First Mentions Analysis

To assess story microstructure, the ENNI includes a measure of cohesion, First Mentions, which can be used to evaluate the referring expressions that a child uses to introduce characters and objects when telling a story. Referring expressions are linguistic forms used to refer to animate beings (*the elephant, Ella, she*), objects (*the train, it*), places (*the park, there*) and concepts (*an idea*). They can be considered adequate if they are appropriate for the listener's knowledge, shared physical context, and the preceding linguistic context. For example, an indefinite noun phrase such as *an elephant* or a proper name is appropriate for a new character in a story in the absence of a shared physical context, while *the elephant* or *she* would only be appropriate for mentioning the character later on in the story.

Young children frequently introduce referents in a confusing way, often using pronouns such as *she*, which are appropriate only if the speaker can presuppose that the listener already has the referent in his or her consciousness. The ability to introduce referents appropriately develops gradually through the early school years. Schneider and Dubé (1997) found that Kindergarten and Grade 2 children have more difficulty with first mentions of referents than with subsequent mentions of the referents. Preliminary analyses of ENNI data from 4, 6, and 8 year olds indicates that first mention usage distinguishes among age groups as well as between children with and without language impairments to a greater degree than did subsequent mentions (Schneider, 2001a, 2001b).

To date there is no normed narrative instrument that includes a measure of referential cohesion. Because first mentions appeared to discriminate well among age and language groups, and because the rules for adequate first mentions are more straightforward than for subsequent mentions, we decided to use a measure of first mentions as the measure of referential cohesion. A scoring system was developed that focuses on first mentions of the characters and selected objects, with detailed information on scoring each. The ENNI will facilitate analysis of this important skill.

First Mentions Scoring

Scoring Directions:

Look for the first time each character and object listed on the scoring sheet is mentioned. Score according to the examples on the Scoring Criteria sheets.

Generally speaking, first mentions using an indefinite determiner (*a, an*) plus noun will be scored as 3. For characters, names are also scored as 3, e.g., *Jerry and Ellie*. Sometimes that may be the name of the animal, as in *Elephant and Giraffe were at the pool*. Objects introduced without a determiner are scored as two, except for mass nouns (*water*) and plurals (*planes*). Characters and objects introduced with a definite determiner (*the, that*) will normally be scored as 2 (except for the lifeguard – see criteria below). However, introduction with *this* is usually okay, as in *this elephant is bouncing a ball*, in which *this elephant* would be scored 3.

Pronouns are usually inadequate for first mention and are thus scored as 1. Exception: If the child puts him/herself in the story, a first-person pronoun is adequate (since it refers to the speaker) and is scored as 3, as in the following example:

I was playing one day with my friend Elephant.

If a child mentions two characters together, look for a subsequent mention of each character separately and score that. For example:

> 1) There were *two animals* at the pool playing ball. It went in the water. *The giraffe* went to get it. He gave it back to *the elephant*.

In this example you would score *the giraffe* and *the elephant* rather than *two animals*. They would each obtain a score of 2.

> 2) *They* were at the pool. The ball fell in. *He* went to get it for *the elephant*.

In example 2), *he* and *the elephant* would be scored as first mentions of the characters (1 and 2 points respectively).

In the following example, the individual mentions would get 3 full points each:

> 3) There were two animals. *The first one* had a ball that went in the water. *The second animal* went in to get it. He got it and gave it to the first animal.

If the characters are never mentioned individually, as in the following example, score *they* as the first mention for both characters (one point for each).

> 4) They were playing ball. Their ball went in the water. They got it out. They got out of the water.

Relative clauses: sometimes a relative clause may make a definite noun phrase appropriate for first mention, but not always. In the example below:

> 5) .... Then *the woman who cleans the pool* came along with a net.

The expression can be considered appropriate for first mention because it is plausible to assume that a pool would have a person whose job it is to clean it. It would be scored 3. The expression below is not as plausible:

> 6) .... Then *the woman who catches toys* came along with a net.

It is not plausible to assume that a pool would have an employee who catches toys; thus this would be scored as a 2 because of the definite determiner *the*. (*A woman who catches toys* would be scored as 3.)

Relative clauses with vague terms: A relative clause may clarify a referent, even if it does so through circumlocutions. If the referent is reasonably clear, score as 3; if not, score as 2. Examples of expressions for "net":

> …a thing that you scoop fish with when you want to clean out the tank (score as 3).

> …a thing that you scoop with (score as 2).

Edmonton Narrative Norms Instrument
First Mentions Scoring Criteria

Character	Score as 3	Score as 2	Score as 1
Giraffe – story A1	**a/this** _____ (e.g., *a giraffe, this cow*) **name** (e.g., *Gerry, Geegee*) **possessive + noun** (e.g., *her friend* if 'she' already introduced) **another animal** **the other animal** (if C mentioned 2 animals and one animal mentioned previously) **1st person pronoun** (if C is putting self in story)	**the/that** _____ (e.g., *the giraffe*) **a [invented word],** e.g, *a geegee* **someone / somebody** **possessive + noun** (if other character not yet introduced) **another/the other** _____ (e.g., *the other animal* if no animal mentioned previously)	**pronoun** (*he, she, it*) **the [invented word]**, e.g., *the geegee* (an invented **name** would be scored as 3)
Elephant – Story A1	**a/this** _____ (e.g., *a elephant*) **name** (e.g., *Ellie*) **possessive + noun** (e.g., *her friend* if 'she' already introduced) **another** _____ *(e.g., another animal* if other character introduced as animal)* **the other** _____ (e.g., *the other animal* if C mentioned 2 animals and one animal mentioned previously) **1st person pronoun** (if C is putting self in story)	**the/that** _____ (e.g., *the elephant*) **a [invented word]** **someone / somebody** **possessive + noun** (if other character not yet introduced) **another/the other** _____ (e.g., *the other animal* if no animal mentioned previously)	**pronoun** (*he, she, it*) **the [invented word]** (an invented **name** would be scored as 3)
Ball – Story A1	**a/this** _____ (e.g., *a ball, a balloon, an orange*) **possessive + noun** (e.g., *her ball, the elephant's ball*) **the ball** if character is 'playing ball'	**the /that** _____ **vague or empty term**, e.g., *a thingy/something/ whatchacallit* **a [invented word]**	**pronoun** (*it, this, that*) **the [invented word]**
Lifeguard – Story A2	**a/this** _____ (e.g., *a lifeguard, a guy*) **the lifeguard** / **the coach** (only if *pool* or *swimming* or *diving board* previously mentioned) **name** his/her/their [family member] (e.g., *daddy, brother* if clear whose family member)	**the/that** _____ (including *the lifeguard* if no mention of pool, swimming, or diving board, and family member, e.g., *the daddy*, unless main characters were introduced as brother and sister) **a [invented word]** **someone / somebody**	**pronoun** (*he, she, it*) **the [invented word]** (an invented **name** would be scored as 3)

Airplane – Story A3	**a/this** _____ (e.g., *a plane, a toy)* **possessive + noun** (e.g., *his toy, the giraffe's plane)*	**the/that** _____ indefinite vague or empty term, e.g., *a thingy/something* **a [invented word]**	**pronoun** (*it, this, that*) definite vague or empty term, e.g., *the thingy* **the [invented word]**
Woman with net – Story A3	**a/this** _____ (e.g., *a lady, a elephant, a person)* **another** _____ (e.g., *lifeguard*, *elephant* or *girl* if at least one previous character identified with same term) **someone / somebody the** _____ **+ relative clause** (if a plausible role, e.g., *the person who cleans the pool*) **name**	**the/that** _____ (e.g., *the woman, the person who catches toys*) **a [invented word]**	**pronoun** (*he, she, it*) **the [invented word]** (an invented **name** would be scored as 3)
Net	**a/this** _____ **possessive + noun** (e.g., her net)	**the/that** _____ indefinite vague or empty term, e.g., *a thingy/something* **a [invented word]**	**Pronoun** (*it, this, that*) definite vague or empty term, e.g., *the thingy* **the [invented word]**
Dog – Story B1	**a/this** _____ (e.g., *a dog, a mouse)* **name** (e.g., *Susie)* **possessive + noun** (e.g., *her friend* if 'she' already introduced) **another animal** **the other animal** (if C mentioned 2 animals and one animal mentioned previously)	**the/that** _____ (e.g., *the dog)* **a [invented word]** **someone / somebody** **possessive + noun** (if other character not yet introduced) **another/the other** _____ (e.g., *the other animal* if no animal mentioned previously)	**pronoun** (*he, she, it*) **the [invented word]** (an invented **name** would be scored as 3)
Rabbit – Story B1	**a** _____ (e.g., *a rabbit, a bunny)* **name** (e.g., *Ellie)* **possessive + noun** (e.g., *her friend* if 'she' already introduced) **another animal** **the other animal** (if C mentioned 2 animals and one animal previously mentioned)	**the** _____ (e.g., *the rabbit)* **a [invented word]** **someone / somebody** **possessive + noun** (e.g., *his friend* if other character not yet mentioned by other than a pronoun) **another/the other** _____ (e.g., *the other animal* if no animal mentioned previously)	**pronoun** (*he, she, it*) **the [invented word]**
Sandcastle – Story B1	**a/this** _____ (e.g., *a castle)* **possessive + noun** (e.g., *her castle, the dog's sandcastle)*	**the/that** _____ indefinite vague or empty term, e.g., **a thingy/something** **a [invented word]**	**pronoun** (*it, this, that*) definite vague or empty term, e.g., **the thingy** **the [invented word]**
Doctor – Story B2	**a/this** _____ (e.g., *a doctor, this woman)* **name** (e.g., *Dr. Bunny)* his/her/their [family member] (e.g., *her mommy,* if clear whose family member)	**the/that** _____ (including family member, e.g., *the mommy,* unless main characters were introduced as brother and sister) **family member**, if not clear whose (e.g., *the mommy)*	**pronoun** (*he, she, it*) **the [invented word]** (an invented **name** would be scored as 3)

Balloon – Story B3	**a/this _____** (e.g., *a balloon)* **possessive _____** (e.g., *his balloon)*	**the/that _____** vague or empty indefinite term, e.g., **a thing/something** **a [invented word]**	**pronoun** (*it*) **the [invented word]** vague or empty definite term, e.g., **the thing**
Balloon seller – Story B3	**a/this _____** (e.g., *a rabbit, a man*) **name** (e.g., *Mr. Balloon Man*) **the + relative clause** if clear from context, e.g., *the man who had sold her the balloon; there were balloons…the man selling the balloons* **another animal**	**the/that_____** (e.g., the balloon seller)	**pronoun** (*he*)
Balloon(s) at end of Story B3*	*a balloon* *balloons* *two balloons* *their own balloon(s)*	*the/that balloon* *those balloons*	**pronoun** (*it, them*)

* Note: Score the first expression that refers to a specific balloon or balloons that the animals get at the end, if possible. For example, if the child says, "He wanted a balloon. He saw a guy with balloons. He asked the guy for a balloon. But he had no money for a balloon. He asked the doctor to buy him a balloon. She gave the man money for balloons. Then they each had a balloon/they had two balloons." Score only the last expression (either *a balloon* or *two balloons*). The earlier expressions were *nonreferential*, that is, they did not refer to a specific balloon but only to the class of objects. The last expression refers to specific balloons.

If the child gives a nonreferential expression followed by *one* or *some*, such as, "She gave him money for balloons…Then they each had one", score *one* as 3 points.