

SSW



REPORTS

DO YOU QUALIFY?

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QUALIFIERS AND THE SSW TEST - Jack Katz

WHY USE QUALIFIERS?

There are a number of qualified responses that may be noted on the SSW test. Qualifiers usually clarify why a person may have made an error, or even more importantly, why a person did not make an error. Qualifiers often suggest the type of underlying problem, which may not be obvious from the actual error. Thus, we might interpret the test performance differently, in light of the qualifiers or use the information to support or extend the standard evaluation. This does not supplant the C-SSW scores and response biases. Rather, they are essentially "free" sources of information that can provide you with important insights.

Some examples of commonly used qualifiers will illustrate how these indicators may alter your interpretation and provide a look into the underlying difficulties. The other articles in this issue will provide more specific criteria, guidelines and interpretations which can be derived from the findings.

Quick and Delayed Responses

If you have listened to a few people take the SSW test, you might soon realize that there is a certain response cadence. In normal adults, the reply follows the end of the

item by perhaps 1 to 3 seconds. Response latencies shorter than 1 sec may be considered too brief, a quick response (Q). Those longer than perhaps 4 or 5 sec may be considered too long, and therefore are delayed responses (X). Precise latency norms are not presently available.

When we administer the SSW we anticipate the usual cadence (plus or minus a bit). However, when there is a rushed response that seems to start immediately after presentation of the last word, or sometimes before the last word is finished, we would show the Q qualifier in the numbered box. Qualifiers do not constitute errors in themselves, they simply signify a certain behavior which may or may not be associated with an error.

If the person is significantly delayed in responding, then an X is shown at the place of infraction with a carrot under it. The delay is displayed before the first word or between succeeding words and is especially important if the answer is correct.

Quick Response - Item Correct

Let's use "upstairs, downtown" for illustration (it has been used so often for illustration that it's a wonder it is not worn out).

Q 1.	up	stairs	down	town	R	•
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If we did not show the (Q) in the numbered box, then it would appear that the response was typical and thus, suspect no central auditory processing (CAP) problem. But the qualifier suggests the possibility that the individual had to rush the response. In some cases the individual takes a chance on the last word, by starting before it is finished, in order to avoid forgetting the first word.

Quick responses should be discouraged to get a truer SSW score. However, the rushed response gives you some very helpful information that might not show up on some other aspect of the test, or its presence might support a related Ear L/H or Order H/L.

Quick Response - Item Incorrect

On item #2, a client answers:

Q2.	out	side	in	lay low	R	
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What might we infer from this? It is possible that the person answered so quickly that it might have interfered with the full perception of the final word. If the individual was actually having trouble figuring out the last word, he would have delayed the response until the word was understood (and certainly not rushed the answer).

If the person continues to respond too quickly, there might be a contamination of the response bias. The individual could demonstrate an Order L/H instead of H/L. That is to say, if there was a tendency to forget the first word and a subsequent quick response, then there may be an error on the final word instead of the first. If this happened a number of times the opposite pattern (Order L/H) could be significant or the anterior sign neutralized.

Delayed Response - Item Correct

Our example below shows a delayed response on item #3.

3.	(X) day ↑	light	lunch	time	R	•
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It designates that the long pause occurred before initiation of the response, rather than within the response.

Without this qualifier we would have no information to suggest any difficulty whatsoever. The indication of this, and perhaps one or two other delays, would be that it required the person more than the usual amount of time to determine the answer. A very long delay, without struggle, is not the same as this 4 second delay.

The correct response in spite of the delay would suggest that a rapidly fading memory is not present. Rather, there may be an implication of a decoding problem, because it took more than the usual amount of time to fully "digest" the information.

Delayed Response - Item Incorrect

Item #4, below, shows a delayed response and an error on the next to last word. The same interpretation would follow if it was the last word.

4.	(X) wash ↑	tub	back black	board	R	
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The interpretation might be that the delay was due to slow processing and especial difficulty with the competing word. The last spondee is more vulnerable in decoding problem cases. In addition, the competing word is more difficult than the noncompeting. Whether or not there was a significant posterior sign (Ear/Order Effect), the demonstrated

delays would raise the suspicion of poor or slow discrimination for phonemes.

The interpretation might be quite different if the error was on the first word or even the second. If the first word was the one in error, we might guess that the delay was to give sufficient time to figure out the first word, or that because of the delay, the first word was forgotten. An error on the second word (or both the first and second words) would usually be preceded by a pause. That's why it is not as important to show a delay if there is an error and certainly unimportant if there are two errors.

The purpose of this introduction is to show how qualifier information can help in gathering valuable data. Failing to use qualifiers could cause you to misinterpret response biases, or prevent you from identifying certain underlying characteristics. In many cases the SSW gives you the information from the C-SSW peaks or response bias and the qualifiers simply give you further reassurance.

QUICK AND DELAYED RESPONSES

The previous information provides a rationale for noting and using SSW qualifiers. The number of qualifiers is continually growing as we make new observations. Two of the oldest qualifiers are the quick and delayed responses.

As noted above, a quick response has not been precisely defined, other than a rushed answer, probably faster than 1 sec. The individual should be asked if he is having difficulty remembering all the words. Typically, the answer is "yes". Indicate that despite that, you would like for him to wait until the word is completed before responding. If necessary, instruct

the individual that you will keep your hand up as long as the words are being presented and to respond only when you put your hand down.

Using the above procedure you may reduce the number of (Q)s considerably. However, even 1 (Q) would make me suspicious of a rapidly fading memory. Further support for this would come from the presence of anterior bias (Order H/L and/or Ear L/H). Significant scores on both the RNC and LNC Conditions could be taken as further evidence of this memory problem.

There are two types of delayed responses to consider. The regular delay which is designated by (X), has been described above. When it takes about 4 seconds after the item to formulate a response, this would no doubt constitute a significant delay. It is particularly interesting if after this amount of time, the person produces a correct response. It suggests to me that the person's decoding skills may not be sharp. The individual often shows some effort in coming up with the answer. This would be supported by a significant score in the RC Condition and/or possibly the LNC. In addition, the posterior response bias (Order L/H, Ear H/L) would provide support of a decoding problem.

An extreme delay (XX) is perhaps a 6 or 7 second hesitation. But what is particularly important (more so than the actual amount of time) is the apparent lack of effort in the eventual response. The

11.	house	fly	(XX)	wood	work	R	•
		^					

person might try to use delaying tactics (well, er, let's see in this ear it was ...) or simply present a calm face until the final words are given. A reversal-ear-effect might relate to the extreme delays.

Extreme delays are most closely associated with Type A patterns or at least LC peaks (in right handed individuals). [It should be remembered if the Type A is present, then associated Ear/Order Effects should be voided.]

TONGUE TWISTERS AND SMUSHES

Tongue twisters ((TTW)) and smush ((SM)) responses are noted on the SSW form. They should be shown in the numbered box for easy identification.

The TTW represents (usually) a correct response in which the person became tripped up in saying the words. "She shore" for "seashore" is a common one, as well as the most frequent TTW "chee chain" for "key chain". These are not errors because if you ask for a repetition the person will endeavor to say it correctly. It is obvious that these are instances of difficulty in getting the articulators to say what the person has in mind. I see them as motor programming confusions.

One TTW should be considered significant and two of them probably suggests a major problem with expressive abilities on the production end. TTWs are seen in individuals who display anterior response bias, smushes and frequently go along with poor coordination. It suggests motor programming difficulties (for example in handwriting).

The smush response is typically the combination of competing words from opposite ears that are merged to form a third word or nonsense word. For "iceland sweet cream" the individual might say "ice leat (or "swand") cream". In such cases, the words land and sweet would not be said and therefore would be shown as 2 errors. Sometimes a person will say "sea shout out side" for "seashore outside". In this case there will be a ((SM)) and only one error.

Dempsey (SSW Nesletter, 1979) pointed out a second type of "blending error" in which words to the same ear are smushed. Presumably this is not unrelated to the dichotic smush. Dempsey pointed out that the same people who had such problems with the SSW, also had difficulty separating information from the two ears on the Willeford Competing Sentence Test.

Smushes are associated with anterior bias as well as other anterior signs such as TTW. This is part of the constellation of problems that I have started to think of as Tolerance-Fading Memory difficulties. It is unknown at this time how many smushes are needed for significance. I would think 2 is reasonable, until we have more definitive information.

ARE YOU READY? ANOTHER QUALIFIER

Charlotte Dempsey made another very interesting observation (8-79). She noted that the way a child deals with the "Are you ready?" carrier phrase gives you insight into how the child manages everyday communications. She wrote:

This [the AYR behavior] is perhaps the most interesting and useful of the response biases... the audiologist has 40 chances (if he can stand it) to observe the child's reaction to a rhetorical question. The "normal" child simply ignores the phrase ... [or it] is eventually adapted out of consciousness. Therefore, the child who must deal with the question every time it is asked is behaving inappropriately to an irrelevant stimulus (p. 2).

She noted a variety of responses in LD children. One child knows he should not repeat the carrier phrase, but can't stop so he mumbles it. Another repeats the words mimicing the tempo and inflection, while one group is embarrassed at

having inadvertantly said the famous words. The latter children are hard on themselves for having done such a foolish thing. Another child is like a robot and simply says everything that enters the ear canal, including 40 AYRs. One child has a delayed response to uttering the words. He clasps hand over mouth etc. This child, she observed, hands in papers to the teacher filled with erasures. One type giggles each time AYR is heard. One kid, Charlotte points out, "says phrase with Jack or mimes it. Refer for drum lessons." You have all heard the one who answers, "No." This child she says needs attention constantly. Finally, she described the screamer who "gets so frustrated that he yells answer or phrase. No self-control. Eventually stands up and hollers into microphone."

Dempsey's observations while whimsically presented were most astute. She pointed out that the AYR subtest was sensitive to those with attentional disorders and that enviornmental controls were needed.

By formalizing AYR as a qualifier and through the use of comments we are able to benefit from Charlotte's work. It has been my own observation, that entirely supports what she wrote, that the AYR-kids generally fall into the Tolerance-Fading Memory group. These individuals tend to have attentional deficits, are hyperactive, volatile, fearful and complain about being tested and having to sit in the test room. Yet when they hear, "Are you ready?", they usually respond (tho unpleasantly at times).

It would be helpful if you would not only try using the AYR and other qualifiers, but would save information about age, WDS, reversals and whether there is anterior or posterior bias for these children. Perhaps in this way we could validate or alter statements about AYR and the other qualifiers.

OTHER QUALIFIERS

The study of qualifiers is still in its infancy. It follows lines of approach of Dempsey, above and the refined error analyses carried out by Rudmin using acoustic and linguistic factors. Lucker, sought further information from the peaks of errors and response bias has given us insight into central auditory skills and disorders. Other qualifiers have been used for a long time and some have been recorded only recently. These qualifiers will be reviewed here.

There is a replay ((R)) qualifier that is used to show that the item was played again for the individual. Thus, if the replay produced a correct response (and you chose to score it that way) then there would be evidence that the person did not simply breeze through the test. Replays are required if the person gets stuck on the AYR and then forgets the test portion of the item. Although replay should not be done often or routinely, it could be done occassionally to appease a distraught individual. Of course, you may record the answer of your choice (the one that is more interesting or more informative).

The (R) is placed in the numbered box. To my knowledge it has no diagnostic significance. It is especially important to show the R if the replay produced a correct response or substantially improved performance.

The cued response is designated by a ((C)) at the place that you asked for more information or gave encouragement to respond further. A carrot is shown below the (C). It is most critical to show the (C) when the omission of your cueing would lead one to believe that there was a reversal. If the person said, "downtown" and nothing more, you would be acting appropriately to ask if there was anything else. If the

person then said "up something", it would show up as a reversal when most likely it was not. The person probably gave up on the first spondee and was content to say just the last one. However, your prompting gave the impetus to dig further or say what would have been omitted.

Like the replay, cueing is not associated with any particular auditory dysfunction. However, it will prevent an occasional item from appearing as a reversal.

A new qualifier that I have been looking at is perseveration ((P)). The designation is placed in the numbered box, for easy identification. When a previous word (correct or incorrect) is used two more times incorrectly, I would consider this evidence of significance. In addition, if two previous words were used again once each, this would be significant as well.

Perseveration is seen in cases who have decoding problems. It is common in those with significant RC Conditions and/or posterior response bias.

Another new qualifier is the quiet rehearsal or silent rehearsal. Occasionally, a person will say the response to himself before telling it to you. The rehearsal may be silent and only seen on the person's lips or could be spoken softly. We will refer to these as silent rehearsals ((SR)). The designation is shown in the numbered box. Care should be taken to distinguish it from the ((SM)).

Even one silent rehearsal would be significant. The silent rehearsal is seen more often on the Phonemic Synthesis test than the SSW, but by the same individuals. This behavior seems to be most common in those with poor decoding skills. It should be associated with RC peaks and/or significant LNC results. Posterior bias may be noted as well.

SUMMARY

This issue has been devoted to qualifiers. It is based on observations that those with certain test peculiarities have a greater chance of certain auditory problems.

"Anterior" problems, that is Tolerance-Fading Memory cases are most likely to have quick responses, tongue twisters, smushes and to get stuck on are you ready. "Posterior" cases more typically have delayed responses, perseveration and silent rehearsals. These go along with auditory decoding difficulties. The extreme delays are most closely associated with Type A patterns in older individuals and corresponds to the integration group (Katz, SSW Study Group, 1986).

DEAR ACKIE

Hey Ackie:

I heard da February SSW Reports previewed on Saturday Nite Live last week and wanted to make sure I got my two bits in. Dat guy asks "Do I Qualify?" You tell dat guy dat I said "Who's askin?" What's it to ya if I qualify or not, ya get me? You mind ya own business if ya know what's good fa ya.

A'course we qualify, we're fom Brooklyn. We use all dem qualifiers except the very new ones like AYR, perseveration and silent rehearsals. We din't loin dat at da college I attended.

But, you tell dat guy to bug off. No more questions. I ask da questions in Brooklyn.

BROOKLYN

Dear Brooklyn:

No arguement from Ackie. I'll tell da guy just what you telled me and he'll bug off. - ACKIE