Assessing Social Pragmatic Skills of School Aged Children

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Presentation Objectives

• By the end of the presentation you will be able to
• Summarize the role of SLP in assessment of pragmatic language and social cognitive abilities of school-age children
• List formal assessment instruments used to assess pragmatic language and social cognitive abilities of school age children
• Describe informal assessment procedures used to assess pragmatic language and social cognitive abilities of school age children
Social Pragmatic Language Disorders in Children

- Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)
  - Asperger’s
  - High Functioning Autism
- Emotional Behavior Disturbances (EBD)
  - Attention and Behavior Disorders
  - Mood Disorders
  - Anxiety Disorders
- Idiopathic
  - Lack of Diagnosis but displays inappropriate social behaviors/interactions
Social Pragmatic Skills

- More than good eye gaze, nice manners, adequate conversational abilities or knowing multiple meanings of words
- Dynamic and complex process which begins in infancy and continues to mature well into adulthood
- “The ability to adapt your behavior effectively based on the situation and what you know about the people in the situation for them to react and respond to you in the manner you had hoped.”
- Winner, Michelle Garcia (Oct, 2011) Social Thinking Across the Home and School Day; YAI Autism Conference.
Social Pragmatic Skills (cont)

- Ability to initiate social interactions (Prizant & Meyer, 1993)
  - Ask questions
  - Obtain help
  - Initiate academic work
- Attend to & interpret social cues (Langton et al, 2000)
- Ability to process messages appropriately
- Abstract thinking skills
- ToM & perspective taking (Baron-Cohen, 1995)
- Gestalt processing (Brosnan et al 2004)
- Humor (Semrud-Clikeman & Glass, 2010)
Difficulty with Detection of Social Pragmatic Language Deficits

- Standardized testing sensitivity issues
  - Tests of communication, typically focus on semantics, syntax, morphology, and phonology, as these are the performance areas in which specific skill development can be most objectively measured (Hill & Coufal, 2005)
  - Average scores yet significant social pragmatic impairments
- Need for supplemental testing
Difficulty with Detection and Recognition of Social Pragmatic Deficits

- May be perceived as challenging behaviors
- Severe cases misdiagnosed as Oppositional Defiant Disorder
- Common teacher/parent complaints:
  - “Ignores” presented directions
  - Follows own agenda
  - Inappropriately “acts out”
  - Acts immaturity
  - Clueless regarding others around him
Role of SLP in Assessment of Pragmatic Language Disorders

- Language disorder
  - Impaired comprehension and/or
  - Use of spoken, written or other symbol systems
- May involve deficits in
  - Language form
  - Language content
  - Language function
- To assess deficits SLPs need to use
  - Static or dynamic assessments & include
  - Standardized and/or non standardized measures

• Assess knowledge and use of language for listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking, including:
  • Discourse structures
  • Pragmatic conventions
  • Metacognitive and self-regulatory strategies
• Examine how language strengths and weaknesses affect activities and participation
Where do we begin?

- Data Collection
- Create Referral Forms
  - Give it to the teacher
  - Send it home
- Can’t Assess Everything
- Design Form to Target Deficit Areas
SAMPLE FORM:
SPEECH LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOL AGE CHILD

AVAILABLE AT
http://www.smartspeechtherapy.com/shop
Relevant Assessment Areas

- Adaptive Behavior
- Pragmatics
- Social Emotional Functioning
- Problem Solving
- Conversational Abilities
- Procedural Recall
- Narrative Abilities
- Listening Comprehension
- Executive Function
Sample Areas of Difficulty

- Check all that apply:
  - Problem Solving
    - Difficulty making inferences
    - Difficulty predicting results of actions
    - Difficulty determining causes of events
  - Social Emotional
    - Difficulty recognizing moods
    - Difficulty interpreting body language
Social Pragmatic Language Assessment: Useful Standardized Tests*

- Test of Problem Solving - 3 Elementary (TOPS-3)
- Test of Problem Solving - 2 Adolescent (TOPS-2)
- Test of Pragmatic Language - 2 (TOPL-2)
- Social Emotional Evaluation (SEE)
- Social Language Development Test - Elementary (SLDT-E)
- Social Language Development Test - Adolescent (SLDT-A)
- Listening Comprehension Test Adolescent (LCT-A)
Test of Problem Solving-3 Elementary (TOPS-3)

- Ages 6-11:11
- Open ended questions re: photos
- Critical thinking to analyze, problem solve, evaluate, make predictions and inferences, etc
- Assesses ability to integrate semantic and linguistic knowledge with reasoning

- Subtests:
  - Making Inferences
  - Negative Questions
  - Problem Solving
  - Predicting
  - Determining Causes
Test of Problem Solving-2 Adolescent

- Ages 12-17:11
- Open ended questions
- Critical thinking abilities based on student's language strategies using logic and experience
- Analysis, interpretation, evaluation, inferencing, self-regulation, etc
- Subtests:
  - Making Inferences
  - Determining Solutions
  - Problem Solving
  - Determining Perspectives
  - Transferring Insights
Test of Pragmatic Language-2 (TOPL-2)*

- Ages 6-18:11
- Open ended questions re: social situations
- Addresses Components of:
  - Physical Setting
  - Audience
  - Topic
  - Purpose
  - Visual-gestural cues
  - Knowledge of Abstractions
- Students with Ave/High Ave IQ do well but have profound deficits
- Rules of polite conduct & involves very limited perspective taking
- Best for children with impaired IQ, severely impaired ToM
Social Emotional Evaluation (SEE)

- Ages 6-12:11 (color drawings)
- Assesses knowledge of social situations and emotional reactions
- Subtests:
  - Recalling Facial Expressions
  - Identifying Common Emotions
  - Recognizing Emotional Reactions
  - Understanding Social Gaffes
  - Understanding Conflicting Messages*
- First step in assessment of the social emotional competence
- Best for children with impaired IQ, impaired ToM
- *Understanding Conflicting Messages may be limitedly useful for administration with higher functioning children
Social Language Development Test - Elementary (SLDT-E)

- Ages 6-11:11
- Focuses on language-based skills of social interpretation and interaction with friends
- Assesses students' language-based responses to portrayed, peer-to-peer situations
- Subtests:
  - Making Inferences
  - Interpersonal Negotiations
  - Multiple Interpretations
  - Supporting Peers
Social Language Development Test - Adolescent (SLDT-A)

- Ages 12-17:11
- Ability to interpret and respond to sarcasm, engage in peer-to-peer perspective-taking, respond to sensitive information and rumors as well as understand socially complex emotions
- Subtests:
  - Making Inferences
  - Interpreting Social Language
  - Problem Solving
  - Social Interaction
  - Interpreting Ironic Statements
Social Language Development Tests and Multicultural Considerations

- SLDTE - Potential for linguistic / cultural bias
- Answers could be marked incorrect due to:
  - Lack of vocabulary knowledge
  - Lack of exposure (e.g., SES status)
  - Limited life experiences (schooling)
- Multiple Interpretations Subtest
  - May be confusing to some children (trick questions)
Social Language Development Tests and Multicultural Considerations

- SLDTA
- Too abstract/hypothetical to answer “What is he thinking?” if child is unused to that style of questioning
- Questions pertaining to topics such as dating or dieting
  - Based on exposure/prior experience
  - May not be appropriate for children 12-16 years of age
- Interpreting Social Language subtest
  - Heavily based on vocabulary knowledge
Social Language Development Tests and Multicultural Considerations (con’t)

- SLDTA
- Problem Solving subtest
  - Responses may be incongruous with personal cultural values
- Interpreting Ironic Statements
  - based on idioms
  - If lack knowledge then ↓ score)
Listening Comprehension Test Adolescent (LCT-A)*

- Ages 12-17:11
- Paragraph based questions requiring synthesis of presented information to identify main ideas (Gestalt Processing)
- Assesses problem solving and inferencing abilities, empathy and decision making in older children
- Subtests
  - Main Idea
  - Details
  - Reasoning
  - Vocabulary and Semantics
  - Understanding Messages
Informal Assessments
Sally-Anne: First Order False Belief Task

This is Sally.

Sally has a basket.

Sally has a marble. She puts the marble into her basket.

Sally goes out for a walk.

Anne takes the marble out of the basket and puts it into the box.

Now Sally comes back. She wants to play with her marble.

Where will Sally look for her marble?
Sally Anne False-Belief Task
(Baron Cohen, Leslie & Frith 1985)

* Milestone in ToM’s development is gaining the ability to attribute false belief
  - Recognize that others can have beliefs about the world
  - Mental representations of situations are different from their own
  - Be able to predict behavior based on that understanding.

In typically developing children
  - Mastery is around age 4
Strange Stories: Happe 1994

- First used in a study of individuals with autism to test ToM
- 24 short mentalistic stories
- 13 physical control stories
- Short paragraphs about everyday situations where people say things they do not literally mean
- Can be used in a testing battery to determine whether a student understands non-literal messages, indirect requests, sarcasm, jokes and metaphorical expressions

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**Story Type: Pretend**

Katie and Emma are playing in the house. Emma picks up a banana from the fruit bowl and holds it up to her ear. She says to Katie, “Look! This banana is a telephone!”

— Is it true what Emma says?
  - Yes/No/Don’t know
— Why does Emma say this?
Informal Assessment: Discourse

- Observation of Student conversing with Peers
- Direct Engagement
- Conversational Turns (balanced turns vs. excessively verbal)
- Topic Stringing ↓
- Balanced question/comment ratio
- Perspective taking
  - Provide background information
  - Monitor comprehension
  - Gage interest in topic
  - Recognize and repair conversational breakdowns
- Body Language
- Proximity
- Tone/Loudness/Prosody
Informal Assessment: Procedure Analysis

- Ability to coherently verbalize
  - Rules of a sports or a videogame
  - Event Sequencing (what steps do you need to take in order to…?)
  - Describe a Recipe (how do you make a …)
Informal Assessment: Information Sequencing

- Sequence and create a 6-8 part story based on visuals
  - No-Glamour® Sequencing Cards* (Linguisystems)

- Gestalt Processing
  - Create whole from parts

- ToM
  - What are they talking about?
  - What are they thinking?

- Organizational Ability
  - Thought and expression
Informal Assessment: Narratives

- Sequencing Ability
  - Story order

- Working Memory
  - Use of relevant details

- Grammar
  - Sentence structure (errors, run-on sentences, etc)
  - Use of temporal and cohesive markers to connect the story

- Vocabulary
  - Immature vs. age-level
  - Word retrieval issues vs. lexical fluency

- Pragmatics
  - Story cohesion / coherence
  - Use of anaphoric references

- Perspective Taking
  - Insight into character’s feelings, beliefs, thoughts
Elements of Narrative Assessment

- Story grammar (Stein & Glenn, 1979)
  - Setting
  - Initiating event
  - Internal Response
  - Attempt
  - Consequences
  - Reaction

- Conjunctive cohesion
  - and, but, so, then, and then, however, subsequently, moreover

- Temporal Markers
  - before, after, during, first, firstly, secondly, last, finally

- Anaphoric Referencing
  - appropriate identification of people, locations, events vs. labeling everyone “he” or “she” or using non-specific comments such as “that place”, “that thing”, etc
Elements of Narrative Assessment (con’t)

- Event sequencing
  - Central theme vs. unconnected story
- Explicitness
- Fluency
  - Story fluidity, lack of lexical/phrasal interruptions ↓
- Word Retrieval/Word Finding
  - Word fillers such as um, ah, word/phrase revisions, word/phrase repetitions, word omissions, word prolongations, false starts, etc
- Emotional Relatedness/Perspective Taking
  - Identify and correctly interpret character’s emotions, ideas, thoughts
- Hedgeberg & Westby 1993
Conclusion

- Use of multiple assessment tasks to create a balanced assessment
- Assessment has to be functional
  - Determine strengths not just weaknesses
- Descriptive measures vs. standard scores
  - To qualify for services in cases with Average Standard Scores but pervasive social pragmatic deficits
- Make sure your assessments yield diagnostic information needed to formulate treatment goals
References


References


Resources Available For Purchase

- Assessment Checklist for Preschool Children
  [Link](http://www.smartspeechtherapy.com/shop/speech-language-assessment-checklist-for-a-preschool-child/)

- Assessment Checklist for School Children
  [Link](http://www.smartspeechtherapy.com/shop/speech-language-assessment-checklist-for-a-school-aged-child/)

- Narrative Assessment
  [Link](http://www.smartspeechtherapy.com/shop/narrative-assessments-of-preschool-and-school-aged-children/)

- Creating Functional Therapy Plan
  [Link](http://www.smartspeechtherapy.com/shop/creating-a-functional-therapy-plan-therapy-goals-soap-note-documentation/)

- Behavior Management
  [Link](http://www.smartspeechtherapy.com/shop/behavior-management-strategies-for-speech-language-pathologists/)
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