

# CLINICAL TERMINOLOGY GLOSSARY

## A

**Abstract:** A descriptive term that refers to language that is not concrete. Vocabulary words that refer to concepts that cannot be seen or heard are abstract (e.g., success, honesty). Idioms, proverbs, similes, and metaphors are abstract language.

**Alerting Cue/Stimulus:** What the SLP/SLPA says or does to cue the student to pay attention to a stimulus.

**Attention:** The ability to focus mental effort on stimuli. Different types of attention include sustained, selective, alternating, and divided attention.

**Auditory Bombardment:** Presentation of many examples of a speech or language target by the SLP/SLPA. Typically, the student is not expected to respond to the presentations but is just listening to the target being produced.

**Auditory Cue:** A sound, typically a spoken sound, word, or phrase designed to assist the student to produce a target response. Auditory cues also include changes in pitch, loudness, or syllable stress.

## B

**Babbling:** Production of syllables, typical of developing speech of infants and toddlers. May be reduplicated (the same syllable is repeated) or variegated (different syllables are combined).

**Baseline:** the initial data gathered on student performance at the beginning of treatment and/or goal development that matches the condition, criterion, and performance of the long-term goal.

**Backwards Chaining:** A scaffolding procedure in which the SLP/SLPA models a desired response from the end to the beginning, increasing the length of the response with each presentation. The student immediately imitates each modeled syllable or word. Often used when practicing pronunciation of multisyllabic words (e.g., graduation: tion, ation, uation, graduation).

## C

**Carrier Phrase:** A short phrase that the SLP/SLPA presents for the student to complete by producing a target word. The student might produce the missing word or the entire phrase with the word. Often used to increase the level of response complexity from single-word productions of speech sound or language targets to sentence productions.

**Categorize:** To put named items, words or objects in groups based on similarities.

**Chunking:** SLP/SLPA presentation of a large amount of spoken information in smaller amounts separated by a pause to make it easier for the student to recall what was said.

**Circumlocution:** A student behavior that involves the person talking about or describing an item or concept that they do not name directly. Often a result of word-finding difficulty.

**Clause:** a grammatical term referring to a group of words that contain both a subject and a verb. Clauses can be independent (grammatically correct sentences) or dependent (grammatical units that must be with an independent clause because they are not grammatically correct on their own).

**Cloze technique:** A verbal cue presented by the SLP/SLPA saying a sentence but leaving the last word off for the student to produce.

**Communication Temptation:** A situation planned by the SLP/SLPA that is likely to cause the student to communicate to obtain a desired item or action.

**Communication Unit (C-unit):** An utterance with a main clause and one or more subordinate clauses. The spoken and written language of older students might be monitored by calculating clausal density by dividing the number of clauses in a sample by the total number of C-units for a measure of clausal density.

**Compare/Contrast:** Expressive language skills in which students state how 2 or more items or vocabulary words are similar (compare) to each other and different (contrast) from each other.

**Comprehend:** To understand. Comprehension is not, by itself observable measurable. We measure comprehension through observable actions such as answering questions, pointing, and following directions.

**Concrete:** A descriptive term that refers to language that names items or events that can be seen, heard, or otherwise sensed (e.g., shoe, purple, run). A person who interprets language literally may have very concrete thinking.

**Confabulation:** A student behavior in which the person makes up information that is not accurate, often to fill gaps in memory.

**Consequence:** An event that takes place after the student's response, often in the form of spoken SLP/SLPA feedback, that indicates the accuracy of the response, making it more or less likely that the student will produce the response again.

**Cue or Prompt:** An action or verbalization by the SLP/SLPA that supports the student in therapy. May be part of the stimulus presentation to elicit a student's response or during the student's response to assist the student to be more accurate.

Phonemic: first sound or syllable in a target word

Semantic: information about the meaning of a target word (location, function, description, etc.

Tactile: touch

Verbal: spoken

Written: typed or printed

Visual/Nonverbal: movement, gesture, picture

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## 2 | Clinical Terminology Glossary

## D

**Define:** Tell the meaning of a word without using the word itself.

**Describe:** State features of an object or word such as the category, size, shape, parts, location, sound, smell/taste, etc.

**Diagnosis:** The condition affecting the student that results in the communication disorder. A student might have a medical, psychological and/or communication disorder diagnosis.

**Drill:** Therapy that is fast paced with many stimulus presentations and response trials. Allows the student to practice the target skill many times in short period. Typically, feedback is limited.

**Duration:** The amount of time a behavior lasts, typically measured in seconds or minutes. Disfluencies (stuttering) and phonation times (holding out an “ah” sound) are commonly measured by their duration.

## E

**Echolalia:** A student behavior in which the person repeats what someone else has said or what they have said themselves. This is different from imitation in that echolalia signals disordered communication, while imitation is often requested in treatment when learning a new communication skill.

**Elicit:** A verb meaning to draw out. A SLP/SLPA presents a stimulus, cue, or prompt to elicit a student response.

**Expansion:** The SLP/SLPA repeats what the student says and adds words to make it grammatically correct

**Express:** To produce language, either spoken or written.

**Extension:** The SLP/SLPA repeats what the student says and adds more information to make the sentence more complete.

**Eye Gaze:** Refers to eye movement, which can be used by students who communicate with AAC to indicate choices or to control devices. Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders may have difficulty following and interpreting the eye gaze of others.

## F

**Fade:** Decrease the amount or type of cueing, prompting, reinforcement, and feedback to eventually result in the student performing the target behavior in natural communication interactions.

**Feedback:** SLP/SLPA information presented to the student regarding the accuracy of the student’s response. Is often part of the “consequence” in the therapeutic process.

Corrective: Presented to change the student’s performance to be more correct on the next attempt.

General: Only indicates if the response was correct or incorrect.

Positive: Informs the student that the response was correct.

Specific: Provides information about what was correct or incorrect in the student's response

**Final**: Last. In articulation tasks, this refers to the place in a word where the target phoneme is located.

**Foils**: Stimuli presented to the student as part of a choice set that are incorrect.

**Frequency**: The number of times a behavior occurs. This is often tracked by making a tally mark or recording each event in another way. When frequency is divided by time (e.g., number of seconds, minutes, or hours), the result is a **rate** of occurrence.

## G

**Gesture**: A nonverbal behavior, often a movement of the shoulders, arms, and/or hands produced in place of or with verbalization. SLP/SLPAs and students both use gestures.

**Goals and Objectives**: The desired outcomes of therapy. Well-written goals include conditions, student performance, and criteria.

Behavioral objectives are written for one treatment session and lead up to the short-term goal.

Long-term goals are written for dismissal from therapy or for a 1-year period.

Short-term goals are written for a shorter period of time (e.g., 3 months, 1 month) and lead up to the long-term goal.

## H

**Hand-over-hand**: A type of assistance in which the SLP/SLPA uses their hand to move the student's hand to perform a task.

## I

**Identify**: A student behavior in which they choose a correct option from a set of choices. This is a receptive (comprehension/understanding) task.

**Imitate**: Perform a behavior that was performed by another person. Typically, the SLP/SLPA will model a target and the student will attempt to imitate it.

Delayed: Imitation after a period of time has passed, often with other verbal information between the model and the imitation attempt.

Immediate: Imitation right after the model with no delay.

**Independent**: student response is performed without additional cueing or prompting.

**Initial**: First. In articulation tasks, this refers to the place in a word where the target phoneme is located.

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## 4 | Clinical Terminology Glossary

**Intelligible:** An adjective used to describe speech that is understood by a listener. SLP/SLPAs may rate the percent of speech that the student produces intelligibly as the student's **intelligibility**.

**Intonation:** See Prosody.

## J

## K

## L

**Latency:** The time from the end of the stimulus presentation to the onset of the response

**Level of Complexity:** describes how simple or complex the language or speech sound production task is. Often SLP/SLPA's will treat skills in simple contexts first and work toward more complex contexts. For example, from least to most complex, correct production of speech sounds is addressed in isolation, syllables, words, phrases, sentences, and conversation.

## M

**Medial:** In the middle. In articulation tasks, this refers to the place in a word where the target phoneme is located.

**Mimic:** To do or say what someone else did before you. This essentially means the same as imitate; however, imitate is the preferred clinical term.

**Model:** The SLP/SLPA performs the behavior that is expected from the student.

Direct: The model is presented alone, and the student imitates it

Indirect: The model is presented in the process of another activity (e.g., production of pronouns while playing with a doll house)

**Modify:** Change the task by changing stimulus presentation or response expected from the student to make the activity easier or more difficult, depending on the student's performance.

**Morpheme:** The smallest meaningful unit language

## N

**Neglect:** A condition in which the student does not attend to stimuli. The student may neglect stimuli in the environment or their own body.

## O

**Objective or Behavioral Objective:** See Goals and Objectives.

## 5 | Clinical Terminology Glossary

**Orientation:** Awareness of person, place, time, and situation. Individuals who have experienced brain injury may have difficulty with orientation.

## P

**Perseverate:** A student behavior in which the person continues to say or do the same thing repeatedly.

**Phoneme:** A perceived distinct unit of sound in any language that can distinguish one word from another.

**Phrase:** A group of words that add meaning to a sentence but do not contain a subject and a verb. There are different types of phrases, including but not limited to noun phrases, verb phrases, adverbial phrases, prepositional phrases, gerunds, infinitives, and adjective phrases.

**Physical Assistance:** The SLP/SLPA physically moves the student or the student's body part to help them perform the desired response.

**Placement Cue:** Verbal or visual information provided by the SLP/SLPA to inform the student where to place their tongue to produce a target sound.

**Produce:** To make something. students will produce communication behaviors such as speech sounds, words, and sentences.

**Progress Monitoring:** The means of collecting data on a student's progress on the identified short-term or long-term goals/objectives. Data is collected on the target skill at least every two weeks and reviewed periodically to determine the student's progress towards the goals/objectives.

**Prompt:** See Cue or Prompt.

**Prosody:** The "melody" of speech, created by changes in pitch, loudness, and duration of sounds. Also called intonation.

**Punishment:** SLP/SLPA presentation of feedback or consequences that indicate a behavior or response was incorrect and discourage the student from producing it again.

## Q

## R

**Rate:** A measure of how often a behavior occurs over a given period of time. Rates may be useful to measure a student's use of target skills such as initiating communication with peers, and their demonstration of behaviors that we want to reduce such as disfluencies.

**Recast:** The SLP/SLPA takes the student's utterances and says it back in a different sentence type (e.g., student: The kitten is soft. SLP/SLPA: Is that a soft kitten?).

**Redirect:** SLP/SLPA presentation of a cue or prompt to encourage the student to stop an off-task behavior to focus on and complete target tasks in therapy.

**Reinforcement:** SLP/SLPA presentation of feedback or consequences that indicate a response was correct and encourage the student to produce the response again.

**Reinforcer or Reward:** Something the student receives for a correct response or target behavior.

Primary Reinforcer: An item that has value to the student in and of itself.

Secondary Reinforcer: An item that does not have value by itself but can be collected to earn something of value. Tokens and stickers that are collected to earn a prize are secondary reinforcers.

## S

**Sabotage:** A SLP/SLPA action or statement that is purposefully incorrect or inadequate, requiring the student to communicate to obtain what they want or to fix the SLP/SLPA's error.

**Scaffolding:** SLP/SLPA supports that help the student to successfully complete a task that is too difficult to do without supports. These supports can take many forms including verbal cues, gestures, modeling, etc.

**Self-correction:** The student can change an incorrect response to a correct response without cueing or feedback from the SLP/SLPA.

**Self-monitoring:** The student attends to their own performance of target skills and can judge their accuracy (self-assessment).

**Sequence:** A language skill in which students order information based on a specific criterion. Pictures or descriptions of steps to a task may be sequenced first to last. Vocabulary words may be sequenced by a variety of features (e.g., soft to hard, slow to fast, angry to happy).

**Shaping:** The SLP/SLPA starts with a response that the student can perform and provides instruction and feedback to change it gradually into the target skill. Often used in articulation therapy when the SLP/SLPA asks the student to produce a sound they can make and then gives instructions to change articulator movements to change that sound into the target sound.

**Social Thinking:** A pragmatic language skill which includes skills such as attending to nonverbal communication of others, thinking about others, adjusting one's communication to accommodate the interests and feelings of others, etc.

**Spontaneous:** Behavior occurs without the SLP/SLPA saying or doing anything to elicit it.

**Stimuli:** SLP/SLPA behaviors and materials that are presented to elicit a response from the student. (stimulus - one, stimuli - more than one)

## T

**Target:** The communication skill the student is attempting to perform.

**Telegraphic:** A descriptive term for spoken or written language that contains mostly nouns and verbs, but lacks function words such as articles, determiners, helping verbs, and conjunctions. Also called agrammatic language or speech.

**Terminal Unit (T-Unit):** A main clause and any subordinate clauses that are part of the same sentence. (Hunt, 1970) The spoken and written language of older students might be monitored by calculating clausal density by dividing the number of clauses in a sample by the total number of T-Units for a measure of clausal density.

**Transcript:** A written or printed representation of an orally presented narrative or conversation.

**Trial:** One stimulus presentation or opportunity for a student to perform a target behavior.

## U

**Utterance:** A spoken segment of speech bounded by silence. It may be a single word, a simple, compound, or complex sentence, a run-on sentence, or an incomplete thought.

## V

**Verbal Cues:** Spoken information from the SLP/SLPA.

Choice sets - provide 2 or more options for the student to select the correct response from.

Comment - a statement related to the topic. (e.g., I wonder why.... To elicit an inference.).

Phonemic - provide the first phoneme or syllable of the target word/phrase.

Question - a question related to the topic (e.g., where is the \_\_\_\_? To elicit a phrase with a preposition).

Reminder - tell the student what to do before the attempt (e.g., before the student responds, SLP/SLPA says, “remember to add /s/ to mean more than 1”).

Semantic - provide information about the meaning of the target word or phrase.

Sentence cloze - provide a sentence or phrase for the student to finish (e.g., I have one shirt, we have two \_\_\_\_.) Note the word is “cloze,” not “close”.

**Verbalize:** Communicate with spoken words.

**Vocalize:** Produce voicing, possibly with some modification into speech sounds, but typically without understandable speech.

## W

**Wait time:** A period of time after the stimulus presentation during which the SLP/SLPA does not provide additional prompting or cueing but remains silent and still to allow the student time to respond.

**Word position:** See initial, medial, and final.



X

Y

Z

## WORDS AND PHRASES TO AVOID

In clinical writing, avoid descriptions of SLP/SLPA and student behaviors that are not objective, or observable and measurable. For example, “Evelyn was excited,” is a statement of someone’s interpretation of Evelyn’s behaviors. Rather than saying, “Evelyn was *excited*,” a clinical writer will report that “Evelyn smiled and skipped into the room. She told the SLP/SLPA that she was excited because she was going to a birthday party after school.”

Avoid using words and phrases that:

- Label emotions (sad, happy, disgusted)
- Label mental states (confused, understood, knew)
- Label the quality of performance without objective data or description (awesome, wonderful, fantastic, poor)
- Are non-specific (went through, did, tried, gave)
- Are more appropriate for creative writing (eyes sparkled, beamed, glowered)

If you choose to report your perception of a student’s mood, thoughts, or attitudes, also include an objective description of what the student stated or what you saw the student do that led you to this interpretation.

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