Intensive Narrative Intervention in the Schools

SLP Leadership Group
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Why Intensive?

Intensive Service Delivery (Gillam and Frome-Loeb, 2010):

Students: 216 school age students in Texas and Kansas

Four Common Characteristics of Treatment

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Four treatment conditions:
Pre and Post-test: Administered battery of tests, including Comprehensive Assessment of Spoken Language (CASL)

Compared to: pre and post-test standard scores on the Test of Language Development Primary (3rd edition) from a large group (n=156) of same-age children who had participated in a longitudinal epidemiological study in Iowa (Tomblin et al., 1997; Tomblin et al., 2003).

Children in the Iowa study received intervention in public school settings twice each week for 20-minute sessions for two years (an approximate total of 48 hours).

Results: Improved significantly in

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Continued to improve for 6 months.
Improvement was FIVE times greater than the improvement seen in Iowa Study after 2 years.

Similar results as Barratt et al. (1992) study with preschool children:
- Students with intensive intervention programs showed greater improvement in language expression than students in once-weekly services
“...we dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative.”
Hardy (1978)

Children with Language Impairment have difficulties with:

- **Narrative Macrostructure:**
  - Greater variability across stories
  - Incomplete references to characters and story contexts
  - Fewer story grammar components

- **Narrative Microstructure:**
  - Fewer complex sentences
  - More grammatical errors
  - Limited number and type of conjunctions
  - Fewer mental and linguistic verbs
  - Fewer adverbs

**Narrative Research Shows:**

- Narrative assessment is a useful tool in identifying language impairment (Gillam, 2010)
- Narrative retelling tasks without visual aids may not be as useful as those with them (Wellman et al, 2009)
- Language intervention using narratives should focus initially on narrative macrostructure (Wellman et al., 2009)
- Students with language disorders that appear to “recover” by second grade still look disordered in narrative abilities in fourth grade (Gillam, 2009)
- “Stickwriting” can be a successful strategy for representing a narrative visually as an alternative to writing text (Ukrainetz, 1998)
- Narrative intervention found to provide gains in language skills that were 40-60% higher than traditional “language card” therapy (Gillam, 2009)
- Narrative intervention also found to be effective for students with significant disabilities (Gillam, 2009)
How Did We Get Started?

Each Pilot Project Site Provided:

1. 
2. 
3. 
4.

The ESC Provided:

1. Training in Narrative Intervention, including travel
2. Access to scripted intervention materials
3. Funding for 1 SLP
4. Analysis of results of project by researchers
Based on the work of Drs. Ron and Sandi Gillam (Functional Language Intervention Program for Narratives (FLIP-N), Gillam and Gillam, 2009)

Goals of narrative intervention:

- Improve story comprehension (literal, inferential, gist comprehension)
- Improve the ability to construct more complex stories
- Improve vocabulary and sentence complexity

Therapy targets:

- Inclusion of story grammar elements
- Temporal adverbs
- Causal adverbs
- Mental and linguistic verbs
- Pronoun use
- Dialogue
- Complex sentences

Narrative Intervention Activities:

- Story modeling – single photo, wordless picture books
- Visual/graphic organizers
- Child/clinician drawings - pictographs
- Co-telling – prompted co-creation
- Comprehension checks – literal and inferential
- Multiple retelling
- Parallel stories (make up a story like the one they just heard)
- Independent story generation

Phases of Narrative Intervention:

Phase 1: Basic story structure

Phase 2: Elaboration

- Story structure
- Sentence structure (complex sentences)

Phase 3: Independent Storytelling
Phase 1: Teaching a Basic Story

- Teach the meaning and function of icons (simple pictures) to represent the story grammar element
- Teach icons and Key Words/Vocabulary to get into story retelling

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<tr>
<th>Story Grammar</th>
<th>Key Words</th>
<th>Key Teaching Phrase(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>person, animal, toy, many, name</td>
<td>A character is a person, animal, toy, etc. How many characters can a story have? Our characters need names.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>Place, city, time of day, many</td>
<td>Setting can be a place, time, or city. What “time” of day or night was the story? How many setting elements can a story have?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take-off</td>
<td>Scary, funny, problem, All of a sudden</td>
<td>Name something _________ that gets the story going. Might say “All of a sudden . . .” to cue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling</td>
<td>Decided, wanted, planned, thought</td>
<td>How did the character FEEL about the take-off?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan</td>
<td>Use SO and BECAUSE to explain action in response to initiating events (Take offs)</td>
<td>What did the character THINK about doing? What did he WANT to do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Use SO and BECAUSE to explain action in response to initiating events (Take offs)</td>
<td>What did the character DO because of the Take-off?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complication</td>
<td>Uh oh!</td>
<td>Might say “Uh oh” to cue. Something got in the way.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Landing</td>
<td>The problem was solved when . . . finally . . .</td>
<td>What happened to make the story end? What did the character(s) do to solve the problem?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrap up</td>
<td>In the end . . .</td>
<td>Remind us about what happened and how do you think the character(s) felt about it?</td>
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• Go through a simple picture story, hold up icons and get students to ID the elements in the story:
  o Tell the story – co-tell
  o Draw it out - Storyboard with icons (stick figure drawing – “draw as fast as you can”)
  o Retell from your story board
  o Create a new parallel story (“mentor text” idea)

Phase II: Elaboration
• Assist students in “elaborating” on the story grammar elements they have learned
  o Character names, personality attributes
  o Specific setting elements, city names
  o Elaborated actions
  o More sophisticated vocabulary to describe character feelings
• Push students to be more complex –elaborated noun phrases (name characters and say one thing about them) – “Susan, with red bows in her hair,”
• Go back to old stories the story told and add pieces to make the story more complex
• Add one bit of complexity at a time

Phase III: Becoming independent story tellers
• Develop stories from single scenes
• Each child develops his or her own story
• Children tell each other’s stories
• Use bingo cards to encourage students to “monitor” each other for SG elements
• Start with story boards
• Finish without them

Quantitative Results
Student Data
• n = 15
• Pre-Post Effect Change on Story Retelling - .80
• Pre-Post Effect Change on Vocabulary - 1.58
Additional Data on Four of the participants:
  o Average CELF Scaled Score Pre-test – 8.6
  o Average CELF Scaled Score Post-test – 10.75
  o No change in TEWL Scores

How Did it Work?
The average effect size for improvements in language intervention studies that have been published is .6. So, the children who received services from your clinicians made more improvements than the average child who participates in research studies on language intervention techniques. – Dr. Ron Gillam

Clinician Data

- 100% of clinicians rated the scripted narrative intervention materials as “liked a lot”
- 75% of clinicians rated the computer work as “liked a little”
- 100% of clinicians rated the parent response as “liked a lot”
- 100% of clinicians rated the progress made by students as “Good”
- 100% of clinicians rated their administrator’s response as “liked a lot”
- 25% of clinicians reported that classroom teacher reported improvement in a student this year
- 100% of clinicians would be interested in participating in the project again this summer
- 100% of clinicians incorporated the therapy strategies into their intervention

What made the project MOST beneficial to their students:

- Daily contact with therapist – 75%
- Narrative intervention – 100%
- Computer work – 33%
- Continuation of services through the summer – 33%
- Therapist contact with parents – 33%

What made the project MOST beneficial to the clinicians:

- Daily contact with students – 50%
- Training on narrative intervention – 50%
- Scripted nature of the program – 33%
- Seeing progress of students during school year – 33%
- Opportunity for summer employment – 33%

The following barriers were reported for providing the program again

- Lack of funding – 25%
- Lack of appropriate students – 25%
- Lack of time by SLP – 75%
Qualitative Results

Materials, books, and therapy comments:

- The visuals really helped the kids remember the parts of the narratives.
- Great stories! Followed the icons well.
- It was hard to do this in the summer period when our district was essentially “closed”. The janitors were waxing floors and AC was sometimes off. Felt very alone. Would have been better if done at a time and campus that was “actively” doing summer school.
- Transportation for students would have allowed more to participate.
- I was really pleased with this experience. I had some introduction to narrative therapy in college, but wasn’t sure how to implement it in the schools. It was great to put it into practical use.
- The program gave me a framework for introducing and then continuing on with a higher level of narrative. Some students were able to tell me how they used the structure when writing for their STARR practice writing test.

Parent Response:

- The parents commented that they had noticed an increase in expressive language at home during the summer pilot period of 4 weeks.
- They were very appreciative of the program being offered as an extra in the summer. All expressed being pleased with the progress and most of the kids were excited to come each day.
- Parents continually expressed their gratitude for the opportunity for their students to learn.

Student Response:

- Students with the weakest language skills made the greatest progress.
- Great structured program. It was really neat to see the kids every day. They retain so much more than 2x weekly.
- For districts with a low SES and bilingual, the students who would benefit the most were the upper elementary age.
- I was particularly impressed by the improvement for students with auditory comprehension issues. Good gains were noted.
References:


Drs. Gillam Resources:
http://comd.usu.edu/htm/research/child-language-research-group

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