

II. Impairments in Language Skills

A. Impairment in the *pragmatic* use of language. This refers to the inability to use language in a social sense as a way to interact/communicate with other people. It is important to observe the individual's use of language in various settings with various people (especially peers). Since the impairments are in pragmatic language usage

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| <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. Uses conversation to convey facts and information about special interests, rather than to convey thoughts, emotions, or feelings. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Uses language scripts or verbal rituals in conversation, often described as “nonsense talk” by others (scripts may be made up or taken from movies/books/TV). At times, the scripts are subtle and may be difficult to detect. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. Has difficulty initiating, maintaining, and ending conversations with others. E.g.: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | a. Focuses conversations on one narrow topic, with too many details given, or moves from one seemingly unrelated topic to the next. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Once a discussion begins it is as if there is no “stop” button; must complete a predetermined dialogue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | c. Knows how to make a greeting, but has no idea how to continue the conversation; the next comment may be one that is totally irrelevant. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | d. Does not make conversations reciprocal (has great difficulty with the back-and-forth aspect), attempts to control the language exchange, may leave a conversation before it is concluded. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | e. Does not inquire about others when conversing. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Is unsure how to ask for help/make requests/make comments. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | a. Fails to inquire regarding others. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Makes comments that may embarrass others. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | c. Interrupts others. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | d. Engages in obsessive questioning or talking in one area, lacks interest in the topics of others. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | e. Has difficulty maintaining the conversation topic. |
| B. Impairment in the <i>semantic</i> use of language. This refers to understanding the language being used. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. Displays difficulty understanding not only individual words, but conversations and material read. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Displays difficulty with problem solving. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. Displays difficulty analyzing/synthesizing information presented. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | a. Does not ask for the meaning of an unknown word. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Uses words in a peculiar manner. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | c. Is unable to make or understand jokes/teasing. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | d. Creates jokes that make no sense. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | e. Interprets known words on a literal level (concrete thinking). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | f. Has a large vocabulary consisting mainly of nouns and verbs. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | g. Creates own words, using them with great pleasure in social situations. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | h. Has difficulty discriminating between fact and fantasy. |
| C. Impairment in <i>prosody</i>. This refers to the pitch, stress, and rhythm of an individual's voice. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. Rarely varies the pitch, stress, rhythm, or melody of his speech. Does not realize this can convey meaning. |

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| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Has a voice pattern that is often described as robotic or as the “little professor”; in children, the rhythm of speech is more adultlike than childlike. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. Displays difficulty with volume control (too loud or too soft). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Uses the voice of a movie or cartoon character conversationally and is unaware that this is inappropriate. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Has difficulty understanding the meaning conveyed by others when they vary their pitch, rhythm, or tone. |
| D. Impairment in the <i>processing</i> of language. This refers to one’s ability to comprehend what has been said. The Asperger individual has difficulty absorbing, analyzing, and then responding to the information. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. When processing language (which requires multiple channels working together), has difficulty regulating just one channel, difficulty discriminating between relevant and irrelevant information. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Has difficulty shifting from one channel to another; processing is slow and easily interrupted by any environmental stimulation (seen as difficulty with topic maintenance). This will appear as distractibility or inattentiveness. (Note: When looking at focusing issues it is very difficult to determine the motivator. It could be attributed to one or a few of the following reasons: lack of interest, fantasy involvement, anxiety, or processing difficulty.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. Displays a delay when answering questions. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Displays difficulty sustaining attention and is easily distracted (one might be discussing plants and the Asperger individual will ask a question about another country — something said may have triggered this connection or the individual may still be in an earlier conversation). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Displays difficulty as language moves from a literal to a more abstract level (generalization difficulties found in the Asperger population are, in part, due to these processing difficulties). |