Elicited Tasks: What’s Important?
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INTRODUCTION

Although spontaneous language samples can provide a valid measure of expressive grammar, the time needed to elicit, transcribe, and code each sample may limit application in research and clinical practice. Thus, the focus of study is on an infrequently occurring structure (e.g., full propositional complement clause), even a lengthy sample may not provide sufficient data for analysis. Elicited production tasks and elicited imitation tasks are alternatives to spontaneous language samples, particularly when a specific interest in a temporarily occurring structure is of interest.

In an elicited language production task, the examiner sets up a context, using verbal and nonverbal prompting, that creates a felicitous condition for the production of the target structure (Thornton, 1996). Elicited language tasks can provide a efficient and valid measure of children’s expressive grammar if responses provided in the elicited tasks accurately reflect a child’s underlying linguistic proficiency. It seems that the development of valid elicited task must address two issues. First, the elicitation task must make it likely that children will attempt the target of interest. Second, the scoring of responses must assure that the child has indeed attempted the target structure.

WHAT RESPONSES PROVIDE A VALID INDICATOR OF PROFICIENCY ON THE TARGET?

INFINITIVAL COMPLEMENTS

Rice and Wexler (2001) provided in the TEGI manual, a response is not scorable if an unmarked verb with no subject to a subject plus a marked verb (i.e., [4] [1] sequence), 86 trials were re-prompted by the examiner re-prompted by repeating the prompt sequence and/or reminding the child to begin the response with a subject, for example, That was a great story. But tell me that story again. Remember to start your story with she.

Based on the TEGI manual, a response is not scorable if an unmarked verb without a subject to a subject plus an unmarked verb (i.e., [4] [2] sequence). We calculated the percent of 3s marking in these total interchanges: a / a + b , or 59 / 66 = 89%. Overwhelmingly re-prompted responses provide a valid reflection of the child’s language proficiency. However, all elicited language tasks must be carefully designed and tested to assure that the accepted responses provide a valid reflection of the child’s language production abilities.

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