Social Pragmatic Language Intervention

Jenny R. Long, MS CCC-SLP
Colin A. Macpherson MA CCC/SLP
Mecosta Osceola ISD
Course Learning Objectives

- Understand the role of infant social pragmatic games in language acquisition
- Improve knowledge of the infant's ability to communicate and interpret intentions
- Improve knowledge of the infant's strategies for word learning
- Improve knowledge of apprenticeship model for guiding parents/caregivers to guide their child's learning and language acquisition
Early On Services in Michigan

- Federal mandate for assessment/intervention services: 0-3 and 3-6.
- Service delivery models vary widely.
- Critical Notions
  - At risk categories
  - 20% delay in development
  - Infant Family Service Plans
  - Natural Environments
  - Parent participation and involvement in the entire process.
A Cognitive Constructionism Perspective

- C constructs generalized understanding about language
  
  Emphasis is on individual knowledge
  Knowledge as abstract representations
  Based on an information processing model
  Computer analogy/computational processes
  Context is secondary/modifying
  Unit of analysis: the individual
  Intervention is focused on discrete skills.
A Social Constructionism Perspective

- Social constructionism – Internalization of society practices via guidance from other individuals
- Human knowledge is inextricably embedded in the social and physical context.
- Inadvisable to talk in terms of decontextualized abilities
- Knowledge as performance
- Learning as participation
- Unit of analysis: social participation in context
# Expressive Language Gain: Outcomes

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<th>Sub</th>
<th>Lang Gain in Months</th>
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# Expressive Vocabulary Gain: Outcomes

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Social Pragmatic Language Intervention Model

- Social cognitive basis
  - Social = within a culture
  - Cognitive = language learning based on general cognitive principles, not innate

- Social pragmatic basis
  - Pragmatic = centrality of communicative intent

- Affective-social basis
  - Affective = influence of the “dance”
Infant Skills that Contribute to First Language Learning; Cognitive

- Children come to acquire a language subsequent to significant developments in:
  - Pattern finding
  - Intention reading
  - Social imitation/role reversal
Word Learning: Infants and Pattern Finding

- Ability to form perceptual and conceptual categories of “similar” objects and events
- Ability to form schemas/scripts from recurrent patterns of perception and action
- Ability to perform statistically based analyses of speech input
  - Extract words, morphemes, phrases from speech stream
  - Identify the communicative job these elements are doing in the utterance
  - See patterns across utterances, or pairs of utterances, which enable them to create more or less abstract categories and constructions (Tomasello, 2003).
Early Word Learning

- Development of speech acts: label, repeat, protest, request, call, greet, etc.
- Development of semantic content: existence, nonexistence, action, possession, denial, etc.
- Formulation of grammatical classes: nouns, verbs, adjectives.
- Formulation of grammatical relations: subject, predicate, etc.
- Critical mass notion: Knowledge of 100+ different words necessary to start grammar. Vocabulary predicts MLU.
- Number of spoken words (10th percentile): 18 months/20 words; 24 months/80 words; 30 months/250 words. Children come to acquire a language subsequent to significant developments in:
  - Intention reading
  - Pattern finding
  - Social imitation
  - Language development has a cultural base (Tomasello, 2003).
A Social-Pragmatic Approach to Language Intervention

- Language is a set of social conventions whose primary function is to enable one person to manipulate the attention of another person in a very specific manner.
- Use of language for communication is the most powerful social-cognitive skill that children acquire.
- Language is a social skill, symbols are socially shared (Carpenter et al., 1999)
Social Pragmatic Language Intervention

- Following the child’s lead/interest is a beginning that leads to a relationship.
- Develop Social Pragmatic Games that may either serve to prime recall (joint attention scenes/formats) or enable initiation of events (mental event representations/scripts).
- Social Pragmatic Games enable the child to recall and predict what will occur (i.e., common ground).
- Social Pragmatic Games provide a structure that enables the child to “tune into you” and establish common ground.
- Social Pragmatic Games may be elaborated.
Social Pragmatic Language Intervention: Language develops in the context of social pragmatic games.

- Critical component is the relationship between caregiver and child.
- Social pragmatic games provide the context for facilitating communication and language skills.
- Joint attention formats, joint attention routines, and scripts are aspects drawn from social pragmatic games.
- Conversation/event histories are necessary as scaffolds for development.
Social Pragmatic Language Intervention

• Theoretical base:
  • Social Constructionism (Vygotsky, Rogoff, Tomasello, Carpenter, Bruner, Muma, Nelson)

  The Take Home:
  The context, partner, and history matter to why/how/when/where a development “move” occurs.
Social Pragmatic Games

• Begin between 6-9 months
• Called “primary intersubjectivity”
• Often called “The Dance”
• Coordinating actions and emotional states
• Clear roles that can be reversed
What is “intersubjectivity?”

“The mutual understanding that is achieved between people in communication has been termed intersubjectivity, emphasizing that understanding happens between people; it cannot be attributed to one person or the other in communication.”

(Rogoff, Apprenticeship in Thinking, p. 67)
Elements of the “Dance”
(Interactive Regulation, Primary Intersubjectivity)

- Managing attention
- Managing physical distance between parent and child
- Pacing/response to pacing
- Quality of initiation/invitation
- Acceptance of initiation/invitation
- Response to initiation failures
- Response to initiation successes
- Response to loss of coordination once established
- Coordination of emotional tone (happy, sad, etc)
- Coordination of emotional intensity (a little excited or very excited)
- Balance of communication (verbal, non-verbal, etc)
- Fluidity of the interaction
- Timing of all the elements
First Social Pragmatic Game, 
7 months
Taking on role Peekaboo, 8 months
Elaboration on Peekaboo, 10 months
Social Pragmatic Games (JAS, JAR, JAF)

- Simple content, small number of elements whose interrelations may be easily understood.
- Number of repetitions in the infant’s experience so he can abstract a task structure that is predictable with limited variation.
- Clear role structure for participants, most often reversible to enable infant to move from a passive to an active role.
- Have a playful affective tone.
Social Pragmatic Games

Components:
1. Affective-social
2. Cognitive
3. Become pragmatic, i.e., build communicative intent/reasons to communicate
Affective-Social: The Flip Side of the Coin

* The ontogenesis of smiling and laughter tell us (Sroufe, p. 97):
  1. The tendency of the infant to move toward incongruity and to find pleasure in cognitive challenges
  2. The increasing flexibility of the range of situations that produce laughter and the increasing organization as seen by a focused, precisely timed response rather than spillover of excitement
Relationship between Cognitive and Affective-Social Development

Development is seen as an integrated whole. The cognitive underpinnings of developmental changes in the process signified by the smile are clear; strongly implied also is the roles of the attachment relationship and interaction with a sensitive, responsive, caregiver in expanding the infant's tolerance of tension and in promoting expansion of schemata. In a reciprocal manner, cognitive changes promote exploration, social development, and the differentiation of affect; and affective-social growth leads cognitive development, as in the caregiver's renewed closeness with the infant upon the beginnings of “recognition” smiles. Neither the cognitive nor the affective system can be considered dominant or more basic than the other.” (Sroufe, p. 100)
Tension Modulation Model (Sroufe)

* tension is a natural consequence of the infant's engagement of novel stimulation.
* In a secure context, infants actively seek to reproduce incongruous, tension-producing situations.
* the same stimulus situation can lead to either strong negative or positive affect depending on the infant's context-based 'evaluation' of the incongruity.
Tension Modulation Model

* A steep, sharp tension fluctuation (as seen by reliable heart rate patterns) is required to produce laughter

* What stimulates a laugh changes over time as the infant's internal scheme of the event or social pragmatic game elaborates (i.e., by 8 months peekaboo without sound, a cloth dangling from caregiver's mouth, etc.)

* Laughter becomes more a product of the infant's active engagement (taking on a role) and elaboration in the social pragmatic game (i.e., the older infant stuffing a cloth back into caregiver's mouth)
Re-look at SPG “banging”
Communicating and Interpreting Intentions

• Develops between 9-15 months
• Called “secondary intersubjectivity”
• Often observed through use of gaze, gestures, prosody: declarative pointing, waving, “where go” gesture, etc.
• Bringing the external world into the game as something else to “share” about
Secondary Intersubjectivity

Coordinating subjective reactions to common perceptions, an external reference point (9-15 months)

The topic is our shared experience of what we see, hear, feel, taste and smell
(Looking at something together)
SPGames support
Communicative Intent, 15 months
What are Communicative Intentions? (Tomasello 1999).

- Underlying structure of a communicative intention is “She intends that I attend to X (and wants us to know this together) for some reason relevant to our common ground.”

- You intend for {me to share attention to (X)}

- The understanding of a communicative intention must have this structure.

- Not merely producing gestures or words.
The “Sharing Look”

- It is bidirectional, a confirmation that attention is shared, as well as a comment on the just-established topic (Carpenter)
- “Hey did you see that!”
- Recent research is finding that the “sharing look” is diagnostically distinctive of true joint attention vs. reliance on RJA and IJA as indicators (Hobson 2007)
Infant Pointing: A closer look
Tomasello et al., 2007, 2010

- Pointing always underdetermines the intended referent without shared context.
- Pointing simply directs someone’s attention to a location in the perceptual environment.
- Correct identification of the referent requires partners to know together that the indicated location is RELEVANT to a context they share (the “sharing look”, common ground).
- Individuals both know that they both know.
Skills necessary for the use of communicative intents (Tomasello, 1999).

- Understand others as intentional agents (they intend to direct their attention there)
- Participate in joint attention scenes that set the social-cognitive ground for symbolic acts
- Understand not just intentions but communicative intentions in which someone intends for her to attend to something in the joint attention scene
- Reverse roles with adults in the cultural learning process and thereby use toward them what they have used toward her
Communicative Intent, Role Reversal, 15 months
What does social pragmatic language intervention look like?

Apprenticeship Model of Guiding and Transferring (Rogoff):

- SLP demonstrates with child
- SLP coaches parent with child
- Role play (child-caregiver) with SLP and caregiver, both roles
- SLP coaches parent, transferring
SPLI & Family-Centered Intervention

- Respect families
  - Family culture, “availability”, and resources matter
- Provide flexible/individualized services
- Sharing information with parents
- Parent involvement in assessment, planning and intervention process.
- Change the focus to Parent is PRIMARY change agent.
  - Gives us relevance
  - Gives us intensity
Building the Social Pragmatic Games

Crucial Element:

“Mutual Creativity”

- the goal is playfulness, once a specific outcome is desired, spontaneity is lost (Fogel, 2008)

- once playfulness is back in the relationship, the SLP guides the parents in carefully adding variations to the game at a pace that the child is ready for.

- Avoid specific “how-tos”; creates loss of playfulness and leads to directiveness
Finding the Balance in the Game

- According to Beebe (2005), social pragmatic games are a flexible balance between interactive regulation (the “dance”) and self-regulation.

- Children receiving Early On services are most frequently preoccupied with self-regulation, and are missing opportunities to develop the games.
Building Games, in lieu of Balance

- Pattern (event schema)
  - What pattern/game works for the family? Is there anything that has already been established? In what context? How will the roles relate to each other? Are the roles reversible? Is the level of predictability appropriate for the child?

- Variation (play with ‘tension’)
  - Pauses, stress, volume, rate, gestures, positioning, emotional reaction, feigned incompetence, unexpected events, touch, gaze, exaggeration, chanting, silences, changes in the “talk” or action
What game to choose?

• Vertical vs. horizontal elaboration
  • Build more games vs. extensive elaboration in one game
• Choose a game that has room for growth
  • In typical development, many games “die out” as the infant/toddler becomes more competent (i.e., banging game vs. appear/disappear games)
• Appropriate for developmental level of child
“He’ll do it with you, but not with me”

- Social pragmatic games/joint attention scenes build event schemas and affective-social history with that specific person (does not carryover to parents unless THEY are the participant in the game!)
- Within the game, communicative intent is built (reasons to communicate and respond to communication)
Build and Bash 1
“We were playing the game, but he got bored with it”

- Usually this means the facilitator/caregiver got bored
- Recognize “bored” may be “lost”, implying lack of event schema/memory for the elements of the game
- When the pauses between the elements are too long in the game, this can also show up as “bored”
- If needed, add variation carefully, and monitor child’s response
Build and Bash 2
“what’s the point of this? I’ve already been doing this, and it hasn’t helped”

- Often the parents haven’t truly been doing a social pragmatic game (i.e., lack of roles, lack of predictability, limited repetitions)
- Parents often are overly directive rather than “mutually creative” or responsive
- The adult-initiated play is beyond what the child can do developmentally
- Child hasn’t heard sufficient amount of talk in the games/JAS to support language acquisition
Social Pragmatic Language Intervention: General strategies

- SOUL: Silence, observation, understanding, listening.
- Strive for balanced exchanges.
- Clinician talks about what the child is doing.
- Clinician responds to all child communicative attempts; communication payoff (Muma)
- Clinician uses recasts with use, content and form aspects.
- Clinician “ups the ante” based on past conversational/event histories.
SPLI & Parent as Primary Change Agent (How describe to parent)

- Relationship is goal of intervention process
- General Strategies
  - SOUL
    - Follow child lead/watch the eyes
    - Talk, Talk, Talk; Paraphrase, Paraphrase, Paraphrase
    - Repeat & Add words
    - Respond to any communication
  - Social Pragmatic Games
Practical aspects of conducting meaningful intervention in the home

- Use of texting with parents to provide information, answer questions, confirm appointments, etc.
- Using both child and clinician material sets/daily events in the intervention process.
- Clinician serves as teacher and coach/guide with family members.
- Use of video technology (iPad) to support parent involvement in the intervention process.
Summary

1. The context, partner, and shared history matter! (Social constructionism)

2. Social pragmatic games/joint attention scenes drive communicative intent through building event schemas and novelty seen by frequent use of sharing looks

3. Language acquisition is mapped onto the games/JAS as a way to share more of the private mind with the “community of minds” (Nelson)
Questions?
Discussion?