

# Ch. 1: A Functional Language Approach

Owens, Robert J. (2010). Language disorders. A functional approach to assessment and intervention, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

- theoretical underpinnings
  - Language is a communication tool
  - ...used primarily during conversational exchanges
  - ...for the purpose of
    - ...controlling the behaviors of others.
    - ...getting/giving information.
    - ...understanding, remembering and recalling information.

- **Conversational Exchanges**
  - essential context of language assessment & intervention...
    - focus upon...
    - ...the child's needs to accomplish their communicative goals
    - ..natural contingencies...results...of conversations
    - ..increasing their communicative needs
    - ..increasing their opt. to participate in interactional/conversational exchanges
    - ..1st changing the behaviors of the individuals who interact with the child
  - P. 5 **“In short, in a functional language approach, conversation between children and their communication partners becomes the vehicle for change.”**

- in \*contrast to more traditional approaches that...
  - ..focus upon...
  - ..language form and content vs function
  - ..highly structured
  - ..behavioral focus
  - ..emphasizing the teaching of specific behaviors
  - ..usually with out grounding w/in actual communications
  - ..intervention teacher centered
  - ..child is a largely passive recipient
  - ..results in little generalization to actual language use
- \* p. 7, Table 1.1 - Comparison of traditional and functional intervention models
- \* p. 9, Figure 1.1 – “Relationships to the aspects of language”

- Essential intervention concepts of a functional language approach:
  - goal...to enhance their day-to-day use of language...i.e., identify, understand and provide the child with tools to resolve their most frustrating communication breakdowns
  - Language intervention as family or environmentally based...
    - Manipulating the interactional environment to facilitate the perception and use of targeted language goals.
    - = impact of 'context' upon language use

- Essential concepts (cont.)
  - "Communication First Approach"
    - = language goals based on child's communication needs & interests
  - focus upon the communication process
    - = built upon child's prior and current experiences
  - teachers serve as 'language facilitators' vs 'controller'
    - = ...as environmental specialists
- Indicators of success:
  - P. 7 “Indices of improvement are in increased successful communication, rather than in the number of correct responses.”

- Role of Pragmatics in Language Intervention
  - p. 8 “Pragmatics consists of the intentions or communication goals of each speaker and of the linguistic adjustments made by each speaker for the listener in order to accomplish these goals.”
  - p. 8 “Previously, for example, children’s behaviors were considered either appropriate or inappropriate to the stimulus- reinforcement situation, rather than as a part of the interaction.”
  - p. 8 “Older approaches tend to emphasize childrens’ deficits with the goal of fixing what’s wrong (Duchan, 1997). In contrast, a functional approach stresses what a child needs in order to accomplish his or her communication goals.”
  - p. 10 “An SLP must be a master of the conversational context.”
    - Discuss how the role of the teacher of the deaf and SLP are similar and different. Plus why this is such a good book for us to use in this class, when it does not focus upon students who are d/hh, or their teachers.

- Role of Generalization in Intervention
  - p. 10 “One of the most difficult aspects of therapeutic intervention in speech-language pathology is generalization, or carryover, to nontraining situations ( Fey, 1988; Halle, 1987; Hunt & Goetz, 1988; Warren, 1988).”
    - Is this also a problem for teachers?
    - Why does this problem occur?
  - p. 11 “With each client, an SLP needs to ask: Will this procedure ( or target) work in the child’s everyday environment? Is there a need within the everyday communication of the client for the feature that is being trained, and do the methods used in its teaching reflect that everyday context?”
    - This same question needs to be asked by teachers. Your reply?

- Role of context in learning
  - p. “The contexts in which training takes place influence what a child actually learns.”
    - = the closer the learning context to “life,” the better/deeper the learning
    - = implications for teaching?
      - Problem based learning....real problems...student centered problems
  - Two types of generalizations
    - Content = what & how
    - Context = when & where

- Language Goals

- p. 13 “Training target selection should be based on the actual needs and interests of each child within his or her communication environments. The focus of instruction should be on increasing the effectiveness of child- initiated communication.”
  - = their communication breakdowns, your intervention targets
  - = their topics, your tasks
- p. 13 “training targets should be selected on the basis of each child’s actual communication needs and abilities, rather than on some preconceived agenda. The targets selected for training should be functional or useful in a client’s everyday communication environment.”

- Language Intervention

- p. 13 “Not all language features occur with equal frequency. It may be necessary, therefore, to create more frequent opportunities for a feature to occur. An SLP must create activities and modify the environment to increase the need for the target feature.”

- = serve as manipulators of the environment to increase the need for and use of the target language goals

- p. 14 “Training should occur in actual use within a conversational context.”

- Lang. intervention (cont.)
  - p. 16 “Language should be trained within the daily activities of the client. Daily routines can provide a familiar framework within which conversation can occur. The familiar situation provides a frame that allows for a degree of automatization important in the acquisition of such skills as language. Often called incidental teaching, this approach attempts to ensure that children learn and have ample opportunity to use language within naturally occurring activities ( McCormick, 1986; Owens, 1982d; Warren & Rogers- Warren, 1985).”
    - Old form/new function
    - New function/old form

- Evidenced Based Practice:
  - p. 17 “Not all clinical evidence is created equal.”
  - p. 18 criteria for evaluating empirical evidence
  - Use of evidenced based practices to provide information in the “Q&A” section of our course.