

The Effects of Mediated Prompts as Dynamic Assessment Intervention to Assist Storytelling Tasks on Young Students' English-Speaking Abilities

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Article information	Abstract
Article history: Received: 21 Jan 2024 Accepted: 26 Dec 2024 Available online: 27 Dec 2024	<i>This study aimed to design mediated prompts as dynamic assessment (DA) intervention to enhance young students' English-speaking abilities in storytelling tasks and to explore the effects of the designed mediated prompts as DA intervention on English-speaking abilities of young students. The research was conducted in two phases. The first phase illustrated the design process of mediated prompts, and the adjustments made for pre-scripted mediated prompts. Ten students from K3 level were selected as participants for this phase. In the second phase, twenty K3 students were selected to assess the impact of DA intervention. This research was conducted in an international school in Thailand for a duration of 8 weeks. The results revealed the value of DA intervention in finding students' potential weaknesses and confirmed the positive effect of utilizing mediated prompts on students' English-speaking abilities. The intervention promotes an English learning environment in the classroom that is joyful, stimulating, and stress-free. This study can benefit educators by providing insights into designing and applying mediated prompts during DA intervention in storytelling tasks for young students, ultimately improving their English-speaking abilities.</i>
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INTRODUCTION

Storytelling or (re)telling story is one of the learning tasks often used with kindergarten level students. For young L2 learners, storytelling is one of the most common activities in early childhood education, and has reportedly had significant positive effects on the speaking ability. Picture books provide abundant resources as teaching material in storytelling tasks to improve young students' speaking abilities in terms of comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Storytelling tasks contain numerous underlying potentials to facilitate learning with flexible contexts for individual comprehension and thus, can stimulate teacher-learner interactions. Moreover, storytelling tasks can also give students various support through mediated prompts, such as verbal communication, physical explanations, and mental encouragement.

Roney (1996) stipulated that storytelling provides flexibility to adapt languages for children which may help enhance their interest and comprehension. However, Deswenda (2023) found that most of the kindergartens students she observed in class could not thoroughly express themselves. The problem can be described as students' lack of understanding of the content of the stories they hear and not being able to express their opinions. She conducted action research implementing storytelling in two cycles and found that the students showed, in learning cycles 1 and 2, a better improvement from 76.5% to 88.2%. This success was supported by the teacher's expertise in telling fun stories that could attract children's interest. The challenge of this study was quite similar to what Deswenda (2023) encountered. Both sets of research were responsible for giving kindergarten students guidance to complete the storytelling task in English.

Dynamic Assessment (DA) can be defined as an approach not only focusing on assessment as its name suggests, but also aiming to instruct learners through hints or prompts, which are forms of mediation within the framework of Sociocultural theory (SCT). Based on SCT, to assist students in learning, the teacher (expert) must consider the distance between the actual and potential level of competence of the student, which is called the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). This potential level of competence could be assessed through students' mediation in the form of their prompts, hints and questions during the dialogic interaction with the teacher (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004). The students' reactions to mediation, which is near to their current level of capacity, reveal cognitive functions that have not completely matured yet (Poehner, 2007). Within the field of second language acquisition, DA encourages teachers to provide guidance within learner's ZPD to support their potential abilities in language acquisition (Herazo et al., 2019). By facilitating appropriate mediated prompts during DA intervention, young students may acquire over-expected development, and teachers may gain clearer understanding of students' future development (Valsiner, 2001). As a result, DA targets things students have the ability to do in cooperation with others instead of what they can perform by themselves (Poehner, 2007). In other words, during the process of DA, the focus is on the teachers' active modification to adjust the students' weak points and solve their problems with the purpose of bringing positive changes to enhance the students' accomplishment.

Mediated prompts that occur in DA can assist young students' English ability development in numerous aspects while assessing the students' current ability (Jeon, 2023; Jordanidisz et al., 2019). The pre-scripted prompts were utilized as DA intervention strategy in the majority of previous research to support various study objectives. However, some researchers suggested that the pre-scripted prompts were not suitable for every student and were not adequate to respond to all types of requests. For instance, prompts should be adjusted according to students' backgrounds, such as gender, characteristic, learning environment, and social experience. Furthermore, based on the form of learning task, the students should be able to express their own ideas and recall their own life experience while presenting learning material.

Unfortunately, the designing process of mediated prompts as DA intervention in storytelling tasks for young students, especially kindergarten students, was rarely seen or explained. The majority of previous studies neglected how young students' English ability might be affected

by using customized mediated prompts. Therefore, this study focused on one important issue which may be of concern to the teachers: what, when, and how the mediated prompts should be used. This study therefore explored how to design mediated prompts to assist young English students with their English-speaking abilities in storytelling tasks and seek empirical evidence of the effect of the mediated prompts in assisting them with such tasks through an interventionist DA approach. The purpose of this study is thus two-fold:

- 1) To design mediated prompts to assist young English students with their English-speaking abilities in storytelling tasks; and
- 2) To explore the effects of DA intervention with designed mediated prompts on the English-speaking abilities of young students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dynamic assessment intervention

The concept of DA was established by Campione and Brown (1985) based on Vygotsky's theory - ZPD (Tzuriel, 2001). The term DA differs from conventional assessments in regard to its goals, processes, instruments, and interpretation of results. While traditional tests aim to evaluate students' present level, DA attempts to assist learners' performance so they can be guided to a higher level. Moreover, DA stands out from the general static tests by providing precise information about individual differences. During the process of DA, researchers assist in the learning experience for each individual student and craft a unique lesson plan catered to that student's needs. Each student is different in terms of intelligence, characteristics, needs, behavior, experience, level of comprehension and cultural background. Instead of giving general recommendation and correction on learners' errors, DA encourages teacher/peer-learner interaction and provide guidance to facilitate future learning (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002)

Poehner (2008) and Stiggins (2001) stipulated that DA takes an assessment-as-learning approach. The researchers believed that teaching can be embedded in the assessment process to support students' learning achievement. DA encourages teachers to offer flexible support in the immediate context, while the assessment information is being gathered (Dubiel, 2016). In a DA context, the teacher offers support which often takes the form of prompts, questions, modeling, or explanations. The goal of the support is to mediate the student's efforts to carry out the task in the immediate setting and transfer the successful completion to similar tasks in the future.

Lauchlan and Carrigan (2013) gave direct instructions during the DA process to transit DA from theory to practice (See Table 1). The three steps summarized the essence of the principle of DA, the mediation in DA, and gave a clear direction for the educators about the future guidance for the learners after DA intervention. The instruction especially focused on how to give feedback on students' errors and responses of DA to follow up a more effective intervention for the children.

Table 1

Improving learning through dynamic assessment: A practical classroom resource for educational psychologists (Lauchlan & Carrigan, 2013)

	Materials	Aims
1. Assessment	checklists of “learning principles” (cognitive and emotional)	to be used as a practical aid to help with the recording of information during a DA
2. Feedback	(1) a proforma entitled a ‘learning profile’	(1) to be used to summarize quickly and effectively the findings of a DA to parents and teaching staff
	(2) the learning principles adapted into simpler, child-friendly language, with accompanying graphic representations	(2) to be used to feedback to the child following a DA
3. Intervention	a bank of strategies, which includes general tips, strategies, resources, and activities	to map directly onto the two checklists (i.e., strategies and resources are provided for each of the learning principles)

Mediated prompts in dynamic assessment

According to Freuerstein et al. (1979), DA is commonly associated with the theory of Mediated Learning Experience (MLE). MLE refers to the mediation used during the educational process, and the interaction between educators and students. In DA context, “an examiner mediates the rules and strategies for solving a specific problem and assesses the level of internalization of these rules and strategies to other problems of increased level of complexity, novelty and abstraction” (Haywod & Tzuriel, 1992; cited from Tzuriel, 2020, p. 99). Lantolf and Poehner (2004) related MLE to mediated strategies as intervention strategies with a series of prompts, questions, hints, suggestions, or explanations. It is believed that higher exposure to mediation will allow students to interact more, have higher curiosity, and be more vigilant (Bower, 2019). For the long-term development of young children, the adequate adaptation of MLE facilitates children to later mediate themselves independently in a new learning situation. MLE can be conducted in different ways to achieve a specific learning goal. In the concept of “mediation of meaning”, MLE refers to the value of interaction in the nonverbal and verbal categories. Nonverbally, MLE can be conveyed by facial expression, tone of voice, rituals, and repetitious actions. Verbally, it can be the illustration of an event, or activity relating to the experience. The researcher believed that the children will later initiate attachment of meaning to new information instead of waiting for correct answers passively. The mediators also need to concentrate on children’s feeling of competence in the MLE process. Another notion named “mediation of feelings of competence” emphasis that feedback is necessary to stimulate children’s learning motivation and arise their curiosity of the learning context. Compliments should be given to children’s successful solution of current problems and children’s effort of mastering the problem-solving ability (Tzuriel, 2001).

Storytelling and English language teaching

Among the various methods that have been applied in preschools and kindergartens to teach young students’ English language, storytelling is considered to be one of the most successful mediations. The plentiful information (such as storyline, themes, and animation creatures) in

story books and the flexible ways of storytelling activity greatly raises the chances of interaction (Robin, 2016). Another advantage of storytelling is that it can promote learners' emotional responses and intentions to share information depending on their narrative levels (Kang et al., 2020). Bosch (2014) suggested that children should be able to use their own experience to understand the illustrations, and try to acquire vocabulary about mood, atmosphere, figures, and gestures. In other words, the use of story books can pave the way for young students to develop knowledge through experience. The combination of storybooks and storytelling tasks have the power of increasing students' interests of learning because the students are allowed to relate to their own life experiences, release emotional feelings, and express themselves in a free space. Hsu (2010) defined storytelling as the use of verbal and non-verbal expressions to create interaction between teller and audience. How the story is received greatly depends on the personal ability of speaking, comprehension, and performance ability. Practically, in the storytelling tasks, the words are created and used through spontaneous performance of the facial expression, eye contact and body movement.

Liwun and Alinda (2021) conducted the research that proved the positive relationship between picture-based storytelling tasks and young students' English-speaking abilities. The study aimed at enhancing young students' English-speaking abilities by using pictures. The students in the study received two cycles of picture-based classes and their performances were compared to determine improvements in their speaking abilities. The results of the research showed that using pictures effectively improve students' English-speaking abilities in aspects of grammar, fluency, pronunciation, comprehension, and vocabulary.

Speaking ability development through DA intervention in storytelling tasks

Speaking skills include comprehension, convey, expression, communication, and other essential skills that people need to use in daily life (Locke, 2013). In this study, English-speaking abilities were assessed in two aspects: narrative and language use. Narrative, one of the sub-categories of English-speaking abilities, is very crucial in human development because it can provide coherent meaning to reality. The narrative competence for young children is normally assessed and demonstrated by telling or retelling stories, whereas the teacher can gain insight into children's beliefs, thoughts, experiences, and language development. As for the other aspect, language use, it concerns the concepts of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation expressed through various activities (Putri & Rahmani, 2019). A considerable amount of research has been conducted to confirm the positive effect of storytelling tasks on language use (Lin & Hwang, 2018; Tavakoli, Campbell & McCormack, 2016).

Hill and Sabet (2009) investigated the effect of mediation on linguistic skills. The participants, all of whom majored in Spanish Language were given a picture-based story and asked to retell the story within a classroom environment. The oral performances before and after the mediation were scored with the rubrics in terms of pronunciation, fluency, grammar, vocabulary, content, and comprehensibility. After analyzing the results of the participants' speaking abilities, the researcher concluded that the mediator could help gain a deeper understanding of the students' capabilities. The result was also supported by Limmerstedt and Lyhre (2011). In order to examine how DA could work on young students' narrative abilities, mediated

prompts were applied and adjusted based on storytelling tasks with wordless picture books. Young students aged from preschool to Grade 1 primary school received DA interventions in both teacher- and peer-to-peer interactions. The results showed an expected increase on all sixteen measures of narrative abilities.

Peña and Fiestas (2018) carried out a study with bilingual children to explore the relationship between mediated learning experience and narrative improvement. The study applied the DA of narratives in a bilingual English- and Spanish-speaking early elementary classroom. One group of students who received DA intervention participated in mediated learning with storytelling tasks, while the other group of students who received regular academic activities with no DA intervention. The result revealed that children who received DA gained higher scores in the post test of narrative abilities. The researcher found that children learned to elaborate more on character and setting information when telling stories. The positive effect of DA on students' speaking ability was also confirmed later by Gurung (2021). In this study, mediated prompts as DA intervention of storytelling task were delivered via a computer program. The researcher used pretests and posttests to compare and analyze students' speaking ability. The data clearly illustrated the significant increase of score in the posttest in terms of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

The ability of language use includes two additional categories: accuracy and fluency. To be exact, there are many factors that could be assessed here such as speaking speed, the proper use of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. However, while the DA intervention has its merits, the constant intervention and interruption of students' language use during storytelling tasks might cause students to have negative feelings and it may also greatly diminish students' confidence. Considering the young age of participants in this study (5-6 years old), and to ensure a positive learning environment, this study selected grammar as the main assessment target in language use because of the following reasons: 1) grammar is an abstract concept for young learners and it is difficult to learn systematically. However, DA intervention can provide a teacher-student interactive environment and can stimulate the students' thinking process; 2) vocabulary acquisition was excluded because the stories selected for the current study were all at a basic level and not sophisticated enough to reflect growth in their vocabulary pool; and 3) pronunciation only offers a low chance of interaction in storytelling tasks which is highly contrary to the purpose of DA.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The current study was divided into two phases to illustrate the sequence between the designing process of mediated prompts and the utilization of mediated prompts in the DA intervention. Phase 1 aimed to investigate students' potential weaknesses and ZPDs, so the researchers can design suitable mediated prompts for DA intervention. Phase 2 focused on evaluating the students' development of English-speaking abilities to explore the effects of DA intervention. The conceptual framework of Phase 1 was developed in three steps. First, samples of students' storytelling were used as input for an iterative intervention. Then, the mediated prompts were adjusted and designed according to the results of the iterative intervention and the students'

potential weaknesses revealed from the intervention. The adjustment of mediated prompts ran through four stages during the intervention: 1) observation of young students on task in the pretest, 2) design of mediated prompts, 3) DA intervention and further adjustment of mediated prompts, and 4) observation of students on task in the posttest. Overall, the four stages here are also meant to give the students an opportunity to identify the production of erroneous language. As for output, the mediated prompts utilized in the DA intervention were divided into two dimensions: 1) narration and applying the sequence of narrative mediated prompts adapted from Perterson and Spencer (2020), and 2) language use and the sequence of mediated prompts adapted from Lantolf and Phoeher (2011).

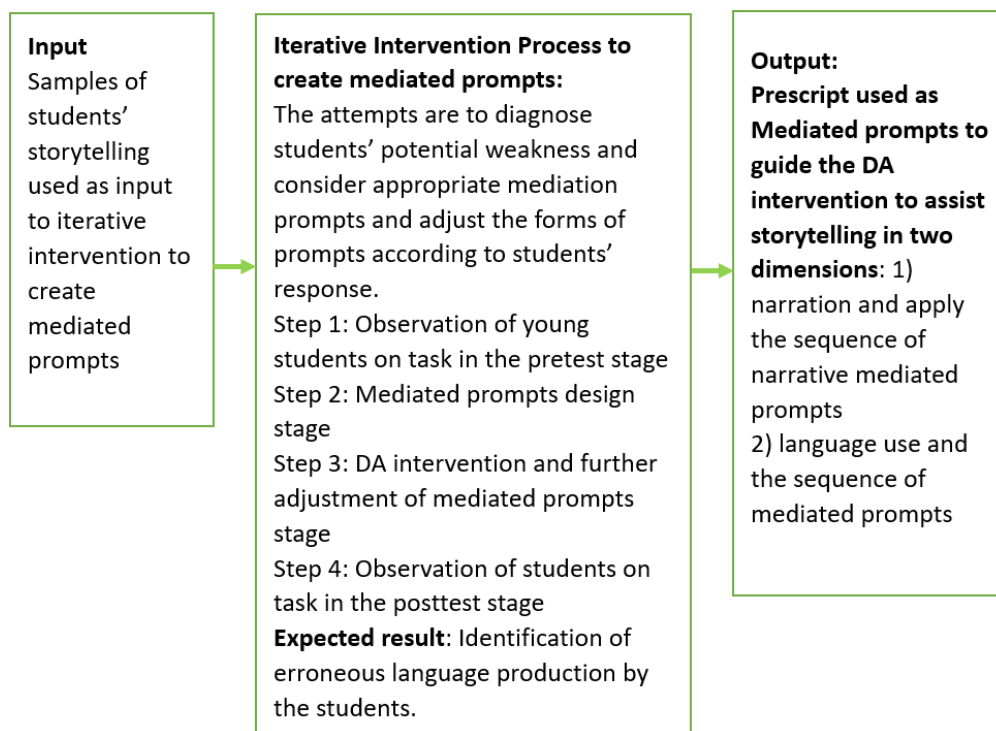


Figure 1 Conceptual framework of the mediated prompts design process (Phase 1)

The DA intervention framework of Phase 2 was planned with a classic pretest-intervention-posttest structure (see Figure 2). The pretest of English-speaking via storytelling was administered to young students in which their abilities were judged based on a non-intervention scenario. The mediated prompts in the DA intervention designed to help young students in their English storytelling tasks were then used on them. After that, a posttest was administered in which the marking scheme was again based on a non-intervention scenario.

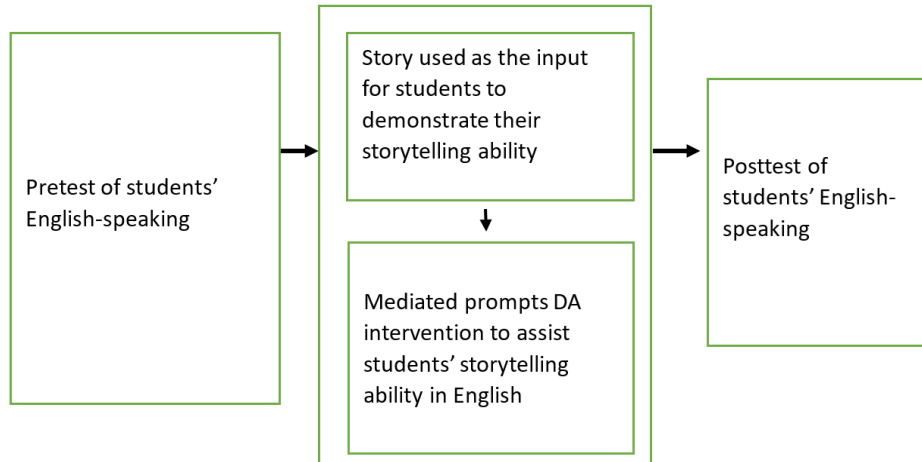


Figure 2 Conceptual framework of the DA intervention utilizing mediated prompts in storytelling tasks (Phase 2)

METHODOLOGY

Population and sample

The total population of this research consisted of 72 students between ages 2 and 6 years old from an international school in Thailand. The students were divided into four levels (Preschool, K1, K2, K3) according to their age. All young students are exposed to an English-speaking environment since all the teachers are either native speakers or speak English as a second language.

The participants selected for Phase 1 in this research were 10 young students from K3 and 20 young students from K3 for Phase 2. All of the participants were recommended by their homeroom teacher and finally selected for this study according to the following criteria: 1) Students must have stable attendance so the students' English-speaking opportunities in school and their participation in the study can be controlled; 2) Students must be able to understand teachers' daily instruction methods and are capable of communicating with their teachers/peers in English. Consent forms were also sent to the parents to obtain permission for the children to participate in the study, and for the data to be used for the researchers' purpose.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

Phase 1: Designing the mediated prompts as DA intervention to assist young students with their English-speaking abilities in storytelling tasks

Stage 1 Observation of young students' performance in the storytelling task during the pretest

Each participant joined an individual pretest in a non-DA class to tell a story with a wordless picture book. Young students were encouraged to describe the pictures page by page in an

unlimited amount of time with their current English-speaking level of expression and comprehension. The underlying reasons behind students' mistakes were reported as qualitative data. The students' scores for narration and language use were evaluated quantitatively according to a specific scoring rubric for comparison with the posttest score. The narrative scoring rubric by Squires et al. (2014) contains seven main elements with regards to the narrative abilities (character, setting, initiating event, internal responses, plot, actions, and consequence) (see Appendix C). Each item was scored from 0 to 3 with the highest total score being 21 and the lowest score being 0. The scoring rubric for language use was adapted from Hirai and Koizumi (2008) and consists of a hierarchical set of explicit questions where the examiner makes a series of yes-or-no choices and reaches a final score. The score differs from 0 to 5 depending on the student's performance (see Appendix D).

Stage 2 Design of mediated prompts

First of all, pre-scripted prompts from the previous research were adapted to ensure validity. To be precise, the narrative pre-scripted mediated prompts were adapted from Owocki's (1999) five questions theory with "Who, What, When, How and Why". The sequence of narrative mediated prompts was then adapted from the research of Petersen et al. (2017) (See Table 2), whereas the pre-scripted mediated prompts related to language use for Phase 1 were adapted from Lantolf and Poehner's (2011) (see Table 3).

Table 2
The sequence of narrative mediated prompts (Perterson et al., 2017)

Prompt 1. Correct and/ or prompt immediately	Immediately stop the child if there is an error or an omission of a target feature.
Prompt 2. Use least-to-most verbal prompting	Use a two-step prompting procedure. Level 1: Open-ended questions Level 2: Model the target
Prompt 3. Use over-correction procedure	Use the over-correction procedure so that the child produces the target feature multiple times and has the opportunity to produce the target feature in context. Go back one step in the story before the target element so the child has an opportunity to produce the target in a meaningful context.
Prompt 4. Foster Independence	Especially during Steps 3 and 4 of the teaching phases, use the least amount of verbal prompting possible.

Table 3
The sequence of language use mediated prompts (Lantolf & Phoeher, 2011)

Level of explicitness	Mediated prompts
Prompt 1	Teacher repeats the sentence as a question instead of pointing out the mistake.
Prompt 2	Teacher repeats the phrase with mistakes but without pointing out.
Prompt 3	Teacher confirms the mistake and wait for students to correct.
Prompt 4	Teacher gives options, ask "either... or..." questions.
Prompt 5	Identify the correct answers and give an explanation.

Stage 3 DA intervention and further adjustment of mediated prompts

To support the students in their storytelling task during the intervention phase, Spencer and Slocum's (2010) DA teaching techniques were adapted (see Table 4). The intervention was divided into three steps with specific instructional guidance from the teacher. In this phase, the pre-/adjusted mediated prompts of Table 2 and Table 3 were implemented in Step 2 of the DA intervention (Group retell; see below). A lesson plan for the DA intervention was designed and implemented for the specific storybook in the current study.

During and after the DA intervention, the teacher could further analyze the students' response towards the intervention and switch the form of mediation flexibly according to the students' requests and needs. After this step, the final versions of the designed mediated prompts could be subjected to trial validity and reliability check before actual use.

Table 4
Steps in each DA teaching cycle (Spencer & Slocum, 2010)

Steps	Researchers' Role	Students' Role
1. Model	Lay out pictures. Model the story. Place icons near pictures. Name the story elements.	
2. Group retell with pictures and icons	Leave pictures displayed on table. Picks up icons and place on corresponding pictures. Provide support and mediated prompts. Ensure all parts are included.	Each students selects an icon. Each students tell one part of the story.
3. Individual Retell with pictures and icons	Leave pictures displayed on table. Provide support and mediated prompts. Select preassigned 1 to 3 students to retell.	One student tells the entire story. Other students listen and observe.

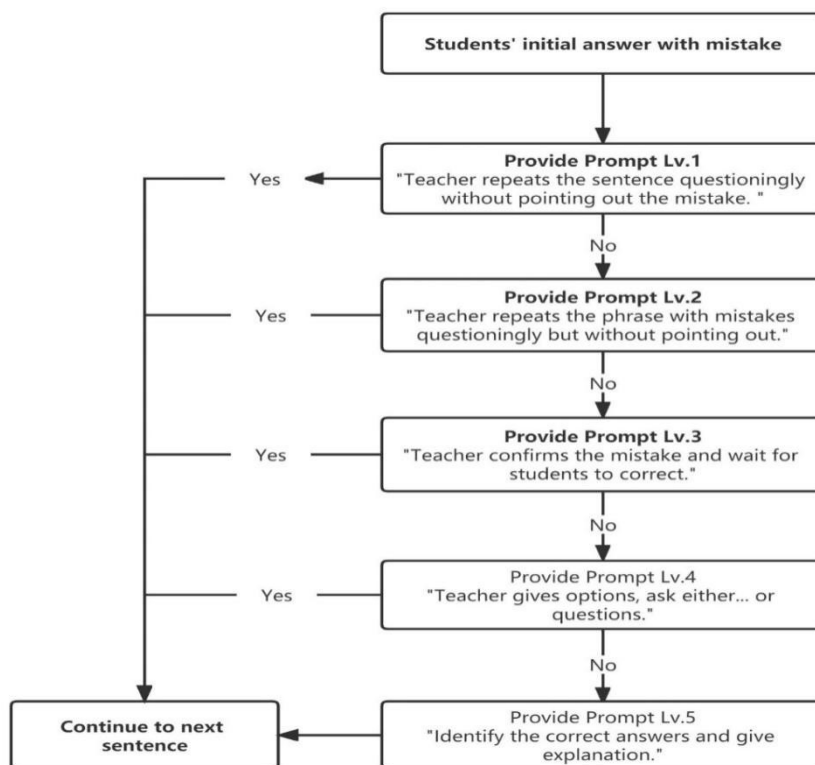
Stage 4 Observation of students' performance in the storytelling task during the posttest

Each participant joined an individual posttest without DA intervention to tell the same story as in the pretest. The performance was evaluated by two scoring rubrics and the score was used to identify the effectiveness of designed mediated prompts. The increase in scores indicated the effectiveness of designed mediated prompts and meant that they could be officially utilized for Phase 2.

Table 5
Sample of mediated prompts as DA for story telling in Phase 1

Mediated Prompts	Phase 1	Sample of what the teacher says
Prompt 1: Correct and/ or prompt immediately	Immediately stop the child if there is an error or an omission of a target feature.	Stop the child by saying: (e.g., <i>Good, but you forgot to look at the lady.</i>)

Mediated Prompts	Phase 1	Sample of what the teacher says
Prompt 2. Use least-to-most verbal prompting	Use a two-step prompting procedure. Level 1: Open-ended questions Level 2: Model the target	Use a two-step prompting procedure with essential body language, gestures, voice tune and gesture. Level 1: Open-ended questions (e.g., <i>How does the lady feel? How does her face look like? – facial expression/ body language</i>) Level 2: Model the target (e.g., <i>Now let's try to say again like you are the mom</i>)
Prompt 3. Use overcorrection procedure	Use the overcorrection procedure so that the child produces the target feature multiple times and has the opportunity to produce the target feature in context. Go back one step in the story before the target element so, the child has an opportunity to produce the target in a meaningful context.	Use the overcorrection procedure with positive feedback and comments. (e.g., <i>Very good! How does the lady feel?</i> [Students answer] <i>Excellent! Why does she feel that way?</i> [Student answer] <i>That's right.</i>)
Prompt 4. Foster Independence	Especially during Steps 3 and 4 of the teaching phase, use the least amount of verbal prompting possible.	Use non-verbal prompt as hint to assist. (e.g., <i>by pointing at missed feature on the pictures to remind students of their mistakes</i>) (e.g., <i>by giving conjunction words to remind students of the logics between plots development.</i>)



Excerpts 1 and 2 presented two occasions that illustrate how the sequence of mediated prompts

should be adjusted. Excerpt 1 strictly followed the sequence of Prompt Lv. 1 to Prompt Lv. 5. Students' responses to the intervention allowed the teacher as the examiner to utilize prompts smoothly and instructively. In Excerpt 2, there was a long silence among all the students, which was abnormal during the whole DA intervention process. Students' silence alerted the teacher that the choice of prepositional word was beyond the students' current knowledge. Thus, Prompts 3 and 4 were skipped so that the explanation could be provided as soon as required.

Excerpt 1 is taken from the intervention (with mediation).

Excerpt 1

Student 8: Grandpa throw the stick.

Teacher: Grandma throw the stick? (P1)

Student 8: Throw.

Student 4: Threw.

Teacher asked student 8: Do you think Student 4 is correct? (P2)

Students 8: Yes

Teacher: Very good. (P3) Can you tell me why it's threw not throw? (P4)

Students: Because the dog already had the stick.

Teacher: Yes, it happened already, in the past, it is over now.

Excerpt 2 is taken from intervention (with mediation).

Excerpt 2

Student 6: The girl threw the cap off.

Teacher: Threw off? (P1)

Student 6: Throws off.

Teacher: Threw is correct, but off is wrong, what word should we use? (P2)

Students: Silence (Look at teacher for further clarify)

Teacher: Off is used when we drop something from very high place to lower place (body language). When we say something went very very far (show the action of throw), we use "away". Look at the picture, what shall we use? (P5)

Students: Away.

Teacher: Correct.

To conclude both dimensions of mediated prompts designed to assist young English-speaking students in storytelling tasks, the teacher used a three-step regulatory scale for the DA (Udeshinee et al., 2022): 1) narrow down the location of the error and indicate the nature of the error, 2) provide clues to help the learner to arrive at the correct form, and 3) provide the correct form with explanation/examples.

Phase 2: Exploring the effects of the designed mediated prompts on the English-speaking abilities of young students in the DA intervention

The entire procedure of Phase 2 adapted a classic interventionist approach of DA, lasting 8 weeks. The interventionist approach involves delivering pretests, analyzing students' performance, utilizing mediation intervention, and conducting posttests. It allows for more

accurate data collection of learners' information, so that the intervention would be more tailored to the students' behavior and ability.

Step 1 Pretest

In the first week, each participant participated in an individual pretest without DA intervention to tell the story, "Fetch". Each performance was then evaluated by two scoring rubrics.

Step 2 Intervention with designed mediated prompts

The period from Week 2 to Week 7 consists of a 6-week DA intervention timeframe where designed mediated prompts were utilized from Phase 1. Three story books were selected to assist students in the storytelling tasks. Different story books were used every two weeks to serve the twofold English-speaking objectives: develop young students' narrative abilities and language use.

Step 3 Posttest

In the last week (Week 8), each participant took an individual posttest without DA intervention to tell the same story as in the pretest, "Fetch". Each performance was evaluated by two scoring rubrics and compared against their respective score in the pretest. By comparing the students' pre- and posttest scores, the effect of the DA intervention could be determined. Then, independent sample t-tests were run to check whether there was any significant difference between the results pre- and posttest.

Research instruments employed in Phase 2

To sum up clearly, four research instruments were used in the interventionist approach of DA: 1) an English-speaking pretest (non-intervention), 2) lesson plans and mediated prompts to assist young students with their English-speaking abilities in storytelling tasks, 3) an English-speaking posttest (non-intervention), and 4) scoring rubrics for the English-speaking pre- and posttests (non-intervention).

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The content validity was performed by three Thai experts with experience and professions in early-childhood and bilingual education. Item Objective Congruence (IOC) was used to assess the correspondence of the content validity of all the research instruments based on scores +1, 0, -1. For this study, all three experts agreed on the lesson plan, unit plan and designed mediated prompts with a total index of IOC at 1.00. This result indicated that the research instruments were valid for the study.

For the reliability of the pre- and posttests, two language teachers who were native speakers

in the school were asked to be inter-raters to evaluate the performance of the students' speaking abilities. They were trained to use the scoring rubrics and independently rated the students' speaking performance during both the pretest and posttest.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Result and findings of Phase 1 / Research objective 1

The result of using mediated prompts as part of the DA intervention in Phase 1 helped the teacher to clarify the students' most obvious current weaknesses in their ability to narrate and language use. According to the results, the teacher was able to analyze the potential reasons behind the mistakes students made. The adjustments were made flexibly and dynamically based on the findings to further support students' learning.

1) Narrative abilities

In the pretest, the most common errors were the incomplete descriptions during narration. For instance, most of the students tended to introduce the characters in a random order, which resulted in some characters being omitted and subsequently led to the plot being disrupted. Moreover, the narrative elements such as "internal response" and "initiating event" were never mentioned during the pretest where students were instructed to tell the story without mediation. A noticeable phenomenon was that few students showed a great interest in the plot development and were too excited to see the next page, meaning that they did not pay close attention to the pictures on the current page. Therefore, the prompts were constantly neglected. Excerpt 3 shows several students' description of characters without any mediation.

Excerpt 3 is taken from the pretest (without mediation).

Excerpt 3

S7: "The old lady is playing with her dog. And that dog is swimming. And I see mom and boy and girl." (*randomly picking up characters to introduce*)

S10: "There are two dogs. This dog is swimming (pointing), this dog is jumping (pointing). And the family is watching, mom, sister, and brother (pointing), they have a dog too. There are three dogs!" (*no mention of the setting*)

S8: The dog get the stick back. (*No mention of the internal response*)

S5: The dog jump into the water. (*No mention of the initiating event*)

The students' incomplete descriptions were mostly caused by their short attention span and lack of observation. In order to motivate students to narrate more completely and comprehensively, adjustments were made focusing on catching students' attention and stimulating their curiosity, so that they can spend more time to observe each picture. The teacher also provided positive feedback so as to compliment them on their attempts made for observation. Moreover, direct instructions and explanations were given when necessary. Excerpt 4 illustrates one example of a student's improvement and achievement during the DA

intervention with mediated prompts.

Excerpt 4 is taken from intervention step (with mediation).

Excerpt 4

Teacher: ... Look at the picture and try to tell the best story you can.

S7: "The old lady is playing with her dog. And that dog is swimming. And I see mom and boy and girl."

Teacher: Yeah. You see four people, old lady, mom, boy and girl.

....

Teacher: Now let's look at the dogs. How many dogs in the picture?

S7: One, two, three.

Teacher: yeah, very good. Are they the same?

S7: No.

Teacher: Can you tell me what do they look like?

S7: This dog is brown and white. This dog is white. This dog is yellow. He is very small.

The second most common problem was revealed from the intervention phase and the problem was the students giving incorrect descriptions of the scenes. They frequently gave unexpected answers towards the open-ended question prompts. The problem of incorrect descriptions is mainly because the young students could not relate their life experiences to the story or drastically lack the relevant experience. In most cases, the teacher gave mediated prompts by relating the scene or plot of the story to the students' closest possible real-life experiences, or by providing explanations by virtue of nonverbal mediations. Excerpt 5 is an example that illustrates how the students could not comprehend the character (a dog)'s internal responses until it was related to human facial expressions. Excerpt 6 illustrates an example of how the mediated prompts could compensate for the student's lack of life experience and make full use of the students' current vocabulary mastery during narration.

Excerpt 5 is taken from intervention step (with mediation).

Excerpt 5

Teacher: Why didn't the dog want to fetch the stick?

S1: I don't know.

Teacher: How do you know he doesn't want it?

S1: Look the face!

Teacher: What's wrong with the face?

S2: The face looks like angry.

S4: No, it's not angry, it's ignoring.

Teacher: Oh, is it angry or ignoring? How does the angry face look like? And how the ignoring face looks like? Can you show me?

Students: (Showing the facial expression)

Teacher: So, everyone agrees the dog is more like ignoring?

Students: Yes.

Teacher: If the dog can talk, what will he say?

S1: The dog will say "Hey I don't want it."

S2: Teacher, maybe the dog doesn't want to be dirty like this one.

Teacher: Wow, why he doesn't want to be wet?

S1: The dog going to be wet because he is fluffy. My dog doesn't like swim. Every time my mommy give dog shower, the dog get so scared.

Excerpt 6 is taken from intervention step (with mediation).

Excerpt 6

Teacher: Why the hat fell into the lake?

S10: Silence.

Teacher: What weather do you think it is?

S10: I don't know.

Teacher: Look here, what happened? (*Pointing at falling leaves*)

S10: The leaves are falling.

Teacher: Yes! Why sooo many leaves fall from the tree? How is the weather?

S10: Hot?

Teacher: When the wind blow, the leaves leave the tree and fall on the ground, right?

S10: Yes.

Teacher: Now do you know what the weather was like that day?

S10: Windy day! Because the wind will be very very strong.

Teacher: Very good! And the wind was sooo strong, it ... (*wait for answer*)

S10: Blow the hat away!

As shown in Excerpt 5, students had already acquired the vocabulary for describing emotions. However, they were confused when tasked with identifying the feelings of the dog character. Once the teacher explained the emotion with human facial expression, students could immediately develop empathy for the characters in the story and came up with the correct answer. This case is a great example of how students were able to relate to a story because they had similar experiences. Similarly, in Excerpt 6, students could not reach the right answer because they were never explained how nature factors can affect human life. After receiving the prompts, students were able to solve the problems with deeper understanding. Within the students' ZPD, adjustments were made to mobilize students into using their life experiences to comprehend pictures. Verbally, more mediated questions were asked to recall the students' memory of previous experiences, so they could understand the story with empathy. Nonverbally, gestures, voice of tune, body language, and facial expression were appended to create more intuitive feelings for comprehension.

2) Language use

The most noticeable errors in language use were verb tenses. Based on the results from the DA intervention, prompts were applied and adjusted to improve students' understanding of verb tenses. For instance, the students might start narration with past simple tense, then switch to simple present tense or even mixed 2 to 3 tenses in one sentence. Even though the students attempted to use the past tense, they had not acquired all the conversions from simple tense to past tense in special cases (e.g., catch – caught/ throw – threw). The young

students applied suffix “-ed” to all the verbs in past tense. Similarly, although the young students understood to add the suffixes -s for single nouns and -es for plural nouns, they could not distinguish between first-person pronouns (I, we) and third-person pronouns (he, she, mom, boy, girl, etc.) (Shown in Excerpt 7 and Excerpt 8)

Excerpt 7 is taken from pretest (without mediation).

Excerpt 7

“They go to the park... mom throw (s) the stick... the cap fly (~ies) away...”

Excerpt 8 is taken from pretest (without mediation).

Excerpt 8

“The dog jumped into the water... He caught (caught)cap... The family was happy”

Besides the use of verb tenses, other grammatical errors found were related to pronouns and prepositional phrases. During the pretest, students could narrate the stories at an adequately fluent level, but the narration was always presented with at least one type of grammatical error, and if not, with numerous grammatical errors.

The pre-scripted prompts of language use illustrated the sequence of five-level prompts. After the pretest, students’ current weaknesses were analyzed and the conclusion was that each student had a different level of grammatic accuracy, and the odds of error were uncertain. Thus, considering the students had already acquired some basic grammar knowledge, for some grammatic errors, it was not necessary to provide all five prompts and the choice of prompts could be flexible and targeted at each individual student’s request.

3) Effectiveness of designed mediated prompts

The effectiveness of adjusted and designed mediated prompts were tested through a comparison of the pre- and posttest scores.

Table 6
The effectiveness of designed narrative mediated prompts

	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	T	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Pretest	10	11.1	20.89	-7.67	-10.78	9	.001
Posttest	10	18.8	15.56				

$p < 0.05$

Table 6 shows that the mean score of the pretest was at 11.1, while the posttest was at 18.8 out of a total of 21. Evidently, the young students’ score for narrative abilities was significantly higher in the posttest ($t = -10.78$, $p < 0.05$). This result indicated that the designed narrative mediated prompts had a positive effect.

Table 7

The effectiveness of designed language use mediated prompts

	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Pretest	10	2.22	1.56	-1.78	-8.00	9	.001
Posttest	10	4.00	2.00				

* $P < 0.05$

Table 7 illustrates the effectiveness of the mediated prompts designed for language use were positive. The result showed that the young students' scores for their speaking abilities were significantly higher in the posttest ($t = -8.00$, $p < 0.05$). It also suggested that the designed mediated prompts could be applied in Phase 2.

It can then be said that the above evidence has substantiated the point of mediated prompts designed to assist young students with their English-speaking abilities in storytelling tasks.

Result and findings of Phase 2/Research objective 2

The results of applying adjusted mediated prompts as DA intervention in storytelling tasks are presented in Tables 8, 9 and 10 below. The data found a positive influence by comparing the pretest and posttest scores.

Table 8

The difference of the narrative abilities in the pre and posttest

	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Pretest	20	10.5	27.42	-6.8	-5.16	19	.001
Posttest	20	17.3	7.27				

Table 8 indicates the difference between the pretest and posttest results for narrative abilities was statistically significant ($t = -5.16$, $p < 0.05$). The result suggested that there was a significant positive effect of the designed mediated prompts on narrative abilities in the storytelling tasks.

Table 9

The difference of the language use score in pre-t and posttest

	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Pretest	20	2.60	0.78	-0.75	-2.8	19	.008
Posttest	20	3.35	0.66				

* $P < 0.05$

Table 9 illustrated young students' differences in language use between the pretest and posttest. The result revealed that students' English-speaking abilities related to language use significantly improved after the DA intervention ($t = -2.8$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 10

The effect size of the mediated prompts on young students' English-speaking abilities in the storytelling tasks

	Cohen's d	Effect size
Narrative abilities	0.34	Small effect
Linguistic ability	1.04	Large effect

The results of Table 10 indicated that mediated prompts of the DA intervention affected the students' narrative abilities and language use differently. For their narrative abilities, the influence of mediated prompts can be considered small and the reason will be discussed in the next section. For language use, there was a significant effect behind applying mediated prompts to assist young students with their English-speaking abilities during the storytelling tasks.

DISCUSSION

Discussion of Phase 1

The results of the pretest revealed students' current English-speaking abilities and exposed their potential weaknesses. By analyzing the students' common errors, the research was able to summarize the underlying reasons and then categorize students' respective ZPD. In this study, young students' group ZPD was comprised of limited comprehension and expression due to their inadequate life experiences and grammatical knowledge. It was quite challenging for the teacher to explain the concepts of narration and language use since it was too abstract for the young students. Considering the students' common needs and age characteristics, the mediated prompts were designed with more variety in their form (verbally and nonverbally). A similar conclusion was also drawn by Davin (2013) who suggested that "linguistic concepts that are unfamiliar to students often require more flexible mediation." With the assistance of designed mediated prompts, the scores of the posttest indicated the development of both the students' narrative abilities and language use. The results of the current study are also consistent with the previous research which demonstrated the improvement of children's English-speaking abilities through DA intervention (Fiestas & Peña, 2018).

As Lidz (2002) suggested that the students who experienced mediational environments have an increased chance of developing higher mental functioning and increasing their competence in learning situations, the design progress of mediated prompts greatly filled the gap between students' current level of English-speaking abilities and potential development. For instance, the young students learned to elaborate more details on the characters and settings. Though in the pretest, the students only talked about the main characters and had no description for the setting. In the posttest, however, the students not only introduced all the important characters, but also attempted to draw relationships for the characters according to their family experiences. Additionally, the students applied more vocabulary when describing characters' internal responses, such as "*mom is happy*", "*the girl was shocked*", and "*because he doesn't want to do it*". As for language use, the students' improvement was greatly dependent on how much MLE they received and how much they remembered after the

intervention. For example, the students showed strong intentions of telling the story using the past tense because the mediated prompts were asked in that tense. However, although a few cases of special transformations of verb tenses were introduced to all the students, there were still repeated errors during the narration. Nevertheless, it is not surprising that the students cannot remember, acquire and apply the new knowledge within such a short time.

Discussion of Phase 2

For the narrative abilities, the difference between the pretest and posttest was significant ($t = -5.16, p < 0.05$), while the result from calculating Cohen's d coefficient (Cohen's $d = 0.34$) indicated that mediated prompts in the DA intervention only had a small effect. To explain why there was only a small effect, the students' previous English narrative abilities must be considered. First of all, according to the inclusion criteria, the K3 students had acquired adequate vocabulary knowledge and had basic narration skills. Second, some narrative items such as initiating events, internal response, and setting showed a considerable increase. The explanation of this result is that the students' storytelling abilities before the DA intervention were only limited to surface comprehension, where they only narrated what they saw but not what they observed. After the DA intervention, the students were more motivated to "read" the characters according to their own life experiences so they could understand the story more completely.

For language use, the t test result indicated that there was a significant difference between the pretest and posttest ($t = -0.75, p < 0.05$). The Cohen's d effect size suggested that the mediated prompts had a more significant effect in the DA intervention (Cohen's $d = 1.02$). The results from this study were also consistent with those from other studies implanting mediated prompts in DA interventions to promote children's language use in terms of accuracy and grammar (Tavakoli et al., 2016). There were also qualitative differences in the students' storytelling between the pretest and the posttest. The kind of adjustments that the students made mirrored the targets taught during the 6-week intervention session. From a cognitive perspective, the students showed strong error awareness within the aspect of language use, especially when it came to the choice of verb tenses. For instance, almost all of the students started narrating the story in the past tense and when there was a misuse of the tense, some students would hesitate and correct the error independently.

To conclude, the current study applied the "pretest-intervention -posttest" structure of DA to illustrate the role and impact DA can have in improving young students' English-speaking abilities. As stated in previous research, DA can be useful when standardized tests fail to capture the gap between students' current ability and potential development (Laing & Kamhi, 2003; Peña et al., 2006). The information gathered from this DA intervention provides great opportunities for educators to develop more suitable mediational strategies for young learners. These learners would benefit from interactions with more targeted mediation and ultimately reach a higher level.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The application of mediated prompts in DA intervention is a flexible teaching method; the results, however, can differ due to teachers' experience, the materials used, and the teaching methods applied. The current study selected wordless picture books with topics related to young children's daily life as teaching materials to investigate the effect DA intervention can have. The selection of picture books greatly fit the participants' life experiences and thus, created an easy environment of teacher-student interactions. One limitation of this study though, is that the standard of vocabulary and sentences for the topics was too basic. For future studies, the research should aim to explore how mediated prompts should be designed to deal with various topics (such as science, nature and history) to stimulate students' interest and enhance their learning motivation.

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Appendix A

Lesson plan

Topic: Fetch

Objectives:

- Teacher apply mediated prompts during intervention teaching phase to assist students' English narrative abilities and language use.
- Students observe the story and narrate according to the narrative elements.

Materials:

- camera for recording
- printed picture

Steps in DA intervention

1. Introduction (Warm up)

- To clarify the demands of task
 - Catch students' attention and stimulate students' interest
- "Today I will show you a story, but we need to look at the pictures and tell the story together."

2. Model

- Teacher lay out pictures
- "This is the story we will tell today."*
- Place icons near pictures
- "Here are five numbers relate to five pictures."*
- Name the story elements
- e.g. "This is a little boy; his name is Same- Character; It is a cold morning – Setting; Sam is very happy – Internal responses..."*
- Model the story
- Tell the story with students together.*

3. Group Retell

- Leave pictures displayed on table
 - Pick up icons and place on corresponding pictures
- e.g. This is picture 1, this is picture 2...*
- Provide support and mediated prompts
1. *Correct and/ or provide prompts immediately*
 2. *Use least-to most verbal prompts with open-ended questions (e.g. What happened? How does he feel?)*
 3. *Integrate interactive strategies (e.g. eye contact, gesture, voice tune...)*
 4. *Use overcorrection procedure with positive feedback*
- Ensure all parts are included

4. Individual retell with pictures and icons

- Leave pictures displayed on table
 - Select pre-assigned 1 to 3 students to retell the story; Other students listen to the story and observe
 - Provide support and mediated prompts
- Same as above*

Appendix B

Unit plan

Assessment	Purpose	Weeks	Story book	Objectives
Non Intervention	Pretest	1	Fetch	Tell the story without mediated prompts.
Intervention with designed mediated prompts	Narrative	2-3 (30 min /class)	The lost Teddy	Observe and describe the pictures with narrative elements. Be able to tell the whole story with or without mediated prompts.
	Linguistic	4- 5 (30 min /class)	Getting up	Tell the story with adequate language use. Be able to correct with or without designed mediated prompts.
	Narrative & Linguistic	6- 7 (30 min / class)	The big box	Tell the story with narrative elements and adequate language use. Be able to tell the story with or without mediated prompts.
Non Intervention	Posttest	8	Fetch	Tell the story without mediated prompts.

Appendix C

Narrative rubrics for “Fetch” in pretest and posttest (adjusted based on Squires et al., 2014)

Element	0	1	2	3	Total
Character	Pronouns only (e.g., he, it, she, they)	Must include 3 of the following: A girl / A boy/ A dog / The mom	Name 3 characters included plus: The other dogs	Name 3 characters included plus: The other dogs/ The old lady	
Setting	No reference to time or place (e.g., A girl is playing with a dog)	Must include 1 of the following: One day / A lake/pond / In park	Must include 2 of the following: One day / A lake/pond / In park	Must include 3 of the following: One day / A lake/pond / In park	
Initiating Event	No problem or “starting” event	Must include 1 of the following: - They go to the park with their dog. - They want the dog to fetch the stick. - They throw a stick, but the dog doesn’t fetch. - The wind blows the cap away.	Must include 2 of the following: - They go to the park with their dog. - They want the dog to fetch the stick. - They throw a stick, but the dog doesn’t fetch. - The wind blows the cap away.	Must include 3 of the following: - They go to the park with their dog. - They want the dog to fetch the stick. - They throw a stick, but the dog doesn’t fetch. - The wind blows the cap away.	
Internal Responses	No mention of characters’ feelings, desires or thoughts	Must include 1 of the following: - She is very <u>excited</u>. - The dog closes his eyes. - The dog <u>doesn’t like to</u> fetch. - They are <u>confused</u>. - They are <u>shocked/ surprised</u>. - The dog feels very <u>proud</u>. - The family is <u>happy</u>	Must include 2 of the following: - She is very <u>excited</u>. - The dog closes his eyes. - The dog <u>doesn’t like to</u> fetch. - They are <u>confused</u>. - They are <u>shocked/ surprised</u>. - The dog feels very <u>proud</u>. - The family is <u>happy</u>	Must include 3 of the following: - She is very <u>excited</u>. - The dog closes his eyes. - The dog <u>doesn’t like to</u> fetch. - They are <u>confused</u>. - They are <u>shocked/ surprised</u>. - The dog feels very <u>proud</u>. - The family is <u>happy</u>	
Plot	No statements provided about plot prediction.	Must include 1 of the following: - The family want the dog to <u>learn fetch</u>. - The dog <u>will / will not go</u> fetching. - The dog <u>will/ will not get</u> the stick.	Must include 2 of the following: - The family want the dog to <u>learn fetch</u>. - The dog <u>will / will not go</u> fetching. - The dog <u>will/ will not get</u> the stick	Must include 3 of the following: - The family want the dog to <u>learn fetch</u>. - The dog <u>will / will not go</u> fetching. - The dog <u>will/ will not get</u> the stick.	

Element	0	1	2	3	Total
Actions Verb list provided: - throw into -point at -cheer up -jump into -fetch)	None of the actions (Only use the verbs in the list)	Must include 2 of the following besides verb list: - They <u>take</u> the dog to the park. - They <u>observe/ watch</u> the other dogs. - Mom is <u>telling</u> the dog to fetch. - The girl <u>tries</u> to throw again - The wind <u>blows</u> the cap away. - They have their <u>thumbs up</u>.	Must include 3 of the following besides verb list: - They <u>take</u> the dog to the park. - They <u>observe/ watch</u> the other dogs. - Mom is <u>telling</u> the dog to fetch. - The girl <u>tries</u> to throw again - The wind <u>blows</u> the cap away. - They have their <u>thumbs up</u>.	Must include 4 of the following besides verb list: - They <u>take</u> the dog to the park. - They <u>observe/ watch</u> the other dogs. - Mom is <u>telling</u> the dog to fetch. - The girl <u>tries</u> to throw again - The wind <u>blows</u> the cap away. - They have their <u>thumbs up</u>.	
Con sequence	None of the consequences.	Must include 1 of the following: - the dog doesn't like to fetch at first because... - the dog fetch in the end because... - The family are happy at last because...	Must include 2 of the following: - the dog doesn't like to fetch at first because... - the dog fetch in the end because... - The family are happy at last because...	Must include 3 of the following: - the dog doesn't like to fetch at first because. - the dog fetch in the end because... - The family are happy at last because...	
Macro Total Score:					

Appendix D

Language use rubrics for “Fetch” in pretest and posttest (Hirai & Koizumi , 2008)

