Speech and Language Therapy Report

Name: Gita

D.O.B: 18.04 2011

Chronological age: 9 years 2 months

Assessment date: Gita was assessed over 4 dates in June with short breaks between assessment tasks (15.06.20, 16.06.20, 22.06.2020 and 23.06.20).

Attention and listening: Gita was able to engage with tabletop activities for approximately 15 minutes. She was able to re-engage for a further 15 minutes after a short break. Gita needed prompting to stay on task particularly as tasks became more challenging, but she responded well to encouragement. Gita wears hearing aids and was able to follow spoken language in a quiet room. The therapist was positioned facing Gita to provide as much support for spoken cues as possible. Aesha (Her mother) reported that Gita does well in one to one settings but can switch off in the classroom.

Receptive language: Gita's receptive language skills were assessed using informal assessment tasks, as well as the British Picture Vocabulary Scale (BPVS) (Dunn, Dunn et al. 2009), and the Test of Reception of Grammar (TROG)(Bishop, 2003). The BPVS and the TROG are not standardised for children with cerebral palsy so it is not possible to attain a standard score however Gita's performance on the test can be used and interpreted to provide information about Gita's receptive language abilities and performance.

The Test of Reception of Grammar (TROG)

Gita attained an Age Equivalent of 6:2 on the TROG. She demonstrated the following areas of strength based on this assessment:

- Ability to follow 2 and 3 element utterances, understanding of negatives, action words and colours.

Areas that were more challenging for Gita were:

- Gita had difficulty with processing more complex utterances (4 element level), with constructs like not only X but also Y, and with plurals. Her understanding of prepositions appeared inconsistent.

The British Picture Vocabulary Scale (BPVS) Gita attained an Age Equivalent of 7:6 months which suggests understanding of vocabulary is an area of relative strength for Gita.

Informal assessment

A number of informal tasks were used to further probe Gita's receptive language skills. Based on these tasks, Gita demonstrated the following strengths:

- Gita was able to categorise items from a range of common categories (animals, food, vehicles).
- Gita was consistent in responding to 2 and 3 element instructions and was able to achieve some 4 element instructions when scaffolded with prompts.
- Gita demonstrated understanding of basic wh- questions Who? What? and Where?

- Gita demonstrated understanding of a range of adjectives (noisy, funny, hot, cold, old and new), emotions (angry, happy, sad) and comparative words (biggest, smallest, tallest).

Gita had challenges with:

- Understanding the prepositions under, beside, behind and in front of.
- Understanding regular past tense endings
- Understanding plurals
- Understanding pronouns

Expressive language

Gita's expressive language was assessed using several tools. Two standardised assessments, the Renfrew Action Picture Test (RAPT)(Renfrew, 2003) and The Renfrew Bus Story (Renfrew, 1991) were used. It was not possible to attain age equivalent scores based on Gita's performance however the adapted use of these assessments provided insight into Gita's expressive use of language. In addition, a language sample was collected in informal conversation, play and shared storybook reading. Gita's mother, Aesha, reported that the sample obtained was similar to the language Gita typically uses every day.

Areas of strength: Gita is a multimodal communicator who uses some spoken words, gesture and graphic symbols to communicate. She frequently used spoken words or word approximations (which were interpreted by Aesha) to communicate. She often used spoken words in combination with gesture to initiate, ask for help and to comment on activities. Her communication book was available throughout all 4 assessment sessions, however Gita rarely initiated using it although she did respond to prompts and encouragement to use it. When communication breakdown occurred, she tended to look to Aesha for support.

Analysis of Gita's language sample suggests Gita mainly uses one, two and three element utterances which often combine more than one mode (for example, speech and gesture or speech and graphic symbols). Gita was observed to use subject + verb and subject + verb + object constructions (both in spoken and graphic symbol forms). A sample of utterances is provided below. The following strengths were identified from Gita's expressive language sample:

- Gita will combine communication modes to produce a range of utterances that are largely understood by those familiar with her. Gita's utterances were less intelligible to the therapist as an unfamiliar listener. A barrier task indicated that communication can breakdown for familiar listeners when context is removed.
- When communication breaks down, Gita was observed to persevere to try and communicate her message. She also relies on familiar people to support her communicative output.
- Gita was inclined to use speech and gesture as her primary modes but demonstrated ability to use single and two symbol utterances to comment when prompted and supported.

- The data obtained from the formal assessment tools indicated Gita has developed strategic competence both in combining communication modes and also in using symbols creatively to express meaning.

The follow areas were more challenging for Gita:
- Using her communication book unprompted.
- Using symbols for pronouns or generic people (e.g., brother, uncle,. etc).
- Using prepositions.
- Combining more than 3 symbols.
- Using symbols in a more abstract or generic way (some strategic use was observed but there was limited use of core words to describe what was happening .
- At times Gita was observed to visually search for symbols, and it was unclear what symbol she wanted.
- Gita found it challenging to combine ideas using a basic narrative structure. She demonstrated the ability to sort picture stories of up to 5 pictures. In retelling stories, she required prompting after each element and she did not employ cohesion devices.

Utterance sample:

Ma heh' + eye point to her bag	Gita produced word approximations of 'Mammy help' combined with an eye point to her bag to request help in taking out an LOL doll to show the therapist.
'eee' + point to self	Indicated 'me' using a word approximation and a point in response to the question, Who wants to go next?
GITA + TWIX	two symbol combination in response to question about what food she liked (needed prompted to use book).
RED+ CAR+ GO	Gita produced this 3-symbol utterance when describing the bus story. Gita required prompting to use her book but was then able to produce this 3-symbol utterance. 'BUS' was not available as a symbol on her book suggesting strategic use of car as a replacement.
SMITA + FALL + HOME.	Gita used a 3-symbol utterance to describe the picture from the RAPT where the girl fell down the stairs. She used the symbol for her sister who wears glasses suggesting strategic use of the symbol.
SAD +facial expression	This was Gita's response when asked about a character in a YouTube clip.

HOME	Gita spontaneously used this symbol when she was getting tired during the assessment process on the last day.

Graphic representation and communication book

Gita's communication book has approximately 80 1.5" symbols with pages broadly set out in a syntactic layout. Aesha reported that Gita has used this symbol set since preschool and it is used by several other children at school. She has had her current book for 3 years and during that time, additional symbols have been added in an idiosyncratic way. While the Fitzgerald key has been used to colour code a number of the symbols, this was not consistent across all symbols.

During the assessment, Gita's knowledge and use of symbols on her existing system was probed. Gita demonstrated good knowledge of the symbols and their locations for the following categories:

- familiar people
- common verbs
- feelings words
- colours
- A large number of nouns (including food items, favourite play items, clothing, and places).

She did not appear to have knowledge of the symbols for pronouns, prepositions, more abstract verbs and some adjectives (she demonstrated knowledge of big and small but had difficulty with the rest of this category).

At times when Gita was trying to manipulate the book to search for symbols, she sometimes accidentally caught the book with her right arm causing it to fall on the floor. The book fell on several occasions and these falls appeared to be a source of frustration for Gita. In addition, when Gita is focused and looking down at the book, she loses saliva from her mouth which can pool on the book.

Informal symbol assessment tasks indicated that Gita could accurately identify and select a 1" symbol for common nouns from an array of up to 148 symbols and demonstrated good understanding of both syntactic and semantic forms of organisation. During the assessment, Gita was very engaged and responsive to aided language modelling and was observed to copy symbol utterances modelled.

Literacy

Gita's literacy skills were not assessed during this initial assessment however some literacy related information was gathered. Aesha reported that Gita loves shared story book reading and loves choosing the book to read and turning the page. She also reported that she shows some interest in print. Aesha reported that her teacher feels stuck with progressing Gita's literacy due to challenges with read aloud related to Gita's speech difficulties. In the assessment, Gita was able to identify the initial letter in her own name and in 'Mummy'. Attempts at trialling initial letter cuing as a communication strategy were not successful in the session. Further exploration of Gita's literacy and phonological awareness skills is recommended.

Gita and Aesha's perspectives on the communication book

A Talking Mat was completed with Gita to explore her attitude towards her communication book. Overall, she reported she did not like her book.

The features she indicated she liked were:

- The symbols about her family and friends
- The symbols Smita had added for some of her favourite things (LOL dolls, bath bombs, crafts, and shoes).
- The colour of the book (Gita loves the colour teal and the book cover and pages were   made on a teal background).

The features she did not like were:

- The book is dog eared and looks shabby.
- She cannot find symbols she wants.
- It is too big and bulky on her wheelchair tray.

Aesha reported that they do not use the book at home as Gita can communicate most of what she wants with speech and gesture and the book does not have enough vocabulary for Gita.

Summary

Gita is a 9 year 2month old girl who attended for a language and communication assessment to inform AAC intervention planning. Based on this assessment, Gita's receptive language skills (understanding of language) is an area of relative strength for Gita particularly in the area of understanding vocabulary. She also demonstrates understanding of 3 element utterances, negatives, action words and colours. Gita had difficulty with understanding 4 element utterances, plurals, past tense endings, pronouns and prepositions. Gita's literacy skills were not assessed as part of this assessment however it was reported that her teacher is having difficulty supporting Gita's literacy development in school.

Gita is a multimodal communicator who engages well and perseveres to get her message across. She uses spoken word approximations, vocalisations, gesture, facial expression and a communicate book to communicate. A key strength of Gita is her ability to combine modes of communication and support from familiar communication partners to get her message across. Gita mostly uses unaided modes (e.g., facial expression, vocalisation and gesture) to communicate and often relies on familiar partners to interpret her messages. Gita was observed to mostly use her communication book when prompted and she demonstrated the ability to combine 1 and 2 symbol utterances. Gita demonstrated strong ability to use noun and noun verb combinations to communicate. She was not observed to use other word classes to express herself. Gita would benefit from AAC intervention to enable her to communicate more independently, to support her receptive language and literacy development, and to develop her use of aided communication.

Recommendations

- Develop an aided symbol based system for Gita that provides her with access to a wider range of vocabulary organised in a way that minimises the demands on Gita in locating vocabulary. Gita and her family should be core to the selection and development of this system to ensure ownership and that the system meets their needs.
- Provide Gita with supports to promote her receptive language development.
- Carry out a literacy assessment and provide supports for Gita's teacher in adapting literacy instruction in a way that facilitates Gita's participation.
- Gita would benefit from intervention supports to develop her aided system use in two ways. Gita should be supported in using her system for fun fast communication opportunities to engage in school and home life easily. She also needs supports to develop her ability to use her aided system to express more complex ideas and in how to use the vocabulary available strategically to express herself. An aided language input approach would be beneficial to support Gita's understanding of how the aided system can be used.
- Provision of peer training to support Gita engaging in interactions with her peers and to support her in developing friendships.

Signed: Jamie Johnson
Speech and Language Therapist

Assessment references

Bishop, D. (2003) Test for Reception of Grammar-2 Harcourt Assessment: London

Dunn, L. M., Dunn, D. M., Styles, B., & Sewell, J. (2009). *The British Picture Vocabulary Scale III* (3rd Edition ed.). London GL Assessment.

Renfrew, C. (1991). The Bus Story (2nd edn.). Oxford: Speechmark Publishing Ltd.

Renfrew, C. (2003). The Action Picture Test (4th edn.). Oxford: Speechmark Publishing Ltd.