
Chapter 6: Analysis Across Utterances and by Communication Event

Owens, Robert E. (2010). *Language disorders: A functional approach to assessment and intervention*, 5th Edition. Boston, MA: Pearson

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- “Traditional analysis has focused exclusively on the utterance or sentence as the unit of analysis.” p. 146
 - Actually on what the student said, not what was said to them.
 - 100-200 utterances transcribed
 - Transcription limited to verbal, vs. visual and/or motorical behavior
 - Focus upon the correctness of utterances via “normal” developmental progression
 - “To analyze language only at the utterance level is to miss many of a child’s language skills, especially those aspects that govern cohesion and conversational manipulation.” p. 146
 - i.e., focus upon language form/performance, vs. function/competence

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- p. 146, Table 6.1 “Types of Analysis Beyond the Utterance”
 - Across Utterances and Partners
 - By Communication Event
 - This is what we are doing via the Observational Studies

Across Utterances and Partners

■ Stylistic Variations

- By age 4 children begin to vary their language when communicating with younger, less linguistically advanced, children
- Register Shifts
 - How you alter your language depending on the context, i.e., place, person, topic, task, modality, language
 - You do this to enhance your communicative effectiveness

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- Register Shifts (cont.)
 - Children with language difficulties often fail to make expected register shifts, either because they do not know when, or how such shifts should be made
 - As a result these children often:
 - Provide insufficient information, or reasons to/for the individual they are communicating with
 - Interject inappropriate language, statements, questions
 - Fail to alter their language based on the feedback, i.e., communication breakdowns, of their conversational partners

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- Interlanguage & Code Switching
 - Occurs when individuals make errors in switching between two languages
 - Usually problems cease as individual gains additional experience, assuming they are provided with sufficient feedback
 - i.e., students learning what are the expected patterns of behavior and language use in L2 vs. L1

■ Channel Availability

- Refers to the fact that the less information you have available to you during an interaction, the more likely you are to experience communication breakdowns
 - Within our conversational model, these channels are visual, motorical and verbal
 - Note: each culture/language has its own unique patterns of beh.

■ Referential Communication

- “Referential communication is the ability of a speaker to select and verbally identify the attributes of an entity in such a way that the listener can identify the entity accurately.” (p. 148)
 - i.e., to describe ‘x’ in a way that ‘y’ can understand

■ Presuppositional Skills

- This is how well the speaker/signer understands and then uses that understanding, to interact with the listener/“looker” in a way that they can understand
- This use of this principle can be represented by the Gricean Principles
 - Quality..... = truthful
 - Quantity.... = as much as necessary and no more
 - Relevance. = pertinent to the conversation
 - Manner.... = in a way that can be understood

- Presuppositional Skills (cont.)
 - “From early on, informativeness is a characteristic of communication. Even toddlers tend to code information that is maximally informative, thus talking about things that are new, different, and changing. For most children, the receptive and expressive ability to consider a partner’s perspective is well established by age 10.” (p. 149)
- “Children with LD have poor referential skills and are less likely to adjust to the listener and more likely to provide ambiguous and insufficient information. In addition, although children with LD seem to understand directions given by others, they take longer to comply than do age- matched children who are non- LD (Feagans & Short, 1986) and have great difficulty giving adequate instructions.” (p. 149)

- Deitics “...linguistic elements that must be interpreted from the perspective of the speaker in order to be understood as the speaker intended.” (p. 150)
 - i.e., what does the listener know/understand about ‘x’
 - e.g., “the” vs. “a” [know vs. don’t know ‘x’]
 - e.g., “come” and “here” [as perceived from the speaker’s perspective]
 - E.g., “this” and “that” and “those” [as intended from the speaker’s perspective]

- Cohesive Devices

- Conversational cohesion, i.e., how the entire conversation holds together, makes sense vs. the individual elements of the conversation

- [see next slides from the Brinton & Fujiki text]

- concept of “cohesion”....bit confusing in text, better explanation provided by Brinton B., & Fujiki M. (1989). Conversational management with language-impaired children. Aspen Publication: Rockville, Maryland.
 - cohesion – “...refers to the fact that successive utterances or turns in conversation can be linked.’ (p 57)
 - “...cohesion is not enough to ensure coherence. Coherence is evident when utterances and turns are related to an overriding goal.” (p. 58)
 - cohesion....:next” sentence relates to the previous sentence
 - coherence....all of the sentences relate to the same topic and/or conversational task/goal

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- p 11 - Fey's (1986) 4 categories of conversational behavior: “+” = student; “-” = adult
 - active conversationalist [+/+]
 - passive conversationalist [-/+]
 - inactive communicator [-/-]
 - verbal noncommunicator [+/-]

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- Conversational turn taking
 - p 27 - sequential, clustering of turn taking signaling behavior
 - p 27 - primacy of motorical over verbal signaling behavior
 - p 28 - listener's use of "back channel" responsive behaviors & cultural specific nature of such behaviors
 - p 38 - initial reliance upon "pause duration" as primary turn taking signal

- Ch. 3: Topic Manipulation
 - p 44 - definitions of "topic"
 - p 45 - multiple nature of conversational exchanges
 - p 46 - role of "questions" as topic markers & the function as a "response requester"
 - p 47 - role of specific function words as topic change markers
 - p 51 - concept of "topic maintenance"
 - p 51 - types of topic maintenance, i.e. local & global
 - p 52 - concept of "discontinuous discourse"
 - p 52 - linguistic and behavioral markers for change of topics
 - p 52 - topic "shading" vs. straight or discontinuous topics
 - p 56 - concept of "topic reintroduction"
- p 59 - parental use of "scaffolding" and child development of "scripts"
 - p 59 - role of scripts in the lang. dev. process and the instructional use of games
 - p 59 - role of increasingly sophisticated syntactical use in topic maintenance

■ Topic Maintenance - p 58-62

- reflexive to intentional signaling of desired topic by infant/toddler/child
- initially, adult carry the burden to recognize, build upon and maintain the child's topic...focus is to engage the child and keep the interaction going as long as possible
- topical progression is from "self," to objects, events, and individuals in the immediate context over which the child can effect some change. Later, abstract topics are added, in addition, topics can be introduced by others.
- initial way that children maintain a topic is repetition, i.e., repeat what the adult says
- adults expand children's topics by topic "shading", i.e., by referencing the current topic to objects and events in the past and future and by facilitating child's exploration and understanding of their growing environment

- p 64 Communication Repair
 - communication repair - Who:
 - a. other-initiated, self-repaired
 - “What did you say?” - “I said ‘Hi!’”
 - b. self-initiated, self-repaired
 - “I...we are ready to go now.”
 - c. other-initiated, other-repaired
 - “You said ‘today’, but I know you meant ‘yesterday.’”
 - d. self-initiated, other-repaired
 - Oh....what is the word I am looking for....” – “register?”
 - while all four types of repair mechanisms are used by adults....which do you think require the least/most language competence to perform?
 - least = “a” & “c”
 - most = “b” & “d”
 - ...implication = “b” & “d” represent language goals...why?

- p 66 - communication repair - How:
 1. nonspecific request for repetition
 - “Huh?” = repeat all
 2. specific request for repetition
 - “You said ‘who?’” = repeat “x”
 3. specific request for specification
 - “Where do you want to go?” = tell me “x”
 4. request for confirmation
 - “You really went with him?” = explain “x”
 5. direct request
 - “What does that sign mean?” = what is “x”
 6. relevance request
 - “Why is that important?” = justify “x”

- Repair strategies (cont.)

- p 81 - covert repairs - "...consists of an interruption of speech with an editing term or repetition of one or more words"

- p 81 - causes of covert repairs:

- a) further justify a message

- b) desire to continue speaking, but unsure what to say next

■ Repair strategies (cont.)

- p 82 - other-initiated/other-repaired con. strategies:
 - a) rarely occur
 - b) every opportunity given for self repair
 - c) considered socially inappropriate for an adult to do this to another adult
 - d) "THIS MAY STEM...FROM THE FACT THAT THESE TYPES OF REPAIRS CAN SHIFT EMPHASIS AWAY FROM WHAT THE SPEAKER HAS TO SAY TO HOW THE SPEAKER SAYS IT."
 - e) even when such repairs occur, they tend to focus upon content or lexical items RATHER THAN SYNTAX OR PHONOLOGY
 - f) some evidence that child language dev. is hindered by "...differential reinforcement of correct and incorrect utterances..."
 - g) such repairs appear to "devalue" the child's production

■ Repair strategies (cont.)

- p 85 - self-initiated/other repaired, i.e. speaker located trouble source and repairs were provided by listeners (e.g., listener provides the word that the speaker was trying to think of [SEEMS LIKE AN IDEAL TIME FOR VOCABULARY BUILDING!])
- p 86 - "...repair mechanisms appear to play an integral part in the language acquisition process." = IMPLICATION FOR OUR LANGUAGE INTERVENTION WORK?
 - p 86 - other-initiated repair strategies - constitute an early, important part of the dev. process
- p 87 - production of clarification request is "predicated" on:
 - a) ability to monitor conversation
 - b) judge the intelligibility, relevance and truth value of messages
 - c) knowledge of the availability and pragmatic use of a variety of linguistic forms
 - d) knowledge of when and how to initiate a repair strategy

■ Repair strategies (cont.)

- p 87 - level of syntactic sophistication does not directly influence request for clarifications
- Developmental progression of repair strategies:
 - p 92 - "All subjects demonstrated a variety of repair strategies, but these strategies were used differently at different ages. Older subjects chose strategies that involved the addition of information rather than just the repetition of the message more often than did younger subjects."
 - p 92 - "Although young children are good at responding to clarification request, they may have difficulty specifying the particular element of the message in need of clarification."

- p. 157

- Latency of Contingency

- “When the child makes contingent responses, there should be little delay or latency between his, or her, turn and the preceding speaker’s turn.”
 - ...the need to interpret/translate what was communicated will take time...much longer than normally experienced in interactions between h/h or D/D
 - ...implication....extend “wait time” = increase comprehension and/or request for communication repair....why?

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- Patterns of conversational language problems demonstrated by students:
 - a) many "...do not appear to have the persistence to continue to obtain a turn from other children and adults after an initial attempt fails."
 - b) many have difficulty in initiating topics within turns
 - c) many will work to maintain the topics of others, but are hesitant to introduce their own
 - d) many will introduce topics, but do so in a way that is very difficult to understand, maintain or follow

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- Patterns of conversational language problems demonstrated by students: (cont.)
 - e) many will have difficulty knowing what topics to introduce in a given context and/or have only a very limited array of topics that they can introduce
 - f) many have difficulty giving "speaking turns" to others
 - g) many take too many turns and introduce too many topics and thus disregard the interest of their listeners
 - h) many may be unresponsive to their conversational partner

- p 99 - discuss the "rule-of-thumb" that can/should be used to determine if a given behavior constitutes a "language problem" or not
- p 99 - occurrence of "simultaneous" or overspeech
- p 100 - use of interruptions with language impaired children:
 - a) may be very disruptive to the language dev. process
 - b) may cause them further difficulty with lang. productions
 - c) may reduce their level of assertiveness within conversational exchanges

- p141-166 - Facilitating Turns & Topics

1. begin with nonverbal exchange activities...games that do not require lang.
2. imitate the child's behavior...com. system
3. sustain the interaction...keep it going for as long as possible
4. use interactive games, favorite stories, social "scripts"....fun, familiar routines within which new behaviors can be easily understood

- p141-166 - Facilitating Turns & Topics (cont.)

5. use questions...signals a “turn” is requested

6. use clarification request....encourages persistence

7. allow sufficient response time....count to “10”

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- p. 168 - Conversational Breakdowns
 - “In essence, the entire analysis of the language of children with LI (language impairment) is an attempt to find where the children are ineffectual, where they fail to communicate.”
 - ...keep this in mind when SLP/others question why you are not using a normalists, psychometric test that was neither designed nor valid to determine the language abilities, differences and needs of d/hh students.

 - pp 139 assessments should:
 - a. determine area of deficit
 - b. determine point of breakdown
 - c. determine existing strategies
 - d. determine cause of problem
 - e. determine alternative behavioral sequence