

STORYBUILDING

A Guide To Structuring Oral Narratives

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, the focus in communication assessment and intervention has shifted from the sentence level to larger linguistic units termed *discourse*. Conversations and narrations are two types of discourse. There exists both similarities and differences between narrations and conversations. "Both require a sense of purpose, the selection of relevant information, the clear and orderly exchange of this information, the ability to make necessary repairs, and the ability to assume the perspective of the listener or audience" (Roth, 1986, p. 22). Roth and Spekman (1986, as reported in Larson and McKinley, 1987) detail some of the differences between narrations and conversations:

1. Narrations have more extended or elaborated units of text than conversations.
2. Narrations are expected to have story markers (e.g., an introduction and closing) and an orderly presentation of events leading to a logical resolution.
3. Narrations carry the expectation that the speaker will engage in an oral monologue and that the listener's role can be more passive. More responsibility is placed on the speaker to be organized, coherent, and interesting. (p.11)

Assessment and intervention materials, which focus on speech acts and other pragmatic areas to address conversation skills, have proved invaluable to the speech-language pathologist. Additionally, there is a need for assessment and intervention materials to address narrative skills. Failure to achieve narrative skills at the expected age levels limits communicative competence in both academic and social domains (Stephens, 1987). Academically, narratives play a role in reading skills, in telling or writing stories, and in comprehending any story-based information. Content areas such as science, social studies, and health all include materials which contain a storyline. Socially, the ability to recount experiences and events from our lives is an important communication tool that we use daily. Life can be viewed as a series of events sequenced temporally (Stephens, 1987). Narrative discourse allows us to interpret and organize these events. Although narratives are an important source and means of communication, they are seldom considered in a speech-language diagnostic evaluation or remediation program. Too often, the speech-language pathologist is left with a lingering sense that something is wrong with this individual's communication system, but is unsure how to assess or provide therapy. Here are two examples, taken from the author's files, which demonstrate how communication can break down in a narrative:

My sister went to the pep rally and I didn't, so I went, so I decided to make a little Sky Commander out of my Centurion. It broke today, when I was in Mrs. Vandre's. I'd rather buy one for \$4.00. I want Grandpa to get those cows in the barn.

I went up to Wal-Mart* and put something on lay-away. It's kind of like a horse. Then they keep it 'til when you want it off and stuff, so then when you get ready, when you get it off, when you have the money. Mine was only \$5.00, cause I put some money on lay-away the first time. So my mom helped the first time...the first time I put something on lay-away. Put something on lay-away, Ms. Hutson.

The first narrative sample is from a boy, ten years of age. The second narrative sample is from a girl, nine years of age. In each instance, the child had a desire to communicate and a willing listener. Unfortunately, these students were not able to construct a narrative in a logical and appropriate manner. These preceding narrative samples are considered to be personal narratives, since they are based on true experiences. Sutton-Smith and Heath (1981) have identified three types of narratives:

1. Fictional Narratives-Fantasies
2. Personal Narratives-True experiences
3. Personal Fictions-Mixtures of fantasies and true experiences

THE ACQUISITION OF NARRATIVE SKILLS

Children's narratives have always played an important role in language development. Among a child's first narrations are the stories told when looking at picture books or retelling favorite stories. During the primary school years, narrations are evidenced in Show-and-Tell and Sharing Time. A child's narrative also plays a role in connecting home and school experiences. During the middle and high school years, a student's personal narrative may serve as the basis for writing tasks. Clearly, children who have difficulty structuring narratives would be handicapped throughout the school years (Scott, 1988).

When asked to make up a story, children will frequently begin the narration with "Once upon a time..." indicating that this more literary style has been incorporated into the child's repertoire. Children learn this literary style through repeated exposure to books and stories. Children also learn to narrate by hearing and reading stories. "Listening to and reading high-quality literature allows students to experience all the language components together and promotes narrative development" (Van Dongen and Westby, 1986, p.80).

Children acquire narration skills not only through exposure to well-formed stories, but also by practicing and developing these skills. Children as young as two or three years will relate stories to listeners (Kemper and Edwards, 1986). Van Dongen and Westby (1986) state, "Children's development of narrative discourse grows within the context of their daily lives, as they tell personal narratives about themselves and others and build their experiences and knowledge about the world" (p. 71).

The next two sections, *Levels of Narrative Development* and *Story Grammar Skills*, represent two perspectives for viewing narratives: a developmental sequence (i.e., Applebee, 1978) or a story grammar taxonomy (i.e., Stein and Glenn, 1979).

LEVELS OF NARRATIVE DEVELOPMENT

The acquisition of narrative skills seems to follow a developmental progression, with early developing skills providing the foundation for later acquired skills. Applebee (1978) has outlined six basic types of narrative structure, followed by four additional levels of narrative development, based on Piaget's levels of cognitive development (Ault, 1977). Examples of children's narratives are from Hedburg and Stoel-Gammon (1986).

TYPES OF NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

HEAPS - Heaps are the earliest prenarrative structure. These are collections of unrelated ideas. Children switch topics freely with no apparent connections between the utterances. The sentences are generally simple declarations, usually in the present or present progres-

sive tenses (Westby, 1984). Cohesive techniques are not used. "Children who tell heap stories often do not appear to recognize that the characters on each page of picture books are the same characters" (Westby, 1984, p. 115). For example a child might say:

A dog is walking down the street. A cat is fighting the dog and a baby is crying. The baby is sleeping. The boy is playing on the swing. The man is laying down and the girl is jumping the jump rope. The lady is cooking chocolate chip cookies. A girl is going to the store. The man is going into the supermarket. The old man is fighting the other man. That's all. (Hedburg and Stoel-Gammon, 1986, p. 62)

APPROXIMATE AGE OF EMERGENCE

2 YEARS

SEQUENCES - Sequences represent the second stage of prenarrative development. The term *sequences* is confusing, since the elements of the stories are linked together by arbitrary commonalities but without a common characteristic. Sequence stories do include a macrostructure which involves a central character, topic, or setting. "The story elements are related to the central macrostructure on perceptual bonds" (Westby, 1984, p. 115). For example:

She lives with her dad. She lives with her mother. Grandma and Grandpa live together. And these three children live with their grandma. And these two animals live with them. And that's all. (Hedburg and Stoel-Gammon, 1986, p. 62)

APPROXIMATE AGE OF EMERGENCE

2 to 3 YEARS

PRIMITIVE NARRATIVES - Primitive narratives typify the next level of narrative development. Like the sequence stories, primitive narratives contain a macrostructure of a central character, topic, or setting. Unlike the sequences, the events in a primitive narrative follow from the central core. This main theme requires the child to interpret or predict events. "Children producing primitive narratives recognize and label facial expressions and body postures, and in their stories they make frequent reference to the associated feelings of the character" (Westby, 1984, p. 117). Children at this level of narrative development do not always recognize the reciprocal causality between thoughts and events (Larson and McKinley, 1987). Cohesive techniques such as use of pronominals and reiteration of the main character's name may be used. These techniques link individual sentences to the major theme but generally not to each other. For example:

My dad, he went up to go to work. My mom stayed and sleep in. My two brothers, they went to go play with the toys. My dog, she went outside. My kitty cat came up and he tickled me and came up and started to meow. And then I started to cry because he bit me. And my brothers came runnin' in and Mike said, "What happened?" They said, "What happened?" "My kitty cat just bit me." So mom comes runnin' in and she said, "What happened? Oh, the kitty cat bit you. O.K." (Hedburg and Stoel-Gammon, 1986, p. 62)

APPROXIMATE AGE OF EMERGENCE

3 to 4 YEARS

UNFOCUSED CHAINS - Unfocused chains are the next level of narrative development. These stories contain no central character or topic. Unfocused chains present an actual sequence of events yet there is no consistency of character or theme. The events are linked

in logical or cause-effect relationships. Cohesive techniques of connecting words and propositions may appear. The conjunctions *and*, *but*, and *because* may also be used. This type of narrative structure is seldom produced by children, for as soon as cause-effect and sequential relationships appear, children will begin to tie the story elements to each other and to a central theme (Westby, 1984). For example:

This man is walking. He saw a dog and a cat and he saw a girl, too, with the cat and the dog. He said, "Hello." He walked back and he said, "Brother, come here." So her grandmother walked up to her and said, "You wanna go dancing?" They went dancing. And so it was a slow dance. And then they went back. And then these two children came. And then first he said, "I'm not." And then he said, "What?" "I wanna go out to eat." So they went out to eat. (Hedburg and Stoel-Gammon, 1986, p. 63)

APPROXIMATE AGE OF EMERGENCE

4 TO 4 1/2 YEARS

FOCUSED CHAINS - Focused chains are comprised of a central character with a logical sequence of events. These chains describe a chain of events that take the form of a series of "adventures." There are central characters and a true sequence of events but the listeners must interpret the ending. Westby (1984) states, "...the characters' actions seldom lead to attainment of a goal; consequently, if no goal is perceived, then, in the child's thinking, there is no need for an end to the story, or, at least, the ending does not have to follow logically from the beginning" (p. 118). For example:

Once upon a time there was a mother named Christie. And she had a husband named Tom. And they had some children named Heather and Christie. And then they had a boy named Ronnie. And the mother told the boy to go outside to play. And then the boy came in and said, "Mother, mother, our dog's outside and he's barking. I will go see. What are you barking at? I don't know what he was barking at, Tommy, Ronnie, Ronnie. I don't know what he was barking at. You go out there and see. He wants in. I'll go let him in. There, I let him in." (Hedburg and Stoel-Gammon, 1986, p. 63)

APPROXIMATE AGE OF EMERGENCE

5 YEARS

TRUE NARRATIVES - The level of true narratives represents the next stage of narrative development. True narratives adopt a consistent perspective focused on an incident in a story. There is a true plot, character development, and sequence of events. The presented problem, which is related to issues introduced in the beginning, is resolved in the end. Children may also perceive the relationship between attributes of characters and events. For example:

One day there was a boy named Bobby and a girl named Sharon. They found a cat in their front yard and they brought it into the house. They fed the cat and they gave it some milk. They played and played with it and then a little while after a lady called and asked if anybody had seen her cat. And then they said that they had it at their house. And they brought it to the lady's house. And she gave them each five dollars for finding the cat and having them feed it and give it milk. (Hedburg and Stoel-Gammon, 1986, p. 64)

APPROXIMATE AGE OF EMERGENCE

6 to 7 YEARS

Children's narrative development does not end at seven years of age. Rather, children seem to lengthen and refine their narratives. The elements of the narratives also grow more complex as the child matures (Applebee, 1978).

7-11 YEARS OF AGE - At this level of development, children will now begin to summarize and categorize stories. Children may categorize stories subjectively or objectively. "Subjectively, the child may categorize or summarize a story as 'funny' or 'exciting' or 'sad.' Objectively, the child may summarize a story as rhyming or long. In either case, the child is capable of considering the entire story and placing it in a more general category" (Larson and McKinley, 1987, p. 100).

11-12 YEARS OF AGE - Children at this level of development are now capable of producing complex stories with multiple embedded narrative structures.

13-15 YEARS OF AGE - Adolescents who reach this level of development are now adept at analyzing stories. This analysis is often combined with evaluation of stories or elements of stories.

16 YEARS OF AGE TO ADULTHOOD - Individuals at this level of narrative development are now capable of more sophisticated analysis. When presented with a story, these individuals are now able to generalize about the story's meaning, formulate abstract statements about the message or theme of the story, and focus on their reaction to the story (Larson and McKinley, 1987).

STORY GRAMMAR SKILLS

Some stories produced by children may be best described using a set of rules to illustrate their underlying structure. A story grammar framework may then be utilized. "Story grammars are goal-based definitions of stories in which a major character, the protagonist, is motivated to achieve a goal through engaging in some type of goal-oriented action" (Hedburg and Stoel-Gammon, 1986, p. 64). A story grammar framework assists both the speaker and the listener in a narrative exchange. The use of a story grammar appears to represent the speaker's knowledge of narrative structure as well as allowing the listener to use a story grammar framework to assimilate the narrative input (Roth, 1986). While several different story grammars have been proposed, Stein and Glenn (1979) suggest that stories are comprised of a setting and one or more episodes. An episode includes an initiating event + an internal response + a plan + an attempt + a consequence + a reaction. If a story does include more than one episode, these episodes may be linked sequentially, temporally, or causally (Roth, 1986). Definitions for each of these story grammar components are listed below:

1. Setting statements introduce the main character(s) and describe the context of the story.
2. Initiating events induce the protagonist(s) to react in some way.
3. Internal responses describe the character's(s') thoughts, intentions, or emotional responses to the initiating events.
4. Internal plans are statements referring to the protagonist's(s') strategy for reaching the goal.
5. Attempts are made overtly by the protagonist(s) to obtain the goal.
6. Consequences are the outcome and indicate whether the attempts of the

protagonist(s) were successes or failures.

7. Reactions are descriptions of how the character(s) now feel, think, or respond emotionally.

This story grammar model does not characterize perfectly all stories. Rather, it provides a framework for viewing children's stories. Through repeated exposure to stories, most children develop adequate story grammar knowledge. A narrative produced by an adolescent should contain all seven of these components (Larson and McKinley, 1987). Story grammar analysis and narrative developmental levels allow us to evaluate and make judgments regarding an individual's ability to structure and produce an oral narrative. The next section will provide a description of some of the types of narrative disabilities shown by school-age children.

NARRATIVE DISABILITIES

Many students with language/learning disabilities also exhibit difficulty structuring oral narratives. Elementary school children may be producing narratives characteristic of much younger children. Language-impaired adolescents may not have reached the level of producing a true narrative. Instead, their narrative development may be limited to focused chains and primitive narratives.

Unfortunately, many children with language delays and disorders also experience difficulty with reading skills. Language-impaired children may also be reluctant to share and practice narratives with others. Therefore, these important sources of language stimulation may not be readily accessible.

In a study comparing spontaneously produced stories told by learning disabled students with those produced by their normally achieving peers, Roth and Spekman (1985) reported that the stories told by the learning disabled students were shorter, contained fewer descriptors, less detail, and substantially fewer complete episodes. Furthermore, the learning disabled students demonstrated less usage of response, plan and attempt statements, and were less likely to connect statements, as compared to their normally achieving peers. An important prerequisite in the generation of a spontaneous story is the ability to assume a character's perspective. The speaker must be able to perceive how a character in the story might feel, even though the speaker might feel different. This is especially true for stories in which a character's feelings or thoughts may not be explicitly stated. For language/learning disabled students, this awareness of an individual character's own thoughts and motivation seems to be slow in developing (Westby, 1985).

Norris and Brunig (1988) examined the narratives of one hundred and fifty good and poor readers in kindergarten and first grade. Their findings indicate that the poor readers produced stories that were shorter, contained fewer ideas, and included more irrelevant information. In addition, the poor readers were less likely to tie the story elements together and to link characters and events.

Westby (1984) has identified three patterns of difficulties in structuring oral narratives for language/learning disabled children:

1. Inefficient processing - Children with inefficient processing may be able to produce a narrative with an appropriate macrostructure. However, these students may

exhibit delayed responses, difficulty changing tasks, and slow retrieval of words. In addition, they may use vague, nonspecific vocabulary, and frequently need repetitions and cues.

2. Inadequate organization - These students may be characterized as possessing problems in planning. They may be able to answer questions appropriately about the characters' motivations and cause-effect relationships. However, their narratives are not organized in a logical, coherent manner. The narratives may only be sequential statements. These stories lack a theme or plot and may include irrelevant details.
3. Insufficient schema knowledge - These students also demonstrate problems in planning. They may not be aware that the pictures contained in a book present a story. They may describe each picture as a separate stimulus. Cause-effect and motivational relationships may not be perceived or correctly interpreted by these children.

NARRATION ANALYSIS

Speech-language pathologists working with school-age children are required by P.L. 94-142 to evaluate and assess linguistic functioning. Then, this information needs to be presented to a multidisciplinary team for decisions regarding placement and IEP development. To develop an overall profile of a child's language abilities, narrative analysis is vital. "Narrative analysis is one of the most valuable skills a language clinician can possess" (Hedburg and Stoel-Gammon, 1986, p. 58). Narrative analysis is best done using informal assessment procedures, since standardized testing methods seldom detect narrative disabilities (Westby, 1984). "Short answers to standardized test questions do not tax cognitive organization and formulation skills to the degree that classroom and social encounters frequently demand" (Simon, 1985, p. 205). The following section, entitled *Assessment*, provides guidelines for collecting narrative samples, assessment forms to evaluate narrative and story grammar development, and interpretative information. However, caution should be exercised when using the *STORYBUILDING Assessment and Remediation* sections with culturally different individuals.

In recent years, there have been increasing numbers of school-age children from multi-cultural backgrounds. While stories produced by children from many cultures seem to follow a consistent organizational structure, speech-language pathologists need to be sensitive to the nature of narratives in other cultures (Westby, 1989). For example, the attributes of certain characters in some children's stories, such as the wise owl or the curious cat, seem to be culturally bound. Therefore, the speech-language pathologist needs to exert care when doing narrative assessment and intervention with culturally different students. "Speech-language pathologists should recognize that using the middle-class English-speaking child as the norm is no longer adequate for the language assessment of minority children" (Kayser, 1989, p. 226).

ASSESSMENT

Because a child's ability to logically structure and relate a personal narrative is such a critical skill, the speech-language pathologist must have adequate diagnostic information. Therefore, two assessment forms are included as measures of a child's ability to logically structure and relate a narrative. These assessment forms are entitled: *Narrative Levels Analysis* and *Story Grammar Assessment*.

The *Narrative Levels Analysis* is based on Applebee's (1978) developmental narrative sequence arranged according to Jean Piaget's periods of cognitive development (Ault, 1977). The *Levels of Story Grammar Development* (see page 18) are based on Glenn and Stein's (1980) story grammar taxonomy for the acquisition of story structure. A *Narrative Levels Analysis* or *Story Grammar Assessment* form should be completed for each narrative sample collected. The purpose of this task is to make judgments regarding the child's level of narrative development, not to capture the story. These forms may be used as part of an initial diagnostic evaluation or to measure progress for a three year re-evaluation or end of the year assessment. On pages 20-26, sample *Story Grammar Assessment* forms have been completed for each level of story grammar development.

These assessment measures are appropriate for individuals who have been determined to have a mean length of utterance of three words or more (Hedburg and Stoel-Gammon, 1986). Although the assessment measures were designed to be used with individuals possessing a $MLU \geq 3.0$, there are some individuals for whom a particular assessment form would be more appropriate. The *Narrative Levels Analysis* is most appropriate for assessing the narrative development of individuals with limited verbal skills. Specifically, individuals with limited verbal skills include preschool and lower elementary school-age language-impaired children, children with hearing impairments, mentally retarded students, and adults with aphasia (Hedburg and Stoel-Gammon, 1986). The *Story Grammar Assessment* is better suited for the assessment of children who are producing stories with the focused chain or true narrative structure (Westby, 1984). The narrative levels of summarization, analysis, and generalization may best capture the narratives produced by adolescents.

For either type of analyses, it is recommended that a minimum of three samples of the child's narrations be collected and analyzed to obtain a clearer picture of a child's true ability. To aid in assessment, the examiner may wish to collect, from the child, one narrative sample from each of the following categories:

1. Personal experience narrative
2. TV program, movie, or book summary
3. Fictional story

A personal experience narrative can be collected by asking the child to tell about a family trip, vacation, a funny incident, or any occurrence in which the child is a main character. The second category of narratives can be obtained by feigning ignorance of a book the child has read or a TV program or movie the child has seen. The student can also be asked to tell the story that he/she sees in a Viewmaster* that the examiner cannot see. A third method is to show the student a short video, puppet show, or cartoon and ask the child to retell the story to a person who was not present when the stimulus was being shown (Emily Moore, Personal Communication, 1989).

When collecting a fictional story from a child, instruct the child to "...tell a story like you would read in a book." This directive alerts the child to switch to a more literary style of

language (Westby, 1984). It is also important to look at the amount of structure that is provided when a child is asked "to tell a story." One way to consider the structure provided is to imagine a continuum where the poles represent no structure provided as opposed to a high degree of structure. Most narratives considered for assessment will fall somewhere between the two extremes, depending on the individual's linguistic ability and willingness to communicate. We can classify the amount of structure accordingly:

Table 2.1 Amount of Narrative Structure

NO STRUCTURE		MEDIUM AMOUNT OF STRUCTURE		HIGH DEGREE OF STRUCTURE
The child chooses the topic and formulates a narrative	The child is given a topic and is asked to tell a story	The child is given an action picture with obvious characters and surroundings	The child is given a starting sentence containing the setting, characters, and an initiating event and is asked to complete the story	The child is told a story, or given sequence cards, and is asked to reformulate that story

In the initial assessment of a child, a medium amount of structure should be provided when asking a child to formulate a narrative. Depending on how well the child completes the task with some structure, more or less structure may be provided for subsequent narration assessment tasks. Children with limited verbal ability and/or a reluctance to communicate may benefit from a high degree of structure. "The instruction to make up a story when no stimulus material is provided is the most demanding for the child, because all schemas must be evoked and organized rather than simply recognized" (Westby, 1984, p.121). Individuals with more fully developed linguistic skills may be able to produce a true narrative with little or no structure provided. If the student is able to produce a narrative at an age-appropriate level, with no additional structure provided, then that student probably does not need this program. Therefore, when using the assessment procedures, the examiner should indicate the amount and type of structure provided, since these variables will influence the child's narrative production. When providing additional structure to a child in a diagnostic evaluation, one should bear in mind the child's level of familiarity and experience with the given stimulus. Familiar stories told in a familiar style ("Once upon a time...") seem to elicit more well-formed stories than unfamiliar items.

Keep in mind that language is most meaningful when it is purposeful. While a request from a speech-language pathologist to "make up a story" may seem very purposeful to some, it probably does not seem like a very functional or necessary task to a child. Optimally, narratives for assessment are best obtained when the child has a purpose for communicating within a naturalistic context.

The last page of the *Assessment* section includes a supplemental assessment form entitled *Style of Narration Assessment*. This form may be completed for each narrative sample collected from the student or following the analysis of several samples from a student. The questions on this form pertain to the manner in which the narrative was told. The information gathered from this form, while subjective, will be beneficial to parents and teachers, as well as to the speech-language pathologist.

INTERPRETATION

Once the speech-language pathologist has analyzed the student's narrative and story grammar development, decisions then need to be made as to whether or not this child is a candidate for language intervention. To achieve the most accurate normative data, it is recommended that the speech-language pathologist establish norms based upon the local population. The speech-language pathologist has the option of using the following information to interpret scores.

NARRATIVE LEVELS ANALYSIS

The *Narrative Levels Analysis* on page 17, provides an approximate age of emergence for each level of narrative structure. Students whose narrative language samples are consistently two to three years delayed, compared to chronological age, may benefit from language intervention.

STORY GRAMMAR ASSESSMENT

Although normative data for the *Story Grammar Assessment* are not yet available, the examiner can make judgments regarding the student's story-telling and narrative abilities. Through the use of the *Story Grammar Assessment*, the examiner can determine the structural elements that are present in the child's speech and those that have not yet been demonstrated or acquired by the child. As previously reported, the *Story Grammar Assessment* is best suited for children who are producing stories with the focused chain or true narrative structure (Westby, 1984). This would then suggest a minimum level of linguistic development comparable to a normally developing child of five to six years of age. The final question on the *Story Grammar Assessment* form corresponds to a story grammar structure that is generally observed in normally developing children of eleven to twelve years of age (Gmeiner Heinrich, 1989). This would suggest that between the ages of five and twelve years, normally developing children are in the process of developing and mastering these story grammar skills. Following the analysis of a story with the *Story Grammar Assessment*, the examiner can then determine the percentage of story grammar structures present in the child's language. These percentages can then be compared with the information in Table 2.2 to determine the level of story grammar development.

Table 2.2 Level of Story Grammar Development

12/12	100%	Level 7	Interactive Episode
11/12	92%	Level 6	Complex Episode
10/12	83%	Level 6	Complex Episode
9/12	75%	Level 5	Complete Episode
8/12	67%	Level 5	Complete Episode
7/12	58%	Level 4	Abbreviated Episode
6/12	50%	Level 4	Abbreviated Episode
5/12	42%	Level 3	Reactive Sequence
4/12	33%	Level 3	Reactive Sequence
3/12	25%	Level 2	Action Sequence
2/12	17%	Level 1	Descriptive Sequence
1/12	8%	Pre-Level 1	
0/12	0%	Pre-Level 1	

Children whose analyses reflect more than one level of development may be transitioning to a higher level of development. (See page 18 for a description of the seven levels of development.) It is also conceivable that a collected narrative language sample was not truly representative of the child's language. Therefore, further assessment would be warranted. Students may also be selected for intervention if the analyses of their stories reveal a significant number of NO responses. Children older than twelve years whose scores fall below 70% may be considered for further assessment and/or remediation. This minimum competency score of 70% was chosen, since "...thirty percent...[marked as NO] approximates two standard deviations below the mean on standardized tests" (Larson and McKinley, 1987, p. 109).

STYLE OF NARRATION ASSESSMENT

Through the use of the *Style of Narration Assessment*, the speech-language pathologist can develop a more comprehensive picture of the child's narrative abilities. While using this form, the following two points should be considered: 1. This assessment form is to be used with individuals who have reached the level of producing a true narrative; and 2. Story narratives, as compared to personal narratives, contain fewer pauses, repetitions, and false starts (Westby, 1984). On the *Style of Narration Assessment* as well, it is recommended that 70% be used as a guideline for the selection of candidates for remediation.

Included in the remainder of the *Assessment* section are the following:

1. Narrative Levels Analysis
2. Story Grammar Assessment
3. Levels of Story Grammar Development
4. Sample Story Grammar Assessment Forms
5. Style of Narration Assessment

NARRATIVE LEVELS ANALYSIS

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

AGE: _____ EXAMINER: _____

DIRECTIONS: Place check marks to reflect the highest level of narrative development for formulated and reformulated tasks.

Cognitive Period	Approximate "Normal" Age of Emergence	Mode of Organization	Tasks	
			Formulated	Reformulated
Pre-operations	2 years	Heaps		
	2 to 3 years	Sequences		
	3 to 4 years	Primitive narratives		
	4 to 4½ years	Unfocused chains		
	5 years	Focused chains		
	6 to 7 years	Narratives		
Concrete	7 to 11 years	Summarization		
	11 to 12 years	Complex stories		
Formal	13 to 15 years	Analysis		
	16 years to adulthood	Generalization		

Description of formulated task: _____

Description of reformulated task: _____

Comments: _____

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LEVELS OF STORY GRAMMAR DEVELOPMENT

Glenn and Stein (1980) have suggested a developmental taxonomy for the acquisition of story grammar skills. Seven different levels have been identified ranging in complexity from simplest to most complex. Each level contains all the components of the previous levels with one additional component added. Examples of stories which illustrate each of these seven levels, with completed *Story Grammar Assessment* forms, are provided on pages 20-26.

Level 1 DESCRIPTIVE SEQUENCE

This story is comprised of descriptions of characters, surroundings, and usual actions of the characters. No causal relationships or sequences of events are present.

Level 2 ACTION SEQUENCE

This story consists of events in a chronological order but no causal relationships exist.

Level 3 REACTIVE SEQUENCE

This story does contain a causal relationship in that certain changes automatically cause other changes. There is no evidence of goal-directed behavior.

Level 4 ABBREVIATED EPISODE

At this level, a goal is implied even though it may not be stated explicitly. This story contains either an event statement with a consequence or an internal response with a consequence. The actions of the characters seem to be purposeful, though not as well thought out as in successive stages.

Level 5 COMPLETE EPISODE

This story contains an entire goal-oriented behavior sequence. A consequence is required as well as two of the following three components: Initiating Event, Internal Response, Attempt.

Level 6 COMPLEX EPISODE

This level is an elaboration of the complete episode, with an additional partial or complete incident embedded in the episode. A story at this level could also contain multiple plans which are used to achieve the goal. Either one of these factors or both must be present.

Level 7 INTERACTIVE EPISODE

The interactive episode is the highest level. This story contains two characters with separate goals and actions that influence the actions of the other.

STORY GRAMMAR ASSESSMENT

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Degree of structure provided:

- ☐ No additional structure
- ☐ Medium amount of structure
- ☐ High degree of structure

Collect a narrative from the student. (See pages 7-8 for definitions.)

1. IS A SETTING GIVEN?	YES	NO
2. ARE THE CHARACTERS DESCRIBED?	YES	NO
3. ARE THE EVENTS PRESENTED SEQUENTIALLY?	YES	NO
4. IS THERE A CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EVENTS?	YES	NO
5. IS THERE AN INITIATING EVENT (IE)?	YES	NO
6. IS A GOAL PRESENT?	YES	NO
7. IS THERE A CONSEQUENCE?	YES	NO
8. IS AN INTERNAL RESPONSE (IR) PRESENT?	YES	NO
9. IS THERE AN ATTEMPT TO ATTAIN THE GOAL?	YES	NO
10. ARE MULTIPLE PLANS USED TO MEET THE GOAL?	YES	NO
11. IS A PARTIAL OR COMPLETE EPISODE EMBEDDED IN THE EPISODE?	YES	NO
12. ARE THERE TWO CHARACTERS WITH SEPARATE GOALS AND ACTIONS THAT INFLUENCE THE ACTIONS OF THE OTHER?	YES	NO

Number of YES Responses _____ ÷ 12 x 100 = _____ %

LEVEL OF STORY GRAMMAR DEVELOPMENT _____

Comments _____

SAMPLE STORY GRAMMAR ASSESSMENT

Her mom took her at the zoo. She sees a monkey and she sees a giraffe. Now she went to a cage of lions. Now she comes to a place where a person sells balloons and stuff. Sometimes she sees elephants and stuff. She saw deers. Now she sees penguins. Then she went to a lake with ducks in it.

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. IS A SETTING GIVEN? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 2. ARE THE CHARACTERS DESCRIBED? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 3. ARE THE EVENTS PRESENTED SEQUENTIALLY? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 4. IS THERE A CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EVENTS? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 5. IS THERE AN INITIATING EVENT (IE)? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 6. IS A GOAL PRESENT? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 7. IS THERE A CONSEQUENCE? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 8. IS AN INTERNAL RESPONSE (IR) PRESENT? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 9. IS THERE AN ATTEMPT TO ATTAIN THE GOAL? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 10. ARE MULTIPLE PLANS USED TO MEET THE GOAL? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 11. IS A PARTIAL OR COMPLETE EPISODE EMBEDDED IN THE EPISODE? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 12. ARE THERE TWO CHARACTERS WITH SEPARATE GOALS AND ACTIONS THAT INFLUENCE THE ACTIONS OF THE OTHER? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |

Number of YES Responses 2 ÷ 12 x 100 = 17 %

LEVEL OF STORY GRAMMAR DEVELOPMENT Level 1 Descriptive Sequence

Comments _____

SAMPLE STORY GRAMMAR ASSESSMENT

I get up in the morning at 6:30. My mom gets up first. She wakes me up, then she wakes up my brother. Then I get dressed. My mom makes eggs for me, sometimes. Sometimes, I eat cereal. I make the toast. After I get done eating, I go out to wait for the bus.

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. IS A SETTING GIVEN? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 2. ARE THE CHARACTERS DESCRIBED? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 3. ARE THE EVENTS PRESENTED SEQUENTIALLY? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 4. IS THERE A CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EVENTS? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 5. IS THERE AN INITIATING EVENT (IE)? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 6. IS A GOAL PRESENT? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 7. IS THERE A CONSEQUENCE? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 8. IS AN INTERNAL RESPONSE (IR) PRESENT? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 9. IS THERE AN ATTEMPT TO ATTAIN THE GOAL? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 10. ARE MULTIPLE PLANS USED TO MEET THE GOAL? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 11. IS A PARTIAL OR COMPLETE EPISODE EMBEDDED IN THE EPISODE? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 12. ARE THERE TWO CHARACTERS WITH SEPARATE GOALS AND ACTIONS THAT INFLUENCE THE ACTIONS OF THE OTHER? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |

Number of YES Responses 3 ÷ 12 x 100 = 25 %

LEVEL OF STORY GRAMMAR DEVELOPMENT Level 2 Action Sequence

Comments _____

SAMPLE STORY GRAMMAR ASSESSMENT

Last summer, when I went to visit my grandpa, there was a fire at the house next door. My grandpa called the fire department. Pretty soon, the fire trucks came. Then the police came, too. The ambulance came, too. It was just a little fire. Nobody was hurt.

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. IS A SETTING GIVEN? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 2. ARE THE CHARACTERS DESCRIBED? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 3. ARE THE EVENTS PRESENTED SEQUENTIALLY? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 4. IS THERE A CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EVENTS? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 5. IS THERE AN INITIATING EVENT (IE)? | YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 6. IS A GOAL PRESENT? | YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 7. IS THERE A CONSEQUENCE? | YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 8. IS AN INTERNAL RESPONSE (IR) PRESENT? | YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 9. IS THERE AN ATTEMPT TO ATTAIN THE GOAL? | YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 10. ARE MULTIPLE PLANS USED TO MEET THE GOAL? | YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 11. IS A PARTIAL OR COMPLETE EPISODE EMBEDDED IN THE EPISODE? | YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 12. ARE THERE TWO CHARACTERS WITH SEPARATE GOALS AND ACTIONS THAT INFLUENCE THE ACTIONS OF THE OTHER? | YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |

Number of YES Responses 4 ÷ 12 × 100 = 33 %

LEVEL OF STORY GRAMMAR DEVELOPMENT Level 3 Reactive Sequence

Comments _____

SAMPLE STORY GRAMMAR ASSESSMENT

One time, my dad was painting the house. He was painting it brown. He climbed up the ladder. Then his foot slipped on the ladder and he dropped the pail with the paint in it. I was standing by the ladder and I got paint all over me. It was in my hair and on my clothes.

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. IS A SETTING GIVEN? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 2. ARE THE CHARACTERS DESCRIBED? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 3. ARE THE EVENTS PRESENTED SEQUENTIALLY? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 4. IS THERE A CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EVENTS? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 5. IS THERE AN INITIATING EVENT (IE)? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| ? 6. IS A GOAL PRESENT? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 7. IS THERE A CONSEQUENCE? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 8. IS AN INTERNAL RESPONSE (IR) PRESENT? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| ? 9. IS THERE AN ATTEMPT TO ATTAIN THE GOAL? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 10. ARE MULTIPLE PLANS USED TO MEET THE GOAL? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 11. IS A PARTIAL OR COMPLETE EPISODE EMBEDDED IN THE EPISODE? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 12. ARE THERE TWO CHARACTERS WITH SEPARATE GOALS AND ACTIONS THAT INFLUENCE THE ACTIONS OF THE OTHER? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |

Number of YES Responses 7 ÷ 12 × 100 = 58 %

LEVEL OF STORY GRAMMAR DEVELOPMENT Level 4 Abbreviated Episode

Comments _____

SAMPLE STORY GRAMMAR ASSESSMENT

Sally woke up one beautiful, sunny morning. Sally looked out her window and saw a beautiful rainbow. Sally had always heard stories that at the end of the rainbow there was a pot of gold. She knew the end of the rainbow was far away and that her parents would be upset if she went looking for the pot of gold. Sally had to make the decision whether she should go or should not go. Sally made the decision to go.

Sally left her home and walked for miles and miles trying to find the end of the rainbow. Unfortunately, she got lost in the woods. Sally didn't know where to go or what to do. She was very scared and upset. Night was coming. She sat by a tree and wondered what was going to happen. She wanted to go home. Soon, she fell asleep.

The next morning, Sally woke up. She was cold and wet. She wandered around the woods, trying to find her way home. She tried to remember how she had come the day before. Finally, her parents found her. Sally decided that she would never go out in the woods alone again.

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|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. IS A SETTING GIVEN? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | NO |
| 2. ARE THE CHARACTERS DESCRIBED? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | NO |
| 3. ARE THE EVENTS PRESENTED SEQUENTIALLY? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | NO |
| 4. IS THERE A CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EVENTS? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | NO |
| 5. IS THERE AN INITIATING EVENT (IE)? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | NO |
| 6. IS A GOAL PRESENT? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | NO |
| 7. IS THERE A CONSEQUENCE? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | NO |
| 8. IS AN INTERNAL RESPONSE (IR) PRESENT? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | NO |
| 9. IS THERE AN ATTEMPT TO ATTAIN THE GOAL? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | NO |
| 10. ARE MULTIPLE PLANS USED TO MEET THE GOAL? | YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 11. IS A PARTIAL OR COMPLETE EPISODE EMBEDDED IN THE EPISODE? | YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 12. ARE THERE TWO CHARACTERS WITH SEPARATE GOALS AND ACTIONS THAT INFLUENCE THE ACTIONS OF THE OTHER? | YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |

Number of YES Responses 9 ÷ 12 x 100 = 75 %

LEVEL OF STORY GRAMMAR DEVELOPMENT Level 5 Complete Episode

SAMPLE STORY GRAMMAR ASSESSMENT

One time last summer, I went swimming in Lake Wissota with my friend MaryAnne. We were swimming off the dock at my house. Actually, I was swimming and MaryAnne was sitting on the dock. MaryAnne hasn't gone swimming since she was about six years old. When she was six, she was swimming and she swam to a real deep part, over her head. She couldn't swim back to the shore. She was really afraid. She kept going under the water. Finally, her brother saw her and saved her. So since then, MaryAnne doesn't like to swim.

Anyway, on this day, I was swimming and I found something in the sand on the bottom of the lake. It was a box buried in the sand. I wanted to open the box and see what was inside. I kept diving down to the bottom and pushing the sand away but I couldn't lift the box. It was buried too deep in the sand. I called MaryAnne to come and help me. She didn't want to go in the water but I talked her into it. Together, we kept pulling on the box. We tried for a long time but we couldn't move the box. We were so tired we had to stop. All that night we tried to imagine what was in the box. The next day we went back down to the lake to look for the box. Of course, MaryAnne didn't want to go in the water so I went by myself. I looked everywhere but I couldn't find the box. I thought I knew where the box was buried but I couldn't find it. MaryAnne even came in the lake to look for the box. We looked for two days but we never found the box again. Maybe the box got covered by sand again or we forgot where it was. We are going to look again, next summer, for that box.

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. IS A SETTING GIVEN? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 2. ARE THE CHARACTERS DESCRIBED? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 3. ARE THE EVENTS PRESENTED SEQUENTIALLY? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 4. IS THERE A CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EVENTS? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 5. IS THERE AN INITIATING EVENT (IE)? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 6. IS A GOAL PRESENT? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 7. IS THERE A CONSEQUENCE? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 8. IS AN INTERNAL RESPONSE (IR) PRESENT? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 9. IS THERE AN ATTEMPT TO ATTAIN THE GOAL? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 10. ARE MULTIPLE PLANS USED TO MEET THE GOAL? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |
| 11. IS A PARTIAL OR COMPLETE EPISODE EMBEDDED IN THE EPISODE? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO |
| 12. ARE THERE TWO CHARACTERS WITH SEPARATE GOALS AND ACTIONS THAT INFLUENCE THE ACTIONS OF THE OTHER? | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO |

Number of YES Responses 10 ÷ 12 x 100 = 83 %

LEVEL OF STORY GRAMMAR DEVELOPMENT Level 6 Complex Episode

SAMPLE STORY GRAMMAR ASSESSMENT

Once there was a man who lived alone in the forest. He didn't want to live around other people. He was a gentle man who was trusted by the animals of the forest. During the spring, summer, and fall seasons, the man would collect berries, catch fish, and grow food. He would store the food for the long, cold winter.

One day, the man went out in the woods to find some blueberries. He walked a long way to find the berries. When he returned to his cabin, everything was a mess. Jars, cans, and sacks of food were tipped over and spilled on the floor. There were fruits and vegetables everywhere. The man did not know who could have done this. There were no other people around and the animals never went inside his cabin. The man cleaned up his cabin and then went outside. As he stepped out of the cabin, he realized that the forest was silent. No birds were singing and no squirrels scurried by. The man knew immediately that something was wrong.

On a hill overlooking the cabin sat a hungry watchful fox. He saw the man go back into the cabin. The fox slowly made his way down the hill towards the cabin. Inside the cabin, the man took out an old rifle. It was covered with dust. Carefully, the man dusted off the rifle and began to load it with shells. At that moment, the vicious fox stalked angrily outside the cabin. The man slowly opened the cabin door and stepped outside. He saw the fox. The man quickly raised his rifle, pointed it at the tallest tree, and fired. The noise frightened the fox, who turned and ran back up the hill to watch the man. The man stood there a long time and finally went inside the cabin. The man was afraid. He knew that he had frightened off the fox for now, but he also knew that the fox would return soon.

1. IS A SETTING GIVEN?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	NO
2. ARE THE CHARACTERS DESCRIBED?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	NO
3. ARE THE EVENTS PRESENTED SEQUENTIALLY?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	NO
4. IS THERE A CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EVENTS?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	NO
5. IS THERE AN INITIATING EVENT (IE)?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	NO
6. IS A GOAL PRESENT?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	NO
7. IS THERE A CONSEQUENCE?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	NO
8. IS AN INTERNAL RESPONSE (IR) PRESENT?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	NO
9. IS THERE AN ATTEMPT TO ATTAIN THE GOAL?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	NO
10. ARE MULTIPLE PLANS USED TO MEET THE GOAL?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	NO
11. IS A PARTIAL OR COMPLETE EPISODE EMBEDDED IN THE EPISODE? <i>(6.5)</i>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	NO
12. ARE THERE TWO CHARACTERS WITH SEPARATE GOALS AND ACTIONS THAT INFLUENCE THE ACTIONS OF THE OTHER?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	NO

Number of YES Responses 12 ÷ 12 x 100 = 100 %

LEVEL OF STORY GRAMMAR DEVELOPMENT Level 7 Interactive Episode

STYLE OF NARRATION ASSESSMENT

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

For each narrative sample collected, answer the following questions:

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. IS THE NARRATIVE GRAMMATICAL? | YES | NO |
| 2. IS SUFFICIENT INFORMATION PRESENTED? | YES | NO |
| 3. DOES THE LISTENER UNDERSTAND THE NARRATIVE WITHOUT ASKING QUESTIONS OF CLARIFICATION? | YES | NO |
| 4. IS THE NARRATIVE PRESENTED IN A FLUENT MANNER (I.E., WITHOUT PAUSES, HESITATIONS, REVISIONS, OR FALSE STARTS)? | YES | NO |
| 5. DOES THE SPEAKER TELL THE STORY WITHOUT EXHIBITING FRUSTRATION OR OBVIOUS DIFFICULTY? | YES | NO |
| 6. IS ONE TOPIC PRESENTED (IF MORE THAN ONE TOPIC IS GIVEN, IS THERE A SMOOTH AND APPROPRIATE TRANSITION BETWEEN TOPICS)? | YES | NO |
| 7. DO ALL THE STATEMENTS PERTAIN TO THE TOPIC(S)? | YES | NO |
| 8. ARE PRECISE VOCABULARY TERMS USED (I.E., WITHOUT LOW INFORMATION WORDS LIKE <i>THINGS</i> , <i>STUFF</i>)? | YES | NO |
| 9. ARE FACIAL AND BODY EXPRESSIONS APPROPRIATE TO THE STORY? | YES | NO |
| 10. WAS THE TOPIC OF THE NARRATIVE APPROPRIATE FOR THE AUDIENCE? | YES | NO |

Number of YES Responses _____ $\div 10 \times 100 =$ _____ %

DESCRIPTION OF NARRATIVE TASK _____

Comments _____
