Facilitating Language Development for Your Students in Special Education

By Abbey Steele and Liz Heisler
About us

**Abbey Steele** - I graduated from ISU in 2015 with a LBS I certificate. I have spent my 3 years as a special education teacher working in a life skills setting (mod-severe cog/autism) with students ranging from ages 5-14. I am passionate about working with students with significant disabilities at the middle/high school level, and I will begin working towards my master’s degree in Applied Behavior Analysis this fall.

**Liz Heisler** - I am a Speech-Language Pathologist with a Listening and Spoken Language Graduate Certificate from ISU. I worked at Chicago Public Schools for 2 years in Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing programs, blended early childhood programs, and resource programs in PreK - 8 settings. For the past two years and currently, I work at Henry-Stark Special Education in Kewanee/Geneseo in our Life Skills programs (mod-severe cog/Autism) and cross-categorical programs in K-12 settings.
Outline of Presentation

1. Development of Language/Literacy
2. Ways to provide language-rich opportunities in your classroom during ELA/Language/Reading
3. Ways to provide language-rich opportunities in your classroom during other subjects
4. Ideas to implement
5. Ways we collaborate
6. Questions/Answers
Overview of Language Development

Early expressive language development:
- 12-18 months: Words
- 24 months: Development of verbs
- 27 months: Development of sentences
- 26 months: Tense onset
*Verbs are very important!

Development of receptive language/answering questions:
- 2-3 years: Answer simple who, what, where questions
- 3-4 years: Answer all who, what where, and why questions
- 4-5 years: Answer when questions
*Not all questions are alike!
Promoting Language through AAC

- **Augmentative and Alternative Communication**
  - Low-tech: Core vocabulary boards, Go-Talks, bigMACKS, PECS
    - Voice-output vs. no voice output
  - High tech: Speech-Generating Devices (SGD), NovaChat, iPad with LAMP WFL, Tobii-Dynavox TI15

- **Use of an SGD for minimally verbal school-age children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) as an intervention and/or treatments increased spontaneous expressive language and use of novel utterances compared with the same interventions and/or treatments that did not include use of an SGD (Kasari et al., 2014)**

- **Aided Language Stimulation/Partner Assisted Scanning**
  - Strategy used to encourage use of the AAC system in the classroom
  - Model appropriate language on student’s device to show them how to use it
  - 70% of the time and more modeling of comments than questions
Literacy Development

“The development of literacy skills is one of the most empowering developments in the lives of individuals with significant communication disabilities who require AAC.” (Light & Kent-Walsh, 2003)

- AAC users ARE capable of learning literacy skills, but many haven’t had opportunity to learn
  - Often lack basic literacy skills
  - Often underachieving compared to typically developing peers
  - Often have reduced expectations
  - Require intensive intervention

- Determining when to teach literacy skills
  - Refer to FAQ portion of Penn State’s literacy curriculum
  - Avoid “reading readiness” idea
  - Dylan’s story - always presume competence!
    - Spoken language is not a prerequisite for literacy learning
Importance of Literacy Skills

- **AAC users and students with significant needs will use literacy skills to:**
  - **Access community**
    - Identify community/safety signs
    - Complete job application
    - Read menu
  - **Develop relationships**
    - Send a text or email
    - Access social media
  - **Participate in rec/leisure activities**
    - Browse internet
    - Read book

These are only a few examples. The list is endless!
Where Do I Begin?

- Learning to read is a complex process

- Refer to Penn State’s literacy instruction model
  - Targeted towards and adapted for learners with complex communication needs
  - Instructional procedures, sequence, skills based on recommendations of National Reading Panel

- Provides a multimodal approach to teaching literacy to AAC users and learners with significant needs
  - Language skills
  - Phonological awareness skills
  - Letter-sound correspondence
  - Decoding skills
  - Sight word recognition
  - Reading and understanding simple texts

- Teach 2-4 skills at a time
  - Target skills at top of list (phonological awareness, letter-sound correspondence), and move down (decoding, sight word recognition, shared reading, etc.) as learner begins to acquire skills
Ways to provide language-rich opportunities in your classroom during daily ELA/Language/Literacy
Core Vocabulary

- Core = high frequency words
- Fringe = words that occur infrequently and lack versatility
- 80% of our vocabulary is made up of core vocabulary words as they are consistent and highly predictable
- 20% of our vocabulary is made up of fringe vocabulary (names, toys, food items)
- If we focus on fringe, we get many 1-word responses
  - Fringe words: bubbles, cookie, bear
  - Core words: I want that, more please, can I have that, we need it, it goes in/up
DLM First 40 Core

“The DLM Core Vocabulary Project was initiated to determine the vocabulary that is necessary for students with significant cognitive disabilities to engage, learn, and demonstrate knowledge in an academic environment.” (DLM Professional Learning Team at UNC-Chapel Hill, 2013).

- Recommended for students who use AAC
- Selected from larger core vocabulary set based on usefulness in everyday communication and in addressing DLM Essential Elements
- Alignment to Common Core/Essential Elements
- First 40 list
DLM First 40/Dolch Sight Word Hybrid

- Teachers can cross-reference DLM First 40 Core with Dolch sight words to create hybrid model for literacy instruction
- Generates list of 20 words - use as starting point

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<td>you</td>
<td>he</td>
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<td>is</td>
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</tr>
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<td>open</td>
<td>turn</td>
<td>stop</td>
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**DLM™ Core Vocabulary “First 40”**
Group Language Lessons

**Beginning:** Provide a schedule, start with introductions, greetings/hello song

**Lesson:** Interactive/Adaptive books targeting specific core words

**Activity:** Sensory activity, movement activity, bingo/matching games - all related to book/lesson.

**Ending:** Reinforcement, ending greeting, choice of song
Other Activities

Sensory bins

- Target monthly core words/phrases
  - Examples: open the box, take it out, put it in, I want it
- Reflect monthly/seasonal theme (e.g., bugs, winter, camping)
- Allow students with more significant needs to participate
- Make it age-appropriate!
  - Examples: winter clothing, water (wash/dry or clean/dirty), planting

Cooking Class

- Target prepositions, verbs, and core words
- Allow opportunities for strategies such as, modeling appropriate language, giving choices, sabotage, and/or wait time
- Create script, practice reading, and deliver treats to school staff
DATA, DATA, DATA

- Data starts with goals!
  - Dynamic Assessment Goal Grid by Tobii-Dynavox for our students with significant communication needs.

- Example: Student will transport his/her communication device to all activities in his/her daily schedule with indirect verbal cues with 80% accuracy.

- Example: Using speech generating device, student will use learned sentence constructions (carrier phrases) for creative 2+ word phrases (e.g., “I want/see/have __.”) in structured language activities with indirect verbal cues with 80% accuracy.
**Chain of Cues Example**

- **Situation:** Entering a room
- **Communication Opportunity**
  - **Targeted:** Greeting others (“Hi!”)
- **Natural Cue:** Others saying hello.
- **Indirect Cue:**
  - **Search light** – randomly moving light/pointer over device
  - **Verbal** – “Did you hear what they said?” or “I wonder if there is something you could say back.”
  - **Visual/Gestural** – waving hand or pointing to the people
- **Direct Verbal Cue:** “They said, hello to you.”
- **Direct Pointer/Light Cue:** Showing the location of “Hi!” on the device without activating it.
- **Physical Assistance:** Brief physical help to select the correct button or picture.

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**Chain of Cues**

![Diagram of Chain of Cues]

- **Natural Cue**
- **Indirect Cue**
- **Direct Verbal Cue**
- **Direct Pointer/Light Cue**
- **Physical Assistance**

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*Provide Partner Augmented Input consistently!*
Data, Data, Data continued...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Activity</th>
<th>Level of Independence</th>
<th>Response Time</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Comments/#of words</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>Ques Req Com</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Data (+/-) with Prompt</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>IND</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE/TIME:</th>
<th>ENVIRONMENT (location of use: i.e., classroom, hallway, cafeteria, therapy session, etc.)</th>
<th>ACTIVITY (What was going on? What was the student being asked to do?)</th>
<th>Number of appropriate activations (use tick marks)</th>
<th>Number of total activations (use tick marks)</th>
<th>Types of activations (see codes below) Use tick marks for all activations.</th>
<th>LEVEL OF CUES (see codes below) Use tick marks for all prompts given.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- Always note the type of prompt given when tallying accuracy
- Provide clipboards to staff and have multiple data sheets around the classroom to encourage everyone to take data!
- Qualitative data is always encouraged, as well!
Encouraging use AT ALL TIMES

- Did you know it would take 84 years for a child to be at the same language level as a two-year old using this device only 2x week, 20-30 minutes?
- Device and access needs to be available at all times!
  - Example: bathroom, lunch, recess, music, P.E., art, and at home, too!
- Aided Language Stimulation
  - Accessibility, Message, Attention
- Train and teach support staff, teachers, and students!
Ways to promote language and literacy development in your classroom during non-language activities.
Reading

- Students read targeted and/or mastered words during shared reading activities
- **Scholastic sight word readers**
- Reading A-Z high frequency books
- Unique Learning System/News2You
Predictable Chart Writing

- Supports emergent and conventional writers and readers
- All students have opportunity to participate, be successful, and share own ideas
- Great activity for students who use AAC to use existing and/or targeted vocabulary
- Occurs over 5-day period (your entire week of writing is planned!)
  - Day 1: Write chart
  - Day 2: Reread sentences
  - Day 3: Work with cut-up sentence strips
  - Day 4: Be the sentence
  - Day 5: Make a book
    - TarHeel Reader

- Helpful resource guides
  - UNC webpage
  - Speak for Yourself
Science and Social Studies

- **Answering questions with sentence strips**
- Pre-teaching vocabulary and/or knowing where vocabulary is on certain AAC systems.
- Adapting curriculum to fit AAC/vocabulary needs of the student.
  - Example: Amphibians vs. reptiles, dry vs. wet
- Ask simple wh- questions, instead why or when questions.
Math

- Core vocabulary boards with fringe access to numbers and/or shapes
- Prepositions for math using sentence strips, core boards or any AAC during cooking class, fraction lessons
- Make it a book! Or download one from AAC Language Lab.

Two dogs are dancing.

Two
Calendar/Personal Information

- Access to core board with months, years, days of the week
- **Personal ID cards**
- Low-tech ideas with bigMACKS
  - Access to say ‘hello’ or the name of the student programmed to “My name is ___”
- Access to visual choices
  - Songs, names, good vs. bad
Our implementation program

- Core Words of the Month!
- Large core board posted at front of classroom for modeling
- Related to monthly language group lessons
  - Example: Feelings book from AAC Language Lab and Eggs for holiday
- Examples during your day:
  - **Arrival:** I feel happy to be here! How do you feel? Put it in your locker.
  - **Binders/Work:** Put it on the table. Take it off. Put it in/on.
  - **Snack/Lunch/Fun food Friday:** I feel hungry! He feels happy! Put it in the microwave.
  - **Recess:** Get on the swing. Take it off. Put it on.
  - **Music/P.E.:** I feel sad, I don’t like music. I feel excited, I love P.E.
How We Collaborate

- Teacher supports during group language activities
- SLP works at specific station during instructional centers
- Work jointly to develop IEPs (depending on student, complete Tobii Dynavox Dynamic Assessment Goal Grid)
- Teacher implements language and communication activities/strategies in classroom
  - Monthly core words
  - Language Lab books
- Complete school-wide trainings in general education classrooms
Resources We LOVE!

- Language Acquisition through Motor Planning - LAMP
  - Core Word of the Week
- Illinois Assistive Technology Program - Springfield
- Penn State’s Literacy Instruction website
- UNC’s Center for Literacy and Disability Studies
  - Project Core
  - TarHeel Reader
  - DLM professional development modules
- The Autism Helper
- SpeechRoomNews
- PrAACtical AAC
Questions?

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References


