

Pragmatic Development

as adapted from *The Pragmatics Profile of Everyday Communication Skills in Children*

Birth to 9 months

- Responds to interaction by looking, smiling, and laughing
- Early turn-taking through “peek-a-boo” games
- Early joint attention, first between infant and caregiver followed by inclusion of objects into interaction

9-18 months

- Begins to understand adult’s simple gestures such as pointing
- Child initiates and terminates interactions using non-verbal methods (giving, pointing, vocalizations, moving away from caregiver)
- Limited turn-taking to 1-2 turns

18 months-3 years

- Asserts independence
- Understands early figures of speech (ex. “in a minute” means “to wait”)
- Initiates interactions and gains attention using vocatives (ex. Mommy!)
- Begins using verbal responses in response to others
- When asked, will repair communication breakdowns by repeating or revising original message
- Retells simple stories

3-4 years

- Becomes more able to communicate with strangers
- With peers, talk may alternate between private talk to self and talk to partner
- Can participate in pretend conversations
- Rapid shift in topics noted
- When communication not understood, tends to repeat without modification

4-7 years

- Alters communication to fit needs of listener, including using “polite” language
- Begins to use and understand indirect requests
- Begins to tell and enjoy jokes
- Requests clarification when has not understood
- Takes instruction from peers and responds to their directions
- Learning appropriate timing to join in on others’ conversations

7+ years

- Begins to “make promises,” hypothesize, and describe own and others’ feelings
- Reasons and evaluates
- Expresses abstract ideas and opinions
- Develops use of non-literal language, such as idioms and metaphors
- Begins using sarcasm and irony
- Shows awareness of how intonational cues affect meaning
- Can understand jokes based on play on words