Practical Strategies for Implementing Aided Language Stimulation

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With Ideas from Gayle Porter

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It is now clear from clinical experience and research, that children can effectively learn to use their AAC Systems through the use of Aided Language Stimulation.

Aided Language learning opportunities don’t just happen...

The Responsibility Lies with Us!

We Need to Create an Appropriate Aided Language Learning Environment

Become Fluent Yourself!

* Communication partners need to be more fluent in the AAC system than the children they are teaching

* Practice systematically to build fluency

* Start with core words at appropriate language level and then learn patterns of language adding one pattern at a time

What does Competent Communication Look Like?

Long term Goal?

Being able to say what I want to say, to whoever I want to say it to, whenever I want to say it

Gayle Porter
Modeling and expanding for autonomous communication
Keep the long term goal in mind

- Our role is to provide ideas of possibilities (NO fixed agenda)
- Child’s role is to select what they want according to their own agenda (intentions)

Interactions known to support spoken language development

- Rich models of language throughout the day for a range of functions
- Synchronize language to the child’s attention and activities
- Apply these to Aided Language

Synchronize your language to the child’s attention and activities

- Michael Siller and Marian Sigman 2002-04
  1, 10, 16 years

General receptive input?

- What are we saying?
  - Range functions, messages, topics, vocabulary, language structures
  - Conversation
  - Strategic competencies
  - Expansion – recasting

Modeling is Talking not just asking questions

Use Strategic Feedback
Instead of Prompting - Say what the child did or is doing

Focus on Commenting, and Making Statements - Describe What is Going on Around the Child
Any Context, Anytime

Begin with Modeling the Quick Core Words part of a Robust Communication System (Not core words in isolation)

This Helps to Build Partner’s Fluency as they are Learning the system – Once partner fluency is achieved, then model the full range of language

With PODD, (Pragmatic Organization Dynamic Displays) Let the Book/Page-Set Guide You!

• PODD books are selected based upon the child’s language level

• You should be modeling at and just above the child’s level

• Model what you can say, based upon what is efficient and easy to say in this particular book – instead of trying to say every word in your sentence with correct word forms, etc.

Early Language Level
(PODD Early - Expanded Functions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Me, I’ll do it</th>
<th>Help me</th>
<th>I’m done</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Higher Language Level
(PODD Expanded Key Word)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I will do that</th>
<th>I want you to help me, please</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am (past tense) finished with that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What Else Are You modeling?

• Also modeling important concepts such as
  • “Oh I can say that using....”
  • “This is when I could say....”
  • “That’s how I go about taking my turn to say that in this situation”
  • This way of communicating is valued and responded to by others
  • Kid language - what peers would say

Learning to Complain:
Follow this pattern?

Gayle Porter
We often ask children what’s wrong? But that doesn’t help child learn to complain

• Instead of asking: Are you tired?
• Model how they could say it - “Linguistic Map”
• Put word on to what you see
• “Oh you look very tired”
• Can add the word “maybe” - “Maybe something’s wrong, maybe you are tired”

I want vs. Do you want?

• As adults, we don’t often request things of children
• We often say: Do you want a book? (or It is time for a book)
• We have to consciously model the request
• If child doesn’t really want that, they are now on activity page and can request something else
• Also model requests from other people nearby for the child to observe

Learning to Request an Activity: Follow this pattern?

Catch Yourself and Develop a New Habit

• Think of something you would typically say “Do you want ______?”
• Turn it around and say “I want ____ .”
• If Kid is reaching say “Oh I think maybe you want ______.”
What is the Cue to Communicate?

• Because I actually want to say something for a genuine purpose within a natural context?
• Someone said “hit the switch” or the switch suddenly appeared in front of me?
• Because someone asked me a question?

Children Need to Learn to Look for Natural Cues to Communicate?

• Model in natural contexts
• Verbally reference what you are doing to call attention to why you might have said that.
• Pause and give the child time to recognized naturally occurring cues.

Maintain the Pragmatics of the Discourse

• Prompting too much can lead to passivity
• Prompting for communication can disrupt development of recognizing natural cues for communication

“Looks like it’s ready” - “I want some of that!”

“What do you want?” - “I want some of that!”

Same message but the communicative function changed from a request to answering a question

Type of Models

• General receptive input throughout the day - No fixed agenda for what the child says or does

vs

• Mand modeling - expectation that the child will say what you want them to say

Modeling as a prompt or cue

• Another person models a possible “child message/turn” in a natural situation
  - Opportunity, but no expectation that child will produce the modeled message at that time

  Stay above the line

• Model a targeted “child message/turn” in a set-up situation
  - Expectation that child will say that specific message
  - The model is used as part of the prompt to “GET THEM TO SAY IT”

• Mand-model
  - Say “…
  - Child expected to imitate the model

Instead of Prompting, Use Natural Feedback and Expand

• Once the child has finished his message, rephrase the meaning in a complete sentence
• Respond naturally to the child’s message
• Expand upon what the child says, using their communication system.
Receptive input, modeling, expanding

- Whose message is it?
- Is this something the child might want to say?
  - age
  - Gender
  - social role(s)
  - image
  - personality
  - interests
  - etc.

Child's question:

- “Is this something I want, see myself (capable of) doing?”
- Needs to spark their interest
- Interesting possibilities!
- Looks like fun!
- Might help!
- I can do that!
- What a good idea!
- Etc.

Model Child talk

- Adults can re-relate what speaking peers and siblings say

- Helping doll / adult (not partner) uses AAC to provide a direct model of what child may like to say (i.e. they fulfill child’s turn)

- Model the value of AAC

Modeling kid perspective for “I want” instead of “It’s time”

All modeling is not equal!

Respond to the Child’s Message, instead of Rewarding the Act of ‘Talking’

Prompts and cues

- Prompts are always used to support the child to communicate their own message and never used to elicit an externally contrived message
- Does the prompt/cue make communicative/pragmatic sense to the child?
- Does the prompt/cue maintain the integrity of the discourse?
- Does the prompt/cue support the child’s learning to initiate communication?
- Least-to-most prompting hierarchy
Prompts and cues

Least intrusive
- time delay, contextual cue *
- encouraging / expectant pause*
- environmental /gestural cue
- indirect verbal cue * +
- search light cue * +
- direct verbal cue * +
- partner-assisted auditory plus visual scanning* +
- momentary light cue +
- fixed light cue +
- another models response +
- verbal referencing + (?)
- accomplice suggestion +
- physical prompt (providing opportunity to shape
Most intrusive

Who provides the prompt?
- Communication partner can only provide general prompts as they “Can’t ALREADY KNOW” what the child is saying
- Communication Accomplice can provide prompts for the specific message from behind or next to the child
- Teach para-professionals and peers to be Communication Accomplices

Say what the child may be thinking

Linguistic Map –

Observe the child’s behavior and attention, use language to talk about it

Model What is Happening in the Classroom around the child

Give your Opinion

Model to others nearby

Encourage Others to Model

When a child uses an alternative access method,
Model that some of the time,
Model directly – most of the time. Direct modeling teaches the patterns through the book.

Aided Language is just a form of language – with its own set of symbols and rules

Teach Aided Language the same way we teach typical children to speak
Disclosure: Linda J. Burkhart

• Self-Employed
• Paid Consultant and Trainer
• Small Home Business (books and software activities)
• Work with children, families and teams privately
• Volunteer consulting to AT Vendors and product developers

Selected References

The Roads to Autonomous Communication Using Aided Language, Gayle Porter and Linda Burkhart, ISAAC Pre-Conference, Pittsburgh, 2012

Aided Language Stimulation: Research to Practice, Linda Burkhart, Samuel Sennott, Caroline Ramsey Musselwhite, and Joanne Cafiero, ATIA Orlando 2010

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