

Laura – Example Report for Case Study Practice

Background

Laura is a nine-year-old student who has received speech and language services since kindergarten. Laura lives with her mother and two older brothers. English is the only language spoken in the home. She was first referred to speech therapy by her kindergarten teacher who reported that Laura had trouble keeping up in class and seemed to have problems following multi-step directions. Her current teacher describes Laura as a quiet student who gives her best effort during classroom activities. Laura's Speech Language Pathologist is completing her three-year reevaluation.

Language Sample Analysis

Elicitation Task and Database Overview

Laura completed a narrative story retell of 'A Porcupine Named Fluffy' (Lester, 1986). She listened to the story and then retold the story using her own words. Measures of sample length, intelligibility, narrative structure, syntax/morphology, semantics, verbal facility, and errors were calculated from her language sample and compared with samples from 41 speakers completing the same task. These speakers were within 6 months of Laura's age. Although most measures were calculated from the entire sample, a few measures, such as total pause time and number of errors, can be affected by different sample lengths, i.e., the longer the sample, the more opportunity to produce them. For these measures, Laura's sample was compared with a subset of 34 samples matched in length by the same number of words. All measures were interpreted using a standard deviation interval of 1.00 SD.

Transcript Length

Laura produced 47 utterances using a total of 269 words in 4 minutes and 33 seconds, which were all within normal limits for this task.

Intelligibility

Laura's sample was 100% intelligible.

Macro Analysis

The Narrative Scoring Scheme was used to assess the structure and content of Laura's narrative. The following categories were included: introduction, character development, mental states, referencing, conflict resolution, cohesion, and conclusion. Laura's composite score of 23 out of a possible 35 points was within normal limits. She demonstrated particular difficulty with the category of mental states as she used very few. Laura could have elaborated more on setting/characters (introduction), and given more details when describing events (conflict resolution). Laura wrapped up the story with good detail and a sense that the story was ending.

Syntax/Morphology

Laura's mean length of utterance (MLU) in words was 5.51, which was 1.84 SD below the database mean of 7.45. Most frequently, she used 4-word, 5-word, and 7-word utterances. Her MLU in morphemes was 6.34, which was 1.78 SD below the database mean of 8.38. 100.0% of Laura's utterances contained verbs with an average of 1.40 verbs per utterance. These values were both within normal limits. Laura's sample was scored for subordination index (SI), which measures the average number of clauses per utterance. In general, higher SI scores indicate increased use of complex syntax. Laura yielded an SI score of 1.29, which was within normal limits. Her most complex utterance contained 4 clauses. For example:

C The rhinoceros said, "Ah it/'s ah :03 um {C laughs in character} it/'s oh I/'m laugh/ing too hard".

Semantics

Laura used 102 different words (NDW) within an analysis set of 259 total words (NTW). This compares with database means of 128 different words within 341 total words to complete the same task. NDW can be affected by the length of the sample, so the moving-average NDW was calculated by averaging NDW across the sample, looking at each set of 100 NTW. Laura produced a moving-average NDW of 54, which was within the normal limits, indicating typical vocabulary diversity.

Verbal Facility

Laura's rate of speech, at 59 words per minute, was slower than the database mean by 1.79 SD. Laura's sample contained 10 within-utterance pauses for a total time of 38 seconds, with an average pause time of 3.80 seconds. The total number of pauses and total pause time were both more than 3 SD higher than the database mean, while the average pause time was within normal limits. Her sample also contained 15 between-utterance pauses for a total time of 52 seconds, with an average pause time of 3.47 seconds. The total number of between-utterance pauses and total pause time were both higher than the database mean by 2.62 SD and 2.51 SD, respectively, while the average pause time was within normal limits. Pause time as a percent of total time was 33.0%, which was 2.97 SD higher than the database mean of 9.3%. A high number of pauses may indicate difficulty with word retrieval and/or utterance formulation. In Laura's sample, 7.2% of the words were filled pauses, false starts, repetitions, or reformulations. This was within normal limits.

Errors

10.6% of Laura's utterances contained errors, which was comparable to her database peers. Her sample contained the following pronoun error: HIM[EP:HIMSELF] and the following other word-level errors: A[EW:AN], MAYBE[EW:OF], MRS_AND_MRS_PORCUPINE[EW:MR_AND_MRS_PORCUPINE], and NAME/ING[EW:NAMED].

Interpretation:

Laura's relative strengths based on her narrative sample are accurate utterances with few errors, few revisions, false starts, or repetitions, and speech intelligibility. However, Laura continues to demonstrate difficulty with utterance formulation and word finding as indicated by the high number of between and within-utterance pauses. She also has a lower mean length of utterance which may be due to difficulty with formulating utterances and limited vocabulary, or use of complex utterance types. As a result, Laura may have difficulties with losing her listeners, or clearly and effectively participating in classroom discussions.

Suggested Goal Areas:

Teach use of conjunctions
Vocabulary building activities
Personal narratives with use of graphic organizer
Word retrieval activities
Utterance planning activities