

# Targeting Complex Sentence Structures

Assessment, Goal Development, and Therapy

# Disclosures

- I have no relevant financial disclosures to disclose.
- I have no relevant non financial relationships to disclose.

# Learning Outcomes

- State the relationship of syntax to the common core standards and curriculum.
- Identify formal and informal assessments to guide decisions to target complex syntax.
- Develop measurable IEP goals
- List therapy techniques to implement with students

# Bio

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- BA from The Ohio State University: 1998
- MA from the University of Akron: 2002
- Have worked in the schools for 16 years.
- I have served grades 4-12.

# Review of Syntax

- Compound Sentences:
  - 2 independent clauses and use the FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so
- Complex sentences
  - 1 independent clause and at least 1 dependent clause
  - Use subordinating conjunctions (adverbials)
- Ebels and Owen Van Horn (2020): [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1qkCE35UOVOUbBYbNktAcwsi5hyPzY7C03mXZ\\_bX9tt0/edit?gid=0#gid=0](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1qkCE35UOVOUbBYbNktAcwsi5hyPzY7C03mXZ_bX9tt0/edit?gid=0#gid=0)
  - Chart with suggested order of sentence structure intervention

# Subordinating Conjunctions

<b>After</b>	<b>Although</b>	<b>As</b>	<b>Because</b>
<b>Before</b>	<b>Even though</b>	<b>If</b>	<b>In order that</b>
<b>Since</b>	<b>So</b>	<b>Than</b>	<b>That</b>
<b>Though</b>	<b>Unless</b>	<b>Until</b>	<b>When</b>
<b>Whenever</b>	<b>Where</b>	<b>Wherever</b>	<b>While</b>

# Review of Syntax

- Passive Voice- The cake was eaten by the children.
- Relative Clauses- Use relative pronouns- who, that, which, whom, whose.
  - The boy who is my son plays the tuba.
  - The green apple which I ate for a snack was delicious.
  - The kid that I talked to was nice.

# Language Development

- Tyack and Gottsleben (1986) took language samples of 110 preschool children with normal language development.
- Found that children with an MLU of 3.0-3.99 were already using sentences with coordinating conjunctions and adverbials. Most used were and, but, or, because, & when.
- Adverbials and subordinating conjunctions appeared when a child's MLU was 4.00-4.99. These included because, when, except, if, after, & before. Children with an MLU of 5.00-5.99 were using the conjunctions until and since.



# Common Core Standards

- [Ohio Learning Standards for English Language Arts](#) (link)
- Writing standards include the use of linking words starting in 2nd grade and through 12th grade.
  - Example: 2nd grade: “W.2.1: use linking words (e.g., because, and, also) to connect opinion and reasons.”
  - Example: 3rd grade: “W.3.1 c.: use linking words and phrases (e.g., because, therefore, since, for example) to connect opinion and reasons.
  - Use of temporal words/sequence of events (before/after)
  - Use of transition words

# Common Core Standards

- Elementary students need to use complex sentences to meet many state standards. (Owens et al, 2024)
- Language Standards: for writing and speaking
  - Starting in 1st grade include common coordinating and subordinating conjunctions.
  - 2nd grade includes expanding simple and compound sentences
  - 3rd grade: coordinating and subordinating conjunctions
  - 4th grade: relative pronouns (who, whose, whom, which, that) and relative adverbs (where, when, why)
  - 5th grade: correlative conjunctions (e.g., either/or, neither/nor)
  - 7th grade: includes simple, compound, complex, and compound complex sentences

# Relationship to the Curriculum

- Knowledge of Complex sentences is important for reading comprehension.
- Students with specific language impairment struggle with sentences that do not follow a simple subject-verb-object order (Balthazar and Scott, 2018).
- Reading comprehension problems for students usually become apparent as sentences become more complex in the text (Scott, 2009).
- In 2016 Poulsen and Gravggaard designed a study that controlled for difficulties in vocabulary, memory, and decoding and found that complex sentences contributed to difficulties with reading comprehension (Balthazar and Scott, 2024).

# Relationship to the Curriculum

## 4th Grade

- “**Although** Latin was the language of both the Church and government, only select members of society could understand that language.” (Excerpt from Amplify CKLA, 4th grade Medieval Unit)
- “One day he rescued a child from the path of a moving train, and the boy’s father, **who** was trained to operate a telegraph, offered him lessons in telegraphy.” (Excerpt from Amplify CKLA, 4th grade)
- “Doors were forcefully kicked in **until** finally the men came out and declared **that** I was nowhere to be found.” (Excerpt from Amplify CKLA, 4th grade, Treasure Island)

# Relationship to the Curriculum

## 5th grade

- From Don Quixote: “No one would expect anything bad from him **or** think anything wrong about him, **for** he was an honorable man, a perfect gentleman.”
- “**While** the cultural achievements of the Greeks and Romans were admired, new, home-grown ideas began to thrive.” (Amplify CKLA, 5th grade Renaissance unit)
- “The competing scents battled through the house **while** I helped Papá and Abuelo set up folding domino tables on both ends of our dining table.” (Amplify CKLA, Prince of Los Cocuyos, Blanco, R.)

# Formal Assessment and Data Collection

- CELF: Recalling Sentences, Formulated Sentences, Sentence Assembly
  - Compare subtests and analyze to determine where the student is struggling.
- CASL-2: Sentence Expression, Sentence Comprehension

# Informal Assessment and Data Collection

- Conjunction lists
- Student creates their own sentences about a picture.
- Language Sample
- Written Language Sample

# Therapy Sequence

1. Choose 1 conjunction
2. Teach Meaning of Conjunction
3. Priming: Model use of conjunction: Use CHAT GPT: stories
4. Student repeats sentences with conjunction
5. Elicit student created sentences with conjunction: pictures, conversations, etc.



# Therapy

- Finish the sentence: When I get home..... After I go to the park.....
- Conjunction hunt- use classroom text
- Clause matching
- Conjunctions in beginning and middle of sentences
- Sentence builder charts
- Word Magnets
- Writing Practice

# Sentence Builder Charts

<b>Attribute</b>	<b>Who or What</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>To/For Whom?</b>	<b>How? When? Where?</b>
The brave	girl	walked	to the store	after she ate dinner

# IEP Goals

- Given a picture and a conjunction, the student will create a sentence with 2 clauses with 80% accuracy in an average of 3 consecutive trials.
- Given a picture and a coordination conjunction, the student will create a sentence with 2 clauses with 80% accuracy in an average of 3 consecutive trials.
- Given a picture and a subordinating conjunction, the student will create a sentence with 2 clauses with 80% accuracy in an average of 3 consecutive trials.

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