

Bringing Your “A” Game:
Strategies to Support Students
with Autism
Communication Strategies

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Outcomes for this Session

- Have a basic understanding of the challenges related to communication and language development in children and teens on the autism spectrum.
- Be aware of evidence-based interventions that have proven useful in improving effective language and communication skills for children and teens on the autism spectrum.
- Learn some strategies for promoting effective communication between children and teens with autism and their neuro-typical peers, friends and family.
- Be aware of resources that can provide more information and support regarding enhancing language development and communication for children and teens on the autism spectrum.

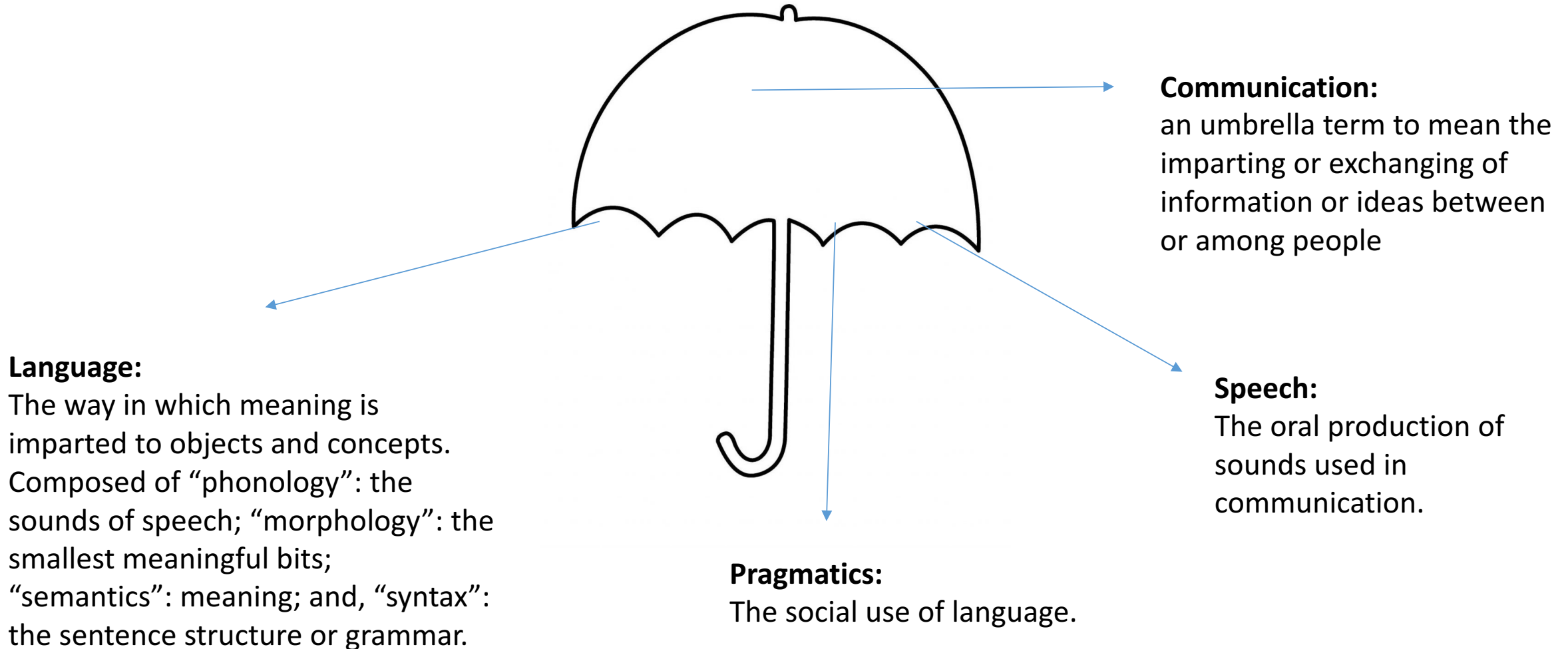
AGENDA

- Definitions of Communication, Speech, Language and Pragmatics
- Other dimensions of communication: receptive and expressive; verbal and non-verbal
- Other variables that effect communication: echolalia, audience, social anxiety and motivation
- Strategies for supporting communication across the spectrum and across ages
- Resources

Definitions

- By definition, Autism Spectrum Disorder includes challenges related to social communication.

Communication, Speech, Language and Pragmatics



Expressive Communication and Receptive Communication

- Expressive Communication: Sending a message.
- Receptive Communication: Understanding a message.

Verbal and Non-verbal Communication

- Verbal Communication:
- When messages or information is exchanged or communicated through words or writing. Verbal communication may take place through face-to-face conversations, group discussions, counseling, interview, radio, television, calls, memos, letters, reports, notes, email etc.

Non-verbal communication

- Non-verbal Communication
- Includes gestures, voice (tone and volume), facial expressions, eye contact, space (how close to stand to someone when speaking with them), touch and body positions (known as “body language”), as well as unspoken understandings and presuppositions, and cultural and environmental conditions that may affect any encounter between people.
- Imparts much of the meaning (66%-90%)

Other variables that effect communication

- Echolalia, audience, social anxiety and motivation (to name a few)

Echolalia

- The repetition of words or phrases, these may be immediate or delayed and involve repetition of words or phrases from conversations involving the child, conversations the child hears, from television or videos, etc
- Once thought to be problematic, now thought to be a potentially functional pathway to communication

Audience

- Knowing how you are talking to (i.e., peers, adults, professionals)

Social Anxiety

- Social anxiety is the fear of social situations that involve interaction with other people. Social anxiety is the fear and anxiety of being negatively judged and evaluated by other people. It is a pervasive disorder and causes anxiety and fear in most all areas of a person's life. It is chronic because it does not go away on its own.
- 28% of those with ASD also meet the clinical criteria for social anxiety.

Motivation

- The desire (not the skill to communicate).

Strategies

- Expressive—beginning communicators
- Most if not all behavior is considered communicative. When the same behavior, sound or word is repeated in the same context, through convention, meaning is developed.
- Some children with ASD begin to speak on their own; others don't

A comparison of strategies for children not developing functional speech on their own

Sign (SEE sign or ASL)	Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)	Mobile Technology (Proloquo2go)
<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always available • People like it • Some data to support it (Total Communication) • Low cost <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many signs are poorly articulated • Communicative partner(s) need to learn sign • Must engage a communicative partner 	<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaches pro-social skills often absent in children diagnosed with ASD • Easily understood by a variety of communicative partners • Relatively quick acquisition time • Moderate cost <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must make, manage and update symbols • Specialized training involved often with two trainers • If the child doesn't learn to discriminate, cant use the 	<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attractive for users and communicative partner • Quick to update icons • Has a voice output device • Easily grows with the communicator's skills <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized training for programing and teaching • Expensive • Must be charged

Generic Teaching Strategy

- Have something the child wants and show them
- As they show interest in the object, shape or prompt the behavior towards a standard form
- Present the object when the child has used the best form they can
- Repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat

Expressive: requesters

- Once children can make simple requests “I want X” its time to expand communication to multiple forms and longer requests.
- Multiple forms: “I see”, “I hear”
- Longer requests: comments, models and mands (reduce non-authentic questions)

Expressive: partnered communication

Conversation Skills

- Teach Conversational Responses
 - Answer yes/no questions
 - Answer simple questions
 - Respond to a statement with a statement
 - Answer open-ended questions
 - Respond to a statement with a questions
 - Respond to a questions with a brief statement and a question

Starting Conversations

- PATHS
- Prepare ahead—know something about who you are going to talk to—keep the information organized on index cards
- Ask yourself what you are going to say and how you are going to say it—use questions about the past, present, future, person's interests, shared events, seasonal topics...
- Time it right—make sure the person is not busy or in a hurry
- Hello-formal or informal greeting
- Signals (non-verbal clues)—appropriate facial expression, orient body towards person, friendly tone of voice, eye contact

Maintaining Conversations

- Ask questions
- Provide relevant comments

Ending Conversations

- Nonverbal signal that you need to leave—look at watch, look away, etc
- Wait for a pause and excuse self

Receptive:

- Teach listening skills.
- Make sure you have the student's attention before you deliver an instruction or ask a question.
- Consider the student's processing challenges and timing.
- Avoid complex verbal directions, information and discussion. Keep instructions short or give information in chunks.
- Say what to do not what not to do.
- Avoid immediately repeating an instruction.
- Supplement verbal information with pictures, visual schedules, gestures, visual examples, written instructions.

Non-verbal communication

- Drawn, photographed or video examples of emotions
- Role play
- Practice
- Social stories
- Video modeling

Echolalia

- **Immediate:**

- Understand the function (i.e., the meaning for the child)
- Use it to shape a functional response

- **Delayed:**

- If you can determine the source, see if it gives clues for meaning

Audience

- Teach the child the right words for the right context

Social Anxiety

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Teach coping skills
- “Face Your Fears”
 - 1) Encourage and reward your child for his or her effort and engagement in brave behaviors
 - 2) Ignore excessive displays of anxiety
 - 3) Distinguish between realistic and unrealistic fears so that an appropriate treatment direction can be established
 - 4) Convey confidence in the child's ability to handle his or her worry and anxiety
 - 5) Model courageous behaviors
 - 6) Work together with your spouse or partner to develop a plan for facing fears
 - 7) Discuss how to share coping skills and the creation of exposure hierarchies with other professionals so that gains in one setting can be generalized to other settings

Motivation

- Restrictive repertoire
- The reward system and wanting vs. liking
- The Social Motivation theory of autism
- Environmental strategies:
 - Control or withhold access to materials/out of reach/be a gate keeper
 - Interesting items
 - Adapt materials so the child needs help/ closed materials
 - Start and stop the activity
 - Choices
 - Omission of key material/sabatoge
 - Inadequate portions
 - Silly situations

Resources

(this list is not exhaustive and inclusion on this list does not suggest endorsement)

- First hand perspective:
 - Grandin, T. (2006). Thinking In Pictures: My Life with Autism. Vintage Books, New York.
- Resources for Interventions described in this talk:
 - <https://pecsusa.com/pecs/>
 - <https://seecenter.org/>
 - <https://www.nad.org/resources/american-sign-language/>
 - <http://www.orin.com/access/Proloquo2Go/>
 - <https://vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/ebip/environmental-arrangement/>
 - <http://products.brookespublishing.com/Facing-Your-Fears-Facilitators-Set-P144.aspx>
 - <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.890.4042&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- National
 - <http://www.hanen.org/CMSPages/PortalTemplate.aspx?aliaspath=%2fHome>
 - <http://www.nationalautismcenter.org/>
 - <http://fpg.unc.edu/node/2879>
 - <https://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/Autism/>
 - <https://www.ocali.org/center/autism>
 - <https://www.autismspeaks.org/wordpress-tags/communication>
 - <http://www.autism.org.uk/about/communication/communicating.aspx>
 - <https://vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/kidtalk/info-for-professionals/>
- State
 - <https://hsha.wildapricot.org/>
 - <http://www.hawaiiaba.org/>
 - <http://community.cec.sped.org/hi/home>

Thank you!

Contact Us

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