Supporting Language Development Through Modeling

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Introduction

Penny Tonn, M.S., CCC–SLP
- Clinical Director and Speech Language Pathologist at ABLE Health
  - Private speech/language therapy provider in Pierce and King counties
- Primarily serving children with complex communication disorders such as Autism
- Specialize in teaching communication and language development for individuals with complex communication disorders, including nonspeaking individuals
- Experience in research to better serve culturally and linguistically diverse populations

Communication Considerations for Autism

- Social communication differences
    - Including responding and initiating
    - Difficulty participating in conversations or playing reciprocally
- Differences in nonverbal communicative behaviors
    - Decreased use of gestures
    - Restricted range of facial expressions and facial referencing
    - Unusual prosody, rate, or rhythm of speech
- Differences in understanding and building relationships
    - *Teach children that social interactions are motivating!*
- **Limited use of spoken word**
- **Repetitive verbalizations**
    - Vocal stereotypy
        - Repetitive vocal play
    - **Echolalia, or scripting**

Echolalia
or
Scripting

Echolalia: when a person repeats or mimics words used by others

> This might be words spoken by another person, words from a TV show, or lyrics from a favorite song

1. Immediate echolalia: repeating words right after hearing them
2. Delayed echolalia: repeating words hours, days, or even weeks after hearing them

Echolalia is also referred to as scripting.

Use of echolalia, or scripting, is a language learning tool! It can help kids learn to use scripts to communicate their wants, needs, and ideas!

Different ways kids process and learn language....

Analytic Language Processors

"Word" learners- Tune into <u>single words</u>

1. Use single words
2. Use 2-word combinations
3. Use early grammar in phrases
4. Use first sentences
5. Use more complex sentences and grammar

Develop first words and then begin to combine words to form phrases and sentences

What we hear → Words combined to create sentences

Gestalt Language Processors

"Intonation" learners- tune into the <u>melody</u> of language

1. Use of <u>chunks</u> of language, often echolalic
2. Break apart chunks over time becoming more flexible with putting different chunks together
3. Begin to separate individual words
4. Use grammar in phrases
5. Use grammar in sentences
6. Use more complex sentences and grammar

What we hear → Sentences and phrases created using an intonation similar to the source of the "script" or chunk of language

The chunks of language a child is using are <u>meaningful!</u>

Sometimes adults have to do some "detective" work to understand what the script might mean and even the source of the script.

This detective work will help us model language to increase the phrases and sentences a child uses so the child can learn to break these chunks into smaller pieces, such as 2 word combinations or single words.

An speaking example of "intonation" learning

Situation: Child is looking out the window watching the rain
Child: *"If you jump in muddy puddles, you **must** wear your boots."*
Source: Dialogue from Peppa Pig cartoon
Possible Meaning: It's raining outside

How can we help this child expand?
Child: *"If you jump in muddy puddles, you **must** wear your boots."*
Adult: "Yes, **you must wear your boots** *when it is raining outside. It's fun to play in the rain*."
Child: *"George, let's find some more puddles"*
Adult: "Yes! **Let's go find some more puddles**. *Let's go outside*!"

Process for teaching "intonation learners":
1. Listen to the chunk of language the child is using
2. Become familiar with commonly used scripts and what meaning they hold for the child.
3. Acknowledge what the child says by repeating part or all of the statement back.
4. Provide expansion of what the child says by adding on another meaningful phrase.

The goal for communication development is to expand on how much and how effectively a child can communicate for a variety of purposes through multimodal means.

Spoken word communication *may* be one of these means.

A note on communicators who do not use spoken word....

Not all people communicate through speaking. Many use gestures, sign language, or Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems. The goal is for individuals to be able to communicate their wants, needs, ideas, and experiences. An emphasis on using speech can limit approaches that may benefit overall communication.

Use of AAC can facilitate growth in communication development in all areas, with spoken word being one of these areas.

Model functional chunks of language using AAC to help the communicator learn how to say many different things!

An speaking example of "intonation" learning for someone using AAC

Situation: Child is holding a blanket and approaching the parent while humming the tune to "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star"
Possible Meaning: I'm tired and ready for bed.

How can we help this child expand?
Child: *Humming "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" tune*
Adult: Using AAC, touches *STAR + NIGHT. Says "Little STAR. Yes, it's NIGHT"*
Child: *Looks at parent. Hands the parent the blanket.*
Adult: Using AAC touches I'M TIRED + BED. Says "I'M TIRED. Let's go to BED."

Process for teaching "intonation learners":
1. Notice any repetitive vocalizations, humming of familiar tunes, or repetitive use of an AAC system the child might be learning to communicate with.
2. Do the detective work to understanding what meaning these sounds or AAC buttons hold for the child.
3. Use the AAC system to demonstrate a functional script associated with the vocalizations and behavior you see..
4. Provide expansion of what the child says by adding on another meaningful phrase using AAC.

Summary

1. <u>Listen closely</u> to sounds, scripts, and intonation your child uses.
2. <u>Can you find a meaning</u> behind this vocalization?
3. <u>Acknowledge</u> what the child vocalizes as meaningful.
4. <u>Repeat</u> the vocalization and <u>add on</u> an additional phrase or script relevant to the situation.
5. <u>Keep listening, repeating, and modeling</u> to help your child understand and use language scripts.

Questions?

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