Here’s How to Conduct Narrative Assessment for Grades K - 4

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Why Assess Narratives?

• “A narrative task samples a student’s ability to produce extended amounts of language, to recall details, and to summarize information into an intelligible whole for a listener who has never heard a particular story before.”

• (p.89, Strong’s Narrative Assessment Protocol)
Why Assess Narratives?

• These skills allow a student to benefit from extended discussions, reports, explanations, retellings, and stories in the classroom.

• They also enhance the student’s ability to summarize and paraphrase—skills that are essential for school success—and to engage in positive social exchanges."

• (p.89, Strong’s Narrative Assessment Protocol)
What are Narratives? (Schema)

Cognitive models, maps or schemas

Structure conscious thinking and decisions

In the largest sense, these are models of the physical, social and psychological world we live in, and our place in it, as physical and psychological beings and members of society.
Functions of Narratives

• Transition between oral & literate language styles

• Foundation for reading acquisition

• Essential skills for academic success

• Essential skills for social interaction
What can we Expect from the Narratives of Children with LLD

- Narration is often problematic – requires the integration of higher level semantic and syntactic abilities (Gillam, 2003)
- Shorter and contain less information
- Story structure knowledge is insufficient for good story telling/retelling
- Narratives lack orienting information for the listener and lacks story binding elements (cohesion)
- Restricted world knowledge especially for social and physical cause-effect relationships
- Restricted syntax
- Contain few literate language features (e.g. transition words) (Strong, 2001)
What can we Expect from the Narratives of Students with SLI and ASD

• Failure to plan (lack of organization)
• Hyper focus on details at the expense of the gist
• Inability to use information from multiple sources
• Difficulty allocating mental resources
• Difficulty answering inference questions that require integration of information
How to do Narrative Assessment - Agenda for the Morning

• How to do a Narrative Assessment
  A. Formal vs. Informal
  B. Assessment

• Script narratives: elicit and analyze
• Personal narratives: elicit and analyze
• Story retell and generation
  1. Developmental guidelines
  2. Elicit
  3. Analyze the Microstructure
    a. C-Unit Analysis
  4. Analyze the Macrostructure
    a. Story grammar
    b. Listener Friendly Devices (coherence)
    c. Cohesive Devices
  5. Test of Narrative Retell: School Age
  6. Progress Monitoring (MISL & Language Dynamics)
How to do a Narrative Assessment

• A. Formal vs informal
  • Test of Narrative Language (ages 5-11)
  • Index of Narrative Complexity (SALT)

http://saltsoftware.com/resources/databases
How to do a Narrative Assessment

• B. Informal Assessment-Elicit

  1. Types of narratives
     • Scripts
     • Personal Narratives
     • Stories- sequence of events with intentionally produced fictional elements (retell, self generated)
How to do a Narrative Assessment

• Assessing Script Knowledge
  • Informal Script Knowledge checklist

• Assessing Personal Narrative Generation
  • Informal Personal Story Rubric
How to do a Narrative Assessment

Story Retell and Generation

Developmental Guidelines

• Story Development based on Logical-Temporal Structure of Narratives by Lahey, 1998, Apel & Masterson, 2005
  • Additive Chains
  • Temporal Chains
  • Simple Causal Chains
  • Multiple Causal Chains
Developmental Guidelines: 
Stage 1 Additive Chains (age 3)

- Series of sentences with some type of unity
- No temporal or causal relationships
- Examples

My mom went to outer space. And she was a monster. And she ate moon cake. And she was everything but nothing else. That was it. (4.5)

Once upon a time there was a birthday party and the boy come. And he had fun there and they gave them some presents. And I don’t know the rest of it. (5.2)

Apel & Masterson, 2005
Developmental Guidelines Stage 2: Temporal Chains (ages 3-5)

- Series of sentences in which the order is important
- Sequential but does not contain causal relation (no episode)
- Example

One day they went on an air balloon ride. And then they came home from that. And then they went to bed. They got up in the morning and they went there again, and they drove it to school. That was fun, huh? (10)

Apel & Masterson, 2005
Developmental Guidelines Stage 3: Simple Causal Chains/Complete Episode (age 5)

- Contains a simple complete episode
- Episode = initiating event + attempt/action + consequence

Example

One day Horton, the elephant, went to his aunt’s house for dinner. But his aunt didn’t know how to cook so Horton cooked the dinner for him and his aunt. They ate nachos and drank pop. They ate a good dinner. After dinner, he went home. But his car broke down, so he had to walk home.

Apel & Masterson, 2005
Developmental Guidelines Stage 4: Multiple Causal Chain (ages 5-7)

Multiple Causal chain/complex or embedded episodes

- Contains more than one episode
- Conjoined (each episode completes before next one starts)
- Embedded (new episode may be initiated before previous episode is completed)
- Example

Once upon a time there was a little boy who had a sister. One day, the boy felt sick. And he had to go to the doctor. The doctor said that he had chicken pox. One day they were having a baby boy. And they had to take mommy to the hospital. And they had to lemon on her. So the baby would come out. And it did. We did it for her. And until one day she came home with the baby. And sometimes the baby was sick. And she had to go to the doctor. Then the doctor said she had chicken pox. They were both having chicken pox. (5)

Apel & Masterson, 2005
How to do a Narrative Assessment
Developmental Guidelines

• Written narrative development lags behind oral narrative development by about 2 years

• At about age 9, written narrative catches up to oral and written narration will continue to become more complex as child ages
How to do a Narrative Assessment

- **Elicit**
  - Elicit a story retell
  - Ask comprehension questions
  - Elicit a story generation

- **Audio/Videotape & Transcribe**

- **Use the Narrative Decision Tree**
  - Analyze the Microstructure
    - A. C-units analysis
    - B. Informal syntactic analysis
  - Analyze the Macrostructure
Microstructure Analysis

C-Unit Analysis

C- units

• C unit vs. T unit
• C unit = each independent clause with it’s modifiers
• one main clause with all subordinate clauses attached to it
C-Unit Analysis

- Clauses
  - Utterance that contains a subject (NP) + predicate (VP)

- 2 kinds of clauses
  - Main
  - Subordinate

- The frog was sitting on a lily pad when the boy saw him.

MC= The frog was sitting on a lily pad (stands by itself grammatically)
SC= when the boy saw him (depends on MC to make sense)

How many C units in this utterance?
Conjunctions (2 types)

1. Coordinating conjunctions-link 2 main clauses or 2 independent clauses
   • “and, but, or, so” (FANBOYS)

2. Subordinating conjunctions-link main clause and subordinate clause
   • “because, when, that, who, before, after, so(that), which, while, until, like, as, where, if, unless, what”

• Not perfect rules- must use the context and speaker’s intent to help determine if a clause is coordinated or subordinated
Identifying Coordinating & Subordinating Clauses
Strong (1998)

• 1. The frog was sitting on a lily pad and then it jumped in.

• 2. When the boy looked by his bed, the frog was gone.

• 3. The big frog jumped on the raft and kicked the little frog off.

• 4. The big frog jumped on the raft and he kicked the little frog off.

• 5. They can’t find him, so they go home.

• 6. He jumped on the raft so he could kick him off.
C-Unit Analysis

Strong, (1998)

Types of subordinate clauses- relative, adverbial and nominal clauses make up 90% of all subordinate clause usage

- **Adverbial**
  - provide background info such as time (when, after), place(where), or motivation (because) for action or state.
  - It modifies an adjective or verb in the main clause

- **Nominal**
  - can occur in the subject or object position but more common in object position
  - Tend to include the connectors (that, what)
  - Tend to occur in the form of dialogue
  - Fills the noun slot in the main clause

- **Relative**
  - less frequent than adverb & nominal
  - Specifies or elaborates about whatever is named by noun or pronoun in subject or object position (that, which, who)
  - It modifies a noun in the main clause
C-Unit Analysis

Strong, (1998)

Position of clauses: Left branching or right branching

- Right branching – clause is in the predicate or object position. This is the first to occur developmentally.
- Left branching – clause is in the subject position.
- Center

Examples of Subordinating Clauses & Positions

Adverbial Clauses

- And his family was mad at him, because they made him go home. (adv. clause of reason & right branching)
- As soon as they closed the door, the boy and the frog just started laughing. (adv. clause of time & left branching)
- And then he leaned on some branches so he could see better. (adv. clause of reason with deletion of “that” & right branching)
- They were looking where there were logs. (adv. clause of place & right branching)
Examples of Subordinating Clauses & Positions

Nominal Clauses

• One of the animals told him what had happened (right branch)
• What surprised him even more was in the bathtub. (left branch)
• He climbed on a rock to see if he could see better. (right branch)
• And he said, “here I am.” (dialogue; right branch)
• “Go to your room,” said his father. (dialogue; left branch)

Relative Clauses

• And then they heard a sound that they liked. (right branch)
• One of the other animals that the boy had told the boy (center)
• They went to the restaurant, which was a fancy one (right branch)
• The person who was playing the instrument couldn’t make a sound come out. (center-embedded)
How to do Narrative Assessment

- Complete Microstructure Analysis (see decision tree)
- C-unit analysis or Complete Microstructure Summary
How to do Narrative Assessment

- **Analyze the Macrostructure** (refer to Decision Making Tree)
  - *First step* is to determine logical-temporal structure

- **Second step** is to analyze story grammar components
  - Compare story grammar for young children vs complete story grammar
How to do a Narrative Assessment

Analyzing the macrostructure using “beginning” story grammar

• Story Grammar/PreK
• Characters
• Setting
• Initiating Event*
• Attempt/Action*
• Consequence*
• Ending

• * These three elements make up an Episode
How to do a Narrative Assessment

Analyzing the macrostructure using “complete” story grammar

• Story Grammar/Complete
• Characters
• Setting
• Initiating Event*
• Attempt/Action*
• Consequence*
• Internal Response (optional)
• Plan (optional)
• Reaction/Ending
• Moral (optional)
Story Grammar Definitions (Westby, 2010)

**Setting**: Introduces the main character or describes the social, physical (place), or temporal (time) of the story.

**Initiating event**: The event, physiological state (hunger, pain), or perception of an external event that begins the story. Initiating event usually represents the problem around which the plot of the story is developed.

**Internal response**: The character’s feeling response to the initiating event.

**Internal plan**: What the character thinks about the initiating event and his/her feelings; what he/she thinks about doing about the problem or initiating event.

**Attempt/Action**: Characters’ overt actions in dealing with the initiating event.

**Consequence**: Outcome of the story/action.

**Ending**: The resolution of the story which may be an affective response (living happily ever after), a thought (knowing you have found a friend), or an action (riding off into the sunset).
How to do a Narrative Assessment

- **Step 3** Analyze Listener Friendly Devices (Refer to Decision Making Tree)
  - Provide the how, when, what, where & why of narrative
  - May include: setting (considering the listener’s point of view), mood/motivation, younger children include time and place
    - Opening and Closing
      - Beginning and ending of a narrative
      - Use a literate form (e.g. Once upon a time, Lived happily ever after)
      - Become more sophisticated as children grow
  - Abstract- hints or clues that an action is coming
  - Evaluation- (e.g. how narrator feels about events, statement of feeling)
    - This is a device that helps the listener understand
How to do a Narrative Assessment

• **Step 4** Analyze Cohesive devices (refer to decision making tree)
  - Use of vocabulary and grammar to connect sentences
    - Pronouns- were they used and used correctly/appropriately and is a clear referent provided
    - Articles- used and used appropriately
    - Connector forms (conjunctions)
      - Appropriate variety?- list the different conjunctions used
      - Serve their purpose? Do the conjunctions combine thoughts and continue the flow of the story?

• Ellipses (shortening utterance because info is already available from context for example “Did you eat yet?” “No”)

PreK and School Age Narrative Criterion Referenced Assessment Tools

http://www.languagedynamicsgroup.com/assessments.html

- **PreK**
  - Benchmark & Progress Monitoring Test of Narrative Retell
  - Test of Personal Story Generation
  - Test of Story Comprehension

- **School Age (Grades K – 3)**
  - Test of Personal Story Generation
  - Benchmark & Progress monitoring Test of Narrative Retell
Additional Considerations

• How will you assess across the grades?
  • Refer to Appropriate sampling Methods by grade level

• How will you accomplish progress monitoring?
  • Refer to MISL & Language Dynamics Resources
References