
Language Sampling

Ch. 5 – Owens 5th Edition

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Purpose

- What do you want to accomplish as a result of your language sampling work?
 - i.e., what do you want to learn?
 - e.g., what the student can do, when and how they can do it, what they have difficulty doing, or....?

Context

- What difference has context made in the informal observation project you are carrying out on yourself?
 - i.e., how does your language behavior change in relation to the contextual variables of person, place, time, topic, task, modality, or language
- How will the type, or cause of language problems demonstrated by a student impact upon the setting you select for your language sampling work?

Guiding Position of a “Functional Approach” to Language Assessment

- “Language sampling provides more specific information for planning intervention because it includes both the content and context of language use.” (pp. 122)
 - What does the word “content” refer to in this sentence?
- “If the goal of language intervention is generalization to the language used by a child in everyday situations, it is essential that an SLP collect a language sample that is a good reflection of that language in actual use.” (pp. 122)
 - Therefore, one of your first task is to determine the student’s pattern of daily interactions.

Language Sampling

- “Good language samples do not just occur. They are the result of careful planning and execution. An SLP can design the assessment session so that the context fits the purpose of collecting the desired sample. The result is usually a combination of free conversation sampling and some evocative techniques. Both are essential.” (pp. 122)
 - What does the term “evocative techniques” refer to and why would they be needed?

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- “Several issues are of importance when planning and collecting our language sample. Among the most prominent are the representativeness of the sample and the effect of conversational context. In addition, collection of several language forms and functions may require the use of evocative techniques.” (pp. 122)
 - What are some of the factors that would negatively impact the “representativeness” of a language sample?

- “Representativeness or typicalness can be addressed by ensuring spontaneity and by collecting samples under a variety of conditions. Spontaneity can be achieved if a child and a conversational partner engage in real conversations on topics of interest to the child.” (pp. 122)
- “To ensure spontaneity, an SLP can follow the (LCC) 3 formula for (a) less clinician control, (b) less clinician contrivance, and (c) a less conscious child (Cochrane, 1983).” (pp. 122)
 - What are some of the situations in which this could be accomplished?

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- “The sample will be less contrived if the SLP follows the child’s lead and adopts the child’s topics for conversation.” (pp. 123)
 - i.e., their topic, your task
 - “More contrived situations, such as “ Tell me about this picture” or “ Explain the rules of Monopoly,” do not elicit spontaneous everyday speech. The most contrived situation occurs when an SLP relies on a tried- and- true, never- fail list of standard questions used with every child.” (pp. 123)
 - Why would this be the case?
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- “A child’s caregivers can offer suggestions to the SLP on contexts to help obtain a representative sample. It may be desirable for caregivers to serve as partners, especially with young children. After the sample has been collected, caregivers can review the data and comment on the typicality of their child’s behavior.” (pp. 123)
 - Involving the parents in this way is not only appropriate, but also critical to establish an effective partnership.
- “The sampling environment can contribute to representativeness if there is a variety of contexts, including various settings, tasks, partners, and topics.” (pp. 123)
 - How do you decide which contexts to include?

- “Two aspects of context are structure and predictability (Bain, Olswang,& Johnson, 1992).
 - Structure is the amount of adult manipulating of materials and evoking of particular utterances.
 - Predictability is the familiarity of the overall task and materials.
 - In general, children will produce a greater frequency and diversity of language features in low- structure situations and more new features in predictable ones (Bain et al., 1992).” (pp. 124)
 - Why would this be the case?

- “Routinized events or routines provide mutually understood and conventionalized interactions.” (pp. 124)
- “Scripts are linguistic and nonlinguistic patterns that accompany routines,…” (pp. 124)
 - Think of patterns of socially expected and appropriate behaviors.
 - How do you learn such “scripts” and what happens when they are not used effectively?
- “An attentive, responsive partner will elicit more language from child. In joint, or shared, attention situations, children produce more extended conversation and are best able to determine the meanings and intentions of the partner.” (pp. 124)
 - Why would this be the case?

- “The best sampling context is a meaningful activity containing a variety of elicitation tasks. In general, a child who is more familiar with the situation will give the most representative sample.” (pp. 124)
- “...familiar routines provide a linguistic and/ or nonlinguistic script that guides a child’s behavior.” (pp. 124)
 - i.e., they know what to do, they can use what they understand to learn new information/strategies
- “The challenge for an SLP is to find a collection technique that strikes a balance. Too highly structured methods often are not representative (Fujiki & Brinton, 1987).” (pp. 125)
 - + be cognizant of cultural and linguistic differences

- ““Conversational sampling should be authentic and functional (Damico, 1993). Authenticity comes from the use of real communication contexts in which the participants convey real information.” (pp. 125)
 - What constitutes an unauthentic conversation?
 - Why is the difference between authentic and unauthentic so important?
- “The selection of clinical materials can affect the pragmatic performance of young children by modifying the physical context in which the sample is collected.” (pp. 125)
 - KEY = “... modifying the physical context...”
- “If certain language features are desired, an SLP must increase the probability of their occurrence.” (pp. 126)
 - How?

- “...peer interaction usually involves more equal status between participants than do adult– child interactions. Adults tend to guide and control the topic when conversing with children, whereas child– child conversations are presumably more equal.” (pp. 127)
 - What, if any, preparation would be required to use peers in this way?
 - What are the downsides to such use?
- “As the conversational partner, the SLP can set the tone of the interaction by being nondirective, interesting, interested, and responsive. The SLP should respond to the content of the child’s language, not to the way it is said. At this point, the purpose is to collect data, not to change behavior. Our goal is collecting, not correcting.” (pp. 127)
 - i.e., have a real conversation! This is hard to do, why?

■ Topics:

- “Children have a wide variety of interests, and the conversational partners must be careful to enable a child to talk about them. Children are more spontaneous and produce more language when they are allowed to initiate the topics of discussion.” (pp. 127)
 - ...their topic, your task
 - Can you identify a personal experience that mirrors this concept?
 - How do you find out student’s topical interests?
 - What do you do if they only have a very limited number of topics on which they are interested in interacting with you on?

Evocative Conversational Techniques

- “Although the sample should represent everyday language use, free samples may have limitations, such as low frequency or nonappearance of certain linguistic features and conversational behaviors.” (pp. 128)
- P. 130, Table 5.3
 - What are some similar situations that could be used with older students?
- Consider the pragmatic function of the linguistic forms you are attempting to elicit. Use this information to structure the situation.

■ Intentions or Illocutionary Functions

- “Illocutionary functions are the intentions of each utterance.” (pp. 130)

- vs. the overall conversational task

■ P. 131, table 5.4

- Illocutionary functions + how to elicit from child

■ Pp. 132-133

- Extended description of the illocutionary functions

- Assessment =

- What the students can do + where

- What the students want to do, + where, but are experiencing frequent and substantial difficulty accomplishing

Presuppositional & Deictic Skills

- “Presupposition is the speaker’s assumption about the knowledge level of the listener and the tailoring of language to that supposed level. Deixis is the interpretation of information from the perspective of the speaker.” (pp. 134)
 - Why would the lack of such skills cause problems?
 - How would you recognize when such problems occur?
 - How do you improve your presuppositional skills?

Discourse Organization

- This information is represented by the “conversational model” I shared with you last week
 - Assessment focuses upon how well/effectively the child accomplishes each of the tasks.

Language Form (pp. 137)

- Remember that function dictates form
- What are patterns of language use that indicate a student's problems are rooted in the form, vs. the function of language?
- P. 138, table 5.6 "Elicitation of Some Language Features"
 - Techniques focus upon establishing contexts in which the targeted language forms naturally occur.
 - Let's explore this concept of the "functional foundation" of language forms.

Recording the Sample

- “There is no ideal length for a conversational sample.” (pp. 138)
 - You are looking for patterns
 - How much you have to look, depends on the complexity of the patterns and your skill in observing
 - How long has it taken you to find patterns in the language use within your observational studies?
 - If you are observing someone you do not know as well, if the individual is using patterns of communicative behavior that you do not use, then it will take more observations to “figure out.”

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- P. 139, Table 5.7 “Guidelines for Language Sampling with CLD Children”
 - Can parents assist you with this?
 - Can the student’s themselves learn how to observe, record, understand, share, and “fix” their own language?
 - “A language sample is recorded permanently by using an a log or digital recording, event transcription, or a combination of these.” (pp. 139)
 - How can you, and or parents, realistically make such recordings, i.e., do you/they have the needed technologies?

Transcribing the Sample

- “The SLP transcribes the linguistic behavior of both the child and the conversational partner, along with the nonlinguistic behaviors of each. The timesheet format in Table 5.9 enables the SLP to evaluate delays or latencies on the part of the child.” (pp. 141)
- Discuss:
 - How to do this in a way that is “doable” given all of the task you will have as a teacher, vs. a SLP?
 - How to give the student’s increasing responsibility for this and related tasks?
 - How to develop transcripts of sign, sign + speech, vs. speech, or written dialogues?

Summary Guidelines for Language Sampling

- pp. 144
 - “Establish a positive relationship with the child before recording the language sample.
 - Reduce your authority- figure persona to ensure more participation by the child. A child is more likely to respond naturally with someone who is an equal.
 - Be unobtrusive while collecting the sample so that the child is less conscious of the process.
 - The conversational partner should keep talking to a minimum. Although SLPs abhor a vacuum, when possible you should wait out the child when possible.

- ❑ Avoid yes/ no questions and constituent questions (e. g., what's that?) that require only a one- word response from the child. Ask process rather than product questions (e. g., how do you do that?).
- ❑ Follow the child's lead in play and in the selection of topic. Determine the child's interests before beginning the collection process. Select those materials at the child's interest level that are likely to stimulate interest.
- ❑ If the child does not talk or responds in a very repetitive or stereotypic manner, model responses for the child or have another person model.
- ❑ Collect more than one sample.” (pp. 144)

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- Discuss how such language sampling directives can be carried out during the course of everyday school activities and classes.
 - i.e., discuss what is realistic for teachers to do