

**Conversations: A Framework for Language
Intervention (1996)**

Author: Barbara Hoskins, PhD

Publisher: Thinking Publications, 1-800-225-4769,

www.thinkingpublications.com

Cost: \$57.00

Reviewer: Wendy Eng, Alberta Hospital Brain Injury Rehabilitation
Program, Ponoka, Alberta

The objective of this book is to provide professionals with a language-based framework to facilitate communicative interactions. It is based on pragmatic language theory and is designed for those who require training with basic social and interactional skills.

The activities in the book are designed for group work with clients from 11 years to young adults. This resource is developed for use by speech-language pathologists in collaboration with educators in a classroom setting. The group activities are meant to be functional and interactive in order to develop and facilitate generalisation.

The book is divided into two main parts: (a) theoretical and background information including a framework for intervention and how to plan intervention, and (b) activities to facilitate the development of successful conversational abilities. The first quarter of the book provides theoretical information and background for pragmatic skills. The activities are divided into three sections (Conversational Moves, Linguistic/ Conceptual Skills, and Social/Cognitive Skills) with specific abilities targeted by each activity. The first set of activities is aimed at developing foundation skills for effective conversational interactions. These serve as a base upon which other skills are built. The foundation skills targeted and discussed include how to introduce, maintain, elaborate, extend, and change a topic; how to clarify information in a conversation; and, how to respond to requests for conversation. Hoskins states that these "moves" are essential for effective conversational interaction and that each move provides a foundation and basis for the next move.

Although the book provides a specific and thoroughly laid out framework, the author encourages its users to adapt and modify it according to the needs of the participants. The framework is not set up as a module where each section must be completed in a set order. The many activities in the book can be easily modified for varying levels of ability, providing a diverse range of possible activities.

Use of this book should not be limited to adolescents and young adults with language disorders. It would be beneficial to use with any population that requires training or intervention with pragmatic and conversational skills. For example, it would be beneficial to use with clients who have sustained a head injury. Following head injuries it is not uncommon to have impaired pragmatic and interactional skills.

Such skills can be retaught in a group setting in the context of conversations, thereby making intervention more functional and facilitating generalisation.

This book has many activities from which to choose. It is important that, prior to training or retraining interaction skills, a thorough pragmatic assessment be completed. Once areas of need are determined, it would be easier to select appropriate activities. The layout of the activities are clear, well organised, and detailed. One criticism is that it covers many topics and areas, some rather superficially, with no review mechanism provided. In order for activities to be beneficial, they appear to rely on participants whose metalinguistic skills and motivation are quite good. Although the book provides information about how to plan and implement intervention in a structured way (how to provide feedback, how to facilitate interactions, and how to organise and sequence the sessions), a good leader is required to adapt to the various language and motivation levels of the participants.

**Handbook of Exercises for Language
Processing: HELP for MEMORY (1996)**

Author: Andrea M. Lazzari

Publisher: LinguiSystems, 1-800-776-4332, www.linguisystems.com

Cost: \$53.95

Reviewer: Leah Mackie, Alberta Hospital Ponoka Brain Injury
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Help for Memory is the third installment in the "Help for..." series authored by Andrea M. Lazzari and published by LinguiSystems. The purpose of this resource is clearly stated as "not necessarily to expand or improve an individual's memory but to provide a means of systematic training in memory strategies to aid in recall" (p. 5). The exercises included in the book are, therefore, a means for helping individuals to acquire memory strategies deemed appropriate. The materials are directed towards the eight through adult population, however etiology types are not discussed. Speech-language pathologists who work in the area of memory compensation are aware that many of the activities will be confounded if there is a concomitant language impairment (i.e., organizing and chunking rely heavily on categorization skills) and therefore a thorough assessment is of primary importance prior to treating memory impairments. The materials are well laid out, with a brief half-page explanation prior to each section. This explanation does not discuss the different skills needed to perform a strategy but rather discusses the purpose of the section, and of each activity type.

The resource's first section focuses on selective attention skills or "the ability to identify and select the most critical incoming information" (p. 7) from sentences and paragraphs. Some of the exercises include identifying key elements in information and judging the importance of information. Selective attention and judgements about what to remember are essential base skills when implementing memory strategies.

The second section addresses organization, which is vital for effective compensation for memory deficits. There are many types of organizational skills that are needed. However, Lazzari focuses mainly on linguistic organizational strategies such as associations, categorizations, and whole/part relationships. These are important base skills if you plan to implement strategies such as chunking or visual imagery.

The third section presents a variety of exercises intended to help determine which strategies would be most helpful for the client. The strategies included chunking, acronyms, rhymes, catch phrases, reciting, and visual imagery. School-related memory strategies are addressed including taking notes, rebus symbols, outlines, webs, and timelines. Several exercises are provided for each strategy; however, if one of the strategies is proving effective, it may be more appropriate to use personally salient information versus inconsequential facts. For example, if you are going to teach recital to help facts become part of long-term memory then it may be more useful to use information that needs to be remembered, such as the individual's address.

The final section provides stimuli at the sentence and paragraph level as well as pictorial scenes to practice techniques which were identified as effective in previous sections. Lazzari also includes a tip sheet which talks about common difficulties encountered by individuals who have memory difficulties such as frequently locking one's keys in the house. She suggests installing dead bolt locks which can only be locked on the outside. This and many of the other tips may be very appropriate depending on the nature of the individual's

impairment. In addition to this tip sheet Lazzari includes a list of carryover activities which could be used to implement the chosen strategies in extended settings.

This resource is well organized. The author cautions the user of the materials not to implement the exercises simply as practice work sheets to strengthen memory much as one would a muscle. However, there is the danger that this book will be used as a treatment program rather than as a resource in memory retraining due to the systematic and hierarchical organisation of the exercises. Lazzari states that practice is provided in order to help the clients see which memory strategies would be the most helpful. As diagnosticians it is vital that speech-language pathologists assess semantic, episodic, auditory, visual, and procedural memory as well as language skills in order to determine which strategies should be tried and which are simply of no utility due to the nature of the impairment. Once this has been ascertained, then this resource may prove beneficial.

This resource focuses on internal memory strategies and addresses external memory strategies only in passing. External strategies such as day timers and memory journals are often the most successful strategies. In order to be successful they also require careful training and carryover exercises, none of which are discussed in the tip sheet. There is a limited reference list included and one would need to look beyond the book for more information on the theory and research behind any of the strategies and the type of memory a particular strategy is targeting. If one chooses to train internal memory strategies in addition to, or in place of, external compensation strategies then this book may provide useful direction on the type of strategies and activities available.

