DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIAL PRAGMATICS

CHARACTERISTICS OVERVIEW CHART

Verbal Skills	Grade Levels	Cognitive Level	Areas Addressed
☒Nonverbal	☒PK	☐Classic	☐(Pre)Academic/Cognitive/Academic
☒Mixed	☐Elementary	☒High Functioning	☐Adaptive Behavior/ Daily Living
☒Verbal	☐Middle/High		☐Behavior
			☒Communication/Speech
			☒Social/Emotional

BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Children with autism tend to acquire language skills that focus on getting their needs met (e.g., "give me," pointing to an object) as opposed to social and pragmatic skills. As a result, they use very limited social-communicative components in their language. The developmental, social-pragmatic intervention is based in developmental theory focused on building the ability to have meaningful social conversations.

DESCRIPTION AND STEPS

The idea behind developmental social pragmatics intervention originated from the interactions between typically developing infants and their mothers. This model has been introduced to young at-risk children and children with other disabilities (Prizant, Wetherby, & Rydell, 2000). To date, only one study, specifically identified as a DSP intervention, has been conducted with children with autism (Ingersoll, Dvortcsak, Whalen, & Sikora, 2005). However, the positive results of this study and others that may fit within DSP guidelines (e.g., Floor Time™, PLAY Project) indicate a direction for future research. The developmental social pragmatic intervention is a naturalistic approach, emphasizing responsive interactions between the child and an adult in order to build social-communicative skills.

Common characteristics of the developmental social pragmatics intervention (Ingersoll et al., 2005) are as follows:

- Teaching activities are selected on the basis of the child's interests and attention span. During the adult-child interaction, the adult follows the child's lead and starts conversation/interaction based on the child's initiation.

- The adult arranges or manipulates the environment for the purpose of reinforcing child's initiation and responsiveness. For instance, the adult purposefully places the child's favorite toy in a place that is inaccessible to the child without help. Or the adult narrows the stimuli in the surrounding area to keep the child's focus on specific teaching materials in a theme-based social context.

- The adult responds to all communicative attempts made by the child, including unconventional (e.g., echolalia, meaningless verbal) and preintentional (e.g., pointing, gesturing) communication. This is because all social-communicative attempts are essential to establishing spontaneous communicative interactions.

- The adult encourages and gives feedback to emotional expressions and affect sharing. In order to teach facial and affective expressions to the child with autism, the adult purposefully exaggerates facial expressions or gestures. Modeling and parallel talking and responding are important for encouraging social output.

The developmental social pragmatics intervention takes place in a child's natural environment during familiar routines. The adult plays an important role in terms of responsiveness, reinforcement, and modeling social-communicative behaviors.

Examples of developmental social pragmatic strategies (Ingersoll et al., 2005) include:

- Floor Time^{TM}/DIR, PLAY Project, and other play-based models
- SCERTS model
- Incidental teaching
- Responsive teaching/interaction

- Indirect language stimulation strategies: vocal imitation, descriptive modeling, self-talk, parallel talk, and expansion
- Strategies for purposefully arranging the environment: playful obstruction, sabotage, violating familiar routines, in sight-out reach

BRIEF EXAMPLE

Ben is a 5-year-old boy with classic AU who likes to play with toys. He uses simple words to ask for a toy. In order to increase his social-pragmatic language skills, Ben's parents decided to spend more time playing with him and facilitate more social initiation through responsive interaction. Specifically, they decided to increase social communication by following Ben's lead.

When Ben showed interest in a toy or game, his parents would say, "Look at this farm house! It is so cute! Just like the one we visited last summer with grandpa!" When his parents used this type of intensive interaction and responded immediately to Ben's communicative attempts, Ben learned more social communication in his regular play.

SUMMARY

Developmental social pragmatics intervention is a naturalistic and child-oriented approach. The purpose is to increase social interactions and enhance general communication skills.

RESEARCH TABLE

Number of Studies	Ages (year)	Sample Size	Area(s) Addressed	Outcome
1*	2.5-4	3	Spontaneous language, total appropriate language	+

Note: Other techniques include elements of developmental social pragmatics, including Floor Time[TM]/DIR, PLAY Project and other play-based models, the SCERTS model, and incidental teaching.

STUDIES CITED IN RESEARCH TABLE

1. Ingersoll, B., Dvortcsak, A., Whalen, C., & Sikora, D. (2005). The effects of a developmental, social-pragmatic language intervention on rate of expressive language production in young children with autistic spectrum disorders. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 20*(4), 213-222.

   Three boys with autism participated in this study in which the developmental social pragmatics approach was administered by a speech-language pathologist. The results showed increased use of spontaneous language with the therapist and parent.

REFERENCES

Ingersoll, B., Dvortcsak, A., Whalen, C., & Sikora, D. (2005). The effects of a developmental, social-pragmatic language intervention on rate of expressive language production in young children with autistic spectrum disorders. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 20*(4), 213-222.

Prizant, B. M., Wetherby, A. M., & Rydell, P. J. (2000). Communication intervention issues for children with autism spectrum disorders. In A. M. Wetherby & B. M. Prizant (Eds.), *Autism spectrum disorders: A transactional developmental perspective* (pp. 193-224). Baltimore: Brookes.

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- Developmental Social-Pragmatic Model: www.autism-help.org/intervention-developmental-social-pragmatic.htm
  This link is a fact sheet on the developmental social pragmatics.

- Ganz, J. B., Kaylor, M., Bourgeois, B., & Hadden, K. (2008). The impact of social scripts and visual cues on verbal communication in three children with autism spectrum disorders. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 23*, 79-94.

- Rollins, P. R. (1999). Early pragmatic accomplishments and vocabulary development in preschool children with autism. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, 8,* 181-190.

- Sarokoff, R. A., Taylor, B. A., & Poulson, C. L. (2001). Teaching children with autism to engage in conversational exchanges: Script fading with embedded textual stimuli. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 34*, 81-84.

- Thiemann, K. S., & Goldstein, H. (2004). Effects of peer training and written text cueing on social communication of school-age children pervasive developmental disorder. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research, 47*, 126-144.

- Wetherby, A. M., & Prizant, B. M. (2004). Identification, education, and treatment. In D. B. Zager (Ed.), *Enhancing language and communication development in autism spectrum disorders: Assessment and intervention guidelines* (pp. 327-366). New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

  These articles and books provide more detailed information about the Developmental Social Pragmatics model.

GENERAL RESOURCES

- Autism Internet Modules (AIM) www.autisminternetmodules.org
  The Autism Internet Modules were developed with one aim in mind: to make comprehensive, up-to-date, and usable information on autism accessible and applicable to educators, other professionals, and families who support individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Written by experts from across the U.S., all online modules are free, and are designed to promote understanding of, respect for, and equality of persons with ASD. Current modules are:
  - Assessment for Identification
  - Home Base
  - Peer-Mediated Instruction and Intervention (PMII)
  - Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
  - Pivotal Response Training (PRT)
  - Preparing Individuals for Employment
  - Reinforcement
  - Restricted Patterns of Behavior, Interests, and Activities
  - Self-Management
  - Social Supports for Transition-Aged Individuals
  - Structured Teaching
  - Structured Work Systems and Activity Organization
  - Supporting Successful Completion of Homework
  - The Incredible 5-Point Scale
  - Time Delay
  - Transitioning Between Activities
  - Visual Supports

- Interactive Collaborative Autism Network (iCAN) http://www.autismnetwork.org
  iCAN offers free online instructional modules on autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Modules have been developed in these areas:
  - Characteristics
  - Assessment
  - Academic Interventions
  - Behavioral Interventions
  - Communication Interventions
  - Environmental Interventions
  - Social Interventions

- Indiana Resource Center for Autism (IRCA) http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/fmain1.html
  The Indiana Resource Center for Autism staff's efforts are focused on providing communities, organizations, agencies, and families with the knowledge and skills to support children and adults in typical early intervention, school, community, work, and home settings.
  - IRCA Articles http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/ftrainpapers.html
  - IRCA Modules http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/fmodules.html

- Texas Statewide Leadership for Autism www.txautism.net
  The Texas Statewide Leadership for Autism in conjunction with the network of Texas Education Service center with a grant from the Texas Education Agency has developed a series of free online courses in autism. Please check the training page, www.txautism.net/training.html, for update lists of courses, course numbers and registration information. Current courses include the following:
    - Autism 101: Top Ten Pieces to the Puzzle
    - Autismo 101: Las 10 piezas principales del rompecabezas
    - Asperger Syndrome 101 Online
    - Asperger Syndrome 101 Online
    - Navigating the Social Maze: Supports & Interventions for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders
    - Communication: The Power of Communication for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders
    - Communication: The Power of Communication for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders