

Using the South Tyneside Assessment of Syntactic Structures (STASS)

*Tracking the spoken language
development of deaf children*

2nd edition



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Acknowledgements

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1 Why use STASS?

The South Tyneside Assessment of Syntactic Structures (STASS) was produced by two speech and language therapists in 1987. Susan Armstrong and Maureen Ainley were interested in the development profiles produced by David Crystal with Garman & Fletcher, (1989) but wanted an assessment tool which was quicker and easier to administer. The researchers took time out from work to test 900 children aged 3-5 on Tyneside. Their aim was to produce an assessment which could be used to screen for language or developmental delays.

Armstrong and Ainley didn't expect this assessment to have a new lease of life in the twenty-first century. There are not many assessment tools which measure the growth of the grammatical system in the period before five years. This age group has become crucial in deaf education since the introduction of newborn hearing screening. The NHS can now identify deaf children in the first month of life and language support and guidance with families can start much earlier than in the past. It is far more common today for deaf children to reach age appropriate spoken language targets if they have been aided early or had access to a fluent signed language from a young age. If this happens, there may be less need for later intervention or remedial support for deaf pupils at school.

The STASS assessment focuses on spoken language communication. It is an assessment which is useful for any deaf or hearing child who uses speech to communicate. Of course many deaf children use a mixture of speech and sign, or use both BSL and English at different times. STASS is just a test for spoken English. However, we are able to some extent to consider how the child responds to the assessment in a multimodal way, which can influence the findings. We see this further on in the booklet when we look at the responses of Abdo, a late diagnosed deaf boy aged nine.

STASS can yield useful information for teachers of deaf children. For example, it can help you to set new language targets which are most appropriate for the child's language development. Or it may assist with a decision about introducing fluent BSL models so that the child can develop age appropriate BSL skills, because the child may make progress more quickly with BSL than with speech and be able to express more complex and academically relevant thoughts in a signed language.

All teachers of deaf children should feel confident in analysing child language; this is our area of expertise. There are many areas of child language which we may want to investigate: how language is used (pragmatics), how words are pronounced (phonology), the growth of the child's vocabulary and the gradually deeper understanding of meaning (semantics), the development of listening skills and comprehension skills and the development of the child grammar in speech or a signed language into adult grammar of speech or the sign language.

This booklet has been written to assist teachers of deaf children and speech and language therapists in just one area: the development of the English grammatical system. The STASS assessment has been chosen because it is quite a straightforward one to use. It has limitations, as all assessments do, but it develops skills in the area of grammatical analysis which can later encourage teachers of deaf children to explore the English language development of their pupils in more detail.

This doesn't mean STASS on its own is enough, because other areas of language development are important too and in fact it is artificial to separate them. There are other tools which can be used to track and promote pragmatic, semantic, and phonological development, listening skills and discussion skills – see section 11 for References.

What does the assessment consist of?

All the materials for STASS are contained in a spiral bound book, available from the authors for £55. The pictures were updated in 2012. The materials are aimed at children in the 3-5 age group so could not realistically be used with deaf children beyond the age of about ten. A parallel assessment called DASS is more suitable for older children or teenagers. The pictures in DASS have not yet been updated, and this assessment has not been normed on older children. However, it may be more appropriate to use with deaf learners of 9+.

The assessment takes about 10 minutes per child. The assessor sits opposite the child and uses a prompt phrase while showing a picture. The child looks at the picture and responds. The assessor writes the response down or records the assessment to analyse later. This produces a collection of utterances which has been elicited to show a range of grammatical structures. After the child has left, the assessor analyses the responses. There is some help in the booklet about how to analyse, but not much. This guide will help fill out some of the detail and give teachers and speech and language therapists more practice in the analysis stage.

Features of syntax at clause, phrase and word level are noted and entered onto a summary sheet. The test booklet has charts showing expected mastery of features at ages 3, 4 and 5. From these charts and the summary sheet, practitioners can work out the stage the child has reached in developing spoken language and possible areas which will emerge soon. This can inform the child's language programme, not to teach grammar but to devise activities which will model new constructions and elicit and practise more complex language.



2 STASS and children with different language learning backgrounds

STASS is only useful for children who are using some speech, that is, they can use at least two words together in short utterances. If you use the Early Support Monitoring Protocol (DfES, 2006) you will know about the B stages. We are concerned here with Stages B8 and above.

Children with BSL as their first or preferred language

This assessment is not designed to assess BSL development; fortunately, there are several assessments available to do this:

- Herman et al. (1999). Assessing BSL Development - Receptive Skills Test. London: City University Publication
- Herman et al. (2004) Assessing BSL Development: Production Test (Narrative Skills). London: City University Publication
- Woolfe et al. (2010) MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventories for British Sign Language. London: City University Publication

Assessors need to have attended a training course to use the Productive Skills assessment, and have at least Signature British Sign Language (BSL) Level two (or SCQF 5 or above). The cost of the assessment includes this training which is now available online.

Children with other spoken home languages

Many children will have another spoken language used at home, and in the period 0-5 this will usually be the child's dominant language. The child may be bilingual or multilingual, but the results you find when using STASS will not measure the proficiency of the child in other languages.

We know that when the STASS developers were referencing their test against norms for hearing children they excluded those from families where English wasn't the first language (Armstrong & Ainley, 1984 p2). We can't use norms based on monolingual English speaking children to judge the progress of bilingual or plurilingual children. Also, we don't have information about syntactic development of young children with Polish, Punjabi, Cantonese, Bengali etc which would be useful in Britain. We can use tools such as the University of California National Heritage Language Resource Center (UCLA, 2020) to find out more about our pupils' other languages.

So we can use STASS with children from plurilingual backgrounds, but we need to be very careful about how we interpret the results. Some speech and language therapists (SLTs) also use another spoken language or a particular knowledge of certain community languages. SLTs are a very helpful source of advice when using tools such as STASS because in their training they spend much longer finding out about language development than teachers of deaf children usually do. To find out more about the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, see their website: <http://www.rcslt.org/>

Children with non-standard English

Another important issue to consider is that many, possibly most, young children will not be using standard English at home with their families.

Here are some examples of non-standard English which could be the norm for many English speakers: *I just seen him. I have forgot. I'm no coming.*

When we use David Crystal's development framework in the STASS assessment we should remember that he usually uses examples from standard English. Most areas of the UK have regional dialects, and working class children are more likely to use a non-standard variety than middle class ones. These different grammars are not wrong, just different. The children who use them will learn while they are at school to move in and out of the standard variety. It's important that when we assess young children's language development we don't think these non-standard Englishes are evidence of developmental delay or deviance. Children often construct their identity around the use of non-standard Englishes, but also they need access to the standard version for achievement in the school system, which legitimises standard English (Brady, 2015).

If you are not familiar with Scots, there are a number of good websites which introduce you to its grammar. For example: <http://www.scots-online.org/grammar/sse.htm>

Ruth Swanwick's book *Languages and Languageing in Deaf Education* (2016) is recommended as a starting point for exploring these different attitudes to languages used by deaf children. We need to remember too, the prescriptive history of our own profession and allied health professionals: signed languages and community languages have been marginalised and discouraged for many decades with families of deaf children. As practitioners with an interest in language development, we should be aware of the spoken community languages used in our area, of the national and regional variations in English found nearby and of BSL. This process of exploration will help us use tools such as STASS better; this test is standardised on hearing children from monolingual backgrounds. Interpretation of the results, therefore, has to be carried out carefully.



3 Crystal's method of analysing children's language development

To use STASS properly you need to be familiar with grammatical features of English. Although we use English fluently we often find it remarkably difficult to analyse because very few of us have been taught to do this at school. Most of us are the products of an education system which favoured creativity in English over analysis. However, it's not hard to learn. You will find it easier if you refer to a good dictionary which shows grammatical word classes of words; these are usually recommended for people learning English as a foreign language. The

Collins Online Dictionary, is very helpful for checking information about word classes and frequency: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english>

Spoken English can be analysed in several different ways, but the predominant British tradition is a descriptive one. David Crystal is a linguist who has always been interested in child language acquisition with his contributions based firmly on data from real children. Though influenced by Chomsky's focus on syntax development, he is not a Chomskyan. He is more interested in real life data than Chomsky's notion of competence. Theoretically, Crystal is more aligned with the more recent usage based theories of language development. His model of the five stages suggests that at the right stage, children can be given a nudge to the next level.

For more on the different theoretical approaches to child language acquisition see Saxton (2017) and Thornton chapter 7 (in McLeod and McCormack, 2015). Both these reference books are recommended to understand more about child language development.

Children's grammars gradually emerge from the one word utterance to two word, three word then little sentences. Children don't immediately copy the adult grammar they hear from caregivers. They have limitations of sentence length and processing power, which means that their grammar develops gradually over the period from one to five. When most children reach five they have in place the majority of the grammatical features of the adult grammar.

David Crystal has produced many works introducing English grammar; perhaps one of the most useful is Rediscover Grammar (2004). Crystal's works on language disability and remediation form the basis of his LARSP profile. His book, Profiling Linguistic Disability (1992) 2nd edition, is still available from Wiley.

Crystal's analysis looks at three levels of language patterns. Starting with the largest chunks of language, we can analyse children's utterances into simple clause patterns of Subject, Object, Verb, Adverbial and Complement. This booklet will explain how to do it and we will practise using real children's language.

Next Crystal directs us to the phrase, which is a group of words that can fill out any of the clausal elements. These phrases may appear on their own, for example *Ali bike*. Or they may appear as one element in a clause, for example:

That's Ali bike (3;5)
S V C

I will use the convention of underlining phrases where they appear in a clause. The age in brackets is made up of years and months after the semicolon.

Crystal directs us to certain features of phrase development which happen in a predictable order in English, such as the first appearance of the auxiliary verb (He's swimming, I *can* jump). Analysing phrase level development is the most time-consuming part of the STASS assessment. Before you can do it, you need to be familiar with the word classes of English.

A word class is a label for a group of words for example Noun, Verb, Adjective. We will practise these thoroughly in section 4.2.

Next Crystal focuses on word-level developments. Again, there is a predictable sequence in the emergence of word endings in children's spoken English development. The -ing verb ending occurs very early on, and features such as -er on comparative adjectives are usually still not present by five years old. These features are relatively easy to spot.

Crystal is also interested in the interplay between phrases and clauses. Children's early utterances may have two clause elements or three, each formed with one word. For example *Daddy gone* could be analysed as a Subject Verb sentence. The next stage we would expect to see is that one or perhaps both of these clause elements will be filled out into a phrase. For example:

daddy car / gone
S V

Crystal also draws our attention to certain word-level features which emerge in a regular sequence in normal spoken English development: the auxiliaries or helping verbs, prepositions and pronouns. We will look in more detail at these later on.

Armstrong and Ainley used Crystal's LARSP procedure and simplified it for busy speech and language therapists and teachers so that it becomes quicker to discover if the child has expected spoken language development or not. They have turned Crystal's complex one-page summary form into a neater, simpler form. However, they have sacrificed some of the detail in Crystal's diagnostic assessment. In particular, they decided not to track language development after the age of around five. It is very important to remember this when using STASS. Quite often children will say things which are more complex than what is usually expected for a three year old. Unless you are also familiar with Crystal's Stages Five and upwards you may not give the child credit for what she is saying. You may analyse it as being simpler than it really is. In fact, what she says may be too complex for you to analyse at present. This could mean that you set targets which are too low for her.

Table 1. Comparing Crystal's framework with STASS and Early Support stages

Crystal (LARSP)	Expected age group	Armstrong and Ainley (STASS)	Early Support (DfES)
Stage one	0;9 – 1;6	1	B 5 - 7
Stage two	1;6 – 2;0	2	B 8 - 9
Stage three	2;0 – 2;6	3	B 10
Stage four	2;6 – 3;0	4	B11
Stage five	3;0 – 3;6		
Stage six	3;6 – 4;6		
Stage seven	4;7 +		

Armstrong and Ainley used their assessment with 204 real children from South Tyneside. They chose children who were within two weeks of being aged 3, 4 or 5. They excluded children who may have shown atypical development, including deaf children or children whose home language was not English.

Crystal himself is careful to state the age at which a child enters a stage can vary a great deal, but it is interesting to see that the South Tyneside children performed less well than Crystal would have expected. Perhaps the samples they used were different in some way.

Once you become familiar with STASS, it is worth going back to Crystal to find out more about the next stages of spoken language development. We often work with deaf children with delayed spoken language, which means that we may be working with a partially deaf child of nine who is using speech in a way similar to a hearing child of five. It is very useful for practitioners to have a thorough knowledge of the expected spoken language development across the full age range. The Assessment of Comprehension and Expression 6-11 (Adams et al., 2001) is a detailed diagnostic assessment for the primary years. Once you are confident with STASS you will be in a better position to use other assessments which rely on grammatical analysis skills. Katharine Perera's book (1984), now out of print, is also worth finding second hand to explore the grammatical development in speech and writing of children over the school years.

Crystal produced his analysis of the stages in child language development in the later part of the 20th Century, and STASS builds on this fairly monolingual view of children's language development. However, we can still use this framework, particularly if we add in a translanguaging approach. That is, we will look at how in real life children are often plurilingual. They draw on their entire linguistic repertoire when they communicate, and we should not compartmentalise different languages when we are looking at the child's overall language development.



4 Grammatical Analysis for STASS

Clause level analysis

There are five elements which we use to describe the building blocks of utterances: Subject (S), Verb (V), Object (O), Complement (C) and Adverbial (A). Each element can be a single word or a group of words (or phrase).

The first examples will be ones where there is just one word for each element. By looking at the labels you can start to work out the rules for yourself. After you have looked at them, write down some rough rules which you think define the labels S, V, O, A, C and Q (Q = Question element).

Mummy... juice (child picks up cup and looks at mum) (1;4)
S O

Frog... sits (1;9)
S V

Where 's blanky? (child's word for blanket) (2;4)
Q V S

I want it. (2;4)
S V O

What 's that? (2;6)
Q V S

He's dirty (2;11)
S V C

That is just alright (2;11)
S V A

Put it there (3;0)
V O A

I gotten (3;0) (child's word for forgotten)
S V

I unflatted it. (3;6) (uncrumpling a piece of paper)
S V O



Jot down the rules you can see so far about the clause elements SVOACQ from this very small collection of data. Here are some ideas to get you started:

The Subject of the utterance seems to often go in _____ position.

The Object element is in _____ position.

The Verb element is often in _____ position. But in instructions it is in _____ position.

The Complement element seems to follow the verb _____

The adverbial element _____

Typical clause orders for a statement seem to be: _____

A typical clause order for an instruction seems to be: _____

A typical clause order for a question seems to be: _____

Now compare your generalisations with mine on page 72.

The STASS scheme uses the abbreviation Q for a question word. In most other grammars these elements are labelled as Adverbials. It is important to monitor the development of question words, so that's why they are treated separately in the STASS analysis. Elsewhere in other grammar books you will usually see question words labelled as a sub-group of Adverbials.

Now we will look at these categories in more detail and practise analysing some simple utterances.

4.1 Verb and Subject elements

As we have seen, clauses can have five different elements which all have different functions. The first element is always compulsory: the Verb element. The next element which is almost always present is the Subject of the sentence, which tells us who or what it is about. The other elements are optional and can make sentences much longer. They are the Object, the Adverbial and the Complement.

We use abbreviations for these terms:

Subject	S
Verb	V
Object	O
Adverbial	A
Complement	C

Here are some examples of simple sentences with only two elements, S and V. The slash shows the boundary of the elements in the clause. Remember the underline denotes a phrase in a clause element.

Tony / has arrived.
S V

The Subject element of this clause is in this case a proper noun, or name. The Verb element of the clause is a Verb Phrase which has an auxiliary (has) and a main verb.

My hamster / died.
S V

The Subject element of this clause is a Noun Phrase with two words in it. The Verb element of the clause is just one verb here. The order of the elements, SV, is typical of English. Other languages have their own typical clause element order.

Now identify the Subject and Verb elements in these SV sentences. To find the subject element look for the person or thing that does the action or process in the verb. Put in one slash per utterance to show the clause elements.

The oak tree has grown.

This boat is sinking.

Answers on page 72.

4.1.1 The object element O

The object element is directly affected by the verb. We don't always need an Object element in a sentence because some verbs, like *grow* and *sink* above, don't have to have an object. But a lot of verbs do need an object after, for example *tell* or *discover*.

My youngest sister / has told / him.
S V O

The boy / discovered / a hidden cave.
S V O

The SVO pattern is very common in English; the object normally follows the verb.

Some verbs can have two objects after them, for example *give*, *throw*, *tell*.

The thing that is directly affected by the verb is called the *direct object* (Od). The thing that is indirectly affected is called the *indirect object* (Oi).

I / gave / him / the book.
S V Oi Od

He / threw / my sister / the ball.
S V Oi Od

The young woman / will tell / him / her answer.
S V Oi Od

To find out which is the direct object, use the verb to make a question:

What did she give? The book. That's the direct object.

What did he throw? The ball

What will she tell? Her answer

Children actually find it very hard to produce this adult-like clause order: S V Oi Od. They often use a simpler order, and you can hear many adults do this too in speech: SVOA

He / threw / the ball / to my sister.
S V O A

We don't label *my sister* as the indirect object because this phrase is now inside an

Adverbial element starting with the word *to*. This Adverbial answers the question *where*. More about Adverbials later.

Practice at analysing SV and SVO clauses

Do a clause level analysis on these sentences. Remember to separate the clause elements clearly with slashes. Check your answers on page 72. The last one is tricky.

1. I loved the fireworks.
2. She will be wearing pink pyjamas.
3. The family ate their evening meal.
4. The children have been fighting.
5. Tony and Gerry promised to get my dad a ticket.
6. Give me a hand!

4.1.2 Adverbial element A

This element of a clause answers the question *Where? When? How? Why?* This element tells us more information about when the action happened, where it happened, how it happened or why it happened.

Where? How long?

I / have been / here / for an hour.

S V A A

Where? How long?

I / have been / in Scotland / for over eleven years.

S V A A

Where?

There / is / a light / over the door.

S V O A

If we look into the Adverbial element of a clause down to phrase level we often find a preposition phrase. For example *in Scotland*, *for over eleven years*. *In* and *for* are prepositions.

The Adverbial can also be a single adverb (eg; *here*) or a phrase (eg; *over there*).

Now do a clause level analysis on these sentences:

1. He / meandered / down the lane.
2. A battered old ex-army helicopter / flew / overhead.
3. Don't sing / so loud.
4. The two old friends / came / the day before yesterday.
5. He / came to / in a police cell.

Answers on page 72.

4.1.3 The Complement Element C

This element of the sentence gives us more information about the Subject. We will call it the Subject Complement. The Complement comes after a limited group of verbs. These are the most frequent: BE, APPEAR, SEEM, MEAN, CALLED, BECOME, REMAIN. We can think of the Subject Complement as reflecting back on the Subject.

I / am / a carer
S V C

The children / became / wild animals
S V C

You may think these Complements look very like Object elements. But they do behave differently in a number of ways. We can do a grammatical test to show the difference between C and O in a sentence.

We can substitute an adjective (e.g. *happy*) for the complement and it would make sense in an SVC clause. We can't do this with an Object element in an SVO clause:

(1) The man / hit / the ball. SVO

(1a) * The man / hit / happy. * means not possible in the language

(2) I / am / a carer. SVC

(2a) I / am / happy. SVC

It is possible to substitute an adjective for a different complement. It still makes sense.

Practice at distinguishing SVO from SVC sentences

Do a clause level analysis on these sentences. Which are SVO and which are SVC?

1. Your two children / are / very bright.
2. The water / splashed / me.
3. He / 's / mean.
4. Jessie and Mary / became / friends.
5. The shopworker / overcharged / the customer.

Answers on page 73.



4.1.4 Object Complements

There is another sort of Complement at the clause level which tells us more about the Object rather than the Subject. We still label it C. Object complements are not common in children's speech.

The long story / made / the children / sleepy.
S V O C

The committee / elected / him / secretary.
S V O C

You can see how the word *sleepy* relates to *the children*, and how the word *secretary* has the same reference as *him*.

Building up sentences with all five elements

We can now analyse all simple sentences. The common sentence patterns of English are:

Clause pattern	Example
V	Stop!
SV	The door / shut.
SVO	Lauren / climbed / the stairs.
SVC	The cat / washed / itself.
SVA	We / are going / tomorrow.
SVOA	The woman / called / me / on her mobile.
SVAA	The sauce / was bubbling / furiously / on the cooker.
SVOiOd	She / gave / me / her number.
SVOC	They/ have named / the baby / Tara.

When practitioners are learning about sentence analysis they sometimes assume that sentences all follow the SVO pattern. This is a very common pattern, but it only makes up about 50% of the clause patterns of six year-olds.

The adverbial can appear as an addition in any of these clause patterns. It is also possible to make clause patterns much longer by adding more adverbials. For example:

I / ran / along the seafront / over the bridge / for a mile or so.
S V A A A

The Adverbial element can appear in many slots in the clause structure. The other elements are much more fixed. For example:

ASV: At last / morning / came.

SAVO: He / finally / understood / me.

Revision of clausal analysis of simple sentences Put these sentences in the right row on the chart and put in the dividing slashes to show you know where each element starts. Answers on p.72.

I haven't got any money.
I pronounce you man and wife.
Someone posted me a Valentine's card.
Joanne and Pete arrived last night.
The birds were singing.
We danced all night under the stars.
Help!
The old man seemed to be angry.
There are four thousand holes in Blackburn, Lancashire.

Clause pattern	Example
V	
SV	
SVO	
SVC	
SVA	
SVOA	
SVAA	
SVOiOd	
SVOC	



4.2 Phrase level analysis

We have already seen that most clauses have elements which are more than one word long. I use the convention of underlining these phrases so that you can see they belong together. As children develop their spoken language they start to fill out each clause element to make little phrases. Crystal has a way of noting these expansions, which he sees as a good stepping-stone towards the next stage of increasing the number of

elements in a clause. If a child has utterances with only one word for each clause element but no phrase structure, then something is not going well. It could be that the child has a lack of vocabulary to fill out the phrases or perhaps she has a processing problem which prevents her building up longer utterances. The STASS assessment looks at phrase level development in a slightly simpler way than Crystal. I will introduce you to the word class labels used in phrases as they build up from simple two word phrases to much longer ones.

On page 17 of the STASS manual there is a key to the symbols. Below you can see these same symbols divided into columns: Clause level, Phrase level, Word level, Transitions. Just to introduce you to these terms now: Word level is about word morphology or word parts; Transitions is looking at the number of phrases in a clause and in which clause elements they sit. Read these columns from top to bottom, not across. For now we only need to look at the Phrase level symbols.

Table 2: Symbols for language features used for grammatical analysis

Clause level	Phrase level	Word level	Transitions
A = Adverbial element	Adj = adjective	'aux	A:AP
C = Complement element	Aux = auxiliary verb	'cop	C:NP
'N' = noun-like element at stage 1	C = conjunction	-ed	O:NP
O = Object element	Cop = copula	-en	S:NP
Q = question word	D = determiner	-er	V:VP
'Q' = question-like element stage 1	Int = intensifier	-est	
S = Subject element	N = noun	gen	
V = Verb element	Neg = negation	-ly	
VC/OA = VCO or VCA	VPart = verb + particle	n't	
		Prep	
		Pl	
		Pron 3s	

To do successful Phrase Level analysis you need to be familiar with the labels for word classes in English. I have reordered the abbreviations here to introduce you to them in a logical way. We will look at them in the order: Nouns and Noun Phrases; Verbs and Verb phrases; Adjectives; Intensifiers; Pronouns; Determiners; Prepositions; Conjunctions; Negatives; Minor fixed expressions. These phrase level abbreviations above are a shorthand for the appearance of significant development in children's evolving grammar.

4.2.1 Nouns N

Nouns are names for people, things, ideas, qualities, organisations, feelings or places. Here are some tests to help you decide if a word is a noun:

- It may have a plural ending which sounds like /s/ /z/ or /ez/, e.g. *cats, dogs, boxes*.
- You may be able to substitute another word you know is a noun in its place.
- The word often follows *the, a, any, his, her* or *many*.
- It may have a typical noun ending, eg; *-ion, -ity, -ment, -ence, -ance*.

Let's try some of these tests on a new word you meet in a child's utterance:
We got a trampoline. (2;11)

We could substitute another word we know is a noun in the same slot in the sentence and it would make sense. For example, *car*. The word follows *a*. So we can deduce *trampoline* is a noun too. We use the abbreviation N for noun.

For example: I am going to **Australia** in the **summer**.

N

N

Proper nouns are real names of people, places etc and they have capital letters in the writing system. eg; *Germany, Hannah, Mrs Robinson*.

Two nouns together NN We often use two nouns together in English:

a computer virus

N

N

the mountain path

N

N

a light bulb

N

N

It is quite hard to tell often in children's speech whether the NN sequence is one noun or two e.g. *swimming pool* *seat belt*

We are using our knowledge of writing to separate them. But to a child this is just one noun and the words run into each other.

Noun Phrase NP

A noun phrase always has a head noun in it, usually towards the end. It may have other word classes too, particularly words like *a, the*, prepositions and adjectives.

We /got /a trampoline. (2;11)

S V O
NP

Clause level analysis
Phrase level analysis

They /'re diggin up / some bit of sand, / see? (2;11)

S V O V
NP

Clause level analysis
Phrase level analysis

Self-check about nouns Without using the dictionary, write down 5 nouns in each of these categories: 1. proper nouns 2. other nouns

Now check in a dictionary to see if you were right. Remember not all proper nouns will be in the dictionary.

4.2.2 Verbs V

A verb is a not just a doing word. Verbs are words that show an action, an occurrence, a state of being, a state of mind or a relationship. For example:

Example verb	Type of verb
run	Action
die	Occurence
rot, freeze	State of being
enjoy, doubt	State of mind
rely, look after	Relationship

Try adding these examples of verbs to the table: *happen, survive, climb, need, love*. Look at the self-check heading on page 73 to check your answers.

If you want to test whether a word is a verb or not, you can try to make it into a past tense. If you can express it in the past, then it's a verb. For example: *rely*

Past sentence: I **relied** on her for helping me with childcare.
V

You can turn it into a past tense, which shows that *rely* is a verb.

Auxiliary verbs (Aux)

English verbs are often phrases of several words. There will always be a main verb, the one that carries the meaning. There are often also auxiliary verbs which, like auxiliary nurses, help the main verb do its job. The auxiliaries add extra meaning to the verb to show how or when the action happened. Here are some auxiliary verbs:

Auxiliaries from BE: *is, was, are, were, be, being, been*

Auxiliaries from HAVE: *has, have, had, having*

Auxiliaries from DO - used for making questions and the past tense: *do, does, did, done*

Modal auxiliaries: *must, might, have to, will, would, should, could, can, need ...*

Some of modal auxiliaries have negative forms too: *can't, won't, shouldn't*.

Modal verbs give us information about attitudes, beliefs, future time and the likelihood of something happening. In this example the Verb Phrase is underlined:

She /will be wearing /pink pyjamas.
Aux Aux V

wearing is the head of the Verb Phrase in this example. It has the -ing form.

The STASS form has a special box to note auxiliaries; the following ones are counted:

have, can, be, do, will, might, could

Although BE and WILL are actually part of the same verb, they are counted separately on the STASS form.

Two verbs together (VV)

When two main verbs appear together in a verb phrase they are recorded in STASS as VV:

sitting down watching (2;11)
V V Phrase level analysis

Let 's jump in (3;6)
V S Clause level analysis. V element is split (let.... jump in)
V V Phrase level analysis.

Let jump is recorded as VV.

Copula (Cop)

A copula verb is one of a limited group of verbs which connect Subject and Complements in SVC utterances. For example:

The cat / is / sick.
S V C Clause level analysis
Cop Phrase level analysis

That / 's / a little boat. (2;11)
S V C Clause level analysis
Cop Phrase level analysis
'cop Word level analysis

Here we have used the abbreviation 'cop to show that the copula is reduced to just the /s/ sound. When we move on to look at Word level analysis, we see that both Crystal and STASS record this as significant. Deaf children will often miss that sound out if they can't hear it.

Copula verbs are not always made from BE. Here are the other main ones:

look, feel, taste, smell, sound, seem, appear, get, become, grow, stay, keep, turn, go, remain, run, lie

BE is the most common one in children's speech.

Here is an example of a different copula verb:

My medicine / tastes /yummy. (3;6)

S	V	C	Clause level analysis
	Cop		Phrase level analysis

Verb with a Particle (V Part)

As well as having auxiliaries, the verb phrase can be made up of a verb with a particle. The particle is so closely attached to the verb that it is analysed as a unit. In English these are called *phrasal verbs*. The particle looks a bit like a preposition (see page 27) but we call it a particle when it's so closely associated with the verb. Crystal's abbreviation is V Part.

For example: *tie up, tell off, tip over, calm down, bump into, dream up, bring up*.

These particles attached to verbs are particularly difficult for people learning English as very often they don't seem to carry any obvious meaning. A learner may know the meaning of *off* and the meaning of *tell*, but the meaning of *tell off* is not just a combination of the parts but a new meaning. Good learners' dictionaries will list the verbs and particles, often as PHR VERB (or phrasal verb).

The development of VPart in a child's language is a good indication that they are progressing well and they can express more complex ideas; that's why Crystal has drawn attention to it.

If you are interested to find out more about phrasal verbs or VPart, have a look at this online phrasal verbs dictionary:

<http://www.englishpage.com/prepositions/phrasaldictionary.html>

Words that can be verbs or nouns

Some words can be verbs or nouns, for example *hand, fish, fly*. The dictionary will show this.

Verb *Hand* me the hammer.

Noun He has beautiful *hands*.

Self-check about verbs

- Can you think of a sentence with more than three auxiliaries? Write it out. Underline the verb phrase and identify the main verb.
- Think of two more words which are both nouns and verbs. Write out an example sentence for each. Check in the dictionary to see if you are right.

4.2.3 Adjectives (Adj)

Adjectives are words that tell you more about a noun or a pronoun. For example: *hot, tall, quiet, loving*. We say the adjective modifies the noun.

Checking to see if a word is an adjective

One fairly reliable way to test if a word is an adjective or not is to use the VERY test. Try putting *very* in front of the word and see if it makes sense:

very tired tired is an adjective.

* *very cowering* cowering is not an adjective.

This test works because you are a confident user of English and can rely on your intuition about language rules.

Adjective endings

As children reach the primary age they will meet a wider range of adjectives used in their school subjects, *shiny/reflective* for example. Adjectives often have typical endings which can help to identify them. For example: -able, -al, -ate, -an, -ant, -ent, -ful, -ist, -ive, -less, -ory, -ous, -some, -wise, -y. But not all words with these endings are adjectives! (For example, principal and baby are both nouns).

Some adjectives look as if they are verbs because they have -ing or -ed endings. Look up *interested/interesting* in the dictionary. Can you see the different sections for the use of this word as adjectives and verbs? Here are some example sentences to show the differences:

Grammar/ interested /me.

S	V	O	
	Verb		Clause level analysis
			Phrase level analysis

She /'s / an interesting person.

S	V	C	
Cop		Adj N	Clause level analysis
			Phrase level analysis

Where adjectives go in a phrase or clause

Adjectives are usually part of a noun phrase. The noun phrase (abbreviation NP) has a head noun which usually comes at the end of the NP; the adjective usually precedes the head noun:

the old boat
Adj N

the tired woman
Adj N

Adjectives can also slot into a clause pattern where they complement the Subject of the sentence. Look at this sentence which has both phrase level and clause level analysis:

The earth / is / huge.

S	V	C	
NP	V	Adj	Clause level analysis
			Phrase level analysis

Numbers

Cardinal (*one, two, three*) and ordinal (*first, second, third*) numbers can be seen as a type of adjective. They go in front of nouns and they give us information about the noun. Notice though that numbers don't obey the very test.

two chickens
Adj N

three quiet little mice
Adj Adj Adj N

Personal pronouns

Pronoun type	Position in clause	Example
I, you, he, she, it, we, they	Subject	He is untidy. S V C
me, you, him, her, us, them	Object	Robert likes her. S V O

Other types of pronoun

Pronoun type	Position in clause	Example
mine, yours, hers, ours, theirs sometimes called possessive pronouns	Subject, Object, Complement	That car / is / theirs S V C
myself, herself, himself, itself, ourselves, themselves sometimes called reflexive pronouns	Complement	The cat / washed / herself S V C

Relative pronouns

who, whose, which, that, when ...

This is an important group of pronouns which introduce a dependent clause. They refer to a person or thing. STASS doesn't count dependent clauses, because there are not many in children's speech by age 5. They do often turn up in the STASS data though, particularly when the child brings up something away from the assessment of interest to them.

*Is / that / the house **which** you used to own?*
V S O

We can go inside the Object element and see we have a further level of clause analysis to do because there is another verb in this little clause:

*the house [**which** / you / used to own?]*
s S V

The abbreviation *s* is used by Crystal to stand for a *subordinating* word such as *which*. The subordinating word *s* refers back to the noun it follows; *house* in this example.

The STASS assessment doesn't discuss this feature, which is introduced by Crystal at Stage Five. We do sometimes find children as young as three using relative clauses in their speech, so we need to be able to recognise these complex utterances. They are a sign of excellent language development. For example:

He /'s / dirty / cos he's been in the mud. (3;6)
S V C A
Cos / he /'s been / in the mud
s S V A

Demonstrative pronouns

this, that, these, those, what

For example, Which cup do you want, *this* or *that*?

Pronouns are an important group in the STASS score sheet. The following pronouns are noted for young children:

he, I, it, they, she, that, you, her, him, them

Self-check on pronouns Do you think this utterance is in Standard English? Explain why or why not.

Me and Tony are twins.

Write sentences including the pronouns *ours, theirs, these, those*.

Self-check on word classes: nouns, verbs, adjectives, pronouns

Look at the passage in the box below. Use the word class abbreviations: N, V, Aux, VPart, Adj and Pron to label the words. Don't label the greyed out words as we haven't covered them yet.

My name is Kathy H. I am thirty-one years old, and I have been a carer now for over eleven years. That sounds a long time, I know, but actually they want me to go on for another eight months, until the end of this year. That will make it almost exactly twelve years.

Adapted from the first paragraph of *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro.
See p. 74 to check.

4.2.6 Determiners (D)

This is a class of word which goes before nouns, like adjectives. But they don't give you any more detail about what things look like or feel like, as adjectives do. Instead they tell you more about the relationship between the nouns they premodify. Here are some determiners:

the, a, an, these, this, my, his, its, your, their, this, that, what, every, each, either, some, any, another, no, much, what, enough, our

We use the abbreviation D for determiners.

The articles: the / a / an

This is a sub-group of determiners which come at the beginning of the noun phrase and give us information about nouns. In fact, it is quite hard for us to become conscious of just how much meaning is carried by these small words.

The function of *the* and *a* is to provide reference to shared or new information. Articles are often the last feature of English acquired by people learning it as a second or foreign language, and they are also often very late in developing in deaf children. They are spoken quickly and quietly and are usually unstressed.

Position of articles

The article comes at the start of the noun phrase. Other words like adjectives go before the head noun. For example:

the helicopter

the battered, old helicopter

the battered, old, ex-army helicopter

D Adj Adj N N

Phrase level analysis

Possessive determiners: my, his, her, its, your, our, their,

my house *his private jet*
 D N D Adj N

her rights *its lid*
 D N D N

your two children *their books*
 D Adj N D N

our father
 D N

You may think these words look rather like the pronouns we mentioned in section 4.2.5. We call them determiners here because they can't stand in place of a noun. Instead they go in front of a noun. They are dependent on the noun. These determiners, just like *a* and *the*, give us more information about the relationships between the nouns being discussed. We call these words 'determiners' because they help us work out, or determine, which thing we are talking about and who it belongs to.

This way of classifying words such as *his*, *your* and *my* has been generally accepted since the 1990s. When Armstrong and Ainley produced their STASS assessment they classified these words as pronouns. This is why *his*, *your*, *my* appear in the pronoun box. It doesn't really matter very much – the development of both pronouns and determiners are an important sign of progress in the noun phrase and we need to pay attention to both of them.

this, that, these, those, some

When these words are dependent on the noun, and in front of the noun, they are called determiners. For example:

this town, *that woman,* *these shoes,* *those children,* *some people*
 DN DN DN DN DN

As we have seen before, some words can be in two different word classes at the same time. Here are some examples of the words above in different structures where they are not being determiners, but pronouns:

This is a book. Pron
I can't stand that! Pron
These are my friends. Pron
Those are her slippers. Pron
I want some. Pron

Self-check on determiners

Try labelling these sentences correctly with the word classes D, N, Int, Adj, Pron.
 See p. 74 to check.

the old river boat

his car

a little girl and a big man (3;6)

It 's too big. (2;11)
 V

4.2.7 Prepositions (Prep)

Examples of prepositions: *in, on, during, next to, behind, against, towards, above, near, of, off, to, from...* This is a closed class of words – that means there is a limit to them. Some prepositions are 2 or 3 words, eg; next to, in front of.

Prepositions tell you about

- time: *during* the evening, *throughout* the morning, *after* the lecture
- space: *on* the desk, *under* the streetlight, *in* the basin
- logical relationships: owing *to*, because *of*, in comparison *with*

Prepositions are particularly difficult for learners who have been deaf from a young age because they are often unstressed and they can be spoken very quickly and quietly. Many have indistinct lip patterns. Prepositions may seem to have very unclear meaning for people learning English. Even the category of preposition that describes place seems imprecise. Look at these different meanings of *over* for example:

There's a light *over* the door.
They threw a ball *over* to her.
They live *over* the road.
Leaves lay all *over* the ground.
They splashed water all *over* me.

We use the abbreviation Prep for prepositions. Here is a phrase with a preposition in it:

in the cup (2;11)

Prep D N

As we saw in the section on Verbs, many verbs have particles following them which have the same form as prepositions. It's important to be able to classify *to* correctly:

<i>He wandered over to the office.</i>	<i>Preposition – movement</i>	<i>Prep</i>
<i>I am going to leave now.</i>	<i>Part of verb phrase</i>	<i>VV</i>
<i>He came to in a police cell.</i>	<i>Phrasal verb</i>	<i>VPart</i>

The STASS assessment focuses on a particular group of prepositions which are the first ones to emerge: *in, inside, on, under, underneath, behind, beside, next to, between, in front.*

It is tempting to count VPart as prepositions. But it is probably better to consider phrasal verbs separately.

Self-check on prepositions

Without looking in the dictionary, explain each of these phrases which use the preposition *on* to someone who is learning the language. You can use pictures, diagrams or translation to BSL if you want.

1. Put it on the table.
2. Hang your coat on that hook.
3. He was on the plane.
4. We meet on Wednesday afternoons.
5. On arriving at work I found I had been sacked.
6. He's an expert on newts.
7. She's on the council.

Decide if these sentences have *to* as a preposition, part of a verb phrase or as a phrasal verb:

Ali came *to* in the operation and could feel everything.

She helped me *to* lift the pushchair up the steps.

How long is it *to* lunch?

Answers on page 74.



4.2.8 Conjunctions (c)

These are words which connect other words, phrases or clauses together. There are different groups of conjunctions:

Co-ordinating conjunctions *and, or, but, for, nor, yet, so*

Examples:

um um he he had his own room and he he had a pointy thing and a machine you see (3;11)

Subordinating conjunctions *cos, if, when, so that...*

Crystal uses two abbreviations here:

Co-ordinating conjunctions = c

Subordinating conjunctions = s

STASS uses just *c* because it is not concerned with children's speech beyond stage 4. Children often start using 'cos about the age of three or four. That is, they are ready to subordinate a small clause to a larger clause. When they first start using 'cos they don't always use it in the same way adults would:

It wants its parcel because it's giving it to the snowman. (2;11)

This child didn't know the name *Father Christmas* and has also not yet worked out how to use *give* in an utterance; it's a difficult verb to use because it takes two objects. Perhaps she didn't have enough cultural background knowledge to know that Father Christmas gives and children receive presents.

4.2.9 Negatives (Neg X, Neg V)

Neg X is a group of two or more words, one of which is negative. For example:
no a man, not car

Neg V is any negative verb phrase. For example,
Doesn't weren't hadn't not sleeping never gone

4.2.10 Minor/fixed expressions

Minor sentences are things like this: *Yes. No. Oh! Hi. Hey! Yeah. Umm.*
And they include some fixed expressions which are frozen. They can't be broken down, changed, or analysed:

*First come, first served.
Good morning.
Just my luck.*

The STASS scheme doesn't note these, but Crystal does.

Revision check

Now we can go back to the passage we analysed before and complete it. This time just label the words which are grey:

My name is Kathy H. I am thirty-one years old, and I have been a carer now for over eleven years. That sounds a long time, I know, but actually they want me to go on for another eight months, until the end of this year. That will make it almost exactly twelve years.

Answers on page 74.

Conclusion of section 4.2 about phrase level analysis

We now know how to classify nearly any word we come across in children's spontaneous language. These abbreviations will be useful when we analyse verb and noun phrases. When we are doing STASS we don't need to analyse the content of every single NP and VP we meet. We are looking just for some common patterns which emerge in the language sample we elicit with the pictures.

Here is the list of STASS Phrase level features with two examples of each pattern I gathered from child language elicited with the test materials. Most of these examples are Noun Phrases (NP) or Verb Phrases (VP). The examples with full stops are full utterances with clause structure; the rest are just phrases. Where you see X in the table, it means this can be any other phrase feature. It is the combination which is important.

Table 4: Phrases from children's speech in stages

	Phrase feature	Example 1	Example 2
Stage 2	DN	a cat	the man
	Adj N	little boat	happy dog
	NN	man dad	cat tail
	Prep N	in sea	on cup
	VV	went swimming	likes to play
	V Part	fallen off	take off
	Int X	too big	freezing cold
Stage 3	D Adj N	a brown one	her old top
	Adj Adj N	big, red flower	tiny little boat
	Prep D N	on the cup	in the house
	N Adj N	house big house	teddy old jumper
	Cop	He is dirty.	It tastes yummy.
	Aux	is giving	They'll crash.
	Pron	He's under the cup.	They'll crash.
	Prep Adj N	in big house	under big one
Stage 4	N Prep NP	back of the cup	bottom of the cup
	Prep D Adj N	with his big foot	Without any hard stones
	cX	But now they need the toilet.	or they'll fall out.
	XcX	eyes and nose	a lady and a boy
	Neg V	doesn't have	didn't take off
	Neg X	not a mouth	no seat belt
	2 Aux	has been painting	would have finished

When we look at real samples of children's speech, remember that their grammar doesn't have to conform to ours. They will slowly move towards an adult grammar. What we are doing is recording what they are doing now, not passing judgement on it.

4.3 Word level features

Now we have looked at Clause level and Phrase level analysis, the next level to look at is the individual word. This is fairly easy to identify because it is usually obvious by the form of the word.

-ing whether these are adjectives or verbs, the -ing ending is tallied up.

Pl the plural ending is counting whether it is regular (like horse/horses) or irregular (like foot/feet).

-ed the past tense of the verb is tallied as -ed whether it is a regular verb such as walk/walked or an irregular verb like fall/fell. Even if the child makes an error with the past tense, it is still recorded, eg; fall/felled.

-en This form of the verb is sometimes called the past participle.

Every verb in English has 5 forms:

For example, the verb *run* has 5 forms which you can see if you look at the verb RUN in the Cobuild dictionary or this learners dictionary:

<https://www.learnersdictionary.com/definition/run>

1. run - this is the root used for the present tense
2. runs - this is the form used for the third person singular with he/she/it in the present tense.
(abbreviation 3S)
3. running - this is the continuous form, sometimes called the participle, used for making continuous constructions showing duration. (abbreviation -ing)
4. ran - this is the past form
5. run - this is the form used for making **the perfect** and **the passive**. We can use the abbreviation -en for this form.

All verbs in English have five forms. For regular verbs, the perfect and passive will be the same. The STASS assessment is interested in the emergence of the -en form in irregular verbs.

For example, *walk* is a regular verb:

1. <i>walk</i>	2. <i>walks</i>	3. <i>walking</i>	4. <i>walked</i>	5. <i>walked</i>	
present	3s	-ing	-ed	-ed	Word level analysis

Whereas *fly* is an irregular verb:

1. <i>fly</i>	2. <i>Flies</i>	3. <i>flying</i>	4. <i>flew</i>	5. <i>flown</i>	
present	3s	-ing	-ed	-en	Word level analysis

You may think it strange to record *flew* as -ed when it is irregular. We hope that the language sample in STASS may give children the opportunity to demonstrate several irregular past tenses in their speech.

What is the perfect?

It is a way of using the verb phrase to refer to recent events, or things that have happened which are linked to the present. We form the perfect with the auxiliary HAVE and the -en or 5th form of the verb. For example:

He has just flown in from New York.

Aux V

-en

Phrase level analysis

Word level analysis

1. fly 2. flies 3. flying 4. flew 5. flown

She's fallen over in the playground.

Aux V

-en

Phrase level analysis

Word level analysis

1. fall 2. falls 3. falling 4. fell 5. fallen

What is the passive?

It is a way of changing the clause structure to show that the person who did the main action is not known, or not important. We form the passive with the auxiliary BE and the -en or 5th form of the verb.

For example:

The car / was stolen / last night.

S

V

A

Aux V

-en

Clause level analysis

Phrase level analysis

Word level analysis

In this sentence the focus is on the car and it is not important or perhaps unknown who actually stole it. Passives are used a lot in news reporting because of this lack of information. They also appear in science texts at schools when processes are being described.

At the clause level this sentence has been changed round from an original active sentence, for example:

The boys / stole / the car / last night.

S

V

O

A

-ed

Clause level analysis

Word level analysis

To make an active verb into a passive, the speaker moves the object into first position and changes the verb to the 5th form using the auxiliary BE. It is a difficult construction to make and Crystal only notes its emergence at Stage VI (3;6-4;6 typically).

The gorilla / was seen../..by the people. (5;4)

S

V

A

3S -ed/ -en

Clause level analysis

Word level analysis

In this sentence, was is an example of both 3S and -ed at Word level.

Early emerging passives often use *has* as the auxiliary verb with GOT:

He /'s got painted / by that brush. (2;11)

S

V

A

Aux Aux V

3S -ed -en

Clause level analysis

Phrase level analysis

Word level analysis

It is difficult to know what to do with regular verbs on the STASS form in the perfect or passive. There is no -en ending to the verb. For example, the perfect: *I have just arrived*. Or the passive: *The leaflet was printed yesterday*. I suggest we don't count these as -en

forms. They are correctly made with the right auxiliary. But we are looking at Word level analysis here and the form of these regular verbs in the perfect or passive is not the 5th form of the verb, usually with an -en ending. What STASS is doing is really focusing on the irregular verbs and whether the child uses -en endings such as:

I've fallen over (perfect construction)

She's been eaten by the monster (a passive)

3S In the present tense when the child is talking about he/she/it the verb ends in -s. This is called the third person singular. For example:

He's under the cup. (2;11) She sits there. This one doesn't have a hole. It's sailing away. He's got a fish.

Gen Genitive, meaning *belonging to*. We show the belonging to relationship by adding an /s/ or /z/ sound in speech or an apostrophe s in writing. Children who don't yet use the Gen marker will just put the two nouns together.

the cat's tail

mummy's car

n't The negative ending in words like *doesn't, didn't, won't, couldn't* etc.

'aux A contracted auxiliary verb, which is often just an /s/ or /z/ sound. For example:

It's sailing away.

The full auxiliary verb: IS from BE

He's got a fish.

The full auxiliary verb: HAS

They'll crash.

The full auxiliary verb: WILL

We're hungry.

The full auxiliary verb: ARE from BE

-est The ending of an adjective when it is made into a superlative.

-er The ending of an adjective when it is made into a comparative.

big, bigger, biggest

-ly The ending on an adverb. Not all adverbs have the -ly ending. Only count those adverbs which do end -ly. Remember not all words ending -ly are adverbs.

Adjective *quick careful quiet beautiful loud*

Adverb *quickly carefully quietly beautifully loudly*

By the way, you may have noticed by listening that the -ly adverb ending is dying out in spoken English. This is the end of the Word level analysis section.

4.4 Expansion features

The last feature to look for is quite straightforward, so long as you have underlined the words in the phrases on your transcript. The right-hand column of Table 2 above shows the expansions which STASS records. E.g. O:NP. Here is an example:

They /need / the toilet.

S	V	O	Clause level analysis
		NP	Phrase level analysis

We can see the Object element of this clause is a noun phrase. On both the STASS form and with the Crystal profile this is recorded as: XY+O:NP

This means that the sentence has three clause elements, one of which is the Object and this is a noun phrase. It doesn't matter what the other two elements are, which is why they are listed as XY.

Expansions are an important sign of progress in language development. If a child can't expand elements into little noun or verb phrases then they may have a very small vocabulary or perhaps a working memory difficulty.

Here are all the expansions listed on the STASS form with an example for each:

Stage	Expansion code	Example	Understanding the code
Stage 2	X+S:NP	<u>My teddy</u> / broken. S C	The Subject element is a noun phrase and there is one other element, called X rather than C here.
	X+V:VP	<u>was digging</u> /down V A	The Verb element is a verb phrase, and there is another element, called X here rather than A.
	X+C:NP	Me / <u>a monkey</u> . S C	The complement element is a Noun Phrase, and there is another element, called X here rather than S.
	X+O:NP	drive / <u>his car</u> V O	The Object element is a Noun Phrase, and there is another element, called X here rather than V.
	X+A:AP	Daddy / <u>up top</u> . S A	The Adverbial element is a Adverbial Phrase, and there is another element, called X here rather than S.
Stage 3	XY +S:NP	<u>My medicine</u> / tastes / yummy. S V C	The Subject element is a noun phrase and there are two other elements, called XY rather than VC here.
	XY +V:VP	He / <u>'ll get</u> /there. S V A	The Verb element is a verb phrase and there are two other elements, called XY rather than SA here.
	XY +C:NP	He / 's / <u>big man</u> S V C	The Complement element is a noun phrase and there are two other elements, called XY rather than SV here.
	XY +O:NP	They / bump / <u>each other's cars</u> . S V O	The Object element is a noun phrase and there are two other elements, called XY rather than SV here.
	XY +A:AP	He /'s / <u>under the cup</u> . S V A	The Adverbial element is an Adverbial phrase and there are two other elements, called XY rather than SV here.

Crystal goes on to look at expansions at Stage Four. Although the STASS form doesn't have room for it, it's worth recording more complex clauses which also have expansions.

For example:

I / fallen off / my scooter / one time. (2;11)
S V O A

This could be recorded as: XYZ+O:NP then XYZ+ A:AP

This is particularly impressive in a child who is not yet three.



5 Getting to know the STASS forms

5.1 STASS Data Sheet

This form is a landscape form with a target response for each picture prompt and space to write the child's response. When you start using STASS it is a good idea to audio or video record the first few assessments so that you can focus on exactly what the child is saying. As you get more experienced, you can write down the response quickly on this form. If the child makes the expected response, just tick the left-hand target column. To save time you can annotate the target response if it is fairly similar. For deaf teachers carrying out STASS, I would suggest asking a colleague who also uses language assessments or a trusted Access to Work colleague to provide the top line of the transcription, then you can do the analysis.

5.2 Detailed Analysis Form

This form is a blank with a line for the response, copied from the Data Sheet, and five lines for the analysis. The analysis moves through the levels from Clause to Phrase to Word to Expansions and finally there is more focus on Auxiliaries, Prepositions and Pronouns. A worked example in section 7 will show the types of decision you need to make to complete the analysis. The analysis stage will probably a few hours the first time. As you become more experienced, it will take much less time.

5.3 STASS Rapid Assessment Score Sheet

The forms can be photocopied and are in Appendix One. The STASS form is also reproduced here as we are going to look at it in detail.

This is the summary sheet which gives an overview of the child's spoken English development. As well as recording the child's name, their age in years and months and the date, it is useful to record your own name as colleagues may need to check details with you in the future.

Starting from the top this form is organised into Crystal's Stages from 1-4 down the page. There are no age norms on the chart, though you can look at page 8 of this booklet to find Crystal's suggestions for typical ages for each stage of spoken language development.

Looking only at rows 1-4 on the STASS form, the first column shows the Clause level analysis, the next shows Phrase level analysis, and the third shows Word level features. The final column, only needed for Stages 2 and 3, shows Expansions.

The bottom row of the Score Sheet shows more detail about some of the words used in phrases. The first box is for auxiliary verbs, the second for prepositions and the third for pronouns. As we have noted before, some determiners appear in the pronoun box, but this is probably because of a different way of analysing grammatical features.

There is some space for recording other information at the bottom. I often mark features beyond stage 4 which I find in the language sample, for example features of subordination or a wider range of prepositions.

You may decide just to file this summary form with the child's records. I think there is an advantage in keeping all of the forms because it's very useful to look back at the detail next time a review is being made of the child's spoken language.

STASS Rapid Assessment Score Sheet

1. CLAUSE

Q
N
V
Other

NAME
AGE
DATE
PHONOLOGY
COMPREHENSION

2. CLAUSE

QX
SV
SC
SO
NegX
VC
VO
AX

PHRASE

DN
AdjN
NN
PREP N
VV
V Part
Int X

WORD

-ING
PL
-ED
-EN
3S

EXPANSION

X+S:NP
X+V:VP
X+C:NP
X+O:NP
X+A:AP

3. CLAUSE

QXY
VS
SVC
SVO
SVA
NEG XY
V C/O A
VOO

PHRASE

DAdjN
AdjAdjN
PREP D N
N Adj N
COP
AUX
PRON
PREP Adj N

WORD

GEN
NT
'COP
'AUX

EXPANSION

XY+S:NP
XY+V:VP
XY+C:NP
XY+O:NP
XY+A:AP

4. CLAUSE

QVS
QXYZ
VS(X+)
SVCA
SVOA
SVOO
AAXY

PHRASE

N PREP NP
PREP D Adj N
eX
XeX
NEG V
NEG X
2 AUX

WORD

-EST
-ER
-LY

5. AUXILIARIES

HAVE
CAN
BE
DO
WILL
MIGHT
COULD

PREPOSITIONS

IN / INSIDE
ON
UNDER / UNDERNEATH
BEHIND
BESIDE / NEXT TO
BETWEEN
IN FRONT

PRONOUNS

HE	THAT
HIS	YOU
I	MY
IT	HER
THEY	HIM
SHE	THEM
YOUR	

6 Arranging the assessment

You will need parental permission for doing any assessment; most services for deaf children organise this early on in their contact with families. It is important to explain to parents why you are doing the assessment, and what conclusions you may draw from it. Make sure you tell parents the limitations as well as the advantages of using STASS. Parents who have used the Early Support Monitoring Protocol (DfES 2006) may know a lot about early language development from the sections on Communication and Attending or from the section called Early Grammar in the Level 2 materials. It is positive when parents are interested and able to access this information. When you talk to the parents, make it clear you are not testing the child. You are trying to find out the level they are currently at so you can see their progress, pass the news on to the parents, and plan next steps in your language activities with the child and the family.

It helps if you already know the child you are going to be assessing. If you don't, give yourself some warm up time to play with the child and let them feel relaxed. Sit down at their level, or find somewhere comfortable to sit where you can hold the picture prompts up to them and write down their responses. If you are using a video camera, arrange the room so the camera is pointing away from a window and the light is on the child. Seeing the child's face can help with transcribing when you start. Set the video camera up before the child comes into the room and don't draw attention to it.

Don't deviate from the script. It's tempting to reword the prompt to encourage the child to say something more, but try just to repeat the prompt.

Tell the parents you can't draw conclusions very quickly from this assessment and make sure you get back to them with an informal summary of your findings within a day or so. This is important because parents often worry about their children's language development.

Summary: What are the advantages and disadvantages of using STASS?

Advantages:

- It is quick to collect a language sample which covers a wide range of structures.
- The assessment has been normed on over 200 children. So it is possible to report results, for example by saying the child has achieved better than 75% of 5-year olds.
- It is quite straightforward to score.

Disadvantages:

- Practitioners may find it laborious at first to score the assessment.
- It is difficult to make any generalisations about the performance of children from families where English is not the main language used at home.
- Children in a free play situation are likely to produce more complex language than that elicited by the pictures. So the results may underestimate the child's true levels.
- Age related norms may not be not a suitable way of reporting results of assessments in deaf children, especially if the deaf child has not had exposure to a full natural language from a young age. Reporting results in this way can be upsetting for parents.
- The STASS pictures are really only suitable for children up to about the age of nine.

7 Analysing data – decisions and examples

We are going to use a complete set of data from a hearing girl called Katie (3;6) and discuss how it is analysed. Katie's responses to the STASS assessment are repeated in full in Appendix Two. To make sense of these responses you need to look at the STASS picture prompt book.

7.1 Clause level analysis

For the first sweep through the data we are only going to analyse those utterances which are complete clauses. If it is just a phrase, for example NP or VP, we will leave it till the next level of analysis. Below I discuss cases where it is difficult to decide what to do. This leaves us with the following data, which we then analyse at Clause level. Underline any clause elements you find which have more than one word in them; these are phrases which we will analyse later.

I use the symbol + for a pause and + + + for a long pause.

1. *girl* + + + *sitting down*

There was a very long gap between the Subject and the Verb here so I decided that it was not a clause.

2. *He's* + *he 's* / *digging* / *a hole*.
 S V O

3. *He* / *hasn't got* / *any eyes or mouth*.
 S V O

4. *He* / *having* / *a basketball* / *on the grass* + / *without any hard stones*.
 S V O A A

5a. *On the on the edge of the on the bottom of the cup*.
These are phrases, so leave them till later.

5b. *He/ 's* / *in the cup*
 S V A

6. *the happy dog*. This is a phrase.

I think he's a mite? sad.

This seems to be a clause. One word is unintelligible but the clause could still be analysed. It could be bit or mite.

I think he's a bit sad.
 S V O

The object element is a little clause itself; it's a subordinate clause. So we can analyse this too:

He /'s / a bit sad.

S V C

We will enter both on the summary sheet, and also note in the space at the bottom that Katie has used subordination which appears beyond the level of this STASS assessment.

7. *cos it /'s /too big.*

S V C

We will ignore the 'cos which is a feature of subordination for now as it's the answer to a question.

8. *a cat + a tail* This is a phrase, so ignore it till the next level of analysis.

9. *He/ falled/ off his bike.*

S V A

10. *is /a tiny boat*

V C

This clause is a response to the prompt: *This is a big boat and ...*

11. *slow.* This isn't a phrase. We may be able to use it at the Word level.

He / wants to win / and / she / doesn't.

S V c S V

This lovely comment sentence shows features of ellipsis. That is, Katie knows she doesn't have to repeat the full verb phrase, *doesn't want to win*. She just uses the auxiliary, *doesn't*. Ellipsis is not marked in the STASS assessment, but Crystal notes it as a feature of Stage 7.

12. *a red flower. A red flower. a big flower*

13a. *under the cup*

13b. *beside the cup*

These are all phrases.

14. *they/ 'll bump in*

S V


I have taken the verb to be a phrasal verb, *bump into*.

15. *he / can't.*

S V

The fish will just fall out.

S V A



Adverbials like *just* can interrupt a verb phrase. You could put a double arrow underneath to show there is one verb element.

16. *he 's spilt his milk.*
S V O

17. *I can't stay up*
S V A

This is the sort of wonderful child-like perspective on the world which makes you glad you work with little children! She means she can jump, but she can't stay up in the air as the boy in the picture appears to be doing to her.

Cos it 's a picture.
s S V C

cos is a subordinator

18. *a little girl and a big man dad + no seat belt*
These are both phrases.

or they 'll fall out
c S V A
or is a co-ordinator.

19. *cos they have been in the sea.*
s S V A

Swimming pool a phrase

Swim in the sea. Record as SX, that is an Adverbial plus another clause element.
V A

Katie now tells me a story which shows how much more advanced her language is compared to the limited responses to the assessment items:

I have been + I have been + in sea + one day + when I was at nanas and papas.
S V A A A

This clause has 5 elements: SVAAA. So it is well beyond what we can record on this STASS form. We could note it in the space at the bottom. In addition the last adverbial element is a clause in its own right because it has a verb, so we can analyse it again.

when I was at nanas and papas.
s S V A

and it was freezing cold.
c S V C

and I cried
c S V
You know what,
S V O

I had my shoes on and Sarah had her old top on.
S V O c S V O




In both cases in this balanced construction the verb element is split by the object. So Katie shows she knows the rules about how phrasal verbs work.

and I went 'Come Sarah let's jump in'
 c S V O

This direct speech is a clause in its own right:

'Come Sarah let 's jump in'
 V S V S



The Verb element of the last clause is split.

and he said 'Aagh!'
 c S V O

20a. He 's dirty.
 S V C

20b. cos he 's been in mud.
 s S V A

No he 's been painting himself.
 S V C

21. He 'll fall in.
 S V

22. cos he doesn't want it.
 s S V O

My medicine tastes yummy.
 S V C

23. in the big house.

This is just a phrase.

24a. + + + at the back of the cup

24b. at the front of the cup

Phrases – ignore for now.

25. he he he he (unintelligible)

Leave this out as there is no phrase or clause to analyse.

26. Where 's my shoes?
 Q V S

To see why the question clause has this structure, turn the elements round: My shoes are where? SVA. In STASS we record question words as Q, but actually they are a type of Adverbial. Record as QXY.

27. bigger, bigger, + + biggest

No clause or phrase structure. We will wait till the Word analysis to look at this further.

28. brush your teeth. Brush your teeth. +
 V O V O

I would only record this once as it's an exact repeat. To see why the command clause has this structure, imagine you are inserting the name of a person at the front:

(You) brush your teeth.

(S) V O

She says 'open your mouth'.

S V O

As before we have direct speech with a little clause:

open your mouth

V O

This item requires the child to imagine that he/she is the mother. Many children can't do this by four years old, especially when in the picture there is someone like themselves. Language development and a growing theory of mind are closely linked (See Woolfe et al., 2002).

29. *beside each other. Beside the cups.*

These are phrases.

30. *cos she 's been in the sea.*

s S V A

31. *cos he didn't take his clothes off.*

s S V O ↑

SVO sentence. The Verb element is split by the Object.

32. *Santa 's giving her a parcel.*

S V Oi Od

This is recorded on the score sheet as SVOO.

Now we have finished the first level of analysis we can enter the results in the first column of the Rapid Assessment Score Sheet.

Use the blank Score sheet in Appendix One and enter the tallies in column one (only use rows 1-4). Then check your answers against mine in the Answers on page 75.

7.2 Phrase level analysis

Next we will look right through the data again, including those ones which were not in clauses. This is the most time-consuming part of the analysis. Remember we are only looking for the patterns on the STASS sheet. There may well be other phrase patterns in our data, but we ignore them to save time. I have put the stage in brackets to allow for easy transfer to the STASS Score Sheet form.

1. *sitting down*

V Part (2)

2. *'s digging a hole*

Aux (3) D N (2)

3. *hasn't got any eyes or mouth.*

Aux NegV D N c N Record as XcX (4) (3) (4)

4. *a basketball on the grass without any hard stones.*
D N (2) Prep D N (3) Prep D Adj N (4)

5a. *On the on the edge of the on the bottom of the cup.*
Ignore this – repeats Prep D N Prep D N

If you record this as PrepDN x 2 at Stage 3 it is not really giving credit for the phrase's complexity. I would record it as N Prep NP even though it is actually NP Prep NP (4).

5b. *in the cup*
Prep D N (3)

6. *the happy dog*
D Adj N (3)

a bit sad
D Adj

I would classify a bit as one determiner But it's more complex than (2). Hard to fit into the chart so leave it out.

7. *too big*
Int Adj Recorded as Int X (2)

8. *a cat + a tail*
DN DN (2)

9. *fallen off his bike.*
V Part DN (1)

10. *a tiny boat*
D Adj N (3)

11. *wants to win*
V V (2)

12. *a red flower A red flower a big flower*
D Adj N D Adj N (3)

13a. *under the cup*
Prep D N (3)

13b. *beside the cup*
Prep D N (3)

14. *'ll bump in*
Aux VPart (3 & 1)

15. *The fish will fall out*
DN Aux VPart
(2) (3 & 2)

16. *'s spilt his milk.*
Aux (3) DN (2)

17. *can't stay up*
Aux / Neg V / VPart
(3) (4) (2)

a picture
D N (2)

18. *a little girl and a big man dad*
D Adj N D Adj N N (3) Also record as XcX (4) Really beyond level 4

no seat belt
Neg X (4)

'll fall out
Aux VPart
(3) (2)

19. *have been in the sea*
Aux Prep D N (3)
Look back to the data sheet to check that *been* is a main verb here. It is not two auxiliaries.

Swimming pool
N N (2)

in the sea
Prep D N (3)

<i>have been +</i>	<i>in sea +</i>	<i>one day +</i>
Aux	Prep N	Adj N
(3)	(2)	(2)

at nanas and papas
Prep N c N Record as XcX (4)
(2)

freezing cold
Int X (2)

<i>my shoes</i>	<i>her old top</i>
D N (2)	D Adj N (3)

had on V Part (2)

let.. jump in
V V Part Record as VV and VPart (2)

20a. no phrases

20b. *'s been in mud*
Aux Prep N (3 / 2)

's been painting
Aux Aux 2 Aux (4)

21. 'I'll fall in
Aux V Part Record as Aux (3) and VPart (2)

22. doesn't want
Neg V (4)

My medicine
D N (2)

23. in the big house
Prep D Adj N (4)

24a. at the back of the cup
Prep D N Prep D N Record as N Prep NP (4)

24b. at the front of the cup
Prep DN Prep DN As above

25. no data to analyse

26. my shoes
D N

27. bigger, bigger, + + biggest
No clause or phrase structure. We will wait till the Word analysis to look at this further.

28. your teeth your mouth
D N D N (2)

29. beside each other beside the cups
Prep D N Prep D N (3 – twice)

30. 's been in the sea.
Aux Prep DN
(3) (3)

31. didn't take.. off his clothes
Neg V V Part D N
(4) (2) (2)

Join the parts of the phrase together to make it easier to analyse.

32. 's giving a parcel
Aux DN
(3) (2)

Now we have finished the Phrase level analysis of Katie's data set we can enter the results in the second column of the Score Sheet.

Transfer the scores for the phrase level analysis to column two of the STASS sheet. Then check your answers against mine on page 76.

7.3 Word level analysis

For this sweep of the data we will look out for the word level features in column 3 of the STASS table as well as the actual examples of auxiliaries, prepositions and pronouns in the bottom row of the table. It is quite easy to look for both at once. Here I will repeat the complete data set and annotate word level features in bold.

Remember we are not counting the particles on phrasal verbs as prepositions.

You will see that *his, my your* are recorded by STASS as being in the pronoun box, even though in this booklet we classified them as determiners. We still need to count them, so to remind yourself that they are actually determiners you could put a D on the data sheet, for example: *my* Pron-D.

Transfer the Word Level Analysis to the blank STASS Score Sheet in Appendix One and fill in the Auxiliaries, Prepositions and Pronouns boxes.

1. *girl* + + + **sitting** down
-ing

2. **He's** + **he** 's **digging** a hole.
Pron Pron 3S -ing

3. **He** hasn't got any **eyes** or **mouth**.
Pron n't Pl

4. **He** **having** a basketball **on** the grass. Without any hard stones.
Pron -ing Prep Pl

5a. **On** the **on** the edge **of** the **on** the bottom **of** the cup.
Prep (x 2) Prep Prep Prep

5b. **He** 's **in** the cup
Pron 3S Prep

Also record the 's as 'Aux, auxiliary contraction (3)

6. The happy dog. I think **he** 's a mite? sad.
Pron 'Cop

'Cop means reduced copula verb. Remember this sentence was SVC at the clause level.

7. **cos** **it** 's too big.
Pron 'cop (3)

8. a cat + a tail

Katie is not able to say cat's tail yet, which would be a genitive (Gen).

9. **He** **falled** off **his** bike.
Pron -ed Pron-D

Record -ed even though it's an irregular verb so an error. As Katie is only 3;6 this isn't an error at her stage of development, just a step on the journey to adult grammar. *his* – recorded on the STASS sheet as a pronoun even though we know it is a Determiner.

10. **is** a tiny boat
3S

11. *slow.* **He** *wants to win* and **she** *doesn't.*
Pron 3S Pron n't
Katie doesn't yet have the -ly adverb ending.

12. *a red flower. A red flower. a big flower*

13a. **under** *the cup*
Prep

13b. **beside** *the cup*
Prep

14. **they** **'ll** *bump in*
Pron

Record **'ll** as 'aux contraction And also under Auxiliaries: WILL

15. **he** *can't.* *The fish* **will** *just fall out.*
Pron n't Aux

16. **he** **'s** **spilt** **his** *milk.*
Pron 'Aux -ed Pron-D

Record *spilt* as -ed even though it's a correctly formed irregular past. We should make a note of this good development if there's room on the form.

17. *I* **can't** *stay up.* *Cos* **it's** *a picture.*
Aux: CAN Pron 'Cop
n't

Check carefully: the *is* in the second utterance is a main verb in an SVC sentence, so a copula.

18. *a little girl and a big man* *dad + no seat belt or* **they'll** *fall out.*
Pron 'Aux

Also list the Auxiliary as WILL.

19. *cos* **they** *have* **been in** *the sea. Swimming pool.*
Pron -en Prep

Swim in the sea. I have been + I have been + in sea +
Prep Pron -en Pron -en Prep
Aux: HAVE

one day + when I was at nanas and papas. And it was freezing cold. And I cried.
Pron -ed Prep Pron -ed Pron -ed

You *know what, I had my shoes on and Sarah had her old top on.*
Pron Pron -ed Pron-D pl -ed

And I went ' Come Sarah let's jump in' and he said 'Aagh!'
Pron -ed Pron:US Pron

There isn't a category at stage 3 or below for the shortened *let us*. We record *he* as pronoun even though it's a slip as it refers to Katie's sister.

20. **He** **'s** *dirty.*
Pron 'cop *Because this is a SVC clause.*
3s

20b. *cos* **he's been in** *mud.* *No* **he 's been painting himself.**

Pron 'Aux -en Prep Pron 'Aux -en -ing Pron
Auxiliary: HAVE (x2)

3s

3s

This last pronoun is more complex than any in the box. Worth recording as a positive feature.

21. **He** 'll *fall in.*

Pron 'Aux

Auxiliaries box: WILL

22. *cos* **he doesn't** *want it.*

Pron 3s n't Pron
Auxiliary: DO

My medicine tastes **yummy.**

3s

23. **in** *the big house.*

Prep

24a. **at** *the back* **of** *the cup*

These prepositions aren't in the box, but you could mention them as positive features at the bottom of this box.

24b. **at** *the front* **of** *the cup*

Prep

25. **he** *he he he (unintelligible)*

Pron

26. *Where's* **my** *shoes?*

'cop Pron-D Pl

Record 's as reduced copula even though the adult grammar would be *are*. We can't count this as an error for someone at Katie's stage of development.

27. **bigger,** *bigger,* + + **biggest**

Katie has the comparative and superlative adjective endings.

28. *brush* **your teeth.** *Brush* **your teeth.** + **She** *says* 'open **your** *mouth'.*

Pron-D pl Pron-D pl Pron 3s Pron-D

Your will be recorded as Pron-D. *teeth* is listed as Pl. It's a correct irregular plural.

29. **beside** *each other.* **Beside** *the cups.*

Prep Prep Pl

30. *cos* **she's been in** *the sea.*

Pron 'Aux -en Prep
Auxiliary: HAVE

3s

31. *cos* **he** **didn't** *take* **his** *clothes off.*

Pron -ed n't Pron-D
Auxiliary: DO

32. **Santa's** *giving* **her** *a parcel.*

'Aux -ing Pron
Auxiliary: BE
3s

It is quite tricky to spot all the word features as well as Auxiliaries, Prepositions and Pronouns. You may find it easier to do several sweeps just looking for one thing. Add the word level features to your Score Sheet and check your results match with mine in the Answers on page 77.

7.4 Expansions

When you lay the utterances out on the Detailed Analysis Form it becomes much easier to see which elements of a clause have been expanded into phrases because you have underlined all the phrases of more than one word already. Transfer the transitions to the blank STASS Score Sheet in Appendix One.

1.

2. he 's digging a hole.
S V O XY+V:VP; XY+O:NP

3. He hasn't got any eyes or mouth.
S V O XY+V:VP; XY+O:NP

4. He having a basketball on the grass + without any hard stones.
S V O A A
WXYZ+A:AP (x2); WXYZ+O:NP

This is well beyond Stage Four.

5a.

5b. He 's in the cup
S V A XY+A:AP

6. I think he's a bit sad.
S V O XY+O: Clause

He 's a bit sad.
S V C XY+C: NP

7. it 's too big.
S V C XY+C:AP

The STASS Scoring system assumes that Complement clauses are always going to be Noun Phrases. This one is actually an Adjective Phrase.

8.

9. He falled off his bike.
S V A XY+A:AP

10. is a tiny boat
V C X+C:NP

11. He wants to win and she doesn't.
S V c S V X+V:VP

12.

13a.

13b.

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'Come V	Sarah S	let V	's S	<u>jump in</u>	X+V:VP
		↑		↑	
and c	he S	said V	'Aagh!' O		
20a. He S	's V	dirty. C			
20b. cos s	he S	<u>'s been</u> V	<u>in mud.</u> A		XY+V:VP; XY+A:AP
No he S	<u>'s been painting</u> V	himself. C			XY+V:VP
21. He S	<u>'ll fall in.</u> V				X+V:VP
22. cos s	he S	<u>doesn't want</u> V	it. O		XY+V:VP
<u>My medicine</u> S	tastes V	yummy. C			XY+S:NP
23.					
24a.					
24b.					
25.					
26. Where Q	's V	my shoes? S			XY+S:NP
27.					
28. brush V	<u>your teeth.</u> O				X+O:NP
She says S	<u>'open your mouth.'</u> V				XY+O: Clause Beyond level 3
<u>open your mouth</u> V					X+O:NP
29.					
30. cos she s S	<u>'s been</u> V	<u>in the sea.</u> A			XY+V:VP; XY+A:AP
31. cos s	he S	didn't take V	his clothes O	off.	XY+V:VP XY+O:NP
32. Santa S	's giving V	her Oi	a parcel. Od		XYZ+V:VP XYZ+O:NP

Many of these transitions are showing achievement well above the STASS score sheet. Note these down as they are positive signs which can be reported on.

Add the expansion features to your Score Sheet and check your results match with mine in the Answers on page 78.

8 Becoming proficient with STASS and working with non-standard responses

8.1 Short cuts

We have been recording everything on the Score Sheet so far. This is useful to do if it's the first time you have got a detailed picture of a child's grammatical achievement. But if you have a profile from the year before you could use a quicker approach: just enter the first example of each structure on the form.

Write out the clause analysis as before on the Detailed Analysis Form. Then do the phrase, word and expansion analysis just by looking for the first example. This should save a lot of time. You should be able to see the child's progress from the year before too.

When you first start using STASS it can seem very slow. Work with a colleague or a Speech and Language Therapist so you can discuss your analysis. After you have become used to STASS you should find a full analysis will take you less than an hour if you use the rapid screening approach.

8.2 Non-standard responses

Now look at another set of responses, this time from Abdo.

Abdo's responses STASS

The child

Abdo is currently aged 9;6. He was diagnosed deaf aged 6;11 and aided a month later at 7;0. So his listening experience is currently 2;6. It is very likely he was deaf from birth. That is, linguistically his situation is extreme and he needs urgent measures to develop his languages. In his repertoire he has spoken English, spoken Arabic and British Sign Language. He experiences teaching mostly in English with a limited amount of BSL tuition to his school class. He has nearly full time Communication Support Worker interpreting between BSL and English in school. At home he sees and hears Arabic and English. He attends a weekly Arabic literacy class for religious purposes. He has a radio aid (FM) at home but it is not maintained well.

Context of the assessment

It was conducted outside because of Covid19, maintaining social distancing. We were under a verandah roof which made the sound quality better. Abdo's mother filmed us.

Conventions used in this transcript

Brackets with + written after word spoken shows sign or gesture or other activity coinciding with words. Capitals in these brackets means the conventional BSL sign.

Dots means pause, so this utterance may not be one but several. Non-words are an approximation of the sound from the video. Question marks and exclamation marks

to some extent indicate intonation. Question marks in brackets mean unclear. Numbers relate to the STASS assessment questions. Prompts or stimulus utterances are not recorded.

1. chair

the girl on on the chair

2. sand I din see

sand (+ sign BSL: SAND) nd

sand (+ sign BSL: SAND DIG)

and the girl boy girl (+ sign BSL: BOY GIRL) boy girl an san
and the girl the girl in swimming (+ sign BSL: SWIM)

3. teddy ... um ... mouth (points to eyes)

and smiling (+ sign BSL: SMILE)

nothing mouth (points to eyes)

eye nothing (+ sign BSL: NOTHING)

4. (+ sign BSL: BUILD)

drumming (+ sign BSL: DRUM verb)

football (mime kicking)

him he football like liking

5. the on the cup (+ sign BSL: CUP) ... teddy (+ sign BSL: TEDDY)

the cup under the teddy

6. the dog

which one do I like best?

eh? this one

what called?

I'm happy.

7. the box in the postman

ah small (+ sign BSL: SMALL)

all the boxall (+ sign BSL: 2 handed outline postbox)

and the parcel

all is different

8. squirrel (+ sign BSL: SQUIRREL)

steam (?) stoops

9. ooh! this one.... um... (elaborate mime of story)

fell the bike fell..... and fell over

and fall The bike (+ sign BSL: BIKE) and the fell (+ sign BSL: CYCLE verb) fall

10. small

small boat small

11. going walking

and fast walking

going slow going slow
and going fast

12.flower and flower and flower
one flower
red flower
bigger

13.cup ... cup (+ sign BSL: CUP) in under (gesture) um teddy
the cup
cup, er... behind it... am teddy

14.the car
stop, the car
and the car is boom! (then unintelligible section)
and then boom!

15.broken
because the boy and fish
and then (con con con con ... unintelligible) (+ gesture upward throw)
what happen? (+ sign BSL: WHERE)
it broken! (+ gesture HERE)

16.the boy..... n the fell the cup..... milk
mum, the milk!
I don't have a milk
the shop... er milk
I'm going shop

17.OK I jump (he jumps)
The boy, ... on the jump

oh my god!
motor (gesture like BREAK in BSL) an fast
motorbike
because it noisy go fast

18.car..... who car? Dad
the girl car (brmm brmm! Runs off being a car)

19.why they wet?
they're wet
on the bath n wet
they're wet because they got wet
and the boy in the wet
(unintelligible babble)
in the water

20.dirty er black
because this is dirty n black n paint on (+ sign BSL: PAINT verb)

21.the boat n shw shw shw (+ sign BSL: BOAT) (mimes stretching out hand)
what happen?
(mime action)
and then fall

yeah he fell

22.the boy handshape

because (unintelligible) this 'I don't like it!'

23.the boy, that house, and bigger

the boy, this is your home

24.the cup behind (+ sign BSL: BEHIND) cos teddy

the cup... the cup be over

25.and then her go go go go jacket

and then her jacket (+ sign BSL: JACKET) and then go chair
or the jacket and throw!

and chair... the boy on the chair

and the gogogogo girl jacket, and the floor!

26.and then the girl

and then go to the shop

mummy, because 'where ver shoe?'

where the shoe?

27. big bigger!

28.brushing (+ sign BSL: TOOTHPASTE) and then (spit)

29. the cup... the teddy ... behinding? (gesture: 2 hands)

before?

30.The girl (unintelligible)

31.(laughs) the boy because the bath

the boy, the bath (+ sign BSL: SONG, SONG; wash in the bath mime)

nd song (+ sign BSL: SONG) bath in

he's got is jumper

32.he a christmas

he kun give it the girl

Commentary on Abdo's responses

Abdo uses all the resources he has in English, mime and BSL. His answers are often embodied in actions, probably more than usual because he was outside. He is interested in storytelling. He sees the items as connected at times ('and then') as a story, though the assessment doesn't make sense as a whole narrative. He uses a play voice to show characters' speech. He has a good range of appropriate intonation. His multimodal assemblages are very communicative. He checks to see if I understand. At one point he echoes a whole question from me, substituting *you* for *I*: see response 6.

Abdo's vocabulary is small, and at times he pulls in other languages as support: see response 8 where he does not know the English word *tail*. The BSL sign SQUIRREL refers to a tail. As with all children, his vocabulary is personal to him including some metalanguage from BSL classes at school: handshape, response 22.

When we analyse these responses in STASS, we are only analysing the English. As can be seen by his multimodal responses, this is only looking at part of Abdo's repertoire. What would you do to investigate progress with BSL and Arabic with Abdo?

When I analysed these responses, I decided not to count *because* as a subordinator; I think at present Abdo uses this word as a conjunction. However, there is some reported speech here which could be called subordination: see response 26

Activity with Abdo's responses

It would be useful to do this exercise with a colleague, then work through your answers together looking at features you found difficult.

- Analyse the responses at clause, phrase and word level using a grid as in Appendix 1. Abdo has a number of non-standard responses so you will have to decide sometimes to leave utterances out of the analysis or to hazard a guess. There are dangers in deciding on an analysis without enough evidence. Make a note of places where you have perhaps guessed too much and bracket utterances where it's too difficult to decide on an analysis.
- Record the results on the Summary Form. I suggest use a highlight colour rather than ticking each occurrence.
- Find the nearest age equivalent in the STASS handbook and use a highlighter to show the 25%, 50% or 75% level for that age group, whichever you think is the best fit.
- Look at features which Abdo has not yet acquired but which are next in the expected sequence. Here you are starting to interpret the results.

Now look at the next pages where I show my analysis and the summary form. Check your answers against mine. Keep a note of the areas you are making mistakes with and go back to the earlier sections of this handbook to revise these features.

My analysis of Abdo's dataset

1.

Response	chair	the girl	on	on the chair
Clause	N	S		A
Phrase		DN		PrepDN
Word				
Expansion		X+S:NP		X+A:AP
Aux Prep Pron			Prep: on	

2.

Response	sand	I /din see	and the girl	boy girl and sand	the girl /in swimming
Clause	N	S V			SV
Phrase		Aux, Neg V	cX DN	NN cX	DN
Word					-ing
Expansion		X+V:VP			X + S: NP not sure VP?
Aux Prep Pron		Pron: I Aux: do			Prep: in

3.

Response	teddy um mouth	and smiling	nothing mouth	eye nothing
Clause				
Phrase	NN	cX	NegX	Neg X
Word				
Expansion				
Aux Prep Pron				

4.

Response	drumming	football	him he football like	liking
Clause	V	N	SVO	V
Phrase				
Word	-ing			-ing
Expansion				
Aux Prep Pron			Pron: he, him	

5.

Response	the on the cup	teddy	the cup under the teddy
Clause			SA
Phrase	PrepDN		DN PrepDN
Word			
Expansion			X+S:NP, X+A:AP
Aux Prep Pron	Pron: on		Pron: under

6.

Response	the dog	Which one do I like best?	this one	what called?	I'm happy.
Clause		QSVA (echo?)		QX	SVC
Phrase	DN	Aux Pron	DN		
Word		-est		-ed	'cop
Expansion		XY+V:VP			
Aux Prep Pron		Pron: I Aux: do			Pron: I

7.

Response	the box in the postman	ah small	all the boxall	and the parcel	all is different
Clause	AX	other			SVC
Phrase	PrepDN		Level 3?	cX	
Word					3S
Expansion					
Aux Prep Pron					

8. Is omitted

9.

Response	ooh this one!	the bike fell	and fell over	The bike and the fell fall
Clause		SV	cV	SV
Phrase	DN		VPart	XcX
Word		-ed	-ed	-ed
Expansion				X+S:NP X+V:VP??
Aux Prep Pron				

10.

Response	small	small boat small
Clause	Other	
Phrase		Adj N
Word		
Expansion		
Aux Prep Pron		

11.

Response	going walking	and fast walking	going slow	and going fast
Clause				
Phrase	VV	cX IntX?		cX
Word	-ing	-ing	-ing	-ing
Expansion				
Aux Prep Pron				

12.

Response	flower and flower and flower	one flower	red flower	bigger
Clause	N			
Phrase	XcX	ADJN	ADJN	
Word				-er
Expansion				
Aux Prep Pron				

13.

Response	cup in under ...um ...teddy	cup er behind it am teddy
Clause	AX	SV
Phrase	PREP N	PREP N
Word	Emerging 3S?	
Expansion	X+A:AP	X+A:AP
Aux Prep Pron	Pron: in	Pron: it Aux: BE. Prep: behind

14.

Response	the car	stop, the car	And/ the car/ is boom!	and then boom!
Clause		SV	c SV	
Phrase	DN		Aux	cX
Word			3S	
Expansion		X+S:NP	X+S:NP X+V:VP	
Aux Prep Pron			Aux: BE	

15.

Response	broken	because the boy and fish	what happen?	It broken.
Clause	other		QV	SC
Phrase		XcX DN		
Word	-en			-en
Expansion				
Aux Prep Pron				

16.

Response	the boy n the fell.... the cup... milk	Mum, the milk!	I don't have a milk!	the shop... er milk	I'm going shop.
Clause	SV		SVO		SVA
Phrase	DN	DN	DN Aux	DN	Aux
Word	-ed				-ing
Expansion					XY+V:VP
Aux Prep Pron			Aux: DO Pron: I		Pron: I Aux: BE

17.

Response	OK, I jump	The boy ... on the jump.	Because it noisy, go fast
Clause	SV	SV	SC VA
Phrase		DN	
Word			
Expansion			
Aux Prep Pron	Pron: I	Prep: on	Pron: it

18.

Response	car ... who car? Dad	the girl ... car
Clause	QXY	AX?
Phrase		NN DN
Word		
Expansion		
Aux Prep Pron		

19.

Response	Why they wet?	They're wet.	On the bath n wet	They're wet because they got wet.	And the boy in the wet	in the water
Clause	QXY	SVC		SVC s SVC Subordination?		
Phrase			PREP D N XcX		PREP D N cX	PREP D N
Word		'cop		'cop -ed		
Expansion						
Aux Prep Pron	Pron: they	Pron: they	Prep: on	Pron: they	Prep: in	Prep: in

20.

Response	Dirty er black	Because this is dirty n black n paint on
Clause		SVC (not real subordination)
Phrase	XcX?	XcXcX
Word		3S
Expansion		XY+C:NP
Aux Prep Pron		Prep: on

21.

Response	the boat	What happen?	and then fall	Yeah, he fell.
Clause		QX	AX	SV
Phrase	DN		c	
Word				-ed
Expansion				
Aux Prep Pron				Pron: he

22.

Response	The boy handshape	This , "I don't like it!"
Clause		SVO NEGXY
Phrase	NN DN	PRON
Word		N'T
Expansion		XY+V:VP
Aux Prep Pron		PRON: it, I

23.

Response	the boy, that house, and bigger	The boy ... This is your home.
Clause		N SVO
Phrase	DN	
Word	-er	3S
Expansion		XY+O:NP
Aux Prep Pron	Pron: that	Pron: your

24.

Response	The cup behind....cos teddy.	The cup..... the cup be over.
Clause	AX	N SVA
Phrase	DN	Almost a VPart DN
Word		
Expansion		XY+S:NP
Aux Prep Pron	Prep: behind	

25.

Response	And then her go jacket.	And then go chair.	Or the jacket and throw.	The boy on the chair	And the girl jacket and the floor
Clause	c SVOA	c VOA	SV	AX	SOA
Phrase			DN cX	PrepDN	XcX
Word					
Expansion				XY+S:NP, XY+A:AP	XY+S:NP, XY+A:AP
Aux Prep Pron				Prep: on	

26.

Response	And then the girl	And then go to the shop	Mummy because 'where ver shoe?'	Where the shoe?
Clause	AX	AVA	S c QX	QX
Phrase	DN	PREP D N		DN
Word				
Expansion	X+A:AP X+S:NP		X+A:AP	X+A:AP
Aux Prep Pron		Prep: to		

27.

Response	Big bigger!	
Clause		
Phrase		
Word	-er	
Expansion		
Aux Prep Pron		

28.

Response	Brushing ... and then ... puh!	
Clause	V Other	
Phrase	cX	
Word	-ing	
Expansion		
Aux Prep Pron		

29.

Response	The cup.... The teddy. Behinding?	Before?
Clause	SVO (possibly)	
Phrase	DN	
Word		
Expansion		
Aux Prep Pron	Prep: behind	

30.is omitted.

31.

Response	The boy because the bath	nd song bath in	He's got is jumper.
Clause		c AX	SVO
Phrase	XcX DN		AUX
Word			'AUX
Expansion		X+A: AP	XY+V: VP, XY+O:NP
Aux Prep Pron		Prep: in	Pron: his (nearly there), he

32.

Response	He /a Christmas.	He /kun give /it ... /the girl.
Clause	SC	SVOO
Phrase		AUX PRON DN
Word		
Expansion	X+C:NP	XYZ+O:NP, XYZ+V:VP
Aux Prep Pron		Aux: CAN, Pron: it

Conclusion:

When we compare Abdo's profile to 50% of 4-year olds, he is achieving well. The yellow blocks shows features he uses, and you can see they go right the way down the STASS chart to stage 4. I used the manual to compare Abdo's performance with 50% of 4-year olds. There was a lot of overlap. The pink blocks show features expected by hearing children of 4;6 according to the STASS norms. So these are features which may emerge next, but in some ways he is operating above 50% of 4 year olds. He has only had 2;6 years of listening. So he is making very good progress. The expansions in particular suggest he will continue to make good progress. The plurals and genitive are not emerging, probably because he can't hear the /s/ clearly.

Look at the STASS form below and see how I have transferred the information from the analysis grids above to yellow blocks on the form. We are not counting the number of occurrences of a particular form; if he shows it once, we count it.



STASS 2

RAPID ASSESSMENT SCORE SHEET

1. CLAUSE

Q
N
V
Other

NAME
AGE
DATE
PHONOLOGY
COMPREHENSION

2. CLAUSE

QX
SV
SC
SO
NegX
VC
VO
AX

PHRASE

DN
AdjN
NN
Prep N
VV
VPart
IntX

WORD

-ING
PL
-ED
-EN
3S

EXPANSION

X+S:NP
X+V:VP
X+C:NP
X+O:NP
X+A:AP

3. CLAUSE

QXY
VS
SVC
SVO
SVA
NEG XY
V C/O A
VOO

PHRASE

D Adj N
Adj Adj N
PREP D N
N Adj N
COP
AUX
PRON
PREP Adj N

WORD

GEN
N'T
'COP
'AUX

EXPANSION

XY+S:NP
XY+V:VP
XY+C:NP
XY+O:NP
XY+A:AP

4. CLAUSE

QVS
QXYZ
VS (X+)
SVCA
SVOA
SVOO
AAXY

PHRASE

N PREPNP
PREP DAdj N
cX
XcX
NEGV
NEGX
2AUX

WORD

-EST
-ER
-LY

5. AUXILIARIES

HAVE
CAN
BE
DO
WILL
MIGHT
COULD

PREPOSITIONS

IN/INSIDE
ON
UNDER/UNDERNEATH
BEHIND
BESIDE/NEXT TO
BETWEEN
IN FRONT

PRONOUNS

HE	THAT
HIS	YOU
I	MY
IT	HER
THEY	HIM
SHE	THEM
YOUR	

9 Interpreting and reporting results

9.1 Results matched to the appropriate age level

The STASS handbook has some charts on pages 12-16 (First edition STASS) which show the results of their assessments of children at 3;0 4;0 and 5;0. The charts show what 25% of children could do – usually the top performing quarter, what 50% could do and what 75% could do for each age group. There are some structures which 100% of a particular age group could do.

If you are working with a deaf child who has been diagnosed in the first few months of life and she has received early support, start with the correct chart for the age of the child. This will show if the deaf child is developing age appropriate language. The DfES suggested a target of 60% of deaf children achieving age appropriate language by age three. It seems fair to look at the 75% level as the level, which shows a particular age group has generally achieved a construction.

- Take your completed STASS Score Sheet and a highlighter pen and look at the chart closest in age to the child you are working with. Highlight the rows where 75% of children of this age of hearing children achieve. Be careful – the Charts and the STASS Score sheets don't quite match up and some lines are in the wrong order.
- Now look at your Score Sheet. You will see how the child you have assessed scores compared to the majority of hearing children in the same age group.
- If the child you are working with has achieved more than this, move on to the next chart for children a year older and repeat with a different colour highlighter.
- You should be able to see strengths and weaknesses of the child you are working with, compared to the majority of hearing children in that age group. This will give you ideas for possible targets or language work with the child.
- You may have some additional notes at the bottom about features which are particularly good, perhaps going beyond the level of the STASS assessment.

To compare or not with hearing norms

There are different views about whether we should compare deaf children with hearing norms, or plurilingual children with monolingual norms. Deaf children rarely have the chance to experience different options in school of learning through speech and/or a signed language. If interpreters are provided, they are rarely qualified. This is in contrast to the automatic right in the UK to a cochlear implant for eligible children. Even if the deaf child does have the opportunity to choose the language to learn in, actual tuition in the signed language is even rarer in mainstream settings. The whole aim of mainstream education appears to be to lessen the opportunity for the deaf child to become multilingual or plurilingual while attempting to meet hearing children's norms. For deaf children with delay in learning of a spoken language, there are strong arguments for tuition in a signed language at the same time, and tuition freely available to their family too. However, with funding so restricted in relation to bilingual or plurilingual options, deaf children often grow up without good access to any fluent language. This has a devastating impact on their school attainment and sense of wellbeing.

However, if we don't have age appropriate spoken language as our goal for deaf children who use speech, then we could start to accept lower standards for deaf children and later their progress at school would be depressed. Ideally, we would give deaf children as many options with fluent users of accessible languages around them as possible.

As we have seen, STASS is an assessment based on the view that syntactic features always emerge in a regular sequence. We don't know if deaf children always follow this sequence. Even with brilliant hearing aids, the acoustic input is often degraded in real life contexts. Having said that, it is a useful tool for monitoring linguistic progress, and it also allows us to examine the effectiveness of support from professionals and the family. The way it is constructed focuses on syntax, which could lead us to make recommendations only related to syntax, which we need to guard against. But you can learn many other things from the assessment about other aspects of language and communication.

The STASS results could affect our collaborative decision making with parents and colleagues. Stalling or lack of progress with spoken language development may initiate discussions about improving information to parents or offering new multilingual choices to the child. As a result of these discussions, we may redraft the child's Educational Plan and provide different educational support such as tuition in a signed language, for example. This is not an either/or choice as co-enrolment programmes show us. It is crucial for us to remember the purpose of education is to raise a complete child, one who can succeed academically and socially. There is no reason for monolingual ideology to hold this back.

Of course the STASS test is not the only tool we will use to make decisions. It is only one of a large range of assessments available to us. Detailed observation of the child in different environments can help inform our decision making as much as a standardised assessment tool such as STASS. We are not assessing the deaf child to document her difference from the norm, but to inform us as teachers and parents so we can see what we can do next to encourage language development. This sort of diagnostic assessment is an example of evidence-based practice. Without guidance from the data, we may focus on language areas which are irrelevant, too easy for the child, or much too difficult.

9.2 Results matched to a younger age level

When a deaf child has delayed syntactic development in English, as Abdo does, we can compare his responses with the nearest level we can find amongst hearing children. The STASS rapid assessment sheet for Abdo shown on page 63 has his results compared to what 50% of hearing children do at age 4 (figure 2, p. 14 STASS manual), which could be seen as a listening period of 4 years 6 months on average.

I used a highlighter to add in the 50% of age 4 to Abdo's summary sheet. This left some gaps where Abdo is not currently producing structures we would expect, and also some areas where he is performing better than expected.

At the Clause level he has no gaps and goes beyond the 50% level at age 4. Interestingly he makes a nice SVOO (level 4) construction at response 32 (*He can give it the girl*), but does not have VOA or VOO at level 3. This suggests some consolidation is needed. Utterances starting with verbs are instructions, such as: *Put the cup on the table* (VOA) or *Give Sara the book* (VOO). Verbs like *give* are useful for building clauses with two objects. Other verbs in this category are: *bring, buy, cost, get, give, leave, lend, make, pass, pay, play, promise, read, send, show, sing, take, teach, tell, wish, write*.

Another interesting feature of Abdo's constructions is the way he has several attempts at each picture as he gradually works out how to express more detailed meaning. We can see this clearly in response 25. The stimulus provides the first description, *The girl has dropped her coat on the floor. What about the boy?* The response should be *The boy has put his coat on the chair*. That is, you expect to see the perfect aspect with the main verb *put* rather than *dropped*, *boy* substituted for *girl* and *chair* for *floor*. This is a transformation.

The clue is in the conversation just before. Abdo is not currently making use of these clues. He may find it easier to do these transformations by reading to start with as he is a confident beginner reader. I am not suggesting coaching to the test, but controlled practice in constructions and transformations can be fun if managed carefully. This could happen with a wide range of constructions which he has not yet mastered – certainly not ones which will come up in this STASS assessment.

At the Phrase level he has strong development. But at Level 3 he doesn't have the phrase patterns DAdjN, Adj Adj N or PrepDAdjN yet which we would expect. His level 4 phrase development is good. Again, this suggests consolidation with adjectives would be useful in phrases such as: *the little boy; big fat cat; on the red bus*. As Abdo is aged 9, he has got beyond the sort of play activities where he might refer to different dolls' house toys. He may prefer real world and moving activities outside in a Total Physical Response approach.

At the Word level he does exactly what we would expect of 50% of 4 year olds apart from the missing genitive 's, in phrases like *the cat's tail*, and the missing plural -s. These are likely due to not hearing the final -s clearly, very important in English morphology.

For the Expansions he goes beyond the 50% level at age 4 because he has some clauses in subject and complement positions at Stage 3. Because he goes beyond what is expected, we won't worry about the gap with X+O:NP at Stage 2. Generally these expansions are painting a promising picture of increasing utterance length and syntactic control.

Auxiliaries: Abdo is not yet using *will* or *have* as auxiliaries, although he has a range of other ones. This means he needs to start referring to beyond the here and now to talk about the future and what has just happened: *will* for future constructions and *have* for perfect ones, actions which are recent and related to now. He has only just started using *can* and this could be consolidated now with more language games.

Prepositions: Abdo knows a good range of prepositions, but the issue here is a semantic one. He doesn't have a secure link to meaning yet with several of those he uses.

Pronouns/determiners: Abdo is not yet using *she* or *you*, both of which we would expect by age 4;6.

From these results we can make a report suitable for an annual review meeting and draw up some plans for activities and targets for Abdo over the next few months. On the next pages you can see an idea for a report and language activities. Each service for deaf children will organise reports and reviews in different ways, so this may not be suitable for everyone. The important thing is to make the summary readable by any other colleague or parent so that they understand what the language focus will be over the next few months.

Notice in the report that the positive features of Abdo's developing spoken English and his multilingualism are mentioned before any gaps. I include in the report reference to other assessments which have gone on into how the family is doing with Abdo at home, including with early literacy, and vocabulary development, also very crucial for him. STASS may tend to focus you only on syntax, so don't forget pragmatic development, vocabulary and literacy too when evaluating children's spoken language development.

Although the STASS data are real, the name and report are made up to illustrate one possible way of reporting progress to parents and colleagues.

9.3 Sample report to a review meeting

Abdo Ibrahim: Report on spoken language development 30.6.20

Abdo has been aided now for 2.5 years. Despite a period of no spoken language progress from birth to age 7, his gains with spoken language are better than 2.5 years using the South Tyneside Assessment of Syntactic Structures profile. Abdo is showing spoken English similar to a 4 year old at present, and there are promising signs that his spoken English will continue to accelerate, hopefully to catch up with his peers over time. Abdo also uses Arabic at home, and he attends Arabic classes weekly to practise Arabic literacy. He has good exposure to both languages at home and with his extended family. Abdo also uses BSL at school, but his parents do not yet have access to BSL classes, which they would like. The STASS assessment was carried out in the park, maintaining social distancing and recorded on video.

Abdo's mother has taken a proactive role in developing his spoken English and his literacy. She reads bedtime stories with him every night and talks about the stories in English and Arabic. She has a picture dictionary where she records the dates when Abdo says a word, sometimes also writing down when he knows this word in Arabic. Mrs Ibrahim is very interested in supporting Abdo. He has no difficulties in working memory and his concentration is improving rapidly. Abdo is the youngest of four children and has an active social life with his extended family, including relatives in Sudan who communicate by phone or video. Abdo has good friendships at school, including hearing children who use beginners BSL with him regularly. He rarely meets anyone fluent in BSL apart from the Communication Support Worker.

Summary of Abdo's spoken English skills

1. Vocabulary – Abdo's vocabulary is developing well and appropriately for the length of time he has been aided, but this is very far behind his classmates. The areas he needs to consolidate at the moment are more everyday verbs, the meanings of prepositions of place, and adjectives, including those for feelings.
2. Communication and pragmatics -Abdo has real strengths in communicating in context. He understands other people's points of view well, probably because he is centrally engaged in his family's life at home. He uses all his language resources to communicate, including spoken English, mime, gesture, BSL, and at home, Arabic.
3. Grammar – Abdo can construct spoken sentences similar to children with 4 years of listening and talking experience, but he needs more consolidation with common sentence patterns, giving instructions and transforming sentences, including the use of verbs like *give* or *show*. He could now start talking about the future with *going to* and *will*. He should be able to talk about things which have just happened using *have / has* and the main verb. Abdo uses a good range of pronouns, but could try now to use *she* and *you* more often.
4. Talking about books – Abdo loves stories and this affinity with narrative and drama will help him build his spoken English skills and his literacy. He has good basic phonic decoding skills which shows he making excellent use of the support service for deaf children. He is almost independent at reading books usually offered towards the end of primary 1. Being read aloud to and talking about picture books are both likely to remain an important part of the way Abdo improves his spoken English.

Suggestions for English language activities with Abdo over next 6 months

1. Focus on pronouns *she*, *you*, *her* and *them*. Play a lot of games using these words, with receptive skills before expecting any utterances using them.
2. Model perfect constructions in real contexts e.g. *Dad's just come in*. Have you finished your dinner? *Oh look, Grandma's arrived!* (Don't stress the auxiliary *have* – it's almost always unstressed). Abdo should be able to hear the 's in the contracted form. Later see if Abdo can distinguish a past event from one which has a connection to now. For example, *I've just fallen over*. *Yesterday Lauren fell over*. This could also link to literacy work, matching pictures to sentences. Similarly talk about the future more using *going to* and *will* – make lots of plans.
3. Focus on things belonging to other people to see if Abdo can hear the 's. Later see if he can produce it in phrases. For example, an individual speech session in the cloakroom would give a lot of practice. On the same theme, look at the determiners *my* and *her* in the context of possessions, for example in the school cloakroom or sorting clothes at home.
4. Practise plurals with Abdo. He knows about them in print, he can use BSL to translate from his reading book to show plurals, but he is not using them in spoken English production.
5. Practise spoken transformations in relaxed and game-like contexts of sentences with 4 elements, including using verbs that take two objects such as *give*, *show*, *pay*. For example, carrying out and giving instructions.
6. To practise *can* and *can't*, focus on what people in Abdo's class or family can and can't do. Set tests for people round school. This could be linked to maths and pictograms. For example, *who can curl their tongue?* *Can Miss McLaren fingerspell her name?*
7. Prepositions of place need some consolidation because although Abdo knows the form, he is not yet consistent about the meaning in productive situations.
8. Set up the picture dictionary as a home/school book so that the Communication Support Worker, teacher, parents, sibling and best friend at school can all contribute to it. Review this vocabulary regularly using photos or videos in one to one sessions on the mobile or ipad.
9. Expand Abdo's range of adjectives and play choosing games where you have large and small toys that look the same, e.g. red and yellow, large and small toys that look the same etc. Practise instructions from you and from Abdo to use adjectives to be explicit about what you are referring to. Produce a feelings chart with pictures to show gradations of different feelings.
10. Arrange regular reading time one to one or very small group in good listening conditions in school to read and discuss P1 or P2 picture books. This could involve dressing up, drama, and should include talking about both the print and the story.

Hearing aid and FM check

Check the hearing aid and FM system is working optimally to make sure the /s/ is accessible to Abdo. Issues 2, 3, and 4 in the suggestions for activities relate to hearing and producing this sound in various grammatical contexts.

Recommendations for BSL with Abdo

We have not included here assessments of Abdo's BSL receptive, productive or vocabulary skills. These need to be added in. However, we note at present Abdo receives very little tuition in BSL and neither does his family. It is likely that Abdo will have lags with English development right through school and possibly all his life. So it is important to consider at annual reviews the need for him to have another fluent language available, one he will not have difficulties acquiring if he is given actual tuition in it and exposure to fluent models.

Measuring progress

Video a short play session with Abdo in 6 months' time, transcribe and look for these features or use the STASS system rather than the actual STASS assessment. Review the targets. Repeat the STASS assessment in a year's time.

This may be seen as far too many targets for 6 months. But the fact is, Abdo is facing a linguistic emergency in relation to learning English. It is important that the successful English language development since he was aided does not stall or fossilise. Only through using spoken English in real motivating communicative contexts will Abdo continue to see the reason to communicate and push his own English language development on.

Usually direct support for families stops when deaf children start school, and thereafter there may be a home/school book or attendance by the teacher of deaf children at the school parents' evenings or meetings where the parent is invited into school. There is a strong case to be made in situations of very late diagnosis such as Abdo for continuing home visits if the family want this. These targets can be written in a form which parents can adopt at home, or presented gradually over a 6-month period to keep the momentum going, for example offering regularly changing fridge magnet cards with ideas for home activities round the targets.

Targets for the Child's Plan

Abdo has an IEP which sets out the staff and facilities he needs and the objectives over a six month period. Using what you know about Abdo and his situation at the moment, create an IEP which focuses on both spoken language and BSL. Remember that the IEP is so tightly focused on the child that it often ignores the family and the staff. Their skills and resources are also important to document. Compare your IEP with a colleague. Have you written it in language which Abdo's family can understand? Will they be able to track his progress? What arrangements will you make with Abdo's mother, clearly crucial in his English language development, a few weeks before the annual review meeting?

Further professional development

This booklet is part of your professional development; you can take it further by exploring some of the resources in the Reference list. A key skill to develop is the ability to hold interesting and extended conversations with deaf children (Whorral and Cabell, 2016). The resources draw on research with hearing children learning English as a second language (Kırkgoz, 2019; Nassaji, 2019), hearing children with a delayed spoken language (Wasik and Hindman, 2018; Dockrell et al., 2010), and some resources from an Auditory Verbal Therapy approach with deaf children which may be useful (Fickenscher et al., 2015; Fickenscher and Salvucci, 2019). I have chosen open access articles which are available freely on the internet, as teachers of deaf children rarely have good access to an academic library after their course is over.

10 Beyond STASS

Now you have worked through this booklet you should be able to:

- Collect a language sample from deaf children.
- Analyse it at Clause, Phrase and Word levels, and look for Expansion features.
- Match the actual profile to standard profiles for hearing children.
- Identify next steps for the child.
- Report the results in a format suitable for review meetings.
- Set targets and devise activities which will help achieve the next stage.

This is quite an achievement!

You may also decide you are ready to move beyond STASS and try collecting a more naturalistic sample of speech from the deaf child. The reason for doing this is that children will use more complex structures when they are talking about things relating to them. The STASS stimulus picture prompts are not as interesting as the main focus of their lives: themselves and their family.



To collect a naturalistic sample you could set up a play area or a conversation area with some stimulus material in it which will evoke the range of structures you are looking for. This could be a science room with some equipment out, or a cooking area, for example. Over a ten-minute period you can move the conversation on to cover the areas you want, for example:

Topic Reason – sort of language you hope to get in the sample

1. A recent holiday or outing: past tense narrative and use of pronouns
2. What you did just before this session / or use picture prompts for the very recent past: perfect constructions
3. Tell me how to make something or how to get somewhere: instructions, verb first.
4. Picture prompt of finding a £20 note in the park. This could lead to future constructions moving beyond the here and now, and use of modal verbs.

You can also continue to study more about children's language development and go on to the recursive stage above Stage 4 of STASS to when children start subordinating and making more complex sentences. Hopefully you will also now be more confident with ACE, designed for children aged 5–11, but useful in secondary school too. Another useful resource to learn more about word meaning and vocabulary growth is the Cambridge English Vocabulary Profile Online which shows the frequency of words and the many layered meanings of words as they gradually enter the child's lexicon:

<https://www.englishprofile.org/wordlists/evp>

Enjoy planning speaking and listening English language programmes with the child and their family, and remember the socio-cultural context and many other language resources the child and their family have as assets.

Answers

Chapter 4 Clause level analysis

Thinking about your generalisations. Have a look at my generalisations and see how they compare with yours.

The Subject of the utterance seems to often go in first position.

The Object element is in final position.

The Verb element is often in second position. But in instructions it is in first position.

The Complement element seems to follow the verb BE.

The adverbial element seems to go towards the end of a clause.

Typical clause orders for a statement seem to be: SV, SVO, SVC

The typical clause order for an instruction seems to be: VSA

The typical clause order for a question seems to be: QVS

This exercise was designed to get you thinking about generalisations; making your own rules is helpful in remembering language features.

Answers to earlier self-check questions about SV clauses 4.1

The oak tree has grown.
S V

This boat is sinking.
S V

Answers to self-check questions about SVO clauses

I loved the fireworks.
S V O

She will be wearing pink pyjamas.
S V O

The family ate their evening meal.
S V O

The children have been fighting.
S V

Tony and Gerry promised to get my dad a ticket.
S V Oi Od

Give me a hand!
V Oi Od

The last one is unexpected because the Subject element is not there. This is a common clause pattern for instructions. The Subject element is understood to be YOU, the person addressed. But we don't say *You give me a hand.*

Answers to 4.1.2

He meandered down the lane.
S V A

A battered old ex-army helicopter flew overhead.
S V A

Don't sing so loud.
V A

The two old friends came the day before yesterday.
S V A

He came to in a police cell.
S V A

Did you spot that (3) is an instruction, so doesn't have a Subject?

4.1.3 Self-check answers to practise distinguishing SVO from SVC sentences

Your two children are very bright.
S V C

The water splashed me.
S V O

He 's not little.
S V C

Jessie and Mary became friends.
S V C

The shopworker overcharged the customer.
S V O

4.1.4 Answers to matching Clause patterns

Clause pattern	Example
V	Help!
SV	The birds / were singing.
SVO	I / haven't got / any money.
SVC	The old man / seemed to be / angry.
SVA	Joanne and Pete / arrived / last night.
SVOA	There / are / four thousand holes / in Blackburn, Lancashire.
SVAA	We / danced / all night / under the stars.
SVOiOd	Someone / posted / me / a Valentine's card.
SVOC	I / pronounce / you / man and wife.

How did you do at finding the boundaries of the clause elements? Discuss this with a friend or colleague.

4.2.2 Check your answers:

Example verbs	Meaning category
climb	Action
happen	Occurrence
survive	State of being
need	State of mind
love	Relationship

4.2.5 Answers

My name is Kathy H. I am 31 years old, and I have been a carer now for over eleven years.
 N V N Pron V Adj N Adj Pron Aux V N Adj N

That sounds a long time, I know, but actually they want me to go on for another eight months,
 Pron V Adj N Pron V Pron V Pron Vpart Adj N

until the end of this year. That will make it almost exactly twelve years.
 N N Pron Aux V Pron Adj N

Count how many you got right. The total number of words to classify is 34.

You may have had to look some of the words up in the dictionary. *Been* is a main Verb, not an auxiliary here. You can see this by doing a clause analysis:

I have been a carer now for over 11 years.
 S V C A A

Incidentally, you can see by doing this language analysis that Ishiguro's style is very like conversational speech with a high proportion of pronouns.

4.2.6 Answers to self-check determiner questions

the old river boat
 D Adj N N

his car.
 D N

a little girl and a big man (3;6)
 D Adj N D Adj N

It's too big. (2;11)
 Pron V Int Adj

4.2.7 Answers to self-check

There are no right answers for the exercise on explaining prepositions. If you used diagrams and pictures, that's good because deaf learners usually like visual explanations. Did you try using a time line for 4 and 5?

Functions of *to*

Ali came to in the operation and could feel everything. V Part
 She helped me to lift the pram up the steps. VV
 How long is it to lunch? Prep

4.2.10 Answers to revision

My name is Kathy H. I am thirty-one years old, and I have been a carer now for over eleven
 c D Prep Prep

years. That sounds a long time, I know, but actually they want me to go on for another eight
 D c Prep D

months, until the end of this year. That will make it almost exactly twelve years.
 Prep D Prep D

STASS Rapid Assessment Score Sheet - Clause level analysis, Katie

1. CLAUSE

Q
N
V
Other

2. CLAUSE

QX	
SV	### III
SC	
SO	
NegX	
VC	I
VO	II
AX	I
	8
	1
	2
	1

3. CLAUSE

QXY	I	1
VS		
SVC	### I	6
SVO	### ### I	11
SVA	### IIII	9
NegXY		
VC/OA		
VOO		

4. CLAUSE

QVS	
QXYZ	
VS (X+)	
SVCA	
SVOA	
SVOO	I
AAXY	
	1

Above level 4

SVOAA SVAAA
subordination
ellipsis

STASS Rapid Assessment Score Sheet - Phrase level analysis, Katie

2. PHRASE

DN	III III III I	16
ADJN	I	1
NN	I	1
PREP N	III	3
VV	II	2
V Part	III III	10
Int X	II	2

3. PHRASE

D ADJ N	III II	7
ADJ ADJ N		
PREP D N	III IIII	9
N ADJ N		
COP		
AUX	III III II	12
PRON		
PREP ADJ N		

4. PHRASE

N PREP NP	III	3
PREP D ADJ N II		2
cX 111		3
NEG V	IIII	4
NEG X	I	1
AUX	I	1

Above level 4

XcX II

STASS Rapid Assessment Score Sheet – Word level analysis, Katie

2. WORD

-ING	###	5
PL	### II	7
-ED	### III	8
-EN	### I	6
3S	### ###	10

3. WORD

GEN		
N'T	### I	6
'COP	###	5
'AUX	### IIII	9

4. WORD

-EST	I	1
-ER	I	1
-LY		

5. AUXILIARIES

HAVE	IIII	4
CAN	I	1
BE	###	5
DO	III	3
WILL	IIII	4
MIGHT		
COULD		

PREPOSITIONS

IN / INSIDE	### II	7
ON	IIII	4
UNDER / UNDERNEATH	I	1
BEHIND		
BESIDE / NEXT TO	III	3
BETWEEN		
IN FRONT		
OF	IIII	4
AT	III	3

PRONOUNS

HE	### ### ### III	18
HIS	III	3
I	### I	6
IT	IIII	4
THEY	III	3
SHE	III	3
US	I	1
HIMSELF	I	1
YOUR	III	3
THAT		
YOU	I	1
MY	II	2
HER	I	1
HIM		
THEM		

Expansion features of Katie's speech sample

2 EXPANSION

X+S:NP		
X+V:VP	###	5
X+C:NP	I	1
X+O:NP	II	2
X+A:AP	I	1

3 EXPANSION

XY+S:NP	III	3
XY+V:VP	### ### I	11
XY+C:NP	II	2
XY+O:NP	### I	6
XY+A:AP	### III	8
XY2+V:VP	I	1
XY2+O:NP	I	1

More Advanced Expansions:

WXY2+A:AP	IIII	4
WXY2+O:NP	I	1
WXY2+V:VP	I	1
XY=O:clause	III	3
WXY2+A:clause	I	1

We have now finished analysing the data from the sample assessment. As you practise using STASS you will find it becomes much quicker.

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Appendix One

STASS 2 Rapid Assessment Score Sheet

1. CLAUSE

Q
N
V
Other

NAME
AGE
DATE
PHONOLOGY
COMPREHENSION

2. CLAUSE

QX
SV
SC
SO
NegX
VC
VO
AX

PHRASE

DN
AdjN
NN
Prep N
VV
VPart
IntX

WORD

-ING
PL
-ED
-EN
3S

EXPANSION

X+S:NP
X+V:VP
X+C:NP
X+O:NP
X+A:AP

3. CLAUSE

QXY
VS
SVC
SVO
SVA
NEG XY
V C/O A
VOO

PHRASE

D Adj N
Adj Adj N
PREP D N
N Adj N
COP
AUX
PRON
PREP Adj N

WORD

GEN
N'T
COP
AUX

EXPANSION

XY+S:NP
XY+V:VP
XY+C:NP
XY+O:NP
XY+A:AP

4. CLAUSE

QVS
QXYZ
VS (X+)
SVCA
SVOA
SVOO
AAXY

PHRASE

N PREPNP
PREP DAdj N
cX
XcX
NEGV
NEGX
2AUX

WORD

-EST
-ER
-LY

5. AUXILIARIES

HAVE
CAN
BE
DO
WILL
MIGHT
COULD

PREPOSITIONS

IN/INSIDE
ON
UNDER/UNDERNEATH
BEHIND
BESIDE/NEXT TO
BETWEEN
IN FRONT

PRONOUNS

HE	THAT
HIS	YOU
I	MY
IT	HER
THEY	HIM
SHE	THEM
YOUR	

Appendix Two

STASS Responses Katie 3;6

1. girl + + + sitting down
2. He's + he's digging a hole.
3. He hasn't got any eyes or mouth.
4. He having a basketball on the grass. Without any hard stones.
- 5a. On the on the edge of the on the bottom of the cup.
- 5b. He's in the cup
6. The happy dog. I think he's a mite? sad.
7. cos it's too big.
8. a cat (*what's this bit?*) a tail
9. He falled off his bike.
10. is a tiny boat
11. slow. He wants to win and she doesn't.
12. a red flower. (RPT) a big flower
- 13a. under the cup
- 13b. beside the cup
14. they'll bump in
15. he can't. The fish will just fall out.
16. he's spilt his milk.
17. I can't stay up. Cos it's a picture.
18. a little girl and a big man dad + no seat belt
(me: *they should have, shouldn't they*) yeah, or they'll fall out.
19. cos they have been in the sea. Swimming pool. Swim in the sea. I have been + I
have been + in sea + one day + when I was at nanas and papas. And it was
freezing cold. And I cried. You know what, I had my shoes on and Sarah had her old top
on. And I went 'Come Sarah let's jump in' and he said 'Aagh!'
- 20a. He's dirty.
- 20b. cos he's been in mud. No he's been painting himself.
21. He'll fall in.
22. cos he doesn't want it. My medicine tastes yummy.
23. in the big house.
- 24a. + + + at the back of the cup
- 24b. at the front of the cup
25. he he he he (*What's he done?*) (unintelligible)
26. Where's my shoes?
27. bigger, bigger, + + picture, biggest
28. brush your teeth. Brush your teeth. ++ She says 'open your mouth'.
29. beside each other. Beside the cups.
30. cos she's been in the sea.
31. cos he didn't take his clothes off.
32. Santa's giving her a parcel.

For more information and additional copies of this book please contact:

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