Assessing Social Communication in Asperger Syndrome

Timothy P. Kowalski, M.A.,C.C.C.
Professional Communication Services, Inc.
1294 Palmetto Ave.
Winter Park, FL 32789
www.socialpragmatics.com
mrtim@socialpragmatics.com

About Your Presenter

Timothy P. Kowalski, M.A.,C.C.C. is a Speech-Language Pathologist in Winter Park , Florida who has had extensive experience in treating individuals with psychiatric and behavioral/emotional deficits in acute, residential, and outpatient settings. He presents extensively on social, emotional and behavior disorders, Asperger syndrome and autistic spectrum disorders at local, state, national, and international settings. He is a consultant for academic facilities for children with and without developmental and autistic spectrum disabilities and served on the board of directors for the Greater Orlando Chapter of the Autism Society of America. He is the author of the *Source for Asperger's Syndrome*, published by LinguiSystems, Inc., and *Assessing Communication Skills in Asperger's Syndrome: An Introduction to The Conversational Effectiveness Profile*. He is also the recipient of the "TEAMS 2000 Speech-Language Pathologist of the Year" award for his work with autism in the four county region of greater Orlando. He is a graduate of Case Western Reserve University and Southern Connecticut State University and has been residing in Orlando since February 1983.

Classification Systems

- 1994 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – IV, Text Revised (DSM-IV, TR)

- International Classification of Diseases –10th Edition (ICD-10)

- Gillberg's Criteria

DSM–IV, TR
American Psychiatric Association, Ed.(1994). *1994 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.* Washington, D.C.

- Qualitative impairment in social interaction …

    o marked impairment in use of multiple nonverbal behaviors such as eye-to-eye gaze, facial expression, body postures, and gestures to regulate social interaction

- Restricted repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests, and activities...

    o encompassing preoccupation with one or more stereotyped and restricted patterns of interest that is abnormal either in intensity or focus

- There is no clinically significant general delay in language

    o there is no clinically significant delay in cognitive development or in the development of age-appropriate self-help skills, adaptive behavior (other than social interactions), and curiosity about the environment in childhood

ICD-10
World Health Organization. (1989). *Tenth Revision of the International Classification of Disease.* Geneva: World Health Organization.

- There is no clinically significant general delay in spoken or receptive language or cognitive development. Diagnosis requires that single words should have developed by 2 years of age or earlier...

- Qualitative abnormalities in reciprocal social interaction...

    o Failure to adequately use eye-to-eye gaze, facial expression, body posture, and gesture to regulate social interaction

- The individual exhibits an unusually intense, circumscribed interest or restricted, repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests and activities...

    o An encompassing preoccupation with stereotyped restricted patterns of interest that are abnormal in content or focus; or one or more interests that are abnormal in their intensity and circumscribed nature though not in content or focus

Gillberg's Criteria

Gillberg, C. (2002) *A Guide to Asperger's Syndrome*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

- Speech and language peculiarities

    o delayed early development possible

    o superficially perfect expressive language

    o odd prosody, peculiar voice

    o impaired comprehension especially with literal and implied meanings

- Nonverbal communication problems

    o limited use of gestures

    o clumsy body language

    o inappropriate facial expression

    o difficulty with physical expression

Assessing Social Communication: Educational & Clinical Models

- purpose
- A.S. is medical not educational dx
- validity of testing tools

Qualifying for E.S.E. Placement

- E.S.E. label

- qualify services based on educational standards not standardized testing

IDEA 2004

- significant changes will have a positive impact on students presenting with AS

Impact #1

- Schools may not focus predominately or exclusively on academics in their evaluations but must consider all areas of the child's functioning at school

Impact #2

- The requirement to assess developmental and functional performance requires consideration of the effect of learning problems e.g. reading, writing, and math learning disabilities, based on functional impact, regardless of response to intervention or discrepancy scores

Impact #3

- Evaluations must be provided in the language and form most likely to yield accurate information on what the child knows and can do academically, developmentally and functionally.

Pragmatic Language Assessment Tools

1. *Conversational Effectiveness Profile*
   Kowalski, T. (2005). Assessing communication skills in Asperger's Syndrome: An introduction to the Conversational Effectiveness Profile. *Florida Journal of Communication Disorders. 22, 29-34.*

   o observational rating scale comprised of 6 domains:

- social interaction
- social communication
- academic communication
- nonverbal communication
- perspective taking
- social-emotional

Conversational Effectiveness Profile

Name: _____   Date: _____

Birth Date: _____   C.A.: _____

Note: For all responses, use the following behavioral rating score:
1. Behavior is appropriate.
2. Behavior is somewhat inappropriate.
3. Behavior is extremely inappropriate.

Social Interaction

This section is designed to compare the individual's ability to interact with others as well as the style of interaction the individual frequently employs.

1. Interaction with adults.   ___
2. Interaction with age-appropriate peers.   ___
3. Interaction with younger children.   ___
4. Ability to interact with many individuals simultaneously   ___
5. Ability to establish multiple friendships   ___
6. Participation in group activities.   ___
7. Passive tendencies   ___
8. Aggressive tendencies   ___
9. Responsiveness   ___
10. Ability to handle being "left out"   ___

Social Communication

This section is designed to compare the individual's ability to communicate with others using non-verbal and verbal means.

Topic Maintenance

11. Ability to establish a topic   ___
12. Ability to maintain topic relevancy   ___
13. Ability to change a topic using signals   ___
14. Ability to change a topic using verbal means   ___
15. Relevancy of information   ___
16. Ability to interrupt appropriately   ___
17. Ability to terminate the conversation   ___

Conversational Structure
18. Ability to initiate a conversation   ___
19. Ability to establish a conversation outside of interest area   ___
20. Ability to acknowledge others in conversation   ___
21. Ability to delete redundant information appropriately   ___
22. Ability to order information appropriately (new info follows old)   ___
23. Use of pedantic speech   ___

Word Structure
24. Ability to use generals/specifics   ___
25. Pronoun use   ___
26. Use of word referents   ___
27. Ability to employ Theory of Mind (presuppostion)   ___

Manner/Effectiveness
28. Provides ambiguous information   ___
29. Provides relevant information   ___
30. Truthfulness of information (grandiosity)   ___
31. Ability to establish joint activity   ___
32. Tendency to present personal opinions as factual   ___

Repair Structures
33. Requests clarification as needed   ___
34. Spontaneously provides additional information   ___
35. Provides additional information upon request   ___
36. Requests repetition of information for clarification purposes   ___

Functional Intent

A. Responsiveness
37. Looks at speaker when called   ___
38. Delay of response   ___
39. Ability to label information appropriately   ___
40. Ability to describe objects appropriately   ___
41. Ability to describe events appropriately   ___
42. Ability to state facts appropriately   ___
43. Ability to provide clarification appropriately   ___

B. Requesting
44. Ability to request information appropriately   ___
45. Ability to request permission appropriately   ___
46. Ability to request yes-no responses appropriately   ___

47. Ability to use Wh-Questions appropriately ____
48. Ability to request an action of another appropriately ____
49. Ability to request clarification appropriately ____
50. Ability to request attention appropriately ____
51. Ability to request help appropriately ____

C. Prosody
52. Ability to use appropriate rate of speech ____
53. Ability to use appropriate tone of voice ____
54. Ability to use appropriate pitch ____
55. Ability to use appropriate loudness ____
56. Ability to comprehend implied meanings via tone of voice ____
57. Ability to comprehend implied meanings via inflectional cues ____

D. Protests
58. Ability to state his opinion using appropriate means ____
59. Ability to disagree ____

E. Style of Conversation
60. Ability to shift the style of conversation according to person ____
61. Ability to shift the style of conversation according to the setting ____
62. Ability to shift the style of conversation according to humor ____
63. Ability to engage a listener appropriately ____
64. Ability to use politeness ____
65. Appropriateness to the situation ____
66. Ability to recognize other's moods ____
67. Ability to differentiate requests from demands ____

F. Humor
68. Comprehends humor ____
69. Uses humor appropriately ____

G. Greetings/Acknowledgements
70. Provides greetings ____
71. Uses greetings ____
72. Ability to acknowledge the presence of another individual ____

H. Problem Solving
73. Ability to solve problems affecting himself ____
74. Ability to solve problems affecting others ____
75. Ability to recognize problems affecting others ____
76. Ability to recognize problems affecting himself ____
77. Ability to establish cause-effect ____

78. Ability to use conflict-resolution   ___

I. Deceit
79. Uses language to deceive   ___
80. Lies   ___

Academic Communication

This section is designed to compare the individual's ability to communicate in an academic setting with other students.

81. Ability to respond appropriately to teacher requests   ___
82. Ability to reorient to academic agenda appropriately   ___
83. Ability to obtain teacher's attention appropriately   ___
84. Ability to request clarification from teacher   ___
85. Ability to participate in classroom discussions   ___
86. Ability to interact with classroom peers   ___
87. Ability to paraphrase text   ___
88. Ability to summarize a story providing key information   ___
89. Ability to respond to questions requiring inferential reasoning   ___

Nonverbal Communication

This section is designed to compare the individual's ability to communicate with others using non-verbal means.

90. Ability to recognize "personal space" boundaries   ___
91. Ability to touch appropriately   ___
92. Comprehends facial expression   ___
93. Comprehends eye gaze   ___
94. Comprehends gestures   ___
95. Comprehends body language   ___
96. Ability to use facial expression   ___
97. Ability to use eye gaze   ___
98. Ability to use gestures   ___
99. Ability to use body language   ___
100. Ability to use eye contact   ___

Perspective Taking

This section is designed to compare the individual's ability to recognize and use appropriate perspective taking.

101. Ability to recognize another's viewpoints   ___
102. Ability to recognize another's interests   ___
103. Ability to recognize another's feelings   ___
104. Ability to demonstrate concern for another's problems   ___

Social-Emotional

This section is designed to compare the individual's ability to recognize emotional states and use appropriate terminology.

105. Ability to recognize personal emotional states   ___
106. Ability to recognize emotional states in others   ___
107. Ability to express personal emotional state   ___
108. Ability to use appropriate self-control   ___
109. Ability to lose a game graciously   ___
110. Perfectionist quality   ___
111. Degree of anxiety in social settings   ___

2. *Dore's Conversational Acts*
   Stickler, K. R. (1987). *Guide to Analysis of Language Transcripts*. Eau Claire,
   WI: Thinking Publications.

   - o used to assess the function behind an utterance
   - o comprised of 3 parts based on the message's
     - meaning
     - syntax
     - speaker's intent

- Requests
  - Statements that request information, action, or acknowledgment from another individual
    - o yes-no questions
    - o Wh-questions
    - o clarification
    - o requests for action or permission

- Descriptions
  - statements that provide factual information about the past and present such as:
    - o identifications
    - o properties
    - o events
    - o locations
    - o times

- Statements
  - comments that are used for:
    - o rules
    - o evaluations
    - o attributions
    - o explanations

- o facts
- o definitions

- Acknowledgments
  - comments that recognize and evaluate responses such as:
    - o acceptances
    - o approval/agreements
    - o disapproval/disagreements
    - o conversational returns

- Organizational Devices
  - comments that regulate contact and conversation such as:
    - o boundary markers
    - o calls
    - o speaker selections
    - o politeness markers
    - o accompaniments

- Performatives
  - comments that serve to accomplish their task:
    - o protests
    - o jokes
    - o claims
    - o warning
    - o teasing

- Miscellaneous
  - Utterances not classifiable elsewhere such as
    - o no responses
    - o unintelligible responses
    - o exclamations

3. *Tough's Functions of Language*
   Tough, J. (1977). *The Development of Meaning: A Study of Children's Use of Language Skills. London, UK: Allen and Unwin.*

   - defines the role language has in problem solving and thinking

   - identifies 4 major functions of language:

       o directive

       o interpretive

       o projective

       o relational

   - Directive

       o ability to direct comments to self such as:

       o monitoring/verbalizing about his actions

       o describing and directing his actions toward a task

       o stating what he intends to do

       o ability to direct comments to others such as:

       o requested actions

       o providing instructions

       o verbalizing problem-solving tasks

       o anticipating future actions that impact himself or others

   - Interpretive

       o reporting on present and past experiences such as:

       o label

       o verbal detail

       o associate and compare against previous experiences

       o recognize incongruity in a situation

       o express a sequence of events

       o using reasoning such as:

       o recognizing cause-effect

       o recognizing social rules and principles

- Projective
    - ability to use prediction such as:
    - stating information in the future
    - anticipating consequences
    - determining possible alternatives
    - stating possible cause-effects
    - recognizing problems and predicting solutions

    - ability to use empathy such as:
    - projecting into other's experiences
    - projecting into other's feelings
    - anticipating the reactions of others
    - ability to use imagination such as:
    - renaming items by providing more specificity
    - using imaginary play
    - role playing

- Relational
    - ability to use self-maintenance skills to express:
    - current needs
    - self-interest
    - justifications
    - criticism
    - threats
    - ability to use interactional skills such as:
    - emphasis
    - other strategies for recognition

4. *Fey's Pragmatic Patterns*
   Fey, M. (1986). *Language Inerventnion with Young Children*. San Diego: College-Hill Press.

- Active Conversationalists
  - assertive and responsive
  - interested in their conversational partner
  - lend information to the conversation
  - may need assistance in expansion techniques

- Passive Conversationalists
  - responsive to conversation but doesn't add to it
  - fails to provide new and/or relevant information
  - need help in developing assertive acts

- Inactive Conversationalists
  - neither responsive or assertive
  - typically socially isolated
  - fail to participate in conversation
  - need help in developing interactions

- Verbal Non-communicator
  - assertive but unresponsive to partner
  - can initiate conversation
  - dominates conversation without regard to partner's needs/desires
  - need help in understanding how their comment relates to current topic

5. *Prutting Pragmatic Protocol*
   Prutting, C. (1983). "Applied Pragmatics." In *Pragmatic Assessment and Intervention Issues in Language,* Edited by T. Gallagher and C. Prutting. San Diego: College-Hill.

   - used with children 5 years of age and older
   - defines how language signifies conversational intent in social settings

6. Communicative Partner Profile
   Anderson-Wood, L. and Smith, B. (2000). *Working with Pragmatics*. Oxon, UK: Winslow Press Ltd.

   - checklist based on the following skills:

- facilitating relationships

- facilitating conversational interaction

- facilitating communication development

- non-facilitating strategies

- training for communicative partners

7. Muir's Informal Assessment for Social-Communication
Muir, N., Tanner, P. and France, J. (1992)."Management and Treatment Techniques: A Practical Approach." Edited by R. Gravell, and J. France, *Speech and Communication Problems in Psychiatry*. Sand Diego: Singular Publishing Group, Inc.

- provides a quick overview of the social domain of language

- uses a rating scale: 1 (severe) to 5 (normal)

- geared more for psychiatric group treatment

8. *Adolescent Pragmatics Screening Scale*
Brice, A. (1992). The adolescent pragmatics screening scale: Rationale and Development: *Howard Journal of Communications*. 3: 177-193.

- can be used to identify pragmatic language deficits

- provides a measure on 6 topical subtests and a composite total score

9. *Halliday's Functions of Language*
Miller, J. (1981). *Assessing Language Production in Children*. Baltimore: University Park Press.f

- uses 7 categories to assess pragmatics

- communication may function as:

- interpersonal: intention to interact with others

- textual: utterance is based on previous utterance

- ideational/experiential: an attempt to express meaning

10. *Pragmatic Rating Scale*
Anderson-Wood, L. and Smith, B. (2000). *Working with Pragmatics*. Oxon, UK: Winslow Press Ltd.

- designed to compare communication performance against others

- non-standardized rating scale

11. *Interaction Record*
    Anderson-Wood, L. and Smith, B. (2000). *Working with Pragmatics*. Oxon, UK: Winslow Press Ltd.

    - provides for a transcription of communication interaction

    - provides for a visual demonstration of strengths and weaknesses

Misdiagnosis

- in one study of 32 students eventually identified as AS, 92% were provided other diagnoses or labels (Church, C., Alisanski, S. and Amanullah, S. (2000). "The social, behavioral, and academic experiences of children with Asperger syndrome." *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*. 15(1): 12-20.)

- labels provided by:

- school/clinical psychologists

- primary care physicians

- psychiatrists

Common Misdiagnoses

- ADHD

- autism

- communication disorder

- learning disorder

- emotional handicap

- obsessive-compulsive disorder

- bipolar disorder

It is hoped that you...

- learned something today that you didn't know before

- feel more confident and are more willing to work with Asperger's Syndrome-ish

type individuals

- will try and make their chaotic world more sensible

- Thank you for coming.