

AAC-07

“Tell Me About It”

Building Narrative Skills in Students Who Use AAC

Carole Zangari, Ph.D., CCC-SLP
 Nova Southeastern University
 zangaric@nova.edu

1

Learning Objectives

- Identify characteristics in the narrative skill development of students with AAC needs
- Describe methods of assessing narrative skills in students who use AAC
- Discuss strategies for improving the narrative skills of students who use AAC

AGENDA

1. Overview of narrative language
2. Assessment
3. Intervention
4. Case example

2

Why Focus on Narrative Language?

- Gives information on content, form, and use
 - Allows us to assess language skills in context
- High levels of ecological validity
- Associated with other academic skills
- Lack of developmental norms for AAC learners
- Progress Monitoring: Track growth over time
- Ties into State Standards (ELA) at all grade levels

3

Development of Narrative Skills

- Movement toward storytelling is gradual
- Initially, children require support for telling narratives.
 - Narratives emerge as part of a dialogue with adults asking questions or providing other prompts to elicit information
 - Adult support is geared to the kind of information that is needed for the narrative to be more complete.

4

Typically, narrative development is facilitated by adult support.



5

Scaffolding

- Adults provide:
 - Conversational support (e.g., “Then what happened?” “Why do you think she said that?”)
 - Historical support (e.g., “Nicole was late, right?” “Was that at the wedding?”)
 - Psychological support (e.g., “I want to hear more about that.” “I know that was hard.”)

Ukrainetz, 2006

6

TYPES OF NARRATIVES



7

Script Narratives

- Account of routine events or familiar processes
 - E.g., making a pizza; posting on Facebook; checking out a book at the library
- Often used to describe event as it is occurring or when planning an event.
- In AAC
 - Rarely produced spontaneously
 - Often addressed during work on sequencing

8

Personal Narratives

Recounts:

- Speaker is directed to tell about an experience
- Examples “I can’t wait to hear about your trip.” “I heard there was a problem at the pool last week.”
- In AAC
 - Often elicited at the start of a therapy session or school day
 - Frequently produced
 - Scaffolding needed to go beyond single word level

9

Personal Narratives


Accounts

- Speaker tells about an experience without any prompting
- Sample topics
 - A problem at school
 - News about someone we both know
 - A recent event, such as a celebration or trip
- In AAC
 - Frequently attempted, but at single word level; Scaffolding needed

10

Story Retelling

- Familiar story is retold in own words
 - Story is told (or read) using an age appropriate book or passage
 - Student is asked to retell in own words
- In AAC
 - Rarely used
 - Need prompts for expansion (e.g., “Tell me more about that”), continuation (e.g., “And then...”), and encouragement (e.g., “Great! Keep going”).
 - Try to avoid direct questions

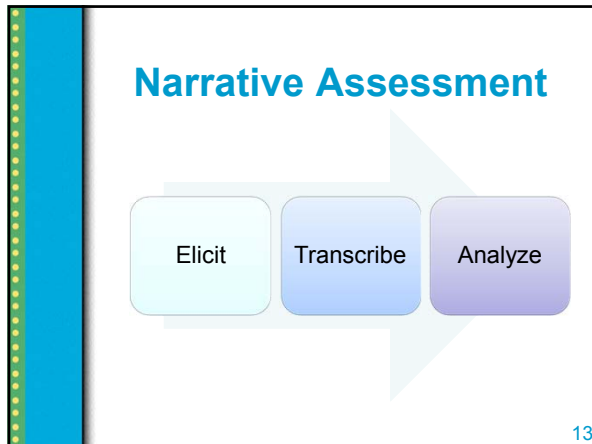


11

Fictional Narratives

- Stories that are created
 - Often required as part of typical academics in language arts
 - Later developing type of narrative
- In AAC
 - Difficult
 - Requires extensive support and scaffolding

12



- ### Obtaining a Narrative Sample
- Permission and consent
 - Spontaneous narratives
 - Elicited narratives
 - What type of narrative?
- 14

- ### Analysis
- Macro Level
 - Story Grammar
 - Episodic Complexity
 - Micro Level
 - Lexical Cohesion
 - Sentence Structure and Complexity
 - Lexical Diversity and Complexity
- 15

- ### Analysis
- Macro Level
 - Story Grammar
 - Episodic Complexity
 - Micro Level
 - Lexical Cohesion
 - Sentence Structure and Complexity
 - Lexical Diversity and Complexity
- Students who use AAC generally have problems with all aspects
- 16

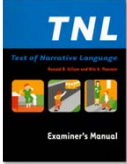
- ### Narrative Assessment Profile (NAP; McCabe & Bliss, 2003)
- Macro Analysis
 - Topic maintenance, event sequencing, informativeness, referencing, conjunctive cohesion, fluency
 - Can be used with various types of narratives
 - Can be used with individuals who don't yet produce long narratives.
- 17

- ### Narrative Assessment Protocol (Pence, Justice, & Gosse, 2007)
- Preschool
 - Macro: initial event, search, resolution, semantics
 - Micro: Sentence and phrase structure, modifiers, nouns, verbs
 - Designed to be used online & scored from video (eliminating need for transcription, but still need to code & analyze)
- 18

Test of Narrative Language

(Gillam & Pearson, 2004)

- Narrative Comprehension
- Oral Narrative Ability
- Listen only
- Listen + picture sequence
- Listen + single picture



19

Personal Narratives

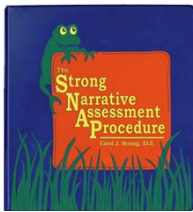
Narrative Assessment Profile Bliss & McCabe, 2012

- Topic maintenance
- Informativeness
- Essential facts
- Event sequencing
- Optional details for elaboration
- Referencing (anaphoric)
- Subjective evaluation
- Cohesion (conjunctive)
- Fluency (lexical)

20

Story Retells

- Strong Narrative Assessment Procedure (SNAP; Strong, 1998)
 - Listen to a story with wordless picture book, then retell.



21

Peter & the Cat

(<http://bit.ly/1Bujn6n>; Allan & Leita, 2014)

- App: Student listens to a story, then retells it.
- Clinician listens to recording, transcribes, analyzes
- Macro: Story structure & content
- Micro: Descriptive lang., embedded clauses, pronouns & referencing, conjunctions & adverbial connectors, linguistic & cognitive verbs.
- Report generator



22

SUPPORTING NARRATIVES

23

Make It a Focus

- Yes, it is hard for them.
- Yes, they lack some of the pre-requisite skills for full narratives.

But

- They need to get better at it.
- They want to get better at it.

24

Consider Starting with Personal Narratives

- Accounts & Recounts
- Sample Goals: Personal Narratives - Recounts
 - At the end of the day, S will use single words to contribute to a narrative about the day's events.
 - Given partial prompts for cohesion, S will tell about something she did with a clear beginning, middle, and end.

25

Expect to provide a **lot of scaffolding** for the first several years.

26

Typically, narrative development is facilitated by adult support.



27

When Students Use AAC

- Our scaffolding changes
 - Less language enrichment
 - More direct questions
 - Less support for expanding length and complexity
 - Very little on grammar
 - Little/no expectation for reformulation

28

Problems with Instruction

- Can be too adult-directed
- Often focuses on teaching individual language elements (without combining them into a whole utterance)
- Can be limited to a narrow range of communicative functions (primarily requesting, answering, labeling)
- Is often marked by **over**-use of questions and **under**-use of supportive strategies


29

What additional supports can we put in place?

30

Consider using Established Programs

- Story Grammar Marker (Mindwing Concepts)
 - Telling, retelling
 - Props & icons for story elements (E.g., eye=characters; star=setting)



– Also an app (<http://bit.ly/1zqHTYH>)

31

Provide Models

- Use the language of storytelling
 - “Can I tell you a story about my weekend?”
 - “I heard you went to Disney over break. Let’s tell a story about that.”
 - “So I know you’re upset. I know it’s about Nila. But I don’t know the story of what happened. Should we work that out together?”

32

Use Typical Language Facilitation Techniques

- Expansions
- Extensions
- Recasts
- Instructive feedback
- For more information
 - <http://bit.ly/116leh2>

33

Use Recasts

- “...utterances that rephrase a child’s utterance by changing one or more sentence components while still referring to its central meaning” (Long, 1996)
- We reformulate the learner’s utterance **without the error**.

EXAMPLES

 - “It about trip” is recasted as “It is about our trip.”
 - “I like trip” is recasted as “I liked the trip.”
- Provides information without making the learner feel wrong
 - Implicit (less obtrusive); Non-confrontational

34

More teaching, less testing

- Focus on intervention (lots of support)
- Occasional probes AS NEEDED to judge progress
- 75-95% of time spent on instruction; 5-25% of time spent on assessment of learning.

Teach a lot. Test a little.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Big one. You saw a big one. – Stop. Want to say stop? – Happy. You look so happy! – Go WITH mom. Let’s say ‘go’! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Big. How do we say ‘big’? – Stop. Which one says ‘stop’? – Is that ‘happy’ ? (yes or no?) – With. Point to with. – Tell me on your talker.
--	---

Co-Construction

(Solomon-Rice & Soto, 2011)

- Independence is not the starting point
- Aim for co-creating the narrative
- Take the student's utterance and build together into a narrative

37

- Can I tell you about* mean prank?
 - A mean prank. I wonder where that happened.
- Hospital
 - The hospital. Okay. So I know where. But I don't know who.
- Nila
 - So the mean prank happened at the hospital and you were with Nila. Put it together.
- Can I tell you the mean prank that Nila played on the hospital?

* Sentence starter that she was taught

38

Spread it out

Develop a single narrative over several lessons.

39

Reformulation

- Have them say the whole thing or at least parts
 - Build it up together
 - Record it somehow
 - Come back later to help the student reformulate it
 - Space it out
 - This can happen over multiple sessions.

40

- Can I tell you the mean prank that Nila played on the hospital?
 - I'm all ears.
- Nicole cousin peer pressured her to call the nurse.
 - Horrified gesture+pause; And then?...
- Without thinking, she pulled the string to call the nurse. I heard the alarm go off and I speculated they were going to get in trouble.
 - Jeez!
- I was right. I heard a nurse say to don't do that you scared the whole hospital.
 - What a story!
- What can I do to help our friendship? I don't like what she did. What can I do?

41

Make Language Visible

Laminator, \$79.00

Picture symbol software, \$399.00

10 trips to the Speech-Language Pathologist, \$1200.00

"I love you, Mom." Priceless.

Visual Supports
Don't leave home without them.

Visual supports are **priceless** for AAC learners.

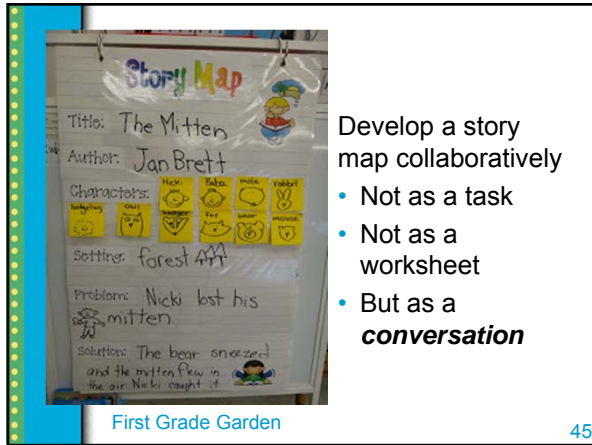
42



43



44



- Develop a story map collaboratively
- Not as a task
 - Not as a worksheet
 - But as a **conversation**

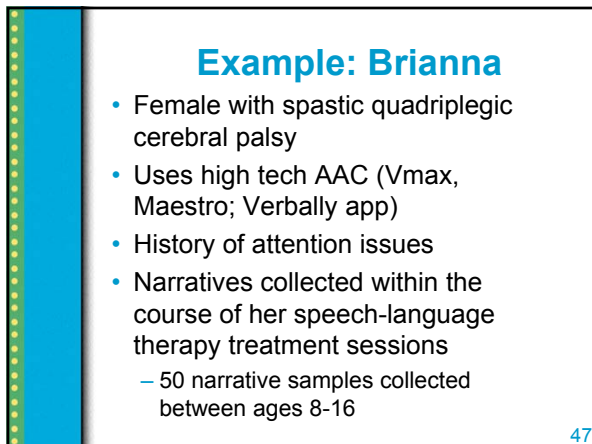
First Grade Garden

45

Free Download at <http://bit.ly/XsNn1o>

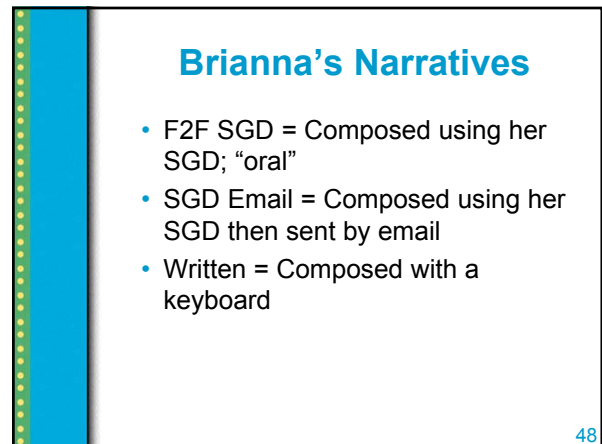
	Words We Can Use
When we tell stories, people understand us best when we include these things:	I, me, you, [names], she, it, friend, teacher, Mom, brother, neighbor, man, girl, baby, animal, stranger, worker, student, something else
Who was involved?	do/did, go/went, see/saw, tell/told, know/knew, think/thought, get/got, like/liked, have/had, say/said, can/could, something else
What happened first?	next, then, also, some, again, before, after, with, because, about, around, not, something else
What else happened?	here, there, home, school, inside, outside, far away, close, place, store, up, in, beside, under, town, state, country, planet, different, not, something else
Where did this take place?	today, yesterday, last, day, week, month, year, start, time, before, after, around, long, short, remember, something else
When did it happen?	feel/felt, good, bad, best, scary, nice, proud, embarrassed, terrific, frustrated, worried, awesome, amazing, unusual, something else
How did it feel?	

46



- Example: Brianna**
- Female with spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy
 - Uses high tech AAC (Vmax, Maestro; Verbally app)
 - History of attention issues
 - Narratives collected within the course of her speech-language therapy treatment sessions
 - 50 narrative samples collected between ages 8-16

47



- Brianna's Narratives**
- F2F SGD = Composed using her SGD; "oral"
 - SGD Email = Composed using her SGD then sent by email
 - Written = Composed with a keyboard

48

Brianna's Script Narratives

- Did not occur spontaneously
- Elicited with mands or questions
 - E.g., "Tell Sara what you do in dance class," "How do you make your PowerPoints for class presentations?"
- Difficult for her

49

Brianna's Recounts

Recounts:

- Difficult for her
- Little/no resistance
- Consistently required significant prompting to tell a complete narrative

50

Brianna's Accounts

Accounts

- Occurred spontaneously w/in sx
- Often enthusiastic, particularly if the situation focused on a problem she or someone else had
 - Role of emotion
- Generally required moderate levels of prompting for clarity and to add detail

51

Brianna's Retells

- Difficult
- Consistently required significant prompting to retell the story

52

All Narratives

Mean of Narratives	Total # of Words	# of Different Words
Age 9-10	54	46
Age 11-12	42	37
Age 13-14	89	58
Age 15	107	60
Age 16	153	71

53

Narrative Genre

Type of Narrative	Total # of Words	# of Different Words
Script (8)	48	40
Account (26)	166	104
Recount (9)	61	49
Retell (6)	68	50

54

Take-Aways

- Teach narrative skills
 - Write goals for it
 - Develop an intervention plan
- Understand that success depends on the amount and type of scaffolding
- It takes years to become competent, but they can and will show progress IF we prioritize narrative skills.
- The rewards are worth it!

55

Session Evaluation
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/AAC-007>

THANK YOU!



zangaric@nova.edu
www.PrAActicalAAC.org
@PrAActicalAAC


Pinterest
<http://bit.ly/1zgclBu>



56