

Communication Skills Assessment

John Smith

Prepared for whoever wants it
Assessor: Roger C. Williams

Filename:

Test Instrument

The Communication Skills Assessment assesses an individual's relative strengths and weaknesses across a spectrum of communication modalities. It is designed to identify individual strengths, weaknesses and assist in identifying communication strategies. The test is structured so to permit those with severe language deficits to demonstrate skills, thus the definition of competence does not necessarily reflect a high degree of fluency or skill. It does not allow for meaningful comparisons between individuals, nor does it compare one individual to a group norm. Attempts to interpret scores in these ways represent invalid applications of this instrument.

Referral Information:

Mr. Smith was referred for the Communication Skills Assessment by Susie Smith Regional Counselor for the Deaf in the Local Area who was requesting assistance in completing an evaluation of the client. This evaluation was completed for the purpose of assisting the other agency involved in meeting Mr. Smith's communication needs. The CSI was given at the offices of the Mental Health Center, a location familiar to Mr. Smith.

Background Information:

Mr. Smith is a 21 year old African-American deaf male. He has a profound sensori-neural hearing loss of unknown etiology with unknown onset, although presumed at an early age. He is mildly mentally retarded and has some motor impairment. He has a mild vision impairment, corrected with glasses. He is single and lives at a Community Training Home (CTH) in the local area. He has a limited support system with infrequent contact with his mother and grandparents. Client is not currently employed. He communicates with his caretakers using a combination of gestures and speech. From client and caretaker's report, none of the staff or his family have sign language skills and he does not use sign language with them as "they would not understand". Client has very limited contact with his biological father who has no sign language skills.

Mr. Smith attended the School for the Deaf from approximately age eleven until completion at age 20. He attended a special at the school and received a Certificate of Attendance. Since completing his education, he has not been around persons fluent in ASL.

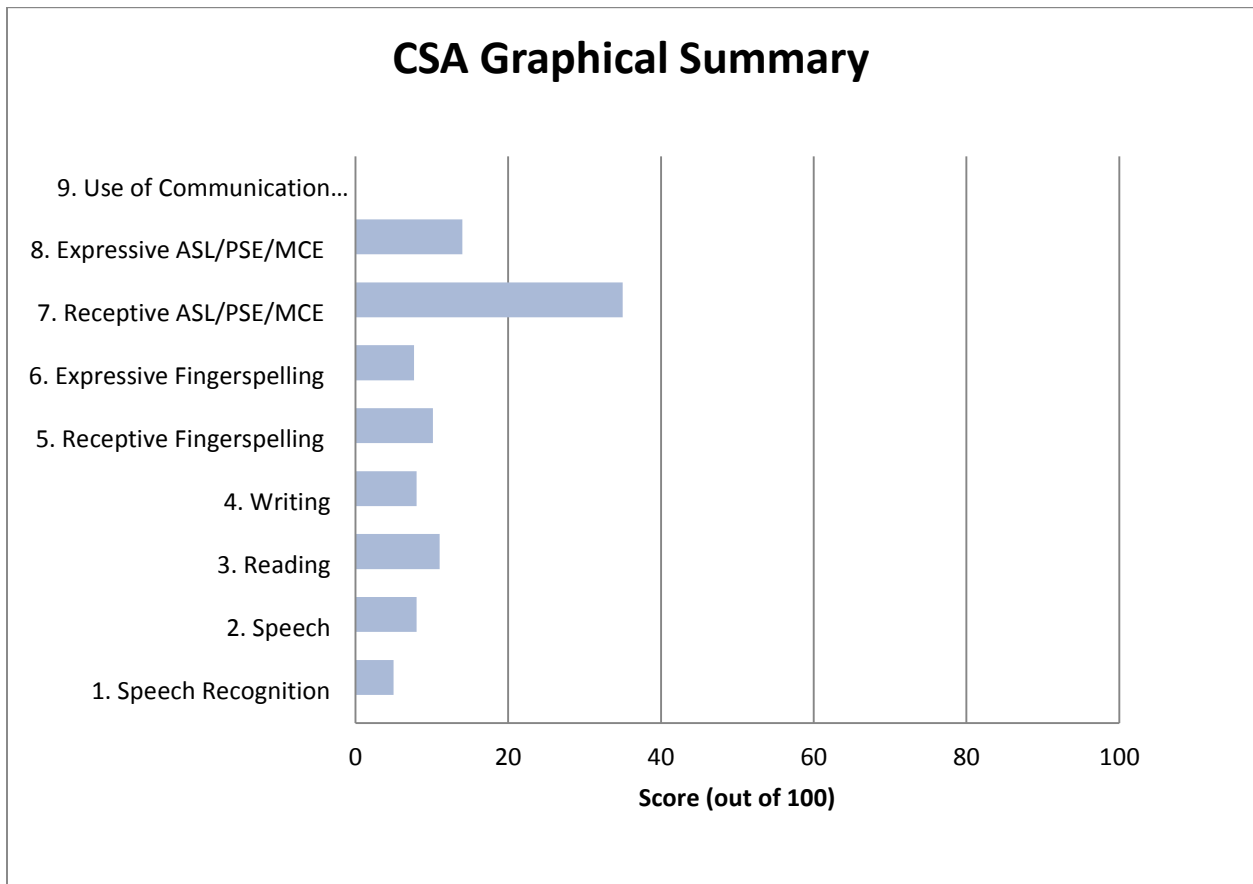
Mr. Smith has used an interpreter in the recent past, although he does not know the sign for "interpreter". He did not seem to understand the role of the interpreter nor does he know how to arrange for an interpreter. He has a closed captioning device on his television at the CTH, although states he cannot read the words. He does not have access to a TTY or to visual alerts for telephone, doorbell or fire alarm. He has used a hearing aid in the past although he does not wear one at present, reporting that it was lost when he and his mother moved approximately one year ago.

Testing Administration

Mr. Smith was interviewed at the offices of the Mental Health Center. Present for the interview were the client, Roger Williams, another examiner and a representative from the Special Needs Board. The initial interviews and testing instructions were conducted using speech and basic American Sign Language. Client was cooperative with the process, even when the tasks were difficult. He had difficulty understanding some instructions and it was necessary to repeat instructions at times. He appeared to enjoy the interaction with the assessor. He was not able to provide much of the background information as he did not know the answers to many of the questions. Background information was provided by his counselor. Overall, his performance is thought to be a good representation of his receptive and expressive communication abilities.

Testing Results

Scoring Grid



Discussion:

This client has significant communication deficits across the communication spectrum. The combination of limited sign language skills, deafness and motor impairment result in a situation where no one communication modality stands out in comparison to the others. He performed best in receptive skills using American Sign Language. This was also his strongest area expressively, although not significantly better than his expressive speech or writing. He has virtually no receptive speech skills being unable to accurately identify single words or simple sentences. He can read simple words but is not able to understand sentence structure or grammar. He will identify the one word in a sentence he understands and then makes a decision as to the meaning of the sentence based on that one word.

He has very basic expressive speech skills and can pronounce single words and will frequently be understood by a speaker who is familiar with him. His expressive writing skills are in the single word range. As with his speech and reading he can only write single simple words with no sentence structure or grammar.

His sign language receptive skills were his strongest area. He can understand simple sentences although still looks for key word associations rather than assessing the sentence as a whole. He had poor fingerspelling skills both expressively and receptively suggesting that he has difficulty with the speed and memory task requirements of fingerspelling production as he was not able to understand fingerspelled words which he could read on paper and could himself fingerspell. His sign language expressive skills are affected by his motor impairment, although no information was available to this examiner as to the nature and extent of this impairment. This makes it difficult for someone not familiar with Mr. Smith to understand him and he will use his speech as a way to compensate when he cannot produce or does not know a specific sign. He was able to answer questions given to him using American Sign Language which was the only modality where he was able to respond to questions with any consistency.

The signs he did produce were not produced clearly nor did he use ASL classifiers or grammatical markers. His facial expression reflected emotion but did not reflect topic markers, ASL grammar or sentence structure. He was able to stay on topic and provide some limited details.

He cooperated throughout the interview but did not seem to understand that he is difficult to understand. He would frequently make a sign or say a word which, if not understood, he would repeat with no effort to use other communication strategies.

Conclusions:

Mr. Smith is a 21 year old Africa-American deaf male, with a profound hearing loss. He is mildly mentally retarded and has an unknown motor impairment. He displayed significant communication deficits across the spectrum of communication choices. His

strongest communication domain was in the manual communication arena with some basic expressive speech and writing skills.

At present, he does not have sufficient communication skills in any domain for daily living and safety. This needs to be the immediate focus of intervention and an essential part of any Life Plan. Mr. Smith's communications skills will require considerable and enduring effort on the part of all persons in his environment. The best language instruction does not occur in directed one-to-one classroom instruction but in natural language environments where Mr. Smith can have access to other people using language for daily communication. Mr. Smith's frustration with inability to communicate with those in his environment plays a significant role in his acting out and aggressive behavior.

Mr. Smith has some familiarity with assistive devices and using an interpreter.

Recommendations:

1. That Mr. Smith have access to manual communication for a minimum of 8 hours a day.
 - a. Staff working with Mr. Smith should receive training in ASL and have access to interpreter services until their skills are sufficient for fluent communication.
 - b. Mr. Smith should have social opportunities within the deaf community where he could observe others using sign language for social interaction.
2. That visual alarms for fire, doorbell and telephone and a TTY be available at his home.
3. That instructions given to this client be presented in a manual form with accompanying written or visual reminders and instructions.
4. Mr. Smith would benefit from additional instruction in written English, both reading and writing.
5. Mr. Smith would benefit from a PT/OT assessment, if not already done, to determine extent of his motor impairment and to determine if there are any remedial exercises or activity which would be appropriate.

I appreciated the opportunity to assess Mr. Smith. If I can be of additional assistance, please do not hesitate to ask.

Submitted by:

Roger C. Williams, LMSW, CT