Assessing metapragmatic ability in children with pragmatic language impairments

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Outline

Pragmatic language impairment: definition and description

Metapragmatic ability: definition

Assessment of Metapragmatic Awareness (AMP)

MPA in children with typical language development

MPA in children with pragmatic language impairments
Pragmatic Language Impairment

- Pragmatic Language Impairment
- reasoning
- comprehending and producing narratives
- conversational skills
- awareness of the listener’s thoughts, beliefs and intentions
- over-literal comprehension and use of language
Pragmatic Language Impairment

Specific Language Impairment
- comprehending and producing narratives
- conversational skills
- structural language impairments

Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- reasoning
- comprehending and producing narratives
- conversational skills
- awareness of the listener’s thoughts, beliefs and intentions
- over-literal comprehension and use of language
Metapragmatic awareness (MPA)

- MPA is explicit awareness of the rules that govern talking
- MPA may develop separately from pragmatics (Bernicot, Laval & Chaminaud, 2007; Savich, 1983)
- Studies suggest a developmental shift in MPA around 7 years of age (Axia & Baroni, 1985; Baroni & Axia, 1989)
Assessment of Metapragmatics (AMP)

- Developed in response to a lack of formal MPA assessment in the UK
- Clinically and theoretically motivated
- Pilot version
- Final version
AMP Testing Procedure

- 13 Videos each portraying a different pragmatic error
- Each video acted out by 2 school aged children
- Standard set of MPA questions for each video
- Responses recorded, transcribed and scored
- Total AMP score
# AMP Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MPA Question</th>
<th>Exact question wording</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension check</td>
<td>What were the children talking about?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive MPA</td>
<td>Something went wrong in the conversation. What went wrong?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective MPA</td>
<td>Why is that wrong?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal generalisation of MP rule</td>
<td>What could the boy have done differently?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotion awareness of MP context</td>
<td>The girl feels confused. What made the girl feel confused?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour awareness of MP context</td>
<td>The girl frowned at the boy. What made the girl frown at the boy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social understanding of MP context</td>
<td>What kind of person is the boy?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## AMP scoring scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge Structure</th>
<th>Awareness Level</th>
<th>AMP score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implicit knowledge only</td>
<td>Non-awareness</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary explicitation</td>
<td>Redescription of the pragmatic event</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary explicititation</td>
<td>Awareness of the linguistic marker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary explicititation</td>
<td>Explicit awareness of the pragmatic rule</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Karmiloff-Smith (1986)
Research Participants

- 40 children with typical language development (cwTLD)
- 29 children with pragmatic language impairment (cwPLI)
- 11 children with specific language impairment (cwSLI)
- Age groups: 6-11 years
Results – Total AMP Scores for cwTLD

![Graph showing total AMP scores for different TLD age groups. The scores increase from 6:00-7:11, 8:00-9:11, to 10:00-11:11.]
Results

Total AMP score for children with language impairments

- PLI
- SLI

Total AMP score (max 234)
Results

- Clinical groups differed in
  - Age (cwPLI>cwSLI)
  - Language ability (CELF, TROG & Happe) (cwPLI>cwSLI)

- Correlation analysis
  - No correlation between total AMP and age for either group
  - Significant correlation between total AMP score and
    - CELF Core Language Score for both groups
    - Happe Test for both groups
    - TROG for cwPLI only
Conclusions

- Typical MPA development shows a distinct shift at 7 years
- MPA is impaired in many children with language impairments
- MPA may be a language skill
Next Steps

• Further investigation of the relationship between language ability and MPA in clinical populations

• Investigate the relationship between metapragmatic awareness and pragmatic behaviour in a clinical population?

Analysis of Language Impaired Children’s Conversation
(ALICC, Bishop, Chan, Adams, Hartley & Weir 2000)
AMP website
http://www.psych-sci.manchester.ac.uk/research/groups/neuroscienceandlanguage/chatru/

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