Language Assessment in Adolescents: Implications for Intervention

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December 2, 2021

Power Up Outcomes with Evidence-Based Practice, Online Conference CEU Smart Hub, Lavi Institute, Ladera Ranch, CA

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December 2, 2021

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The focus of this session…

- Adolescents!
- Students ages 12-18 years old (Grades 6-12)
- With known or suspected developmental language disorder (DLD)
- Outline of the talk: Language Assessment with Adolescents
- **Why** assess?
- **When** assess?
- **What** assess?
- **How** assess?

Why assess language?
A quick review

- To determine if a student's language development is WNL
- To identify any areas of language deficit – spoken or written
- To qualify the student for language intervention, if needed
- To gain information for planning **intervention** that is:
  - Individualized – it addresses **that** student's needs
  - Relevant – especially to the classroom
  - Ecologically valid – what is needed in the **real** world
- To monitor the student's progress over time

When assess language? Some red flags…

- Student is struggling in school, academically and/or socially
  - Earning poor grades
  - Earns low scores on tests of academic achievement
  - Does not complete assignments for class
  - Teacher and/or parents express concern
  - Does not **read** fluently when asked to read aloud
- Student shows behavioral or social issues
  - Frustration, anger, acting out in class or on playground
  - Says “Why can’t I do this?” “What’s wrong with me?”
  - Low self-confidence
  - Poor relationships with classmates, teachers, others

What areas of language should be assessed?

- Adolescents with DLD are likely to have deficits in both **spoken** and **written** language (Tomblin & Nippold, 2014):
  - Poor spoken language, esp. academic in contexts that "stress the system"
  - Oral reports for class (e.g., explaining a chemistry experiment)
  - Use and understanding of complex **syntax**
  - Lingering **grammatical** deficits, esp. in written language
  - Poor **vocabulary –** use & understanding of words, figurative expressions
  - Poor use of common **word-learning** strategies:
    - Contextual abstraction and morphological analysis
  - Poor **reading**
    - Word recognition, decoding, comprehension
  - Poor **written expression** (expository & narrative essays for class)

How assess language?

- Answering this question can be overwhelming:
  - There are so many possible **areas** of deficit – all are important
  - There are many possible assessment **approaches**/techniques, e.g.,
    - Norm-referenced standardized language tests
    - Language sampling
    - Classroom observation
    - Informal analysis of student's school work (artifacts)
  - All approaches have their **strengths** and their **limitations**
  - So where do we begin? What would **you** do?
  - How many of you would start with a norm-referenced test?

Norm-Referenced Testing vs. Language Sampling: Boy with possible DLD, age 13

- SLP begins by administering the four core subtests from the CELF-5
- Client earns low scores on most subtests, e.g., Recalling Sentences
- Poor performance on RS suggests a deficit in complex syntax
- But what do we **do** with this information?
  - Do we establish a goal of increasing sentence imitation skill?
  - Do we, in effect, “teach to the test” so he will do better next time?
  - Do we then employ rote sentence imitation tasks to build “skill?”

OR:

- Do we elicit a language sample to see if he actually has a deficit in complex syntax, using a task that “stresses the system”? Yes, I would do this.

Why would I begin by eliciting a language sample? Because language sampling is…

- A method of obtaining **naturalistic** information about how the individual speaks (or writes) in real-world situations, e.g., classroom, social situations, on the job
- The "gold standard of assessment" in our field
  - Less contrived than norm-referenced standardized tests
  - Less biased, culturally and linguistically
  - Reflects how the speaker actually uses language to communicate
  - Provides relevant information for planning intervention

Why language sampling (continued)

- Results provide clear direction for planning intervention, e.g.,
  A. Complex syntax, grammar, literate lexicon, even pragmatics
  B. Enables SLP to defend (and document) treatment recommendations
- Results provide information/data for measuring client's progress
  A. Pre-intervention
  B. Post-intervention
- Takes us back to our roots – the early days of ASHA (1925)
  - Emphasis was on how people speak in the real world
  - Can they speak clearly? Can they say what they want to say?
  - If not, what penalties do they face? (social, academic, vocational, etc.)
  - These concepts are still important in 2021! (almost 100 years later)

But, of course, things have changed dramatically since the early days. How so? Back then, SLPs did **not** have:

- Time-saving technology!
  - Microcassettes, cell phones, laptop computers, word processing programs
  - Software, e.g., *Systematic Analysis of Language Transcripts* (SALT)
- Access to relevant background information and normative data!
  - **How** language *develops* in adolescents (see Nippold, 2016)
  - **What** develops? What to expect at different ages?
    - Syntax, discourse, the literate lexicon, pragmatics, etc.
  - **Normative data** in different genres of spoken communication
    - Conversational discourse
    - Expository discourse
    - Narrative discourse

How to conduct language sampling with adolescents (Nippold, 2021)
Consider three main types of discourse (or genres).
What do different genres and tasks offer?

- Conversational discourse:
  - Student talks about family, friends, pets, school, favorite activities, etc.
  - Can reveal strengths and weaknesses in **pragmatics**, e.g.,
    - Make appropriate eye contact?
    - Use appropriate body language? (gestures, facial expressions)
    - Answer questions?
    - Stay on topic?
    - Make relevant comments?
  - But this is the **simplest** type of language in terms of vocabulary and syntax
  - Often does not "stress the system" enough to reveal strengths and weaknesses in more complex aspects of language

Expository discourse

- Student explains complex issue such as the rules and strategies of a favorite game/sport (FGS task)
- Student summarizes a passage from a science textbook
  - Very relevant to academic success
- Elicits greater syntactic complexity than conversation
- More likely to reveal strengths and weaknesses in language
- SALT has norms for FGS task (Miller et al., 2019)!
- Database includes ages 10-18 years (*n* = 354)
- SLP can match client to peer of same age (+/- 6 months)
- Can document language deficits relative to peers

Narrative discourse

- Student retells story (e.g., SLP reads story aloud to student)
- Fables, folktales, and legends are especially good for adolescents (stories aren't just for little kids)
- Story-retelling can reveal problems in organization, memory, comprehension, etc.
- Can reveal limitations in complex syntax, literate vocabulary
- Elicits greater linguistic complexity than conversation
- **Can stress the system** more than general conversation

Summary: More complex discourse types (EXP, NAR) “stress the system” (Lahey, 1990) by eliciting more complex language:

- Longer utterances
- Higher-level syntactic structures
- Greater use of subordination & clause packaging
  - Reflects later language development (ages 5-25 years)
- More abstract vocabulary words
- Potentially more errors in production (grammar)
- Therefore, these genres provide greater direction for intervention

Tips for eliciting language samples with adolescents

- Show respect and genuine interest in the adolescent speaker
- Listen patiently through lengthy or confusing discourse
- Remain calm, attentive, upbeat
- Avoid arguments, overlaps, and interruptions of speaker
- Make supportive comments and use positive body language
- Ask one question at a time
- Pause (count to 4 silently) after asking a question
- Repeat or rephrase a question, as needed
- Be flexible and be ready to “go with the flow”
- Now, let’s look at some examples of real adolescents

Expository Language Sample using the Favorite Game or Sport Task
Excerpt: Boy with DLD, age 13, explaining key strategies needed in football
SALT has normative data on the FGS task (for ages 10-18)

- You should be [MC] a team player.
- Like motivate [MC] your team to win [INF], not to fight [INF].
- Have [MC] good sportsmanship.
- Don't criticize [MC] or put [MC] down other teammates.
- Be [MC] kind to other teammates.
- Work [MC] as a team.
- Encourage [MC] other people.
- Be [MC] kind to your coaches.

He would not do well in terms of SALT's norms. But beyond the norms, there is much to see.

- Strengths:
  - Uses metalinguistic and metacognitive verbs (e.g., *criticize, encourage, motivate*)
  - Uses some abstract nouns (e.g., *sportsmanship*)
  - Pragmatics (emphasis on getting along, working together, being kind)
- Weaknesses:
  - Mostly short, simple utterances (little subordination with embedding) – documented with SALT
  - Mostly simple, common, concrete, repetitive vocabulary (less efficient communication)
  - Fewer utterances/C-units (low TCU)

Compare to peer with TLD on the FGS Task
Excerpt: Boy with TLD, age 14
(explaining key strategies needed in football)

- Make [MC] sure your teammates know [NOM] the play.
- And don't argue [MC] with your teammates.
- Because if you're arguing [ADV] with a lineman, the lineman could let [MC] the guy get [INF] by.
- And you could get [MC] drilled.
- So your linemen are [MC] a big part of the game.
- You want [MC] your linemen in all of your plays.

Peer with TLD continued…

- You want [MC] your linemen to feel [INF] good about themselves and their job because it doesn't seem [ADV] like they do [NOM] a lot.
- They just block [MC] the guy.
- But if nobody was [ADV] there, the running backs would get [MC] nowhere.
- And it helps [MC] to have [INF] a good lineman, and a good running back that can block [REL], and a halfback that can block [REL], and receivers that can catch [REL] and know [REL] their routes well, and just a team that doesn't fight [REL] and argue [REL] about everything. (44 words)
- If you mess [ADV] up, then just do [MC] better next time or try [MC] harder.

Beyond the norms, there is much to see: Informal analysis of this boy's sample

- Reflects strong knowledge base; dense with information
- Uses long, complex sentences with
  - Multiple levels of subordination
  - Appropriate "technical" terminology
    - *Lineman, halfback, running back, receiver*
  - Appropriate use of figurative language
    - *Get drilled, mess up*
- Strong pragmatics and social skills
  - Awareness of others' feelings
  - Knowledge of how to avoid interpersonal conflict
  - Compassionate?

For clients with DLD:
Selecting goals from a language sample:

- Use of later-developing syntactic structures, e.g., subordinate clauses
- Use of age- and topic-appropriate vocabulary
- Appropriate word finding skills
- Showing coherence in discourse (organization, sequencing, clarity)
- Provides sufficient details in explanations (verbal productivity)
- May need to address topic knowledge – expand client's knowledge
- Greater knowledge of complex topics leads to complex language

However, language sampling is not widely used in our profession. Why not?

- Many SLPs say it takes too much time
- However, using SALT can actually **save** time for busy SLPs!
  - SALT automatically calculates many useful variables
  - SALT generates a Performance Report on each client
    - It summarizes how the client performed (SMR)
    - You can cut & paste it into your written client report
- Transcription takes time, but we can train speech assistants to transcribe and segment utterances into C-units
- SLPs don’t have to do everything!

What else?

- SLPS say they don't know **how** to do language sampling
- It wasn't covered in graduate school
  - However, now there are many new resources available on language sampling and how to do it well (Miller et al., 2019; Nippold, 2021)
  - Taking courses and keeping up to date is part of lifelong learning
- SLPs say they aren't comfortable with using technology
- However, many SLPs already USE technology, (I-phones, I-pads)
- Over the years, we've all moved forward with technology
- Who would want to go back to a manual typewriter?
- Desk phones? Land lines? Sending telegrams? Writing everything by hand?
- Who still uses a reel-to-reel tape recorder??

But in their day, these old friends were “high technology”

(Underwood manual typewriter, 1920s)

Reel-to-reel tape recorder, 1960s
Cassette tape recorder, 1970s

Apple IIc desktop computer (1980s) with monitor, cord, keyboard, disc drive

We have all embraced new technology over the years

- What else is new?
  - I-pads
  - Microcasettes
  - Using **Zoom** to elicit language samples or hold meetings
  - Using laptops to analyze transcribed samples with SALT
- Of course, it takes time to learn how to use SALT
  - But it takes time to learn anything new and worthwhile
  - It also saves us time in the long run and makes us more efficient
- So let's look at a few more adolescents, using the SALT norms

Case #1: Girl, 8th grade, age 14;2, MAE
Example using FGS Task (excerpt about basketball)

- See the excerpt the lecturer is showing on the screen
- List three different strengths you see in this sample

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Analysis using SALT Expository Database
Case #1 versus normative group, matched on age

- See the data the lecturer is showing on the screen
- List three different <u>weaknesses</u> you see in this sample

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

SLP's Interpretation of **Case #1's** Performance: Consistent with diagnosis of DLD

- Shows significant deficits in <u>syntactic</u> development
  - Few complex sentences (short MLCU, low CD)
  - Many fragments (incomplete sentences)
- Shows significant deficits in <u>lexical</u> development
  - Low word diversity
  - Difficulty using topic-appropriate vocabulary, e.g.,
  - Says *double bouncing* instead of *dribbling*
  - Says *middle, outsides*, *in front* instead of *center*, *forward*, *guard*
- Shows low verbal facility (high percentage of mazes)
- Shows low verbal productivity (few utterances)

At this point, norm-referenced testing may be useful with this client Lexical development – Some tests to gain more information

- *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test* (PPVT-5)
- *The Word Test-Adolescent*
- *Test of Adolescent/Adult Language* (TOAL-4)
  - Word Opposites; Word Derivation; Spoken Analogies
- However, caution is advised:
  - These tests assume student's primary language in English
  - The tests assume student speaks Mainstream American English (MAE)
  - If not, don't use the tests
- Reasonable alternatives:
  - Dynamic assessment, e.g., attempt to teach word-learning strategies
  - Elicit another language sample
  - Classroom observation/teacher interviews/artifact analysis

Case #2: Girl, 8th grade, age 13;6, MAE
Example using FGS Task (excerpt about tennis)

- See the excerpt the lecturer is showing on the screen
- List three different strengths you see in this sample

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Analysis using SALT Expository Database
Case #2 versus normative group matched on age

- All metrics well within typical range, e.g.,
  - MLCU = 11.25; TCU = 56
  - Consistent with diagnosis of typical language development (TLD)
- Rich content reflects detailed understanding of tennis
- Strong knowledge of basic rules and strategies
- Gets right to the point, answers the questions appropriately
- Uses many complex sentences with multiple subordinate clauses
- Accurate use of “tennis” vocabulary, e.g.,
  - *singles* vs *doubles*, *out of bounds*, *love*, *deuce*, *sets*, *match*

Back to **Case #1** (girl with DLD)
SLP makes recommendations for intervention

- Focuses on the language of the curriculum – expository discourse
- This helps make intervention relevant to academic success (e.g., STEM)
- SLP collaborates with classroom teacher (e.g., biology, geography, math)
  - Expository discourse needed in science class, history, math class, etc.
    - Giving oral reports in class (an experiment)
    - Explaining the relative timing and significance of historical events
  - Expository discourse needed to meet CCSS in expository speaking (8th grade)
- Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.4
  "Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound and valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation." (relevant when making oral reports in class)

SLP Makes Recommendations (continued):

- Designs/provides intervention to address deficits in key areas:
  - The lexicon:
    - Teaches academic vocabulary, e.g. *filtration, conservation, purifying*, etc.
    - Teaches common word-learning strategies, e.g.,
      - Contextual abstraction & morphological analysis (Nippold, 2018)
  - Syntax: Uses scaffolding to systematically teach use of complex sentences
    - Sentence modeling, sentence imitation, sentence completion, sentence combining
    - Used to talk about academic (e.g., science) topics from classroom
    - Teaches different types of clauses (e.g., REL, ADV, NOM) & how they function (metalinguistic approach)

Recommendations continued..
Shows how SLP practices **at top of license**

- Increase client's verbal output of expository discourse
  - Build knowledge of academic topics (esp. STEM)
    - So client has more to talk about (relevant facts)
    - Learns about subtopics within a larger topic area
  - Provide frequent practice in using expository discourse
  - Use graphic organizer for structure and visual clues
  - Cover different academic topics to ensure generalization
    - Science, history, math, social studies, shop, theatre arts

Now let's turn our attention to narrative discourse What *is* narrative discourse? A quick review

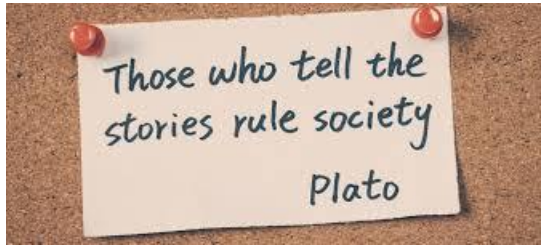
- Narration = the genre of telling/retelling stories
  - About real events (factual), e.g.,
    - What happened at school, at a friend's house, etc.
  - About imaginary events (fictional), e.g.,
    - A fairytale, folktale, fable, the plot of a play or movie, etc.
  - About a combination of real and imaginary events (creative narration)
- A narrative is a monologue, not a dialogue
- Narrative speaking can be challenging
  - It's all on the speaker to be clear, entertaining, etc.
  - There is less scaffolding than in a conversation
  - Calls on all aspects of language, e.g., syntax, semantics, morphology, pragmatics

Why Address Narrative Speaking in Adolescents?
Adolescents = Students ages 12-18 years old

- It provides an opportunity to work on all areas of deficit (e.g. syntax, semantics, pragmatics)
- It's a way of sharing thoughts, feelings, beliefs, experiences, and cultural differences with others
- People of all ages engage in narrative speaking
  - Children (especially ages 5 and above)
  - Adolescents (ages 12-18)
  - Adults (young, middle-aged, older, elderly)
- It's a universal phenomenon
  - People in all cultures tell stories in all languages.
- Therefore, it helps prepare students for life.

Stories are for everyone!!
All ages, generations, countries, cultures, languages
Although they may tell stories in different ways…

Regardless of age or culture, good storytellers are **confident**! Other people listen!



Other reasons to focus on narrative speaking: It's part of the curriculum in many schools today

- In schools today, adolescents are expected to **read**, **retell**, **summarize**, and **interpret** stories in their literature classes.
- This is a demanding cognitive and linguistic activity.
- In addition to speaking, it involves listening, reading, writing, and thinking.
- It requires that adolescents comprehend and produce sentences with multiple levels of clausal embedding.

What else does story retelling require?

- Students must be able to use and understand sophisticated words from the curriculum, such as
  - **metacognitive** and **metalinguistic** verbs (e.g., *decide, covet, bewail*),
  - **abstract** nouns (e.g., *fortune, fate, dismay*), and
  - **figurative** expressions (e.g., *to his heart's content*).
- They also must read written words, visualize the story's characters and events, and integrate the information across sentences.
- Stories become more challenging as students grow older.
- However, many adolescents with DLD are unable to meet these expectations. Why?

Adolescents with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)
Problems in narrative speaking result from (any or all of these):

- Poor listening skills (attention, memory, understanding words & clauses)
- Poor reading skills
    - Weak decoding skills (word recognition)
    - Weak text comprehension and inferencing
- Poor lexical development
    - Know & understand fewer words (because they read less)
    - Use simpler, more common, concrete words
- Poor syntactic development
    - Produce shorter, simpler utterances
    - Challenged to understand complex sentences
- Limited topic knowledge (so have less to say)

Narrative Speaking: **Assessment**
How do we assess? An example…

- The SLP asks the adolescent to listen to and retell a **Greek fable** drawn from the middle school curriculum (e.g., 6th grade lit class).
- The SLP analyzes the content and form of the adolescent's retelling:
  - TWD, TCU, MLCU, CD, and MCVs
- Why fables?
  - They address complicated moral issues (e.g., "Should one ever take more than one needs?" i.e., is it ever OK to be greedy?)
  - They address complex human emotions and mental states

    "Why do people take more than they need?" (e.g., greed, poor self-control).
- Superficially simple, fables are quite complex!

Are norms available for narrative speaking? Not yet with SALT; but see these references:

- Nippold, M. A., Frantz-Kaspar, M. W., & Vigeland, L. M. (2017). Spoken language production in young adults: Examining syntactic complexity. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research, 60,* 1339-1347.
- Nippold, M. A., Vigeland, L. M., Frantz-Kaspar, M.W., & Ward-Lonergan, J. (2017). Language sampling with adolescents: Building a normative database with fables. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, 26,* 908-920.
- Nippold, M. A., Frantz-Kaspar, M. W., Cramond, P. M., Kirk, C., Hayward-Mayhew, C., & MacKinnon, M. (2015). Critical thinking about fables: Examining language production and comprehension in adolescents. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, *58*(2), 325-335.

Narrative Speaking:
How do we **intervene**?

- A student's narrative **retellings** provide guidance in how to intervene.
- We address deficits in **syntax**, the **lexicon**, and **critical thinking**.
- **Lexically**, students can be taught to infer meaning from context and to use morphological analysis to learn new words:
  - e.g., *vain, vanity, vainness, vainglory* – metalexical approach
- **Syntactically**, they can be taught to analyze the structure of sentences and to recognize the meaning conveyed by different types of clauses:
  - e.g., relative, adverbial, nominal – metasyntactic approach
- **Critical-thinking** questions are posed to prompt deeper processing of fables, which supports both comprehension and production of complex language
  - leads to more complex thinking and therefore more complex talking!

Analyzing the Student's Narrative Discourse

You can still use SALT software; just not any formal norms yet

See references on Slide # 47 for preliminary normative data

- Have student listen to and retell a short fable
- Enter sample into *Systematic Analysis of Language Transcripts* (SALT) software
- Segment the sample into C-units (full sentences)
- Examine language productivity
  - Total words (TWD); Total utterances (TCU)
- Examine Mean Length of C-unit (MLCU)
- Examine use of main and subordinate clauses
  - Relative, nominal, adverbial, infinitive, participial, gerundive
- Examine for clausal density: CD = MC + SC / total utterances or C-units.
- Examine for story grammar elements, literate words, and number of utterances

Intervention Goals for Narrative Development:

- To promote the *understanding* of narratives in the context of fables drawn from the classroom.
- To promote the ability to *retell* fables
  - To increase the use of complex syntax
  - To increase the use of literate vocabulary
  - To increase the amount of language produced
    - Number of C-units, number of words
    - Number of story grammar elements (e.g., setting, goals)
    - Details and insights (character's thoughts and emotions)

Intervention Strategies

- SLP leads the group of 3-4 students (or works one-on-one).
- Students work together in small groups (peers can support each other).
- Each student has a printed copy of the fable.
- They listen as the fable is read aloud.
- They underline the difficult words.
- They take turns reading the fable aloud.
  - Repeated oral reading builds fluency
  - Repeated oral reading builds comprehension

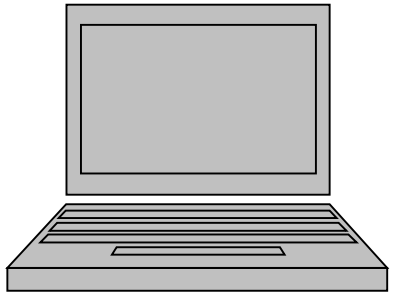
Strategies (continued)

- They are encouraged to think about the meanings of the difficult words:
  - To infer meaning from context
  - To analyze the morphology of the word
  - To consult a dictionary, if necessary
- Students are given a graphic organizer – a story grammar outline.
- They fill in the outline, from the fable:
  - Setting (time, location)
  - Characters (roles, personalities)
  - Problems
  - Solutions/Attempts
  - Outcomes
  - Reactions (inner thoughts/feelings)
  - Ending/Resolution

Story Grammar Structure: Some benefits

- Can promote comprehension, if used repeatedly.
- Provides an organizational framework.
- Encourages students to attend to:
  - Key vocabulary
  - Sequence of events
  - Perspectives of the characters
  - Emotions/inner thoughts
- Results in greater output (more talking).

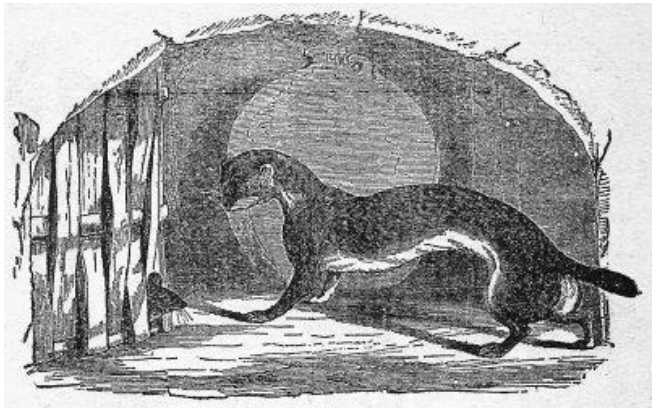
Intervention Strategies (continued)



- If possible, use laptops to create a “running record” of the students’ narrative productions.
  - Enables SLP to monitor progress and collect data (accountability).
- As a student retells the fable, a scribe types it into the laptop.
- The document is saved and later modified.
- The students make improvements in the document, over time.
- Again, the focus is on:
  - Using complex syntax
  - Using literate vocabulary
  - Adding details
  - Talking more
  - Staying organized & making sense

Example of Intervention Activity: Storytelling with Fables
Grade 6 (ages 11-12 years) Literature Class

- Teacher is presenting a lesson on Greek fables.
- Students are assigned to read, retell, and discuss fables by Aesop.
- This week's fable is *The Mouse and the Weasel*
- Superficially simple but actually complex!



The Mouse and the Weasel

A Fable by Aesop (1947)

- A little mouse, who had gone without food for days and was almost starved, had the good fortune to come upon a basket of corn.
- Weak as he was, he was able to make his way into the basket, where he stuffed and gorged himself to his heart's content.
- His hunger appeased, the mouse decided to go home, only to find to his dismay that his enlarged belly would not go through the hole in the basket.
- So there he sat bewailing his fate, until a weasel, brought to the spot by the mouse's squeaks, said to him, "Stop your weeping and wailing, friend mouse."
- "The thing for you to do is to fast where you are until you are thin again."
- "When you reduce yourself to the same condition you were in when you entered, then you can get out the same way."
- Moral: "Don't covet more than you can carry."

Challenges of this Fable:

- Decoding (reading) difficult words
  - Polysyllabic words (e.g., *condition*)
  - Morphologically complex words (e.g., *bewailing, enlarged*)
  - Overall reading level of this fable: Grade 6.7
- Understanding difficult vocabulary
  - Abstract nouns and figurative expressions:
    - *Fortune, fate, dismay, condition, to his heart's content*
  - Low frequency verbs:
    - *Gorged, appeased, fast, reduce, covet*
  - Metacognitive verbs: *decided, covet, bewail*

Challenges of this Fable (continued)

- Syntax:
  - Contains some long, complex sentences, with passive voice:

    So there he sat [MC] bewailing [PRT] his fate, until a weasel, brought [PRT] to the spot by the mouse's squeaks, said [ADV] to him, "Stop [NOM] your weeping and wailing, friend mouse."*

    This sentence contains 28 words and 5 clauses

    Overall, the fable has an MLCU of 21.7 words

- What else is challenging about this fable?

* Characteristic of **literate** writing style; kids need exposure to this

Additional Challenges of the Fable:
Critical Thinking (Nippold et al., 2015)

- Discussing the fable involves critical thinking (CT)
- CT is a prominent theme in schools today (CCSS) – this is good!
- SLP can ask critical thinking questions (CTQs):
  - Do you agree or disagree with the moral, “Don’t covet more than you can carry”?
  - Why do you agree (or disagree)?
  - Can you think of a situation where that moral would apply?
- Such questions will prompt complex thought.
- Student must understand the story well to answer CTQs.
- Promotes deeper comprehension.
- Provides a genuine need for complex speaking.

How to Maximize Success with Narrative Speaking:

- Must address underlying language deficits:
  - Decoding words (reading)
  - Word recognition (reading)
  - Lexical development
  - Syntactic development
- Applies to all other genres of spoken language production:
  - Expository
  - Persuasive
  - Conversational
- How accomplish all of this???
  - As a start, refer to published intervention research in each area!

Word Reading: Key elements to Successful Intervention

(Carnine et al, 2004; Foorman & Al Otaiba, 2009; Torgesen et al. (2005)

- Phonological awareness is addressed (even in older kids)
- Alphabetic principle (letter-sound correspondences or “phonics”) is addressed (even in older kids).
- Instruction is explicit, systematic, and intense.
- Lessons are well-sequenced and scaffolded.
- Students have many opportunities to practice skills.
  - Then they become fast and accurate readers (fluent)
  - Their word reading ability becomes automatic (fluency)
- Students receive frequent feedback from adults
  - Errors are corrected; accuracy is praised.
  - High degree of emotional support & encouragement

Intervention for the **Lexicon**: Key Elements

(Carnine et al., 2004; Throneburg et al., 2000; Vaughn & Klinger, 2004)

- There is **explicit** instruction in key words, drawn from the classroom (e.g., *fortune, dismay, covet*).
- Work with classroom teacher to select words.
- Discuss the meanings of unfamiliar words in context.
- Also, teach word learning strategies (meta-lexical approach):
  - Attending to context clues in sentences (in written passages), and making inferences, for example:

    "A little mouse, who had gone without food for days [REL] and was almost starved [REL], had [MC] the good fortune to come [INF] upon a basket of corn."

    "Weak as he was [ADV], he was [MC] able to make [INF] his way into the basket, where he stuffed [NOM] and gorged [NOM] himself to his heart's content."
  - Use of morphological analysis: gorge, gorging, gorged (focus on roots and suffixes)

Intervention for Complex **Syntax**: Key Elements
(Graham & Perin, 2007; Nippold, 2021; Scott, 2009; Scott & Nelson, 2009)

- Use Sentence Combining Activities (metasyntactic approach):
  - Help student analyze the structure of complex sentences from the classroom.
  - Draw sentences from the assigned weekly stories (e.g., Greek fables)
  - Assist students to break each complex sentence into a string of simpler, shorter sentences (deconstruction).
  - Talk about the meaning of each simple sentence.
  - Student restates/rewrites each simple sentence in own words.
  - Then, begin to build it back up again (reconstruction)
    - Recombine 2 simple sentences into one longer one.
  - Then, retell the meaning of the complex sentence, in own words.

Example:
Complex, (highly literate) Sentence Re-written

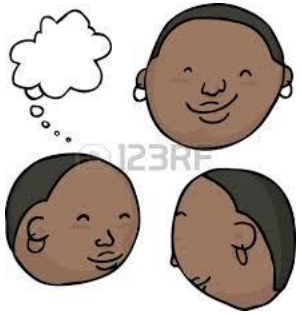
- So there he sat [MC] bewailing [PRT] his fate, until a weasel, brought [PRT] to the spot by the mouse's squeaks, said [ADV] to him, "Stop [NOM] your weeping and wailing, friend mouse."
- Student re-writes it as a string of simple sentences: (DECONSTRUCTION)
  - The mouse sat there. He was crying.
  - He felt sorry for himself.
  - He was upset. Something happened.
  - He could not get out of the basket. He was too big.
  - Then, the weasel heard him.
  - The weasel said something.
  - "Stop your weeping."
  - "Stop your wailing."

Example continued…

- A scribe, speech assistant, or volunteer types the student's simple sentences into a laptop computer (better than writing by hand)
  - Easier to read and revise
  - Easier to move around and combine
- Students practice reading their own sentences aloud from the laptop.
- Then, they can re-state the content, in own words.
- This promotes comprehension of story.
- Remember: They are using written notes to support their spoken language.

Mental Imagery

- SLP talks with students about the meaning of each simple sentence.
- SLP encourages use of mental imagery (Joffe et al, 2007):
  - “Describe what you see.”
  - “What do you hear?”
  - “Do you smell or taste anything?”
  - “How does the mouse feel? Why?”
- Mental imagery promotes deeper comprehension of sentences.



Then, SLP helps students "build it back up" again (gradual RECONSTRUCTION)

- Combine two simpler sentences into one longer, complex sentence.
- SLP provides model while student listens:
  - "As he sat there crying, the mouse felt sorry for himself."
  - "He was upset because he could not get out of the basket."
  - "The weasel heard him and said to stop crying."
- SLP uses sentence imitation activity:
  - Student repeats simple sentences
  - Student repeats complex sentence
- SLP provides sentence completion starter:
  - "As he sat there crying, ….."
  - "The mouse was upset because…."
  - "When the weasel heard the mouse, …."

Sentence Combining (continued)

- SLP asks students to make up their **own** longer sentences, using these as examples.
- Students produce complex sentences:
  - "The mouse was stuck in the basket because he ate too much."
  - "He got too big because he ate too much corn."
- SLP encourages linkages (natural connections) between certain types of words and clauses (*lexicon-syntax interface*), e.g.,
  - MCVs and nominal clauses, e.g.,
    - "The weasel *knew*[MCV] that the mouse was [NOM] upset."
    - "The mouse *believed*[MCV] he would be [NOM] stuck forever." //

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!
And…

- Thank you for everything you do to help adolescents!
- Thank you for your dedication, compassion, and relentless effort.
- Your work makes a huge difference to students everyday!
- Best wishes to you and yours!

- Please let me know if you have any questions
- Feel free to contact me by email: nippold@uoregon.edu

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