Assessing Written Narratives: A Comparison of Two Narrative Analysis Tools

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### Assessing Written Narratives: A Comparison of Two Narrative Analysis Tools

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#### Why analyze older students’ narratives?

- Narrative production is an extremely important component of overall language and communication abilities. Narrative skills are crucial for social and academic success.
- Narrative skills are evaluated from grades 1-12 (Common Core Standards Initiative, 2010).
- By the third and fourth grades, students are expected to “write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences” (Common Core Standards Initiative, 2010).
- It is within the SLP’s scope of practice to assess and intervene with respect to all levels of language ability, including discourse (which includes narration)
- It is within the SLP’s scope of practice to address written, as well as oral language skills (ASHA, n.d.).
- Language sample analysis (LSA) is considered a best practice for school-based SLPs in the assessment of students.

#### Barriers to Using Narrative Analysis

Although LSA is a best practice according to ASHA, many school-based SLPs are not engaging in this practice with upper elementary students. Recent surveys revealed the following barriers to LSA usage:

- Amount of time needed to obtain, transcribe, and analyze language samples
- Limited access to resources
- Limited training and expertise
- Inconsistency in analysis procedures

#### Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the two proposed narrative analysis rubrics to determine:

- which is more time consuming
- which is more easily understood
- what the unique benefits of each individual scoring rubric are

#### Methods

Participants were four Communicative Sciences and Disorders students. Materials included 58 written narratives produced by students in grades 4 & 5, the INC and NSS scoring rubrics, and a stopwatch.

Each narrative was scored twice (once using INC & once using NSS) by two raters who were provided training in use of each rubric. Each rater was provided training in use of each rubric. Each rater was then scored twice (once using INC & once using NSS) by two additional raters who were provided training in use of each rubric. Each rater was then scored twice (once using INC & once using NSS) by two additional raters who were provided training in use of each rubric.

#### Results

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the time in seconds to use the INC and the NSS. A statistically significant difference in scoring time was found for INC (M = 297.2, SD = 94.6) and NSS (M = 223.0, SD = 80.3). The magnitude of the differences in the means was large (eta squared = .175).

#### Conclusion

In response to the research questions:

- **Time**: although the difference of 74 seconds between rubric use is statistically significant, it is not clinically significant
- **Ease of use**: although all raters agreed that the INC was slightly more time-consuming to use, all also agreed that it was easier to use, largely due to the numerous examples included in the rubric
- **Unique contributions of each rubric**: INC → more categories, greater detail, emphasis on episodic complexity; NSS → easier to analyze conclusion, flexible rater judgment (5 pt. scale vs. 3 pt. scale)

In response to SLP’s perceived barriers:

- **Time**: not a significant barrier
- **Clinical expertise**: interrater disagreements show this may be a barrier
- **Resources**: not a barrier – both rubrics are available free of charge
- **Analysis procedures**: perhaps a barrier due to interrater disagreements

#### References