Introduction

Typically-developing children build their vocabularies in a variety of ways, including asking questions about people, events, and objects in their environments. However, children with communication disorders, including specific language impairment, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and mental disabilities, need direct teaching of how to ask and answer questions. They also need direct instruction to differentiate *wh-* questions correctly (Parnell, Patterson, & Harding, 1984). As children progress from preschool to elementary school, there are fewer visual supports in the classroom, resulting in an increase in verbal demands. Children with communication disorders struggle in the classroom environment because they have difficulty answering questions with complex syntax structures (Deevy & Leonard, 2004). Children who lack appropriate asking- and answering-question skills may experience educational failure because they don't have equal access to the curriculum as compared to typically-developing peers (Wilkinson & Silliman, 2000).

Oral language skills are the building blocks for reading readiness. That knowledge, along with the research findings above, led us to recognize the value of an intervention tool that uses best practice methods to provide in-depth therapy for improved question-answering skills. We reflected on how frequently children with communication disorders confuse *wh-* question forms and took into account that these children, especially when they're younger, benefit from using visual supports to learn new language skills. As a result, we developed *No-Glamour Junior Answering Questions* to use with a variety of preschool and early elementary children on your caseload. It provides you with the materials you need to improve a child's overall vocabulary and syntax, ability to ask and answer questions, and narrative discourse and comprehension.

No-Glamour Junior Answering Questions uses illustrated, sequenced stories and provides three types of lessons: three-part stories, four-part stories, and five-part stories. There are 15 lessons for each type (45 total), and each lesson includes three activities.

Activity 1
The first activity presents a three-part, illustrated story. You read the story and have the child follow along by looking at the story illustrations. Then you use the story to expose the child to a variety of *wh-* question forms, drawing from three levels of comprehension questions.

Level 1 – basic content questions
Level 2 – inference questions
Level 3 – problem-solving, predicting, and expansion questions

Activity 2
The second activity provides the child with guided instruction and visual support to plan and tell his own story, which will be loosely based on the story from the first activity. The child is presented with three, four, or five questions that he answers to plan his narrative, helping him determine the character, setting, and brief plot of his story. (The number of questions the child answers depends on whether he is planning a three-part, four-part, or five-part story.) Each question has three pictures the child can choose from to answer the question. These pictures will later provide the necessary visual support the child needs to tell his story. There is also an example story you may tell the child to use as a reference for planning and telling his narrative.

This second page of each lesson is vital for a child who realizes his verbal skills are weak and, therefore, avoids verbal-only tasks. The pictures serve as visual prompts for the child's narrative development. They help the child think about *wh-* questions more abstractly, and they provide the child with language disorders the confidence to tell a sequenced story using visual support. This is important since it improves the child's language skills while providing him with an acceptable level of assistance.

Activity 3
The child sequences the pictures he selected in Activity 2 and glues them in the correct order on the empty boxes on this page. Each empty box has a temporal word (e.g., *first*, *next*) and a number printed under it to help the child make the semantic connection between the vocabulary and the numbers.

You then ask the child to tell his story to you or peers in his language therapy group. Depending on the child's language level and his ability to tell a cohesive story, ask all the Story Question Prompts (maximum assistance), only a few questions (minimum to moderate assistance), or none of the question prompts (independent level). As the child progresses through the lessons and his language skills improve, he will need less prompting to share a narrative that others comprehend. However, children will benefit from always answering the Personal Application Prompts since these questions delve deeper into complex *wh-* question forms and the critical thinking skills of problem solving, memory, inferencing, and predicting.

No-Glamour Junior Answering Questions systematically builds children's language skills using three-part stories, four-part stories, and five-part stories. The book focuses on a variety of language skills, including temporal vocabulary, syntax, narrative structure, and answering *wh-* questions that address both basic comprehension and higher-level thinking skills. These language skills help children succeed in classroom and home environments. We hope you and your students enjoy working through the activities in this book!

LinguiSystems Staff

References

Deevy, P., & Leonard, L.B. (2004). The comprehension of wh- questions in children with specific language impairment. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research, 47*, 802-815.

Parnell, M.M., Patterson, S.S., & Harding, M.A. (1984). Answers to wh- questions: A developmental study. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Research, 27*, 297-305.

Wilkinson, L.C., & Silliman, E.R. (2000). Classroom language and literacy learning. In M.L. Kamil, P.B. Mosenthal, P.D. Pearson, & R. Barr, (Eds.), *Handbook of Reading Research: Vol. III.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Therapy Tips/Expansion Ideas

These tips and expansion ideas provide enhanced value to meet your varied therapy needs, giving you suggestions for multiple ways to use the stories and activities in *No-Glamour Junior Answering Questions*.

✓ Choose one three-part story, one four-part story, and one five-part story to use as a pretest and posttest for each type of lesson. Follow the procedure described below to obtain a baseline on the child and again, later, to document the child's improvement on the various language skills targeted in each lesson.

Activity 1
Ask the child the Comprehension Questions (all levels), without any prompting or extra cues, and record his correct and incorrect responses.

Activity 2
Independently allow the child to choose the pictures that reflect his answers to the questions on this page. However, you may read the Example Story Structure to the child as a guide.

Activity 3
Transcribe the child's narrative exactly as he says it, and then present the Personal Application Prompts. Do not give the Story Question Prompts to the child while administering a pretest or posttest.

✓ In group therapy, have each child share his story from Activity 3 of a lesson with his peers. When the child is beginning therapy or has weak language skills, let him present his sequenced pictures to the group while he tells his story. However, as the child's language skills improve, fade out his use of the visuals. Let him tell his story verbally and then ask his peers whether they understood the story. Since the child may value peer feedback more than an adult's feedback (e.g., SLP, teacher, parent), this is a more authentic way of letting the child show ownership for his work.

✓ Save the pictures the child does not choose from Activity 2 of each lesson and allow him to use them to create additional stories. Have the child glue the pictures on cardstock to provide him with further examples of narratives. Ask the child various *wh-* questions about his stories.

✓ Cut out individual pictures from newspapers or magazines, and let the child chose a high-interest picture he can use to create a three-part story, four-part story, or five-part story. Let the child draw pictures to complete the story, if he needs visuals to supplement his oral language. As the child progresses in therapy, he may need only the single picture to start the narrative but then be able to verbalize a sequenced story with minimal verbal cues. This further helps the child formulate a story with minimal visual or verbal cues, which is a skill that is vital for a child's success at home and at school.

✓ Send a completed lesson home with the child to share his story with caregivers.