

Narrative Speech Development: Findings from Greek-Cypriot children

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Abstract

The present study investigates the narrative structure of Cypriot primary school children. The purpose of the investigation is to describe the micro-structural parameters in the narrative discourse of 10 typical 9-12 year old Cypriot children (5 boys and 5 girls), with an average age of 10; 6. The narrative speech was collected through structured interviews between one researcher and each participant. First, a descriptive analysis of the data was performed followed by an inductive analysis. The most important results obtained from the inductive analysis of the data initially show that there are no statistical differences between 5 girls and 5 boys, regarding the **MLU-w** ($t(8) = -1.21, p = .26$), or the **NDWs** ($t(8) = 0.51, p = .62$). This confirms that the two genders follow the same developmental path in terms of narrative microstructure. Also, the results of the study show that regardless of gender, there is no correlation between **SMEs** and **NDWs** ($r(10) = 0.26, p = .47$). From this finding, it is concluded that the media and NDWs develop separately and at a different rate in the narrative microstructure.

Introduction

The present study addresses the issue of narrative microstructure. The purpose of the investigation is to describe the micro-structural parameters (SMEs, NDWs and ILCs) in the narrative discourse of Cypriot children of typical child development, ranging from 9 to 12 years of age. These results will enrich existing - but limited - data on narrative microstructure in school-aged Cypriot children and beyond. Thus, the data will form a basis that will serve as a reference point for clinical evaluations of children who are likely to have language disorders. Primarily, however, this analysis is required to be tested on standard population before data can be applied to a non-standard population.



Aims and Objectives

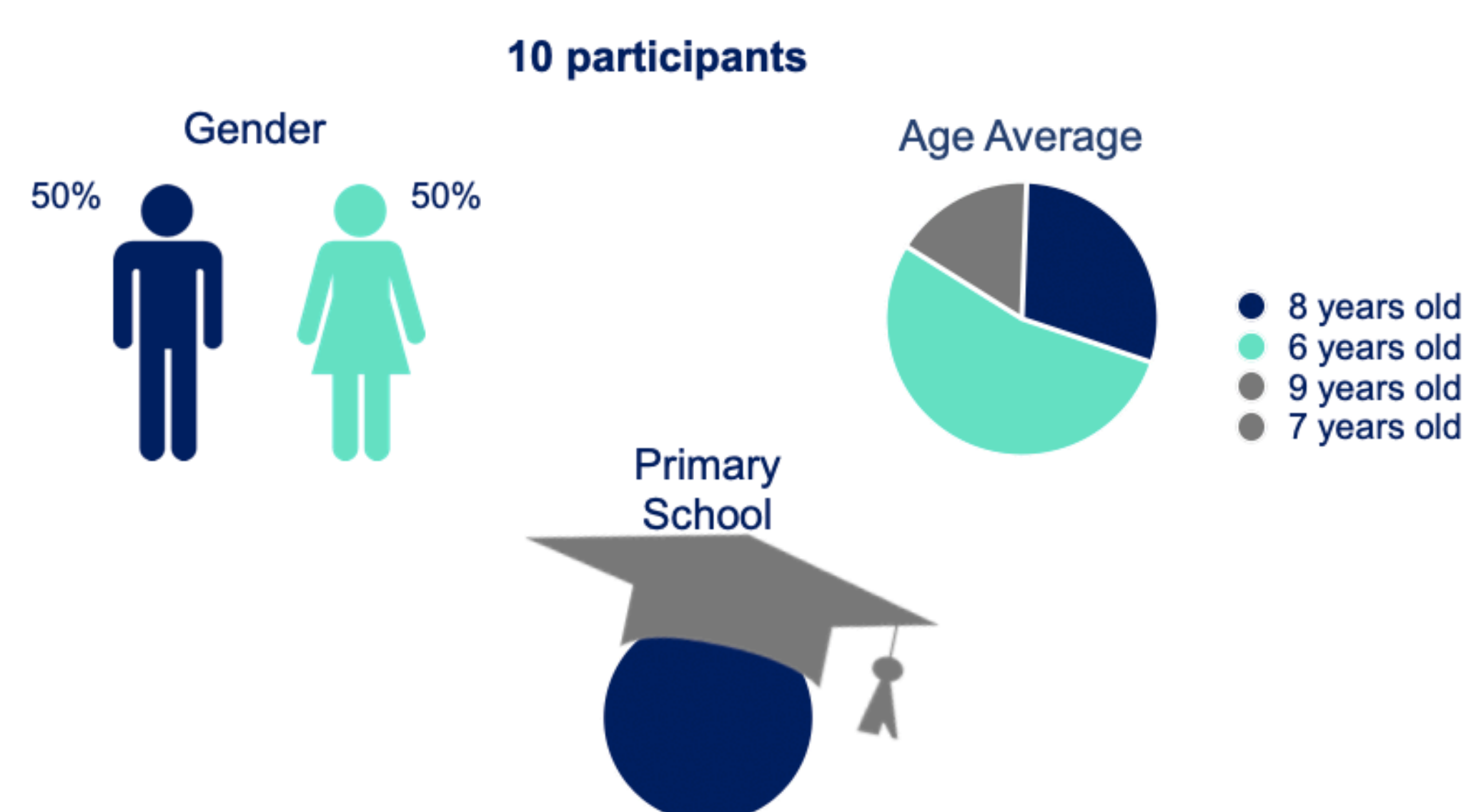
The study aims to answer the following research questions:

- **RQ1:** What is the expected MLU, NDWs and MLD of children 9-12 years of age in terms of level measurements and micro-structure of narrative speech?
- **RQ2:** Is there a difference in the measurements of MLU, NDWs and MLD according to gender?
- **RQ3:** Is there a correlation between the MLU and the NDWs and if so, what is the degree and direction of the correlation?

Research Method

Participants

The research focused on the study of children who did not have speech disorders, neurological or other diagnoses. All members of the sample had Greek as their mother tongue, and more specifically the Cypriot dialect. Subjects in the sample did not undergo any language or other examination prior to data collection.



Elicitation instrument

Narrative samples were collected based on the Global TALES protocol (Westefeld et al., 2018). To elicit personal narrative language samples from children and adolescents using 6 simple prompts.

Examples:

1. Tell me a story about a time when you felt excited, or really happy
2. Tell me a story about a time when you had a problem and you had to fix it. Tell me all about what happened and what you had to do to fix it.

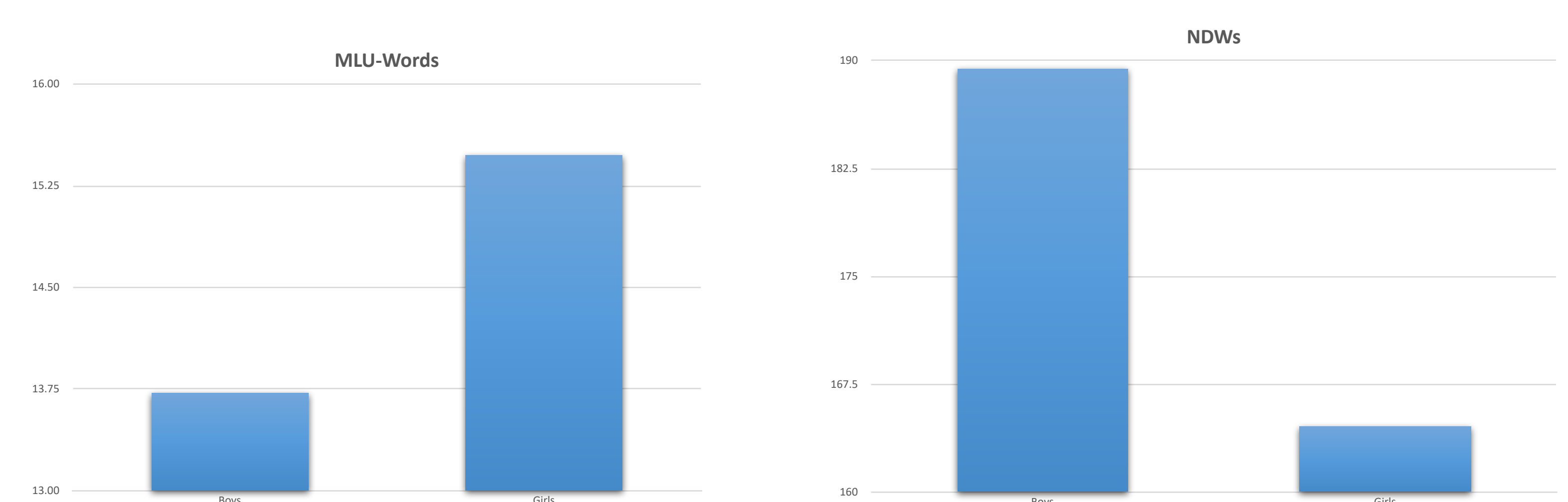
Measurements

MLU-w: Mean Length of Utterance- Words (Total number of words divided by total number of utterances)

NDWs: Number of Different Words

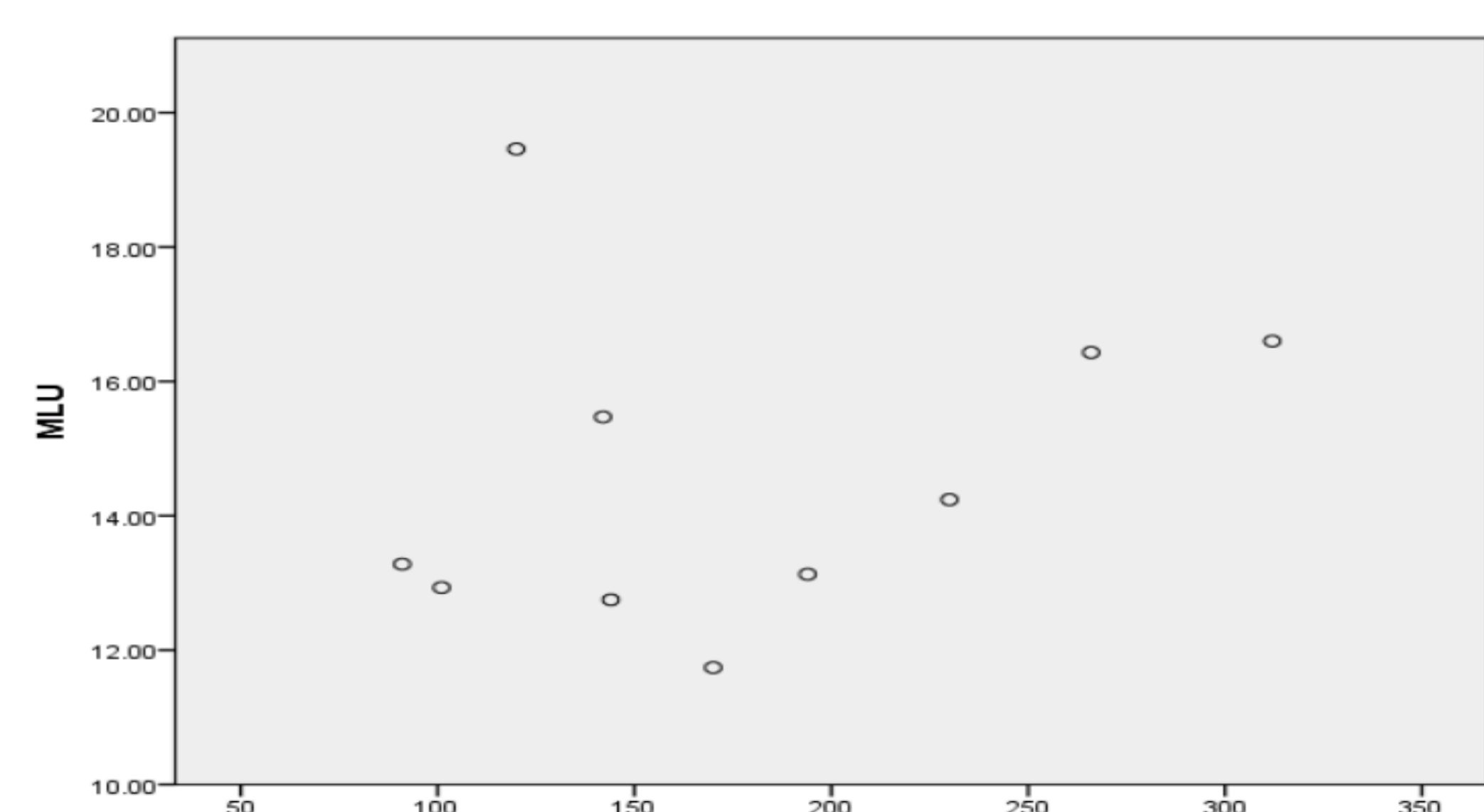
Results

RQ1: Through the descriptive statistics that applied to the narrative speech, the following results are obtained. Initially, the average of the media resulting from the **narrative speech samples is 14.6030**. Subsequently, for the **NDWs variable is an average of 177.00**. Finally, regarding the MLP, the average of **words content used by the participants is 133.3**, while the average **functional words is 41.5**.



RQ2: The average of the **boys' MLU is 13.7220**, while the **girls' is 15.4840**. Regarding the **NDWs**, the **boys' average is 189.40**, while the **girls' is 164.60**. Finally, the measurement of MLD between the two showed that the **average content for the boys is 143.6**, while the average **functional words** for this group of participants **are 43**. The **girls' average content is 123**, while the average operating words used by the girls in the **sample are 40**.

RQ3: Through the inductive analysis of the data it has been observed that there is no correlation between these two variables and this is confirmed by the **Pearson coefficient** ($r(10) = 0.26, p = .47$). There were no statistical differences between genders in the measurements of SMEs and NDWs. Through the inductive data analysis using T-test, data showed that there are no statistical differences between boys and girls in their **MLU** ($t(8) = -1.21, p = .26$), nor in **NDWs** ($t(8) = 0.51, p = .62$).



Conclusions & Recommendations

This research, in combination with similar studies that have been carried out concerning children (Puranik, Lombardino, & Altmann, 2008; Méndez, Perry, Holt, Bian, & Fafulas, 2018), are the starting point for creating a solid background, in terms of narrative ability in a typically developing population in the context of Cyprus. It is important that future research also concentrates on the narrative microstructure to cover a wider age range. Creating a background for the typically developing population in terms of narrative ability can be used as a basis on which future clinical assessments of children will be based, with the ultimate goal of early diagnosis and intervention.

References

- Méndez, L. I., Perry, J., Holt, Y., Bian, H., & Fafulas, S. (2018). Same or different: Narrative retells in bilingual Latino kindergarten children. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 41(2), 150-166.
- Puranik, C. S., Lombardino, L. J., & Altmann, L. J. (2008). Assessing the microstructure of written language using a retelling paradigm. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 17(2), 107-120.

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