Multi-Clausal Sentences



Ideas for

Intervention

Here you will find resource materials for intervention. These are not programs or recommended methods but are meant to aid you by providing myriad resources and techniques for intervention. We’ve taken the time to research available resources and to offer them for you to consider.

Let’s begin by making the distinction between two different types of multi-clausal sentences: the embedded and conjoining clauses.

According to Dr. Robert Owens, both embedded and conjoining multi-clausal sentences involve relationships between at least two clauses (2014).

* Dr. Robert Owens also indicates that embedding involves the relationship between different phrases and clauses (2014).
  + - * + For example, the sentence, *the toy that I want is on sale* is a complex sentence that contains an embedded clause.
* Simple conjoining sentences contain two clauses that are joined together by a conjunction: either coordination (*and, but, or*, etc.) or subordination (*because, after,* etc.) (Steffani, 2007).
  + - * + For example, the sentence, *I went to the store because I needed ice cream* is a conjoined complex sentence.

Multi-Clausal Sentences

In addition to embedded and conjoining clauses, there are also complex sentences that contain both an embedded and conjoined clause (Steffani, 2007).

* Complex sentences that contain an embedded and a conjoined clause may include a catenative (Steffani, 2007)



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* + - According to Steffani (2007), “catenatives (also known as semi auxiliaries) are words such as *gonna, wanna,* and *hafta”* (p. 48). However, these words are only considered to be catenatives when there are two other main verbs in the sentence (Steffani, 2007).

Complex sentences are an important aspect of language as children develop. Complex language use is required as they enter school in order to discuss more complex thoughts and ideas that cannot be accomplished through simple sentences only (Steffani, 2007). It has been found that, “complex sentences aid children in sequencing events temporally and casually, improving the cohesiveness of narratives, and increasing the sophistication of written language” (Steffani, p. 47, 2007).

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* Note: it’s critical that clinicians understand when they should expect to see the different types of sentences in their clients’ speech from a developmental perspective. Knowing this information will help the clinician to understand and determine preceding concepts and skills to provide potential scaffolding and supports.
* According to Steffani (2007), complex sentences typically emerge when a child has achieved a mean length of utterance (MLU) of 3.0.
* Steffani also indicates that the first complex sentence structure to emerge are conjoined clauses using the coordinating conjunction *and* (i.e., I like Elsa and she likes Ana) (2007).
* As children develop, they continue to add an increased amount of embedded sentences to their language. This is done by using infinitives with different subjects (i.e., I want you to go to sleep) and through the use of relative clauses (i.e., she is the girl that I saw) (Steffani, 2007).
  + - * These skills primarily develop when a child’s MLU is between four and five (Steffani, 2007).
      * Once a MLU of five is achieved, typically around the age of four or five years old, it is expected that twenty percent of the child’s utterances will be complex (Steffani, 2007).

Methods

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* When teaching multi clausal sentences, there are some considerations that are important to consider in order to adjust therapy to individualize treatment to the client’s particular needs.



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Children with language disorders have been found to use complex sentences, however, they use fewer complex sentences and fewer grammatically appropriate complex sentences when compared to their same-age peers (Steffani, 2007).

Children who have been diagnosed with autism or developmental delays also have a significantly reduced use of complex sentences. Although they use fewer complex sentences, their morphosyntactic skills have been shown to be appropriate when compared to their same-age peers (Steffani, 2007).

Steffani (2007) has also conducted research to indicate that children who have been maltreated show a decreased use of complex sentences as well.

As a speech-language pathologist, it is also crucial to consider the impact of various dialects on the use of complex sentences. As complex sentences are based on clausal units, as opposed to morphological units, those who use African American English (AAE) have variations in their use of complex sentences (Steffani, 2007).

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* According to Owens (2014), children with Significant Language Impairment (SLI) often have difficulties with the use of multi-clausal sentences. This may be a result of poor resource allocation. Resource allocation is the ability to sustain attention to two varying tasks or differing levels of tasks (Owens, 2014).

Particularly, children with SLI have the most significant amount of difficulty with verb phrases (Owens, 2014).

Comprehension of both simple and complex grammar structures is a mentally demanding activity, therefore, children with SLI require specific intervention methods in order to effectively develop the use of multi-clausal sentences.

* According to the Common Core State Standards Initiative, the English language arts standards states that children should have the ability to independently produce simple, compound, and complex sentences by grade three ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.3.1.I](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/3/1/i/)).
* By grade 7, students should have the ability to select among simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences to signal differing relationships among ideas ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7.1.B](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/7/1/b/)).

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Multi Clausal Sentences

As previously mentioned, there are embedded, conjoined, and embedded-conjoined clauses that are apart of multi clausal sentences. However, it is important to be aware of the types of clauses that may be embedded or conjoined.

* Relative clauses, also known as adjective clauses, may be embedded or conjoined to formulate a multi clausal sentence. A relative clause functions to modify the noun within a sentence (Delahunty & Garvey, 2010). These clauses contain relative pronouns (i.e., that, who, which, etc.).

An example of a multi clausal sentence containing a relative clause is as follows: The store that we bought the ice cream from moved down the street.

* Adverbial clauses may also be inserted into multi clausal sentences. An adverbial clause functions to modify a verb within a sentence (Delahunty & Garvey, 2010). These clauses are typically introduced by subordinating adverbial conjunctions (SACs) to indicate concepts of time, place, condition, cause, and purpose (Delahunty & Garvey, 2010).

Examples of multi clausal sentences that contain various functions of an adverbial clause are as follows:

Time: “*After you dropped your cookie,* the birthday party ended.”

Place: “*Wherever you find your toy,* you will also find a sticker.”

Purpose: “We ate a big lunch *so that we could have a late dinner.*

Resources



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Multi Clausal Sentences

Books and Articles

* [*If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*](https://www.amazon.com/You-Give-Mouse-Cookie-Book/dp/0060245867/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=if+you+give+a+mouse+a+cookie+book&qid=1645738792&sprefix=if+you+give+a+mouse+%2Caps%2C195&sr=8-1), by Laura Numeroff

This book contains many complex sentences that are great for young clients to have exposure to. However, this can also be used with older students. Introducing the activity as “flashback Friday” may motivate students as it is a fun, yet simple book. The students will be asked to identify independent and dependent clauses throughout the book. Concepts from the curriculum can also be built into this activity. For example, if the students have read the novel, The Outsiders, you can provide them with partial dependent clauses (i.e., “if you give a Greaser a…” or “if you give a Soc a…”). The students will then finish the dependent clause and add an independent clause in order to create a complex sentence.

* Steffani, S. A. (2007). Identifying embedded and conjoined complex sentences: Making it simple. *Contemporary Issues in Communication Science and Disorders*, *34*(Spring), 44–54. <https://doi.org/10.1044/cicsd_34_s_44>

This article contains an informative flow chart that aids in identifying conjoined and embedded complex sentences.

Games and Activities

Index card activity:

* After providing an explanation of what an independent and dependent clause is, each student can be provided with an index card containing one of these clauses. It may be helpful to have different colored cards for each type of clause. The students will then walk around the room to find the other student that has the card containing a clause that pairs with their own. Each card will have one correct match so they must read and select carefully. After finding their match, the students will read their sentences out loud. This activity will provide a deeper understanding of independent and dependent clauses to then be able to formulate complex sentences in their own language.



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Sandwich sentences:

* Using the simile of complex sentences being like a sandwich, rather than a plain cracker will provide students with an understanding of the level of details needed to formulate a complex sentence. Utilizing an image of a sandwich that contains many layers and asking the students to write their sentences around each layer of the sandwich will provide scaffolding to incorporate more details into each sentence.

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Printables:

* [Sentence structure handouts, quizzes, and PowerPoint presentation](https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Sentence-Structure-Simple-Compound-Complex-and-Compound-Complex-Sentences-2945666?st=2882efb79d411e0a05dc8bfcc79fc8ba)
* [Simple, compound, and complex sentences board game](https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Simple-Compound-Complex-Sentences-Game-Anchor-Charts-Student-Handout-3107553?st=496170f039fcc007d23d2679403b260e)
* [Building sentences handout](https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Answering-Questions-and-Creating-Complex-Sentences-HandoutAnchor-Chart-7512790?st=496170f039fcc007d23d2679403b260e)

Websites

* [*YouTube lecture*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7GZ6IeqtN0)

Please visit [our Pinterest page](https://www.pinterest.com/sugarlanguage/_saved/) for additional resources and activities:

Pinterest Q&A:

What is Pinterest? Pinterest is a social media platform that serves as an electronic bulletin board. Many SLPs use it as a way to electronically “bookmark” (i.e., save) activities for future sessions.

How much does it cost? It’s free! However, you must create an account in order to access the SUGAR Language boards or use the website in general.

How do I use it? Please check-out the following link for an in-depth explanation of all things [Pinterest.](https://www.lifewire.com/how-to-use-pinterest-3486578)

**References**

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