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Effects of Media and Technology on Children's Narrative Skills

Ms. Manasa Preethika[1], Dr. Rohila Shetty[2]
[1]*Post Graduate Student, Dr. M.V. Shetty College of Speech and Hearing, Malady Court, Kavoor, Mangalore-15*
[2]*Professor, Dr. M.V. Shetty College of Speech and Hearing, Malady Court, Kavoor, Mangalore-15*

Abstract: ***Narratives are special in several ways-they tend to be expressed, or controlled by a single speaker. They are usually spoken in external terms and have a special organisation. Narratives are a type of discourse in which people describe a series of events from an actual or fictional world in the past (Labov & Waletzky 1967). In conversation they are common in the form of stories, jokes and anecdotes. Effective communication and narrative abilities are now crucial for people in every aspect of life in the modern, rapidly changing world. The ability to create engaging and convincing narratives that attract people, convey ideas, and motivate action is one of the skills that holds a distinct position. The power of a narrative is acknowledged as a strong tool for engrossing and connecting with others, whether it be in literature, marketing, teaching, or even scientific inquiry. In this study 15 children were chosen, between the ages of 5-10 years. The current study's objective is to examine how media and technology affect children's narrative abilities between the age range of 5 -10 years with an emphasis on the fields of audiology and speech-language pathology. The results revealed that children in both the groups in the age range of 5-10 years didn't exhibit any significant difference in their narrative skills.***

I. INTRODUCTION

Narrative skills encompass the ability to construct coherent and meaningful stories, incorporating elements such as plot, characters, settings, and themes. These skills empower individuals to convey complex ideas, emotions, and experiences in a relatable and memorable manner. In today's information-saturated society where attention spans are fleeting, narratives serve as a powerful tool to cut through the noise and leave a lasting impact on audiences. Narrative plays a significant part in a person's life as it is an extension of language growth. We learn to narrate while also learning from the narration (Labov & Waletzky, 2001). Narrative is an instructional medium through which knowledge, skills, values, and the desire to absorb them are passed down from generation to generation. The epics, as conveyed through the narrative idioms of puranas, harikatha, or dance play in old India, provided the cultural framework within which individuals attempted to understand the world around them and learned to relate it to social problems and organisations

In the realm of literature and entertainment, narrative skills are revered as the backbone of storytelling. Authors and filmmakers leverage narratives to immerse readers and viewers in rich fictional worlds, transporting them to different times, places, and perspectives. Through masterful storytelling, narratives can elicit empathy, evoke emotions, and challenge preconceived notions, fostering a deeper understanding of the human experience.

Narrative is a complex task that requires integration of linguistic, cognitive and social skills and its potential as a clinical assessment has been explored (Botting 2002). It also provides an arena within which to investigate theoretical issues about the relationship between language and social cognition. Narratives differ from conversation in that they are essentially monologues rather than dyadic, but they can contain dialogue that is similar to informal conversation. Although "discourses" in Latin means "conversation," the term "new discourses" refers to any constrained piece of language use produced for a defined purpose, such as lectures, narratives, essays, novels, newspaper pieces, and many others.

Narrative development has been investigated extensively in normally developing children, both English-speaking and cross-linguistically (Berman & Slobin 1994), thus providing a good benchmark with which to compare children with developmental disorders.

The mastery of narrative skills plays a vital role in a child's cognitive and social development, as it enables them to effectively express their thoughts, emotions, and experiences. However, the widespread availability and accessibility of media and technology present both opportunities and challenges for young children. This research project investigates the potential effects of media content, screen time, and interactive applications on children's narrative abilities, considering factors such as vocabulary acquisition, storytelling proficiency, and overall language development.

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In this decade alone media has advanced to a great extent and technology has become a superior medium of communication. It brings the whole world under the control of our fingertip, making us world citizens, closely participating in the transactions of the global village. In fact, technology has nearly become another part of the family, expressing thoughts, selling them, influencing beliefs, and even dictating family decisions. It's almost come to occupy the story-telling grandmother's position in practically all houses. In today's ever-evolving world, effective communication and storytelling skills have become essential for individuals across various domains. Among these skills, narrative skills hold a special place, as they enable individuals to craft compelling and persuasive narratives that captivate audiences, convey ideas, and inspire action. Whether in literature, marketing, education, or even scientific research, the power of narration is recognized as a potent tool for engaging and connecting with others.

Hadley (1998) reported that students are more likely to show maze behaviours and to make errors in morphological marking in narrative contexts than they are in conversation. Narrative tasks then tend to be better at revealing the linguistic vulnerabilities in children with language learning disorder than simpler conversational activities.

R. Shetty., Karanth (2005) in a study on effects of television viewing on children's narrative skills reported that there wasn't significant difference in the narrative skills of children exposed to more television or less. But the variables also play a role in the acquisition of good narrative skills in children.

Depending on the exposure to the medium the effect might vary on viewers of different age groups. Many studies suggest that television viewing has a negative influence on children's language skills, as well as other factors such as academic performance, attention span, behaviour, social and cognitive skills (Bunch, Krisman, Lloyd, Sanchez, Spears 2002; Bhatia 2004; Walsh 2004)

Akcam M (2007) in a post-test only design with a non-equivalent group model studied the sample consisting of 100 fifth-grade elementary students, comprising 46 boys and 54 girls. According to the findings, mean scores for all variables for the experimental group were higher than those for the control group. Also, a statistically significant mean difference was found between the experimental and control groups with regard to narrative skills, length of stories, and creativity in stories. In fact, a positive correlation was found between all variables.

Diane Pesco & Andréanne Gagné (2015) in their study on scaffolding narrative skills: a meta-analysis of instruction in early childhood settings, early education and development, found that verbal scaffolding alone or in combination with other strategies was the predominant teaching approach.

Zhou, N., Yadav, A. (2017) studied the effects of multimedia story reading and questioning on pre-schoolers' vocabulary learning, story comprehension and reading engagement. The results showed significant interaction of media and questioning on target vocabulary and significant main effect of media for engagement, but the results also showed no main significant effects of either media or questioning for comprehension. This study demonstrated research tools to examine children's learning and engagement with interactive mobile devices, and suggested potential benefits of multimedia, story reading and questioning for learning.

A. Need Of The Study

Studying the effects of media and technology on children's narrative skills is important for several reasons. Narrative skills, encompass children's cognitive, social, and linguistic development.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Aim and Objective

The aim of the current study is to investigate the effects of media and technology on the narrative skills of children aged 5-10 years, with a particular focus on the field of audiology and speech-language pathology. To observe whether technology and media viewing had a positive or adverse effect on children's narrative skills. Since most of the children today prefer to follow media and technology and since pre-school is the time when children start learning to narrate stories, by conducting the current study it intends to achieve the following objectives that is to examine the relationship between media exposure and technology usage with the development of narrative skills in young children.

B. Participants

In the study 15 parents and children participated. These children were divided into two groups of one year interval each.

They are:

1) More than 5 hours of media and technology
2) Less than 5 hours of media and technology

C. Child Participant Characteristics

1) All subjects had normal speech and language development.
2) 15 children participated in the study (4 girls and 11boys)
3) All subjects were within the age range of 5-10 years.
4) 2 stories were recorded –
a) Story that will be narrated by the child.
b) The clinician narrates a story and the child later should narrate it back.
5) Questionnaire was created to document how many hours a child uses media and technology on a daily basis.
6) All subjects had normal hearing as it was important for assessing receptive and expressive vocabulary.
7) Subjects did not have any otological, neurological, psychological or ophthalmic problems.

D. Stimuli Used

Picture description **(story)**
(The thirsty crow, The lion and the mouse)

E. Data Collection and Analysis

Conversation sample was recorded from all the children in a well illuminated quiet room in a school environment. The duration of each session was about 20-30 minutes. The conversation sample collection was based on the study done by (Subba Rao,1995). The obtained response was analysed through Praat 6.2.23 version (Boersma and Weenink,2023). The collected sample was transcribed and analysed.

F. Statistical Analysis

The collected sample was transcribed and analysed using the Mann Whitney test which was used to determine the significant differences between the two groups.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of the current study was to investigate whether technology and media viewing had a positive or adverse effect on children's narrative skills in the age range of 5-10 years.

1) *Group I:* More than 5 hours of media and technology viewing
2) *Group II:* Less than 5 hours of media and technology viewing

Table1.1: Showing comparison between Group I and Group II in the age range of 5-10years

					IQR				
		Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Lower	Upper	Mannwhitney test Z value	p value	
ADVERBS	Group 1	3.6	1.1	3.0	3.0	5.0	0.271	0.791	NS
	Group 2	3.4	1.6	3.5	2.0	5.0			
ELABORATED NOUN PHRASES a) with more than 2 modifiers preceding the noun	Group 1	3.0	1.2	3.0	2.0	4.0	0.701	0.495	NS
	Group 2	2.6	.9	3.0	2.0	3.0			
b) prepositional phrases and relative clauses following noun	Group 1	2.3	1.0	2.0	2.0	3.0	0.730	0.478	NS
	Group 2	2.0	.5	2.0	2.0	2.0			
CONJUNCTIONS	Group 1	9.3	1.6	9.0	8.0	10.0	0.430	0.674	NS
	Group 2	9.0	.9	9.0	8.0	10.0			
MENTAL AND LINGUISTIC VERBS	Group 1	2.3	1.3	3.0	1.0	3.0	0.064	0.950	NS
	Group 2	2.3	.9	2.5	1.5	3.0			

NS-No Significance

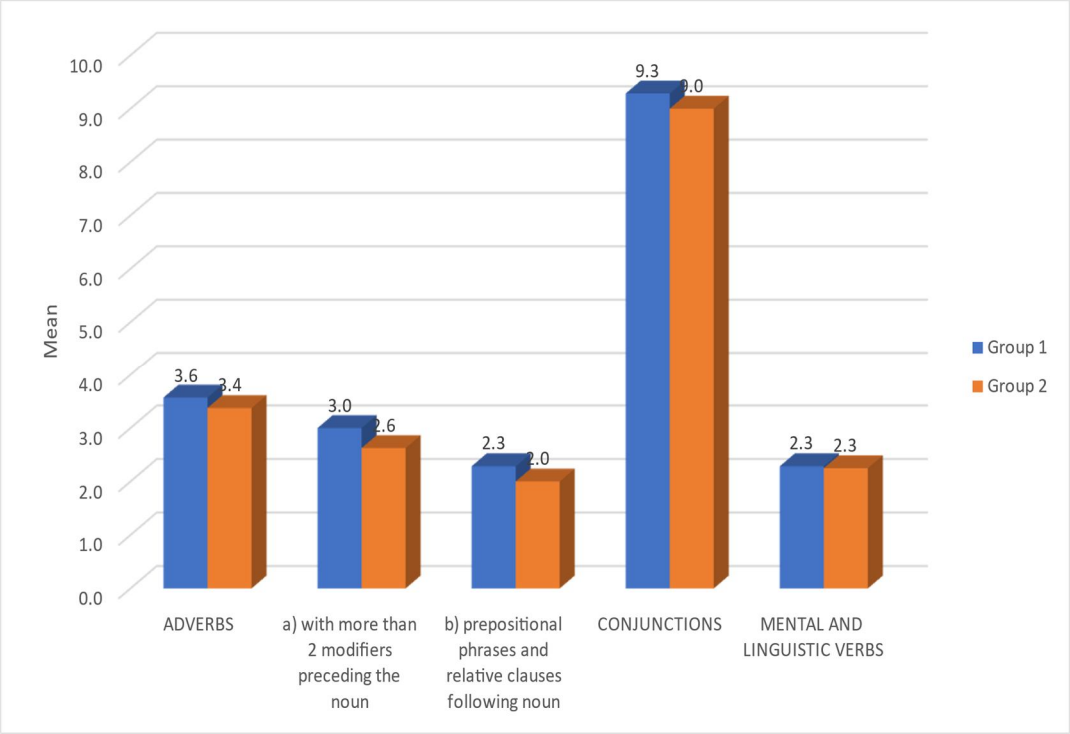


Fig1.1: Showing graphical representation of comparison between Group I and Group II in the age range of 5-10years

It is evident from the above table that when comparing Group I i.e. (more than 5hours of viewing) and Group II i.e. (less than 5 hours of viewing) children in the age range of 5-10 years, there was no significance that was noticed among the two groups.

The results of the current study are in accordance with the previous study done by **(**R. Shetty., Karanth., 2005) on effects of television viewing on children's narrative skills which reported that there wasn't a significant difference in the narrative skills of children exposed to more television or less. But the variables also play a role in the acquisition of good narrative skills in children.

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

As language develops, narrative skills have a big impact on a child's life. We gain knowledge through narration while also learning how to narrate. Generations pass down knowledge, skills, values, and the desire to learn through the use of narratives as a teaching tool. The epics supplied the cultural framework within which people strove to understand their surroundings and learned to relate to social issues and organisations. These narrative idioms were used to express the epics in old India through the puranas, harikatha, or dance theatre.

As advancements in media and technology continue to shape our daily lives, it is crucial to understand their impact on various aspects of human development. In particular, the effects of media and technology on the narrative skills of young children between the ages of 4 and 6 have become a subject of growing concern. This study aimed to explore the relationship between media exposure and technology usage with the participation of audiology and speech-language pathology students specializing in child language disorders.

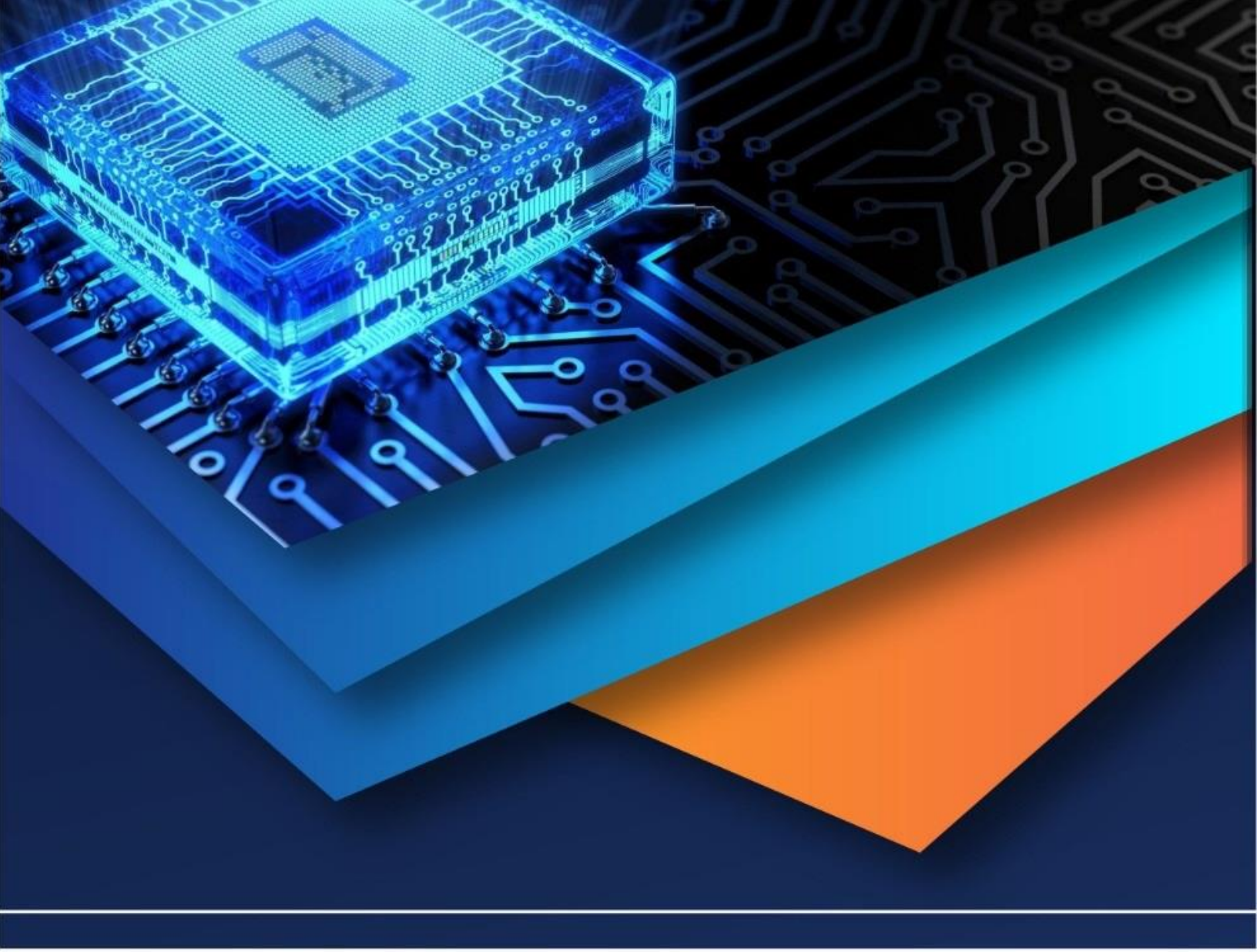
Thereby, the aim of the current study was to examine how the exposure to more than 5 hours or less than 5 hours of media and technology had a positive or negative impact on children's narrative skills. The 15 participants were grouped into two groups – Group I: with more than 5 hours of media and technology viewing, Group II: with less than 5 hours of media and technology viewing per day, based on parental responses to a questionnaire designed for this purpose. Initially speech samples were recorded and transcribed in the study, and 4 elements were being assessed that is conjunctions, elaborated noun phrases, mental and linguistic verbs and adverbs.

The current study has shown that there isn't much significant difference in the narrative skills of children exposed to more media and technology than less. Therefore, further studies would help to find out the other variables and to find a major role of narrative skills and how much effect media and technology play in a child's progress.

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