11 Overall Discussion – Towards a Multi-Faceted Understanding and Enhancement of DLL's Emerging Narrative Skills

The two presented studies make several contributions. First, they document and analyze emerging narrative language skills in preschool-age DLL children on the basis of a broad range of narrative components, namely, narrative microstructure, macrostructure, evaluative language use, as well as the speech production process. Second, they give insight into interdependencies between indices of narrative language, standardized assessments, and the home language environment. Third, they suggest that a short-term clinician-prompted, peer-assisted approach is not only feasible for application in an ECEC setting, but can also successfully support emerging narrative skills while not being detrimental to tutors' narrative skills. The success of this exploratory project highlights key components that can be applied to future peer-assisted intervention studies in the ECEC environment. While future studies addressing study limitations are needed to confirm findings and replication is needed to generalize these initial findings to other participant groups, important implications can still be drawn to inform researchers and practitioners on the theoretical, clinical, and educational level, as discussed in the final upcoming sections.

Theoretical Implications

Moving beyond isolated utterances, preschool narrative analysis provides insight into complex, socio-emotionally and academically valid aspects of language development (e.g., Justice et al., 2010; Norbury et al., 2014, also see chapter 2). The current study included participants from an understudied population and thus provides an important addition to the current literature, because there is an obvious need to diversify research on young DLLs, specifically the languages and cultures under study (e.g., Paradis & Kirova, 2014). To date, the vast majority of research in the area of DLLs' early language and literacy development includes children who are learning English as a second language, accounting for 84% of published research between the years of 2000 and 2011 (Hammer et al., 2014). In contrast to the relative wealth of research on preschool-aged DLLs of Spanish and English growing up in the United States (e.g., Be-

dore et al., 2006, 2008, 2010; Lucero, 2015; Montanari, 2004; Petersen et al., 2016; Resendiz et al., 2014; Rojas & Iglesias, 2006; Squires et al., 2014; Uccelli & Páez, 2007), there is a paucity of studies investigating narrative skills in children from diverse first-language and cultural backgrounds (see sections 3.4 and 3.5). Including these populations is crucial in identifying aspects of DLLs' development that are not only common across languages and populations, but also in discerning aspects that are different (Hammer et al., 2011).

Ultimately, the current studies generated data regarding the underlying principles of the construction of new representations to support new complexities in narrative discourse to refine current models of language and early literacy learning in DLLs. Conducting these studies in the preschool-age allows for the exploration of the variety of developmental trajectories even before children begin receiving formal instruction in reading and language in school and also promotes the identification of risk and resiliency factors in early dual language and literacy development. Also, the current work provides valuable information regarding the patterns of various elements in fictional narratives of DLLs and thus has broader application to theories about the ways in which narrative ability develops.

Another specific contribution of this work is the refinement of a theoretical relational conceptualization of the processes underlying peer-assisted language-based learning approaches in ECEC (see section 7.3.2), which are posited to have facilitative socioemotional potential for children's language and early literacy learning. In particular, these explications provide indirect support for experiential accounts that acknowledge the role of emotionally relevant, dyadic exchanges in the context of peer interactions (e.g., Licandro & Lüdtke, 2012).

Clinical Implications

The over- and underdiagnosis of language impairments in DLL children continues to be a widespread problem (e.g., Kohnert, 2010). It is not only crucial to identify markers of language impairment for different languages (e.g., Leonard, 2014), but also to explore developmental pathways associated with successful dual language and literacy

achievement to complement the knowledge base that serves to develop methods in helping clinicians distinguish typical DLL variations from differences due to impairment (Gillam et al., 2013; Paradis et al., 2013). Internationally, it is agreed that narrative analysis should be an essential part of SLPs' assessment, monitoring, and intervention processes, especially when working with DLLs (e.g., Bedore et al., 2010; Fiestas & Peña, 2004; Gagarina et al., 2015; Gutiérrez-Clellen, 2002; Johnston, 2008; Laing & Kamhi, 2003; Peña, et al., 2014; Rhodes et al., 2005; Terry et al., 2013; Westerveld & Gillon, 2010). However, developmental language data of DLLs, needed to determine valid criteria for the mastery of specific linguistic forms and narrative structure, are still sparse, especially for DLLs from linguistic and cultural backgrounds other than Spanish and English.

In this capacity, the descriptive-developmental indicators on narrative skills in DLLs produced in the current work as well as the exploration of relations between DLLs' language and cognitive skills, the home language environment, and oral narrative performances, can contribute to define expectations of young DLLs' narrative performance. These expectations can translate to documenting and assessing narrative development, identifying possible language delays, selecting appropriate intervention goals, and designing and delivering prevention and intervention models. For example, data from Study I underlined the unique relations between children's expressive language and narrative skills. Therefore, supporting children's (L2) expressive language skills (e.g., vocabulary skills) may also promote the expression of narrative complexity. Correspondingly, interventions addressing narrative macrostructure may lead to concurrent vocabulary growth (also see Heilmann, Miller, Nockerts, & Dunaway, 2010).

Furthermore, Study II complements the knowledge base on including peer models in language intervention by providing further evidence that skills that underpin narrative expression are trainable in DLL children aged 3 to 6 years and that including advanced language peers in the intervention process is not only feasible, but likely beneficial. While this approach has previously been identified as a promising feature in language intervention for school-aged children (e.g., McMaster et al., 2006; Schmitt, 2013), data

on peer-assisted language intervention in the ECEC context are still sparse, such that the extension to preschool-age children is a unique feature of the current work.

Educational Implications

In the early years of a child's schooling, being a successful oral narrator not only entails sustaining conversations in informal social contexts, but also having the ability to linguistically adapt to formal instructive contexts, which can be seen as an educational prerequisite. Although typical developmental patterns have been found across children, there is huge variability in the emerging narrative skills of preschoolers. While some children entering primary school may be prepared for everyday conversation with peers and adults, they may not be equipped with pre-existing competence at understanding and producing the type of narrative structure that is appreciated and required in academic settings. This mainly concerns children from families with social risks (e.g., Gathercole et al., 2015; Peterson, 1994), where engagement in relevant communicative experiences occurs less frequently. This, in turn, may manifest itself in future difficulties in adapting to various linguistic requirements and thus could lead to disadvantages for socio-emotional and academic achievement. Young DLLs, who often rely on the ECEC environment to provide them with these skills, are also often at a disadvantage. The enhancement of children's opportunities for the active appropriation of (L2) language skills should therefore be a main concern of ECEC institutions, while the continued support of L1 language and literacy skills should also be encouraged in educational and home environments (e.g., Kohnert, 2010; Kupersmitt et al., 2014; Thordardottir, 2011). From a broader perspective, documenting and supporting the communicative development of DLLs is a crucial part of the professional activities in ECEC institutions. Especially in the present circumstances, it is crucial for all educators to be knowledgeable about the process of dual language acquisition and the effect of dual language learning on early literacy skills, such as in the area of narrative (e.g., Hammer et al., 2014; Paéz et al., 2011; Tabors & Snow, 2002).

As narratives provide an authentic context for high-quality language and literacy instruction in the ECEC environment, another area explored in the current work was the

successful support of emerging narrative skills in DLLs. It has been well established that socio-emotionally relevant peer interactions contribute to children's language development (e.g, Cekaite & Björk-Willén, 2013; Henry & Rickman, 2007; Justice et al., 2011; Mashburn et al., 2009; Palermo et al., 2014; Palermo & Mikulski, 2014), which strengthens educational policies on the importance of facilitating children's interactions and peer-to-peer conversations in ECEC. While adults may not always be available to listen to children's everyday stories in pedagogical and educational contexts, peers are readily available and also scaffold their equal-status partners' linguistic constructions (Cekaite & Björk-Willén, 2013; Long, et al., 2004). The results of Study II contribute to our knowledge that carefully planned and implemented peer-assisted intervention approaches in ECEC can offer a valid contribution to children's learning.

Conclusion

The rising number of children, adolescents, and adults growing up with and operating in different languages in their daily life makes the consideration of DLLs' language acquisition, use, and the successful support thereof an obligatory field of 21st century educational and clinical practice, as well as research. One of the most pressing issues in educational and clinical settings is how to adequately address the language needs of DLLs in order to equip them with the skills needed to excel in school. Gaining better insight into DLLs' narrative skills in conjunction with other child skills and language socialization patterns, as well as the successful support of narrative skills, can ultimately positively influence clinical services and language education. The two presented studies uniquely add to the literature by focusing on the fictional narrative skills of young DLL children as well as exploring the effects of promoting these early narrative skills via a peer-assisted narrative-based language intervention. As a result, the presented data may help to inform linguistic expectations, developmentally appropriate language goals, and support strategies to promote narrative language features in DLL preschoolers. Furthermore, the current work hopefully provides inspiration to the development of expanded programmatic options including peer-assisted learning activities in the ECEC environment to create engaging and successful language learning opportunities for all children.