Abstract
The purpose of this longitudinal study is to analyze the use of verb tenses in oral and written retellings of narratives produced by Spanish speaking children in the first two years of elementary school, in order to reveal the cognitive demands which may affect the learners'selection of linguistic units inthe first stages of literacy development. The results showed that the main difference between modalities is observed in text length. This factor influences the number of verbs used in the use of stylistic features which characterize written texts (Chafe and Tannen 1987). Similarly, text length and total number of verbs increased with children's age.

Keywords
Verb tenses, children narratives; speech and writing differences.