

# Pragmatics

## **What is it?**

Pragmatic language refers to how a child uses his or her communication skills to interact with others.

## **What are the symptoms?**

Symptoms include difficulties with social interaction skills, such as the following:

- Nonverbal language, including facial expression, eye gaze and gestures
- Topic maintenance
- Initiation of speech
- Requesting
- Relating experiences
- Answering and asking questions
- Turn taking
- Greetings

## **How is it treated?**

Pragmatic therapy, by a speech pathologist, is an approach to language intervention. For children with language disorders of all ages, manipulation of the environment, especially in play situations, is important to a successful treatment. A variety of activities will be used to reinforce interactive language skills. It is in manipulating the environment that “the clinician can encourage the learning of effective communicative strategies”(Friel-Patti & Lougeay-Mottinger, 1985). In addition to concentrating on play as a therapy context, capitalizing on scripts and routines in both the home and classroom encourages generalization. When a clinician incorporates naturally occurring scripts into language therapy, sensitivity is shown to each child’s preferences, she shows sensitivity to the individual client, his preferences, home-life, culture and ethnicity. With a speech pathologist’s direction, parents play a critical role in the pragmatic language intervention program.