
From the Editor

It is quality rather than quantity that matters.

Lucius Annaeus Seneca, [circa 4 BC–AD 65]
(*Epistles*, 41 5.)

This issue of *Topics in Language Disorders* deals with new insights into old problems. Seneca spoke to the heart of the matter, the quality of life, 24 centuries ago. Issue Editor Dana Kovarsky and his authors bring forth new issues related to treatment outcomes for those with communication disorders. Reflecting a need to provide alternative methods, clinicians are searching for new frameworks for collecting data and for measuring the efficacy, as well as the efficiency of their therapeutic approaches.

Critical to both patient and clinician is the ability to establish the viability of new procedures which permit measurement of clinically significant changes. Placing the adult or child at the center of the circle and evaluating the social communication changes from his or her perspective is as important as those reported by family members, teachers, and peers. Something similar is going on in the field of psychology. Labeled positive psychology, its supporters are engaged in an attempt to have clinical psychologists view their patients with a “more open and appreciative perspective regarding human potentials, motives, and capacities” (Sheldon & King, 2001, p. 216).

Readers might also be interested in the research emerging from both psychology and psychiatry, which reports on converging findings that children at risk for psychopathology can demonstrate resilience in the face of genetic or experiential circumstances (Cicchetti & Cannon, 1999; Sheldon & King, 2001). Children who were thought to display special qualities of invincibility due to extraordinary strength or inner resilience are now thought to simply “be responding to the operation of basic human adaptational systems. When such systems are robust even in the face of severe adversity . . . then the risk for developmental

problems is relatively small. However, if these systems are impaired . . . the risk is much greater” (Masten, 1994, p. 227). Some researchers have concluded that positive emotions build psychological resiliency and trigger upward spirals of well-being, including greater abilities to broaden attention and cognition (Aspinwall, 1998).

The words speech-language pathologists use (e.g., communicative participation; life activities and goals, functional performance, ethnographic interviewing, compensatory strategies, executive functioning, etc.) have somewhat similar intent to those in positive psychology and both have relevance to this issue’s focus on discourse as the vehicle for change. Such outcomes appear to have a long history, as Amenemope, an 11th century-BC sage, also recommended:

Beginning of the teaching for life,
The instructions for well-being . . .
Knowing how to answer one who speaks,
To reply to one who sends a message
(*Prologue*)

Kovarsky agrees, as he points out in his foreword, that one theme unites all of these articles: i.e., the common recognition that communication is the primary means through which people go about constituting their social and cultural world which can illuminate “the multifaceted outcomes of language intervention practices.”

All who provide language assessment and intervention are often faced with learning “new” nosological terminology. It may be that we will always need to do so. Robert Frost, the poet, may have said it best when he noted that “Education is . . . hanging around until you’ve caught on.” May this issue serve that purpose!

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