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The vignettes presented in this book are composite accounts that do not represent the lives or experiences of specific individuals, and no implications should be inferred. Names and identifying details have been changed to protect confidentiality.
utive functioning, grapho-motor control, affect, self-efficacy, motivation, self-regulation, and task demands. Only with an appreciation of these factors, as well as the real-world curriculum demands that students face on a daily basis, are we well poised to develop relevant and realistic instruction and intervention.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how SLPs can approach assessment of text comprehension and production abilities in adolescents and adults. To begin, I present a framework for assessment within the context of a case study and, in doing so, consider reason-based clinical approaches to assessing reading comprehension and writing (Apel & Singer, 2005). Finally, I explore the ways in which assessment guides and informs intervention planning.

THE STORY OF HENRY

The other day, a student came to my office for an assessment. I will call him Henry. Henry came to see me because language has never come easily to him and he has never done well in school. Now an adolescent, his parents and teachers are searching for the support that he needs to keep his head above water in class, pass that dreaded high-stakes test and the SAT, graduate from high school, and succeed in college and in life. Henry was diagnosed as having a language disorder in preschool, which affected his ability to understand others and express himself. His language challenges have plagued him throughout his school years and affected his academic performance, most notably in language arts. He has received special education services since first grade, which have focused primarily on reading and writing.

As an SLP charged with assessing Henry’s reading and writing, I begin my assessment by asking, “What do I already know about Henry’s language?” Based on his history of language difficulty, I can form hypotheses about what linguistic domains (i.e., phonology, morphology, semantic, syntactic, pragmatic) might be compromised in both spoken and written language realms. Over the years, Henry’s language difficulties were well documented. His parents, teachers, report cards, and prior speech-language evaluations note his difficulty acquiring vocabulary, understanding and remembering what he hears, holding language in working memory to process it and problem solve, and retrieving words he knows. Spoken syntax and morphology were a challenge to him early on, but (thanks to early language intervention) he now speaks grammatically. Also, with intervention, he learned to tell engaging and elaborated stories and now can formulate discourse with ease. Knowing all of this about Henry’s spoken language helps me to identify what I want to find out about his written language.

The next questions I ask myself are, “What else do I know about Henry? What are his cognitive strengths and weaknesses? And how is he functioning academically?” Prior cognitive testing shows that his overall IQ score is in the average range, but a closer look at his cognitive subtest scores shows that Henry has trouble with tasks that rely heavily on language and verbal memory. With listening tasks, he understands main points, but he quickly forgets details. He also has some
difficulty planning and organizing his approach to complex tasks. Academic achievement testing shows that he has benefited from specialized instruction and can read accurately, but his reading comprehension and written expression abilities continue to lag behind those of his peers.

SLPs who work with older students and adults routinely find themselves in my situation. We can learn a great deal from student records, but the story is always changing. The curriculum gets harder every year. As a result, students’ language difficulties are challenged in new and different ways as they move through school. With each passing year, we need to reappraise whether they have sufficient language/literacy abilities not only to survive school but also to “do” school (Westby, 2006) and eventually hold down a job.

Knowing the aspects of language that have challenged Henry in the past, the aspects that continue to challenge him now, and his overall cognitive profile, I approach my assessment by asking, “What reading and writing skills and abilities do I suspect will be problematic for Henry, and how should I assess them?”

**A Framework for Assessment**

My choice of assessment measures is shaped by three factors: research, my clinical knowledge and expertise, and the needs of the client (Apel & Singer, 2005). One of these factors may carry more weight than the others when I select standardized tests and nonstandardized measures. Together, however, these three factors inform the clinical decisions I make about what to assess, how to assess it, and how to interpret a student’s performance.

I look to published research to identify the skills and abilities that predict reading and writing difficulty and select diagnostic measures that are used widely within educational research. Standardized measures provide a quick snapshot of how well a student performs, without any support, relative to his or her peers. Well-constructed standardized tests are not available for every aspect of literacy that I may want to assess, however, and few have norms for young adults. Accordingly, I need to complement standardized tests with informal and criterion-referenced measures that allow me to assess a broad range of literacy skills and abilities. Using dynamic assessment procedures (Palincsar, Brown, & Campione, 1994), I can understand what kinds of supports maximize a student’s performance and how responsive a student is to those supports. This information not only gives me a sense of prognosis but also guides the development of relevant intervention goals. Drawing on my clinical expertise, I make sure to assess all linguistic domains and analyze how they support and constrain reading and writing abilities. Finally, I consider the referring concerns so that I can make relevant recommendations. Within this framework, I strap on my boots and get to work.
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