

Introduction

Children's Grammatical Development

- Brown (1973) found typically developing children acquire grammatical markers from simple to more complex at similar ages.

Definition of Specific Language Impairment (SLI)

- Difficulties in areas of language in absence of neurological, intellectual, sensory, motor, or emotional impairments (Eadie, Fey, Douglas, & Parsons, 2002).
- Grammatical morphology, especially bound morphemes that mark tense and subject verb agreement are clinical markers of SLI.

Complex vs. Developmental Approach to Target Selection

- Theoretically there are two different approaches SLPs can use for target selection.
- Children's language skills are usually targeted during intervention in the order that a typically developing child would acquire the same skills.
- Leonard, Camarata, Brown, & Camarata (2004) found that focused stimulation for targets unused at baseline was an effective means for teaching verb agreement morphemes for children ages 3;0 to 4;4 with SLI.

Research Questions

- To evaluate whether children with SLI have improved use of grammatical morphemes when targets are selected utilizing a complexity approach.
- Do children generalize to earlier developing bound grammatical morphemes that are also not yet mastered?

Methods

Participant

- Mono-English child, age 3;6, with SLI

Procedures

- Pretest/Posttest design
- Rice Wexler Test of Grammatical Impairment (Rice/Wexler)
- Play-based language sample with language probes

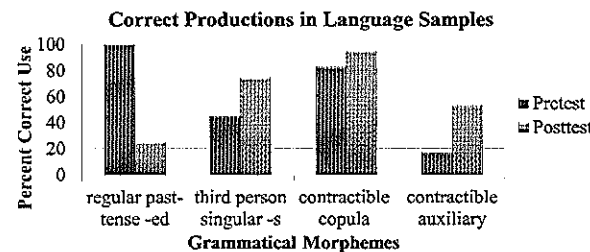
Intervention

- 7 sessions (30 minutes twice weekly)
- Focused stimulation intervene targeting regular 3rd person singular -s
- Generalization morpheme: regular past tense -ed
- Control: articles *a, an, the*
- Teaching episodes: 30 per session

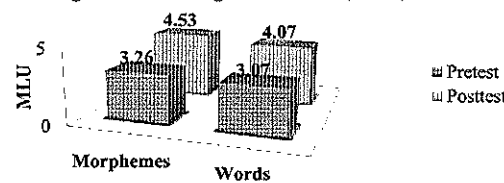
Results

Pretest/Posttest

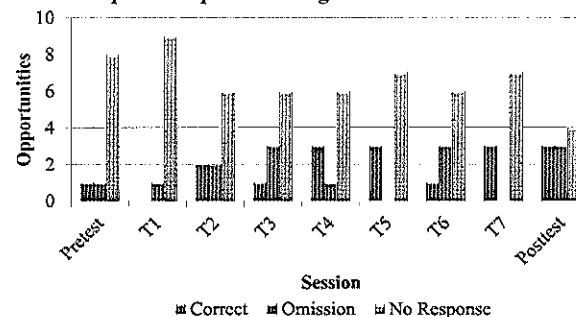
- Rice/Wexler: no change for 3rd person singular or past tense probes.



Change in Mean Length Utterance (MLU)



Responses to probes during intervention sessions



Discussion

Findings similar to Leonard et al. (2004)

- A child with SLI made gains in expressive language when a developmentally complex morpheme was targeted using a focused stimulation language intervention.
- Results of this study were not what was predicted.
- Gains were not made with the non-targeted verb tense marker regular past tense -ed.
- Control noun-related morpheme remained at a low level at post-test.
- Other present-tense non-target grammatical morphemes also increased (e.g., is/are/am); thereby also increasing the participant's use of present-progressive -ing.

Differences between Studies

Leonard et al. study was much longer in duration than the current study (48 sessions vs. 7 sessions).

- Teaching episodes for the current study were 30/session versus Leonard et al. which was 24/session.

Future Research

- Include more participants
- Include the developmental approach to target selection for comparison
- Include a participant with delayed intervention period for comparison purposes
- Differentiate between the influence of focused stimulation intervention and influence of target selection on results

Selected References

- Brown R. (1973). *A first language: The early stages*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Eadie, P. A., Fey, M. E., Douglas, J. M., & Parsons, C. L. (2002). Profiles of grammatical morphology and sentence imitation in children with specific language impairment and down syndrome. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research, 45*, 720-732.
- Leonard, L. B., Camarata, S. M., Brown, B., & Camarata, M. N. (2004). Tense and agreement in the speech of children with specific language impairment: Patterns of generalization through intervention. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research, 47*, 1363-1379.

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