

## Genre and evaluation in narrative development\*

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### ABSTRACT

In this study I examine Venezuelan children's developing abilities to use evaluative language in fictional and personal narratives. The questions addressed are: (1) How does the use of evaluative language vary in fictional and personal narratives? (2) Is there a relationship between the use of evaluative language in these two narrative genres and children's age and socio-economic status (SES)? The sample consists of 444 narratives produced by 113 Venezuelan school-age children participating in 4 narrative tasks, in which personal and fictional stories were elicited. Findings suggest that age and socio-economic status have a greater impact on the use of evaluation in fictional stories than in personal narratives. Low SES and younger children are at a greater disadvantage when performing fictional narratives than when performing personal narratives. These results strongly imply that children's narrative competence cannot be assessed in a single story-telling task, given the importance that task-related factors seem to have on narrative abilities.

### INTRODUCTION

Speakers use different discourse genres when they interact either in oral or written form. For instance, they can produce descriptions, narratives or argumentation within a conversation. My focus in this study is to examine Venezuelan children's oral narrative discourse in order to determine the effects of age and social class on distinctive features of language use in two narrative genres, personal and fictional stories.

Genre determines how a (written or oral) text is organized, which topic is appropriate, what lexical and grammatical choices are acceptable. Moreover, the situational context limits the type of discourse that can be used. Genre characteristics reflect ways in which a text is appropriate within the situational context where it is produced. Thus, examination of genre-specific features

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enables us to reveal how speakers adjust their verbal production to contextual constraints.

[G]enres are socially invented linguistic spaces that encourage different forms of human exchange, varying in the roles they suggest for speaker and listener, the amount of revelation they permit or forbid, and the way they open up or limit the *range and intensity of emotion and/or intimacy* carried by the act of narrating. (Wolf, Moreton & Camp, 1994: 291, underlining is mine)

The quote above relates narrative genre to the expression of ‘emotion or intimacy’, in other words, to the use of evaluative language in narrative discourse. Evaluative language is understood, for the purposes of this study, as linguistic expressions referring to emotions, attitudes, beliefs, and affect, i.e. non-factual, perspective-building elements contributing to the expressive function of the story (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972). The assumption on which this study is based is that narrative abilities follow different developmental paths, depending on the type of task in which the narrative is elicited. Thus, children’s narrative skills, in general, and use of evaluative language, in particular, are expected to differ in fictional and personal narratives.

The purpose of this paper is, then, to discuss genre differences in children’s developing narrative skills and to determine whether and to what extent social class has an effect on the development of these abilities. The results reported here form part of a larger research project, in which I have looked into Venezuelan children’s narrative development, focusing on the use of evaluative language (Shiro, 1997*a*).

The following research questions will be addressed in this paper:

- (1) How does the use of evaluative language vary in fictional and personal narratives?
- (2) Is there a relationship between the use of evaluative language in fictional and personal narratives and children’s age and socio-economic status?

#### *Child narrative and the concept of ‘genre’*

Early in life, children can already distinguish and produce different discourse genres. They participate in conversations; they can produce simple forms of description, narration, and argumentation, among other types of interaction. Certainly, some forms of discourse appear earlier than others in children’s production. For example, episodes of personal experience emerge at an early age (Eisenberg, 1985), while other narrative forms appear much later in life, if ever (e.g. writing a novel or short stories).

The concept of genre is not easy to define. It has been approached in several disciplines like literature, folklore, cinema, and discourse analysis with varied results. The fields of language teaching and the teaching of writing (in first and second language) have dealt with the problem of genre from the learner's perspective. Swales (1990), whose research focus is in the area of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), describes genre as follows:

Genres themselves are classes of communicative events which typically possess features of stability, name recognition and so on. Genre-type communicative events (and perhaps others) consist of texts themselves (spoken, written, or a combination) plus encoding and decoding procedures as moderated by genre-related aspects of text-role and text-environment. (Swales, 1990: 9)

From this viewpoint, genres are properties of discourse communities in the sense that they do not belong to individuals but to larger groups of speakers. Genre analysis should thus focus on conventions that arise from communicative events in speech communities, constraining topic selection, rhetorical organization, lexical and syntactic choices of text production and playing an important role in text comprehension (it appears to be the case that recognition of genre is necessary for text comprehension and more exposure to texts of a certain genre facilitates recognition of genre).

Narratives form a complex category, where multiple narrative genres can be found with manifold communicative purposes (Heath, 1986; Hicks, 1988). Bakhtin (1986) posits the idea of genre as a 'stable form' that shapes all utterances. He makes the point that each time an utterance is produced, that utterance forms part of generic speech:

We speak in definite speech genres, that is, all our utterances have definite and relatively stable typical FORMS OF CONSTRUCTION OF THE WHOLE. (Bakhtin, 1986: 78, emphasis in the original)

In Bakhtin's view, speakers may use multiple genres without being aware of their existence or of the fact that they are using them. He distinguishes between primary and secondary genres, defining primary genres as typically oral, everyday 'simple' communication, as opposed to secondary genres, which are mostly written, 'more complex and comparatively highly developed and organized cultural communication' (Bakhtin, 1986: 62). Bakhtin's distinction between primary and secondary genres raises the interesting question of how these two types of genre are related to each other. Narratives can belong both to primary and secondary genres as they cover a whole range of communication types: from everyday oral narratives to culturally valued artistic pieces of literature. Thus, by studying narrative development, it is possible to reveal the links between primary and secondary genres.

In a very interesting article, Virtanen (1992) imposes a certain order on the different approaches to text typology. She argues that typologies can be based on three types of criteria:

- (1) text-external criteria, whereby situational features are taken into account to classify texts;
- (2) text-internal criteria, whereby textual features are used for categorization;
- (3) functional criteria, which would be a combination of textual and situational features by which the communicative purpose of the text is determined.

Typologies are rarely based on just one kind of criterion. However, the decision for labelling a text in a certain way depends on the criteria used. In the case of narratives, the presence of temporal juncture (a text-internal feature) is necessary for a text to be recognized as a narrative. In other text types (e.g. argumentative discourse), no explicit textual marker needs to be present as long as the function of the text (as persuasion is in the case of argumentative discourse) is made clear. Thus, a narrative text may be produced to persuade the audience and therefore, be used as argumentative discourse (a 'secondary' or 'indirect' use of the text, Virtanen, 1992). Interestingly, Virtanen points out that no other text type (descriptive, argumentative, instructive, or expository) can serve a narrative function, although narratives can serve other discourse functions at a secondary level (e.g. argumentation). Should narratives, then, be considered a basic type of text?

Several researchers in narrative development have posed themselves this question and the debate has not yet been settled. Some scholars believe that narrative is a primary form of discourse that engenders other discourse forms. Bruner (1990: 45) claims that there is some 'human readiness to organize experience into narrative form', endowing narrative genres with a fundamental role in meaning-making. Others (Beals & Snow, 1994) argue that narrative is not the most frequent type of discourse that children engage in during the preschool years.

Similarly, scholars in the field of developmental research try to determine the route of narrative development. Do narrative genres develop in a certain sequence and if they do, which genre is the first to develop? Although findings are not conclusive, some researchers (Eisenberg, 1985; Nelson, 1986) argue that first the child has a general representation of events whose verbal rendition is a script, a form of narrative about ongoing events or events that take place more than once (e.g. birthday parties, going to the doctor). Later, the child develops abilities to talk about one-time past events based on script knowledge in the form of narratives of personal experience.

On the other hand, Miller & Sperry (1988) believe that the abilities to talk about past events develop first, as they serve a primordial communicative function in the child's interaction with others. The view adopted by Hudson &

Shapiro (1991: 99) is that, although the child relies on different skills for the production of scripts and personal narratives, both discourse types 'emerge in their incipient forms at approximately the same time, but may develop at different rates in the preschool years'.

Regardless of which side we take, the conclusion that can be drawn from this debate is that different narrative genres develop at different rates and take different routes (Allen, Kertoy, Sherblom & Pettit, 1994). Therefore, when narrative development is discussed, among the multiple factors that affect narrative competence, genre (understood here as type of narrative discourse) should also be taken into account.

To my knowledge, there have been two approaches so far to the study of genre in narrative development. One defines genre in terms of sources of knowledge in which the narrative has its origins. This criterion is a combination of text-external and text-internal criteria in Virtanen's (1992) terms because it is based on how experience is organized in discourse form. From this perspective, three narrative genres have been described (Hudson & Shapiro, 1991; Allen *et al.*, 1994; Hemphill, Feldman, Camp, Griffin, Miranda & Wolf, 1994; Uccelli, Hemphill, Pan & Snow, 1998): SCRIPTS, PERSONAL ACCOUNTS and STORIES.

As Hudson & Shapiro (1991) compare these narrative types, they point out, on the one hand, that in scripts the foregrounded information is what usually happens, whereas in personal narratives, the foregrounded information is what happened once and thus, it constitutes a deviation from what usually happens. Stories, on the other hand, are characterized by a more complex episodic structure, where characters' internal states and motivations are important. As a result children seem to take longer to develop skills for fictional storytelling. However, Hudson & Shapiro (1991) admit that narrative skills are affected by task-related and other contextual factors. It may be the case that in certain social groups, where, for instance, bedtime storytelling is a frequent activity, children can produce stories at an earlier age.

The second approach distinguishes between narrative genres from the viewpoint of the interaction in which the narratives are performed (text-external criteria are more prevalent in this classification). Thus, the narrative genres proposed are EVENTCASTS, ACCOUNTS, RECOUNTS and STORIES (Heath, 1986; Hicks, 1988). Heath (1986) posits these as four universal types of narrative, but she admits that their distribution and frequency vary greatly from one culture to another. She defines RECOUNTS as the verbalization of past experience, usually shared with the interlocutor and elicited by him/her. EVENTCASTS are 'verbal replays or explanations of activity scenes that are either in the current attention of those participating in the eventcast or being planned for the future' (Heath, 1986: 88). EVENTCASTS are generally elicited, not volunteered, by an authority figure (e.g. a parent, a teacher). ACCOUNTS, the preferred narrative form, are narrative productions of past experiences that

the narrator chooses (voluntarily) to share with an audience. Finally, *STORIES* differ from the other three narrative genres because they are not taken as real by the audience. They are based on the narrator's imagination.

Although genre is a very complex notion and its boundaries are difficult to detect,<sup>1</sup> research in this area suggests that genre studies reveal the relationship between text and context, namely, how text is related to external (i.e. situational, cultural) factors and is determined by them. This notion of 'genre' can be applied to the study of narrative development in order to reveal the different paths taken by emerging narrative discourse in child language. In this study, I compare two narrative genres: *ACCOUNTS* of past personal experiences and *RECOUNTS* of stories based on films (seen either on the small or on the large screen). Bruner (1986) suggests that the narrative speech act has the following felicity conditions (i.e. conditions that ensure the success of the interaction, Austin, 1962):

- (1) [some indication that] a story is to be recounted;
- (2) that it is true or fictional;
- (3) that it fits some [narrative] genre – a sad story, a moral fable, a come-uppance tale, a particular scandal, a happening in one's life;
- (4) a condition of style: that the form of the discourse in which the story is actualized leaves open the 'performance of meaning' in Iser's sense (Bruner, 1986: 25).

Following Iser (1978), Bruner explains what he means by condition (4). It involves those features of the text that guide the reader in the process of making sense out of the text (constructing a virtual text). The three textual features that help in this process are: triggering of presuppositions, subjectivization and multiple perspectives. The first refers to the implicit information carried by the text, the second refers to the role of the narrator and the third to the characters' point of view expressed in the story. It is these textual features and their relationships with narrative types that constitute the focus of my analysis.

#### *Evaluative language in narrative discourse*

While developing narrative competence, children need to acquire the ability to use evaluative expressions appropriately within each narrative genre. The evaluative elements carry the point of the story (Labov, 1972; Peterson & McCabe, 1983; Bamberg & Damrad-Frye, 1991; Eaton, Collis & Lewis, 1999) and consequently, they have an important role in narrative production. However, the function of evaluative language is expected to differ in fictional and personal narratives because of the fundamental differences in perspective building, particularly in the representation of self in the narrated world

[1] And thus, it is not such a stable form as Bakhtin (1986) and Swales (1990) seem to suggest.

(Bamberg, 1997; Shiro, 2000). Typically, the events recounted in a narrative take place in the past, prior to the moment of narrating and often in a different context of situation. According to Chafe (1994) the narrator's (representing) consciousness is displaced from the represented consciousness (present in the narrative world) on the spatio-temporal dimension. In fictional narratives, in addition to spatio-temporal displacement, the represented consciousness (i.e. the story world perspective) is displaced from the representing consciousness (i.e. the narrator's stance) because the former belongs to the story characters and the latter to the narrator (Chafe, 1994).<sup>2</sup>

There is little agreement in the literature on narrative development regarding the types of evaluation to be analysed. A number of studies (Peterson & McCabe, 1983; Bamberg & Damrad-Frye, 1991) have used Labov's (1972) criteria for detecting the evaluative devices in children's narratives. However, given that the focus of this paper is perspective building related to narrative genre, an area in which Labov's concept of evaluation has certain limitations (Shiro, 1997*b*), I have chosen to focus on the linguistic features children use to represent feelings, thoughts and speech as a way of approaching narrative evaluation.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, I have used the following measures of frequency to account for narrative evaluation in fictional and personal stories (adapted from Astington, 1993; Daiute, 1993; Chafe, 1994; Tager-Flusberg & Sullivan, 1995):

- (1) EMOTION, expressing affect, emotion (e.g. *Se puso contenta*. '[She] was happy');
- (2) COGNITION, representing thought, beliefs (e.g. *Pensó que era un pajarito*. '[He] thought that it was a little bird');
- (3) PERCEPTION, referring to anything that is perceived through the senses (e.g. *Vio al policía*. '[She] saw the policeman');
- (4) PHYSICAL STATE, referring to a character's internal state which is physical rather than emotional (e.g. *Estaba muy cansada*. '[She] was very tired');
- (5) INTENTION, referring to a character's intentions of carrying out some action (e.g. *Trató de escapar*. '[She] tried to escape');
- (6) RELATION, referring to an action which is interpreted as a relation between characters or a character and an object, rather than the action itself (e.g. *Encontraron al ratoncito*. '[They] found the rat');

[2] In other publications related to my research (Shiro, 1997*a*, 2000; in press), I address the problem of first person and third person perspective in narrative as related to the two types of narrative tasks examined in this study.

[3] This analytic scheme was derived from the findings of a pilot study (Shiro, 1995). As it is based on semantic categories, it is helpful in detecting the varying linguistic realizations that correspond to each evaluative category. However, there are certain affective features in language (mainly expressed by formal means, such as repetitions, diminutives, hesitation markers, etc) that this analytic scheme does not account for.

- (7) REPORTED SPEECH, referring to language representing speech:
- (a) DIRECT, the character's words are recorded verbatim (e.g. *Le dijo: 'Por aquí señor, por favor.'* '[She] told him: 'Here, sir, please'');
  - (b) INDIRECT, the character's words are indirectly reported (e.g. *Mi mamá le dijo que yo estaba ahí.* 'My mother told him that I was there');
  - (c) FREE, the lexical choices imply that speech is represented without explicitly reporting the words spoken (e.g. *Mi mamá me regañó.* 'My mom nagged at me').

Describing the use of evaluative language in narrative discourse in general gives a limited picture of how children develop abilities to express the point of view in the story. Findings on English speakers' data suggest that evaluations, such as portrayal of self and others, or expressing subjective experience, are related to particular forms of discourse (Miller, Potts, Fung, Hoogstra & Mintz, 1990). Thus, it is necessary to understand how narrative genre determines the use of evaluative expressions in order to fully comprehend how children learn to produce different forms of narrative discourse.

Similarly, narratives can only be studied within the context of the social relations in which the narrator is immersed, as they play a necessary role in the child's socialization process. Thus, there is a close relationship between children's construction of reality and their construction of narrative worlds:

A person [...] interprets reality through socially and culturally shared categories or frames. Individuals construct or establish reality in taking a stance toward it. (Lucariello, 1995: 3)

Most studies on narrative development concentrate on middle class children, and very few investigate the relationship between emerging narrative skills and social class differences (Feagans, 1982: 105). In fact, Labov's seminal work (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972) was intended to demonstrate that socio-economic status (SES) related differences in narrative production were only superficial and the underlying constructs were the same, as he was trying to prove with the analysis of narratives produced by inner city children whose school performance was very poor but whose narratives displayed similar rhetorical structure and evaluative resources as their high SES peers. However, other studies point out that social background has a considerable impact on children's language accomplishment in general (Hart & Risley, 1995) and narrative production in particular (Heath, 1983).

The focus of this study is on Venezuelan children's narrative production. Given the particularities of social structure in Venezuela, a country struggling with underdevelopment, extreme poverty and continued social and political crises, it is necessary to understand how social differences affect narrative development in this particular context.



TABLE 1. *Distribution of the sample (n = 113)*

	Low SES children	High SES children	Total
First graders	27	29	56
Fourth graders	27	30	57
Total	54	59	113

## METHOD

For this study 444 narratives of 113 children were collected in interviews carried out in three private and three public schools in Caracas, Venezuela. To capture the social variation of the Venezuelan population (fast increasing poverty and dwindling middle classes), the sample was selected from both ends of the social scale. The children in the three private schools belong to the upper end of the scale, and the children in the three public schools belong to the lower end. In the Venezuelan context, public and private schools can serve as a 'proxy' for SES differences. Although within-group variation can be observed, there is no overlap between these two SES groups in terms of parents' occupation, income, education or home, all of which are used as indicators of social class (Hoff-Ginsberg & Tardiff, 1995). Children in the three public schools come from wealthy families living in exclusive neighbourhoods. Children in the three private schools live in extreme poverty, mostly in shanty houses built on the hills surrounding Caracas. The sample consists of monolingual Spanish-speaking children in first and fourth grade. The first graders' age varies between 6;5 and 8;2 (mean 6;10); the fourth graders' age range is between 9;1 and 10;9 (mean 10;3). The distribution of the sample is shown in Table 1.

*Procedure*

After an observation period in each school, in which rapport was established with the first and fourth graders who were selected to participate in the study, the semi-formal interviews were carried out individually with each child in his/her respective school. The interviews were audiotaped and later transcribed. An initial warm-up conversation was followed by four narrative tasks in which the child was expected to produce at least one narrative. Two tasks elicited fictional stories and two elicited personal narratives. The prompts for eliciting personal narratives were of two types. One, which I shall call 'open prompt' consisted of asking the child to narrate something scary that had happened to them. With this prompt 109 personal narratives were elicited. The other, which I shall call 'structured prompt', consisted of an anecdote that the interviewer narrated to the child, followed by the question: 'Did something similar happen to you?' (adopted from Peterson & McCabe, 1983).

TABLE 2. *Distribution of the stories produced in the four narrative tasks (n = 444)*

Children	Stories				Total stories
	Personal structured	Personal open-ended	Fictional structured	Fictional open-ended	
High SES 1st graders	29	29	29	29	116
Low SES 1st graders	25	26	27	26	104
High SES 4th graders	29	29	30	30	118
Low SES 4th graders	27	25	27	27	106
Total stories	110	109	113	112	444

As a single anecdote was not expected to be successful with all the children, the interviewer offered three anecdotes and if the child produced more than one narrative in response, the longest and most coherent was selected for the analysis.<sup>4</sup> In this task, 290 personal narratives were generated out of which 110 were selected.

As a response to the ‘open prompt’ in the fictional narrative task, the child told the story of his/her favourite film, television programme. This prompt generated 112 fictional stories. The ‘structured prompt’ for a fictional narrative consisted of asking the child to recount the story of a wordless animated video *Picnic* (Weston Wood, 1993) which had been shown prior to the interview.<sup>5</sup> As expected, all 113 children responded to this prompt.

The (slight) variation in the number of stories produced in each task, as shown in Table 2 below, is already an indication that the same child can respond differently to varying prompts and narrative tasks. Note, however, that the corpus on which the analysis was based includes 428 stories produced

[4] The anecdotes produced by the interviewer were the following:

- (a) *El otro día subí al Ávila y se me atravesó una culebra. Me asusté y salí corriendo. A ti te pasó algo parecido?* (‘The other day I was hiking *el Ávila* and I suddenly saw a snake. I got scared and started to run. Has anything similar happened to you?’).
- (b) *Ayer en la cocina, estaba cortando el pan. El cuchillo estaba afilado y en vez de cortar el pan, me corté el dedo. Tuve que ir a la clínica para que me curen. Te pasó algo similar?* (‘Last night, in the kitchen, I was cutting bread. The knife was very sharp and instead of the bread, I cut my finger. I had to go to the hospital to have it treated. Did anything similar happen to you?’).
- (c) *Alguna vez te llevaron de emergencia al hospital?* (‘Have you ever been taken to a hospital in emergency?’). This last prompt is a more open-ended question than the other two prompts but just as structured in terms of offering the topic around which the child is expected to build a personal narrative. It was found to be useful when the other two anecdotes failed to elicit a personal experience.

[5] A summary of the plot of the 10-minute video is included in the Appendix.

TABLE 3. *The variables*

Variables	Scored as
Outcome Variables	
EMOTION (D_EMO)	Frequency-per-clause
COGNITION (D_COG)	Frequency-per-clause
RELATION (D_REL)	Frequency-per-clause
PERCEPTION (D_PER)	Frequency-per-clause
PHYSICAL STATE (D_PHY)	Frequency-per-clause
INTENTION (D_INT)	Frequency-per-clause
REPORTED SPEECH: DIRECT (D_RPD)	Frequency-per-clause
REPORTED SPEECH: INDIRECT (D_RPI)	Frequency-per-clause
REPORTED SPEECH: FREE (D_RPF)	Frequency-per-clause
Composite outcome variable	
EVALUATION IN FICTION (D_EVAF)	Sum of frequencies-per-clause
EVALUATION IN PERSONAL (D_EVAP)	Sum of frequencies-per-clause
OVERALL EVALUATION (D_EVA)	Sum of frequencies-per-clause
Predictor variables	
AGE	In months
SES	0 for low SES; 1 for high SES

by 107 children who responded to all four prompts in the interview (see the corresponding note to Table 4).

The number of narratives produced by high SES children in all four tasks (Table 2) is larger than the number produced by low SES children. Similarly, fourth graders in both SES groups produced more narratives than first graders. However, high SES fourth graders produced the highest number of stories in the fictional recount tasks, whereas low SES fourth graders performed better in the personal narrative tasks, particularly with the structured prompt than their younger peers.

Each narrative was analysed in terms of the evaluative categories described above and summarized in Table 3. Thus, the analysis yielded nine evaluative categories in four narrative tasks (fictional open, fictional structured, personal open and personal structured). These 36 measures were combined in different ways for the analysis of their relationships with age and SES in fictional and personal narratives.

Two independent raters coded 20% of the narratives and inter-rater reliability using Cohen's kappa was estimated at 0.86 corrected for chance agreement, a coefficient that indicated that the coding scheme was reliable for the purposes of this study.

*The stories: a description of the narrative tasks*

In personal narratives, the roles of speaker, narrator and protagonist are closely related. Events tend to be recounted from a first person perspective,

giving the narrative a sense of immediacy (Engel, 1995). If a personal narrative is told from a third person perspective, it is labelled as a vicarious narrative. Fictional narratives, on the other hand, are typically told from a third person perspective, as the protagonist is an invented character, different and displaced from the narrator.

It is important to point out that fictional narratives are understood in this study as the retelling of a story based on imagined events. The child's rendition of the fictional narrative may have been based on a written, oral or some other (audio)visual source such as a film or a comic strip (Berman & Slobin, 1994). This study does not focus on the child's ability to invent a fictional story, nor does it focus on pretend play, where the child attributes imagined characteristics to real objects. Nonetheless, despite the fact that the child is not the creator of the fantasy world when retelling a film, and however blurred the line between reality and fantasy may be, the child constructs the story world in different ways depending on the degree to which it resembles his/her own reality. In the present study, my aim is to examine the differences in the use of evaluative expressions between the narratives produced in these two types of tasks: one eliciting accounts of personal experience and the other, recounts of videotaped stories. The child, while acquiring the ability to produce fictional and personal stories as narrative genres, needs to develop those skills that will enable her to produce the appropriate language whereby narrated worlds are created according to the requirements of each genre.

Studies on English-speaking children (Preece, 1987) suggest that fictional narratives are not as frequently produced in peer interactions as personal narratives. Preece (1987) has also found that fictional stories based on TV programmes are the most frequently produced of all fictional narratives, exceeded only by accounts of the child's personal or vicarious experience. Although children are not likely to engage in the telling of a fictional story very often, they are exposed to them with increasing frequency as they spend long hours every day in front of a TV set. Moreover, there is a natural link between stories and children, especially in contexts where storytelling is a regular activity. Thus, telling a story may become a pleasant activity in the day-to-day interactions between the child and her caregiver. Storytelling is also a common classroom activity, where children are expected to narrate at the teacher's request and it is frequently used in the teaching of reading and writing skills.

Viewed in this way, personal and fictional stories are linked to some real life referent. In the personal experience narrative, the child makes reference to an autobiographical episode. In the fictional storytelling, the child narrates a film that has been seen by a large audience. In both cases the relationship between the narrative and the referent is mediated by the child's interpretation. In both cases, however, the child feels the need to render a 'faithful' representation of the events in the sense that she will try to stay as close as possible to

what she feels is a 'truthful' account of what she has experienced or what she has seen on the screen. The difference, then, between fictional and personal narratives is not the extent to which the child reports 'real' events but the degree of displacement between the child's world and the narrated world (Chafe, 1994).

The boundary between fictional and personal narratives is not always clear-cut. Fictional stories are sometimes embedded in personal narratives, most particularly in oral interactions, as in the following example:

Example 1. 085.IGN.129.F María<sup>6</sup>

\*EXP: y cuál es la [película] que recuerdes así que te gustó más últimamente?

\*CHI: yo vi que mi mamá me dijo <no, tú te vas a aburrir con esa película. Esa película es muy # muy larga y muy # muy profunda para ti> ["]. Pero que yo la vi en el cine y me gustó bastante.

\*EXP: cuál es?

\*CHI: *Il Postino*, con Massimo #.

\*EXP: me la cuentas?

(\*EXP: and which [film] do you remember, one that you have enjoyed lately?)

\*CHI: I saw that Mom said <no, you are going to be bored by this film. This film is too long and complicated for you> ['] But I saw it at the movies and I liked it a lot.

\*EXP: Which one?

\*CHI: *Il Postino*, with Massimo #.

\*EXP: Would you like to tell me the story?')<sup>7</sup>

Subsequently, the child narrates the film and succeeds in proving that it was not too complicated for her to understand. In this way, the fictional story *Il Postino* is embedded in a personal narrative. The child responds to my prompt first with a personal narrative, in which she makes the point that she had outdone her mother's expectations, followed by the summary of the film,

[6] The interviews were transcribed in CHAT format and analysed with CLAN (MacWhinney, 1995). For reasons of space, precise CHAT format is not shown here. The heading indicates the identification number of the transcript, the school where the interview took place, the Child's age (in months), sex and name. Thus, the coding on the introductory line. '085.IGN.129.F María' means  
 transcript number: 85  
 school: San Ignacio (high SES)  
 age of child: 129 months = 10;9  
 sex: female  
 name: María.

[7] My translation of all the interview excerpts.

the fictional narrative the prompt intended to elicit in this task. This embedding of one narrative within the other may result in added difficulty for the child to organize her discourse. The possibility to combine narrative genres is a reflection of the multilayered nature of discourse.<sup>8</sup>

In the fictional narrative tasks, the children needed to convert into words stories expressed in images. In addition, it is very likely that the children told the story for the first time, given that *Picnic* has not been distributed commercially in Venezuela and therefore, the children in the sample could not have seen it elsewhere. In the open-ended fictional task, there could be cases when a child had already narrated the same film to a different audience. In contrast, in the personal narrative task (both open-ended and structured), the likelihood that the child's rendition of the narrative was not the first increases greatly. Certain experiences become part of the family's repertoire and may be told several times. Studies on narrative discourse (Norrick, 1997) highlight the importance of retelling familiar stories for the fostering of group rapport, ratification of group membership and expression of group values. Thus, retold stories are a valuable source for examining acceptable ways of representing the self and others in narrative form.

The topic in the structured fictional task was held constant as children recounted the same film, *Picnic*. In the open-ended task children chose any of a variety of films or TV series that were very popular at the time of the interview. In children's renditions of fictional stories, the narrator and the protagonist have distinct voices. The child as an outside narrator usually depicts multiple characters' perspectives. School-age children tend to tell fictional stories from the overall perspective of an omniscient narrator (see Shiro, 2000, for a more detailed analysis of first and third person perspectives in children's fictional and personal stories).

In the two tasks where personal experience was elicited, the children covered a wide range of topics: frightening encounters with criminals or wild animals, suffering diseases, injuries or minor accidents. Injuries are by far the most frequent topic in the narratives produced in these two tasks (about 50% of the personal narratives produced by the children in this sample). Also a very common topic in the sample was the child as a victim or an observer of an assault or a robbery (about 10% of the personal narratives). The selection of topics reflects what types of experiences become memorable, and therefore tellable, for the child (although limited in range by the prompt which elicited these narratives).<sup>9</sup> A thematic analysis can also contribute to our understanding of the features which are salient in the child's reality and the relations between these features and social issues.

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[8] For the purposes of this study, only the fictional narrative was used for the analysis.

[9] It may very well be the case that the experience becomes tellable first and, as a result, it turns memorable. I am indebted to one of my anonymous reviewers for this comment.

## RESULTS

*Evaluative language and its relation to fictional and personal narratives*

Given the differences between fictional and personal narrative with respect to communicative purpose, topics and modes of production or comprehension described above, the question that arises is in what ways the developing abilities for narrative production differ in fictional and personal storytelling. To address this research question of how genre affects evaluative language in Venezuelan children's narrative production, first I examined the frequency of evaluative expressions in fictional and personal narratives. The density of each evaluative category was calculated for both narrative genres by multiplying the number of occurrences by 100 and dividing by the number of clauses (e.g. density of perception in fictional narratives  $D_{\text{PERF}}$  equals the number of occurrences of expressions of perception times 100, divided by the number of clauses in the fictional narrative [ $D_{\text{PERF}} = \text{PERF} \times 100 / \text{CLF}$ ]; density of perception in personal narratives  $D_{\text{PERP}}$  equals the number of expressions of perception times 100, divided by the number of clauses in the personal narrative [ $D_{\text{PERP}} = \text{PERP} \times 100 / \text{CLP}$ ]). Then a composite variable was created for each narrative genre (density of evaluation in fictional narratives  $D_{\text{EVAF}}$ , density of evaluation in personal narratives  $D_{\text{EVAP}}$ ) by summing all the occurrences of evaluative expressions, perception PER, intention INT, relation REL, emotion EMO, cognition COG, reported speech RPS, in each genre, multiplying them by 100 and dividing by the number of clauses [ $D_{\text{EVAF}} = (\text{PERF} + \text{INTF} + \text{RELF} + \text{EMOF} + \text{COGF} + \text{RPSF}) \times 100 / \text{CLF}$ ]. Density of fictional evaluation and density of personal evaluation roughly represent the percentage of clauses that contain evaluative expressions in each narrative genre.<sup>10</sup>

Examination of the types of evaluative categories used in fictional and personal narratives (see Figure 1) suggest that the most frequent evaluative device in both genres is perception. Interestingly, the ranking of evaluative categories by frequency is very similar in both genres, with the exception of expressions of relation, which ranks higher in fictional than in personal narratives.<sup>11</sup> Note that references to inner states and speech (i.e. cognition, emotion, reported speech) are remarkably less frequent than expressions referring to perception in both narrative genres.

The majority of the children in the sample used evaluative expressions in 40–60% of the clauses in fictional narratives, and in 30–50% of the clauses in personal narratives, as can be deduced from the means and standard deviations

[10] It is not an exact representation of the percentage of evaluative clauses due to the fact that some clauses contain more than one evaluative element.

[11] A possible explanation for the high frequency of 'relation' in fictional stories is that this type of evaluative expression may be particularly strong in recounts of visually presented narratives. I am indebted to one of my anonymous reviewers for this observation.

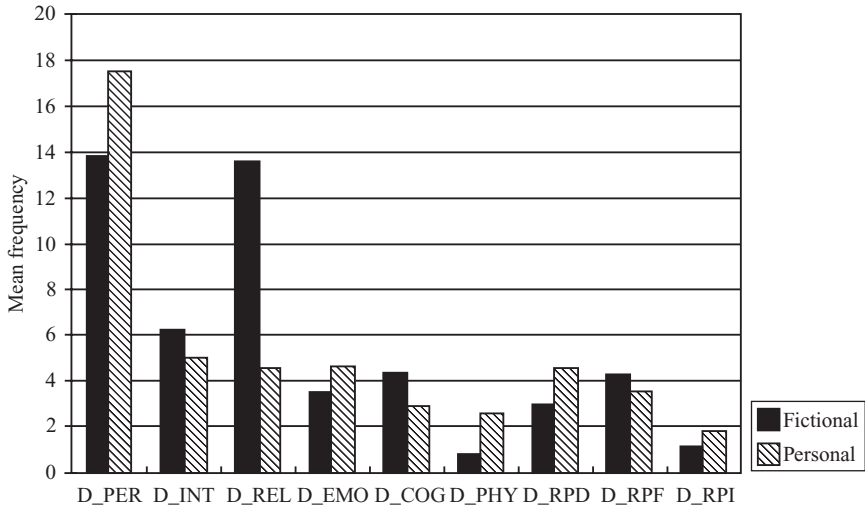


Fig. 1. Evaluative categories in fictional and personal narratives.

shown in Table 4.<sup>12</sup> Even though the correlation between evaluation in fictional and personal narratives is rather weak, as indicated by the coefficients in Table 5, the difference is statistically significant, implying that the same child systematically tends to evaluate more in a fictional story than in a personal narrative ( $F_{(1,105)} = 6.78, p < 0.01$ ).

Thus, it is possible to infer that, in both age groups, children who have a tendency to use a great proportion of evaluative devices in fictional storytelling will do likewise when narrating personal experiences, but to a lesser degree. This is already an indication that children do not respond identically to the two narrative tasks. A major implication of this finding is that conclusions regarding children's narrative competence should not be drawn on analyses of only one type of narrative task. Furthermore, examination of the correlation coefficients between the variables, as indicated in Table 5, sheds some light on other factors which may also have a considerable impact on children's narrative performance.

To examine this difference further, a taxonomy of regression models was built and the effect of children's age and SES on evaluative expressions in fictional and personal narratives was tested. As a result, the independent variables, age, SES, and their interaction were systematically inserted into the regression analysis in order to determine which of the resulting models fits

[12] The measures above are expressed in frequency of evaluative expressions per number of narrative clauses. As the renditions of fictional narratives were considerably longer than those of personal narratives, the raw number of evaluative devices found in fictional stories is considerably higher than in accounts of personal experience.



TABLE 4. *Summary statistics for density of evaluation\* in fictional and personal narratives (D\_EVAF & D\_EVAP)*

Variable	N†	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S.D.
EVAP	107	0.0	93.8	43.7	17.4
EVAF	107	25.6	81.7	50.5	11.8

\* Density of evaluation represents the percentage of evaluative expressions in all narrative clauses (see footnote 10).

† Note that N = 107 is the resulting number of subjects who have responded to all four narrative tasks. The remaining 6 children in the sample did not respond to at least one of the tasks.

TABLE 5. *Correlation matrix of density of evaluation in fictional and personal narratives (D\_EVAF & D\_EVAP) with AGE and SES (n = 107)*

	Evaluation in fiction D_EVAF	Evaluation in personal narratives D_EVAP	AGE	SES
D_EVAF	1.00	0.23*	0.25**	-0.16~
D_EVAP		1.00	-0.09	0.07
AGE			1.00	0.11
SES				1.00

~  $p < 0.1$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

the data best. The multiple regression analyses confirm that the variation in children’s age and SES has a significant effect on the variation in the density of evaluation in fictional narratives, but no similar effect can be found in personal narratives, as the following analyses will indicate.

In this first analysis, an interaction effect of age and SES on fictional evaluation was detected, as shown in Model 4, the best fitting in Table 6, implying that high SES children experience a developmental shift in their use of evaluative expressions in fictional stories. Variation in age, SES and interaction explains 15% of the variation in evaluative expressions in fictional narratives. The interaction effect, as illustrated graphically in Figure 2, implies that, even though low SES children’s use of evaluative expressions starts out higher than middle class children’s, only the latter appear to increase the frequency of evaluative expressions in fictional stories with age. Low SES children do not show a similar increase.

This finding suggests that the frequency of evaluative devices increases with age mostly in high SES children’s fictional narratives. Does the frequency of all evaluative categories increase equally or are some evaluative devices more responsible for this developmental shift than others?

Further analysis related to the frequency of the nine evaluative categories shows that only the frequency of expressions referring to cognition in fictional narratives is associated with age and SES ( $F_{(1,105)} = 6.55, p < 0.002$ ) implying that older children use, on average, more expressions of cognition in their

TABLE 6. *A taxonomy of regression models of density of evaluation in fictional stories (D\_EVAF) on AGE, SES, and interaction (AGE × SES) (n = 107)*

	Intercept	Age	SES	Interaction Age × SES	<i>F</i> (D.F.) <i>p</i> value	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>
Model 1	34.93***	0.15**			<i>F</i> <sub>(1,105)</sub> = 6.87** <i>p</i> < 0.01	0.06
Model 2	52.15***		-3.59~		<i>F</i> <sub>(1,105)</sub> = 2.82~ <i>p</i> < 0.09	0.03
Model 3	35.85***	0.16**	-4.27*		<i>F</i> <sub>(2,104)</sub> = 5.65** <i>p</i> < 0.005	0.10
Model 4	50.09***	0.02	-32.24**	0.27*	<i>F</i> <sub>(3,103)</sub> = 5.99*** <i>p</i> < 0.0008	0.15

~ *p* < 0.1, \* *p* < 0.05, \*\* *p* < 0.01, \*\*\* *p* < 0.001.

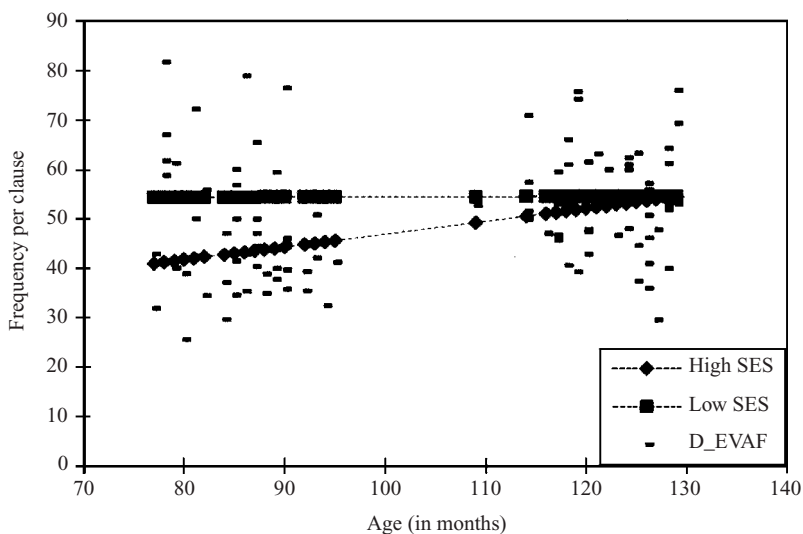


Fig. 2. Fitted regression lines of fictional evaluation (D\_EVAF) on AGE and SES.

fictional narratives and, at the same time, high SES children are likely to use more expressions of cognition in fictional stories than their low SES peers. The variation in age and SES explains 11% of the variation in the density of cognitive expressions in fictional narratives.

Expressions of cognition, then, may enhance a narrative because they reveal the characters' or the narrator's thoughts.

Example 2. 037.PE.123.F Alicia

\*CHI: bueno, entonces él está triste porque él perdió su familia. Y ellos se habían ido sin que se dieran cuenta. Entonces se esconde. Este #

está # está muy miedoso porque él no sabe dónde está. De repente huele algo y son unas flores. Entonces empieza a comer. Entonces la familia se encuentra en el picnic. Está haciendo todo y los # los hermanitos empiezan a jugar y la mamá prepara todo. Entonces cuando están repartiendo la leche se # se da cuenta de que falta un vaso. Entonces dice <quién # quién es éste> [""]? Entonces empieza a mirar y era él. Entonces este # el abuelo de repente este # se recordó que cuando # cuando estaba manejando este # se # el # con una piedra se cae. Entonces todos # recogieron todo y se fueron # y se fueron a buscarlo.

(\*CHI: well, then, he [=the little rat] is sad because he lost his family. And they had left without noticing [that he got lost]. Then, [he] hides. [He] is very scared because he doesn't know where he is. Suddenly [he] smells something and finds some flowers. Then [he] starts to eat [them]. Then [=in the meantime] his family are having a picnic. [She=the mother] is preparing everything and the brothers start playing and the mother is preparing everything. Then, when [she] is handing out the milk, [she] realizes that a glass is missing.<sup>13</sup> Then [she] says <who is this> [""]? Then [she] starts checking and it's him. Then the grandfather suddenly remembers that when [he] was driving [he=the little rat] fell off with [=when the car hit] a stone. Then, they picked up everything and went looking for him.')

In this excerpt of Alicia's rendition of *Picnic*, we find that she uses expressions of cognition such as *se da cuenta*, *se recordó*, *él no sabe* ('[he] realizes', '[he] remembers', '[he] does not know') in order to describe the characters' thoughts and doubts. This reference to the characters' inner states adds to the coherence of the story and contributes greatly to the construction of the story-world.

It is probable that the topic of the wordless picture *Picnic* requires more expressions of cognition and due to this characteristic the density of cognition (D\_COG) is higher in children's fictional stories than in their personal narratives in this sample. However, given that the task was the same for all the children, it is interesting that older and high SES children tended to use more cognitive expressions than their younger and low SES peers, a difference that

[13] Notice that the child says the contrary of what she means. It is not the glass that is missing; a little rat is missing. As a matter of fact, the mother poured one glass more than the number of little rats playing at the picnic. I gave this text to several individuals who were unfamiliar with the story and they all understood what the child meant by *falta un vaso* implying that this distortion does not hinder the coherence of the passage (there may be other coherence problems in this text (i.e. referential clarity), which are beyond the scope of this study).

may suggest that expressions of cognition show developmental shifts in school-age children that other evaluative expressions do not show in this age range.

The findings also suggest that low SES first graders use more evaluative expressions than their high SES peers. Does this mean that they start out with better evaluative skills than high SES children? Let us examine the following example:

Example 3. 062.RG.78.M Douglas

\*CHI: la de Pitufo, Pitufos. este # él hace travesuras. va pa' una iglesia y pelea con un gigante. una vez, vino y agarró, pa' ver, una broma de esa así que # que tiene un redondito así. ah, no, un machete lo agarró y # y le quitó un dedo grande. y entonces, pa' ver, el gigante le dio una patada ahí, voló por # se # salió de la iglesia y # entró otra vez y entonces el gigante le dijo <vas a seguir entrando a una iglesia> ["]? <si sigues entrando, te voy a dar una patada más duro> ["] y entonces le dio otra patada más duro y lo botó. entonces no se rindió. y # como # y el gigante se # bajó pa' # bajó pa' allá afuera. y bajó # se bajó y # y vino y agarró al Pitufo por la mano le echó sal y # y Pitufo hizo <achú> ["]. y # y le # y el gigante le dijo <salud> ["]. <gracias, pero # pero yo me voy porque me vas a dar una patada más duro> ["] y # y y dijo el gigante <gracias porque # porque me recordaste, no te voy a dar una patada más duro te doy una cachetada más duro pa' que te vayas> ["] le dio la cachetada. y # y llegó a otra iglesia y # y rezó. y entonces se fue y le # y le dijo al padre <gracias padre, pero me voy pa' mi casa> ["]. y # y la mamá lo estaba esperando, lo estaba esperando. <mamá, mamá, sírveme la comida, que me voy rápido> ["]. le sirvió la comida y se fue y # y se fue pa' la escuela. <maestra, maestra, me este # hágame la tarea rápido, que me voy pa' # a comer otra vez> ["]. entonces como la mamá no estaba, el papá estaba ahí, pero como la mamá no le dejó # que # que no le hiciera comida. entonces se fue pa' el colegio otra vez, que tenía educación física y se fue y se lo # y le dijo al profesor <profesor, apúrate a # a hacer la educación física porque me voy pa' # pa' ver, pa'l cine a ver una película> ["]. ahá, y entonces le dijo este # <señor, señor, apúrese que # que quiero ir pa' la casa a comer # a comer cotufa> ["]. y entonces co # como la mamá no estaba, le dejó cotufa y se fue otra vez pa' el colegio. entonces termina cuando # cuando él se pone gordo y # y fue pa' # pa' la iglesia del gigante y # y sopló un soplón grande. y le salió toda la comida que tenía en la barriga y # y ganó Pitufo. así termina [c].

(\*CHI: that of Pitufo (Smurf), Pitufo. he # he is naughty. [he] goes to a church and fights with a giant. once, [he] grabbed, let's see, a thing

like this that # that has something round like this. oh, no, a machete, [he] grabbed it and # and [he] cut his [= the giant's] thumb. and then, let's see, the giant kicked him there [he] flew # and [he] flew out of the church # [he] went in again and then the giant told him <are you going to go into the church> ["]? <if you get in again, I'll kick you even harder> ["]. and then [he] kicked him harder and threw him out. then [he] gave up. and # and as # and the giant # went down to # went outside. And [he] bent # [he] bent over # and he grabbed him by his hand and sprinkled salt on him and # and Pitufo goes <achú> ["]. and # and the giant said <gesundheit> ["]. <thanks, but # but I'm leaving because you are going to kick me hard> ["] and # and # and said the giant <thanks for # for reminding me, [I]'m not going to kick you hard, [I]'m going to slap you hard, so that you leave> ["] [he] slapped him. and # and [he] got into another church and # and [he] prayed. and then he left and # and # and [he] told the father [priest] <thank you, Father, but I'm going home> ["]. and # and his mother was waiting for him, [she] was waiting for him. <mummy, mummy, give me some food, 'cause I'm leaving right away> ["]. [she] gave him food and [he] left and # and [he] left for school. <miss, miss, # give me my homework quick, 'cause I'm going to # to eat again> ["] then, as his mother was not home, his father was there, but as his mother didn't let him cook, [he] went back to school, he had gym and he left and # and he told the teacher <sir, hurry up # let's have the class because I'm going to # to # let's see, to the movies to watch a film> ["]. yeah, and then [he] told him # <sir, sir, hurry up 'cause # 'cause [I] want to go home to eat # to eat popcorn> ["]. and then # as his mother wasn't home, [she] had left him the popcorn and [he] left for school again. then, it ends when # when he gets fat and # and he left for # to go to the giant's church and # and he blew a big blow. and all the food came out [the food] that he had in his tummy and # and Pitufo won. that's the end.')

In this narrative, 89% of the clauses contain evaluative language. Douglas, a seven year-old child, also evaluates a great deal in the other narrative tasks (50% in both the structured fictional and the open ended personal narrative and 75% in the structured personal narrative). The presence of these evaluative elements renders the narrative very vivid and lively. However, the listener may get confused in the rapid shifts of perspective (especially the dialogue between the giant and Pitufo, where turn-taking is not always explicitly signalled). The aggressive feelings of the protagonists towards each other are clearly present. The action, however, does not come across very clearly. The listener cannot get a clear picture of the plot.

In the same task, Katy, a 10-year-old girl from a low SES background recounted the following story:

Example 4. 008.FR.116.F Katy

\*CHI: era una muchacha, una muchacha india. y estaba con muchacho, un catirito. pero él era de los blancos y el papá de la muchacha era # era bravo. y # y le tenía rabia a los blancos. y entonces ella cuando fue a cruzar el río, vio al # a el se # al señor. entonces se asustó mucho y se metió pa' el árbol. corrió pa' el árbol. entonces se quedó allá con un animalito que ella tenía, y era muy chistoso. entonces cuando el rey estaba ahí hablando con la # con la hija, entonces vino él y se montó en la corona y <chin> [""] se le cayó encima, en la cabeza. entonces cuando # cuando le cayó ellos se empezaron a reír. y había un indio, que ella # que él estaba enamorado de ella. y cuando él estaba peleando con el blanco entonces el blanco le # el amigo del blanco le # él no sabía disparar. entonces él con una escopeta le me # le echó el tiro a [?] y se cayó al agua. entonces Pocahontas salió corriendo a buscarlo y se puso a llorar y cuando ya # eh # ella se había enamorado del blanco había una # un árbol grande que estaba una señora y ella decía que era la abuela. entonces eh # y al perrito # un perrito que había del hombre blanco malo. entonces él estaba persiguiendo al animalito de Pocahontas. y entonces ella alzó el tallo y lo tumbó y después cuando ella se paró, el papá le dio un collar que era de la mamá muerta. entonces le dio un collar. y siempre ella lo te # lo cargaba. y ella # y la mujer hizo un viento. y le traían rosas y flores y cuando este # el blanco se iba que ya estaba # o sea, tenía rasguños por los indios, entonces él se iba a ir. entonces el papá # el papá de Pocahontas le dijo que # que lo iba a matar. entonces ella se le atravesó y cuando ellos se fueron en un # como en un barco se fueron y ella llorando. y cuando ya estaba lejísimo, ella # ella lloró y lloró siempre. entonces ella se fue en un bichito de esos que le dan a eso y se fue con el animalito. entonces él se cayó de cabeza pa' el río # y ella se echó a reír y #.

\*EXP: cómo termina?

\*CHI: que él se fue. y le llevaron rosas. así con el viento caían rosas y flores y hojitas de esas verdes. caía eso alrededor de ella y ella se puso contenta. después cuando él volvió, ellos se casaron y fueron felices').

(\*CHI: there was a girl, an Indian girl. and she was with a boy, a blond boy. but he was white and the girl's father was angry, [he] was # was furious. and # and [he] was furious with the whites. and then she, when [she] was going to cross the river, [she] saw # the man. then, [she] got very scared and she hid in the tree. [she] ran to the tree. then [she] stayed there with # a little animal/pet that she had and

which was very funny. then, when the king was talking to # to his daughter, then he [=the pet] came and put the crown on his head and <chin> [""] it fell over his head. then when # when it fell, they all started to laugh. and there was an Indian, and she # and he was in love with her. and when he # he was fighting with the white man, then the white man # the white man's friend # he didn't know how to # shoot. then he shot at him [?] with a rifle. and [he] fell into the water. then Pocahontas ran looking for him. and [she] started to cry. and when # eh # she # had fallen in love with the white man. there was a # big tree that was a woman. and # and she was saying that [she] was their grandmother. then eh # and the dog # a dog that was the bad white man's. then he [=the dog] was chasing Pocahontas' pet. and she raised her stem [?] and pushed him down. and then, when she stopped, her father gave her a necklace that had belonged to her deceased mother. then [he] gave her the necklace and she was always wearing it. and she # and the woman caused the wind to blow and it was bringing her roses and # and flowers. and when # the white man was about to leave as he was # that is, [he] had some scratches that the Indians had caused him, then he was about to leave. then, her father # Pocahontas' father told him that # that [he] was going to kill him. then she stood between them. and when they left in a # like a boat. [they] left and she [was] crying. and when [they] were already very far away, she # she cried and cried always. then [she] left on a thing like this that they did like this. and [she] left with her pet. then he fell on his head into the river and # and she burst out in laughter and #.

\*EXP: how does it end?

\*CHI: that he left and [they] took him roses. the wind was blowing roses like this, and flowers and green leaves. all this was falling around her. and she was very happy. afterwards when he came back, they got married and [they] were very happy.')

Katy's narrative is also highly evaluated. About 50% of the clauses contain evaluative expressions. Although the density of evaluation is lower than Douglas', the story comes across more clearly. It seems to me that two factors are responsible for the difference:

- (a) The evaluative devices cannot occur by themselves, just as referential elements alone are also insufficient. It is the combination of evaluative and referential functions that make a good story.
- (b) Not all kinds of evaluative expressions are equally effective.

To illustrate this let us take two examples from the stories above. A conflict between father and daughter is expressed as follows in Katy's story

(example 4):

Example 4a. 008.FR.116.F Katy

\*CHI: entonces el papá # el papá de Pocahontas le dijo que # que lo iba a matar. entonces ella se le atravesó.

(‘\*CHI: then her father # Pocahontas’ father told him that # [he] was going to kill him. then she stood between them.’)

Note the use of indirect reported speech introduced by *le dijo* ‘[he] told her’. Similarly, Douglas (example 3) uses reported speech to describe the conflict between the giant and Pitufo:

Example 3a. 062.RG.78.M Douglas

\*CHI: entonces el gigante le dijo <vas a seguir entrando a una iglesia> [“]? <si sigues entrando, te voy a dar una patada más duro> [“]. y entonces le dio otra patada más duro y lo botó.

(‘\*CHI: then the giant said <[you] are going to go into a church> [“]? <if [you] go into a church, [I]’ll kick you even harder> [“]. and then [he] kicked him harder and threw him out.’)

In Douglas’ excerpt the use of reported speech does not help the interlocutor assign a certain hierarchy to the events. The giant cautions Pitufo and then punishes him. We don’t know why the giant forbids Pitufo to go into the church, or what Pitufo’s intentions are. In Katy’s story, however, we see how the father’s intention (to kill Pocahontas’ friend) provokes a reaction in the daughter (she stops him). Cause–effect relations are clear, the characters’ motives and how that affects their actions is also clear.

The point these two examples illustrate is that frequency of evaluative expressions does not ensure, by itself, the quality of the narrative. The relations between evaluative and referential elements create the overall coherence of the story.

We have seen that high SES fourth graders are likely to use more evaluative expressions in their fictional narratives than high SES first graders. Does this relationship hold in the production of personal narratives? The analysis carried out to test the relationship of evaluative expressions in personal narratives with children’s age and SES, yielded no statistically significant results, as shown in Table 7. These results are similar to Peterson & McCabe’s (1983), who found no developmental pattern in the frequency of evaluative expressions used by English-speaking children between the ages of 4 and 9 while narrating accounts of personal experience. Interestingly, this finding implies that, unlike in fictional narratives, the variation in the frequency of evaluative expressions in personal narratives was found not to be associated with children’s age or socio-economic status. This is further evidence that children use different narrative strategies in personal and fictional storytelling.



TABLE 7. *A taxonomy of regression models of density of evaluation in personal narratives (D\_EVAP) on AGE, SES, and interaction (AGE × SES) (n = 107)*

	Intercept	Age	SES	Interaction Age × SES	F(D.F.) p value	R <sup>2</sup>
Model 1	51.15***	-0.08			F <sub>(1,105)</sub> = 0.91 p < 0.34	0.01
Model 2	41.72***		2.35		F <sub>(1,105)</sub> = 0.58 p < 0.45	0.01
Model 3	56.37***	-0.09	2.72		F <sub>(2,104)</sub> = 0.84 p < 0.43	0.02
Model 4	66.74***	-0.25*	-29.02~	0.30	F <sub>(3,103)</sub> = 1.74 p < 0.16	0.05

~ p < 0.1, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001.

As the findings discussed above suggest that frequency of evaluative expressions is not always associated with skillful storytelling, it may be the case that other aspects related to the use of evaluative expressions are equally relevant. Thus, I examined whether the diversity of evaluative categories used in a narrative was associated with developing narrative skills. To measure the diversity of evaluative categories, I counted the number of types of evaluation used in each narrative. It may very well be that an indicator of skillful storytelling is the use of a wider range of evaluative categories and that in certain narrative genres more diverse evaluative types were required than in others. As diversity of evaluation is not a frequency measure, it assesses the child's use of linguistic resources by focusing on the various linguistic realizations that appear in her narrative and by not accounting for repeated use of evaluative categories. Undoubtedly, in a longer narrative there is a higher probability that the child will produce different types of evaluation and thus display a higher score on diversity of evaluation. However, this variable reflects the child's ability to use the resources that Spanish offers to express narrative evaluation and as such, it should be regarded as a supplementary measure tapping on the child's linguistic skills in storytelling.

The results in Table 8 should be interpreted with a caveat. Although older and high SES children used a wider range of evaluative devices in fictional narratives, this result is difficult to interpret since they also produced longer narratives.

The association between diversity of evaluation, age and SES in personal narratives, shown in Table 9, should be interpreted with a similar caveat. Unlike in fictional stories, and although older and high SES children also tended to produce longer accounts of personal experience, the results obtained in the multiple regression analyses on the diversity of evaluative devices did not suggest that there may be an association between age, SES and diversity of

TABLE 8. *A taxonomy of regression models of DIVERSITY of evaluation in fiction on AGE and SES (n = 107)*

	Intercept	Age	SES	Interaction Age × SES	F(D.F.) p value	R <sup>2</sup>
Model 1	3.92***	0.03**			$F_{(1,105)} = 11.04^{***}$ $p < 0.001$	0.10
Model 2	6.12***		1.02***		$F_{(1,105)} = 11.93^{***}$ $p < 0.0008$	0.10
Model 3	3.72***	0.02**	0.92**		$F_{(2,104)} = 11.17^{***}$ $p < 0.000$	0.18
Model 4	4.75***	0.01	-1.10	0.02	$F_{(3,103)} = 8.04^{***}$ $p < 0.0001$	0.19

~  $p < 0.1$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

TABLE 9. *A taxonomy of regression models of diversity of evaluation in personal narratives on AGE, SES and interaction (AGE × SES) (n = 107)*

	Intercept	Age	SES	Interaction Age × SES	F(D.F.) p value	R <sup>2</sup>
Model 1	4.63***	0.005			$F_{(1,105)} = 0.29$ $p < 0.59$	0.003
Model 2	4.82***		0.62		$F_{(1,105)} = 2.54$ $p < 0.11$	0.03
Model 3	4.50***	0.003	0.61		$F_{(2,104)} = 1.68$ $p < 0.19$	0.03
Model 4	5.52***	-0.01	-1.40	0.02	$F_{(3,103)} = 1.48$ $p < 0.22$	0.04

~  $p < 0.1$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

evaluation in personal narratives. This again may be an indication that personal and fictional narratives can take different developmental paths.

The great diversity in types of evaluative expressions can be illustrated with the story told by José, a 10-year-old, high SES fourth grader.

Example 5. 050.PE.124.M José

\*CHI: la de # una que se llama # la del Hombre Lobo que es un hombre que vive así por una montaña. entonces de repente atropella a un lobo. entonces cuando él se baja, el lobo sigue vivo. entonces el lobo lo muerde en la mano y él así como que si tranquilo. y entonces lucha por los lobos y luego # entonces luego va el doctor. Entonces le pregunta <mira, qué es esto> [“] ? <no, una mordida de lobo, tranquilo> [“]. entonces le empieza a comentar que su hermana se volvió loca, otro desapareció. entonces el lobo va con un viejo. [?] le estaban saliendo pelos por acá. entonces cuando llegaba la noche le # se convertía extraño y eso y entonces escuchaba mejor y veía mejor.

entonces le pregunta a un viejito que estaba allá entonces le pregunta el señor y que <no sé qué me está pasando. tengo mejor vista> [“] entonces y que <tengo una mordida de lobo> [“]. entonces él le dice que no, que el lobo se le está metiendo en el cuerpo de él. entonces se está volviendo lobo porque de repente se iba a volver lobo. entonces le da un amuleto para que se vuelva normal. entonces de repente él deja el amuleto y se le olvida y se le pierde. entonces por las noches él va así. entonces él va corriendo. a veces se come las personas, va pa' los zoológicos caminando y que luego al final, con # la esposa se dio cuenta. entonces lo engaña con un abrigo de piel y lo coloca ahí. entonces luego cuando el hombre va así, entonces ve el abrigo de piel, cree que es un animal. Y cuando lo va a atacar, estaba ahí un pocotón de agujas. Entonces ahí <cla> [“] se clava y se muere.

(\*CHI: one that's called Werewolf, who is a man that lives like this on a mountain. Then, suddenly, [he] runs over a wolf. Then, when he gets out [of the car], the wolf is still alive. Then, the wolf bites his hand and he, like this, doesn't get upset [stays calm]. And then [he] fights for the wolves and afterwards [he] goes to see a doctor. Then [he] asks <look, what's this> [“]? <no problem [= don't worry] a wolf bite> [“]. Then, [he] starts talking about his sister who turned mad, someone else who disappeared. Then Werewolf goes to see an old man. His hair was growing here [= all over his body]. Then, at night [he] turned strange and then [he] could hear and could see better. Then [he] asks the old man who was there <I don't know what's happening to me. I have better eyesight> [“]. Then he says <[I] have a wolf bite> [“]. Then he tells him that the wolf is getting into his body. Then [he] is turning into a wolf because suddenly [he] was going to become a wolf. Then [he = the old man] gives him a talisman to help him turn back to normal. Then, suddenly, he drops the talisman and [he] leaves it behind and loses it. Then, at night he goes like this. Then, he is running. Sometimes [he] eats people, goes to the zoo and finally, his wife realizes [= what's happening]. Then, [she] deceives him with a fur coat and places it there. Then, when the man goes like this, then he sees the fur coat, he thinks it's an animal. And when he is about to attack [the animal], [it] was there full of needles. Then, <cla> [“] [he] pinches himself and [he] dies.')

An example of eight different evaluative categories is underlined in the text above illustrating that José made use of most of the evaluative categories in his summary of the film. On the other hand, in Douglas's narrative (as shown above), we find a pattern of repetition both in terms of words (*vino y agarró, así, dar una patada, más duro*) and evaluative devices (mainly direct reported

speech and perception). If we compare the two stories, it becomes evident that José's evaluative strategy is more successful than Douglas's.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The comparison of evaluative language in two narrative genres suggests that there are major differences in the ways children develop genre-specific narrative skills. Based on the evidence it is possible to conclude that certain developmental shifts in this age range occur only in fictional storytelling and mainly in middle-class children's narratives. Thus, there is an age-related increase in middle class children's density of fictional evaluation, but no equivalent increase was found in working class children's fictional narratives. Expressions of cognition were found to be more closely associated with age differences in fictional narratives. Furthermore, no developmental pattern in either social class was found in the frequency of evaluative expressions in personal narratives. The variety of evaluative categories used in fictional narratives also increases with age in both social groups, but does not seem to increase in personal narratives. However, these results are hard to interpret because the length of the narratives also increases significantly with children's age and SES.

The findings of this study seem to suggest that the presence of evaluative expressions is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the overall coherence of the story. Furthermore, a good story is not necessarily one that contains a very high number of evaluative expressions. It is the skillful combination of evaluative expressions within the story that enhances its coherence.

Similarly, it could be argued that Labov's (1972) distinction between narrative clauses, pertaining to the referential function of the narrative, and evaluative clauses, reflecting the expressive narrative function seems to be problematic. The evaluative elements are scattered all over the narrative and seem to form a variety of patterns fulfilling a number of functions in narrative discourse.

The findings of this study lead to the conclusion that the same child can use different skills in the production of different narrative genres. There seems to be a larger gap between social classes in fictional storytelling than in renditions of personal experience, implying that narrative abilities do not transfer automatically from one narrative genre to the other. It seems to be the case that SES differences in children's storytelling abilities can be explained in terms of the differences in the communicative purposes that storytelling activities serve in these communities (Heath, 1983). Probably, low SES children are not expected to retell the stories based on the films they have seen mostly on TV. In contrast, high SES children may be expected to engage in interactions where they are required to retell stories based on films. Although this is not a comparative study, as it only focuses on Venezuelan children's narrative

production, its findings can contribute to cross-cultural research in narrative development. One important implication is that the variety found in narrative performance among Venezuelan children should warn cross-cultural researchers not to ignore contextual and task-related factors when contrasting narratives or language production in children from different cultural backgrounds.

It can be concluded, thus, that studies on narrative development should use a fine-grained, multidimensional analysis (Shiro, 1995) to ensure a more faithful account of children's emergent narrative skills.

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## APPENDIX

Summary of the silent film *Picnic* used as the structured prompt in the fictional narrative task:

A family of rats started out for a ride in the country to have a picnic. On the way, the youngest rat, who was sitting on the outer edge of the truck with a teddy bear in his lap, fell off the truck. The strange noises in the woods scared the little rat, who hung on to his teddy bear. Then, he found a bush of raspberries and ate more than he could take. The rest of the family continued their trip, unaware of the little rat's absence, until they sat down to eat and the mother was serving a glass of milk to each one of her many children. After she had given each rat a glass of milk, one glass was left with nobody to offer it to. At that point she realized that one of her children was missing. Everybody started to look for the little rat, and the grandfather, who had driven the truck, remembered that part of the road was bumpy and the little rat might have fallen off the edge of the truck. They all packed their things and went back to that part of the road, where they started shouting the little rat's name. All this time, the little rat was sleeping in the bushes not far from the place where the rats had stopped to look for him. As he was awoken by the cries of the other rats, he ran to embrace his family. In his rush, he left his teddy bear behind. In the midst of his family's warm welcome, he ran away to bring his teddy bear back. The family, once again reunited and happy, went back to the picnic area and enjoyed their day out in the fields.