

# SPAU 328

Principles of Evaluation, Diagnosis,  
and Report Writing in ComD

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# Assessment of Language in children



# Approaches to language assessment

- **Psychometric approach** : individuals are ranked according to norms.
- **descriptive approach** it focuses on describing behaviors and comparing past performance to current performance.
- **What should we use ?**





## Language components

1. Semantics
2. Syntactic
3. Morphologic
4. Pragmatic
5. Phonologic



# Cognition and language

- Mental processes for learning, remembering, and using knowledge are essential for normal language acquisition and use.

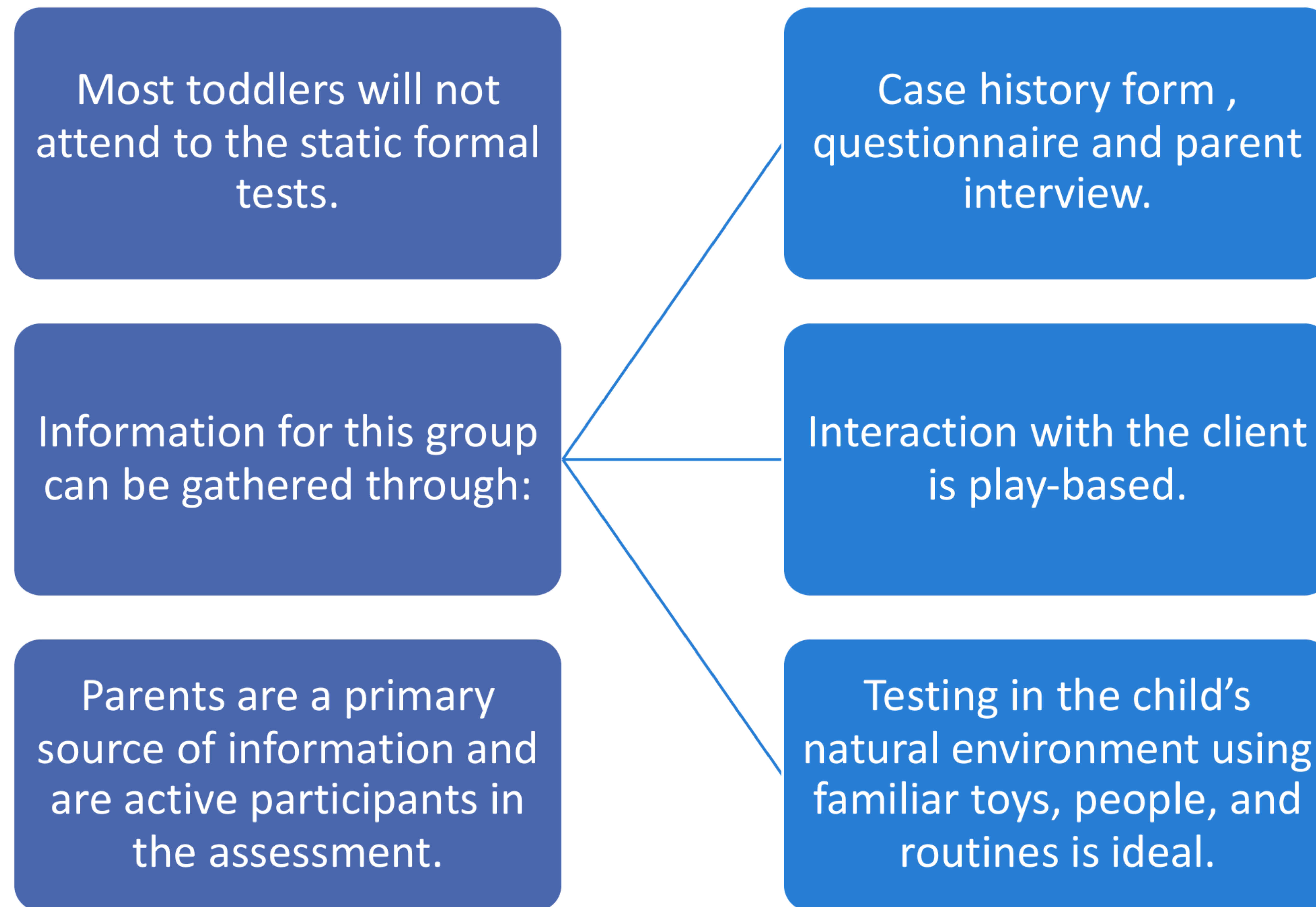


## Language Disorder Categories

- Specific language impairment
- Language-learning disability
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Brain Injury
- Mental Retardation (Intellectual Disability)
- Deafness



# Assessment of early language development infants – preschoolers







# Things to observe/ask parents about

## Non-verbal or pre-verbal child

- Does the child use gestures or signs to communicate?
- Are there non-speech vocalizations?
- Are there meaningful vocalizations?
- How does the child respond to verbal stimulation?
- Does the child use eye contact?
- Does the child use objects and toys appropriately?
- Can the child imitate words?
- Does the child attempt to spontaneously produce words?
- How does the child communicate intent?
- Does the child follow simple commands?
- Can the child point to named objects in a picture book or in the environment?





# Things to observe/ask parents about

**Minimally verbal-child , consider all of the previous questions and also include:**

- Does the child name familiar objects?
- Can the child count or say the alphabet?
- Does the child use any word combinations?
- Does the child use simple grammatical morphemes (e.g., -ing, -s)?
- What is the child's mean length of utterance?
- Does the child understand words and simple phrases?
- Does the child take turns in conversation?



# Things to observe/ask parents about

**For a child that speaks in short phrases, consider all of the above plus the following:**

- Does the child respond to multiple-step commands?
- Does the child use appropriate syntax?
- Does the child use a variety of descriptive and objective words?
- Is the child difficult to understand?
- What phonological processes are noted?
- Does the child demonstrate appropriate back-and-forth communicative exchanges?





# Things to observe/ask parents about

**For a child that is conversational, consider all of the skills previously mentioned and also include the following:**

- Does the child have narrative ability?
- Does the child understand humor?
- Can the child respond to complex commands?

# Also, consider child's behavior

What is the child's temperament?

Is the child easily distracted?

How determined is the child?

What is the child's attention span?

What are the child's coping behaviors?

Does the child seek help when needed?

Does the child visually focus on and track objects of interest?



# Language and cognition

## Important concepts to examine

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Imitation

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Deferred imitation

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Means-end

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Object permanence

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Functional use of object

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Symbolic play



# Refer to the books for Table 7-3 (The Six Substages of Piaget’s Sensorimotor Stage of Cognitive Development)

**TABLE 7-2     Piaget’s Stages of Cognitive Development**

Sensorimotor stage (birth–2 years)	Uses senses and motor activities to understand reality Develops concepts or schemes through physical interaction with the environment Initially relies on reflexive actions; eventually gains understanding of volition Imitates behaviors Develops the ability to act in order to achieve a goal (means-end) Develops an understanding of object permanence Develops an ability to play with objects symbolically
Pre-operational stage (2–7 years)	Characterized by egocentrism Focuses on one dimension in problem solving Cannot adopt alternative viewpoints (think from another person’s perspective) Develops an ability to categorize objects through direct comparisons Gradually refines word meanings Cannot reverse events
Concrete operational stage (7–11 years)	Onset of logical operations, although thinking remains concrete Cannot solve abstract or hypothetical problems Develops an ability to consider more than one dimension in problem solving Able to adopt alternative viewpoints Mentally categorizes objects without direct comparisons Can reverse events
Formal operational stage (11–18+ years)	No longer limited to concrete thinking Able to mentally generalize and think abstractly Understands analogies Uses complex forms of language, including metaphors and sarcasm Able to reason flexibly and verbally through complex problems Able to reason through hypothesis testing



# Late talker vs language disorder

What are the red flags for a possible persistent language problems?

What are some indicators that the child will outgrow their language delay?

# Formal language testing

- Things to consider when choosing a formal language test :
  - How old is the client?
  - What are the specific language concerns that need to be evaluated
  - What is the client's ethnic background?
  - How much time is available to administer the test?
  - How well will the client be able to participate in testing?
  - Is an insurance company, employer, or other agency requiring a certain test?



# Informal language assessment

**Informal testing** allows the clinician to assess certain aspects of language more deeply than formal tests, and it provides the opportunity to view a client's functional use of language in natural context.

**Informal tasks** can be **receptively** or **expressively** based

# Example informal tasks

- Ask the child to follow verbal commands.
- Naming and identifying objects
- Naming items from a category, or identify a category when provided
- Examples:
  - Ask the child to describe similarities and differences of objects.
  - Ask the child to describe a picture, recount an event, or tell a short story.
  - Engage in role-playing activities. For example, pretend to serve food at a restaurant; then reverse roles.





# Language Sampling & Analysis

- A **good language sample** may provide the most useful information about :
  - Form of language
  - Understanding of semantic intent
  - Language use
  - Rate of speaking
  - Sequencing



# Assessment of Morphologic Skills

- Give examples activities to of morphology both expressively and receptively?

**TABLE 7-6** Brown's Stages of Language Development

STAGE	AGE	MLU	LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT
I	12–26 mos. (1;0–2;2 yrs)	1.0–2.0	First words. Linear simple sentences.
II	27–30 mos. (2;3–2;6 yrs)	2.0–2.5	Linear simple sentences with emergence of grammatical morphemes.
III	31–34 mos. (2;7–2;10 yrs)	2.5–3.0	Noun phrases and auxiliary verbs. Emergence of different sentence modalities (e.g., questions, negatives, imperatives).
IV	35–40 mos. (2;11–3;4 yrs)	3.0–3.75	Emergence of complex sentences. Embedding of sentence elements.
V	41–46 mos. (3;5–3;10 yrs)	3.75–4.5	Compound sentences.



# Assessment of pragmatics

- Example behaviors to examine:

## Pragmatic Behavior

\_\_\_\_\_ Respond to greetings

\_\_\_\_\_ Make requests

\_\_\_\_\_ Describe events

\_\_\_\_\_ Take turns

\_\_\_\_\_ Follow commands

\_\_\_\_\_ Make eye contact

\_\_\_\_\_ Repeat

\_\_\_\_\_ Attend to tasks

## Sample Activities

Observe the client's response when you say, "Hi! How are you?"

Put your hand out to shake hands.

Ask the client to draw a circle but don't immediately provide a pencil.

Ask "What would you say to your mom if you were in the grocery store and wanted a candy bar?"

Ask the client what he or she did this morning.

Ask the client to tell you about a holiday or a special occasion.

Ask the client to alternately count or recite the alphabet with you (e.g., you say *a*, client says *b*, you say *c*, client says *d*).

Take turns telling one to two lines of *The Three Bears* or another children's story.

Ask the client to turn his or her paper over and draw a happy face or a square.

Say to the client, "Touch your ears, then clap your hands twice."

Consider whether the client has maintained normal eye contact during other parts of this assessment.

Ask the client to tell you his or her address or phone number.

Ask the client to repeat the following sentences:

Michael is 7 years old.

The oven door was open.

She got a new book for her birthday.

Consider how the client has attended to this assessment.

Ask the client to describe a picture you provide.



# Assessment of Semantic Skills

When assessing semantic skills, note the following:

- Number of different words
- Unusual use of words
- Over-generalizations
- Under-generalizations
- Frequent use of empty words such as thing or that
- Word-finding problems, such as circumlocutions, repetitions, and frequent pauses
- Types of words (e.g., function, prepositions, negatives, descriptive)
- Difficulty with word comprehension
- Difficulty with sentence comprehension
- Poor understanding of nonliteral forms (e.g., jokes)



# Assessment of Syntactic Skills

- We should examine the class of words, type of phrases, and complexity of sentence structures the child is using.

Children with language impairments are likely to demonstrate:

- Simple, less elaborate noun phrases
- Shorter utterances
- Limited range of sentence types
- Overreliance on the S-V-O sentence structure
- Lack of sentence complexity
- Confusion with pronoun references
- Misinterpretations of passive sentences

# Making a diagnosis

## A child with language disorder will show:

- Delayed onset of language
- Limited amount of language
- Deficiencies in syntactic, semantic, and morphologic components
- Deficient cognitive skills
- Academic problems
- Limited language comprehension
- Poor listening skills
- Limited conversational skills
- Limited ability to narrate experiences
- A general inappropriate use of language