

## Genres of Social Stories: Some Linguistic Pragmatics of Pragmatic Texts

Social stories have been used for several decades as a means to help people with pragmatic disorders understand the pragmatics of interpersonal interactions. However, research has shown unreliable results from the use of social stories, to the extent that no improvement can be said to have occurred (Watts, 2008; Sansosti and Powell-Smith, 2006). What has not been investigated are the linguistic pragmatics in social stories, and how those pragmatics might affect the interactions that both researchers and patients have when using the stories. In this study, I analyze patterns in linguistic pragmatics in a set of social stories that are available online and suggest that there are four main genres of social stories. The genres arise from the logical possibilities of level of control (mandatory/optional) and level of individuality (interactive/solitary). There are thus four logical possibilities: 1. Mandatory-interactive (visits to dentists, receiving vaccines); 2. Optional-interactive (attending birthday parties, initiating conversations); 3. Mandatory-solitary (experiencing puberty); and 4. Optional-solitary: (brushing teeth). The linguistic pragmatics that underlie each of these genres supports the existence of separate genres in which it is possible that different types of pragmatic information are included without overt explanation, such as cultural information, assumptions about the desirability or benefits of social interaction, and assumptions about the criteria that must be met in order to be a fully functional member of society. In addition, it is possible that pragmatic information conveyed through images or prosody are not effectively explained when using the social stories, which can add a layer of pragmatic complexity that people with pragmatic disorders might not understand without direct explanation; such complexities could underlie the greater effectiveness of social stories delivered by robots rather than by humans, even in cases in which the robots purportedly have human-like facial expressions and eye contact (Vanderborght et al., 2012). I conclude that using social stories might be appropriate and effective, but that therapists and teachers who use social stories must have more knowledge of the linguistic pragmatics involved in order to choose the most relevant stories and to teach the stories effectively and to evaluate the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of the stories. In addition, there must be additional research conducted in order to determine whether unstated information, such as implicatures, needs to be made overt at a level that is not available in any of the genres of social stories.

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