Multisyllabic Word Production in School-aged Children and the Relationship to Literacy

The focus of this presentation is on the importance of multisyllabic word (MSW) phonology in assessment and intervention for preschoolers and school-aged children. Resolution of speech sound disorders or protracted phonological development (PPD) implies that speech production skills foundational to literacy acquisition are in place, not only for short words, but also for MSWs. Clinicians will gain evidence-based knowledge concerning the relationship of MSWs to the identification of on-going PPD and to literacy. A method for quantifying whole word MSW accuracy will also be demonstrated with example case data. Comparisons for 8- to 10-year-olds with and without PPD on standardized literacy measures of phonological awareness, word and non-word reading, and spelling will be presented, and in addition, on tasks of reading and spelling of MSWs.

Three main learning objectives for participants are:
1. To outline current developmental information about the MSW accuracy of monolingual English-speaking children at stages before and after early literacy instruction from two standpoints: (1) the prevalence of individual phonological mismatch patterns/processes (Australia: James, 2006, 2008; Masso et al., 2016); and (2) quantified whole word accuracy for establishing initial criterion-references (British Columbia: Mason, 2015; Mason et al., 2015).
2. To describe and explain the relationships between literacy skills and the accuracy of MSW production in children with and without PPD.
3. To describe a method for quantifying whole word MSW accuracy and to evaluate its construct validity in terms of current linguistic and language processing theories, and with respect to sensitivity and specificity.

Glenda Mason’s clinical experience in speech-language pathology (SLP) has spanned many years, primarily with preschool and school-aged children with a variety of communication disorders, their significant caregivers and teachers. This time has also included clinical education of SLP students. Career highlights have been the shift to collaborative and client-centered approaches, and the strengthened focus on evidence-based practice. Recently, I completed a PhD program focused on phonology and specifically on school-aged children’s abilities to produce multisyllabic words and the relationship to literacy. A part of the project was the development of a metric for quantifying accuracy of multisyllabic word production. Computerized scoring and analysis methods and their application to other languages are being explored. Currently, I am an Instructor in developmental communication disorders in the School of Audiology and Speech Sciences at UBC.