Copula



Ideas for

Intervention

Here you will find resource materials for intervention. These are not programs or recommended methods but are meant to aid you by providing myriad resources and techniques for intervention. We’ve taken the time to research available resources and to offer them for you to consider.

Do you feel intimidated by the mere mention of the word “copula”? Have no fear, it’s really not as obscure as you may think! Let’s begin by making the distinction between two different types of copulas: the un-contractible and contractible copulas.

* According to Caroline Bowen, the un-contractible copula is “the full form of the verb to be when it is the only verb in a sentence”. This will typically develop first in a child’s language, between 31 and 34 months of age (Brown, 1998).
* Contractible copula on the other hand, is “the shortened form of the verb 'to be' when it is the only verb in a sentence” (Brown, 1998).
	+ - * As far as assessment, “Contracted forms are short and underemphasized”, says Owens, making them harder to detect when they are incorrect (2014).
* Another important consideration is the relevance and importance of this concept in regard to linguistic and grammatical development.
	+ - According to Rispoli, Hadley, and Holt (2012), copula BE was more productive than all other morphemes from age 27 months onward.
			* The copula BE serves a critical purpose for effective communication from a very early point in pediatric language development.

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It is critical for the SLP to be mindful of the relationship between the copula dialectal difference.

* For example, in African American English (AAE), copula deletion is a “syntactic feature of AAE”, it is systematic, and rule governed (Bland-Stewart, 2005).
* When considering whether or not a client’s clinical presentation is reflective of a language difference or disorder, a competent SLP will recognize that the “acceptable” use of the copula will vary across dialects.



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Methods

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* Requesting direct imitations of targeted grammatical structures.

“The model and prompt were paired with an appropriate picture or object stimulus and verbal and/or token reinforcers were delivered following correct responses.” (Camarata, Nelson, & Camarata, 1994).

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* Modeling paired with evoked production and performance feedback.



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Incorporates modeling techniques such as focused repetitions of target words were provided during functional activities”, with the additional “opportunities for subjects to spontaneously produce words and receive feedback regarding their correctness.” (e.g. Weismer & Murray-Branch, 1989).

* Conversational recasting

In this condition, the “clinician structured the setting in a manner designed indirectly to elicit child attempts of the target” (Camarata, Nelson, & Camarata, 1994).

Include play activities which foster naturalistic interaction between the child and clinician.

Incorporate open-ended statements by the clinician to encourage the child to vocalize without imitative prompts or overt reinforcers.

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* Due to data differences across populations, implicit and explicit teaching methods for training copula may need to be trialed and adjusted to individualize treatment to the child’s particular needs.



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Previous research reported that implicit instruction rather than explicitly teaching grammar usage rules in children ages 6-8 with language impairment (Swisher, Restrepo, Plante, & Lowell, 1995, Finestack & Fey, 2009). More recent research supports the notion that Explicit teaching may be more effective in for developmental language disorder in children ages 5-8 (Finestack, 2018).

Implicit and explicit combined intervention may be more effective then implicit alone in children, ages 5-9, with ASD (Finestack et al., 2020).

* In a study titled Acquisition of auxiliary and copula BE in young English-speaking children, Guo (2004) found that children form the grammatical concept of “to be” on a word specific basis.

Methods

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* Another potentially effective method is Focused Stimulation. As described by Patti Soloman-Rice during a presentation at the American Speech Language and Hearing Association Convention, “[The] SLP provides multiple models of targeted vocabulary or grammatical constructions within meaningful contexts a minimum of ten times” (Solomon-Rice, 2011).



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A high frequency of exposure can be beneficial to the client because as we discussed with Guo’s findings, memorization can be an important part of the acquisition of the Copula.

Increased exposure can increase the likelihood that the client will be able to memorize the instances in which the copula is used before they are able to understand that complexities of the grammatical rules involved.

* Memorization is an important part of the development of the copula BE, especially in younger children.

With this in mind, consider using sight words (instead of a rule-based approach) when teaching the copula.

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* Note: it’s critical that clinicians understand when they should expect to see the copula in their clients’ speech from a developmental perspective. Knowing this information will help the clinician to understand and determine preceding concepts and skills to provide potential scaffolding and supports.

According to Brown’s 14 morphemes, typical development of the un-contractible copula is at stage three (i.e., 31-34 Months).

The contractible copula it is present around age five (i.e., 41-46+ Months) (1973).



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Resources



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Books and Articles

[*Quick as a Cricket*](https://www.amazon.com/Quick-Cricket-Childs-Play-Library/dp/0859533069/ref%3Dsr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1547563616&sr=8-1&keywords=quick+as+a+cricket), by Audrey Wood

[*The Three Billy Goats Gruff,*](https://www.amazon.com/Three-Billy-Goats-Galdone-Classics/dp/0899190359/ref%3Dsr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1547563656&sr=8-2&keywords=the+three+billy+goats+gruff)by Paul Galdone

[*The Grammar Book,*](https://www.amazon.com/Grammar-Book-Teachers-Course-Second/dp/0838447252)by Marianne Celce-Murcia and Diane Larsen-Freeman

Hoover, J.R. & Storkel, H.L. (in press).

Grammatical treatment and specific language impairment: Neighborhood density and third person singular -s. *Clinical Linguistics and Phonetics*.

Though this piece looks at new methods of treatment, it includes a vast collection and additional information on previously considered SLI treatments.

Games and Activities

Printables:

* + [Copula and Auxiliary *is* and *are*](https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Copula-and-auxiliary-is-and-are-camping-theme-for-speech-therapy-3890125)
	+ [No Prep Grammar Builder for Uncontractable Copulas](https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/No-Prep-Grammar-Builder-Uncontractable-Copulas-Whos-happy-She-is-3021416)
* During resource presentations at the American Speech Language Hearing Association Convention in 2011, SLPs listed games that had been found to be particularly useful in sessions focusing on various grammar concepts including copula verbs (Dorman, et al., 2011). The results are as follows:
* [*HiHo Cherry-o:*](https://www.amazon.com/Cherry-Board-Players-Amazon-Exclusive/dp/B00000IWGQ/ref%3Dsr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1547404822&sr=8-1&keywords=hi+ho+cherry+o+board+game)can be used for Sentence Pattern IV: Noun phrase + copula + equivalent.
* [*Lucky Ducks*:](https://www.amazon.com/Lucky-Ducks-Memory-Matching-Moves/dp/B00V91HKI4/ref%3Dsr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1547404860&sr=8-2&keywords=lucky+ducks) can be used to incorporate Sentence Pattern V: Noun phrase + copula + reason/recipient.
	+ [*Ned’s Head*](https://www.amazon.com/Ideal-Whats-Neds-Head-Game/dp/B000096RFF/ref%3Dsr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1547404880&sr=8-1&keywords=Neds+head)*:* can use present tense copula BE: “is/am/are”.
	+ [*Grammar Gumballs*](https://www.amazon.com/Ideal-Whats-Neds-Head-Game/dp/B000096RFF/ref%3Dsr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1547404880&sr=8-1&keywords=Neds+head)*:* can use Copula verbs: “is/are”.



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Websites

* [*YouTube lecture*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3OPJA94md8)

Please visit [our Pinterest page](https://www.pinterest.com/sugarlanguage/articles/) for additional resources and activities:

Pinterest Q&A:

What is Pinterest? Pinterest is a social media platform that serves as an electronic bulletin board. Many SLPs use it as a way to electronically “bookmark” (i.e., save) activities for future sessions.

How much does it cost? It’s free! However, you must create an account in order to access the SUGAR Language boards or use the website in general.

How do I use it? Please check-out the following link for an in-depth explanation of all things [Pinterest.](https://www.lifewire.com/how-to-use-pinterest-3486578)

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