

CLD Corner—Literacy-Based Interventions: An Evidence-Based Practice for Serving our Diverse Caseloads

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*The CLD Corner was created in an effort to provide information and respond to questions on cultural and linguistic diversity (CLD). Questions are answered by members of the TSHA Committee on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity. Members for the 2017-2018 year include **Raul F. Prezas**, PhD, CCC-SLP (co-chair); **Phuong Lien Palafox**, MS, CCC-SLP (co-chair); **Mary Bauman-Forkner**, MS, CCC-SLP; **Alisa Baron**, MA, CCC-SLP; **Judy Martinez Villarreal**, MS, CCC-SLP; **Irmgard Payne**, MS, CCC-SLP; **Lisa Rukovená**, MA, CCC-SLP; **Mirza J. Lugo-Neris**, PhD, CCC-SLP; **Andrea Hughes**, MS, CCC-SLP; **Isabel Garcia-Fullana**, MA, CCC-SLP; and **Amy Leal**, BS, SLP-A (graduate student member). Please submit your questions to TSHACL@gmail.com and look for responses from the CLD Committee on TSHA's website and in the Communicologist.*

As speech-language pathologists (SLPs), audiologists, and communication sciences professionals, we receive training in supporting our diverse caseloads. A majority of our committee efforts have focused on how to differentiate between difference and disorder—are speech and language errors due to native language influences or indicative of a true impairment? At this time, we would like to address an equally valuable component of our roles and responsibilities as clinicians. How do we best support our diverse caseloads in the arena of intervention to maximize our efforts? This article will discuss the evidence-based research and provide strategies for using literacy-based interventions to support the cognitive, socio-emotional, and social justice components of our clients and students.

Before talking about intervention, we need to understand (1) what the human brain requires, (2) the three essential components of effective teaching based on brain needs, and (3) how literacy-based interventions maximize efforts to address language needs, socio-emotional necessities, and social justice integrity.

First, let us dive into the brain. Research in the field of neuroscience has provided us this information in the last decade. Let's begin with Maslow's 1943 framework titled, *A Theory of Human Motivation*. This hierarchy of needs tells us that we first need to have our physiological needs met. These include air, water, and food. According to the Kids COUNT Data Center, approximately 19% of children (almost 14 million children) live in homes that were food insecure over the past year, and 44 million people participate in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs. Once those needs are met, we then require and are able to fulfill safety essentials, which include personal safety, financial safety, and health/well-being. After physiological and safety needs are achieved, the third level of needs addresses our desire to feel belongingness. This pertains to interpersonal and social needs. Then, esteem needs can be fulfilled. We all have a desire to feel respected and important, and this level of human need states that we all want to feel valued by those around us. Finally, self-actualization alludes to understanding one's worth and potential to make a valuable impact. Maslow talks about how one can fulfill his/her potential (Maslow, 1987).

For us as SLPs and audiologists, our goal in intervention is for the client/student to make communicative gains through speech and language therapy. Based on Maslow's Hierarchy, where do our responsibilities as educators and clinicians fall? Dr. Jeffrey Duncan Andrade, an associate professor at San Francisco State University focusing on elements of effective teaching with an emphasis in social and cultural studies, speaks of the value of love and belongingness. He tells us that, without a relationship between a child and his teacher, learning will not take place. In turn, learning happens when a relationship is established between the learner and the teacher (Duncan-Andrade, 2011). He discusses the value of first building the relationship and then learning happening. In the arena of speech-language pathology, rapport and trust with the client/student will yield greater outcomes for gains in speech, language, and social-pragmatic skills.

Additionally, Dr. Duncan-Andrade builds his educational research by discussing the three areas that must be fulfilled to meet the comprehensive needs of a person—academic rigor, socio-emotional needs, and social justice.

Academic rigor, to us, equates to the speech and language learning that needs to take place. Socio-emotional needs, as previously discussed, are obtained through the building of the relationship between the SLP and the student/client. Lastly, we will discuss the social justice component. Social justice is defined as “a concept of fair and just relations between the individual and society. This is measured by the explicit and tacit terms for the distribution of wealth, opportunities for personal activity, and social privileges” (Hornby, Deuter, Turnbull, & Bradbury, 2015). Each client and student served by an SLP brings his/her narrative within society into the therapy room. In essence, he brings the space he holds within his societal space to the speech table. Factors contributing to his social justice component include but are not limited to skin color, socio-economic status, language of use, experience, and perspective. Dr. Duncan-Andrade states that successful teaching is a combination of academic rigor and a pedagogy focused on social justice (Duncan-Andrade, 2009).

In turn, the success of speech-language intervention is much more comprehensive than simply mastering determined goals and objectives. Rather, it is a complex and comprehensive interplay between the speech-language therapy, the relationships and trust we develop with our students and clients, and the acknowledgement of the client/student's social-justice narrative. Based on this perspective, what intervention would yield the greatest outcomes? Literacy-based interventions would be a natural, all-encompassing method of (1) addressing language and speech goals (Roseberry-McKibbin, 2018), (2) building relationships through stories (Fleming & Hiller, 2009), and (3) addressing and honoring the social justice components of the student/client (Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Nieuwenhuis, 2010). The remainder of this piece will focus on how to improve story narratives of children and adults from diverse backgrounds.

The narrative styles of children from English-speaking and non-English-speaking homes vary from culture to culture. How a child tells a story, how details are included, and how meaning is conveyed is influenced by language, social class, and beliefs (Shiro, 1998). As educators, we rely heavily on narrative abilities when assessing our students' skills. We ask children to tell us about events, retell stories, write about events in their journals, and answer questions about stories. We then analyze and judge the grammar and content of their story, the order of events, the semantic complexity, and the narrative elements. Consider, however, that a child's stories are different than we expect because his culture and life experiences have taught him a different script. How do we decide if missing elements are due to an impairment or cultural difference? For example, what if a non-mainstream culture dictates that a story be ordered differently than in mainstream culture or perhaps another culture places great importance on a story attribute that is not significant in mainstream American culture?

Further, the complexity of a child's story is considered in the diagnosis of language impairment as well as in the selection of intervention goals. Common deficits include difficulty sequencing story events, difficulty identifying the main idea, problem and solution, and difficulty answering "WH" questions about a story. How should we use evaluation materials if they have not taken this child's culture into account?

Let's begin with research behind the differences in narrative abilities and conclude with examples of how to easily determine what your student's current narrative includes and intervene successfully in the classroom and in language therapy.

Narrative Elements That are Common to Most Cultures

The aspects of discourse and manner of oration that a speaker employs to tell his or her story vary from culture to culture. Initiating events, attempts, consequences, and resolutions are episodic features that are common to stories in most cultures. Contrarily, the uses of an internal response, discourse markers, listener roles, and participant roles are all culturally specific. Below are two quick reference charts (Poveda, 2001; Prath & Palafox, 2017) with narrative elements that may be different across cultures and elements that most cultures share.

Narrative Elements That Are Culturally Specific

Narrative Element	Definition	Example (Three Little Pigs)
Internal response	An emotional response to the initiating event	The pigs were scared at the prospect of having to leave home.
Discourse markers	A word or phrase that does not change the meaning of the sentence	"well," "now," "then," "you know"
Embedded stories	Flashbacks and other cues that may impact the listener's experience	The pigs had built their houses based on something that had happened to their father.
Causal relations	The relationship between an event (the cause) and a	The wolf blew the straw house down so the pig ran as fast as he could to his brother's house.

	second event (the effect)	
Causal chain	A series of causal events that lead from beginning to end	Story progresses from the straw house, then the stick house, and finally the brick house.
Protagonist identification	Identification of the main protagonist in the story within the first scene	Once upon a time, there were three little pigs...

Narrative Elements That Are Common to Most Cultures

Narrative Element	Definition	Example (Three Little Pigs)
Initiating event	The incident that introduces the central conflict in a story	Mom said it was time to live on their own.
Attempt	The protagonist's attempt to solve the problem	The three pigs attempted to build houses.
Consequence	The results of the attempt (i.e., whether or not the goal was attained)	The houses were built.
Resolution	Whether or not the super-ordinate problem was resolved	A house's strength/value was proportionate to the effort put into building it.
Setting	The physical or temporal context of the story	The country

Which Narrative Elements Are Universal?

The presence of certain narrative elements and their use are culture-specific (Poveda, 2001). Organization, content, and meaning create a narrative structure that is part of every language. However, this universal nature only goes so far as to explain the broader components of a narrative. The way a child organizes his stories, the content he includes, and the meaning projected all vary as a result of cultural and linguistic influence.

Narrative development has been shown to be highly significant in the acquisition of complex language and literacy skills. Comprehension of large tasks, sequencing, interpretation of time-

ordered events, and expository skills all require some skill that has been developed along with narrative abilities. Studies that have primarily focused on English-speaking monolinguals suggest that narrative development can reveal basic elements of academic readiness (Gutierrez-Clellen, 2002).

How Can a Story Narrative Be Useful for Intervention?

Children use storytelling as a way to interact and share information about what is going on in their daily lives. These stories are a quick snapshot of overall linguistic ability. The understanding of what goes into a story and the ability to tell a story requires phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic knowledge. Additionally, having a child tell a story provides the clinician with an uninterrupted flow of discourse from a child, thereby avoiding certain artificialities of data from conventional elicitation (Klecan-Aker and Colson, 2009).

Benefits of Reading to Children in Their Native Language

We often hear this question from parents: *“Am I confusing my child by speaking and reading to him in my native language?”* The answer? A resounding no! Unfortunately, this idea is still propagated by well-meaning doctors and educational professionals. It makes sense on some level, right? The theory is that if a child is having difficulty communicating, two languages would make matters worse. The truth is that the number of languages a child speaks does not contribute to communication deficits. What is important is the complexity of the language that is being used. If we are asking parents and caregivers to interact in a language that is undeveloped and foreign to them, the child’s communication will not grow sufficiently. However, if parents and caregivers provide a great language model, the linguistic abilities will transfer from one language to the other.

In a significant study on the importance for parents to read to their kids in their native language, Huennekens and Xu (2010) studied the impact of cross-linguistic storybook intervention on English language development in preschoolers. Researchers selected books that were available in the children’s home language (Spanish, in this case) and in English. Parents were asked to read the books in their native language. Meanwhile, during school hours, teachers read the same books in English. During the period of time that parents and teachers were reading the same books, these preschoolers increased the frequency of their utterances, increased the length of their utterances, and increased their use of spontaneous interactions in the classroom. In summary, when parents read to their children in Spanish, the children’s language skills in the English-speaking environment increased in frequency and complexity also. So tell your parents to keep reading to their children in their native language!

We are talking about the benefits of using books for speech to increase receptive language, expressive language, and social-pragmatic skills. An important fact that we must talk about is the cultural gains a child and family receive from relishing in the literacy experience in their native language. When we are able to provide resources in a family’s native language, we are honoring their language background and encouraging them to share their experiences and their invaluable contributions not only to their children but also to our country. These sentiments say, “Your native language is just as valuable as mine.” Imagine receiving a book to read to your child in your most comfortable language versus a book (or homework) that contains words you may not understand and know how to read. We understand that this is not always possible and available; however, when books are sent home in a child’s native language, the benefits are paramount.

In summary, literacy-based interventions provide a natural way to address speech and language needs for a myriad of reasons. This evidence-based practice naturally lends itself to teaching sound production, receptive language, expressive language, and social/pragmatic needs in a functional and thematic way. Narrative intervention also has lasting effects on the generation of additional stories, increased comprehension in future readings, and better productions in writing (Gillam & Gillam, 2016). Additionally, we have provided evidence to demonstrate how stories additionally honor the social justice needs of a student or client. Through the use of books, we are able to comprehensively address the complex and valuable parts of each human we support.

Below are resources to support literacy-based interventions:

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