Assessing and developing communication interventions for pre-verbal toddlers

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Who Are We?
“The question is: who are YOU?”
Evaluation
Assessment Complete

• What do we look for when starting to work with that child?
• Environment and Caregivers role?
• Where do we begin?
What is Social Communication?

• concepts of social reciprocity, social interaction, social skills, communication skills, or language skills.

• For toddlers this is...
Core Social Communication Skills

» eye contact
» joint attention
» turn taking
» gaining attention
» requesting
» rejection
Cognitive Skills

- Object permanence
- Sorting
- Matching
- Classification
Early Classification
Informal Assessment of Language Skills

- Responding to the Environment
- Spontaneous Communication
- Symbolic Understanding
- Function of Communicative Attempts
Responding to the Environment

1. Sounds
   - Are responses appropriate to loud noises, familiar sounds, songs, and names of objects

2. Name
   - Communication partners, context, tone of voice

3. Gestures
   - Unconventional
   - Conventional
Spontaneous Communication

1. Use of Sounds and Words
   ➢ Number of Different Words

2. Use of Signs
   ➢ Imitative and Non-imitative
   ➢ Consistency of use

3. Use of Gestures
   ➢ Convention and Unconventional

4. In what context?
   ➢ CONTEXT is the MOST IMPORTANT
Symbolic Understanding & Use

1. Concrete versus Abstract
   ➢ Objects, pictures, words, signs, gestures

2. Matching and/or correspondence
   ➢ Object to object, object to photograph, object to symbol/referent

3. Sorting
   ➢ Semantic features, categories, locations

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JlwmuexLo
Function of Communicative Attempts

Pragmatic Language or Social Communicative Intent

- Refuse/Reject
- Request (action, object, or person)
- Seek Recurrence
- Choose
- Comment/Share Information
- Command Others Behavior
- Respond to Questions
- Greeting
- Repeating
First Words Project©

16 by 16 series
  ○ Gesture
  ○ Actions

Social Communication Growth Charts
  ○ Handouts
  ○ Videos

https://firstwordsproject.com

Communication Matrix©

- 4 communicative intents: refuse, obtain, social, informative
- 24 communicative functions
- 7 levels of behavior
- 9 communication modalities
- Parent/provider questions

https://www.communicationmatrix.org/

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Visual Supports

• Used to aid comprehension of spoken language, maintain attention
• Used to communicate expectations
• Used to augment or as an alternative form to spoken language

Hodgdon (1995)
Visual Supports to Support Receptive Language
Visuals for Expressive Language

- Gestures rather than signs
- Objects, photographs, or symbols
Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

"Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) includes all forms of communication (other than oral speech) that are used to express thoughts, needs, wants, and ideas. We all use AAC when we make facial expressions or gestures, use symbols or pictures, or write." (ASHA.org)
Who could benefit from AAC?

Anyone!
Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

- Augmentative v. alternative
- Modalities
  - Aided and unaided
- Expressively and receptively
- Communicative functions
- MANY options
  - High tech, mid tech, low tech
Low tech systems
Mid tech systems
High-tech systems
Assessment
Assessment - Trials
Assessment – What are we looking for?

• Communicative Competence (Light, 1989)
  – Operational Competence: skills needed to operate AAC system
    • On/off, charging, navigating
  – Social Competence: social interaction/pragmatics
    • Initiating, maintaining, terminating conversation
  – Linguistic Competence: language skills
    • Recognize symbol sets, reading
  – Strategic Competence: knowing when and how to use adaptive strategies
    • FCT, resolving breakdowns, using multimodal communication
My client is using AAC... Now What?!

• Identify reinforcers
  – Toys, activities, songs
• Environmental modifications
• Limit Access
• Reinforce!!!!
• Aided Language Stimulation/Aided Language Input
• Core AND Fringe Vocabulary
• Parent/caregiver training
• Pair visuals with toys/songs/activities
Environmental Modifications

HUMAN-ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION

HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENT COOPERATE IN WAYS TO AFFECT EACH OTHER
Human/Environment Interaction

- Depend on Environment
- Modify the Environment
- Adapt to Environment
Limit Access

Find what is motivating and engineer the environment!
Reinforce

• Use preferred activities, toys, games, etc. to teach targeted skill
• Be consistent & playful
• HAVE FUN!
Aided Language Stimulation

MODEL, MODEL, MODEL

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lSN318WaJzA

Use language strategies you are familiar with – expansion, extension, recasting, describing, commenting
A Word About Vocabulary

Core versus Fringe?

BOTH are important
Parent/Caregiver Training

• Teach caregivers and daycare providers to:
  – Create environment for success
  – Reinforce desired behavior
  – Create communication opportunities
• Consistency and carryover is important
  – Teach and demonstrate the POWER of communication
AAC Myths and Misconceptions

• AAC is a last resort
• AAC hinders or stops speech development
• Prerequisite skills
  – ‘The Pitfalls of Presumptions’ Katie O’Neil and Rebecca McCarthy
• Speech-generating devices are for children with intact cognition
• Age requirement
Resources

• [http://aackids.psu.edu](http://aackids.psu.edu) – specifically focuses on EI/young children
• [https://praacticalaalac.org/](https://praacticalaalac.org/)
• [https://www.prentrom.com/](https://www.prentrom.com/)
• [http://www.project-core.com/](http://www.project-core.com/)
• [https://www.assistiveware.com](https://www.assistiveware.com)
• [https://coreword.assistiveware.com](https://coreword.assistiveware.com) – you need to create an account for access
• [www.asha.org](http://www.asha.org)
Where to go Next
Communication and Skill Inventory

- Observe
- Take data
  - What is working? What isn't?
- Consider Communication and Language separately
When to seek outside evaluations?
Limited or No Social Communication Skills

- Language Intact
  - Consistent spontaneous, non-imitative use of symbolic language (sign, spoken, picture)

- Limited Social Communication Skills
  - Does no use language for a variety of communicative functions
  - Reduced turn taking
  - Poor Joint Attention
  - Limited response to name
  - Other Red Flags (restricted repetitive behaviors or interfering behaviors)

Refer for NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION
Limited to No Spoken Language

● Social Communication Intact
  ○ Uses symbolic language (sign, pictures) or conventional gestures to serve a variety of pragmatic or communicative functions
  ○ Consistent spontaneous, non-imitative use of symbolic language (sign, spoken, picture)

● Limited Spoken Language Skills
  ○ Limited non-imitative inventory of spoken words/word approximations
  ○ Limited phonetic inventory
  ○ Intact play skills and verbal/non-verbal turn taking
  ○ Good joint attention, response to environmental sounds, and response to others gestures
  ○ No other Red Flags

Refer for SPEECH-LANGUAGE EVALUATION
Not Sure?

Unsure or observed variable delays across domains.

Refer for combined NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL & SPEECH-LANGUAGE EVALUATION
Questions ?
References

Thank You!

Enjoy the rest of the conference