

Pragmatics

Kerrienne Connors, Stacie
Fleischmann, Laura Levine,
Priscilla Pareja, Melissa Xenakis



What is Pragmatics?

Pragmatics → Rules for social language

- Involves the ability to use language for different purposes
 - to change language according to the needs of a listener or situation
 - following the rules for conversations and storytelling
- Skills:
 - take turns in conversation
 - introduce new conversational topics appropriately
 - interpret facial expressions
 - tone of voice
 - understanding personal space
 - appropriate eye contact

Pragmatic Language Developmental Chart

By 1st Year: Is able to attract attention (vocalizations or gestures) Communicates intention (points, raises arms, shakes head/no); establishes **eye contact**; plays games - peek-a-boo, is a social being

By 2nd Year: Uses simple words/phrases to express intention; names objects; shows **verbal turn-taking**; may have simple questions; labels objects

By 3rd - 4th Year: Has pretend play, can role-play, begins code switching b/w situations; begins using jokes/teasing/fantasies; exhibits **topic initiation**, maintenance and termination; can relate a narrative; requests information through questions

By 5th - 6th Year: Discusses emotions/feelings; can sequence and tell stories from pictures; has cause & effect; extends topics; asks permission; uses please/thank you/you're welcome; **recognizes others' needs and offers help**; communicates knowledge

By the time children enter elementary school, these pragmatic skills should be in place in order for higher level social language skills to develop.

Development Continued:

6-8 years: Can give multiple step directions, uses a well formed narrative, descriptive language improves, checks listener's comprehension, produces full explanations, responds appropriately to compliments

8-9 years: Language is used to establish and maintain social status, increased **perspective taking**, provides conversational repairs, begins to **understand jokes** and riddles

9-12 years: Stories include complex and interactive episodes, understands more abstract jokes and riddles

12-14 years: Goal setting skills develop, increased ability to use strategies for **problem solving**, complex planning skills near maturity

15-18 years: Language is used to **maintain social bonds**, persuasive and argumentative skills reach near adult levels

When do we use Pragmatics?

ALL DAY EVERY DAY

- Eating at a restaurant
- Entering a building
- Waiting at an airport
- Visiting a doctor
- Using a bathroom (public and private)
- Attending parties and holiday celebrations
- Shopping at Target; walking in a mall
- Attending school
- Being part of a family
- **Literally *Everywhere and All The Time***

Pragmatic Language Difficulties May Show As:

- Difficulty interacting with peers and/or adults
- Difficulty adhering to conversational rules (topic initiation, maintenance, extension, and termination)
- Limited to no eye contact
- Frequent Interruptions
 - May Dominate Conversations
- Irrelevant and off-topic comments
- Difficulty with personal space
- Difficulty with interpreting and using non-verbal cues
- Difficulty moderating tone and prosody appropriate to the situation

How do we identify Pragmatic Language difficulty?

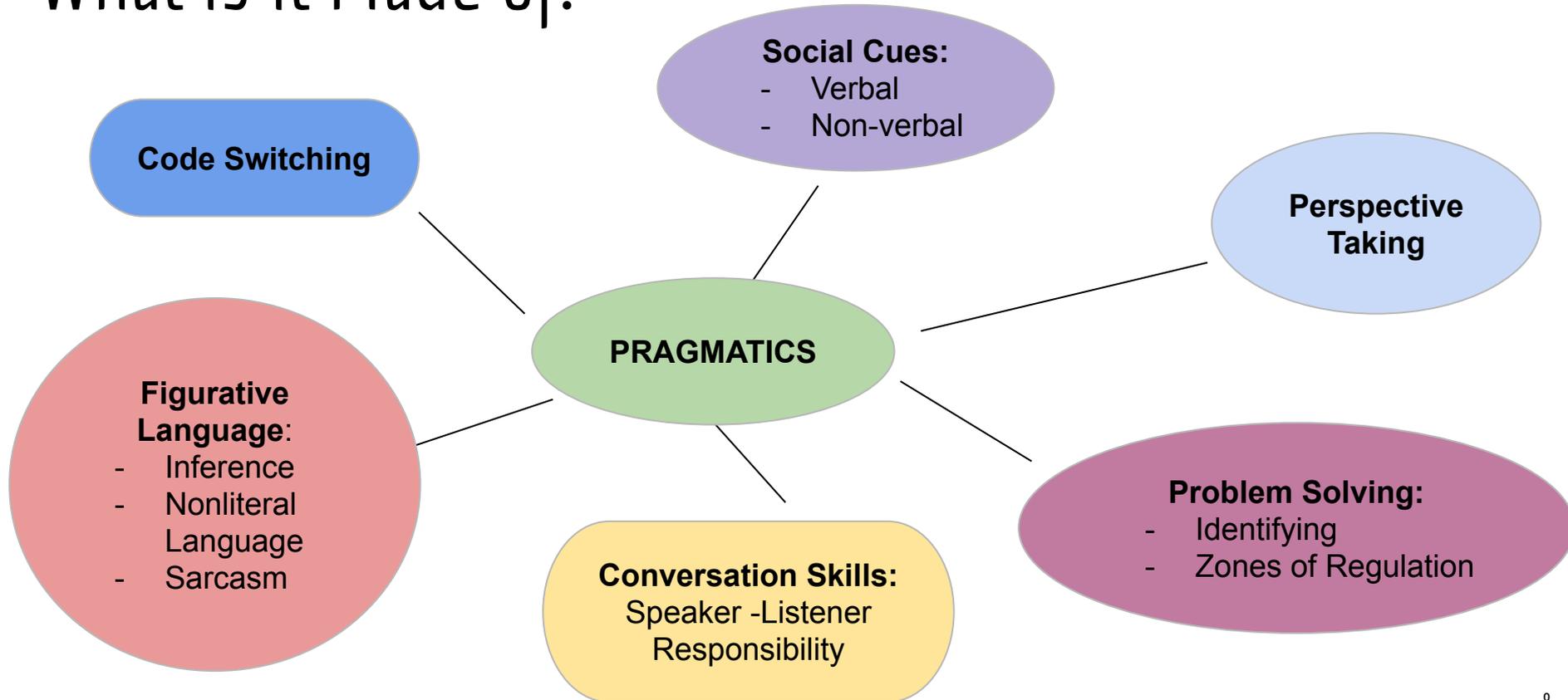
Formal Assessments:

- Test of Social Language Development (SLDT)
- CELF - Metalingustics
- CELF-5 - Pragmatic Profile
- CASL-2 Pragmatic Judgment & Supralingustic Index

Informal Assessments:

- Ongoing observation and monitoring
- Teacher Input

What is it Made of?



Social Cues

Verbal:

- **Direct Cue:** 'Open your books'
- **Indirect Cue:** 'Let's get started' - meaning open your book

Non-Verbal:

- Body language
- Eye contact
- Gestures
- Tone
- Facial Expressions
 - Matching intent
- Proximity - *close talker*

<https://slp.everydayspeech.com/video/keeping-personal-space>

Perspective Taking

Ability to see a situation from another point of view

- Identify how another person may feel
- Anticipate their feelings
- Respond appropriately

<https://slp.everydayspeech.com/video/perspective-taking>

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No offense but...



Figurative Language

Ability to understand the intended meaning of a message independently from the literal meaning

- Interpreting involves using background knowledge to infer beyond the literal meaning
- Represents language in which the words don't always mean what they say
 - **Idioms:** it's raining cats and dogs
 - **Proverbs:** don't judge a book by its cover
 - **Expressions:** sleep on it
 - **Inferencing** - Jim is wearing a heavy wool coat, what's the weather like?
 - **Ambiguity/Multiple Meaning:** It is light
 - **Non-Literal Language/ Sarcasm:** A girl arrives 2 hours late to dinner, her friend responds "I'm so glad you were able to fit us into your busy schedule."
 - **Humor**

Code Switching

Changing language and behaviors according to the listener or the situation.

How are you
Mr. Williams?



What up,
Bro?

Conversational Skills

- Introducing new topics (Initiate conversation)
- Staying on topic
- Extending a topic with questioning or comments
- Taking turns appropriately
- Terminating a topic/ending a conversation
- Re-wording when misunderstood
- Using and understanding nonverbal expressions (facial expression, eye contact)
- Respecting Personal Space
- Process **ALL** of the above simultaneously (**within 2 seconds**) before the message disappears

<https://youtu.be/ykemiu3byk?t=11>

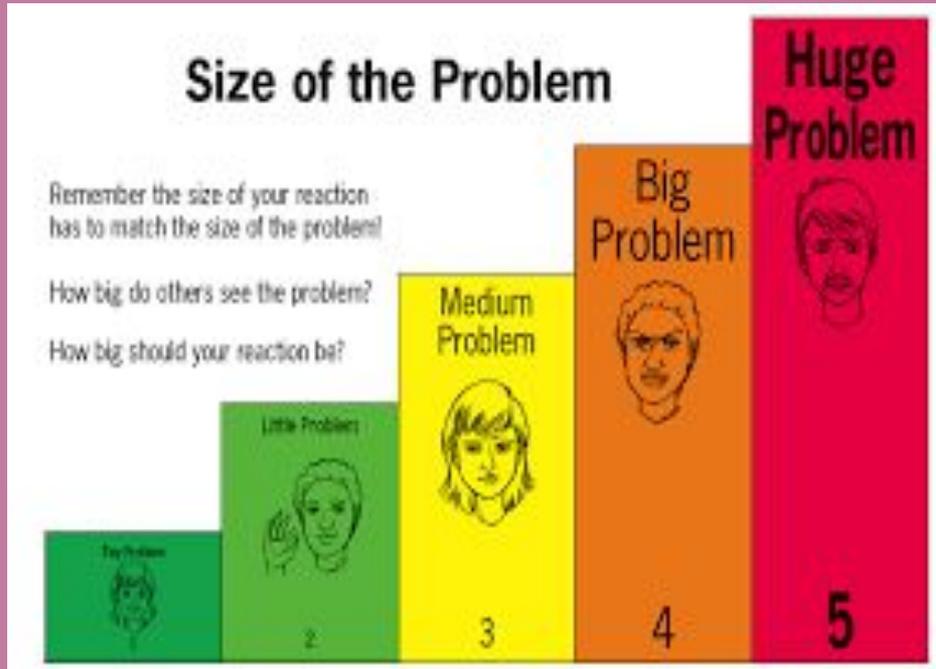
<https://youtu.be/nz27Y0H6sS8?t=10>

Problem Solving

Need: *self-regulation, impulse control, flexible thinking, and perspective taking*

Zones of Regulation help identify the size of the problem: Is it small, medium, or **big**?

Emotions and reactions should match the size of the problem (How long will it take to fix; how much help do we need?)



We need our toolbox to:

- Identify the problem
- Recognize and control emotions
- Identify various solutions
- Evaluate solutions; choose best one
- Reflect and try again if we have to



Hidden Rules of Communication

Rules will vary across cultures, age, gender, and who you're with

- Rules Change with Age - what was appropriate in elementary is not in MS/HS
- If these unstated rules or customs are not learned automatically through social intuition, they need to be taught through direct instruction
- Expected vs. Unexpected Behaviors involving:
 - Proxemics (maintaining appropriate distance from a conversational partner)
 - Body Language
 - Posture
 - Gestures
 - Facial Expression
 - Tone of Voice (should match the verbal or emotional content of the message)
- Impacts home life, school, community, the workplace, and legal system

Each Situation has Hidden Rules

A situation is a specific event happening within a more general ENVIRONMENT

Have difficulty generalizing rules to a variety of settings

- Elevator
- Find a table
- Waiting on line
- Using Utensils
- Eating your own food
- Paying
- Entering a room
- Commentary
- Sitting
- Good Manners

Friendship Management

- Contingent upon appropriate use of Pragmatic Skills
 - Conversation Skills
 - Perspective Taking
 - Empathy
 - Accurately interpreting the intended message
 - Tone
 - Hygiene
 - Making Plans

SOFT SKILLS

- As we prepare Middle School and High School students for the workplace a set of “soft skills” are critical for future workplace success
- These skills are non-technical but employable skills - sometimes called “**people skills**” that help people secure and keep a job:

Professionalism

Teamwork

Positive Attitude

Communication

Problem Solving Skills

Critical Thinking

Networking

Hygiene

Politeness

Soft Skills Continued:

- In repeated surveys, employers state that they **value “soft skills” much more than academic skills**
 - When these skills are lacking - job performance and longevity at jobs suffer
 - SLP’s want to facilitate the development of soft skills while a student is still in a supportive academic environment
 - Including Interviewing Skills
 - Development of IEP transition plans and direct work with student to foster future success in the workplace

Family: What Can We Do?

- **Play is always the way!**
 - Learning how to interact appropriately with their peers through play is fun and rewarding. Practice the skills before turning to peers (Taking turns, initiating conversations, helping one another, requesting, stating, topic maintenance, short structured play-dates)
- **Nonverbal Cues**
 - Practice smiling, frowning, rolling your eyes, looking away, etc. and have your child tell you what that means.
- **Model it**
 - Children learn through models. Show them what is an appropriate way of entering a conversation, asking questions, contributing information with some of your friends or family members.
- **Food**
 - Cooking and eating are enjoyable activities for stimulating learning

Now that our students are older....

- Create Experiences

- Community - let them observe ALL types of interactions
- Opportunity to practice in a natural environment
- Aiming to empower student to gain and use learned pragmatic skills
- *Do together: Watching TV, Doing Chores*

- Model Appropriate Pragmatic skills

- Start in home - learn from interactions they observe
- Social Skills are contagious

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgRoiTWkBHU>

Takeaways

- Important skill to have to function in society
 - whether that be school, socially or to get a job
- Develops on individual basis - not every skill is mastered at once
- Experience as much as possible
 - learn from all interactions throughout the day - none too small or too big
- Encourage safe Social Media practices
 - All kids struggle, and some may need additional support and monitoring to stay safe and make appropriate choices
- Family Rating Scale as a Guideline for Home Use