Developing language for emotion through personal narratives

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@lilaccourt
Children with language disorder have deficits in using internal state/emotion language

- The frog is *lonely*
- He *tricked* the boy on the log
- The boy is so *happy* to see the frog again

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Language disorder (n = 22)</th>
<th>Autism, language OK (n = 26)</th>
<th>Typical language dev. (n = 27)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (months)</td>
<td>129 79 – 184</td>
<td>134 78 – 189</td>
<td>118 81 – 182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-verbal ability</td>
<td>100 79 - 125</td>
<td>103 81 - 123</td>
<td>109 90 - 124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>89 70 - 118</td>
<td>105 81 - 131</td>
<td>105 90 - 130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CELF: total language</td>
<td>69 56 - 80</td>
<td>95 85 - 130</td>
<td>98 85 - 130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Autistic children used MORE mental state language than peers with language disorder!

Norbury, Gemmell & Paul (2013). *Journal of Child Language*
Early language (but not non-verbal ability) is predictive of later emotion recognition from non-verbal cues.

60 trials, 10 per emotion

Griffiths et al. (2020) Peer J
How can we best equip children with the language they need for emotional competence??
Shared book reading interventions?

- Meta-analyses indicate small effects on overall language development (Noble et al. 2019)

- Can support word learning (Flack et al. 2018):
  - Many exposures to new words
  - Reading that includes pointing, explicit definitions, open-ended questions

- Implementation issues
  - Access/attitudes to books
  - Parent literacy levels
  - Other family issues
Personal narratives are important for self and social development

- Oral account from memory of an experienced event(s)
- Major component of most social interactions (e.g. ‘how are you coping with lockdown?’)
- Important for self-identity, self-esteem, and emotional resilience
  - Learn from experiences
  - Recall positive life events when dealing with adversity (Askelund et al. 2019)
- Important for academic success
  - Reading comprehension requires connections between lived experiences and fictional events
- Children who provide more accurate and detailed accounts of their own past experiences are also more skilled at recalling fictional narratives (Wenner et al. 2008)

Children’s personal narratives are associated with the quality of reminiscing interactions they have with caregivers.

- Parents use highly elaborative talk
  - Lots of detail and evaluative comments
- Parents provide coherent account of what happened
- Parents comment on child emotions
- Use open-ended questions, comments, and pauses to share control of conversation with child
Parent elaborative talk that includes statements about...

• **When**: the temporal sequence of events – important for developing narrative coherence

• **Where** and **How**: elaborative details that enrich child stories (both personal and fictional)

• **Why**: makes explicit causal connections within the story, including emotional/internal state drivers of behaviour

Parents can be trained to provide more elaborative utterances and to provide more ‘autonomy support’ (i.e. take the child’s perspective) in reminiscing (Cleveland & Morris, 2014).
Personal narrative deficits are common in a range of developmental conditions

• Developmental language disorders
  • Provide fewer evaluative comments that provide rationale for the story events
  • Fewer references to mental/emotional states
  • Fewer causal connectives to link episodes in a meaningful way
  • Less likely to provide a resolution to the issues raised in the story

• Autism
  • Greater difficulty telling personal stories relative to fictional stories
  • Potential deficits with episodic memory

• Emotional/conduct disorders
  • Personal narrative deficits may reflect co-occurring (and sometimes undetected) language deficits
  • Young offenders report facts/action sequences, but do not organise their accounts around goals and the thoughts/feelings of themselves or others
  • As result, stories lack coherence
Proposed intervention programme to develop personal narratives

Support parents to:
• Record everyday events
• Engage in elaborative reminiscing about these events

Support school staff to:
• Record everyday events
• Engage in elaborative reminiscing about these events

Share stories using photos/videos/text
Share and personalise fictional stories using video/audio
Link personal stories to fictional narratives
Recording memories for reminiscing

Seesaw time outside.
30/10/2013 with 2 Children

Jamie and Annie went really high on the seesaw today. Annie was giggling every time she got to the top.

Pictello
The talking visual story creator
Can this approach improve language and emotion/behaviour regulation?

- Produce materials, prompts, videos, and lesson plans with teachers, speech-language therapists and families

- Feasibility trial focus on dosage, fidelity/implementation and outcome measures

- Randomised controlled trial
Thank you for listening!!

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