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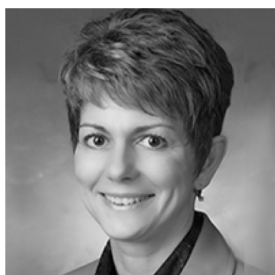
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Personal Narratives Across Diverse Cultures

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Using Personal Narratives to Explore Well-being and Identity Construction in Children with Language Disorders

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Using Personal Narratives to Explore Well-being and Identity Construction in Children with Language Disorders

Rena Lyons, PhD



- **Presenter Disclosure:** Financial: Rena Lyons is Programme Director/Senior Lecturer for the Discipline of Speech and Language Therapy at the National University of Ireland (NUI). She has served as a book editor and has published articles on topics related to this course. Nonfinancial: No relevant nonfinancial relationships to disclose.
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Disclosures (continued)

- Relevant financial relationships
 - Employed as an academic on a part-time basis in NUI Galway, Ireland.
 - This presentation is based on my doctoral work that I undertook in the University of West of England, Bristol, while I was working full-time in NUI Galway. NUI Galway paid my PhD fees.
- Relevant non-financial relationships
 - I am a certified speech and language therapist.
 - I acknowledge the support of my PhD supervisors Sue Roulstone and Mat Jones.
 - This presentation is based on papers published with Sue Roulstone

Learning Outcomes

After this course, participants will be able to:

- Describe narrative inquiry as well as the advantages and disadvantages of this methodology.
- Identify ways in which children with developmental language disorders construct multiple identities in their narratives.
- List the potential facilitators and barriers to well-being in children with developmental language disorders.

What do speech-language pathologists already know about narratives?

- Macro- and micro-structure
- Different modes of elicitation
 - Story re-tell (with or without naïve condition)
 - Picture description
 - Personal narratives
- Used in assessment and intervention
- Predict literacy abilities

Developmental language disorders

- “Children who are likely to have language problems enduring into middle childhood and beyond with significant impact on everyday social interactions or educational progress” (Bishop et al., 2017)
- Relatively common in school-aged children
 - Prevalence 7-12% (McLeod and McKinnon, 2007; Norbury, 2016)
- Can persist into adulthood with long-term effects on linguistic, academic, and psychosocial outcomes (Feeney et al., 2012; McCormack et al., 2011; Le et al., 2020)
- Absence of children’s own perspectives
 - Important to put a face on communication disability (Brinton & Fujiki, 2010)

Why should we listen to children's perspectives?

Conceptualising children - 'sociology of childhood',
Lundy's (2007) model of child participation, social model

Better Outcomes Brighter Future:
The National Policy Framework for
Children & Young People 2014 -
2020



Article 12 of UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989)
United Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (United Nations, 1948) (70th Anniversary of UDHR) (McLeod, 2018)

Client values and preferences

However, children's views, especially those with speech and language disorders, are rarely reported in the literature (Lloyd, Gatherer, & Kalsy, 2006; Rabiee, Sloper, & Beresford, 2005)

Q1

Identity

Identity: What is it and why is it important?

- Difference between self-esteem and identity
 - Self-esteem refers to self-evaluations, or perceptions of the self as good or bad in specific domains (Baumeister, 2005)
- Identity is about
 - how we see ourselves and how others see us
 - about sameness and difference from others (Spencer-Oatey, 2007)
 - Multiple identities
- Sociocultural theory of identity construction e.g., George Herbert Mead
 - through interactions with others that we are able to develop a concept of self
 - Relational and something we do (Thorne, 2004; Spencer-Oatey, 2007)
 - We construct identity in narratives as 'storied selves' (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Sarbin, 1986)

Q2

Identity: What is it and why is it important?

- Internal-external dialectic process
 - 'The individual presents herself to others...that presentation is accepted (or not), becoming part of her identity in the eyes of others (or not)...the responses of others to her presentation feed back to her...reflexively they become incorporated into her self-identity (or not)' (Jenkins, 2008:71)
- We construct who we are and how we want to be known, taking account of how others may try to categorise us (Antelius, 2009)
 - "cultures provide ... frameworks for narrating lives ... cultures inform individual narrative identities and individual narrative identities inform cultural forms." (Fivush et al., 2011: 323)
- Stigma
 - Identity may be spoiled when any attribute excludes the individual from full social acceptance (Goffman, 1963)
 - Dilemmas of difference in education (Graham & Tancredi, 2019)

Well-being

Well-being: What is it and why is it important?

- Well-being defined in objective and subjective terms
- Children's conceptualisation of well-being
 - Feeling good about yourself, positive affective states, absence of psychological distress, and integrating sadness with happiness (Nic Gabhainn & Sixsmith, 2005; Fattore et al., 2006)
- Quality of life
 - Adults and children conceptualise QoL in different ways (Markham and Dean, 2006; Markham et al., 2009)
 - QoL measures focus on individual and little information on ways in which children cope with experiences

Resilience

- Resilience is a process of adaption when exposed to adverse conditions (Ungar, 2015)
- Important to understand protective factors
 - Individual traits such as temperament, autonomy (ability to act independently and agency), belief in a bright future, and social capital (Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012; Ungar, 2015)
- Relevant for children with language disorders
- Children are “active makers of meaning ... who interpret adversity using lenses that practitioners need to understand” (Wessells, 2015:18).

Q4 

Narratives

What are narratives?

- Two modes of cognitive functioning
 - logico-scientific and narrative understanding mode
 - each provides distinctive ways of ordering experience and constructing reality (Bruner, 1986)
- Different types of narratives
 - Structural narratives e.g., abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda (Labov & Waletzky, 1967)
 - Conversational narratives (Ochs & Capp, 2001)
 - 'Big' stories (McAdams, 2019) and 'small' stories (Bamberg, 2004)

Key elements of narratives

Sequence of two independent clauses that are temporally ordered (Labov & Waletzky, 1967)

Organisation of events into a coherent plot

Sense-making devices (Bruner, 1986)

Temporal dimension (past, present, future)

Characters, predicaments, problems, motives

Narratives engage the listener/reader: there is suspense: they have an emotional impact through different genres (e.g., comedy, tragedy); and their moral dimension (e.g., doing the right thing, heroes saving the day, and villains getting punished) (Greenhalgh, 2016)

Key functions of narratives

Relate
information

Evaluative function
i.e., tell the listener
something about
what the events
meant to the narrator
(Labov & Waletzky, 1967)
Language can never
be neutral (Bruner, 1986;
Maybin, 2006).

*"While sharing of simple
facts engages the
listener to some extent, it
is the speaker's "take" on
the "facts" that stimulates
real interest in the
listener, and involves the
listener in the speaker's
world" (Armstrong & Ulatowska,
2007: 764)*

My Research

Research questions

- What identities do children with language disorders construct in their narratives?
- How do children with language disorders talk about their experiences with a focus on risks to well-being and protective factors that may facilitate resilience?

International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, 2016; Early Online: 1-16



Labels, identity and narratives in children with primary speech and language impairments

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RESEARCH

Research Article

Well-Being and Resilience in Children With Speech and Language Disorders

Rena Lyons^a and Sue Boulston^b

Keywords: Children with speech and language disorders are at risk in relation to psychological and social well-being. The aim of this study was to understand the experiences of these children from their own perspectives focusing on risks to their well-being and protective factors that may facilitate resilience.

Abstract: Children with speech and language disorders are at risk in relation to psychological and social well-being. The aim of this study was to understand the experiences of these children from their own perspectives focusing on risks to their well-being and protective factors that may facilitate resilience.

Methodology

- Qualitative research is suited to answering ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions
- Qualitative research “uses words as data, collected and analysed in different ways. Quantitative research, in contrast, uses numbers [their emphasis] as data and analyses them using statistical techniques” (Braun and Clarke, 2013 p.3)
- Underpinned by social constructionism – interpretive and multiple realities

Narrative inquiry

- Qualitative methodology
- “Arguments for ... narrative inquiry come out of a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives ... Story ... is a portal ... by which ... experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful.” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477)
- Narrative inquiry - ‘portal’ to human thinking and experience, implicated in practically every aspect of human communication, social interaction and cultural practice (Hiles, Čermák, & Chrz, 2017)

Q6 ■

Advantages and disadvantages of narrative inquiry

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advantages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sense-making devices ▪ Can convey nuance ▪ Are perspectival ▪ Can capture tacit knowledge ▪ Nested in wider meta-narratives ▪ Have ethical/moral dimensions ▪ Open-ended ▪ “Bumping against” institutional plotlines and “bumping” within ourselves (Clandinin et al., 2015, p5) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disadvantages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Definitions of narrative differ and lack of ‘how-to-do-it’ guides to analysis ▪ Data are often lengthy and can be difficult to condense ▪ Not necessarily true – difference between life as experienced, as lived and as told (Moen, 2006); not a “direct, undistorted, window on people’s experiences and perspectives” (Greenhalgh, 2016, p.10) ▪ Tellability factor |
|---|--|

(Greenhalgh, 2016; Clandinin et al., 2015)



Q7 ■

Participants

- Purposive and maximum variation sampling
- Eleven 9-12 year old children
 - 4 boys and 7 girls
 - One presented with a speech disorder, one with both a speech and language disorder, and 9 presented with developmental language disorders
 - All were receiving additional educational supports because of their speech and language impairments (mainstream and special education)

Data generation

- 5-6 semi-structured interviews with each child over a six month period which included the transition to the next class (total number of interviews 59)
 - Topic guide with activities e.g., circle of friends, post-its, drawing, photography, looking at photo albums
 - Focus on storied accounts and actions (Wetherell et al., 2007) - grand and mini-tours
- Interview contexts: primarily in home and school settings

Data analysis

Structure of narratives
Progressive, regressive, stable (Gergen & Gergen, 1986)

Agency
Self as agent or passive, compulsion verbs e.g., *have to*

Lexical choice
Emotion words e.g., *sad, ashamed*

Direct speech and prosody



Syntax

- Negative markers e.g., *not*
- Cohesive devices
 - conjunctions e.g., *because* and *if*
 - temporal markers e.g., *once, when I was 4*
- Intensifiers and adjectives e.g., *very, really really mad*
- Modal verbs e.g., *must, should, might*
- Adverbs e.g., *slowly*

Coded small stories using NVIVO. Identified themes *within* and then *across* participants

Rigour- reflexive diary, participant checking, negative cases, thick description, illustrative quotes

(Peterson & McCabe, 1983; Habermas & Paha, 2001; Kleres, 2010; Fairclough, 2001)

Findings: Potential risks

Communication impairment and disability

Difficulties with relationships

Concern about academic achievement

Undesired identities


Findings: Protective factors

Hope

Agency

**Positive
relationships**

**Desired
identities**

Q8 

Implications

1. Important to listen to children's stories

- Listen for what they are saying and how they say it – some may be reluctant to express emotions which reflect vulnerability (Bergese, 2008; Morison et al., 2000)

Some claim that better outcomes may be achieved when practitioners listen to the narratives of their clients, grasp and honour their meanings, and be prepared to be moved to respond to their client's stories (Charon, 2001).

Q9 ■

2. Important to harness positive relationships

- Can alleviate problems which children encounter (De Vet, Waite, & Gorman-Murray, 2012; Merrick & Roulstone, 2011; Redmond, 2011) and strengthen resilience (Statham & Chase, 2010; Zaff & Hair, 2003; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012)
- Important to identify, harness, and strengthen children's positive relationships - seek out advocates and supporters to help mediate experiences (McLeod et al., 2013)

3. Importance of hope

- We are in a process of becoming, striving to become something other than (or more than) we currently are (Mattingly, 1998)
- Re-framing therapy - addressing a gap between where the person is now and where they want to be.
- What gives therapeutic activities their significance are their connections to life-plots and the extent to which they open up onto broader life narratives that extend beyond therapy (Mattingly, 1998)

4. Children are actively constructing identities

- What messages do we give children about their identities?
- Key role we play as co-authors in the identity construction process by affirming and challenging identities
- Labels and specialist education may be stigmatising
- Children may be reluctant to disclose vulnerability
- Importance of a strengths-based approach

5. Further research

- Better understanding of the lives of children with language disorders to shape and inform interventions
- Value of socio-ecological framework lens e.g., the moderating and mediating effects
- Value of qualitative research and personal narratives
 - Importance of honouring and bearing witness to children's stories

Thank you!



References

- On a separate PDF