Narrative Competences of Deaf Children in German Sign Language
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Research Questions

Cognitive factors
Narrative development is mainly determined by cognitive processes and becomes manifest in the semantic structure of children’s stories which reflects the state of their mental representation of the story scheme:
1. 5 - 7 years: Elaboration of the story
2. 9 - 14 years: Dramatizing the story
cf Boueke 1995, Reilly 2001)

Social factors
Story telling is an interactive task that is carried out jointly by both conversational partners. Children achieve narrative proficiency primarily on the basis of their experiences in dyadic interactions with adults who support children in reaching the next stage of development.
cf McCabe & Peterson 1991; Hausendorf & Quasthoff 1996

Question 1
Do deaf children who learn German Sign Language (DGS) follow the same developmental stages as hearing children who learn a spoken language?

Method
Comparative narrative acquisition in sign languages and spoken languages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>DoH</th>
<th>DoD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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- deaf
- no other impairments
- Access to DGS from birth or kindergarten/primary school

Results
Narrative Discourse - authentic, but standardized
Personal experience narratives embedded in authentic interactions (adaptation of Quasthoff et al 2011):
1. Two investigators pretend that they want to interview pupils about their experiences with DGS. Investigator 1 (deaf) left the classroom pretending that she has to prepare the video technique.
2. The teacher and investigator 2 initiate two mishaps that break by the normal course of events in the classroom (i.e. a lot of peas fall on the floor; 2. the teacher sits down on a plate with biscuits).
3. The investigator 1 picks up a child for the interview. At the beginning, she asks the child what happened in the classroom.

Question 2
Has limited conversational experience in DGS an impact of the acquisition of narrative discourse competences?
If so, in which areas of narrative discourse do deaf children of hearing parents (DoH) differ from deaf children of deaf parents (DoD)?

Discussion
Comparison of narrative acquisition in sign languages and spoken languages:

- Similaties:
  - Milestones are reached in the same age
  - Big development step between 7 and 10 years
  - see also Reilly 2001, ASL; Rathmann et al 2007, BSL

- Differences:
  - DoH and DoD dramatize their stories by marking the climax from age 5 on, hearing children from age 8-9
  - Contradiction to Reilly 2001, ASL

Although conversational experiences have an impact on syntactic competences (DoH of the same sampling differ significantly from DoD; Becker et al. 2018), this seems not to be true for acquiring narrative discourse competences.

Concerning the acquisition of narrative discourse competences cognitive developmental steps seems to be more important than the quantity or quality (?) of interactive experience.

The modality might have an effect on the acquisition of dramatization. However, it could be that in research on hearing children prosody, nonverbal signals and gestures are not considered, but in sign language research.

The wide range of values in DoD and DoH might indicate a risk for developmental delays in both groups.