

TSHA SI DISABILITY DETERMINATION GUIDELINES FOR LANGUAGE DISORDER

REVISED 2020



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General Information

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Purpose and Intended Use of the SI Disability Determination Guidelines for Language Disorders

The purpose of the Disability Determination Guidelines for Language Disorder is to provide a structure within which the speech-language pathologist (SLP) can use consistent, evidence-based evaluation procedures in accordance with the law to:

- Provide information to teachers and parents regarding the nature of language and language disorders and, when indicated, provide classroom intervention recommendations based on data collected by the campus student support team. Names for this committee vary by school district. For the purposes of these guidelines, the committee reviewing the need for interventions prior to referral for special education evaluation will be referred to as the Response to Intervention (RTI) Team.
- Complete a comprehensive evaluation of a student’s language abilities following a referral with language concerns for a Full and Individual Evaluation (FIE) for special education.
- Identify whether a language disorder is present.
- Determine if the presence of a language disorder results in a disruption in academic achievement and/or functional performance, and document the need for specially designed instruction or supplementary aids and services by the SLP.
- Make recommendations to the Admission, Review, Dismissal (ARD) committee regarding eligibility for special education services and support based on Speech Impairment (SI).

These language disorder guidelines are intended to be used in combination with the information provided in the Texas Speech-Language-Hearing Association (TSHA) Disability Determination Guidelines for Speech Impairment 2020, with the understanding that the use of the tools in this language disorder guidelines manual requires additional, specialized training. SLPs should become very familiar with the information in that manual and be aware that information from both manuals is essential to completing a comprehensive evaluation of language.

It should be noted that these guidelines are no longer referred to as “Eligibility Guidelines.” The reason for the change is to highlight the fact that the ARD committee determines eligibility. The assessment data/analysis, which is explained in an evaluation report, should determine the disability and make recommendations for the ARD committee to establish the eligibility. Please see the TSHA Disability Determination Guidelines for Speech Impairment 2020 for additional information (available online at www.txsha.org).

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In addition, companion manuals provide specific information for disability determination of speech impairment with a language disorder when another disability condition is present (Autism, Intellectual Disability, Specific Learning Disability, and Language Disorder for Student from Culturally or Linguistically Diverse backgrounds).

Definitions

Attention Deficits

Attention, as a concept studied in cognitive psychology, refers to how we actively process specific information in our environment. Approximately 5% to 7% of school-aged children have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD; American Psychiatric Association, 2013; *DSM – 5*). ADHD affects the child’s ability to control attention and behavior. There are two components of ADHD: (a) symptoms of inattention – with problems of poor attention and concentration, distractibility and poor organizational skills; and (b) symptoms of hyperactivity/impulsivity – described as fidgety, always on the go, interrupting and talking incessantly, and acting without thinking.

Auditory Processing

Auditory processing involves the perceptual processing of auditory information in the central nervous system as demonstrated by performance on auditory discrimination tasks, auditory pattern recognition, temporal aspects of audition, auditory performance in competing acoustic signals, and auditory performance with degraded acoustic signals (ASHA, 2005). The problems of children identified as having a possible auditory processing disorder are multimodal and may be caused by cognitive, memory, attention, and language deficits (Paul et al., 2018).

Language

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) has defined language as a dynamic system that involves the ability to integrate knowledge of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and metalinguistics to create sentences within conversational, narrative, and expository discourse contexts (ASHA, 1983). Owens (2020) defines language as a socially shared code or conventional system for representing concepts through the use of arbitrary symbols and rule-governed combinations of those symbols.

Language Disorder

ASHA has defined language disorder as impairment in comprehension and/or use of spoken, written, and/or other symbol system. The disorder may involve (a) the form of language

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(phonologic, morphologic, and syntactic systems), (b) the content of language (semantic system), and/or (c) the function of language in communication (pragmatic system), in any combination (ASHA, 1993).

A language disorder is evident when there is a significant deficit in the child's level of development of the form, content, or use of language (Fey, 1986); or put another way, when there is a significant deficit in learning to talk, understand, or use any aspect of language appropriately, relative to both environmental and norm-referenced expectations for children of similar development level (Paul et al., 2018).

Memory

Memory is the ability to retain information or a representation of past experience based on the mental processes of encoding, retention across some interval of time, and retrieval of the memory.

Metalinguistics

Metalinguistics refers to consideration of language in the abstract, stepping back from language to make judgments about correctness or appropriateness. Metalinguistics is important for reading and writing (Owens, 2020).

Morphology

A morpheme is the smallest unit of meaning in a word. Morphology is the study of words, how they are formed, and their relationship to other words in the same language. Morphology is the aspect of language concerned with the rules governing change in meaning at the intraword level (Owens, 2020).

Phonology

Phonology refers to the sound system of a language and the rules governing these sounds, including the phonemic inventory, allowable sequences and phonological processes (Owens, 2020). Phonological awareness is important in reading for decoding and mapping letters in print to the sounds represented by the letters.

Pragmatics

Pragmatics refers to the social use of language, including the goals or functions of language, the use of content to determine what form to use to achieve these goals, and the rules for carrying out cooperative conversations (Paul et al., 2018). Pragmatics includes

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communication to express intent for behavior regulation, social interaction, maintaining joint attention, and rules for interaction in conversation and in narratives.

Reading

Reading is the cognitive process of understanding information presented in written form. It is a way of getting information and insights about something in print, and it involves understanding the print symbols of the language. Skilled reading involves fluent execution and coordination of word recognition and text comprehension. (Scarborough, 2003).

Reading Readiness

Reading readiness is also called emergent literacy and refers to the period from birth to entering school when children acquire knowledge of letters, words, and books through early literacy experiences (Snow & Dickinson, 1991). The foundations for literacy include phonological awareness, print concepts, alphabet knowledge, and literate language (Justice & Kaderavek, 2004).

Semantics

Semantics is the aspect of language concerned with rules governing the meaning or content of words or grammatical units (Owens, 2020). Semantics refers to both the meaning of words and how words relate to each other in meanings, including referential and relational semantics and non-literal forms such as idioms, humor, metaphors and similes.

Social Communication

Social communication encompasses formal pragmatic rules, social inferencing, and social interaction (Adams, 2008). Children who struggle with social communication may have difficulties initiating and maintaining conversational topics, requesting and providing clarification, turn-taking, matching communication style to the social context, understanding other people's thinking, and understanding emotion from nonverbal cues or situational context (Paul et al., 2018).

Syntax

Syntax refers to the way in which elements of the language are sequenced together, including morphemes, phrases, clauses, and transformations. Syntax consists of the organizational rules specifying word order, sentence organization, and word relationships (Owens, 2020).

Communication Model

(Rudebusch & Wiechmann, 2006)

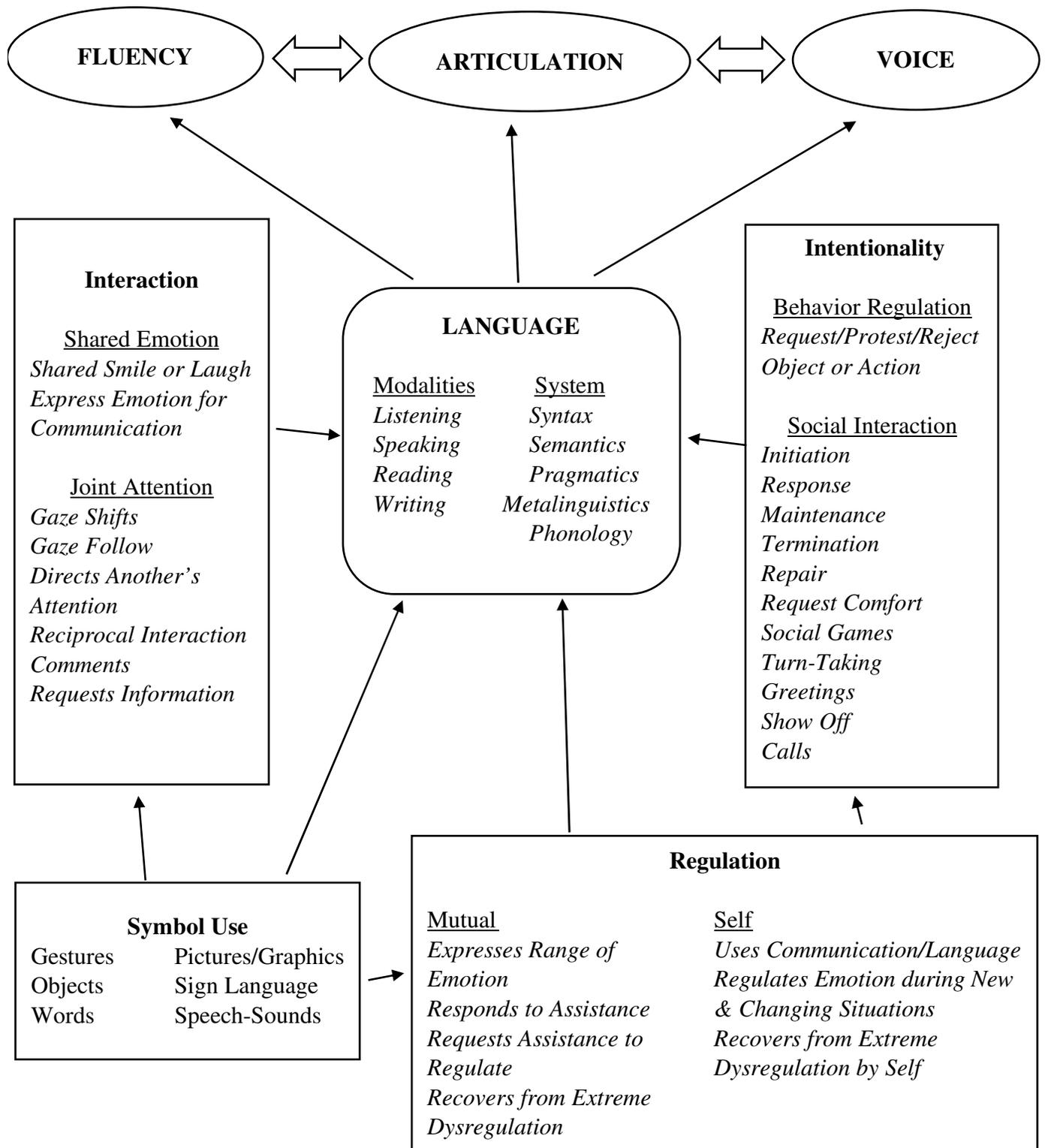
Communication involves using hearing, language, and speech to receive, send, process, and comprehend concepts or verbal, nonverbal, and graphic symbol systems. The speech bases of communication include articulation of speech sounds, fluency, vocal quality, pitch, loudness, and resonance (Figure 1). The modalities of language (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are used to exchange ideas, concepts, and information. Language systems consist of:

- **Language form**
 - Phonology – the sound system and rules that govern the sound combinations
 - Morphology – the system that governs the structure of words and construction of word forms
 - Syntax – the system governing the order and combination of words to form sentences and the relationships among the elements within a sentence;
- **Language content**
 - Semantics – the system that governs the meanings of words and sentences;
- **Language function/use**
 - Pragmatics – the system that combines language components in narrative, functional, and socially appropriate communication;
 - Metalinguistics – the logical understanding of the rules used to govern language and to analyze language as a process or a system.

Language and communication are used for three purposes: for social interaction, to express intentionality, and to regulate the behavior of self and others (Figure 1). The SLP has an important role in evaluating the communication skills that transcend symbol-use expressed through speech and language.

Figure 1: *Communication Model* follows on the next page.

COMMUNICATION MODEL



Prepared by Rudebusch, J. & Wiechmann, J., 2006

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Components of a Comprehensive Evaluation of Language

Comprehensive evaluation of a student's language learning system includes assessment of the student's:

- Language Modalities – listening, speaking, reading, writing;
- Language System – metalinguistics, phonology, pragmatics, semantics, syntax/morphology;
- Language Purpose – joint attention, shared emotion, social interaction, behavior regulation, social interaction, mutual and self-regulation;
- Symbol Use – words, sign language, pictures/graphics, gestures, objects.

It is important that all areas of language are addressed and that those areas of concern are assessed in depth. *Addressing* an area of language suggests that general information indicates that there are no concerns about this particular aspect of the student's language system. *Assessing* an area of language means that data is collected and analyzed.

There are several methods for evaluating language form, content, and use:

- Informal, criterion-referenced assessments such as developmental scales, interviews and questionnaires;
- Norm-referenced standardized assessments;
- Behavioral observations including curriculum-based and dynamic assessments.

Each of these methods has a place in the language evaluation process and provides important pieces of information; however, **none of these methods can be used in isolation as the sole criteria for determination of a language disorder and the recommendation for speech impairment as an eligibility condition for special education services.**

There are four phases in a comprehensive evaluation of language.

- ***Phase I – Assessment Plan***

Review referral information and outside evaluations when available, collect information from the parent and classroom teacher, and complete a criterion-referenced story retell task along with a short conversational language sample. This information is used to determine language areas of concern. Plan evaluation activities based on information gathered in Phase I.

- ***Phase II – Data Collection***

Administer criterion-referenced measures, language sample, checklists, questionnaires, observations, and norm-referenced/standardized tests across school environments as outlined in the Evaluation Plan.

- ***Phase III – Analysis and Interpretation***

Complete the *Language Evaluation Summary Form* and analyze results from Phase II – Data Collection. Look for a pattern of performance that provides evidence of a language disorder or no language disorder. Interpret results of tests and activities to answer these questions:

- Is there a language disorder?
- If so, is there an adverse effect on educational performance (academic achievement or functional performance) resulting from the language disorder?

When there is a documented language disorder with documentation of adverse effect on educational performance, the conditions for disability determination have been met.

The final question to answer when giving recommendations to the ARD committee regarding eligibility for special education with a Speech Impairment is:

- Is specially designed instruction from the SLP needed to address the Speech Impairment (disability condition)?

- ***Phase IV – Evaluation Report***

Complete a comprehensive Full Individual Evaluation report with results of formal and informal tests/measures, description of the student's language system, interpretation of results, and clear description of disability determination. The Evaluation Report will include recommendations to the ARD committee about eligibility for services based on speech impairment as well as recommendations about specially designed services from the SLP, or, if there is no documented disability, recommendations to support the student based on referral concerns.

Information Materials Regarding Language

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Language Information Provided to Teachers and Parents

What is a Language Disorder?

A language disorder is present when a student has difficulty with the ability to understand spoken language and/or difficulty with the ability to verbally communicate thoughts. Language disorders are typically divided into the following categories:

Syntax & Morphology: the sequenced arrangement of words and morphemes (single, meaningful units) in the sentences of a language. Examples:

- Use subject/verb agreement and correct verb tenses
- Use question forms correctly
- Put words in the correct order when speaking
- Include small words such as “the,” “an,” “is,” “are,” “am”
- Use compound sentences
- Use verb tenses correctly
- Use regular and irregular plural nouns correctly

Semantics: the meaning of language. Examples:

- Group words into categories
- Understand antonyms and synonyms
- Understand and use place words (prepositions)
- Compare and contrast objects and ideas
- Solve analogies
- Describe pictures and events sequentially and with detail
- Understand concepts such as “more,” “less than,” “same,” “different”

Pragmatics: the system that combines the above language components in functional and social contexts. Examples:

- Communicate with intent
- Initiate participation in classroom discussion
- Stay on subject when talking
- Vary style of speech patterns and language for listener
- Respond to directions and questions
- Request help
- Maintain personal space boundaries
- Answer questions in social situations

Metalinguistics: the use of language knowledge to make decisions about and to discuss the process of language. Examples:

- Provide definitions of words
- Detect errors in grammar
- Judge sentences as appropriate for a specific listener or setting
- Use correct word order and wording in sentences
- Identify specific linguistic units (sounds, syllables, words, sentences).

Red flags for Recognizing a Language Disorder

Significant concerns about any of the skills listed above may be considered a *Red Flag* for a possible language disorder. Specific concerns should be documented and provided to the campus Student Support Team for discussion.

How Does Language Impact Classroom Performance?

The ability to read and write is strongly influenced by the ability to understand and use language. Students who are good listeners and speakers tend to become strong readers and writers. Language is basic to all academic subjects. Any language disorder affects the student's ability to master the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) that relate to listening and speaking. In some cases a language disorder also affects learning to read.

What Should I do if I Suspect a Student has a Language Disorder?

Teachers: Document concerns and follow district procedures for Response to Intervention or Multi-Tier Systems of Support (RTI/MTSS). Provide pre-referral interventions as needed, and complete a *Teacher Checklist – Initial Referral for Language Concerns*. Conduct a parent conference to discuss your concerns about the student's learning. Obtain the *Parent Information – Initial Referral for Language Concerns*. Concerns about the student's learning in the classroom should be discussed by the Student Support Team.

Parents: Request a teacher conference to discuss your concerns with the classroom teacher.

Classroom Considerations for Students Struggling with Language Skills

Language and Curriculum Expectations

Disability determination of a language disorder for school-based SLP services is based on documentation of the language disorder *and* documentation of adverse effect on educational performance, which includes academic achievement and/or functional performance. School-based SLP services are provided to support the student with a language disorder make progress in the curriculum. In order to enhance educational relevance in SLP service delivery, there are three overarching principles to guide intervention:

- **Use Curriculum-Based Intervention**
SLPs should avoid working on language skills in isolation, but instead, target goals based on material based on the student’s academic curriculum (Ehren, 2000; Ukrainetz, 2007), and support the student in achieving state standards for language and literacy (Rudebusch, 2012).
- **Integrate Oral and Written Language**
Provide both oral and written opportunities for students to practice the language forms and functions targeted in the IEP goals and objectives (Schmitt & Tambyraja, 2015). For example, in addition to basic oral language approaches in primary grades, the SLP can include literacy socialization, metalinguistic and phonological awareness, and simple narrative and writing activities. In intermediate grades, use a phased approach that begins the intervention with primarily oral and highly contextualized tasks, moving to increasingly literate and decontextualized activities.
- **Go Meta**
School-based language intervention should also focus on the “metas” – activities that direct the student’s attention to the language and cognitive skills a student uses in the curriculum (Ebbels, 2014; Wallach, 2010). Meta skills include talking about talking and thinking about thinking. At the basic level, the SLP can demonstrate, model, and allow for practice of different forms and functions of language work. At the meta level, the SLP and student discuss the language forms and functions being used and state rules and principles explicitly related to these rules, with application to curriculum standards.

Language and Literacy

Students who struggle with language form, content, and use will have difficulty meeting the academic, social, and functional expectations at school. Reading is a language-based skill. Once words have been decoded, the same linguistic knowledge

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about the content, form, and use of language that is needed to understand spoken discourse is used for comprehension in reading (Catts & Kamhi, 2012). Children with limited skills in comprehension of spoken language will have the same problem comprehending written text. Intact, well-developed oral language skills in syntax, semantics, and pragmatics are necessary to comprehend both written texts and classroom discourse (Skibbe et al., 2008).

Scarborough (2003) used the illustration of “The Reading Rope” to demonstrate that skilled reading involves many strands that are woven together. Reading involves coordination of word recognition and text comprehension.

- **Word Recognition**
 - Phonological awareness of phonemes, syllables, words
 - Decoding using the alphabetic principle and spelling-sound correspondence
 - Sight recognition of familiar words

- **Language Comprehension**
 - Background knowledge
 - Vocabulary
 - Language structures
 - Verbal reasoning
 - Literacy knowledge

Intervention Strategies for Students Struggling with Language Skills

Response to Intervention (RTI) and more recently, Multi-Tier Systems of Support (MTSS) are systems that districts put in place to support students who struggle in school in order to prevent failure, promote eventual identification of a disability, and possibly provide placement in special education. When students struggle with language it is highly likely that the literacy demands across core content areas will also be challenging.

The Federal Register (2006) specifies that RTI systems should focus on prevention of placement in special education for children who have historically been placed in special education for high incidence disabilities. Speech-Language Impairment and Specific Learning Disability are considered high incidence disabilities. In Texas, the Administrative Code spells out clearly that “prior to referral, students experiencing difficulty in the general classroom should be considered for all support services available to all students such as tutorials, remedial, compensatory, RTI, etc.” (19 TAC § 89.1011). Students who struggle with language should be considered for these supports prior to referral for special education evaluation.

The U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education (Office of Special Education [OSEP], 2012) rendered an opinion in the Letter to Ferrara 60 IDELR 46, that there is no conflict between TAC § 89.1011 and the Child Find Duty under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). However, OSEP cautioned that the parent has the right to request an initial evaluation and further, that the RTI process should not deny or delay a full and individual evaluation of a child with a suspected disability.

Response to Intervention

In a Response to Intervention, more recently referred to as a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) approach, students are provided with different levels of instruction based on need (Ehren & Nelson, 2005; Fuchs et al., 2012).

- ***Tier 1 Classroom Support***
 - Classroom instruction for all students that is evidence-based, standards-based, and rigorous. Children who do not keep pace are provided support in the classroom. Progress of all students is monitored periodically, and children who do not keep pace with expectations even with in-class support are given Tier II instruction.
 - The role of the SLP in Tier 1 Classroom Support
 - Provide consultation to the classroom teacher regarding the five components of effective reading instruction identified by the National Reading Panel (2000):
 - Phonemic Awareness
 - Phonics
 - Vocabulary
 - Fluency
 - Comprehension
 - Advocate for explicit instruction (Adler 2015):
 - Direct explanation
 - Modeling “Thinking Aloud”
 - Guided practice
 - Application
 - Provide classroom lessons designed to shore up language skills, especially vocabulary, grammar, and social communication.
- ***Tier 2 Focused Intervention***
 - Skill-specific, research-based instruction to address weaknesses in students who struggle with language and literacy. Students who do not respond to Tier 1 Classroom Instruction and Support are provided with Tier 2 interventions in addition to Tier 1 Classroom Instruction. Tier 2 intervention is usually provided in small groups with highly structured, skill-specific programs so that students’ responses to the intervention can be measured.

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- The Role of the SLP in Tier 2 Focused Intervention
 - Assist in selection or design of focused intervention
 - Assist with progress monitoring for language-related interventions
 - Provide Tier 2 Focused Intervention.
- ***Tier 3 Intensive Intervention***
 - Skill-specific, research-based intervention provided for students who continue to struggle with language and literacy even with Tier 2 Focused Intervention. Tier 3 Intensive Intervention is provided either one-to-one or in groups of two students, and frequency of delivery of the intervention (number of sessions per week) and duration of intervention (over time) may be increased.
 - The Role of the SLP in Tier 3 Intensive Intervention
 - Assist with progress monitoring for language-related interventions
 - Consider the same intensity of intervention for language struggle as provided for reading struggle
 - Provide Tier 3 Intensive Intervention
 - Monitor progress and give input regarding timely referral for special education evaluation.
 - Example: Student with “wobbly” language skills (Ehren, 2015)
 - Needs effective classroom instruction standards-based curriculum
 - Provide classroom support for students who struggle with the language bases of learning
 - Provide Tier 2 Focused Intervention for students who are not responsive to supports provided in the classroom. Intervention could be delivered by a number of providers (e.g., reading specialist, tutor, Title I teacher, etc.), and focus on language skills needed in reading comprehension
 - Provide Tier 3 Intensive Intervention for students who do not make measurable progress in Tier 2 Focused Intervention. The SLP may provide intensive intervention (2 – 4 times per week) for a short period to bump the student back on track. Non-responders are referred for comprehensive special education evaluation.

Significant Student Factors

Risk factors for language delay have been identified in the literature (Paul et al., 2018). Males are more vulnerable to delay than females. Prolonged periods of untreated otitis media put children at risk for language delay. Children with family members with persistent language, reading, and learning problems are at risk for language delay.

There are environmental factors that also put children with fragile learning systems at risk for language and learning difficulty. Instability in the home – marked by frequent moves or homelessness; poor health and overall wellness – marked by frequent absences or coming to school sick; emotional lability – marked by outbursts and numerous discipline incidents; and children in families who are recent immigrants and who have been exposed to violence may be at risk for language and learning struggle (Perkins & Graham-Berman, 2012).

Check referral information and make note of environmental factors, social-emotional indicators, family history, cultural/linguistic influences, and physical/health history that may contribute to the child’s overall language learning profile.

Data Collection for District RTI/MTSS Process

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Data Collection

The following data are considered essential to completing a comprehensive evaluation of the student's communication skills; however, the method in which the data are collected is district specific and is therefore not included in this manual.

- **Parent data** provides information on sociological factors, achievement of developmental milestones, parent identified strengths and concerns for the student, information on emotional/behavioral functioning, and functional skills.
- **Teacher data** provides information on the educational impact of the student's communication difficulties as well as information related to the student's performance academically and behaviorally in the general education classroom as well as information related to state/district assessments.
- **Health data** provides information on recent hearing and vision screenings as well as any other known health conditions.
- **Home language data** provides information on the language(s) of the home and whether or not the child is exposed to languages other than English.
- **Documentation of interventions** provides information on the specific interventions provided to the student and whether or not progress was made.
- **RTI/MTSS team deliberations** provide information on the decisions made by the Student Support Team as part of the Response to Intervention process.

Overview of Language Evaluation

Overview of Language Evaluation

The purpose of a language evaluation is to assess the student's ability to communicate and function in a variety of environments within the educational setting. After the assessment, the SLP should be able to determine the following:

- Presence of language delay or disorder, rather than language difference;
- Adverse effect of any identified language disorder on educational performance – academic achievement and/or functional performance;
- Strengths and weaknesses in skills necessary for school success;
- Recommendations; assessment drives intervention.

In order to determine the skills used in real-life settings, and especially across school environments, the SLP must look at linguistic and non-linguistic communication, and the cognitive processes that intertwine with language for learning.

Linguistic Communication

Paul et al. (2018) described the key linguistic characteristics of Language Disorder with respect to *form*, *content*, and *use*:

- *Form: Syntax and Morphology*
 - The most consistently reported finding in English is that young children with Language Disorder omit morphosyntactic markers of grammatical tense in spontaneous speech
 - Errors in grammatical forms in older children are an indicator of language disorder
- *Content: Semantics, Vocabulary Knowledge, Knowledge of Objects and Events*
 - Children with a Language Disorder tend to have impoverished vocabularies throughout development
 - As children get older the problem becomes what they know about words (e.g., that words can have more than one meaning)
- *Use: Pragmatics*
 - Pragmatic skills of children with Language Disorder are considered to be immature rather than qualitatively abnormal, as in the case of autism spectrum disorders.

Non-Linguistic Communication

Non-linguistic or extra-linguistic skills include: stress, intonation, pitch, rate of speech, gesture use, and body language. These skills can be observed during direct interaction with the

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student and in focused observations across school environments. When the SLP observes unusual non-linguistic behaviors, a notation is included on observation forms.

Cognitive Processes

Cognitive processes include: crystalized intelligence (language) (Gc), fluid intelligence (Gf), short-term memory (Gsm), long-term memory and retrieval (Glr), visual processing (Gv), auditory processing (Ga), and processing speed (Gs) (McGrew, 2009). These processes may be the underlying cause of the student's language difficulties at school. Some of the behaviors observed in a child who has a weakness in one or more cognitive processes include: a slow rate of response, need for repetition, difficulty repeating a sentence or string of digits, difficulty repeating complex multisyllabic words, and poor non-word repetition.

Phase I of Language Evaluation: Assessment Plan

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Assessment Planning Activities

The purpose of this phase of the language evaluation is to determine assessment questions that will drive the selection of appropriate tools for further data collection.

The following information should be gathered and summarized on the Assessment Planning Worksheet:

- ***Referral concerns***

The packet from the SST/campus referral committee should include referral concerns. If the referral concern is only language, obtain input from the diagnostician about the need for testing to address achievement, literacy, cognition and adaptive skills because of the overlap between language and literacy.

- ***Teacher input***

Teacher observations should be discussed and documented through the SST process using the *Teacher Checklist: Initial Referral for Language Concerns* (see Forms Section). If not completed during the SST process, have the teacher complete the checklist during the Assessment Planning Phase.

- ***Parent input***

Parent observations and concerns are documented on the *Parent Information - Initial Referral for Language Concerns* form (see Forms Section) obtained by the teacher during the referral process, or during the Assessment Planning Phase.

- ***Other Significant Student Factors***

Summarize significant student factors on the Assessment Planning Worksheet (see Forms Section):

- Excessive absences
- History of homelessness
- Instability at home
- Number of schools attended
- Discipline issues concerns or incidents.
- English Learner
- Recent Immigrant
- Poor academic progress in spite of intervention support.

- ***Outside reports***

If any reports from an outside source are available, review and include information you consider relevant on the Assessment Planning Worksheet

- ***Student interaction***
 - Meet with the child to complete a story retell screen and quick conversational language sample. This should take no more than 10 minutes.
 - Conversational language sample: Instructions and tips for obtaining a conversational language sample during the assessment planning stage are included in the Forms Section.
 - Narrative screen: The Story Retell Screener with instructions and scoring are included in the Forms Section. This story retell task is scored as a criterion-referenced measure based on developmental expectations for young children and grade-level expectations (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) for school-age children. Select the Story Retell Screener at the child's grade level through fifth grade. Use the fifth-grade story for older students.
- ***Complete the Assessment Planning Worksheet – Summary Section***
- ***Ask teacher for interventions*** provided and document response to intervention on worksheet.
- ***Follow district guidelines when requesting assessment by the diagnostician.***

Assessment Questions

Develop assessment questions based on the child's weaknesses and areas of concern in order to determine the tests and measures needed to fully evaluate the child's language system. Focused assessment activities allow the SLP to determine if the child's weaknesses and areas of concern are significant and interfere with the child's ability to be successful in school. The assessment questions guide the SLP's selection of assessments and evaluation activities to be administered. These include additional language sampling, criterion referenced assessments, observations and norm-referenced tests or subtests.

During the review of records and assessment planning process, if other disabilities are suspected (e.g., learning disabilities, other health impairment (ADHD), intellectual disabilities), consider the possible need for evaluation for other disabilities in addition to speech impairment. Remember, the evaluation is to be comprehensive enough to identify all suspected disabilities.

Example: Teacher and parent express concern about low vocabulary; the child has limited expression and is not able to retell the story on the story retell task. Assessment questions:

- Are the child's pragmatic language skills for narratives significantly below expectations?

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- Are receptive and expressive vocabulary skills significantly below expectations?

Example: Child demonstrates errors in syntax and grammar in connected speech during the direct interaction in Phase I of the Evaluation. Assessment questions:

- Is there a pattern of syntax and grammar errors?
- What are the specific areas for the errors?

Example: Teacher and parent report that the child is having difficulty learning to read. Assessment questions:

- Is there a language basis for the difficulty learning to read?
- Are vocabulary skills a relative strength or weakness?
- Are pre-reading phonological awareness skills at the expected level?
- Is there a lack of phoneme-grapheme correspondence?

Example: Parent reports that her 3-year-old child's speech is hard to understand. She says that her child understands what she says to him. He does not attend preschool. Assessment questions:

- Is the child's receptive language within normal limits, or is he able to understand only routine instructions in the familiar setting of the home?
- Are the child's articulation errors consistent from one attempted word to another or upon repetition of the same attempted word?
- If his errors are not consistent, is it because of a lack of word knowledge, or does he have motor-planning difficulties?

Assessment Plan

Compile information and develop the Assessment Plan (see Forms Section). When evaluating a student's language skills, complete a language sample, gather more specific teacher and parent information if needed, observe the student across school environments when the student is likely to use or attempt to use the language skills of concern, and administer norm-referenced tests or subtests that provide information about the areas of concern identified in the assessment planning phase of the evaluation.

Phase II of Language Evaluation: Data Collection

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Informal Assessment

The purpose of this phase of the language evaluation is to execute the assessment plan designed in Phase I by administering appropriate assessment tools such as language samples, checklists, questionnaires, observations across school environments, and norm-referenced/standardized tests. Use of a well-rounded battery of informal measures, and formal measures if appropriate, is needed to fully describe the language strengths and weaknesses, and their impact on performance at school.

Data collection for the purpose of describing the student's language/communication status is a layered process. In Phase I, information is gathered along with the initial student interaction and rating of a low-structure language sample and the criterion-referenced story retell screening. This information is used to develop assessment questions and develop the Assessment Plan. In Phase II, the SLP continues to gather and analyze informal assessment data in order to determine whether a standardized test is needed, and if so, which test is likely to provide additional information to help answer the assessment questions.

Criterion-Referenced Informal Measures

Criterion-referenced measures are most useful for establishing baseline function, identifying goals for intervention, and measuring progress. With criterion-referenced procedures, the SLP is comparing the student's performance with a predetermined criterion to observe whether the student is meeting the criterion or whether the student needs intervention to master the expectation. In the school setting, the most commonly used academic criteria are the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) which provide grade level expectations across core subject areas. Age- or grade-level expectations based globally on typical development provide the criteria for pragmatic language and functional communication expectations across school environments.

Language Sample

Language sampling is a required component of a comprehensive language evaluation. Language sample analysis is a useful assessment tool for observing the structures, forms, and functions a student produces spontaneously in a naturalistic setting, as well as the contexts that influence their use. Aside from collecting important and specific language information regarding expressive communication skills, language sample analysis is an opportunity to collect information regarding comprehension skills, pragmatic, nonverbal, and social communication skills.

Language sampling is one of the best methods that we have available for establishing productive language baseline function, targeting intervention goals, and evaluating progress in the intervention program. The most important thing about language sampling is to do it. (Paul et al., 2018, p. 307)

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Once the sample has been collected, analysis can focus on structural analysis of syntactic production, word use and semantic production, and pragmatics. Language sample collection can be completed during low structure tasks such as a free-play situation or conversation, or high structure tasks for students at higher language levels. A combination of activities within a language sampling session may be the best way to gather a complete picture of the student's expressive language use (Costanza-Smith, 2010). In a school setting, tasks that probe the student's expressive language abilities with literate, academic language at grade level are important for addressing any adverse effect on educational performance that may result from the child's language disorder.

Collect a 10- to 15-minute conversation sample yielding 50-100 utterances/sentences/phrases. Best evidence indicates a transcribed, 50-utterance sample is ideal for analysis (Timler, 2019). Shorter samples, for example 25 utterances in length, are presently being studied (Timler, 2019). The procedure for using SUGAR (Sampling Utterances and Grammatical Analysis Revised) requires transcribing 50 utterances (Owens & Pavelko, 2020). Avoid writing copious notes while engaged in conversation with the student. A conversational language sample is to be collected in a naturalistic manner.

Record the language sample using a video recording when possible, as it is the most versatile for focusing on language production and can also be used when a nonverbal context is needed to observe gestures, signs, facial expressions, eye gaze, and other variables associated with language behaviors. While recording the language sample, repeat the student's grammatical and speech sound errors when they occur, repeating back what the child says; use engaged listening; and, use pause time to give the student a moment to initiate a comment (e.g., 5 – 10 seconds).

Refer to the Assessment Plan to determine the type of transcription that is needed. Semantic and syntactic analyses require word-by-word transcription of the student's speech, often with the linguistic context of the other speaker's comments included. Phonological analysis requires phonemic transcriptions. Information about the nonlinguistic context and paralinguistic cues may be needed for analysis of pragmatics (Paul et al., 2018).

Language sample collection activities are listed below based on developmental levels:

- ***Low verbal/emerging language***

Collecting a language sample with students who do not talk very much may seem unimportant. However, it is important to get an idea of the words and sounds the student is producing. Language sample analysis is an opportunity to collect information regarding comprehension skills, pragmatic, nonverbal, and social communication skills. It may be necessary to collect this information from a sample audio recorded at home or in the classroom and ask the parent and teacher to keep a diary or journal entry of sounds or words that the student produces.

- ***Preschool and students with developing language***

Preschool children and students at the developing language level need contextual support to use their best language. Use familiar situations, topics, activities, materials,

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and people to obtain the most representative sample (Owens, 2013). The SLP's interactive style during the language sampling is important. See Appendix A - *Assessing Preschool Students: Considerations and Recommendations* and Appendix B – *Diagnostic Significance of Children's Play*.

- ***Language sample collection types and strategies***

With preschool age children, or students at the developing language stage, use low structure, child-centered conversation about here-and-now and there-and-then topics, object and picture description, or stories about a personal experience.

- *Conversations* with personal retells/recounts. Elicit conversations with statements, retell about negative past events, or important positive events (e.g., boo-boos, accidents while playing, sibling fight, an interesting event involving a family pet). Give child some control over the conversation.
- *Narratives* – story retells with book present (avoid story/narrative generation).
- *Pragmatics* – share a personal story and pause for student to comment or question. Stage communication breakdowns (repeat back something incorrectly); tell student you are confused about something said.

- ***Materials*** (Miller, 1981; Nippold, & Scott, 2010)

- *12 to 30 months* – Familiar and unfamiliar toys, several examples of balls, dolls, eating utensils, cars, etc.
- *30-48 months* – Pretend play materials, such as dollhouse with people, furniture, etc.; introduce some topics about absent objects, people, and events removed from the immediate context in space and time, such as holidays, vacations, etc.
- *4 years or older* – Pretend play with miniatures, unusual objects to describe, photographs of events/places for the intention of object description, picture description, narration, or personal experience.

- ***Preschool language facilitation techniques***, (Timler, 2019)

- Reword questions into statements: "I wonder why your sister did that," "I wonder how you found your pet."
- Contingent feedback saying something that relates to what the child said or did; e.g., child picks up a toy; clinician comments, "Oh, nice car! You have the car!"
- Balanced turn-taking giving extra time to allow the child to respond; letting the child lead and then responding, rather than using questions and initiations for prompting the child to talk.

- Extension of the child's topic saying something that gives more information about what the child just said/did
- Reduced rate of adult speech; do not talk rapidly
- Minimize switching topics.
- ***Kindergarten to grade 3 and students using language for learning***
 - *Conversation*
Use of conversation for language sampling is a low structure task that is usually effective for putting the student at ease and preparing him for more challenging language tasks later in the session.
 - *Interview format*
An interview format is a valid and reliable language sampling context for students with suspected specific learning disability (Evans & Craig, 1992). Nelson (2010) suggested adding questions that elicit an animated, emotional response.
 - Question 1 (5 minutes): What can you tell me about your family? Do you have any brothers or sisters? Do they ever bother your stuff?
 - Question 2 (5 minutes): Are you in school? Tell me about it? Did your teacher ever do anything that really bugged you?
 - Question 3 (5 minutes): What do you do when you're not in school? Did you ever get into an argument with a friend? Do you have a favorite sports team? Tell me about your favorite player.
 - *Narrative*
Use wordless picture books or pictures of different topics that the student may have experienced (e.g., dentist, party at a park, children at a school playground). If the student is reticent or uncomfortable with telling a story, use story retell where the SLP tells the story about the picture or book and then asks the student to retell the story.
 - *Discourse*
Share a personal story and pause for student to comment or question. Stage communication breakdowns (repeat back something incorrectly); tell student you are confused about something said.
- ***Grades 3 – 12 and students with advanced language***
Language sampling with students who may have subtle language learning deficits should tap into the literate/academic language skills that are needed for success in school. Language samples for these students should be connected to the student's grade level curriculum (Nippold, 2014; Price & Jackson, 2015). Use both oral and written language samples. Written language sample may further describe the student's language skills and identify syntax errors that persist in their written language.

- Narrative
 - Use comic strips with the words “whited-out”
 - Have students retell the content of a short video
 - Wordless picture books or videos based on wordless picture books can serve as the stimulus for the story task
 - Write about a special memory
 - Write a story that has a beginning, middle and end
- Expository
 - Retell nonfiction material from reading or documentary video material
 - Interview questions about a favorite game or sport
 - Tell me about your favorite game or sport.
 - Why is it your favorite?
 - Tell me about the rules, how many people play, and what is the object of the game?
 - What do you have to do to win? Are there strategies that a good player should know?
- Persuasive
 - Convince someone on a controversial point of view (orally or in writing). Ask student to pick a rule or situation they want to change in school, at a job, or in the community.
 - Role play requesting something difficult, like extra time to complete a school assignment.

Verbal Techniques for Eliciting Language Samples (Timler, 2019)

- It is important to match the length of the child’s turn, pace, and interest to encourage spontaneous, expressive communication.
- Cue the child to take a turn by making a comment or the use of body language.
- To reduce one-word or minimal responses, avoid as many yes/no questions or product (one-word answer) questions as possible. Also, avoid questions that test the child’s knowledge, questions that are too hard for the child to answer, and questions that answer themselves.
- To encourage complex syntax:
 - Ask process questions and more than one-word “why” questions.
 - How did/do...? What happened? Why did...?
 - Use “Tell me...” or “I wonder...” statements.
 - Use turnabouts by making a comment and cueing the student to talk.

- Use narrative elicitations by building on what the child says or what you know. Begin with “Your mom told me you like to.... Tell me about that.” Or say, “Tell me what you did.”

Interviews and Questionnaires

Questionnaires and interviews completed by parents, teachers, and other adults who know the child can provide important and detailed information to supplement the SLP’s direct assessment. District-developed questionnaires and interview questions can be utilized as well as commercially available tools. Some of these have many of the same psychometric properties as standardized tests with established reliability, validity, sensitivity, and specificity. Examples of standard interview and questionnaire instruments include:

- Children’s Communication Checklist – 2 U. S. Edition (Bishop, 2006)
- Communication and Symbolic Behavior Scales Infant – Toddler Checklist (Wetherby & Prizant, 2003)
- Social Responsiveness Scale – 2nd Edition (Constantino, 2012)
- Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales – III (Sparrow et al., 2016)

Additional teacher interview questions for in-depth probes are provided in the *Expanded Interview: Teacher Checklist - Initial Referral for Language Concerns* which is included in the forms section of these guidelines.

Developmental Scales

Developmental scales are interview or observational instruments that sample behaviors from a particular developmental period. Developmental scales usually provide equivalent score information and can be helpful for establishing baseline function by showing the general age equivalent level at which the student is operating in the areas the scales assess. Examples of developmental scales include:

- Sequenced Inventory of Communication Development – Revised (Hedrick et al., 1995)
- Receptive-Expressive Emergent Language Scale – 3 (Bzoch et al., 2003)

Skill-Specific Probes

In order to get a complete picture of the student’s linguistic functioning, nonstandardized, contextually based measures are needed to show the kinds of errors the student makes in more naturalistic situations. District- or SLP-developed skill-specific probes provide information about specific-error types and help discriminate whether a language disorder is present. The following are examples of skill-specific probes across language domains.

- *Syntax/Morphology*
It is important to assess receptive and expressive syntax/morphology separately. Often students can produce a sentence type, but then not demonstrate understanding of that form when presented in a decontextualized task.

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- Receptive syntax and morphology
 - Comprehension of relative clauses and adverbial clauses
“Before you brush your teeth, hang up the towel” – the order of the clauses is opposite of the intended order of the actions
 - Comprehension of complex structures such as passives
 - Judgment tasks of whether a sentence is silly or normal
- Expressive syntax and morphology
 - Complex sentence analysis and frequency of use of complex sentences
 - Error analysis of morphological markers and syntactic forms
 - If few syntactic errors appear in oral speech, analyze syntactic complexity in written work
- *Semantics*

Semantic skills, other than associating words with pictures, are not well-measured in standardized, norm-referenced tests. Informal measures are needed to fully understand the student’s semantic language functioning level.

 - Observe the kinds of spatial, temporal, logical, and directive vocabulary the student’s teacher uses in class; create directions (one target per directive) to assess comprehension
 - Observe student’s use of spatial terms and connectives
 - Check language sample for total number of words and number of different words – lexical diversity
 - Word retrieval tasks when receptive vocabulary test scores higher than expressive vocabulary test scores
 - Review language sample for complex sentences, conjunctions, and semantic relations
- *Pragmatics*

Pragmatics is the use of language for real communication. As such, it is difficult to assess pragmatic language skills using decontextualized, norm-referenced tests. Informal measures are needed. Observations of the student in natural school environments yield important information of the student’s pragmatics skills – see the *Informal Pragmatic Assessment Checklist* (Forms Section of this manual). In addition to focused observations, skill-specific probes provide information in the areas of communicative functions, discourse skills, flexibility to modify language for different listeners (register), and narrative skills.

 - Presupposition – Ask the student to describe a sequence of pictures, each of which changes by one detail. Note ellipsis (deletion of linguistic redundancies), pronoun use, and use of indefinite articles first and then use of definite articles in subsequent pictures
 - Referential Communication – Barrier Games to probe for linguistic specificity
 - Discourse Management – Ask the student to explain a game, recipe or favorite hobby to a peer
 - Pragmatic Observation Measure (Cordier et al., 2014)
 - Narrative Production

- Macrostructure – rate organization and number/type of story grammar elements in the story. Levels of Narrative Development (Lahey, 1988)
 - Microstructure – word output, lexical diversity, complexity of words and sentences (Justice et al., 2006)
 - Artful Storytelling – precise and diverse vocabulary, literate language style, advanced episodic structure, and linguistic highlight of the high point of the story (Ukrainetz & Gillam, 2009)
- *Metalinguistics*

The metalinguistic skills that are important for engaging in classroom discourse and acquisition of literacy include consciousness of words, segmenting words into sentences, phonological awareness, making judgments about language form and content (editing), understanding and using language play (e.g., riddles, puns, rhymes), and knowledge of morphological meaning within words (Apel, 2014; Justice et al., 2007; Kamhi, 1987; Paul et al., 2018).

 - Probe for word consciousness with use of metalinguistic vocabulary (e.g., *read*, *word*, *spell*), telling what a word is, counting words in a sentence after hearing it, and talking about print
 - Curriculum-based assessment: editing own writing (Nelson, 2010)
 - Demonstrating morphological awareness for late emerging markers such as comparatives/superlatives, advanced prefixes and suffixes (e.g., -ly, un-, re-, dis-, -ment), coordination/subordination, pronoun reference, and irregular forms
 - *Phonological Awareness*

Subtle phonological deficits underlie many of the language-based reading struggles in students with language learning deficits. Probes can be administered in three problem areas: complex phonological production, phonological processing, and phonological memory and retrieval.

 - Non-word repetition
 - Repeat phonologically complex, unfamiliar words and phrases
 - Rapid automatic naming

Focused Observations Across School Environments

The purpose of focused observations across school environments is to get a picture of current communication skills, and further to note the student’s use (or lack of use) of the language skills measured in the evaluation. Focused observations do not compare a student’s performance with a criterion, but rather, describe performance or use of the target language skills. Focused observations are used to sample whether the language form, content, and/or use occurs, the frequency with which it occurs, and the context or antecedents associated with the target skill/s.

The most important feature of the focused observation is careful description of the

language behaviors to be observed. Determine which aspects of language cannot be well-measured through formal tests and informal criterion-referenced measures. Focused observations are well-suited for language skills/use for which less normative data exists, or for which subjective, professional judgments are needed. For example, computing mean length of utterance (MLU) in morphemes is a relatively objective and straightforward procedure. Using MLU calculation gives information about linguistic structural complexity. But if the referral concerns indicate concerns about answering questions inappropriately, a focused observation could be completed where the SLP asks the student questions in a naturalistic format and then counting the number of appropriate and inappropriate responses (Paul et al., 2018). In this example, the focused observation gives quantitative information about a communication behavior in the referral concerns and serves as a baseline for intervention directed at reducing inappropriate responses.

A second important feature of the focused observation is to use a recording system designed for the purpose of the observation. It is important that the observation form is developed in a way that will allow another SLP to observe the same behavior in the same way. Following are examples of ways to record observations:

- Rate frequency that behavior is observed (e.g., frequently, occasionally, not observed)
- Rank behavior on a scale (e.g., 1 = *typical for age/grade*; 2 = *less frequently than peers*; 3 = *noticeable disruption*)
- Checklist: observed/not observed
- Anecdotal record: description of language/communication skills in defined situations

Paul et al. (2018) provide specific types of focused observations that may be helpful in describing the student's current performance:

- *Dynamic assessment*

Dynamic assessment is designed to manipulate the context in order to support the student's performance so the student's best performance can be observed. The SLP actively engages the student in a learning activity to observe their language/learning process. Focused observation in dynamic assessment yields information about

 - How the student approaches tasks, error patterns, and self-monitoring;
 - Whether the child responds to feedback in a way that improves performance;
 - Intervention styles and methods likely to promote change.
- *Functional assessment*

Functional assessments are designed to measure the impact of the language disorder and gather information about contextual factors that facilitate or hinder progress in therapy.
- *Curriculum-based assessment*

Curriculum-based assessments allow for observation of how the student uses language in learning the curriculum. Many of the informal criterion-referenced procedures and skill specific probes can be completed within the context of the curriculum. The tools of this type of assessment include

- Artifact Analysis – products of regular curriculum activities such as homework, written work done in class, independent projects and cooperative learning projects;
- Onlooker Observation – watching from a distance as the student participates in classroom activities.

The following Observation Forms are included in the Forms Section of these guidelines:

- Language Form, Content, Use Focused Observation Form
- Informal Pragmatic Assessment Checklist
- Observation of Student Communication Within the School Environment
- Conversational Skills Checklist
- Communication Skills Observation Worksheet

Formal Assessment with Standardized Tests

Standardized Tests

Standardized tests, often called norm-referenced tests, allow for a comparison of performance among children in the normative sample. Norm-referenced tests, such as the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals, 5th Edition (CELF-5) or the Comprehensive Assessment of Spoken Language, Second Edition (CASL-2) and criterion-referenced tests, such as the Test of Integrated Language and Literacy Skills (TILLS), are developed by designing a series of test items that are given to large groups of children and then computing the acceptable range of variation in scores at each age. Standardized tests are the most formal, decontextualized format for assessment of language function. When standardized testing is used and interpreted correctly, it is a valid way to establish that a child is significantly different from other children represented in the normative sample. **A standardized test may be utilized as part of the comprehensive evaluation, but only when it provides a fair comparison to the normative group.** That is, when selecting tests, the child being evaluated should be represented in the normative group in terms of factors such as age, grade level, gender, geographic region, ethnicity, language proficiency in the test language, and socioeconomic status.

“Standardized testing is the only valid, reliable, and fair way to establish that a child is significantly different from other children” (Paul et al., 2018, p. 50). Three things are needed to ensure the fairness of standardized testing: choose psychometrically sound tests; interpret test results properly and judiciously, and use in conjunction with informal measures to get a complete picture of the child’s language learning system.

Standardized Test Selection Criteria

It is critical that SLPs evaluate the language tests selected for use in order to make appropriate diagnostic decisions. Current evidence-based diagnosis practices prescribe the use of

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standardized tests with good diagnostic accuracy (Dollaghan, 2007). Measures of diagnostic accuracy include sensitivity, specificity, and likelihood ratios. Check for these measures of accuracy in the test manual. A test is not considered “evidence-based” unless there is diagnostic accuracy based on the information available about the test. In some cases, the diagnostic accuracy information might originate from external research studies (e.g., researchers not associated with the test directly). External evidence of diagnostic accuracy of a test is preferred, when available, to minimize potential biases.

The following psychometric criteria should be used to select tests (Dollaghan, 2007; McCauley & Swisher, 1984; Plante et al., 2019):

- The test manual should clearly describe the standardization/norming sample so that the SLP can evaluate the appropriateness of the test for a particular student. The makeup of the “normative group” influences how the test functions. Tests that exclude people with the target disorder from the normative group will be more sensitive to identification of the disorder than tests that include people with disabilities in the normative group.
- An adequate sample size should be used in the standardization sample. Subgroups should have a sample size of 100 or more.
- The reliability and validity of the test should be promoted by the use of systematic item analysis during the test construction and item selection. To meet this criterion, the manual should report evidence that quantitative methods were used both to study and control item difficulty.
- Evidence of concurrent, construct and predictive validity should be reported in the manual. Predictive validity shows that the test can predict later performance on another valid instrument.
- Test administration should be described sufficiently to enable the test user to duplicate the administration and scoring procedures.
- Empirically derived cut-off scores should be available in the manual. Standardized test manuals should provide the standard score to be used as a cut-off score for the identification of language disorders.
- Sensitivity and specificity for cut-off scores should be provided in the test manual. Sensitivity refers to the ability of a test to correctly identify children who truly have language disorders and children without language disorders. Specificity refers to the ability of a test to correctly identify children with typical language skills as children with typical language skills. These two indexes work in conjunction since we need measures that separate children with language disorders from children with typical language skills. Sensitivity and specificity should be at least 80% to be considered fair and 90% to be considered good (Plante & Vance, 1984).
- Positive and negative likelihood ratios should be provided in the test manual or can be

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calculated from the specificity and sensitivity information. The positive likelihood ratio and the negative likelihood ratio are indexes of how clinically informative a standardized test is to either rule in or rule out a language disorder. Following Dollaghan's (2007) rule of thumb for interpretation of likelihood ratios, diagnostic measures with a positive likelihood ratio over 10 are clinically informative to identify a child with a language disorder; and measures with a negative likelihood ratio of 1 or below are clinically informative to rule out the presence of a language disorder.

To illustrate appropriate selection of tests, we use the Test of Integrated Language and Literacy Skills (TILLS; Nelson et al., 2016). The TILLS is an assessment of oral and written language abilities in students 6 – 18 years of age. The technical manual of the TILLS clearly describes the standardization/norming sample in Chapter 1. All age groups in the standardization sample are composed of at least 98 children. The reliability and validity of the TILLS is presented in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 and information on item selection is presented in Chapter 1. The TILLS administration is well described in the TILLS Examiners Manual and in the Examiner's Practice Workbook. Empirically derived cut-off scores and information about specificity, sensitivity, and likelihood ratios is available in Chapter 2 (page 12). Sensitivity and specificity were reported to be at least 81% for all age groups. The information on positive likelihood and negative likelihood ratios suggest that the TILLS is clinically informative to rule out the presence of a language disorder and moderately informative to identify a child with language disorders. Therefore, the TILLS is considered an evidence-based assessment tool for the identification of language disorders in English-speaking children.

Use of Standardized Test Information Without Scores

When SLPs use standardized tests that do not have robust, evidence-based diagnostic information, it is crucial to keep in mind the limitations of the information that these tests provide. A standardized test that does not include diagnostic accuracy information can be used to describe how the language abilities of a child compare to other children in the normative sample. This also applies to the interpretations of subtests. For example, a test or a subtest can provide information about where the language skills are in the normal distribution of language skills, that is, how far from or close to average the performance is. However, information regarding placement in the normal distribution of language skills does not always correspond with language ability status. That is, the score should not be used for diagnostic purposes, but rather for adding to the pattern of language performance the child demonstrates (i.e., typical language development versus language disorder). A test score should never be used as the only criterion to identify a language disorder. It is recommended that the SLP look at where the score fits in the normal distribution of skills and examine potential patterns of errors to see if there is convergence of evidence for documenting a language disorder. For example, a scale score of 6 in the Sentence Repetition Subtest of the CELF-5 indicates that the child's working memory skills for language are below average and the error patterns observed during the task (e.g., grammatical errors) can be used as converging evidence for a child that produces morphosyntactic errors in the language sample.

Phase III of Language Evaluation: Analysis and Interpretation

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Use the *Language Evaluation Summary Form* (see Forms Section) to summarize data collected during Language Evaluation – Phase II. Look for strengths and deficits in language form, content, and use across the language modalities of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Review the assessment questions developed based on the referral concerns and information gathered from the parent, teachers, and student during the initial direct interaction. Make sure that sufficient data has been collected from a variety of sources to answer the questions.

Criterion-Referenced Informal Measures and Observations Across School Environments

Summarize information about language obtained from checklists, interviews and questionnaires, developmental scales, focused observations, skill-specific probes, and the language sample. Information from parents and teachers are required components of the evaluation.

Skill-Specific Language Sample Analysis Measures with Diagnostic Accuracy

In addition to broad language sample analysis approaches (e.g., SALT, SUGAR), there are three skill-specific, evidence-based language sample analysis measures with good diagnostic accuracy:

- Percentage of Grammatical Utterances (Eisenberg & Guo, 2013; Eisenberg, Guo, & Germezia, 2012; Guo & Eisenberg, 2014; Guo, Eisenberg, Schneider, & Spencer, 2019)
- Finite Verb Morphology Composite (Bedore & Leonard, 1998; Leonard, Miller, & Gerber, 1999)
- Measures of Tense Productivity (Hadley & Short, 2005; Rispoli, Hadley, & Holt, 2008)

Analysis for Planning Intervention/Recommendations

The measures shown in Table 1 can be used to analyze language samples in syntax, semantics, and pragmatics based on developmental language level. The objective for language sample analysis and specific skill probes is to assist in documentation of language performance and to establish baseline levels, goal areas, and the types of tasks or specific content to use in intervention.

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Table 1*Language Sample Analysis Measures*

	Syntax	Semantics	Pragmatics
Low Verbal	Word combinations	Frequency of word use	Range of Communication Functions
Emerging Language	Semantic/syntactic combinations	Types of words used Semantic Relation categories	
Preschool	Mean Length of Utterance – Morphemes	Number of Different Words	Analysis of linguistic forms for communicative functions: Request, Comment, Presupposition, Turn-Taking, Respond,
Developing Language	Total Number of Words Clauses per Sentence Analysis of sentence clauses	Number of Words per Sentence Analysis of verb use	
Kindergarten – 3rd Grade	Analysis of morphological & syntax errors	Mental and linguistic verbs Pronouns, referents, conjunctions, adverbs Narrative cohesion	Topic Initiation, Topic Appropriateness Discourse Management – turns, topics, breakdown repair Disruptions vs revisions Narrative macrostructure
Language for Learning	Complex sentences – analysis, frequency, and ratio of complex to simple Narrative microstructure Elaborated noun phrase Elaborated verb phrase	Narrative summarization	Modify communication style, register variations
3rd – 12th Grade	Literate language structures	Clause density Inferences Text cohesion	Narrative macrostructure – internal states, goals, plans for dealing with story problem Discourse management
Advanced Language	Noun and verb phrase elaboration Correctness/Pattern of syntax errors	Correctness/Pattern of semantic errors Use of connectives – coordinating conjunctions, subordinating conjunctions, Conjuncts – concordant, discordant,	Speech style adjustments & register variations

See Appendix C, Evidence-Based Language Sample Analysis Measures.

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Standardized Tests

Standardized test results must be interpreted with caution. There are key principles of norm-referenced/standardized test interpretation.

- ***Principle 1:*** Use empirically derived cut-off scores
There is not a standard cut-off score to be used with all standardized language tests. Instead, each test should have a cut-off score that has been determined using empirical evidence. Refer to the test manual for information about the cut-off score for that test that indicates a language disorder. Using cut-off scores that represent the distribution of language skills (e.g., 1.5 standard deviations below the mean) only identifies the children with the lowest language skills in the population while missing children with language disorders who would benefit from language intervention.
- ***Principle 2:*** Interpret diagnostic accuracy information appropriately
The information on sensitivity and specificity of a test is crucial to interpretation of a standard score on that test. However, even standardized tests with good specificity and sensitivity (over 90%) identify children with language disorders and children with typical language development incorrectly about 10% of the time. The SLP must interpret the score of the student being tested with the understanding that none of the current standardized language tests are 100% accurate.
- ***Principle 3:*** Use confidence intervals for the interpretation of scores
Scores should always be interpreted using confidence intervals so that the standard score is not misinterpreted as an absolute value of the student's performance. A confidence interval is a range of values within which we are fairly confident (e.g., 95%) the true value lies. Standardized tests often offer confidence intervals at 95%, 90%, and 68%. The 95% confidence interval should be used so that the SLP can be 95% certain that the population value is within the confidence interval range. Note that SLPs should not interpret standard scores as a perfect representation of the population value.
- ***Principle 4:*** Results from standardized tests should never be used as the only indicator of a language disorder
Children with language disorders do not always score low on standardized tests, and children with typical language skills do not always perform within the normal range on standardized tests. It is crucial to interpret the results of any test in conjunction with other information about the language skills of a child.
- ***Principle 5:*** Standardized tests scores should not be used as measures of progress
Standardized tests are designed to show whether a child differs significantly from the "norming" population. Once that discrepancy has been established, other forms of assessment are needed to establish baseline function, identify goals for intervention and measure progress. Standardized tests were not designed for any of these purposes (Paul et al., 2018).

Severity Classification

Following determination of a language disorder, adverse effect on educational performance, and description of the student’s language learning profile, it is important to determine severity of the language disorder in order to make further educational recommendation regarding frequency, intensity, and duration of SLP services.

Follow district procedures for rating severity of the language disorder. The following classification system from the World Health Organization (WHO, 2004) may also be applied to school-based SLP services.

Classification	Description
Mild	Some impact on performance but does not preclude participation in age-appropriate activities in school and community; able to function independently with minimal assistance
Moderate	Significant degree of impairment that requires accommodations to function in mainstream settings; able to function in supervised settings
Severe	Extensive support required to function in mainstream settings; may demonstrate some functional skills with supervision
Profound	Few functional skills; requires maximum assistance with basic activities

The severity rating can be used in conjunction with other information to make data-driven recommendations. For example, if the WHO classification system is applied, a student with a mild language disorder may be served through an RTI/MTSS program, or through consultation with the classroom teacher because the student is “able to function independently with minimal assistance” and the language disorder does not appear to impose an adverse effect on educational performance. In other cases, severity ratings of moderate, severe, or profound will often need services of the SLP to mitigate any adverse effect on educational performance.

Disability Determination

Disability determination for Speech Impairment includes both the documentation of a communication disorder *and* documentation of an adverse effect on educational performance resulting from the communication disorder. When referral concerns include the student’s language learning system, the questions that need to be answered are:

Stage I: Is there documentation of a language disorder?

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Stage II: If so, is there evidence of an adverse effect on educational performance resulting from the language disorder?

If the answer to both Stage I and Stage II questions is “yes,” a disability condition is present.

Stage I: Evidence of a Language Disorder

	Yes	No
Is there evidence of a language disorder based on test manual specifications from a standardized language test?		
Is there evidence of a language disorder based on analysis of a language sample?		
Is there evidence of a language disorder based on analysis of other informal criterion-referenced assessment measures?		
Is the teacher concerned about the student’s use of language for academic purposes?		
Is the parent concerned about the student’s language and literacy achievement?		
Is the student stimulable for expanded language use?		
Does the professional judgment of the SLP support a concern?		
Does the student lack confidence for language and learning tasks?		

If the answer to at least four of the above questions is “yes,” it is likely that the student presents with a language disorder.

Stage II: Adverse Effect on Educational Performance

	Yes	No
Is there a documented relationship between the student’s language disorder and academic achievement (e.g., reading, writing, phonological awareness)?		
Does the student’s language disorder limit participation in self-care, navigation of school environments, or classroom routines?		
Is the student’s limited language comprehension or limited expression noticeable across school environments?		
Does the student’s language disorder limit participation in class?		
Does the student’s language disorder limit participation in social situations at school (peers and/or adults)?		

If the answer to at least three of the above questions is “yes,” it is likely that the student’s language disorder results in an adverse effect on educational performance.

Use the *Language Evaluation Summary Form* to document the findings of the language evaluation and the evidence regarding disability determination (Stage I and Stage II questions).

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Recommendations to Admission, Review, Dismissal Committee

When the student exhibits a language disorder that has been documented with informal measures, and formal measures when appropriate, *and* there is evidence of an adverse effect on educational performance resulting from the language disorder, the disability condition has been established. The SLP's recommendation to the ARD committee is for consideration of eligibility for special education services on the basis of Speech Impairment.

When the ARD committee establishes Speech Impairment as an eligibility condition, the Stage III question is addressed:

Stage III: Are specially designed SLP services needed for the student to make progress in the curriculum?

Use the *Language Evaluation Summary Form* to document recommendations regarding the need for specially designed SLP services that will support the student with a language disorder (Speech Impairment).

Phase IV of Language Evaluation: Evaluation Report

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Report Writing Considerations

The evaluation report should provide a comprehensive picture of the child's language skills. In addition to charts and/or tables documenting language assessment results, a narrative section should be included to adequately analyze the results of the assessment in the areas of language form, content, and use. The narrative section should contain student specific information rather than lengthy test descriptions followed by a score. The following pieces of data should be documented in the written evaluation report:

- ***Informal Assessment Results***
 - Information from Parent and Teacher (required)
 - Outside evaluation results
 - Response to Intervention (RTI) information
 - Summary of information gathered from interviews, questionnaires, and developmental scales
 - Summary of information obtained from focused observations
 - Language Sample and Skill-Specific Probes analysis results

- ***Standardized Test Results***
 - Brief description of the test or subtests used with information from the test manual about the standard score to be used as a cut-off score for the identification of a language disorder
 - Student's standard score on the test (if standard score will be used as one piece of evidence for documentation of a language disorder)
 - Description of student's pattern of responses on the test (if standard score cannot be used with validity and reliability for documentation of a language disorder)
 - Interpretation of standardized test/subtest performance; reporting of raw scores or standard scores alone is not sufficient

- ***Discussion/Summary***
 - *Language disorder statement*
 - No evidence of language disorder: Statement that describes language skills that are within expectations for age, grade, linguistic variation
 - Evidence of language disorder: statement that describes the language disorder in terms of characteristics and severity
 - *Adverse Effect on Educational Performance*
 - No evidence of language disorder: do not address educational performance in this section of report
 - Evidence of language disorder: statement that provides the evidence of adverse effect on educational performance resulting from the language disorder

- ***Disability Determination Statement***

- *Documentation of disability*

- When there is documentation of a language disorder *and* documentation of adverse effect on educational performance resulting from the language disorder, the results of the evaluation indicate that criteria for disability determination with Speech Impairment have been met
- When there is no documentation of a language disorder, criteria for disability determination with Speech Impairment have not been met
- When there is no documentation of adverse effect on educational performance resulting from a documented language disorder, criteria for disability determination with Speech Impairment have not been met

- *Recommendation to ARD Committee*

- Documentation of Disability
Recommendation to ARD Committee: Speech Impairment with a language disorder
- No Documentation of Disability
Recommendation to ARD Committee: No documentation of disability condition.

- ***Educational Recommendations***

- *Documented Language Disorder*

- Use the evaluation results to describe baseline performance in language form, content, and use. Criterion-referenced measures including the language sample and skill-specific probes provide the most useful information for this purpose
- Recommendation to ARD committee: whether or not specially designed SLP services are warranted to help the student make progress in the curriculum (Stage III question)
- Goals for SLP services based on baseline performance data and reasonable expectations for progress in therapy
- Suggestions for methods, approaches, activities, reinforcers, or any other aspects of the intervention program that will support the student based on information gathered during the evaluation process (Paul et al., 2018).

- *No Documented Language Disorder*

- Use the evaluation results to describe current performance in language form, content, and use. Criterion-referenced measures, including the language sample and skill-specific probes, provide the most useful information for this purpose
- Refer to referral concerns and use language evaluation results to make recommendations about supporting the student in the areas of concern in both academic and nonacademic environments.
- Consider continued support through RTI/MTSS or extra time in literacy instruction through tutoring or after-school programs
- Provide recommendations for home- and school-designed activities to support the student who may be struggling with language-based literacy tasks

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Sample Evaluation Report Statements

Preschool: Documentation of Language Disorder (Stage I: Is there a language disorder?)

Age of male child: 38 months Referring Agent: Parent Referral Concern: Uses only a few words

Although [the child] willingly separated from his mother, smiled at the examiner, and readily took her hand and walked with her to the testing area, he demonstrated little ability to engage in structured tasks. Formal testing could not be completed due to his inability or unwillingness to interact with the examiner using objects or pictures that he had not chosen. When he was allowed to choose an object, he generally demonstrated play behaviors characteristic of a younger child. He played with toys using actions appropriate for each toy, and he performed simple pretend actions on himself, the examiner, and a stuffed animal, but he did not demonstrate an ability to engage in extended pretend play routines that would be typical of a child his age. He produced a few word combinations, but most of his utterances consisted of single words. He used those words, often combined with gestures such as pointing or reaching, for a developmentally appropriate variety of communicative purposes. He was able to follow context-based one-step instructions, but when given more complex instructions, he would either ignore them or follow only part of the instruction. His mother reported that the behaviors that he demonstrated during today's play session were typical of those she sees at home. His language skills appear to generally fall within a developmental age range of 24-30 months. Social interaction and play skills appear to be approximately commensurate with his language skills. Based on parent information and behaviors demonstrated during this assessment, he demonstrates a language disorder characterized by difficulty both in understanding and using spoken language.

Primary Grades (Kinder – Second): Documentation of Language Disorder (Stage I: Is there a language disorder?)

Teachers reported that [student] has difficulty following directions in the classroom and demonstrates difficulty with reading comprehension. Single word vocabulary knowledge was measured by administering the Expressive One Word Picture Vocabulary Test and the Receptive One Word Picture Vocabulary Test. [Student's] receptive and expressive knowledge of vocabulary was within normal limits for his age and grade level. To further assess vocabulary knowledge, [student] was asked to paraphrase a sentence using classroom Tier 2 vocabulary and then also to select the sentence with the correct use of the word from multiple sentences. [Student] was able to complete these tasks as expected. Vocabulary skills are appropriate for grade level.

[Student] demonstrated difficulty with understanding and use of syntax. On a judgment task for receptive understanding of syntax, [student] had significant difficulty identifying which sentence had correct grammatical structure. Although able to identify simple sentences, when the sentence became more complex, [student] was not able to identify grammatically correct

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sentences. In another task, [student] was given a sentence and was asked to describe what should happen. When the sentence contained a complex syntactical structure, such as an adverbial conjunction (before, instead, otherwise), [student] was not able to describe the action in the correct sequence but described the action based on the order of the words in the sentence. For example: When given the sentence “Before you brush your teeth, put on your pajamas” and asked what should happen first, the answer was brush your teeth. Expressively, [student’s] language sample contained less than 10% of complex sentences. The expected percent at this age is greater than 20%. Although able to produce a narrative, [student] used only simple conjunctions that would be expected of a much younger child. During a classroom observation, the teacher gave instructions using complex sentence structures appropriate for this grade. This type of instruction will be difficult for [student].

[Student’s] difficulty with language and reading comprehension appear to be due to a difficulty comprehending and producing complex syntactical structures expected at grade level. The convergence of evidence from multiple sources supports identification of a language disorder in the area of syntax.

Third Grade and Older: Documentation of Language Disorder (Stage I: Is there a language disorder?)

Teachers reported that [male student] has difficulty following directions and demonstrates difficulty with reading comprehension. He is slow to respond to questions as if trying to think of what to say, and does not usually volunteer information during class discussions. He also seems to have a low vocabulary and uses *this* or *that* instead of more specific words. Results from the *Comprehensive Assessment of Spoken Language, Second Edition* (CASL-2) showed that [student’s] General Language Ability was 1.5 standard deviations below the mean with a noticeable weakness in the Lexical/Semantic Index.

The Word Learning Subtest from the *Diagnostic Evaluation of Language Variations – Criterion Reference* (DELV) was administered to examine ability for learning new words. [Student’s] score was below age expectations. A focused observation in [student’s] classroom during reading instruction showed that he has difficulty with following instructions and comprehension of spatial terms such as *above* and *surrounding*, temporal terms such as *after* and *following*, and connectives such as *however* and *consequently*. Informal specific probes matched to grade level expectations confirmed observations in the classroom. Language sample analysis showed that the Total Number of Words was within 1 standard deviation for 9-year-olds, and the Number of Different Words was more than 1 standard deviation below the mean for 9-year-olds. Number of Different Words is a measure of lexical density and the ability to use flexible, precise vocabulary.

[Student’s] difficulty with language and reading comprehension appear to be due to his difficulty comprehending and producing flexible, precise vocabulary to meet grade level expectations. The convergence of evidence from multiple sources supports identification of a language disorder in the area of semantics.

Re-Evaluation

Re-Evaluation

A re-evaluation must occur at least once every three years, unless the parent and the school district agree that a re-evaluation is unnecessary after conducting a Review of Existing Evaluation Data (REED; 34 CFR §300.303). The school district must ensure that a re-evaluation is conducted when the students' needs warrant a re-evaluation, when the student's parents or teachers request a re-evaluation, or when the ARD committee is considering exiting the student from special education services. See the *Disability Determination Guidelines for Speech Impairment* and follow district procedures for re-evaluation of students coded with Speech Impairment.

Language re-evaluation processes and procedures mirror initial evaluation processes and procedures with the added consideration of careful review of progress in therapy and analysis of strengths and weaknesses in the student's language learning system relative to the curriculum.

- ***Phase I: Language Reevaluation Plan***

Complete the *Language Re-Evaluation Plan* (see Forms Section) to identify progress on language IEP goals/objectives and to clarify the assessment questions for the language re-evaluation.

- ***Phase II: Data Collection***

Collect informal criterion-referenced data about language form, content and use, based on the assessment questions identified in Phase I of the Evaluation. If appropriate, administer standardized tests/subtests. The focus of the re-evaluation is on measuring change in the student's language learning system, so it is important to understand how to measure real change. Standardized test scores are not good for measuring discrete changes, but you can use standard error of measurement (SEM) data, if provided by the test, to detect macro-changes over time that represent real change, not change due to chance or normal development (Plante et al., 2019). Standardized tests can be curriculum-relevant, but not curriculum-based. Curriculum-based samples and samples of social communication across school environments are needed to mark progress, establish new baselines, and set new goals and objectives.

- ***Phase III: Analysis and Interpretation***

Analyze and interpret re-evaluation results to answer the disability determination questions:

- Does the student continue to demonstrate a language disorder?
- If so, is there an adverse effect on educational performance resulting from the language disorder?

Results of the re-evaluation provide documentation to make recommendations to the ARD committee to continue the eligibility condition of Speech Impairment, or if documentation of the disability condition is not met, to follow procedures for dismissal

from speech-language therapy services. If Speech Impairment is documented, the Stage 3 question can be addressed:

- Are specially designed services by the SLP needed for the student to make progress in the curriculum?

Complete the *Language Evaluation Summary Form* (See Forms Section). The SLP makes recommendations to the ARD committee regarding continuation of Speech Impairment as a disability condition, and the need for specially designed services provided by the SLP.

- ***Phase IV: Evaluation Report***

Complete the evaluation report with a thorough description of the student's language learning system, progress since the last evaluation, and recommendations to the ARD committee regarding Speech Impairment eligibility, services provided by the SLP, and recommendations. It is important to remember that the re-evaluation report should be comprehensive enough to be legally defensible; therefore, it is advisable to be thorough in your written description of the progress in the specific language skills, assessment data and analysis for the student.

Speech Impairment as Primary Disability

In general, SLPs will conduct a re-evaluation at least every three years and follow Disability Determination Guidelines for establishing continued eligibility when:

- Speech Impairment is the primary disability condition, and
- The student exhibits significant change in speech, language, or communication skills since the time of the last Full and Individual Evaluation (FIE), and updated assessments are needed to determine continued eligibility or to determine need for SLP services.

When Speech Impairment with a language disorder is the primary disability and a re-evaluation is due, careful consideration should be given to including the diagnostician in the re-evaluation to address cognition, school achievement and the links between the language disorder and mastering the literacy demands in the curriculum.

Speech Impairment as Secondary or Tertiary Disability

When Speech Impairment is the secondary or tertiary disability/eligibility condition, the SLP may participate in the REED process with the ARD committee and other qualified professionals when:

- The student has had an initial evaluation and two subsequent three-year re-evaluations, and

- It is likely that there is sufficient information available from parents, teachers, and other service providers, as well as progress data on mastery of IEP goals and objectives to establish continued eligibility for the primary disability and to determine educational and communication needs.

When Speech Impairment with a language disorder is the secondary or tertiary disability and a re-evaluation is due, refer to one of the following companion documents for specific guidance:

- SI Disability Determination Guidelines for Language Disorder with Intellectual Disability;
- SI Disability Determination Guidelines for Language Disorder with Autism;
- SI Disability Determination Guidelines for Language Disorder with Specific Learning Disability;
- SI Disability Determination Guidelines for Language Disorder in Children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds.

Dismissal

Dismissal

According to IDEA 2004, dismissal considerations should mirror eligibility considerations. Therefore, the same questions from Stages I, II, and III should be asked when making a recommendation about whether or not a student needs speech therapy services for a language disorder.

- **Stage I**
Does the student continue to exhibit a language disorder?
- **Stage II**
If so, does the language disorder continue to adversely impact academic achievement and/or functional performance?
- **Stage III**
If there is a disability determination for Speech Impairment with a language disorder, does the student continue to require specially designed instruction from the SLP to be involved in and make progress in the curriculum?

Determination of continued eligibility is to be made by the ARD committee upon consideration of the re-evaluation data presented by the SLP. The following information should be considered in addition to the data gathered in Stages I and II when recommending dismissal from SLP services to the ARD committee.

- How long has the student received speech/language therapy services?
- What service delivery models have been attempted with the student?
- What is the student's current level of performance on language goals and objectives?
- What is the interface between the student's current level of language performance and literacy demands of the curriculum?
- What is the student's level of independence with social communication?
- What level of support does the student need to be successful?
- Has the student benefitted from SLP services?
- Has the student received SLP services for an extended period of time without meaningful progress?

Level of Support

	Independent	Minimal	Maximum
What level of support does the student need to be successful?	The student communicates effectively most of the time, with expected levels of language complexity and social communication skills	The student needs more cues, models, explanations, or assistance than other students. The student may need instructional accommodations.	The student does not perform effectively most of the time despite modifications and supports. The student requires intensive instruction and/or interventions.
	Only periodic reminders of what to do are needed.		
Considerations	Consider dismissal from speech/therapy services.	Consider what is needed to promote generalization and who the best service provider may be (parent, teacher, SLP, other professionals, etc.).	Consider continuing speech-language therapy services.

After gathering and reviewing data on the student’s present levels of performance in the area of language as well as the student’s history of service delivery, the following questions should be considered when recommending dismissal from speech-language therapy services for language.

	Yes	No
Has there been a plateau in the student’s progress in speech-language therapy?		
Does the student lack motivation to work on improving language complexity and/or social communication?		
Has the student been working at the same language level for longer than one year with <u>minimal</u> progress?		
Is the student willing to participate in class discussions and/or presentations?		
Have at least <u>three</u> service delivery models been provided with minimal success?		

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	Yes	No
Is the student able to communicate effectively most of the time?		
Does the student know what to do most of the time, only requiring periodic reminders?		
Does parent and/or teacher data support the need for dismissal?		
Does the professional judgment of the SLP support the need for dismissal?		
Does formal and/or informal evaluation data support the need for dismissal?		
Is the student currently functioning at the “independent” or “minimal” levels of support?		

If the answer to at least five of the above questions is “yes,” the SLP may wish to recommend dismissal from speech-therapy services to the ARD committee. When the student’s progress has plateaued or the student has reached the expected level of performance given other disabilities or limiting physical structures, dismissal may be indicated (ASHA, 2016; TDLR, 2020).

Presenting Dismissal Recommendations to the ARD Committee when Intervention is no Longer Appropriate, though the Communication Disorder still Exists

- Provide documentation of the consistent lack of progress.
- Educate IEP team members, particularly parents, about the nature of the language disorder and how associated physical or medical factors, or primary disability, impact the student’s ability to benefit from continued SLP services.
- Encourage discussion of the relative value of continued work on language issues versus shifting focus to other educational needs. Often parents and teachers are responsive to discussion about the efficiency of use of instructional time for the student. It may be that it is in the best interest of the student for time spent with the SLP to be eliminated, allowing for more time to be spent in the general or special education classrooms.
- Provide documentation that a variety of evidence-based practices have been attempted in therapy with little or no success.
- Explore how the student’s language learning system is supported by teachers and is found in curriculum-based activities, so that SLP services may not be needed in order for the student to continue to make progress in the curriculum.

- Explore and discuss all possibilities for a continuum of support services, which may include direct services, inclusion services, SLP consultation that is gradually reduced in frequency and duration, or education and recommendations to parents and teachers to be carried over in environments other than the speech-language therapy setting.
- If, upon review of the data, the IEP team determines the student no longer exhibits a communication disorder, or the communication disorder no longer adversely affects academic achievement and/or functional performance, or no longer requires specialized instruction from the SLP, the student is not eligible and can be dismissed from speech-language pathology services (ASHA, 2016).

Forms

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Evaluation Phase I: Assessment Plan

Teacher Checklist – Initial Referral for Language Concerns
Parent Information - Initial Referral for Language Concerns
Student Interaction: Low Structure Language Sample Form
Story Retell Screener – Picture Stimulus
 Kindergarten
 First Grade
 Second Grade
 Third Grade
 Fourth Grade
 Fifth Grade
Assessment Planning Worksheet
RTI/MTSS Pre-Referral Intervention
Assessment Plan

Teacher Checklist - Initial Referral for Language Concerns Speech-Language Pathology

Student: _____ Teacher: _____

Date: _____ SLP: _____

Compared to other students in the class:	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Not Observed
1. Does the student consistently initiate verbal interaction with others?				
2. Is the student's communication easily understood?				
3. Do classmates regularly initiate interaction with this student?				
4. Does the student respond appropriately when classmates attempt to initiate interaction?				
5. Does the student seem to notice if his/her communication is misunderstood?				
5a. If yes, is the student able to modify their communication attempt?				
6. If the student is upset, are they able to use words appropriately to express feelings?				
7. When the student is communicating, do their facial expressions and body language seem to match the situation?				
8. Does the student volunteer information in class?				
8a. If so, are comments relevant to the discussion?				
9. Does the student respond appropriately when asked a question?				
10. During class discussions, does the student ask questions that are relevant?				
11. Does the student ask for help when needed?				
12. Does the student need more repetition of instructions than classmates?				
13. As a listener, do you frequently have to ask questions to determine the student's exact meaning?				

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<i>If the student has trouble communicating ideas clearly, answer the following questions:</i>				
Compared to other students in the class:	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Not observed
14. Does the student mispronounce words?				
15. Does the student use excessive nonspecific vocabulary, such as “thing” or “stuff”?				
16. Is the student’s sentence structure appropriate for age/grade?				
17. Does the student jump from one topic to another?				
18. Does the student fail to provide necessary background information?				
19. When speaking, does the student pause, revise, or repeat so much that it is noticeable?				
Comments:				

**Parent Information - Initial Referral for Language Concerns
Speech-Language Pathology**

Student: _____ Teacher: _____

Date: _____

Is a language other than English spoken in your home? YES NO

If yes, what language does your child use when speaking to:

Parents: _____

Siblings: _____

Grandparents or other family members: _____

Friends: _____

Compared to other children your child's age, is your child able to:	Most of the Time	Sometimes	Never
1. Follow directions when you ask your child to do something?			
2. Answer questions with yes or no?			
3. Answer questions with relevant information?			
4. Use complete sentences when speaking?			
5. Speak without too many errors?			
6. Use as many words as other children the same age?			
7. Play well with other children?			
8. Ask for help or information when needed?			
9. Start conversations with others?			
10. Seem interested in what other people say?			
11. Carry on a conversation with others?			
12. Does your child become frustrated if you cannot understand what your child is trying to communicate?			

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13. Are you worried about your child's language development? <i>If so, give examples:</i>			
--	--	--	--

**Phase I Student Interaction
Low Structure Language Sample**

Student: _____ **Campus:** _____ **Date:** _____

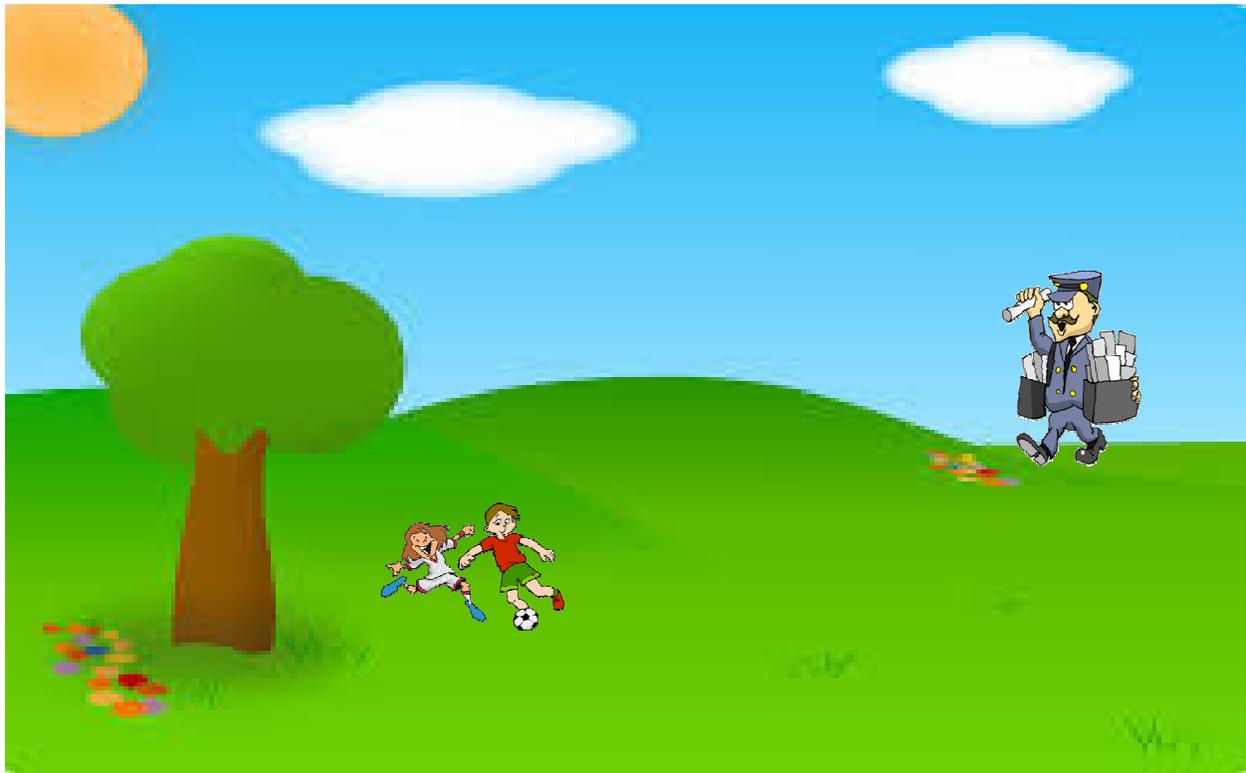
SLP: _____

Description of Context for Language Sampling:

Engage the student in conversational interaction in transition to the speech room and as a “warm-up” to completing the Phase I Story Retell Task. Complete this form and use the pattern of observations for planning the language evaluation.

Skill/behavior	Appropriate	Inappropriate	Not Observed
Responds to greeting from examiner			
Uses appropriate facial expressions and body language for situation			
Makes eye contact			
Answers questions			
Makes relevant comments			
Maintains topic of conversation / can switch topics			
Demonstrates conversational turn-taking			
Follows directions			
Attends to conversation and instructions			
Observations:			

Story Retell Screener – Picture Stimulus



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Phase I of Evaluation: Story Retell Screener for Kindergarten

Name: _____ **Grade:** _____ **Date:** _____

School: _____ **Teacher:** _____ **SLP:** _____

Instructions: Show the stimulus picture to the child and say: *“I am going to tell you a story about this picture. Listen carefully, so you can tell me the story.”* SLP tells the story about the picture.

One day Anna and Thomas go to the park so they can play soccer. Thomas kicks the ball and it gets stuck in the tree. They were very sad. How can they get it down? They jump as high as they can, but they can’t reach it. Then, they see a very tall mailman and ask him for help. He stands on his tippy toes and reaches it! Anna and Thomas are very excited. They tell the mailman “thank you” and start playing soccer again. This time they play far away from the tree.

Scoring: (Do not penalize for articulation errors.)

Kindergarten Skills Based on ELAR TEKS	Skill present	Skill not present
Describes setting – who (with assistance)	1	0
Describes setting - when, (with assistance)	1	0
Describes setting – where, (with assistance)	1	0
Describes initiating event (problem) with assistance	1	0
Describes character emotions (sad, happy)	1	0
Describes resolution of problem with assistance	1	0
Retell contains an abbreviated episode	1	0
Uses simple complete sentences	1	0
Uses is + verbing	1	0
Uses prepositions	1	0
Uses pronouns correctly	1	0

Age 6 should have:

Abbreviated episode: provides aims or intentions of a character but does not explicitly state the character's plan to achieve aims; planning must be inferred. Event statement with consequence or internal response with consequence may be included.

Phase I of Evaluation: Story Retell Screener for First Grade

Name: _____ **Grade:** _____ **Date:** _____

School: _____ **Teacher:** _____ **SLP:** _____

Instructions: Show the stimulus picture to the child and say: “*I am going to tell you a story about this picture. Listen carefully, so you can tell me the story.*” SLP tells the story about the picture.

One day Anna and Thomas went to the park so they could play soccer. Thomas kicked the ball and it got stuck in the tree. They were very sad. How can they get it down? They tried jumping as high as they could, but they couldn’t reach it. It was still stuck. Then they saw a very tall mailman and decided to ask him for help. He stood on his tippy toes and finally reached it! Anna and Thomas were very excited. They told the mailman “thank you” and started playing soccer again. This time they played far away from the tree.

Scoring: (Do not penalize for articulation errors.)

First Grade Skills Based on ELAR TEKS	Skill present	Skill not present
Describes setting – who	1	0
Describes setting – when	1	0
Describes setting – where	1	0
Describes initiating event (problem)	1	0
Describes character emotions	1	0
Describes attempts to resolve problem	1	0
Describes resolution of problem	1	0
Describes character plan (decide to ask mailman for help)	1	0
Retell contains an abbreviated episode	1	0
Uses compound sentences	1	0
Uses pronouns correctly	1	0
Uses prepositions	1	0
Uses past tense – regular	1	0
Uses past tense – irregular	1	0

Abbreviated episode: Provides aims or intentions of a character but does not explicitly state the character's plan to achieve aims; planning must be inferred. Event statement with consequence or internal response with consequence may be included.

Phase I of Evaluation: Story Retell Screener for Second Grade

Name: _____ **Grade:** _____ **Date:** _____

School: _____ **Teacher:** _____ **SLP:** _____

Instructions: Show the stimulus picture to the child and say: “I am going to tell you a story about this picture. Listen carefully, so you can tell me the story.” SLP tells the story about the picture.

One day Anna and Thomas’ mother takes them to the park because it is a beautiful day. Thomas is Anna’s older brother and he wants to teach her how to play soccer. They are so excited to play with their brand-new soccer ball. Thomas accidentally kicks the ball high over his head and when it comes down, it is stuck in the tree. They are very sad and afraid their mother will be mad. They talk about how they can get it down. First, they try jumping as high as they can, but they can’t reach it. The ball is still stuck in the tree. Next, they try to knock the ball out of the tree with a stick. The ball was too high. Then, they see a very tall mailman and ask him for help. He stands on his tippy toes and finally reaches it! Anna and Thomas tell the mailman “thank you” and start playing soccer again. Now, they always play far away from the tree.

Scoring: (Do not penalize for articulation errors.)

Second Grade Skills Based on ELAR TEKS	Skill present	Skill not present
Describes main characters – (name, brother and sister)	1	0
Describes setting – when	1	0
Describes setting – where	1	0
Describes initiating event (problem)	1	0
Describes character emotions (excited, sad, afraid, happy)	1	0
Includes character plan of action	1	0
Describes attempts to resolve problem	1	0
Describes resolution of problem	1	0
Has incomplete episode	1	0
Has complete episode	1	0
Has multiple episodes	1	0
Compound sentences	1	0
Uses conjunctions – and, but	1	0
Uses conjunctions for cohesion – then, finally, because	1	0
Uses prepositions	1	0
Uses adverbs (really, accidentally, finally, always)	1	0

Child age 7-8 may have:

- Incomplete episode: States planning, but one or more of the three essential story grammar parts of a complete episode is missing: Initiating Event, Attempt, or Consequence.

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- Complete episode: includes aims and plans of a character; may reflect evidence of planning in the attempts of a character to reach the goal; has at minimum an initiating event, an attempt, and a consequence; uses words like decided to.
- Multiple episodes: is a chain of reactive sequences or abbreviated episodes, or a combination of complete and incomplete episodes.

Phase I of Evaluation: Story Retell Screener for Third Grade

Name: _____ **Grade:** _____ **Date:** _____

School: _____ **Teacher:** _____ **SLP:** _____

Instructions: Show the stimulus picture to the child and say: “I am going to tell you a story about this picture. Listen carefully, so you can tell me the story.” SLP tells the story about the picture.

One day, Anna and Thomas’ mother takes them to the park because it is a beautiful day. Thomas is older than Anna and he wants to teach her how to play soccer. They are so excited to play with their brand-new soccer ball. Thomas accidentally kicks the ball high over his head and when it comes down, it is stuck in the tree. They are very sad and afraid their mother will be mad. They talk about how they can get it down. First, they try jumping as high as they can, but they can’t reach it. The ball is still stuck in the tree. Then, they see a very tall mailman and ask him for help. He stands on his tippy toes and finally reaches it! Anna and Thomas tell the mailman “thank you” and start playing soccer again. Now, they always play far away from the tree.

Scoring: (Do not penalize for articulation errors.)

Third Grade Skills Based on ELAR TEKS	Skill present	Skill not present
Describes main characters – name	1	0
Describes character relationship	1	0
Describes setting – when	1	0
Describes setting – where	1	0
Describes initiating event (problem)	1	0
Describes character emotions (sad, happy)	1	0
Describes attempts to resolve problem	1	0
Describes resolution of problem	1	0
Has incomplete episode	1	0
Has complete episode	1	0
Has multiple episodes	1	0
Compound sentences	1	0
Uses conjunctions – and, but, or	1	0
Uses conjunctions for cohesion – then, finally,	1	0

Child age 7-8 may have:

- Incomplete episode: states planning, but one or more of the three essential story grammar parts of a complete episode is missing: Initiating Event, Attempt, Consequence.
- Complete episode: includes aims and plans of a character; may reflect evidence of planning in the attempts of a character to reach the goal; has at minimum an initiating event, an attempt, and a consequence; uses words like “decided to.”
- Multiple episodes: is a chain of reactive sequences or abbreviated episodes, or a combination of complete and incomplete episodes.

Sixty percent of 8-year-olds' stories are complete episodes. Stories include internal goals, motivations, and reactions that are largely absent in stories produced by younger children; some episodes will be incomplete.

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Phase I of Evaluation: Story Retell Screener for Fourth Grade

Name: _____ **Grade:** _____ **Date:** _____

School: _____ **Teacher:** _____ **SLP:** _____

Instructions: Show the stimulus picture to the child and say: “I am going to tell you a story about this picture. Listen carefully, so you can tell me the story.” SLP tells the story about the picture.

One day Anna and Thomas’ mother takes them to the park because it is a beautiful day. Thomas is Anna’s older brother and wants to teach her how to play soccer. They are excited to play with their brand-new soccer ball. Thomas accidentally kicks the ball high over his head and when it comes down, it is stuck in the tree. They are very sad and afraid their mother will be mad. How can they get it down? They decide to try and reach the ball. They try jumping as high as they can, but they can’t reach it. Then, they find a long stick and try to hit the ball and knock it out of the tree. The ball is still higher than they can reach, even with the stick. After that, Thomas says, “We need someone to help us.” When they see a very tall mailman, they ask him for help. He reaches up, then stands on his tippy toes and finally reaches it! Anna and Thomas tell the mailman “thank you” and are happy to have their ball. They decided that the next time they play soccer, they always will play far away from trees.

Scoring: (Do not penalize for articulation errors.)

Fourth Grade Skills Based on ELAR TEKS	Skill present	Skill not present
Describes main characters – internal and external traits	1	0
Describes character relationship	1	0
Describes setting – when	1	0
Describes setting – where	1	0
Describes initiating event (problem)	1	0
Describes character emotions (excited, sad, happy)	1	0
Describes attempts to resolve problem	1	0
Describes resolution of problem	1	0
Has incomplete episode	1	0
Has complete episode	1	0
Has multiple episodes	1	0
Complex sentences	1	0
Uses conjunctions – and, but, or	1	0
Uses conjunctions for cohesion – then, finally, before after	1	0
Comparative adjectives (older, higher)	1	0
Uses negatives	1	0

By age 9, child should have:

- Incomplete episode: states planning, but one or more of the three essential story grammar parts of a complete episode is missing: Initiating Event, Attempt, Consequence.

- Complete episode: includes aims and plans of a character; may reflect evidence of planning in the attempts of a character to reach the goal; has at minimum an initiating event, an attempt, and a consequence; uses words like decided to.
- Multiple episodes: is a chain of reactive sequences or abbreviated episodes, or a combination of complete and incomplete episodes.

Phase I of Assessment: Story Retell Screener for Fifth Grade +

Name: _____ **Grade:** _____ **Date:** _____

School: _____ **Teacher:** _____ **SLP:** _____

Instructions: Show the stimulus picture to the child and say: “I am going to tell you a story about this picture. Listen carefully, so you can tell me the story.” SLP tells the story about the picture.

One day Anna and Thomas’ mother takes them to the park because it is a beautiful day. Thomas is Anna’s older brother and wants to teach her how to play soccer. They are excited to play with their brand-new soccer ball. Thomas accidentally kicks the ball high over his head and when it comes down, it is stuck in the tree. They are very sad and afraid their mother will be mad. How can they get it down? They decide to try and reach the ball. They try jumping as high as they can, but they can’t reach it. Then, they find a long stick and try to hit the ball and knock it out of the tree. The ball is still higher than they can reach with the stick. After that, Thomas says, “We need someone to help us.” They don’t see anyone nearby, so they decide to walk over to the sidewalk and look for someone. When they see a very tall mailman, they ask him for help. He reaches up, then stands on his tippy toes and finally reaches it! Anna and Thomas tell the mailman “thank you” and are happy to have their ball. They decided that the next time they play soccer, they always will play far away from trees.

Scoring: (Do not penalize for articulation errors.)

Fifth Grade Skills Based on ELAR TEKS	Skill present	Skill not present
Describes main characters – internal and external traits	1	0
Describes character relationship	1	0
Describes setting – when	1	0
Describes setting – where	1	0
Describes initiating event (problem)	1	0
Describes character emotions (excited, sad, happy)	1	0
Describes attempts to resolve problem	1	0
Describes resolution of problem	1	0
Has complex episode	1	0
Has embedded episode	1	0
Complex sentences	1	0
Uses conjunctions – and, but, or	1	0
Uses conjunctions for cohesion – then, finally, before after	1	0
Comparative adjectives (older, higher)	1	0
Uses negatives	1	0

By age 10, child can manage interactive episodes when retelling a story, but may be limited in number of embedded or interactive episodes. Child can tell coherent, goal-based, fictional stories, although reference to internal states narratives is still rare.

By age 11, child should have:

- Complex episode: includes elaboration of a complete episode by including multiple plans, attempts, or consequences within an episode; includes an obstacle to the attainment of a goal; may include a trick, as in "trickster tales."
- Embedded episode: embeds another complete episode or reactive sequence within an episode

Assessment Planning Worksheet

Student: _____ DOB: _____ Date: _____

School: _____ SLP: _____

Teacher: _____ Grade: _____

Referral Concerns	
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Significant Student Factors	No Concern	Some Concern	Significant Concern
Attendance <i>Comments:</i>			
Discipline Incidents <i>Comments:</i>			
Instability at Home <i>Comments:</i>			
History of Homelessness <i>Comments:</i>			
Number of Schools Attended <i>Comments:</i>			
English Learner <i>Comments:</i>			
Recent Immigrant <i>Comments:</i>			
Poor Academic Progress in spite of intervention support <i>Comments:</i>			

Area	Significant Information Obtained	Completed
Teacher Input		
Parent Input		
Outside Reports		
Story Retell Screener		
Conversational Language Sample – Low Structure		
Other		

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RTI/MTSS Pre-Referral Intervention

	Response to Intervention
Tier I Classroom Support	
Tier II / Tier III Interventions	

Phase I Summary: Strengths and Weaknesses

AREA	DATA	Data Support Concern?	
		YES	NO
Morphology/Syntax			
Semantics			
Phonology – articulation of speech sounds			
Phonology –reading readiness/ understanding letter-sound relationships			
Pragmatics			
Memory			
Auditory processing			
Social communication			
Attention			
Can communicate idea/ get point across			
Adult needs to ask questions to clarify meaning			
Other			

Is diagnostician needed for additional evaluation? (IQ, adaptive, literacy, achievement)	YES	NO
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Assessment Plan

Assessment Questions:

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	Assessment Question Addressed	Language Areas Assessed
Language Sample		Syntax & Morphology Semantics Pragmatics Metalinguistics
Teacher Information In-depth probes		Syntax & Morphology Semantics Pragmatics Metalinguistics
Parent Information In-depth probes		Syntax & Morphology Semantics Pragmatics Metalinguistics
Informal Criterion Referenced Measures Checklists, Interviews		Syntax & Morphology Semantics Pragmatics Metalinguistics
Norm-Referenced Tests/Subtests		Syntax & Morphology Semantics Pragmatics Metalinguistics
Observation Across School Environments – Academic and Nonacademic		Syntax & Morphology Semantics Pragmatics Metalinguistics
Other: _____ _____		Syntax & Morphology Semantics Pragmatics Metalinguistics

Evaluation Phase II: Data Collection Forms

Expanded Interview: Teacher Checklist

Observation Forms

Language Form, Content, Use Focused Observation

Informal Pragmatic Assessment Checklist

Observation of Student Communication Within the School Environment

Conversational Skills Checklist

Communication Skills Observation Worksheet

Expanded Interview: Teacher Checklist - Initial Referral for Language Concerns Speech-Language Pathology

Use the expanded questions in an interview format to probe for additional information about the student’s language and communication skills.

	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Not Observed
1. Does the student consistently initiate verbal interaction with others?				
2. Is the student’s communication easily understood?				
3. Do classmates regularly initiate interaction with this student?				
3a. Are there situations where the student does initiate?				
• If classmates initiate interaction, does the student respond in a way that encourages more interaction?				
• If not, what does the student usually do?				
• Does the student have more than one style of interacting?				
• Does the student change his manner of speaking depending on whether talking to an adult or a classmate?				
• Does the student sometimes use language that is inappropriate for the social situation?				
4. Does the student respond appropriately when classmates attempt to initiate interaction?				
5. Does the student seem to notice if his/her communication is understood?				
5a. If yes, is the student able to modify their communication attempt?				
• Does the student notice if misunderstood?				
• Does the student seem to become frustrated?				

	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Not Observed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the student likely to give up or will they keep trying? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the student just repeat what was said or can the student recognize what the problem is and attempt to clarify? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the student doesn't recognize what the problem is, can the student respond to specific questions from the listener? 				
6. If the student is upset, is the student able to use words appropriately to express feelings?				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the student seem to become easily upset during interactions with others? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can the student use words to express why the student is upset? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the student has difficulty using words to resolve differences, is the student likely to just walk away, or possibly resort to, for example, pushing or shoving? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can the student change behavior based on verbal responses from others? 				
7. When the student is communicating, do facial expressions and body language seem to match the situation?				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the student's facial expressions and body language inappropriate or noticeable when communicating? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does the student do that seems odd? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the student use inconsistent or inappropriate eye contact? 				
8. Does the student volunteer information in class?				
8a. If so, are comments relevant to the discussion?				
	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Not Observed

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the student volunteer information during class discussions? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the student understand the rules for participating appropriately in group discussions, such as not talking out of turn, not interrupting, or not monopolizing the conversation? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the student stay on topic? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If not, are there particular topics that the student will bring up? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the student seem able to monitor the listeners' reactions and judge whether they may be uninterested in what the student is saying? 				
9. Does the student respond appropriately when asked a question?				
10. During class discussions, does the student ask questions that are relevant?				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the student respond appropriately when asked a question? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there often a long pause before the student responds? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the student's responses sometimes inappropriate or unpredictable? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the student ask relevant questions during class discussions? 				
11. Does the student ask for help when needed?				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the student ask for help when he needs it? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the student ever seem to not even realize that he didn't understand? 				
	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Not Observed

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the student asks for help, is it usually enough to just repeat your instructions, or do you need to revise or simplify them? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the student asks for help, do they usually ask specific questions, or is it more likely that they will say something nonspecific, such as “I don’t get it”? 				
12. Does the student need more repetition of instructions than classmates?				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the student need more repetition than classmates? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the student seem to pay attention when subject matter is being presented? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the student seem to be able to retain information appropriately if they understand it? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the student able to retain information better if they can read it rather than if it’s presented orally? 				
13. As a listener, do you frequently have to ask questions to determine the student’s exact meaning?				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the student mispronounce words? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the problem seem to be that the student can’t articulate some individual speech sounds, or that they have trouble with unfamiliar or multisyllabic words? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the student rely on nonspecific vocabulary? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If asked for further explanation, is the student usually able to think of a more specific word? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the student sometimes use gestures or pantomime instead of specific words to describe an object or action? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the student use a variety of descriptive words? 				
	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Not Observed

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is sentence structure age-appropriate? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student use compound and complex sentences? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student use appropriate verb tenses and plural forms? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student state ideas in a logical sequence? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student use temporal words and phrases, such as yesterday, last week? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student jump from one topic to another? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student fail to provide cues to the listener when changing topic? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student provide necessary background information when telling an experience? (For example, does the student use pronouns without specifying the referent?) 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When giving instructions or directions to another person, does the student provide sufficient information? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the student’s speech fluent? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student use a lot of repetitions or revisions? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student use an excessive amount of fillers, such as “ummm,” or long pauses between words or phrases? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student’s intonation seem appropriate? 				
	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Not Observed

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student seem to take things literally? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student understand that words can have more than one meaning? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student understand slang expressions and idioms? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student understand indirect requests? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the student go beyond what is directly stated and make inferences? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the student retell a story with beginning, middle, and end? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the student summarize a story or tell the most important idea? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the student define words and discuss word meanings? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the student can define a word, can they retrieve it from memory in order to use it in conversation? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student understand and use synonyms and antonyms? 	

<i>If the student has trouble communicating ideas clearly, answer the following questions:</i>				
	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Not Observed
14. Does the student mispronounce words?				
15. Does the student use excessive nonspecific vocabulary, such as “thing” or “stuff”?				
16. Is the student’s sentence structure appropriate for age/grade?				
17. Does the student jump from one topic to another?				
18. Does the student fail to provide necessary background information?				
19. When speaking, does the student pause, revise, or repeat so much that it is noticeable?				

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Language Form, Content, Use Focused Observation

Student: _____ **Observation Date/s:** _____

School: _____ **Age/Grade:** _____

Target Language/Communication Skills:			
Context/Observation Setting:		Length of Observation:	
Frequency of Skill Use:	Appropriate	Approximation/ Attempt	Incorrect/ Not Observed
Context/Observation Setting:		Length of Observation:	
Frequency of Skill Use:	Appropriate	Approximation/ Attempt	Incorrect/ Not Observed
Comments			

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Informal Pragmatic Assessment Checklist

Student: _____ **Examiner:** _____ **Date:** _____

Check most appropriate description/observation

Nonverbal Communication		
Eye Gaze	Used to regulate interaction Brief/Fleeting	Excessive/ Staring Absent
Generally oriented to examiner	Yes	No
Personal Space	Appropriate Too close	Too far
Facial Expressions	Appropriate Overly Exaggerated	Flat
Facial Expressions – Emotional States (✓ if demonstrated; X if expected but not observed)		
Happy	Angry	
Confused	Other	
Sad		
Gestures		
Emphatic (talking with your hands)	Yes No	
Conventional/Instrumental (nod/shake head, shrug, clap)	Yes No	Example:
Descriptive (represents object or action “it was THIS big”)	Yes No	Example:
Gestures/Points are:	Clear/effective Exaggerated	Imprecise
Points to:	Share Interest Request	Answer Questions
Reads and responds appropriately to nonverbal cues	Yes No	
Stereotyped/Repetitive/Other Noted Behaviors:		
Verbal Communication		
Response to greetings:	Appropriate No Response	Other:
Answers are relevant:	Frequently Sometimes	Rarely/ Never
Responses are:	Appropriate length Excessive Single Word	No Response Other:

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Presence of:	Echolalia Repetitive words/ phrases	Jargon
Preferred Topics:	Yes No	If yes, list:
Maintains topic by:	Making appropriate comments Not Observed	Asking appropriate questions
Waits turn:	Frequently Sometimes	Rarely/Never
Response time:	Appropriate Rapid	Delayed
Shifts topic:	Appropriately Abruptly	Frequently Shifts to preferred topic
Able to talk on topic chosen by other 3+ turns	Yes No	
Difference noted in complexity of speech, intonation, overall demeanor when talking about topic of interest	Yes No	Behavior noted:
Intonation:	Appropriate Exaggerated Flat	Mechanical Rising Staccato
Volume:	Appropriate Loud Quiet	
Resonance:	Normal Abnormal	If abnormal: ○ Hypernasal ○ Hyponasal ○ Cul-de-sac
Appropriate use of:	Pronouns Regular Plurals Irregular Plurals	Regular Past Tense Verbs Irregular Past Tense Verbs Future Tense
Description of errors:		
Sentence types:	Simple Compound	Complex Frequent errors: _____ _____ _____

Hoffman & De Froy (2016). *Informal Pragmatic Assessment Checklist*. Unpublished.

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Observation of Student Communication Within the School Environment

Student: _____ **Date Completed:** _____

School: _____ **DOB:** _____

SLP: _____ **Class/ Subject Observed:** _____

Communication			
Behavior Regulation	Yes	No	Not Observed
1. Responds to simple gestures used by adults when given directions			
2. Independently carries out familiar, simple directions with minimal repetition			
3. Spontaneously communicates basic needs and desires clearly to others			
4. Asks for help by going to adult, raising hand, etc.			
5. Shows approval or rejection in an appropriate way			
6. Does not get upset when others are working or playing in close proximity			
7. Does not interrupt others			
8. Reacts to changes in routine/environment			
9. Insists on keeping certain objects with the student			
10. Engages in repetitive behaviors			
11. Student appears to be in their “own world”			
Social Interaction			
1. Seeks out and initiates contact with others			
2. Interacts with peers in routine structured work			
3. Interacts with peers in play situations			
4. Shares and takes turns with materials during group activities			
5. Gains attention of others appropriately			
6. Responds to others within environment by giving a response			
7. Uses and responds to greetings in familiar settings			
8. Responds to own name			
9. Acknowledges and responds to feelings by others			
10. Uses appropriate behavior to indicate desire to stop an activity			
11. Asks to move from task to task as appropriate			

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Joint Attention	Yes	No	Not Observed
1. Comments on object held by others or in the student's sight			
2. Adds new information to the topic of others			
3. Responds to simple questions			
4. Asks simple questions			
5. Requests information			
6. Clarifies			
Sensory	Yes	No	Not Observed
1. Shows sensitivity to loud noises/lights			
2. Engages in self-stimulatory behaviors (hand-flapping, rocking, spinning)			
3. Resists being touched or held			
4. Feels, smells and/or tastes objects in the environment			
Communication Method	Yes	No	Not Observed
1. Understands and uses gestures			
2. Engages in echolalia			
3. Displays odd prosody or peculiar voice characteristics			
4. Displays adequate volume or rate of speech			
5. Displays scripted, stereotyped discourse			
6. Displays pedantic characteristics			
7. Utilizes idiosyncratic speech			
8. Inappropriate use of pronouns			
9. Uses social rituals (please, thank you, excuse me)			
10. Responds or reciprocates to greetings			

Comments:

Conversational Skills Checklist

Student: _____ **Grade:** _____ **Date:** _____

Observer: _____ **Position:** (Circle one) **Parent/ Teacher/ SLP**

The Conversational Skills Checklist may be used as a Pre/Post Test to determine the following:

- A student’s strengths in using language skills in conversation
- A student’s needs for developing language skills in conversation
- A student’s progress towards proficiency of language skills in conversation

Directions for Observer: Mark (X) the student’s frequency of use or proficiency for each of the skills listed on the chart. Base your responses on what has been observed at home (Parent), in the classroom (Teacher), or during assessment and/or therapy sessions (SLP)

Conversational Skill	Proficiency Codes		
Opening Section:	Not Yet	Sometimes	Proficient
Secures listener’s attention			
Initiates topic of conversation			
Asks permission before touching or borrowing other people’s things			
Makes eye contact with others			
Uses friendly body language			
Topic Selection:	Not Yet	Sometimes	Proficient
Chooses topics that deal with “here and now”			
Chooses topics that deal with the past			
Chooses topics that deal with the future			
Chooses interesting topics of conversation			
Chooses topics appropriate for situation			
Turn-Taking:	Not Yet	Sometimes	Proficient
Overlap			
Nature of Turn – Comment			
Nature of Turn – Response			
Nature of Turn – Directed			
Takes turns in conversation			
Waits to share at appropriate times			
Invites others into conversation			
Relinquishes turn to talk			

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Topic Maintenance:	Not Yet	Sometimes	Proficient
Maintained through repetition			
Maintained through agreement			
Maintained by adding information			
Can sustain topic through several turns			
Asks appropriate questions that are on topic			
Topic Changing:	Not Yet	Sometimes	Proficient
Introduces new topics			
Reintroduces old topics			
Shades topic of discussion			
Can close or switch topics when appropriate			
Repair:	Not Yet	Sometimes	Proficient
Provides repairs when the listener doesn't understand			
Repeats what was said			
Confirms what was said			
Revises what was said			
Adds additional information to what was said.			
Provides cues			
Inappropriate response			
Seeks repairs when the speaker is not understood			
Gives neutral-nonspecific message of lack of understanding			
Requests confirmation as to what was understood			
Requests specific information to clarify			
Quality:	Not Yet	Sometimes	Proficient
A good listener when others are speaking			
Remembers to thank others for help			
Expresses sympathy when other people are hurting			
Considers how words affect others before speaking			
Manner:	Not Yet	Sometimes	Proficient
Keeps messages of conversation organized (tells things in order)			
Focuses on most important details, clearly and concisely			
Uses cohesion (links ideas)			
Relation:	Not Yet	Sometimes	Proficient
Responds appropriately to others' messages			
Asks for clarification of messages from other people			
Elaborates on a topic when appropriate			
Disagrees without disrupting			

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Assertiveness:	Not Yet	Sometimes	Proficient
Asks question more than once if message not understood			
Continues to try to get messages across if listener does not understand			

Observer Comments:

Communication Skills Observation Worksheet

Student: _____ **Date:** _____

SLP: _____ **Observation Context** _____

Discourse Skills	Frequently Observed	Occasionally Observed	Not Observed
Starts a conversation <i>Examples:</i>			
Shows listening behavior <i>Examples:</i>			
Responds with appropriate content <i>Examples:</i>			
Interrupts appropriately <i>Examples:</i>			
Stays on topic <i>Examples:</i>			
Changes topic <i>Examples:</i>			
Appropriately ends a conversation <i>Examples:</i>			
Recognizes listener’s viewpoint <i>Examples:</i>			
Demonstrates topic relevancy <i>Examples:</i>			
Uses appropriate response length <i>Examples:</i>			
Comments/Observations			

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Speech Acts and Communication Functions	Frequently Observed	Occasionally Observed	Not Observed
Labels things or actions <i>Examples:</i>			
Asks for things or actions <i>Examples:</i>			
Describes things or actions <i>Examples:</i>			
Asks for information <i>Examples:</i>			
Gives information <i>Examples:</i>			
Asks permission <i>Examples:</i>			
Requests <i>Examples:</i>			
Promises <i>Examples:</i>			
Agrees <i>Examples:</i>			
Threatens or warns <i>Examples:</i>			
Apologizes <i>Examples:</i>			
Protests, argues, or disagrees <i>Examples:</i>			
Shows humor, teases <i>Examples:</i>			
Uses greetings <i>Examples:</i>			

Adapted from Erickson, J. (1987)

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Evaluation Phase III: Analysis and Interpretation Form

Language Evaluation Summary Form

Language Evaluation Summary Form

Student: _____ **Campus:** _____ **SLP:** _____

Date of Birth: _____ **Grade:** _____ **Date Completed:** _____

Assessment Questions:

Evaluation Tool	Results		Data Supports Concern	
			Yes	No
Teacher Checklist/ Interview				
Parent Information/ Interview				
Standardized Test/Subtest Results	Score/s:			
	Standard Deviation			
	Confidence Interval			
	Sensitivity			
	Specificity			

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Evaluation Tool	Results		Data Supports Concern	
	Language Skills:	Results/Comments:	Yes	No
Informal Criterion-Referenced Measures: Language Sample Checklists Interviews/Questionnaires Skill Specific Probes	Syntax/ Morphology			
	Semantics			
	Metalinguistics			
	Phonology: <i>Speech Sounds</i>			
	<i>Reading/ Reading Readiness</i>			
	Pragmatics: <i>Social Communication</i>			
	<i>Narrative Skills</i>			
	<i>Discourse Skills</i>			
	Social Interaction: <i>Nonverbal Behaviors to Regulate</i>			
	<i>Interaction</i>			
<i>Turn-Taking</i>				
<i>Joint Attention</i>				
<i>Shared Emotion</i>				
<i>Use of Communication to Regulate Interactions</i>				
<i>Initiate/Sustain Conversation</i>				

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	<p>Intentionality: <i>Request, Protest, Reject</i></p>			
	<p>Interaction: <i>Initiate, Respond,</i> <i>Maintain, Terminate,</i> <i>Repair, Request, Greetings</i></p>			
<p>Focused Observations</p>				
<p>Other Assessment Information</p>				

Recommendations to the ARD Committee			
		Yes	No
Stage I: Presence of a Language Disorder	Evidence:		
Stage II: Adverse Effect on Educational Performance	Evidence (enter rating from Adverse Effect Checklist): Academic Achievement: _____ Functional Performance: _____		
<i>If yes to Stage I and II, the Disability Determination for Language Disorder has been met</i>			
Recommendation that ARD Committee consider eligibility for special education with a Speech Impairment		Yes	No
<i>If ARD Committee determines SI eligibility, then address Stage III:</i>			
Are specialized services by an SLP needed to help the student with a language disorder make progress in the curriculum?		Yes	No
Recommendations for SLP services:			

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Re-Evaluation Forms

Language Re-Evaluation Plan
Phase I Summary: Strengths and Weaknesses
Re-Evaluation Plan

Language Re-Evaluation Plan

Student: _____ DOB: _____ Date: _____

School: _____ Speech-Language Pathologist: _____

Teacher: _____ Grade: _____

Re-evaluation Concerns

Intervention History Since Last Evaluation	
IEP Goals for Language	
Service Delivery Models Provided	
Time in Treatment	
Rate of Progress	

Current Status:

Area	Significant Information Obtained	Completed
Teacher Input		
Parent Input		
Outside Reports		
Other		

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Summary: Strengths and Weaknesses

LANGUAGE AREA	IEP GOAL PROGRESS	CONCERN?	
		YES (Provide Specific Information)	NO
Morphology/syntax			
Semantics			
Phonology speech sounds			
Phonology – reading/reading readiness			
Pragmatics			
Social communication			
Attention			
Can communicate idea/ get point across			
Adult needs to ask questions to clarify meaning			
Other			

Is diagnostician needed for additional evaluation (IQ, adaptive, achievement)	Yes	No
---	-----	----

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Re-Evaluation Plan

<p>Assessment Questions:</p>

	Assessment Question Addressed	Language Areas Assessed
Language Sample		Syntax & Morphology Semantics Pragmatics Metalinguistics
Teacher Information In-depth probes		Syntax & Morphology Semantics Pragmatics Metalinguistics
Parent Information In-depth probes		Syntax & Morphology Semantics Pragmatics Metalinguistics
Informal Criterion Referenced Measures Checklists, Interviews		Syntax & Morphology Semantics Pragmatics Metalinguistics
Norm-Referenced Tests/Subtests		Syntax & Morphology Semantics Pragmatics Metalinguistics
Observation Across School Environments – Academic and Nonacademic		Syntax & Morphology Semantics Pragmatics Metalinguistics
Other		Syntax & Morphology Semantics Pragmatics Metalinguistics

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Appendices

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Appendix A

Assessing Preschool Students: Considerations and Recommendations

Whole Child Approach

When a preschool child is referred for concerns about speech/language development, the examiner should address all aspects of the child's communication system. Child development, especially during the preschool years, does not occur along easily separated strands. A delay in one aspect of a young child's development will affect development in other areas. Often the presenting concern, especially if the parent is the referral agent, is that the child is not producing certain speech sounds or that his speech is hard to understand. However, especially during the preschool years, all aspects of a child's language system should be assessed. Because of the holistic nature of language development, it is unlikely that, for example, an articulation problem would not also affect pragmatics, semantics, syntax, and morphology. Additionally, it is quite likely that, if a child has not been successful in early communication attempts, then that child's social behavior has been negatively impacted. If a child has experienced multiple instances when attempting to ask or tell something, and the child's attempts have resulted, not in a confirmation of the communication, but in a puzzled look or a request for repetition, the child is likely to become hesitant to communicate with unfamiliar persons. If the child's caregivers also have trouble understanding the child, the emotional toll is even more pronounced. Therefore, a primary consideration when testing a preschool child who has been referred for speech/language assessment should be that the child is likely to be more hesitant to talk to a stranger than a preschool child with normal language development would be.

Establishing Rapport

It is important that upon first meeting a young child, the examiner try to avoid making the child more hesitant to talk than they may already be. If a child is not comfortable with the setting or the examiner, they are likely to communicate only minimally or not at all. There are ways that an examiner can seek to lessen the child's apprehension.

- Often the child is brought to testing by a caregiver. After briefly greeting the caregiver, the examiner should greet the child. It is important to speak to the child at eye level.
- It is also important to initially refrain from asking the child questions. As speech-language pathologists we know that a question is a demand for communication. An answer is expected, but this is a child who has probably had negative experiences with attempting to answer questions. So, the examiner should offer information rather than requesting it from the child.

- Don't ask the child's name; tell him yours.
- Tell the child you are glad they came to see you and that you have some pictures and toys that you like and that you want to show them.
- Explain that first you are going to talk to the child's caregiver, and then it will be your turn to talk to them. The child may not utter a word during this time, but is probably forming an opinion as to whether or not the examiner can be trusted. The child's level of cooperation during the evaluation will be largely determined by the child's level of trust in the examiner and the resulting degree of comfort in the testing situation.
- During the evaluation, the examiner may need to ask the child to repeat in order to transcribe a word or even to ascertain the word that the child was attempting. Some children are quite reluctant to repeat, realizing that they have again failed to make someone understand. It can sometimes be helpful if the examiner has a stuffed animal and can ask the child to repeat "because the bear didn't hear what you said" or "this silly bear wasn't listening." For an older preschooler, the examiner may be able to shift responsibility for misarticulation away from the child by saying something like: "My ears are tired today, and they didn't hear that very well. Would you please say that again so my ears can try to listen better?"

Linguistic and Cultural Diversity

Another important consideration when testing preschoolers is the impact of linguistic and cultural diversity. This is an important consideration when evaluating any child, but it is especially important when evaluating very young children who may have had little or no experience outside of the culture of their home and family. When testing school-age children, an examiner may assume that the child is familiar enough with the culture of the school that they know that they will be expected to respond to testing items. Young children, especially if they are not enrolled in a preschool, may not respond at all if they feel uncomfortable. Standardized tests are often administered with the child and the examiner each sitting in a chair and talking about a shared topic. In the case of a preschooler, this topic is likely to be a picture in a book or items from a test kit. Young children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may have had little or no experience with sitting with an adult and talking about something that is not related to the immediate context of their daily lives. Perhaps there are no picture books at home, or perhaps the adults in the child's life are so busy, so stressed, or have such different cultural beliefs regarding appropriate child-rearing that they do not talk much to their children except to interact regarding whatever is happening at the moment. This mismatch between the home culture and that of the school can have a significant negative effect on the child's performance. Even if he is willing to sit and point to or talk about pictures, he may not be able to perform as well as if the context and the tasks were familiar. If a child is unwilling or unable to respond to a formal test when it is administered in a standardized way, the examiner may choose to sit on the floor with a child, modify task instructions, administer items out of order, or otherwise modify

the test in order to get a picture of some of the child's abilities. However, in that case, no scores or age-range equivalences should be reported.

Observation of Play

A preschool evaluation should include an observation of the child during play. Even if the examiner was able to administer a formal test in a standardized way to obtain a score, playing with a child is often the best way to obtain an accurate picture of the child's functional communication skills. When young children are asked to sit and point to or talk about pictures, they are being asked to demonstrate skills in addition to language. Such a task also involves behavioral abilities, such as attending skills and ability to self-regulate. Interacting with a child during play or observing the child playing with a caregiver or peer allows the examiner to obtain a more realistic picture of the child's customary communication. The examiner should be familiar with the developmental levels of both constructive play, which includes activities like stacking blocks or putting puzzles together, and symbolic or pretend play, which includes using toys to imitate familiar activities, such as rolling cars along a pretend road or using miniature cooking utensils to prepare a pretend meal.

- Testing materials should include toys that will facilitate both constructive play and symbolic or pretend play. Cooking and eating utensils, a baby doll with a change of clothes and a blanket, a doll house family and some furniture, cars and trucks, colored blocks and a container, a barn with farm animals, a book with pictures of one or two objects on a page a book with more complex pictures of activities, a simple puzzle, etc. should all be part of the preschool examiner's testing materials.
- Some children will become more verbal and interactive during gross motor play, so there should be a ball or two included in the testing materials. It may be a good idea to first try activities other than gross motor, because some children will become overly excited and may find it difficult to calm down.
- If a child is reluctant to begin to play, wind-up toys or bubble-blowing will often entice him or her to begin to interact. Balls, wind-up toys and bubbles may also be more useful than more representational toys in attempting to engage children who are severely delayed. Flexibility is the key to a good play session! If possible, let the child take the lead in choosing play materials.
- When beginning the play session, as when first meeting the child, the examiner should refrain from asking questions, giving directions, or constantly chattering. If the child does not immediately choose a toy, the examiner should start to play with a toy and make simple comments about the toy and what she is doing with it. The child may just watch for a few minutes, but then he or she is likely to spontaneously join in or to respond if the

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examiner offers a turn with whatever toy the examiner was using. As the child becomes more comfortable, the examiner may begin to explore more directly the child's language abilities. For example, a set of colored blocks and a container can be used to elicit counting, color naming, knowledge of quantity concepts such as "all" and "none," and knowledge and use of prepositions, all while the child and the examiner are sitting on the floor building something together.

Significant Developmental or Behavior Issues

Some children may be so delayed or have such significant behavioral issues that the examiner will quickly realize that formal testing cannot be completed. In this case, the play session becomes even more important. Hopefully, the examiner has had time to obtain from the child's caregiver information about the child's communication and play behaviors at home, and the play session will enable the examiner to see if the child can generalize those behaviors. If the child's language is severely delayed, the level of play demonstrated by that child is likely to be the examiner's best way of ascertaining the child's level of cognitive development. Is the child primarily interested in just rolling the little cars, or will the child join the examiner in an imaginary race? Does the child grab a spoon and use it to bang against something? Or do they demonstrate higher-level cognition by pretending to eat with it or put it in the doll's mouth, or does the child demonstrate even higher-level cognitive ability by engaging in a whole routine of preparing imaginary food and then feeding it to the doll? If the child is nonverbal or uses only a few words, the examiner should also note the communicative gestures used by the child. Does the child seek attention, request objects or actions, comment on actions or objects, request information, protest, etc.? If so, how did he or she communicate these intentions? It is very helpful to have a second examiner during a play session, so that one examiner is free to interact with the child without also having to take notes or record a language sample. Ideally, a play session would result in a record not only of the child's utterances and communicative gestures, but of the immediate context of the utterance or communicative gesture. For example, what toys were being used, how they were being used, and what the examiner did or said to elicit that response from the child. It may also be useful to record attempts by the examiner to elicit a response that were ignored by the child or resulted in an inappropriate response. A successful play session will provide a holistic picture of a child's functional communication skills, as well as an indication of the child's interests and cognitive abilities. Use criterion-referenced measures such as a district-developed checklist or developmental norms for communication to summarize and describe the child's communication during the play assessment. See the section of this manual entitled Language Evaluation Phase II – Data Collection for resources listed under "Interviews and Questionnaires" and "Developmental Scales." An instrument which is useful both in obtaining norm-referenced scores as well as developmental ages is the *Transdisciplinary Play-Based Assessment, 2nd Edition* (Linder, 2008), which is on the Texas Education Agency's list of approved preschool assessments.

Resources: Linder, 2008; Losardo & Notari-Syverson, 2001; Westby, 1988.

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Appendix B

Diagnostic Significance of Children's Play

The play behaviors demonstrated by young children provide a window into their developing knowledge of the world. Play behaviors change as a child learns more about his environment and grows in his ability to interact with that environment. Observation of a child's play provides a way to evaluate that child's understanding of the world and level of competence in dealing with the people and objects in his world. Play can be looked at in various ways. For the purposes of a speech/language evaluation, *symbolic* or *pretend play* is extremely important, because research has shown that the development of pretend play is closely tied to the development of language and cognition. *Constructive play*, which involves activities such as working puzzles and building with blocks, also changes with growth in cognitive and linguistic development.

Stages of Development in Pretend Play

12 – 18 months: Child performs single pretend actions, such as brushing hair or drinking from a cup, using common objects or life-like toys.

18 – 24 months: Child is able to combine more than one action or toy in pretend play (rock doll and put it to bed, pour from a pitcher into a cup and then pretend to drink).

24 – 30 months: Child can participate in more elaborate play routines that represent daily experiences (put "food" in pan, put pan on stove, stir pan, put "food" in dish).

30 – 36 months: Child is able to participate in play that represents less frequently experienced events (going shopping, going to the doctor).

36 – 42 months: Child engages in play routines in which the child was an observer, not an active participant (pretending to be a police officer, firefighter, cartoon character). Play may involve replica toys (dollhouse, garage, farm set) or objects used to represent other objects (blocks in a pan on the stove represent food).

42 – 48 months: Child participates in longer sequences of familiar events (prepares food, sets table, eats, washes dishes). Events are planned, and the child may use a doll or puppet as an actor in the events.

48 – 60 months: Child is able to engage in pretend play routines that involve fantasy themes or planned events that tell a story, including using props and assigning roles (a birthday party for a doll, a superhero saves someone from danger).

Stages of Development in Constructive Play

18 – 24 months: Child can stack several objects, line up objects, complete simple, non-interlocking puzzles.

24 – 36 months: Child is able to build structures that combine stacking and making rows and to label those structures (house, garage, store).

36 – 48 months: Child uses blocks to construct more elaborate structures that can be used in pretend play routines (builds a barn with a fence and then puts animals inside; constructs a road with a gasoline station, rolls cars along the road, stops for gasoline).

Appendix C

Evidence-Based Language Sample Analysis Measures

Low Verbal – Emerging Language				
	Method/Task	Analysis	Criterion Reference* (ages)	Reference
Syntax	Average number of morphemes divided by the number of utterances; Conversational, play-based language sample	Mean Length Utterance – morphemes (MLU-M)	1.0 (18 mos.) 1.1 (21 mos.) 1.5 (24 mos.) 1.9 (27 mos.) 2.0 (30 mos.) 2.3 (33 mos.) 2.52 (2;6-2;11)	Paul, et al (2018)- Adopted from Brown (1973); Miller (1981); Miller et al. (1992); Rice et al. (2010). Rice et al. (2010)
	Compute proportion of word combinations by dividing number of utterances with more than one word by total number of interpretable utterances	Frequency of word combinations	Proportion close to or greater than 50% (24 mos.)	Paul et al. (2018)
Semantics	Percentage of contingent response, those that relate semantically to the previous speaker’s utterances; Spontaneous speech in conversation	Comprehension	Less than 50% of child’s proportion of contingent utterances (24 mos.) 75% of child’s proportion of contingent responses (42 mos.)	Bloom et al. (1976)
	Average number of different words; 50 utterances in conversation, play-based sample	Number of Different Words (NDW); a measure of vocabulary density	36 (18 mos.) 41 (21 mos.) 46 (24 mos.) 51 (27 mos.) 56 (30 mos.) 61 (33 mos.)	Paul et al. (2018) Adopted from Brown (1973); Miller (1981); Miller et al. (1992); Rice et al. (2010).
	Semantic Relational Categories: attribute/entity; possessor/possession; agent/action; action/object; demonstrative/entity; entity/locative; action/locative; recurrence; denial, nonexistence, rejection; disappearance	Semantic Relations	Expresses a range of semantic relations (36 mos.)	Brown (1973)
Pragmatics	Observe communicative intention in play using interesting toys with familiar adult	Range of Communicative Functions	Request action Request object Protest Comment (8 – 18 mos.)	Coggins & Carpenter (1981); Paul & Shiffer, (1991)

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			Request information Answer Acknowledge (18 – 24 mos.)	
	Observe communicative intention in play using interesting toys with familiar adult	Frequency of Expression of Intentions	2 instances intentional communication per minute (18 mos.) >5 instances per minute (24 mos.) <3 proto-declarative acts in 15 minutes (at risk for development of functional speech)	Chapman, (2000) Yoder, Warren & McCathren, (1998)
	Observe communicative intention in play using interesting toys with familiar adult	Forms of Communication	Gestures are predominant (8 – 12 mos.) Gestures combined with word-like vocalizations (12 – 18 mos.) Conventional words or word combinations use more frequently (18 – 24 mos.)	Chapman (2000)
	Observe communicative functions and means of expression across environments	Checklist of Communicative Functions and Means	All ages	Wetherby 1995
Preschool – Developing Language				
Syntax	Average number of morphemes divided by the number of utterances; Conversational, play-based language sampling	Mean Length Utterance – morphemes (MLU-M)	2.7 (36 mos.) 2.7 (39 mos.) 3.2 (42 mos.) 3.2 (45 mos.) 3.5 (48 mos.) 3.7 (51 mos.) 3.8 (54 mos.) 3.9 (57 mos.) 3.12 (3;0-3;5) 3.42 (3;6-3.11) 3.81 (4;0-4;5) 3.96 (4;6-4;11)	Paul et al. (2018) Adopted from Brown (1973); Miller (1981); Miller et al. (1992); Rice et al. (2010). Rice et al. (2010)
	SUGAR Method; 50-utterance sample based on a 10-minute conversation. Ask process questions, use “tell me” statements, use turnabouts (comment + cue student to talk), use narrative elicitations	SUGAR MLU (MLU-S) Note: MLU-S includes a few additional rules for counting morphemes, some benefiting younger students, and some	2.87 (3;0-3;5) 4.13 (3;6-3.11) 4.26 (4;0-4;5) 4.86 (4;6-4;11)	Pavelko & Owens (2017)

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		benefiting older students.		
	SUGAR Method	Clauses per Sentence (CPS)	1.00 (3;0-3;5) 1.04 (3;6-3.11) 1.06 (4;0-4;5) 1.10 (4;6-4;11)	Pavelko & Owens (2017)
	PGU is calculated by the number of utterances with no errors, divided by the total number of utterances with a noun and verb; Picture Description task (3;0-3;11)	Percent of Grammatical Utterances (PGU)	58 (3;0-3;11)	Eisenberg & Guo (2013)
	FVMC is the calculated percentage of correct use in obligatory contexts of third-person singular present -s, regular past tense -ed, and copula and auxiliary be (i.e., am, are, is, was, were) with a single measure. 100 utterances elicited in conversation during play.	Finite Verb Morphology Composite (FVMC)	95 (3;0-3;11)	Guo & Eisenberg (2016); Bedore & Leonard (1998)
	Structures used by 80% of the students with a mean frequency reported; Using SUGAR Method, collect 50-utterance sample based on a 10-minute conversation.	Noun Phrase Elements	Mean Frequency of noun phrase elements in 50-utterance sample: (3;0-3;5) Article 9.8 Poss. pronoun 6.67 (3;6-3.11) Article 13.4 Poss. Pronoun 7.46 Adjective 4.89 Descriptor 3.97 (4;0-4;5) Article 12.38 Poss. Pronoun 6.48 Adjective 5.40 Descriptor 4.63 (4;6-4;11) Article 16.58 Poss. Pronoun 8.00 Adjective 6.81 Descriptor 4.66	Owens et al. (2018)
	Structures used by 80% of the students with a mean frequency reported; Using SUGAR Method, collect 50-utterance sample based	Verb Phrase Elements	Mean Frequency of verb phrase elements in 50-utterance sample: (3;0-3;5) BE copula 5.14 Irreg. past 3.82	Owens et al. (2018)

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	on a 10-minute conversation.		<p>Infinitive phr. 3.71 Prepos. phr. 5.58</p> <p>(3;6-3.11) BE copula 5.16 Irreg. past 4.09 Infinitive phr. 3.32 Prepos. phr. 7.14 Poss. Pronoun 7.46 BE auxiliary 2.24</p> <p>(4;0-4;5) BE copula 6.03 Irreg. past 4.71 Infinitive phr. 4.24 Prepos. phr. 7.49 BE auxiliary 1.96 Do/does+Verb 3.79</p> <p>(4;6-4;11) BE copula 6.49 Irreg. past 5.36 Infinitive phr. 5.19 Prepos. phr. 8.35 BE auxiliary 2.31 Do/does+Verb 2.95</p>	
	Structures used by 80% of the students with a mean frequency reported; Using SUGAR Method, collect 50-utterance sample based on a 10-minute conversation.	Grammatical Morphemes	<p>Mean Frequency of grammatical morpheme elements in 50-utterance sample: (3;0-3;5) Plural -s 7.89</p> <p>(3;6-3.11) Plural -s 7.63 Progressive -ing 1.96 3rd Pers. Sing.-s 2.94</p> <p>(4;0-4;5) Plural -s 6.71 Progressive -ing 2.31 3rd Pers. Sing.-s 3.74</p> <p>(4;6-4;11) Plural -s 6.71 Progressive -ing 2.31 3rd Pers. Sing.-s 3.74</p>	Owens et al. (2018)
Semantics	SUGAR Method	Total Number of Words (TNW)	<p>131.08 (3;0-3;5) 185.98 (3;6-3.11) 191.42 (4;0-4;5) 218.57 (4;6-4;11)</p>	Pavelko & Owens (2017)

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	SUGAR Method	Words per Sentence (WPS)	3.87 (3;0-3;5) 5.07 (3;6-3.11) 5.11 (4;0-4;5) 5.71 (4;6-4;11)	Pavelko & Owens (2017)
	Ask questions to determine comprehension of question words; Read a short, simple story and ask the questions during the reading.	Comprehension of question words	What?, Where?, Whose? Why?, How many? (with a number, not necessarily the right one) (at 3;0) How? (at 3;6) When? (at 4;6)	James (1990) As cited by Paul et al., (2018)
	Average number of different words; 50 utterances in conversation, play-based sample	Number of Different Words (NDW); a measure of vocabulary density	66 (36 mos.) 71 (39 mos.) 76 (42 mos.) 81 (45 mos.) 86 (48 mos.)	Paul et al. (2018) Adopted from Brown (1973); Miller (1981); Miller et al. (1992); Rice et al. (2010).
	TTR is an index of the ratio between NTW and NDW, based on a 50-utterance conversational sample (SALT calculates TTR)	Type-Token Ratio (TTR); a measure of lexical diversity	0.43-0.47 (3;0-8;11)	Templin (1957), as cited in SALT manual
Pragmatics	Conversational interaction between student and SLP or other adult	Communicative Intentions	Request, comment, turn-taking, respond	Roth & Speckman (1984)
	Conversational interaction between student and SLP or other adult	Presupposition	Use barrier games to check for encoding adequate information for partner to identify referents	Roth & Speckman, (1984))
	Conversational interaction between student and SLP or other adult	Organization of Discourse	Analyze turn-taking; topic maintenance; conversational initiation, termination & repair; request clarification	Roth & Speckman (1984)
Kindergarten – 3rd Grade – Language for Learning				
Syntax	Average number of morphemes divided by the number of utterances; Conversational language	Mean Length Utterance – morphemes (MLU-M)	4.16 (5;0-5;5) 4.26 (5;6-5;11) 4.23 (6;0-6;05) 4.51 (6;6-6;11)	Rice et al, (2010)
	Average number of morphemes divided by the number of utterances; Conversational, play-based language sampling	Mean Length Utterance – morphemes (MLU-M)	4.0 (60 mos.)	Paul et al, (2018) Adopted from Brown (1973); Miller (1981); Miller et al. (1992); Rice et al. (2010).

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	SUGAR Methods	SUGAR MLU (MLU-S)	5.31 (5;0-5;11) 6.00 (6;0-6;11) 6.87 (7;0-7;11)	Pavelko & Owens (2017)
	SUGAR Method	Clauses per Sentence (CPS)	1.16 (5;0-5;11) 1.22 (6;0-6;11) 1.25 (7;0-7;11)	Pavelko & Owens (2017)
	PGU	Percent of Grammatical Utterances (PGU)	83 (6;0-6;11) 91 (8;0-8;11)	Guo & Schneider (2016)
	FVMC	Finite Verb Morphology Composite (FVMC)	93 (6;0-6;11) 97 (8;0-8;11)	Guo & Schneider (2016)
	Structures used by 80% of the students with a mean frequency reported; Using SUGAR Method, collect 50-utterance sample based on a 10-minute conversation.	Noun Phrase Elements	Mean Frequency of noun phrase elements in 50-utterance sample: (5;0-5;11) Article 15.64 Poss. pronoun 8.19 Adjective 5.98 Descriptor 4.31 Quantifier 3.44 (6;0-6;11) Article 17.84 Poss. Pronoun 8.10 Adjective 7.00 Descriptor 4.42 Quantifier 4.82 (7;0-7;11) Article 17.65 Poss. Pronoun 8.00 Adjective 7.43 Descriptor 6.41 Quantifier 3.14 Demonstrative 3.89 Numerical term 3.47	Owens et al. (2018)
	Structures used by 80% of the students with a mean frequency reported; Using SUGAR Method, collect 50-utterance sample based on a 10-minute conversation.	Verb Phrase Elements	Mean Frequency of verb phrase elements in 50-utterance sample: (5;0-5;11) BE copula 7.11 Irreg. past 6.02 Infinitive phr. 6.04 Prepos. phr. 8.52 BE auxiliary 2.19 Do/does+Verb 2.62 (6;0-6;11) BE copula 7.85 Irreg. past 6.32 Infinitive phr. 6.78	Owens et al. (2018)

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			<p>Prepos. phr. 9.69 BE auxiliary 2.49 Do/does+Verb 3.31 Modal aux. 2.94</p> <p>(7;0-7;11) BE copula 9.46 Irreg. past 7.30 Infinitive phr. 8.41 Prepos. phr. 9.43 BE auxiliary 2.18 Do/does+Verb 2.95 Modal aux. 3.95</p>	
	Structures used by 80% of the students with a mean frequency reported; Using SUGAR Method, collect 50-utterance sample based on a 10-minute conversation.	Grammatical Morphemes	<p>Mean Frequency of grammatical morpheme elements in 50-utterance sample: (5;0-5;11) Plural -s 8.34 Progressive -ing 2.19 3rd Pers. Sing.-s 3.68 Past tense -ed 3.16</p> <p>(6;0-6;11) Plural -s 8.52 Progressive -ing 2.49 3rd Pers. Sing.-s 5.41 Past tense -ed 2.92</p> <p>(7;0-7;11) Plural -s 9.60 Progressive -ing 2.78 3rd Pers. Sing.-s 5.43 Past tense -ed 3.55</p>	Owens et al. (2018)
Semantics	SUGAR Method	Total Number of Words (TNW)	238.35 (5;0-5;11) 265.23 (6;0-6;11) 310.28 (7;0-7;11)	Pavelko & Owens (2017)
	SUGAR Method	Words per Sentence (WPS)	6.12 (5;0-5;11) 6.63 (6;0-6;11) 7.48 (7;0-7;11)	Pavelko & Owens (2017)
	100-utterance conversational speech sample (SALT and the CLAN system calculate NDW)	Number of Different Words (NDW) - Measure of lexical diversity	156 (5;0) 173 (7;0)	Leadholm & Miller (1992) as cited in Paul et al. (2018).
	100-utterance conversational speech sample (SALT and the CLAN system calculate NTW)	Number of Total Words (NTW)- Predictor of productivity, length and amount of information provided in the sample	439 (5;0) 457 (7;0)	Leadholm & Miller (1992) as cited in Paul et al, (2018).

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Pragmatics	Conversational discourse; Frequency of Discourse skills, rated it as Frequent, Occasionally or Not Observed.	Analysis of Communication Competence - Discourse Skills	Rate the frequency of a behaviors	Erickson (1987) as cited by Paul et al. (2018)
	Conversation; Frequency of speech acts and communication functions, rated it as Frequent, Occasionally or Not Observed	Analysis of Communication Competence – Speech acts and communication functions	Rate the frequency of a behaviors	Erickson (1987) as cited by Paul et al. (2018)
	Narratives	Monitoring Indicators of Scholarly Language (MISL)	Progress monitoring tool using narratives	Gillam & Gillam (2015)
3rd Grade – 12th Grade – Advanced Language				
Syntax	SUGAR Method	SUGAR MLU (MLU-S)	7.19 (7;0-8;11) 8.09 (9;0-10;11)	Owens & Pavelko (2020)
	SUGAR Method -	Total Number of Words (TNW)	320.35 (7;0-8;11) 354.75 (9;0-10;11)	Owens & Pavelko (2020)
	Narrative Task: Fable retelling and answering questions; approximate 10-minute sample	Total Communication Units/ Total C-Units (TCU) – A measure of productivity	Adolescents (14 yrs) Mean 20.93 SD 07.25 Range 9-46	Nippold & Hayward (2018); Nippold et al. (2017)
	Narrative Task: Fable retelling and answering questions; approximate 10-minute sample	Mean length of C-unit (MLCU) – A measure of syntactic complexity. (The length of a C-unit consists of one main clause and any attached subordinate clauses.)	Adolescents (14 yrs) Mean 13.27 SD 02.86 Range 7.75-23.11	Nippold & Hayward (2018); Nippold et al. (2017)
	Narrative Task: Fable retelling and answering questions; approximate 10-minute sample	Clausal density (CD)- Measure of syntactic complexity (The average number of clauses produced per C-unit in a language sample)	Adolescents (14 yrs) Mean 02.46 SD 0.55 Range 1.35-4.00	Nippold & Hayward (2018); Nippold et al. (2017)
	Conversation about common topics such as family, friends, school, work, travel, or hobbies	TCU MLCU CD	Adolescents (14 yrs) TCU 14 MLCU 5.22 CD 0.79	Nippold & Hayward (2018); Nippold et al. (2017)
	Oral language activities- Conversational, narrative, expository, and persuasive	Syntactic Development During Adolescents	Sentences gradually increase in length and complexity, Utterance length and complexity varies	Nippold (2014)

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			with genre, other factors affect length and complexity (topic knowledge, topic interest, motivation to talk)	
Semantics	SUGAR Method	Words per Sentence (WPS)	7.68 (7;0-8;11) 8.30 (9;0-10;11)	Owens & Pavelko (2020)
	SUGAR Method	Clauses per Sentence (CPS)	1.2 (7;0-8;11) 1.22 (9;0-10;11)	Owens & Pavelko (2020)
	100-utterance conversational speech sample (SALT and the CLAN system calculate NDW)	Number of Different Words (NDW) - Measure of lexical diversity	183 (9;0) 191 (11;0)	Leadholm & Miller (1992) as cited in Paul et al. (2018).
	100-utterance conversational speech sample (SALT and the CLAN system calculate NTW)	Number of Total Words (NTW)- Predictor of productivity, length and amount of information provided in the sample	496 (9;0) 518 (11;0)	Leadholm & Miller (1992) as cited in Paul et al. (2018).
	Oral language activities- Conversational, narrative, expository, and persuasive	Semantic Development During Adolescence	Greater use and understanding of figurative language, humor, satire, sarcasm to engage listeners. Greater use of literate vocabulary	Nippold (2014)
Pragmatics	Conversational discourse; Frequency of Discourse skills, rated it as Frequent, Occasionally or Not Observed.	Analysis of Communication Competence - Discourse Skills	Rate the frequency of a behaviors	Erickson (1987) as cited by Paul et al. (2018)
	Conversational discourse; Frequency of speech acts and communication functions, rated it as Frequent, Occasionally or Not Observed.	Analysis of Communication Competence – Speech acts and communication functions	Rate the frequency of a behaviors	Erickson (1987) as cited by Paul et al. (2018)
	Oral language activities- Conversational, narrative, expository, and persuasive	Pragmatic Development During Adolescence	Conversations with peers increase in frequency, improvements in conversational, narrative, expository, and persuasive discourse.	Nippold (2014)
	Narrative sample – is scored on seven features of storytelling such as	Narrative Scoring Scheme (NSS) measures the	SALT Database	Miller et al. (2015)

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	introduction, character development, mental states, referencing, and cohesion. Each category can receive a score of up to five points (35 total points)	narrative structure and content		
	Elicited sample following a script asking the student to explain how to play a game or sport of the student's choosing. Eight topics scored: object, preparations, start, course of play, rules, scoring, duration, strategies	Expository Scoring Scheme (ESS) Assess the structure and content of expository language	SALT Database	Miller et al. (2015)
	Elicited sample following a script – it is scored on the following characteristics: issue identification, supporting reasons, other point of view, compromises, conclusion. Each category can receive a score of up to five points (30 total points)	Persuasion Scoring Scheme (PSS) Assess the structure and content of persuasive language	SALT Database	Miller et al. (2015)
	Narratives	Monitoring Indicators of Scholarly Language (MISL)	Progress monitoring tool using narratives	Gillam & Gillam (2015)

*Mean –1 SD, if not stated otherwise