MORE THAN JUST PRAGMATICS: ASSESSING CHILDREN WITH ASD

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ICE CREAM PLEASE, MOMMY?

NO ICE CREAM FOR YOU, JEFFY. YOU HAVEN'T TOUCHED YOUR SANDWICH.

NOW COULD I HAVE SOME ICE CREAM, MOMMY?
Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

1. Recognize how the assessment of social communicative functioning differs across the spectrum of the disorder.
2. Describe specific areas of assessment to consider in the assessment of social communicative functioning.
3. Identify the appropriate assessments tools such as standardized tests and informal tasks to assess the different areas of social communicative functioning.
Purposes of Assessment

• Eligibility
• Educational Planning
Best Practice for Diagnosis

• Requirements for a **diagnostic** assessment for ASD
  – Review of relevant background information
  – Parent/caregiver interview & rating scales
  – Medical examination/hearing evaluation
  – Direct observation
  – Cognitive assessment
  – Measures of adaptive functioning

See ASD Best Practice Guidelines 2002
Best Practice for Education/Eligibility

– Record review
– Developmental and medical history
– Caregiver interview
– Parent/teacher ratings of social competence
– Direct student observation
– Cognitive assessment
– Academic assessment
– Adaptive behavior assessment
– Communication and language assessment

(Filipek, 1999, National Research Council, 2001; Ozonoff et.al. 2005)
Best Practice for Education/Eligibility

– Additional areas of assessment
  • Sensory processing
  • Executive function and attention
  • Motor skills
  • Co-existing behavioral/emotional problems

(Wilkinson, 2010)
What is a comprehensive (defensible) assessment?

• Multi-disciplinary/Interdisciplinary
• Covers all areas of suspected problems
• Collaborative w/ strong parent component
• Conducted by professionals knowledgeable about ASD
• Considers all sources of information
• Leads to rationale for treatment planning
Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Assessment Protocols for Autism Spectrum Disorders (CMAPs-ASD):

1. Set of four multidisciplinary assessment protocols that provide assessment teams an organized and systematic method of planning and completing an assessment of a child suspected of a diagnosis within the autism spectrum.

2. Protocols were developed based on three communication language profiles (emergent communicators, basic communicators, and atypical communicators).
## Communication Language Profiles Across the Autism Spectrum

(Dodd, 2010; Dodd & Franke, in prep)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Communicator</th>
<th>Communication and Language Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Emergent Communicator (EC) | • Communicates primarily through gestures and behaviors  
• Uses primarily non-symbolic forms of communication  
• Communicates primarily for the purposes of fulfilling basic wants and needs.  
• Uses non-intentional forms of communication with the emergence of intentional forms of communication |
| Basic Communicator (BC)    | • Uses symbolic forms of communication including pictures, symbols, single words and simple sentence patterns  
• Communication is primarily intentional and directed toward a variety of communicative partners  
• Uses language for increasing number of communication functions such as shared attention.  
• Significant difficulty with receptive language |
# Communication Language Profiles Across the Autism Spectrum

(Dodd, 2010; Dodd & Franke, in prep)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Communicator (AT/AT2)</th>
<th>Communication and Language Skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Uses words and novel sentence patterns</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Uses over-learned phrases and pedantic language</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Uses syntax and morphology that is consistent if not advanced in comparison to age-matched peers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Often times described as quite verbose</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Retelling of past events is often fragmented and disorganized</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• May fail to provide sufficient background information to insure their listener’s understanding.</td>
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<td>• Conversational topics may be restricted to personal interests</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• May lack, misuse or fail to recognize social conventions such as eye contact, body language, and personal space.</td>
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Areas of Assessment

- Background
- Observation
- Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Executive Functioning
- Visual Processing
- Cognitive Functioning
- Language Functioning
- Narrative Language
- Speech Sound Production

- Social Communicative Functioning
- Developmental/Pre-academics/Academics
- Adaptive Functioning
- Behavior/Self Regulation/Emotional Functioning
- Sensory Processing
- Motor Functioning
- Other Areas

Filipek et al., 1999
Why Assess “Language” and Social Communicative Functioning Separately?
Social Communicative Functioning
Influenced by Coggins, Olswang, Carmichael Olsson, & Timler, 2003; Coggins, Timler, & Olswang, 2007.

Social Cognition
- Joint Attention
- Emotion Recognition
- Theory of Mind

Pragmatics

Social Problem Solving

Social Communicative Skills
- Social Responsiveness
- Play Skills
- Friendships Skills
- Social Skills

Executive Functioning
Assessment Considerations

• There often are not standardized tests for the skills you want to assess.
• Assessment of pragmatics requires you to consider the context and situation.
• “Snapshots in time” have limited predictive value for future language performance or learning potential.
• Supplement standardized tests with informal assessment procedures.
• Assess across multiple, naturalistic contexts.
JOINT ATTENTION: is the ability to engage with someone else’s engagement with an object, person, or event in the world, and to know that the attention is shared between the parties.

THEORY OF MIND: Describes the everyday common sense psychological concepts that enable us to recognize, interpret and understand the perspectives of others and to adjust our behavior to match the situation.

EMOTION RECOGNITION: the ability to recognize emotions
Theory of Mind

• What’s in the box?
• Sticker finding game
• Appearance Reality
• Unseen Displacement (Sally-Anne, Maxi Task)
• Unexpected Contents
• Ice-Cream Man (Baron-Cohen, 1989)

Pragmatics is “the range of communicative functions (reason for talking), the frequency of communication, discourse skills (turn taking, topic maintenance and change), and flexibility to modify speech for different listeners and social situations” (Paul, 2009)
Assessing Pragmatics

• Elicit a representative language sample
  – Tell a story to get a story (McCabe & Rollins, 1994)

• Additional Resources:
  – http://www.ucs.louisiana.edu/~jsd6498/damico/damico-cda.html
Pragmatic Analysis: Emergent Communicator

- Communicative Intent & Speech Acts
- Responsiveness & Assertiveness/Initiation
- Turn-Taking
Pragmatic Analysis:
Basic Communicator

✓ Communicative Intent & Speech Acts
✓ Responsiveness & Assertiveness/Initiation
✓ Turn-Taking
✓ Communication Repairs
Pragmatic Analysis: Atypical Communicator

- Communicative Intent & Speech Acts
- Responsiveness & Assertiveness/Initiation
- Turn-Taking
- Communication Repairs
- Cohesion
- Coherence

- Topic (Selection & Maintenance)
- Speech registers and styles
- Reference & Presuppositions
Social Problem Solving

• Skills for negotiating everyday social problems
Social Communicative Behaviors

- **SOCIAL RESPONSIVENESS**: interest in others
- **SOCIAL SKILLS**: goal directed, learned behaviors that allow one to interact and function effectively in a variety of social contexts (Sheridan & Walker, 1999).
- **FRIENDSHIP SKILLS**: the student’s understanding of friendships and ability to develop peer relationships
- **PLAY SKILLS**: the student’s Social Play Style, Symbolic Dimension of Play (developmental play patterns) *Play Preferences*- diversity of play (adapted from P. Wolberg)
## EMERGENT COMMUNICATOR

### SOCIAL COGNITION

**JOINT ATTENTION:**
- SCERTS-SAP Observation Form: Social Partner (Prizant et al., 2006)

### PRAGMATICS

- Assessment of Communicative Acts/Functions (Wetherby & Prizant, 1989; Wetherby & Prutting, 1984)
- Communication and Symbolic Behavior Scales (CSBS:DP)
- The Communication Matrix (http://www.communicationmatrix.org)

### SOCIAL COMMUNICATIVE BEHAVIORS

**SOCIAL RESPONSIVENESS:**
- Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS)

**SOCIAL SKILLS**
- The Social Skills Checklist (Quill, 2000)

**PLAY & FRIENDSHIP SKILLS:**
- Developmental Playscale (Westby, 2000)
**SOCIAL COGNITION**

**JOINT ATTENTION:**
- SCERTS-SAP Observation Form: Language Partner (Prizant et al., 2006)

**EMOTION RECOGNITION:**
- Affect Recognition (NEPSY® - II),
- Observation and review of related items on other measures, informal emotion cards

**PRAGMATICS**

- Assessment of Communicative Acts/Functions (Wetherby & Prizant, 1989; Wetherby & Prutting, 1984)

**SOCIAL PROBLEM SOLVING**

- Review of related items on rating scales
### BASIC COMMUNICATOR

#### SOCIAL COMMUNICATIVE BEHAVIORS

#### SOCIAL RESPONSIVENESS:
- Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS)

#### SOCIAL SKILLS:
- The Social Skills Checklist (Quill, 2000)
- The Social Skills Checklist (Quill, 2000)
- Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS)
- The Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS)

#### PLAY SKILLS:
- Developmental Playscale (Westby, 2000)

#### FRIENDSHIP SKILLS:
- Assessment of Peer Relations (Guralnick)
**ATYPICAL COMMUNICATOR**

### SOCIAL COGNITION

#### JOINT ATTENTION:
- SCERTS-SAP Observation Form: Conversation Partner *(Prizant et al., 2006)*

#### EMOTION RECOGNITION:
- Affect Recognition *(NEPSY® - II)*
- Social Emotional Evaluation *(SEE)*
- Observation and review of related items on other measures

#### THEORY OF MIND
- Informal Theory of Mind Tasks
- NEPSY-II Theory of Mind

### PRAGMATICS

- Pragmatic Language Skills Inventory *(PLSI)*
- Children’s Communication Checklist- 2 *(CCC-2)*
- Clinical Discourse Analysis *(Damico, 1991)*
- Informal Probes: Double Interview *(Garcia Winner, 2007)*
- Peanut Butter Protocol *(Roth & Speckman, 1984)*
- Personal Narrative *(McCabe & Rollins, 1994)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOCIAL PROBLEM SOLVING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Preschool Language Assessment Instrument, Second Edition (PLAI-2) <em>Level IV</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Test of Problem Solving, Third Edition (TOPS-2)</td>
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<td>✓ Test of Pragmatic Language, Second Edition (TOPL-2)</td>
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<td>✓ Pragmatic Judgment (CASL)</td>
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<td>✓ Social Language Development Test-Elementary</td>
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## ATYPICAL COMMUNICATOR

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