## 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

1. Uses conversation to convey facts and information about special interests, rather than to convey thoughts, emotions, or feelings.

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.

3. Has difficulty initiating, maintaining, and ending conversations with others. E.g.:
   - Focuses conversations on one narrow topic, with too many details given, or moves from one seemingly unrelated topic to the next.
   - Once a discussion begins it is as if there is no “stop” button; must complete a predetermined dialogue
   - 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.
   - 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.
   - Does not inquire about others when conversing.

4. Is unsure how to ask for help/make requests/make comments.
   - Fails to inquire regarding others.
   - Makes comments that may embarrass others.
   - Interrupts others.
   - Engages in obsessive questioning or talking in one area, lacks interest in the topics of others.
   - Has difficulty maintaining the conversation topic.

### B. Impairment in the **semantic** use of language. This refers to understanding the language being used.

1. Displays difficulty understanding not only individual words, but conversations and material read.

2. Displays difficulty with problem solving.

3. Displays difficulty analyzing/synthesizing information presented.
   - Does not ask for the meaning of an unknown word.
   - Uses words in a peculiar manner.
   - Is unable to make or understand jokes/teasing.
   - Creates jokes that make no sense.
   - Interprets known words on a literal level (concrete thinking).
   - Has a large vocabulary consisting mainly of nouns and verbs.
   - Creates own words, using them with great pleasure in social situations.
   - Has difficulty discriminating between fact and fantasy.

### C. Impairment in **prosody.** This refers to the pitch, stress, and rhythm of an individual’s voice.

1. Rarely varies the pitch, stress, rhythm, or melody of his speech. Does not realize this can convey meaning.
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<th>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.</th>
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<td>3. Displays difficulty with volume control (too loud or too soft).</td>
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<td>4. Uses the voice of a movie or cartoon character conversationally and is unaware that this is inappropriate.</td>
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<td>5. Has difficulty understanding the meaning conveyed by others when they vary their pitch, rhythm, or tone.</td>
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**D. Impairment in the processing 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.

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<tr>
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<th>1. When processing language (which requires multiple channels working together), has difficulty regulating just one channel, difficulty discriminating between relevant and irrelevant information.</th>
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<td>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.)</td>
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<td>3. Displays a delay when answering questions.</td>
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<td>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).</td>
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<td>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).</td>
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