



Fables – Database Description

| Database | Context | Age Range | Grade in School | # Samples | Location | Special Coding |
|----------|--------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|---------------|----------------|
| Fables | Fable (Dog) | 13;5-14;9 | 8 | 30 | CA, OR, WA | SI |
| | Fable (Fox) | 13;5-14;9 | 8 | 30 | | |
| | Fable (Oak) | 13;5-14;9 | 8 | 30 | | |
| | Fable (Stag) | 13;5-14;9 | 8 | 30 | | |

The fables task was designed to examine the spoken language of adolescents. Research has shown tasks that prompt a speaker to think about complicated topics are more likely to elicit complex spoken language. Fables are stories that feature moral lessons through the actions of animals that act like people (Aesop’s Fables, 1947). Fables have been around for centuries and across countries, cultures, and languages. They are often found in school curricula. The fables task encourages the speaker to ponder the deeper meaning of the story and challenges critical thinking skills.

Participants

Four story retellings (fables) were elicited from 30 eighth grade students from California, Oregon, and Washington. The participants’ age range was 13;5-14;9 with a mean age of 14;1. There were 14 boys and 16 girls who spoke Standard American English and had typical language development as confirmed by the Word Classes And Recalling Sentences subtest of the *Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals-Fifth Edition* (CELF-5; Wiig, Semel, & Secord, 2013). Mothers’ average education level was almost 17 years; participants generally came from college-educated families. Most participants were white (26). A few students were of Latino, mixed, or other ethnic backgrounds.

Sample Elicitation

Each participant provided language samples in person by retelling four fables adapted from Aesop’s Fables (1947): (a) *The Dog and His Shadow* (p. 176), (b) *The Fox and the Crow* (pp.5-6), (c) *The Oak and the Reed* (p. 179), and (d) *The Stag at the Pool* (pp.125-126). The examiner followed general LSA guidelines and read the sampling instructions slowly and clearly to each participant. Each participant produced four language samples. The time to elicit one fable retelling and answers to follow-up questions was approximately 5-10 minutes.

General LSA Guidelines:

- Show respect for participant
- Show genuine interest
- Listen patiently
- Avoid interruptions and overlapping speech
- Ask one question at a time
- Pause after asking a question (count to 4 silently)
- Repeat or rephrase questions as necessary

- Tell participant you will record the language and for what purpose
- Test audio recorder prior to eliciting language sample

Refer to the [elicitation protocol](#) for details.

Transcription Notes

Utterances were segmented into Communication Units (C-Units) as defined in the SALT documentation. The transcripts begin and end with the speaker's first and last utterance of the fables task, respectively. Elapsed time and silent pauses (within and between utterances) were not included in transcription.

Coding Notes

The following standard codes were added to the donated transcripts.

- [EO:word] marks overgeneralization error
- [EP:word] marks pronoun error
- [EW] marks an extraneous or unnecessary word in the utterance that, if omitted, would make the utterance syntactically correct, e.g., C And he shout/ed and[EW] to the frog.
- [EW:word] marks other word-level error
- [EU] marks utterance-level error (*also marks utterances with 3 or more errors*)
- [FP] marks filled pause words such as *like*, e.g., *You (like[FP]) get six card/s.*

The transcripts also include the following codes* for a deeper level clausal structure analysis. This coding is optional but required for counts of specific clause types in analysis.

[MC]=main clause

[ADV]=adverbial clause

[REL]=relative clause

[NOM]=nominal clause

[INF]=infinitive clause

[GER]=gerundive clause

[PRT]=participial clause

*Each code was placed immediately after the verb of the clause with one space after the verb.

Example: He felt [MC] it was [NOM] very dense and difficult to handle [INF].

All transcripts were hand-coded and scored for Subordination Index (SI) as defined in the SALT documentation.

Subordination Index (SI)

SI is a measure of syntactic complexity which produces a ratio of the total number of clauses (main and subordinate clauses) to the number of C-units. A clause, whether main or subordinate, is a statement containing both a subject and a predicate. Grammatically, a subject is a noun phrase and a predicate is a verb phrase. Main clauses can stand by themselves. Subordinate clauses depend on the main clause to make sense. They are embedded within an utterance as noun, adjective, pronominal, or adverbial clauses.

Using SALT to Compare Transcripts to the Fables Database

Use SALT's Database menu to compare your transcript with grade-matched transcripts selected from the Fables database. SALT looks at the "+ Context" plus line in your transcript to determine which

database to pre-select. To pre-select the Fables database, include the following plus lines in your transcript:

- + Language: English
- + Context: Fable
- + Subgroup: Dog (or Fox, Oak, Stag)

Although you can type these plus lines into your transcript, the easiest way is to select the correct language (English) and sampling context (Fable) when first creating a new transcript by completing the New Transcript Header information dialogue box.

Acknowledgements

The Fables protocol and database transcripts were contributed to SALT Software, LLC by Marilyn Nippold, Ph.D., University of Oregon, Department of Communication Disorders and Sciences. We thank Marilyn for her generous contribution to the SALT and successively to all the SLPs who take language samples using SALT in their practice. The transcripts from her Fables project add significant power to users who focus on adolescent language skills. Her publication (Nippold et. al., 2017) confirms the reliability and validity of using fables for eliciting language. This task provides a more challenging retell task and the ability to examine critical thinking. It is important to note that, like SALT's expository sampling task, each of the fables produces robust language and subsequent analysis outcomes.

References

Aesop's Fables. (1947). New York, NY: Grosset & Dunlap.

Nippold, M.A., Vigeland, L.M., Frantz-Kaspar, M.W., & Ward-Lonergan, J.M. (2017). Language Sampling With Adolescents: Building a Normative Database With Fables. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 23(3), 908-920.