Expository – Database Description

Database	Context	Age Range	Grade in School	# Samples	Location	Special Coding
Expository	Expo	**10;7 – 18;9**	**5-7, 9-12**	**354**	**WI**	**SI, ESS**

The skill of exposition (explaining) is central to middle and high school curricula. It is included as part of state standards for speaking and writing. Exposition challenges a speaker to use language in context (authentic and naturalistic) and draws more complex production than in conversation or narration. SALT's expository task requires the target speaker to explain how to play a game or sport of choice.

Participants

The expository database contains transcripts from 354 typically developing middle and high school speakers, ages 10;7 through 18;9, whose primary language is English.

The participants were drawn from public schools in two geographic areas of Wisconsin: Milwaukee area school districts (Brown Deer, Fox Point-Bayside, Nicolet, Shorewood, Waukesha, Wauwatosa, and West Allis-West Milwaukee), and from the Madison Metropolitan School District. They were from a variety of economic backgrounds and ability levels. "Typically developing" was determined by normal progress in school and absence of special education services. Economic background was based on eligibility in the free lunch program (25% qualified for free or reduced lunch). Ability level was determined by GPA scores and teacher reports (9% were low, 49% were average, and 42% were high). The race/ethnicity of the speakers was similar to that of the geographic area from which they were drawn (75% White, 13% African American, 7% Hispanic, 4% Asian, and 1% Hmong). Age, grade, and gender are provided for all samples.

Sample Elicitation

All expository language samples were elicited in-person. Participants were asked to explain how to play a favorite game or sport. They were given a few minutes to fill out a planning sheet consisting of the following points: object of the game, preparations, start, course of play, rules, scoring, duration, and strategies. They were then asked to explain how to play the game or sport using their planning sheet. The database samples were typically between 5-6 minutes in length with approximately 50-60 complete and intelligible verbal utterances.

Refer to the elicitation protocol for details.

Transcription Notes

Utterances were segmented into Communication Units (C-Units) as defined in the SALT documentation. The transcripts begin and end with the speaker's first and last utterance of the expository, respectively. All transcripts were timed, and pauses, within and between utterances, of two or more seconds in length, were marked.

Coding Notes

- [EO:word] marks overgeneralization error
- [EP:word] marks pronoun error
- [EW] marks an extraneous or unnecessary word in the utterance that, if omitted, would make the utterance syntactically correct, e.g., C And he shout/ed and[EW] to the frog.
- [EW:word] marks other word-level error
- [EU] marks utterance-level error (*also marks utterances with 3 or more errors*)
- [FP] marks filled pause words such as *like*, e.g., *You (like[FP]) get six card/s.*
- [TI] marks a Topic Initiator; speaker's utterance consists of one of the points from the planning sheet, e.g., "Course of play [TI]".

All transcripts were hand-coded and scored for Subordination Index (SI) and Expository Scoring Scheme (ESS) as defined in the SALT documentation.

Subordination Index (SI) and Expository Scoring Scheme (ESS) Coding

SI is a measure of syntactic complexity that produces a ratio of the total number of clauses (main and subordinate clauses) to the number of C-units. A clause, whether it is main or subordinate, is a statement containing both a subject and a predicate. Grammatically, a subject is a noun phrase and a predicate is a verb phrase. Main clauses can stand by themselves. Subordinate clauses depend on the main clause to make sense. They are embedded within an utterance as noun, adjective, or adverbial clauses.

ESS assesses the content and structure of an expository language sample, similar to how the Narrative Scoring Scheme provides an overall measure of a speaker's skill in producing a narrative. The ESS is comprised of 10 characteristics for completing an expository language sample. The first eight characteristics correspond to the points listed on the planning sheet that is given to the target speaker.

Analysis Notes

The SALT group transcribed the samples following the SALT format and performed a series of statistical analyses to describe the dataset for consistency, differences among types of expository samples, age-related changes, and differences when compared to existing conversation and narrative samples. (Malone et al., 2008). The following summarize the results of these analyses:

- Different expository contexts (team sport, individual sport, game) do not result in significantly different outcomes. Speakers describing how to play a team sport provided similar samples in terms of length, vocabulary, sentence complexity as speakers describing an individual sport or game. This finding is very useful in that it allows speakers to select the type of game they know best, optimizing their performance on this task.

- Measures of utterance length and complexity were significantly different for expository samples than for conversational and narrative samples. Speakers produced significantly more complex sentences in the expository samples than in conversation or narratives. This finding is similar to the findings of Nippold et al. (2005; 2008).

Using SALT to Compare Transcripts to the Expository Database

Use SALT's Database menu to compare your transcripts with age or grade-matched transcripts selected from the Expository database. SALT looks at the "+ Context" plus line in your transcript to determine which database to pre-select. To pre-select the Expository database, include the following plus line your transcript header:

+ Language: English
+ Context: Expo

Although you can type this plus line into your transcript, the easiest way is to select the correct language (English) and sampling context (Expo) when first creating a new transcript by completing the New Transcript Header information dialogue box.

Acknowledgements

References

Malone, T., Miller, J., Andriacchi K., Heilmann J., Nockerts, A., Schoonveld, E. (2008), *Let Me Explain: Teenage Expository Language Samples*, Presented at the American Speech and Hearing Association, Chicago, IL.

Nippold, M., Hesketh L., Kuthie, J., & Mansfield, T. (2005). *Conversational Versus Expository Discourse: A Study of Syntactic Development in Children, Adolescents, and Adults*. Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research, 48, 1048-1064.

Nippold, M., Mansfield, T., Billow, J. & Tomblin, J.B., (2008) Expository Discourse in Adolescents With Language Impairments: Examining Syntactic Development. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology* (17) 356–366.