

Narrative Fluency in Children with Specific Language Impairment

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The purpose of this study was to determine if there were differences between the fluency of narratives produced by children with Specific Language Impairment (SLI) across three narrative tasks. Seventy school-age children with diagnoses of SLI participated in three narrative tasks from the Test of Narrative Language (TNL): story retell based on an examiner's oral story, story generation based on a sequence of pictures, and story generation based on one picture. The narratives were recorded and analyzed using the Systematic Analysis of Language Transcripts (SALT). Disfluency was measured by coding the number of mazes occurring in the narrative samples. Proportion of utterances with mazes, maze word density, and maze length were measured as a function of the three narrative tasks. Both proportion of utterances with mazes and maze word density were significantly higher in the story retell task compared to the other two tasks, while maze length did not differ across the tasks. The sequenced picture story generation task yielded the most fluent narratives. Based on the Demands and Capacities Model (Starkweather, 1987), these results suggest that the linguistic demand of the story retell task was greater than the linguistic demands of the other tasks, leading to more disfluencies.