Words Per Minute: Narrative Language Assessment of English Language Learners

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Abstract

The first step was to collect the audio samples from the children. This was done at various elementary schools around the state of Florida. Children watched a short cartoon using headphones and were then asked to retell the movie to a stuffed animal. The stuffed animal was used to make children feel more comfortable while retelling the movie, and thus elicited a longer narrative.

Methods

Children received minimal verbal cues from examiners, unless the examiner deemed prompting was necessary in order to elicit a narrative from the child. Examiners recorded children’s narrative retells. These audio samples were then transcribed, using C-units to divide examiner and child utterances. A C-unit is defined as an independent clause and its modifiers. The audio samples were also coded as they were transcribed, in order to signal pauses, interruptions for either the examiner or child, or abandoned utterances. Once the audio samples were transcribed, the transcripts were entered into the SALT software in order to generate the WPM for each child.

Discussion

This project is still a work in progress. Currently, we are working on generating the quantitative data using the SALT software. Once we compile the WPM for all the transcripts, we will be able to compare these data to results from three other tests:

- Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT)
- Measures receptive, or hearing, vocabulary of children and their achievement in acquiring vocabulary
- Children are shown pictures and are asked to point to the one that corresponds to a certain description.
- Bilingual English Spanish Assessment (BESA)
- Designed as a comprehensive language assessment that evaluates overall language skills for children who are bilingual in English and Spanish
- Contains three subtests.
- Woodcock Reading Mastery Test, Third Edition (WRMT-III)
- Comprehensive set of nine tests that evaluate reading readiness

Comparing the WPM from the audio transcripts to the results of these tests will reveal more information about how ELLs communicate and process language. We expect the results from all tests to correlate: children that have low WPM will likely score poorer on the PPVT, BESA, and WRMT-III, whereas children that have high WPM will likely score higher in the other tests. This may be due to different levels of fluency in English.

References


Acknowledgments

This project was supported by Florida State University’s University Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) and the Communication Science and Disorders Program.


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