Worksheet 9.2: Williams Syndrome

Exercise 1: Watch the video on Williams Syndrome (WS) and state whether the following statements are **True** or **False:**

	True	False
WS is a genetic disorder.		
People with WS don't like to interact with others.		
People with WS often have special musical ability.		
People with WS find it difficult to focus on tasks.		
People with WS have bad hearing abilities.		
General intelligence and verbal abilities are equally affected in people with WS.		
The overall IQ does not give an accurate picture of a child's abilities.		
People with WS often suffer from cardiovascular problems.		

Exercise 2:

Contrast Between Visuo-Spatial and Language Abilities in Williams Syndrome

a.

b.
And what an elephant is, it is one of the animals. And what the elephant does, it lives in the jungle. It can also live in the zoo. And what it has, It has long gray ears, fan ears, ears that can blow in the wind. It has a long trunk that can pick up grass, or pick up hay....If they're in a bad mood it can be terrible...If the elephant gets mad it could stomp; It could charge, like a bull can charge. They have long big tusks. They can damage a car...It could be dangerous. When they're in a pinch, when they're in a bad mood it can be terrible. You don't want an elephant as a pet. You want a cat or a dog or a bird...
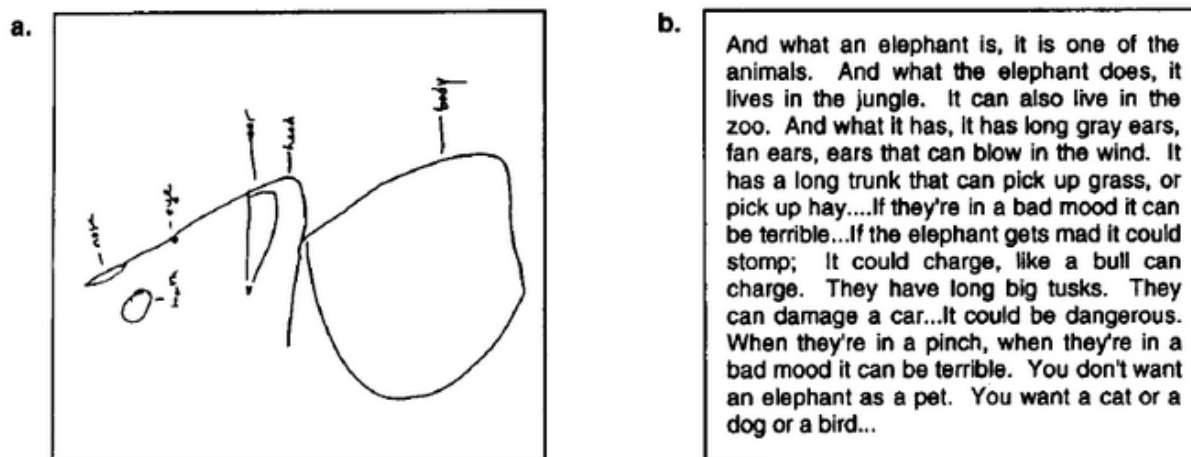
FIG. 2.6. Contrast between visuospatial and language abilities in WS. (a) Drawing of an elephant by an 18-year-old WS woman, whose IQ is 49. (b) Her verbal description of an elephant.

Look at the Figure and answer the following questions:

1. Describe the picture.

2. Read the person's description of an elephant. What can you say about the language? Consider the choice of vocabulary, grammar and the relative complexity of the language used.

3. Is there a discrepancy between the drawing and the language? If so, why do you think that is the case?

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Exercise 3:

The following are characteristics of either children with Specific Language Impairment or Williams Syndrome. Indicate whether you think the property applies to children with SLI or to children with WS. Some properties might apply to both groups.

	SLI or WS?
They have oversensitive hearing.	
They have normal hearing.	
Their language develops late in comparison with typically developing children who have a similar general IQ.	
They often have word-finding difficulties.	
Their language often has rich vocabulary.	
They have difficulty understanding language.	
Their general IQ is below average.	
They have problems with morphology (grammatical morphemes and inflections) and syntax (sentences)	
They sometimes have problems with cognitive tasks, such as putting items in order from smaller to larger.	
The problem is genetic.	

Exercise 4:

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Indicate which of the following sentences were produced by a child with SLI or a child with WS (Examples 1 and 2 from Bellugi et al. 1993, cited in Guasti 2002).

	SLI or WS?
1. I would like to commentate it. It means that … like all the sportscasters do … they tell who's doing what.	
2. Sad is when someone dies; someone is hurt, like when you cry.	
3. A little boy want to tell someone how he get hurt.	
4. Music to me is like the soundtrack of the world.	
5. The grandmother look for son in room.	
6. Now us have lot of snow at … around this house.	

Solutions to Worksheet 9.2

Exercise 1

	True	False
WS is a genetic disorder.	x	
People with WS don't like to interact with others.		x
People with WS often have special musical ability.	x	
People with WS find it difficult to focus on tasks.	x	
People with WS have bad hearing abilities.		x
General intelligence and verbal abilities are equally affected in people with WS.	x	
The overall IQ does not give an accurate picture of a child's abilities.	x	
People with WS often suffer from cardiovascular problems.	x	

Exercise 2:

The picture compares the drawing of an elephant with the verbal description of one by an 18-year old person with WS with an IQ of 49. The drawing is disorganized. We would not be able to recognize the drawing if it were not for the verbal labels that the person provides.

The verbal description of the elephant is fluent and rich. It includes information about what the elephant is, what it does, what it has 'It has long grey ears, fan ears, ears that can blow in the wind. It has a long trunk that can pick up grass or pick up hay'. The grammar is intact. The person uses quite complex sentences, including relative clauses (It has long grey ears, fan ears, ears **that can blow in the wind**). Grammatical inflection is target like (as it should be).

Exercise 3:

	SLI or WS?
They have oversensitive hearing.	**WS**
They have normal hearing.	**SLI**
Their language develops late in comparison with typically developing children who have a similar general IQ.	**SLI**
They often have word-finding difficulties.	**SLI**
Their language often has rich vocabulary.	**WS**
They have difficulty understanding language.	**SLI**
Their general IQ is below average.	**WS**
They have problems with morphology (grammatical morphemes and inflections) and syntax (sentences)	**SLI**
They sometimes have problems with cognitive tasks, such as putting items in order from smaller to larger.	**WS**
The problem is genetic.	**SLI/WS**

Exercise 4:

	SLI or WS?
1. I would like to commentate it. It means that … like all the sportscasters do … they tell who's doing what.	**WS** (Expressive language, the grammar is good)
2. Sad is when someone dies; someone is hurt, like when you cry.	**WS** (Expressive language, the grammar is good)
3. A little boy want to tell someone how he get hurt.	**SLI** (grammatical inflections missing: *want**s**/want**ed**, **got***)
4. Music to me is like the soundtrack of the world.	**WS** (Expressive language, the grammar is good)
5. The grandmother look for son in room.	**SLI** (grammatical morphemes and inflections missing: ***is** look**ing**/look**ed**, for **the** son*)
6. Now us have lot of snow at … around this house.	**SLI** (grammatical errors: ***we** have, missing article **a** lot of snow*)