


Language Impairment and Challenging Behaviour

Narrative : a missing link?
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“The relationship between behaviour and language development appears to be more widely recognised in the literature than it is in practice.”

The evidence

Early Years : Studies of Children with SLI

- Botting & Conti-Ramsden (2000) 40% of children with SLI, co-morbid behaviour problems
- Stevenson et al (1985) children who had language problems at 3 years were at risk for behaviour problems at 8 years

Also:

Beadle (1974), Aran et al (1984), Beitchman (1985)
Tallal et al (1989), Knoll (1999)

Studies of young people with challenging behaviour

- Camarata et al (1988) : Behaviour disordered students; 71% SLI (2 SD below mean)
- Warr-Leeper et al (1994) : Boys in residential treatment centre; 80% undetected language problems
- Burgess & Bransby (1990) : PRU : 16/17 had SLI
- Cohen (1998) : 46% older students of 4 – 14 year age group referred to Psychiatric Services had undetected SLI.

Descriptors: Aggressive, oppositional defiant, conduct disorder

Children who experience receptive v expressive problems may show different behavioural trajectories

Beadle (1979) Pre-schoolers with expressive language problems – poor attention, emotional liability, impulsivity

Hadley & Rice (1991) Limited social interactions at pre-school linked to problems with speech and grammar in expressive problems

Beitchman (1985) Receptive problems

mild : temper tantrums, negativism

severe : problems mirror ASC

Silva (1984) 5 year olds with receptive problems had higher incidence of behaviour problems

Young children who experience both receptive and expressive problems are most at risk for behaviour problems

Baker & Cantwell (1987) : The disruption of the normal development of behavioural control

The significance of expressive v receptive problems changes over time

Silva (1984) Expressive language problems – higher incidence of behaviour problems by 11 years

Pryor (1998) Young offenders 64% significantly lower scores for expressive language c.f receptive language

Ripley & Yuill (2005) 66% boys excluded from school (8 – 16 years) had significant expressive language problems

Alfano (2007) Boys in secure accommodation 72% expressive language problems

Narrative skill : A key to the shift?

- Powell (2005) Young offenders produce narratives statistically poorer than control samples
- Davis (1991) Compared delinquent v non-delinquent controls : reduced capacity to engage in conversational interactions affects relationships
- Bryan (2004) Young offenders reported using violence when they:
 - Find it difficult to communicate
 - Are unable to make their needs known
 - Struggle to “defend” against verbal teasing

Why is Narrative so Important?

- Narrative and self-concept
- Narrative as a social skill
- Narrative as an educational skill

What opportunities are there to explore narrative skills as part of the school day?

Narrative and the development of self-concept

Fivush (1994) We develop personal narratives about ourselves in social interaction with other people

This shared personal narrative

- Conveys information about the significance of our experiences
- Helps us to organise our experiences
- Provides the links between interaction and action

SLI impairs the ability to construct these shared narratives, Yont et al (2002)

We construct our personal identity through the construction of a personal narrative, Davies (2004)

Narrative as a Social Skill

Preece (1997) : In discourse 70% of utterances were anecdotal, relating to real or vicarious experiences
Sharing personal information helps us to make and maintain friendships. Davis (1991) for the evidence.

Reflection on Today

Hedberg et al (1986) Young people who lack adequate story grammar skills have difficulty reconstructing and sharing their experiences with others. They learn to communicate through non-verbal, aggressive means.

Narrative as a Survival Skill

- To explain to the on-call teacher
- To describe what really happened on the playground
- To construct plausible excuses

What other examples come to mind?

Classification of Oral Narratives

- personal anecdotes
- anecdotes of vicarious experiences
- oral fantasies
- original fictions
- print source re-telling
- visual media re-telling
- collaborative narratives

Thought and Narrative

Thought is internalised private speech (Vigotsky 1962) : a personal narrative which facilitates:

- Linking cause and affect – the consequences of our actions
- Planning ahead
- Rule governed behaviour
- The separation of affect from action

Barkley (1995) : Executive functions which facilitate self-regulation, linked to the development of language

Narrative as an educational skill

- The ability to compose a coherent narrative comes before and predicts successful access to literacy at school. Naremore (1995)
- Poor oral narrative skill, pre-school, is a predictor of difficulty with early literacy skills. Boudreau et al. (1999)
- Oral narrative skills in the early years predicts academic progress Bishop & Edmundson (1987)
Academic failure is an independent predictor of challenging behaviour in KS3/4

Narrative Skills and BESD – in Summary

Young people who have poor narrative skills

- Have difficulty communicating and sharing experiences with others, Medberg et al (1986)
- Have difficulty making and keeping friends, Davis et al (1991)
- May deal with social situations in non-verbal aggressive ways, Medberg et al (1986)
- Are more aggressive and use direct action to solve interpersonal skills, Gallagher (1999)
- Show poor self-regulation of arousal, Barkley (1995)
- Are at risk of academic failure, Bishop & Edmundson (1987)

Programmes to Develop Narrative Skill

- Shanks (2000) The Narrative Approach :
Academic and Social Use

Hampshire study (2002-4) significant improvements using quantitative and qualitative measures

Quantative Measures

Percentage Improvement in Scores

Language measure	NA Group	Control Group
1. Relevant word count	58.5	33.8
2. Vocabulary Index	42.0	7.0
3. Grammar	24.0	22.0
4. Structure	40.2	18.0
5. Mean length of utterance	38.0	14.7

Qualitative Measures

Teachers reported that children:

- asked more 'wh' questions
- contributed more to class discussions
- initiated more interactions
- gave explanations of events in a more logical sequence
- provided more specific information to help a listener

Qualitative Measures (continued)

Other advantages included:

The use of visual cueing to focus attention

- Flexibility
 - used with whole class, groups, individuals
 - used to support a range of classroom activities
- Universally – not just for children with identified SEN

Other Programmes include:

- Teaching Children Talking Project, Hobbs (2006) Foundation Stage
- The Talking Table, Farmer, M (2006) Foundation Stage: emphasis on conversations
- Secondary Intervention, Stringer, H (2006)
Described in Language and Social Disadvantage :
Ed Clegg & Ginsborg (2006)
- Waine & Catherall : Narrative Approach to Intervention (1996)
- Hoggan & Strong (1994) Narrative Teaching Strategies