



Instructions for Language Sampling

Language sampling is a technique for documenting and analyzing spontaneous spoken utterances of a child. The analysis on the sample can reveal information about the child's vocabulary - words used, syntax - sentence structures used, and other communication attempts. It can also reveal information about a child's creativity, problem solving, and theory of mind.

Simply put, taking a language sample is writing down what a child says spontaneously - (not imitated, or something the child memorized) when playing or telling a story or having a conversation.

Instructions for taking a language sample.

- Create a situation where the child has an opportunity to communicate spontaneously. This could be a play situation or a daily routine or reading a story book.
 - Start talking to the child. It is a good idea to record this conversation. Aim for at least 5 minutes of conversation. We are aiming for 25-50 spontaneous utterances.
 - Review the video and write down exactly what the child says (don't worry about the pronunciations at this point. Write down the words that the child has said)
 - If the child says, "ball roll" instead of "The ball is rolling away", write what the child said spontaneously. If the context isn't clear, write in parenthesis what the child meant to say including any signs or gestures. For example
 - Look, ball! (look the ball is rolling away!)
 - Blue car? (where is my blue car?)
 - Want more bubbles
 - I love to eat cookies and milk.
 - For a pre-verbal child, it might be easier to video record the communication attempts and identify how the child is communicating. For example, through pointing, gesturing, vocalizations, word approximations and documenting them.

Analysis of the language sample.

The purpose of this exercise is to get a more well-rounded picture of the child's language, and not just a snapshot as is typically seen in standardized assessments.

- Analyze how the child communicates. Review the sample and observe
 - What kind of words does the child use?
 - What type of sentence structure is the child using? What is present and what is missing?
 - Is the word choice and sentence structure appropriate for the child's chronological and hearing age?



Other considerations when taking and analyzing the language sample

- The language sample can be taken in any language. If the child uses multiple spoken language, write down everything that is said.
 - For English speakers, tools such as the Teacher Assessment of Spoken Language (TASL) and the Cottage Acquisition Scales for Listening, Language, and Speech (CASLLS) can be used to analyze language samples.
 - Tools such as the TASL are not available for other languages. However, a professional who has a deep understanding of the syntax of a language, might analyze the language complexity of utterances in different languages.
- Note that all children progress from one-word utterances to two words to simple sentences and then compound and complex sentences. It is important that complexity in sentence structure is supported by growth in vocabulary.

Language samples can be used as a tool for parent coaching.

- Stage 1 - Modeling & Coaching
 - Caregiver chooses a daily routine where the child is most vocal - record a sample (audio-video)
 - Provider transcribes the language sample
 - Uses it as a tool to coach and suggest strategies
- Stage 2 - Coaching & Guided Co-Planning
 - Caregiver chooses a routine to practice discussed strategies - record a sample (audio-video)
 - Provider transcribes the language sample
 - Watches the recording together to elicit observation from the caregiver
 - Reviews language sample for additional coaching and progress monitoring and setting of new targets and strategies
- Stage 3 - Coaching & Caregiver led Co-Planning
 - Caregiver chooses targets and activity/routine
 - Caregiver records and transcribes language sample
 - Provider reviews and transcribes as well, or only annotates
 - Caregiver and provider discuss the progress, strategies, and set next steps.

Language sampling is a part of Listening Together’s parent empowerment program. It is also a strategy used for “TEAM TALK” to support language development.

For more questions about language sampling, contact info@listeningtogether.com