

METHODS TO MINIMIZE IRREGULAR PAST TENSE VERBS

The saying goes, “Kids say the darndest things.” This rule not only applies to embarrassing stories your child will tell to practically anyone, but also to their language development. One challenge parents face during their child’s language development is to make sure their child is not making irregular past tense errors. An example of an irregular past tense error would be if a child says, “I runned fast!” Many children will make these irregular past tense errors well into their elementary school years.

Multiple studies have been conducted about children’s usage of these irregular past tense errors; however, few have directly compared the effects of input on learning this form in children with typical language (TL) development and children with specific language impairment (SLI).



Kerry Proctor-Williams and Marc Fey (BNCD Investigator) did just that. Their study looked at sentence recasts as a method for teaching irregular past tense more efficiently to children with TL and those with SLI. Sentence recasts happen when adults immediately correct a child’s

error, or modify the child’s utterance while maintaining the original meaning of what the child said. For example, if a child says, “I runned fast,” a sentence recast would occur if the adult follows by saying, “You ran fast.” It is not considered a recast if the adult changes the focus of the sentence or adds new information, such as, “You ran fast to grandma’s house.”

The motivation for this study came from previous research by both investigators in which they found that children with SLI learn from sentence recasts effectively in clinical settings while children with TL learn from sentence recasts effectively in daily conversations *and* in clinic settings. In 1999, Fey and colleagues found that the rates of recasts were dramatically

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SUCCESS IN THE CLASSROOM

Every child has the power to succeed in school and in life and every parent, family member and caregiver can help. The question is: How can we help our children succeed? The answer comes from a combination of common sense and research about how children learn and about how to prepare them to learn.

We know, for example, that children tend to do the same things as their parents do. What you say and do in your daily lives can help them to develop positive attitudes toward school and learning and to build confidence in themselves as learners. Showing your child both the value of education and its use in your daily life provides them

with powerful models and contributes greatly to their success in school.

As a child’s first and most important teacher, it’s important that all parents build and keep strong ties to their children’s schools. When parents and families are involved in their children’s schools, the children do better and have better feelings about going to school.

If you think about it, although school is very important, it does not really take up very much of a child’s time. In the United States, the school year averages 180 days; in other nations, the school year can last up to 240

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MINIMIZING IRREGULAR PAST TENSE

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higher in the clinical setting than they were in typical parent-child conversations. Thus, the differences in children's learning could be attributed to the much higher rate of recasts in the clinical setting than in conversation.

For the present study, Proctor-Williams and Fey addressed the questions: Do children with SLI and children with TL learn new irregular past tense verb forms better: (1) when they hear sentence recasts (e.g., Child: I falled down. Adult: You fell down) or models (e.g., Child: I hurt myself. Adult: You fell down) at conversational rates; and (2) when recast rates increase from those typical of conversation to the higher rates used in intervention.

For their study, Proctor-Williams and Fey looked at group of 7-8 year-olds with SLI and a group of 5-6 year-olds with TL and similar language levels. Both groups of children were introduced to 6 novel words. In the low-density recast condition, children were exposed to recasts at a rate of 0.2 per minute; in the high-density recast condition, children were exposed to recasts at a rate of 0.5 per minute. Additionally, the experimenter provided models in both conditions to ensure equal and adequate expo-

sure to the verbs.

The investigators found that only children with TL benefited from conversational rates of sentence recasts. Furthermore, these children displayed better verb learning when recasts were included in the input than when they heard models only. Surprisingly, increasing the rates of recasts did not benefit verb learning in either group. In fact, children with TL produced irregular past tense verbs *less* accurately in the high-density condition than in the low-density condition. The authors offer several explanations for this unexpected result.

The results from this study show that children with TL benefit from sentence recasts at the rates available in conversation, while those with SLI show no greater learning benefit than is available through models alone. This does not mean that children with SLI cannot benefit from sentence recasts; however more research is needed to pinpoint the rates and conditions that provide the best learning opportunities.

Proctor-Williams, K. & Fey, M. E. (2007). Recast density and acquisition of novel irregular past tense verbs. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 50, 1029-1047.

BNCD INVESTIGATOR PROFILE

Steven Barlow, Ph.D. in addition to being a BNCD investigator is a professor in the Speech-Language and Hearing Department and professor for Neuroscience and Human Biology. Dr. Barlow's research interests are in sensorimotor integration and motor control among infants, children, and adults. One of his major projects involves exploring the neural plasticity of premature infants at-risk for brain damage. Another study he is involved in explores the effects of brain stimulator implants on limb and vocal tract motor control in individuals with advanced forms of Parkinson's disease. Dr. Barlow has received a lot of attention and recogni-

tion with regard to the development of the Actifier. The Actifier is a high-tech pacifier that is connected to a computer and helps sucking and swallowing for premature infants so that they can learn to nurse more quickly and are able to leave intensive care sooner. Dr. Barlow also believes that the Actifier has more possibilities for detecting and treating developmental disabilities.



Encourage Language Development

Birth to 2 Years:

- Encourage your baby to make vowel-like sounds such as "ma," "da," and "ba."
- Imitate your baby's laughter and facial expressions.
- Teach your baby to imitate your actions - throwing kisses, pat-a-cake, and peek-a-boo.
- Identify colors.
- Count items.

2 to 4 Years:

- Use speech that your child can model.
- Ask questions that require a choice, "Do you want to wear a red or blue shirt?"
- Expand vocabulary.
- Sing simple songs and recite nursery rhymes and patterns of speech.
- Use photographs of familiar people and places and retell stories or make up new ones.

4 to 6 Years:

- When your child speaks, give your full attention whenever possible.
- Make sure you have your child's attention before you speak.
- Acknowledge, encourage, and praise all attempts to speak.
- Continue to build vocabulary.
- Help your child follow two-and three-step directions: "Go to your room and bring me your book."
- Play games with your child that allow them to pretend.

Taken from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. For full article visit:
<http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/Parent-Stim-Activities.htm>

Upcoming Events for Parents and Kids!



Peter Pan:

The Lied Center is presenting one of children's favorite characters - Peter Pan! Children of all ages are encouraged to take the trip to Neverland. Showing Nov. 28 at 7:30 p.m. Admission charges vary. Contact the Lied Center for more information at:

Call: (785) 864-2787 or

See: www.lied.ku.edu



Gingerbread House Festival:

Annual Gingerbread House display, sponsored by Big Brothers and Big Sisters. Located at the Eldridge Hotel on Massachusetts Street in Lawrence. Event takes place Nov. 30 - Dec. 3rd. and times are TBA. Free admission.

See: www.mentoringmagic.org

Contact: douglascounty@ksbbbs.org

Lawrence Downtown Holiday Parade:

Features horse-drawn carriages, wagons, and coaches decorated for the holiday season. Parade takes place through downtown Lawrence on Dec. 1 at 11 a.m. Admission is free!

Call: (785) 838-9400

Children's Holiday Shop:

Children's Holiday Shop provides a safe and fun place for children to shop for gifts for their families. Gifts are priced \$1 - \$5. For children aged 4th grade and younger. Even get a visit with Santa! Located at the Lawrence Arts Center on Dec. 8th from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. and admission is free. For more information:

Call: (785) 843-2787 or

See: www.lawrenceartscenter.com

"What Do You Want To Be?":

Children have the opportunity to role-play many different occupations. Forecast the weather, work in a laboratory, count-down to take off, or hear the sound of the crowd in a stadium. It's a make-believe adventure in a pretend world. Located Near Crown Center. Dates run Jan. 26th - Apr. 27th. and admission is free!

Call: (816) 274-8444 or

See: www.crowncenter.com



Rumplestiltskin:

KU Theatre presents a participation play of Rumplestiltskin. Event runs Feb. 4th - Feb. 8th at 1 p.m. in Murphy Hall, KU. Admission charge is \$5 - \$10. For more information:

See: www.kutheatre.com

Flat Stanley:

This whirlwind musical is flat-out family fun! Follow Stanley Lambchop search worldwide through South Africa, Mexico, Russia, England, China, and beyond for a solution to his unusual problem. Presented at the KU Lied Center on Feb. 19th at 7 p.m. For more information and admission charges:

Call: (785) 864-2787 or

See: www.lied.ku.edu



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days and students are often in school more hours per day than American students. Clearly, the hours and days that a child is not in school are important for learning, too. Here are some things that you can do to help your child to make the most of that time:

- Encourage Your Child to Read - Helping your child become a reader is the single most important thing that you can do to help the child to succeed in school.
- Talk with Your Child - It's through hearing parents and family members

talk and through responding to that talk that young children begin to pick up the language skills they will need if they are to do well.

- Monitor Homework
- Monitor TV Viewing and Video Game Playing
- Encourage Your Child to Use the Library
- Help Your Child Learn to Use the Internet Properly and Effectively - The Internet has become an important part of how we learn and of how we interact with others. For

children to succeed today, they must be able to use the Internet.

- Encourage Your Child to Be Responsible and to Work Independently
- Encourage Active Learning - Active learning involves asking and answering questions, solving problems and exploring interests.

Taken from *Helping Your Child Succeed in School*. For the full text as well as activities you can do with your children, please visit: www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/hyc.html

