

# **Stories for Eliciting Speech Samples (SESS) Instruction Manual**

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## **Overview**

SESS is a collection of seven photo-sequence stories to be used as stimuli for eliciting connected speech samples. Each story presents all English phonemes with the exception of the phoneme /ʒ/. These stories cover age-appropriate interests, and each story is verbalized using sentence structure and length appropriate to the child's grade level. After telling the story to the child and presenting each photographic plate, the Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) displays each photograph to stimulate the child's retelling of the narrative. These stories are offered in an attempt to standardize the elicitation material (for connected speech) for children being tested for articulation disorders. Obviously, no informal sample can be standardized because a child's narrative productions are spontaneous and unique to him. The SESS offers the next best thing – a replicable method of eliciting connected speech which taps the full spectrum of English phonemes.

### **Description of the SESS**

The SESS presents six grade-level photographed sequence stories and one alternate story. Each story depicts children engaged in common, age-appropriate activities. Photos provide clear portrayal of stories in an easel-bound format, which the SLP can turn to regulate the speed of child's narrative production. Stories are at the interest level of the target group and the characters portrayed are of ages similar to the target audience. (See Appendix 1 for analyses and scripts of the stories.)

## **Grade Level Stories**

The SESS story levels include: preschool, kindergarten-first, second-third, fourth-fifth, sixth-eighth, and ninth-twelfth grades. These stories are presented in 5-10 photo sequences, accompanied by the reading of the target story by the SLP. The child then retells the stories from the photo stimuli.

## **Alternate Story**

The alternate story offers a high interest level for students with low speech and language skills. The alternate story length is 340 words presented via 25 photographs. The utterance complexity of the story is at a preschool level with a sentence length in the elementary range. The abundance of stimulation is offered to assist in eliciting maximal words from children with limited speech output.

## **Phonemes**

The SLP-read stories include every English phoneme, with the exception of the infrequent phoneme /ʒ/, so that the child has the opportunity to produce those phonemes in his connected sample. Of course, in his retelling, the child may omit words containing target sounds. If the child omits all words containing his suspected error phonemes, it is suggested that the SLP turn back to a target-rich photo plate and reread that part of the story, then ask the child to retell that portion.

In addition to presenting all the phonemes, the stories include a high percentage of the most commonly occurring English phonemes: /t/, /n/, /s/, /d/, /r/, and /l/ (Edwards, 1997). Many examples of consonant blends are also presented in each story. Finally, the names of the main characters and themes in the grade level stories were selected to reflect one or more of the phonemes suggested to be the most difficult for children with phonological disorders (Rvachew, Nowak, & Cloutier, 2004). These include /r/, /θ/, /tʃ/, /k/, and /dʒ/, and are featured as follows:

Story A: Richard, Miss Andrews, Ducks

Story B: Mathew, Mr. Page, Firetrucks

Story C: Charlie, Brad, Bike

Story D: Paige, Kitten, Birthday

Story E: Seth, Coach Roberts, Basketball

Story F: Jordon, Homecoming

Story G: Cheerleaders, Homecoming King and Queen

## Sentence Structure

The grade level stories, presented in 150 to 200 word units via 5-10 photographs, have a mean length of communicative unit (MLCU) which is commensurate with the expected MLCU for that grade level. Determination of target MLCU is based on summaries reported in Hughes, McGillivray, and Schmidek (1997). (See Table 1 for the target MLCUs and the actual MLCUs achieved in the SESS.) The complexity of the sentence structures in each story was also controlled. Each story has a mean dependent clause per communicative unit (MDCCU) that is at the expected level for that grade/age group. Determination of the target MDCCU is also based on summaries reported in Hughes, McGillivray, and Schmidek (1997). (See Table 2 for the target MDCCUs and the actual MDCCUs achieved in the SESS.)

Grade	Source	MLCU (by grade)	SD	Range	Actual SESS
A. Preschool	Not Available				5.03
B. Kindergarten 1 <sup>st</sup> grade	Moyano & McGillivray, 1985 Loban, in Hughes, McGillivray & Schmidek, 1997	6.33 (males) 6.92 (females)  6.05	1.20 1.15  1.37	5.13 - 7.53 5.77 - 8.07  4.68 - 7.42	6.68
C. 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	Loban, in Hughes, McGillivray & Schmidek, 1997	6.57 6.65	1.18 1.81	5.39 - 7.75 4.84 - 8.46	7.26
D. 4 <sup>th</sup> grade 5 <sup>th</sup> grade	Loban, in Hughes, McGillivray & Schmidek, 1997	7.70 7.89	1.26 1.10	6.44 - 8.96 6.79 - 8.99	8.71
E. 6 <sup>th</sup> grade 8 <sup>th</sup> grade	Loban, in Hughes, McGillivray & Schmidek, 1997	8.37 9.75 10.71	1.25 1.62 1.57	7.12 - 9.62 8.13 - 11.37 9.14 - 12.28	9.80
F. 9 <sup>th</sup> grade 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	Loban, in Hughes, McGillivray & Schmidek, 1997	10.96 10.68 11.17 11.70	1.78 1.64 1.89 1.82	9.18 - 12.74 9.04 - 12.32 9.28 - 13.06 9.81 - 13.52	13.29
G. High Interest Low Language					8.72

<b>Table 2. MDCCU</b> (Mean Dependent Clauses Per Communicative Unit)					
Grade	Source	MDCCU (by grade)	SD	Range	Actual SESS
A. Preschool	Not Available				0
B. Kindergarten 1 <sup>st</sup> grade	Moyano & McGillivray, 1988	.16 .17	.09 .09	.07 - .25 .08 - .26	.14
C. 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	Moyano & McGillivray, 1988	.18 .23	.08 .11	.10 - .26 .12 - .34	.26
D. 4 <sup>th</sup> grade 5 <sup>th</sup> grade	Moyano & McGillivray, 1988	.23 .27	.11 .11	.12 - .34 .16 - .38	.28
A. 6 <sup>th</sup> grade 7 <sup>th</sup> grade 8 <sup>th</sup> grade	Loban, 1976	.37 .35 .39			.40
F. 9 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup>	Loban, 1976	.43 .48 .52 .58			.57
G. High Interest Low Language					.07

### Applications

The SESS offers a consistent set of stimuli to be used for eliciting connected speech. The articulation errors in the samples can be tallied and analyzed as a baseline measure or for comparison to formal single word tests. When a child makes errors in connected speech which were not tapped by the formal articulation test, it is necessary to collect and analyze a speech sample. The results of the connected sample should then be compared to the results of the formal test to determine if the scores on the formal test reflect what the child is producing in his usual speech. Measures taken with the SESS stimuli can also be re-applied post therapy.

The stories of the SESS are **not** recommended as stimuli for eliciting language samples. Because the stories are at the average linguistic level of each age group, they do not provide adequate stimulation for maximal language production. If they are used to collect a language sample, the examiner might consider using a story level that is above the child's current grade.

### **Rationale for Informal Testing**

When the results of a formal articulation test do not adequately reflect errors the child is producing in his connected speech, the SLP needs to evaluate a connected sample of the child's speech. A common reason for implementing informal testing is to determine if the standardized test (usually a single word test) adequately tapped the child's skills. If there are substantially more errors in connected speech than in the single word test, then we would suspect that the single word, standardized test did not adequately tap the child's true difficulties. If the single word and spontaneous samples reflect the same errors, then we can assume that the score on the standardized test was an accurate representation of the child's articulation skills (Gill, 2002).