Current Research Review:
Use of Language Sample Analysis by
School-Based SLPs: Results of a Nationwide Survey.
(Pavelko, Owens, Ireland, & Hahs-Vaughn, 2016)

Background: Language sample analysis (LSA) is a component of a comprehensive assessment for suspected language disorder that allows the clinician to gather descriptive information about the child's functional language skills. It is especially important when working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) children as few diagnostic practices are valid or accurate for this population. Best practices in LSA include eliciting complex syntax through narrative and expository tasks, analyzing 50 utterances, and recording the sample to avoid real-time transcription. Federal and state law require that various data sources be used to determine eligibility for special education, and many states include in their laws the use of language sampling.

Hypothesis: The authors investigated how often school-based SLPs use LSA and purpose of use, characteristics of the language samples, methods of transcription and analysis, and barriers to LSA. The authors predicted that those with a high caseload would be less likely to use LSA. They also hypothesized that SLPs who more recently completed a graduate program and those who maintained their ASHA certification would be more likely to use LSA. They would also be more likely to use evidence-based practices.

Methodology and Participants: An electronic survey was completed by 1,399 SLPs, representing 34 states. Of the SLPs who responded to the survey, 88% were ASHA certified, 95% had a master's degree, and 58% had more than 11 years of experience in a school setting.

Conclusion: The authors found that a significant percentage, 33%, of SLPs that responded did not use LSA. When SLPs did report using LSA, they often did not do so following best practice based on available research. For example, they often did not use an established protocol, did not obtain the suggested number of utterances (50) for LSA, often used conversation rather than narrative based LSA and often transcribed in real time. SLPs serving middle and high school students were also less likely to use LSA. Most SLPs cited time as the main barrier to using LSA more frequently, although many stated that they would be interested in participating in professional development on using LSA.

Relevance to the field: Since LSA is one of the more valid and effective forms of assessment, the authors found it concerning that many SLPs are not using evidence-based LSA in their current practice. There is substantial research supporting the use of narrative and expository

tasks to elicit complex syntax and obtain naturalistic language samples, especially with older students. Overall, LSA is a key component of any comprehensive language assessment, particularly for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who are often over-identified through standardized language assessments. The authors called for professional development to be provided to SLPs to increase use in clinical practice.

Pavelko, S. L., Owens, R. E., Ireland, M., & Hahs-Vaughn, D. L. (2016). Use of language sample analysis by school-based SLPs: Results of a nationwide survey. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, *47*, 246–258.