

Narrative assessment reflects growth in oral language development, differentiates between children with High Oral Language (HOL) and Low Oral Language (LOL) skills and can be a useful tool to support teaching in the classroom.

TEACHING STRATEGY

Wordless Story Tell Procedure:

Examiner: “Now we’re going to look at a special book. It is special because it is a picture story book. There are no words in it. I want you to take your time and look through the pictures so you know what happens in the story. Then I want you to tell me the story. It is a story about a boy and his two pets.”

Examiner prompts (if required):

- (1) If the student starts telling a story and then stops.....wait for 3 seconds....if there is no additional information, say “Tell me some more!”
- (2) If they offer no further information say “You are telling a great story, tell me what happened next?”

Single Picture Story Tell Procedure:

Examiner: “Look at the picture and think about what is going on in the picture. Now, I want you to make up a story in your head about the picture. You might include things in your story that are not in the picture. Can you tell me your story, like a story you would find in a book.”

Examiner prompts (if required):

As above

Transcription Rules

- ◆ Using the taped samples for each student, play the tape and transcribe the exact language that the student used in each story.
- ◆ Record each sentence on a separate line.
- ◆ Discover the boundaries of each sentence by listening for pauses and sentence ending intonation (*rising pitch on questions and falling pitch on statements*).
- ◆ Mark mazes, with parentheses. A maze includes all instances of hesitations e.g. (um....uh), false starts e.g. (my dog he) my dog jumped on me, repetitions e.g. my dog (my dog) jumped on me, repairs and abandoned utterances e.g. and then he came up like (my dog jumped on me) (Fletcher, 1991).
- ◆ Record pauses with (.....). Only record pauses greater than 2 seconds.
- ◆ Use << >> for any examiner prompts.”

Number of words per T-unit:

Count the number of words in each T-unit. Do not include mazes (see definition below). Do not count unintelligible words in the word count. Count as two words all contractions of two words (e.g. couldn't = could not, she's = she is). Count as one word; synonyms (e.g. water pond, puffer train), proper names (e.g. Thomas the Tank Engine) and immaturities (e.g. choo-choo train, moo cow). Count the total number of words and divide by the total number of T-units = Mean Length of T-unit (MLT). Words were counted as outlined by Gummersall and Strong (1999).

Number of clauses per T-unit - (subordination index):

Count the number of clauses in each T-unit. A clause is a group of words containing a subject and the accompanying verb, and used as a sentence (independent clause) or attached to an independent clause (dependent clause). The simplest and fastest way to calculate the mean number of clauses is to look for the main verbs. The crucial characteristic of a clause is that it normally contains its own verb. Any part of a sentence that does not contain a verb cannot be a clause. Count the total number of clauses and divide by the total number of T-units.

Grammatical Errors:

Problems with word order, lexical selection, or morphology were coded as grammatical errors. They were produced without an attempt by the speaker to repair them.

Grammatical errors were identified in each T-unit. Verb or noun phrase agreement problems, use of inappropriate pronouns, word order problems and omissions of words were considered grammatical errors. Lexical errors, phonological errors and articulation errors were excluded because the focus was on morpho-syntactic skills.

An example of a narrative sample and analysis:

Frog Where are you?	# TU	# W	# C	NGE
Once upon a time (he..) the boy had a frog		9	1	
And then the dog wanted to see what it's inside		11	2	1
And then when the boy was asleep (the..) the frog wanted to sneak out		13	2	
(Then the boy wanted to..) then the boy wanted to look for him		14	2	
And then the boy looked in his shoe		8	1	
And the dog put his face (in the..) in the bowl (..the..whatever the... to be called)		13	1	
And then he looked outside		5	1	
And (then..) (then the boy...then...) then he sawed his dog went passed		8	1	2
And then..and then....and on the wall				
(And then...) and (then...) then he broked (the..) his bowl		6	1	1
(He..) he called the frog		4	1	
He looked (in..in..) in a hole		5	1	
The dog (looked...) was playing with (the bee thing..) the bee thing		8	1	
Then he..um then..then....what's that?				
<< What do you think?>>				
A rat (....) bit (the..the..) the boy's nose		6	1	
(Um) then he looked through a owl hole		7	1	1
(Then..) (and then...he...) and (then he ...) then the owl (.....) followed him		6	1	
And (then...) then he called him again		6	1	
Then the dog..the dog...wanting to (unintell)				
And (then..) then the boy (...went..) went (...on...on...) on the whatever it's called		11	1	
And then (he's..) he's about to go (....) over there		9	1	
And the boy dropped-ed		4	1	1
And the dog dropped		4	1	
And then he felled (in a ..) (in the..) in the puddle		7	1	1
And (then..) then the dog went on top of his head		10	1	
And (then he...) then he heard something		5	1	
And then he sawed his frog		6	1	1
And the frog had a little family		7	1	
And then the boy took one of his babies		9	1	
The end		2	1	
TOTAL	27	203	30	8
		7.52	1.11	0.30

Story Analysis Procedure

Taken from Fey et al.(2001)

Story Elements	Rating Scale	Score
<p>Story Setting</p> <p>Includes explicit reference to the physical and temporal context prior to the establishment of a problem</p>	<p>0 No mention of setting</p> <p>1 Reference to parts of the setting observable in the story picture/s</p> <p>2 Reference to or description of non-pictured parts of the setting</p> <p>3 Reference to non-pictured elements that play a key role in developing the problem or resolution</p>	
<p>Story Characters</p> <p>Includes explicit reference to all characters prior to the establishment of a problem</p>	<p>0 characters are not mentioned</p> <p>1 characters are labelled, including family relationships (eg: mum, brother, sister)</p> <p>2 characters are given names or characteristics not observable in the pictures</p> <p>3 characteristics that play a key role in developing the plot are identified</p>	
<p>Story Ending</p> <p>Includes relevant information, character responses to the resolution, and statements concerning future behaviours following the resolution of the final episode</p>	<p>0 no ending of any sort</p> <p>1 stereotypic endings (eg: the end; they lived happily ever after)</p> <p>2 internal or external responses to the story's problem and/or resolution are provided</p> <p>3 some statement indicating a moral or the future behaviour will change as a result of the character's experiences is provided</p>	
<p>Story Plot (see next page for details)</p>	0 - 6 points	
<p>Language Sophistication/ Literate Language Use</p> <p>Fronted adverbial clauses</p>	<p>0 no use of target features</p> <p>1 single use of one or more of the target features OR moderate use of only one target feature</p> <p>2 moderate use of more than one target features (2+ uses)</p> <p>3 established use of more than one of the target features to story-</p>	

and phrases, relative clauses and post-modifying phrases, "Story" vocabulary, including -ly adverbs and cognitive verbs, direct quotations, sentences with multiple auxiliaries and passive sentences	telling effect	
		TOTAL: /18

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