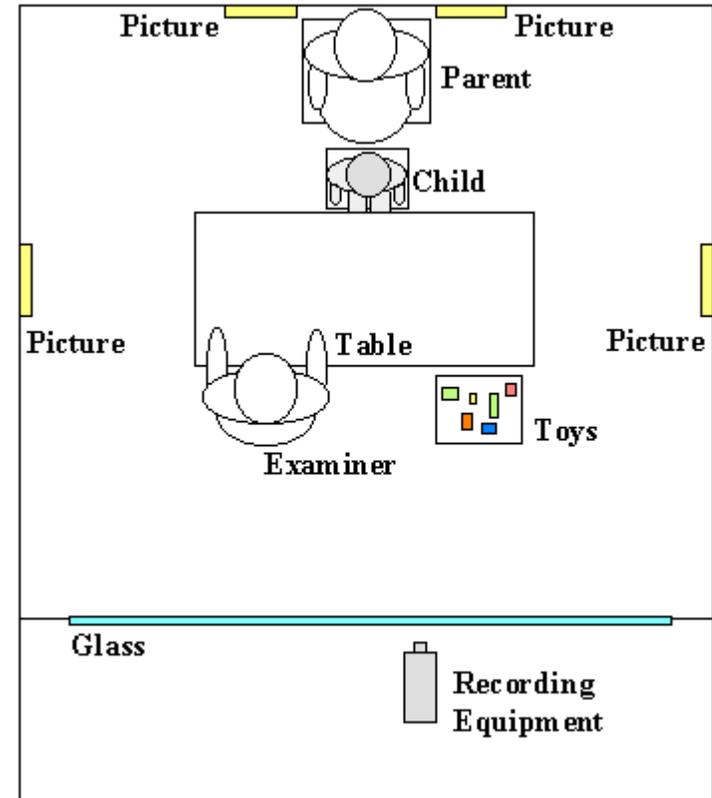


The position of the child, adult, toys, and camera are critical to reliably coding the ESCS. The child will need to be seated in the Tripp Trapp Chair throughout the procedure, if at all possible.

An acceptable room arrangement and positioning during the ESCS:



If the child will not stay seated in the Tripp Trapp chair for the assessment, they may sit on the parent's lap as close to the table as possible (and as far forward on the parent's lap as they can be) with the parent being as unobtrusive to the assessment as possible.

The following instructions must be shared with the parent prior to beginning the ESCS:

“We want to see how (Child's name) communicates with someone other than her/his parent during a number of different tasks. Please try not to initiate communication, games or responses from (Child's name). If (Child's name) hands you a toy, take it but please set it back on the table. Please do not direct your child to hand it back. We can talk about your questions and comments after the procedure is completed.”

The child's attention to the adult that is the result of actions done by the examiner cannot be coded as components of communication acts. Communication acts often require coordinated gaze shift WITHOUT the adult bringing the child's attention to the adult's face with an object or movement. Therefore during all trials, it is important to keep the objects

away from your face when waiting for the child to communicate as well as attempting to make comments, noises and movements that would draw the child's attention to your face.

I. GENERAL ADMINISTRATION GUIDELINES

During ESCS administration, the tester performs a variety of tasks with natural but minimized verbal interaction with the child. A reduction in tester verbalization allows for clearer differentiation of communicative bids that are initiated by the child. The tester should feel free to speak to and interact with the child during transitions in the testing procedure (e.g., while activating an object, while selecting a new object) but should keep verbal interaction to a minimum during actual task administration.

The tester presents a variety of objects and tasks to the child that have been designed to elicit social and communicative bids with the tester as well as to respond to the tester's social and communicative bids.

Specific task situations are presented in the ESCS and there is a recommended order of task presentation (see below). **However, it is most important to keep in mind that a valid and optimal assessment of social communication skill development is dependent on the responsiveness of the tester to the communicative bids of the child.**

Throughout the testing session, only one toy should be present on the table at a time.

In the course of the administration, the tester should be ready to put aside his or her own order of task presentation to follow the lead of the child. This is especially important in the first half (ten minutes) of testing, while rapport is being built. In the second half of testing, the need to present the remainder of all items may lead the tester to redirect the child more persistently and quickly back to the remaining items requiring presentation, while maintaining a responsive testing posture.

Throughout the specific task guidelines provided below, inter-task or task presentation interval estimates are provided. The tester **should not** attempt to rigidly adhere to these time estimates using a watch or clock. Rather, the tester should simply use a silent time count (e.g., sub vocalizing "one second, two seconds, three seconds") to approximate times. After numerous ESCS presentations, this will allow the tester to develop the appropriate sense of pacing for all tasks. Strict measurement of times of presentation would likely interfere with the validity of the social interactive nature of ESCS presentation. For example, some children may be particularly hesitant or "shy" in interaction with unfamiliar adults; we have seen this type of behavior in children with and without developmental delays. In such circumstances, the tester may need to provide slightly longer pauses initially.

II. ITEMS NECESSARY FOR ESCS ADMINISTRATION

4 wind-up mechanical toys (2 toys for the Object Spectacle Tasks and 2 for the Plastic Jar Task; numerous mechanical toys should be purchased as they wear out or break relatively quickly)

3 hand-held mechanical toys (e.g., harmonic top, bumble ball, jack-in-the-box)

Clear plastic jar with screw-on lid (approximately 6 inches tall)

4 colorful posters

Optional Items – Not scorable, for rapport building only:

Hat (Invitation Task)

Ball (approximately 4-6 inches in diameter)

Car (medium-sized plastic car, 4-6 inches long)

III. ADMINISTRATION TASKS

A. Following Commands.

Target behaviors: Responding to Behavioral Requests

Object(s): Any of the objects

Administration: Administered at least once per toy, with a maximum presentation of three times per toy.

The ability of the child to follow the commands of the tester should be assessed at least 8 times throughout the protocol. The child should be given at least 10 seconds of being in possession of the toy before the examiner verbally requests the toy ("Give it to me!") while positioning their hand palm-up and extended towards the child. If the child does not respond, the tester gently retrieves the toy. The examiner may request the toy on only one presentation of the item or on all three presentations, but should not request the object more than three times per toy presentation. The request itself should only be said once before the toy is retrieved by the examiner. The tester should give the child 3 seconds to respond after stating the command.

The tester should be careful to use a clear "command" tone of voice when making these requests (rather than a polite or playful tone). The use of a more directive tone of voice is important to convey the imperative function.

B. Object Spectacle Tasks.

Target behaviors: Initiating Joint Attention; Initiating Behavioral Requests; Responding to Behavioral Requests

Object(s): 2 wind-up mechanical toys and 3 hand-held mechanical toys

Administration: Present each toy 3 times

Two wind-up mechanical toys and three hand-held mechanical toys (harmonic top, bumble ball and jack in the box) are presented. In each presentation the tester activates the toy on the table in front of, but out of reach of the child. Toys should be wound up enough to remain active for at least 6 seconds but not so long that the child loses interest.

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The tester remains silent but attentive to the child while the toy is active to allow the child to initiate joint attention bids vis-à-vis the spectacle. However, if the child initiates a bid (e.g., alternates eye contact between the active object and tester), the tester should provide a natural but brief response (e.g., by smiling and nodding or by saying “mmm hmmm”, or “Yes, I see!”). The child may also make a bid to obtain the toy and the tester should respond to that bid by moving the toy within reach. If the toy ceases and the child has not bid for the toy, the tester should place the toy within reach of the child. The child is then allowed to play with the toy for approximately 10 seconds or until the child gives the toy to the tester.

Each object spectacle, whether it is a wind-up mechanical toy or hand held mechanical toy, is activated and presented to the child three times. If the child shows particular interest in one toy it may be presented up to two additional times; however, no toy should be presented more than **five** times. Only the first three presentations will be scored.

C. Social Interaction Task.

Target behaviors: Initiating & Responding to Social Interaction

Object(s): None

Administration: Twice during session. 3 tickles/touches with each administration.

This task is presented at two different times during testing. Here the tester removes all toys from the table and begins the task by gaining the child’s attention. This can be done by tapping/drumming on the table, calling the child’s name or making a silly/excited noise. The examiner then says “Here comes the tickle bug!” in an excited and playful tone. The examiner will then “crawl” their fingers slowly across the table towards the child, ending in a tickle on the child’s belly/arms while saying “the tickle bug got you!” playfully or something similar. The examiner then returns his/her hands to their side of the table and pauses, attending to the child for at least 5 seconds (after the examiner’s arms are fully retracted and the examiner’s body is still). This allows the child time to initiate a behavior request. After the pause interval, or a child bid, the tester repeats the procedure of running his/her fingers across the table and touching or tickling the child and returning to a resting position, repeating “here comes the tickle bug!”. The minimum amount of tickles will be 3 per trial (tickle, pause, tickle, pause, tickle). If the child requests beyond the 3rd tickle, the examiner may do it again, but it will not be scorable.

D. Gaze Following Task.

Target behaviors: Responding to Joint Attention

Object(s): None

Administration: Twice during session. Points to 4 targets for each administration.

This task is typically presented immediately after the Social Interaction Task to ensure that the child is engaged with the tester at the beginning of the trials. These trials must begin with the tester bringing the child's attention to her face. The child’s attention can usually be directed by calling the child’s name, tapping the table or gently touching the child, and then touching one’s own nose.

The Gaze Following Task involves a sequence of the tester looking and pointing to the posters on the wall while stating: "(child's name), look!" with at least a 3 second pause before saying "look at that!" in an excited tone. The pause is important in order to ensure that developmentally immature children have enough time to process the social information presented to them. The posters are located to the left, right, behind left, and behind right of the child (see room arrangement). The tester attempts to direct the child's attention to each poster in the suggested order of: to the tester's Left, Left-Behind, Right-Behind, Right.

On all trials the tester obtains the child's attention, then turns her entire torso (not just her head and arm) and visually orients to a poster while pointing at it. To reduce the likelihood that arm movement will affect the child's behavior or block the camera's view of the child's face, the tester should always point with the elbow of the pointing arm in contact with his or her side. This forces the tester to display a "short-arm point." For the posters located behind the child, the examiner should lean slightly forward and to the left or right of the child as if he/she sees something interesting directly behind the child. However, the pointing finger of the tester should always be at least two feet in front of the child. Each of the two sets of four pointing trials is presented at different times during the ESCS, one near the midpoint and the other near the end of the assessment.

Following each trial the tester may make a statement related to the target (e.g., "There's Mickey," "Did you see Pooh?") to either acknowledge that the child turned and would have seen the poster or to further engage the child if he or she did not turn. However, the examiner should not immediately make these comments due to scoring guidelines that allows the child to earn credit for following the point even after the second command was given if it was before the examiner comments on the poster.

E. Plastic Jar Task.

Target behaviors: Initiating & Responding to Behavioral Requests

Object(s): Plastic jar and 2 wind-up mechanical toys

Administration: Two presentations of jar

- 1) The tester shows the child a transparent plastic jar with a sealed lid and 2-3 novel wind-up mechanical toys inside. The tester then unscrews the lid and "pours" the toys onto the table, out of the child's reach. Before the child can play with the toys, the tester returns them to the jar and seals the lid sufficiently well to ensure that a small child will not be able to unscrew the lid.
- 2) The tester then gives the jar to the child and waits for approximately 10 seconds, or until the child gives the jar back to the tester. If the child does not give the jar, the tester requests the jar verbally and, if necessary, with a palm up gesture and verbal request. If the child does not respond, the tester gently retrieves the jar.
- 3) The tester then opens the jar and removes one of the wind-up toys. The jar should be set aside near the other toys. The wind-up toy that was removed from the jar should be activated and placed out of reach of the child.

- 4) Once the toy deactivates, the examiner returns it to the jar, seals the lid sufficiently, and again gives the jar to the child.
- 5) The tester waits for approximately 10 seconds, or until the child gives the jar back to the tester. If the child does not give the jar, the tester requests the jar verbally and, if necessary, with a palm up gesture and verbal request. If the child does not respond, the tester gently retrieves the jar.
- 6) Coding stops here for the task, however the tester can open the jar and give the child one of the toys to explore, if desired.

VI. ORDER OF TASK PRESENTATION

While there is a suggested order in which the tasks can be presented, the main goal is to keep the child interested and engaged. Therefore, testers may deviate from this order depending upon the specific requests and interests of the child. For example, if a child voices or gestures a preference for a particular toy upon entering the room, that toy may then be introduced first. The suggested order is based on several considerations. First, one of the mechanical toys should be the first or second toy presented since they are attractive and, thus, typically effective in gaining the child's attention and interest. Pointing, invitation, and tickling tasks may be more effective once rapport has been clearly established (e.g., after other items have been successfully administered). It is also important to vary task demands to keep the child's interest, and to obtain a valid assessment.

POSSIBLE ORDER OF PRESENTATION:

(Optional: Turn-taking task: car or ball)

1. Windup toy #1
2. Bumble ball
3. Tickle game
4. First pointing trial
5. Spinning tops
6. Windup toy #2

(Optional: Invitation task: hat)

--Midpoint--

7. Jack-in-the-box
8. Harmonic top
9. Tickle game
10. Second pointing trial
11. Plastic Jar task with 2 toys

ADDITIONAL PROCEDURAL COMMENTS:

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- 1) All of the wind-up and hand-held toys, except for those present with the plastic jar should be presented at least three times each to the child, so that the child has a chance to respond to them. The examiner may choose to present a toy more than three times if a child requests to see that toy again or is particularly enjoying that item, although none of the toys should be presented more than 5 times. However, all the items of the ESCS need to be presented appropriately within the 15-20 minute testing session.
- 2) If a child does not want to interact with an object, take it away and try it again later. An object can be presented several times in order to achieve a good trial.