Literate Vocabulary in the Written Language Samples of Seventh-Graders

Laura R. Allred
*University of Montana, Missoula*, laura.allred@umontana.edu

Maddie Julin
*University of Montana, Missoula*, madeline.julin@umontana.edu

kiley kremmel
*University of Montana, Missoula*, kiley.kremmel@umontana.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/umcur

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Allred, Laura R.; Julin, Maddie; and kremmel, kiley, "Literate Vocabulary in the Written Language Samples of Seventh-Graders" (2016). *University of Montana Conference on Undergraduate Research (UMCUR)*. 33. https://scholarworks.umt.edu/umcur/2016/amposters/33

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Montana Conference on Undergraduate Research (UMCUR) by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.
OBJECTIVE
The purpose of this study was to add to the local normative database of adolescent writing samples by examining the use of literate vocabulary.

The research questions that guided this study were:
1. Is there a relationship between use of literate vocabulary in the persuasive essays of seventh-graders and their reading scores?
2. What is the typical production of a) adverbial conjuncts, b) metaverbs, and c) abstract nouns in the written persuasive essays of seventh-graders?
3. Is the use of literate vocabulary in persuasive writing correlated with other standardized measures of literacy?

INTRODUCTION
Language sample analysis (LSA) is a preferred practice pattern according to ASHA however, not many school-based speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are eliciting LSAs with adolescents.

Some reasons include:
- Unaware of what aspects of language are relevant to examine with this population
- Recent surveys indicate SLPs who are analyzing language samples are doing so with very young clients (Hua et al., 1993)
- The aspects of language that are targeted for analysis in younger children are not diagnostically relevant to examine in adolescents
- Lack of large scale database of adolescent language norms for comparison (Heilmann & Malone, 2014)

School based SLPs largely rely on standard assessments to determine adolescents’ eligibility for services and in selecting treatment goals.
- Spoken and written language must be assessed efficiently
- Tests often assess what they are capable of doing, but not representative of actual production
- Standardized assessments often use contrived formats to elicit the language forms of interest
- Literate vocabulary is a language form of interest because it involves words that have a low frequency of occurrence in spoken language, but does occur in formal writing (Nippold, 2010)

METHODS
Participants
- Typically developing adolescents, currently attending seventh grade in Missoula, Montana.
- No subjects in data had been retained
- Anonymity was preserved, and no exact dates of birth reported
- Date of birth reported as a range for further anonymity
- Each essay was coded

Table 1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literate Vocabulary Forms</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adverbial conjuncts</td>
<td>meanwhile, furthermore, however, typically, finally, nevertheless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract Nouns</td>
<td>diversion, federalism, gumption, implication, respect, kindness, longevity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive/ metalinguistic verbs</td>
<td>predict, apply, hypothesize, say, think, know, reflect, argue, disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection & Analysis
- Each vocabulary variable was coded for adverbial conjuncts, abstract nouns, and metacognitive verbs, [Ac], [AbN], [MtL]
  - From the data, researchers hypothesized that there would be a correlation between reading scores and use of literate vocabulary
  - Each writing sample was coded by two separate investigators. Reliability for coding each variable reached at least 95%.

RESULTS
- The relationship between the use of literate vocabulary in the persuasive essays of seventh-graders and their reading scores was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient
- Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity
- There was a moderate, positive correlation between the two variables, r = .42, n = 93, p < .001, with high literate vocabulary use associated with high reading scores
- A multiple regression was conducted to determine if meta-verb, abstract noun, and adverbial conjunct use predicted reading scores
- Using the enter method it was found that meta-verb and adverbial conjunct use account for 18% of the variance in reading scores (F(3, 89) = 6.43, p < .001, R² = .18, R² adjusted = .15)
- The analyses show that meta-verb (βmeta = .07, t(93) = .61, ns) and adverbial conjunct use (βverb = .04, t(93) = 0.23, ns) did not independently significantly predict reading scores, although when combined did significantly predict reading scores (βcombined = .36, t(93) = 2.11, p = 0.04).

CONCLUSIONS
- Since few studies have used language sample analysis to determine developmental milestones in adolescent language, this study contributes to the gap in the literature regarding adolescent language norms
- This research added to the local normative data base for speech-language pathologists serving the Missoula adolescent population and provides an understanding of the average productivity and usage of literate vocabulary for adolescents in 7th grade.
- The results from this analysis indicated that there was a moderate, positive correlation between high literate vocabulary usage and high standardized reading scores
- Persuasion is a critical skill for adolescents to master, SLPs are urged to include it in their assessments and examine the use of literate vocabulary
- An adolescent who is not using literate vocabulary in formal writing contexts may be struggling with higher level literacy skills
- These writing samples can be used to create a normative database in regards to these measures

Thank you to our research mentor
Dr. Ginger Collins