

ENHANCING SOCIAL LANGUAGE SKILLS IN HIGHLY UNINTELLIGIBLE CHILDREN

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WHAT MAKES US GOOD COMMUNICATORS?

- **Being Reciprocal (Mutual Exchange)**
 - Make topic related comments
 - Ask topic related questions
 - Share personal topic related information
- **Sharing Our Stories (Narrative skills)**
 - Tell stories that are logical and sequential
- **Being Social and Interactive**
- **Managing Communicative Breakdowns**
 - Notice when you don't understand
 - Notice when you're not being understood
 - Try to do something to fix it
- **Using Appropriate Tone of Voice and Prosody**
 - Rhythm
 - Intonation
 - Emotion
 - Lexical and Contrastive Stress
- **Use Appropriate Body Language**
 - Eye contact/Body positioning
 - Facial expressions
 - Gestures
 - Personal space
 - Posture

Today, we will primarily be addressing the first three topics above...

WHY ARE HIGHLY UNINTELLIGIBLE CHILDREN AT RISK FOR SOCIAL LANGUAGE CHALLENGES?

1. Lack of early social experiences leads to tendency for adult rather than peer interactions
2. May have accompanying neurological impairments
3. Early communicative attempts may have led to reduced confidence and self-consciousness (Rice et al., 1991).
4. Possible accompanying language impairments (reduced language fluidity and nuance)

GENERAL TIPS FOR REDUCING DIRECT QUESTIONING

- **Comment** to children rather than asking direct questions
“Batman is cool because he doesn’t use any magical powers”
- **Pause** to obtain the child’s interest and attention
“Let’s let Big Bird sit right...”
- Use **appropriate vocal inflections** to “suggest” a response
“I think the *red* car will win.”
- **Muse and wonder** about things
“Hmm...I can’t decide what to name this cat.”
“I wonder what will happen if I put another block on top?”

TWO CONVERSATIONS...

CHILD A

Child arrives – mother whispering to him.

Child – “Hi, Dee Fish. How are you? I’m fine.

Adult – *“Hi Brent. I’m fine, thank you. How was school today?”*

Child – “It was so fun. I want to play the “Cars” movie toys, then go home.”

Adult – *“Let’s go put it on the list.”*

Child – “Are you tired Dee Fish?”

Adult – *“Nope. I feel great! How ‘bout you?”*

Child – “Dad take me to comic book store later.”

Adult – *“Great! I wonder which new comic book you’ll get?”*

Child – “It’s so fun!”

Adult – *“I know you love comic books. Which one will you get?”*

Child – no response

Adult – *“Maybe you’ll buy a Green Lantern comic book.”*

Child – “I want a Sutanon.”

Adult – *“Sutanon. Hmm... I don’t know Sutanon.”*

Child – “Su per man.”

Adult – *“Oh, Superman. Cool! Maybe you’ll bring it in and show it to me.”*

Child – “Are you tired, Dee Fish?”

CHILD B

Adult reading a book...*“When he got home, he would add this to his collection of brightly colored rocks. Collection...are you familiar with that word, collection?”*

Child – “Mmm hmm. Like when you have a lot of the same kind of thing.”

Adult – *“When I was young, I used to have a seashell collection. I don’t even know where it is anymore.”*

Child – “I have a sports card collection.”

Adult – *“My nephew collects sports cards, too.”*

Child – “What kind?”

Adult – *“I think just baseball cards.”*

Child – “That’s my favorite, baseball cards.”

Adult – *“The cool thing is, his uncle used to collect baseball cards when he was a kid, and he didn’t want them anymore, so he gave them all to my nephew.”*

Child – “Cool! Does he have Ernie Banks?”

Adult – *“Yep. And Billy Williams, Don Kessinger, Ron Santo. All the old Cubs”*

Child – “Other teams, too?”

Adult – *“Lots of other teams.”*

Child – “What’s your nephew’s name?”

Adult – *“Dominic.”*

Child – “There’s a guy in my class named Dominic.”

PART 1: THE ART OF CONVERSATION!

EFFECTIVE SOCIAL COMMUNICATION REQUIRES INDIVIDUALS TO:

- Produce *supportive responses* and *comments* to let others know you're *listening* and *interested*
- Ask appropriate questions* to get more information
- Add new information* by connecting their own experiences and thoughts to what has been said

A. PRODUCING SUPPORTIVE RESPONSES AND COMMENTS

Sample Conversation:

Child A – “I got a new transformer for my birthday.”

Child B- “Cool”

Child A – “It’s a robot that turns into a dragon.”

Child B – “Nice”

Child A – “My Aunt Liz gave me this awesome Star Wars Lego set, but my sister wrecked it after I built it.”

Child B – “Too bad man.”

This conversation works because each of Child B’s responses demonstrate that he is...

LISTENING

and

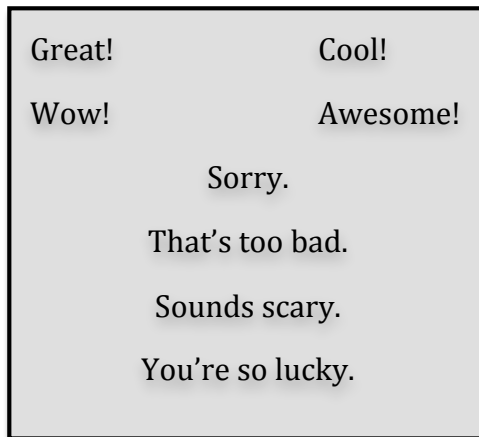
INTERESTED

in what Child A has to say

Child B has learned to make *supportive responses and comments*

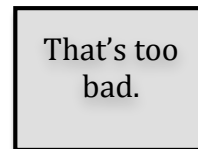
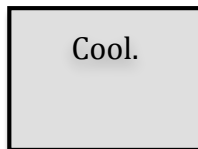
TEACHING CHILDREN TO MAKE SUPPORTIVE RESPONSES AND COMMENTS

- Modeling
Child – “I got a new trophy for soccer.”
Adult – “WOW!! That is so cool!”
- Coaching
Child A – “Look at my new shoes.”
Adult – “Tell _____ ‘Nice shoes.’”
- Reminding
Adult (whispered) – “Be sure to tell your brother, ‘Great game!’”
Child – “Great game, Sam!”
- Discrete practice
 - Comment cue card



- Limited choice comment cue cards

“I got a Wii for my birthday!”



B. ASKING APPROPRIATE QUESTIONS TO OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION

Sample Conversations:

Adult – “I won’t be here next week because I’m going on vacation.”

Child – “*Are you flying on an Airbus or an S-80?*”

Vs.

Adult – “I won’t be here next week because I’m going on vacation.”

Child – “*Where are you going?*”

Adult – “I saw Pink Panther 2 at the movies this weekend.”

Child – “*Why?*”

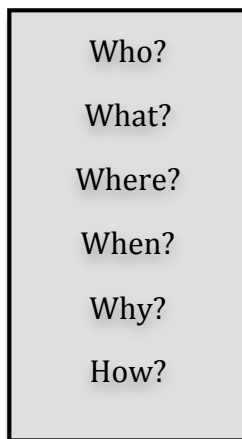
vs.

Adult – “I saw Pink Panther 2 at the movies this weekend.”

Child – “*Did you like it?*”

TEACHING CHILDREN TO ASK APPROPRIATE FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

- Discrete practice
 - Question cue card



- Limited choice question cue cards

“I’m feeling kind of sad today.”



“My sister just moved somewhere far away?”



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- Coaching

Child hands adult a purple game piece.

Adult - "I don't want the purple game piece today."

No response, looks confused.

Adult - "Ask me, 'Why not?'"

Child - "Why not?"

Adult - "I want blue because I'm wearing all blue today."

C. ADDING NEW INFORMATION

Sample Conversation:

Adult - "I saw the movie Pink Panther 2 this weekend."

Child - "*Me too.*"

Adult - "I really liked it."

Child - "*It was funny.*"

Adult - "My son, Michael, wanted to see it, so I took him."

Child - "*I went with Mommy and Daddy and Jason and Sarah.*"

Adult - "I liked the part when Steve Martin dropped all the dishes."

Child - "*I liked when he fell from the chandelier.*"

This conversation works because each of the Child's responses are

CONTINGENT

upon the prior responses

This child has learned to ***add new information*** to what has just been said.

Being **CONTINGENT** requires:

- Careful listening
- Reciprocity
- Flexibility

TEACHING CHILDREN TO MAKE CONTINGENT RESPONSES

- Word Associations – an activity requiring *careful listening, reciprocity, flexibility*

zoo → *monkey* → elephant → *trunk* → car → *HUH?* → drive → truck →
big → little → *ant* → uncle → *HUH?* → man → Superman → *hero*

- Describing
 - Pumpkins
 - Mr. Potato Head
 - Ourselves
- Building or Creating Something Together
 - Legos
 - Block City
 - White Board Pictures
 - Dinosaur Caves

Helping children learn to be contingent by:

- COMMENTING more and QUESTIONING less
 - “Batman is the coolest because he doesn’t have any magical powers. He’s more realistic.”
 - PAUSING to get attention and interest
 - “I think Elmo wants to sit next to . . . Big Bird.”
 - Using appropriate VOCAL INFLECTION on key words
 - “*I* think it’s going to land on *red*.” → *I* think it’s gonna be *blue*”.
 - MUSING and WONDERING about things
 - “Hmm...I cant’ decide what color shoes I want for my Potato Head.”
 - “I wonder what we should name this dog.”
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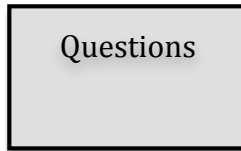
When asking questions of our speech and language impaired children we need to consider:

- What is the purpose or function of the question?
- Do our questions lead to true reciprocity?
- Are we making the child comfortable or uncomfortable?
- Is the child learning how to be “*conversant*” or “*respondent*”?

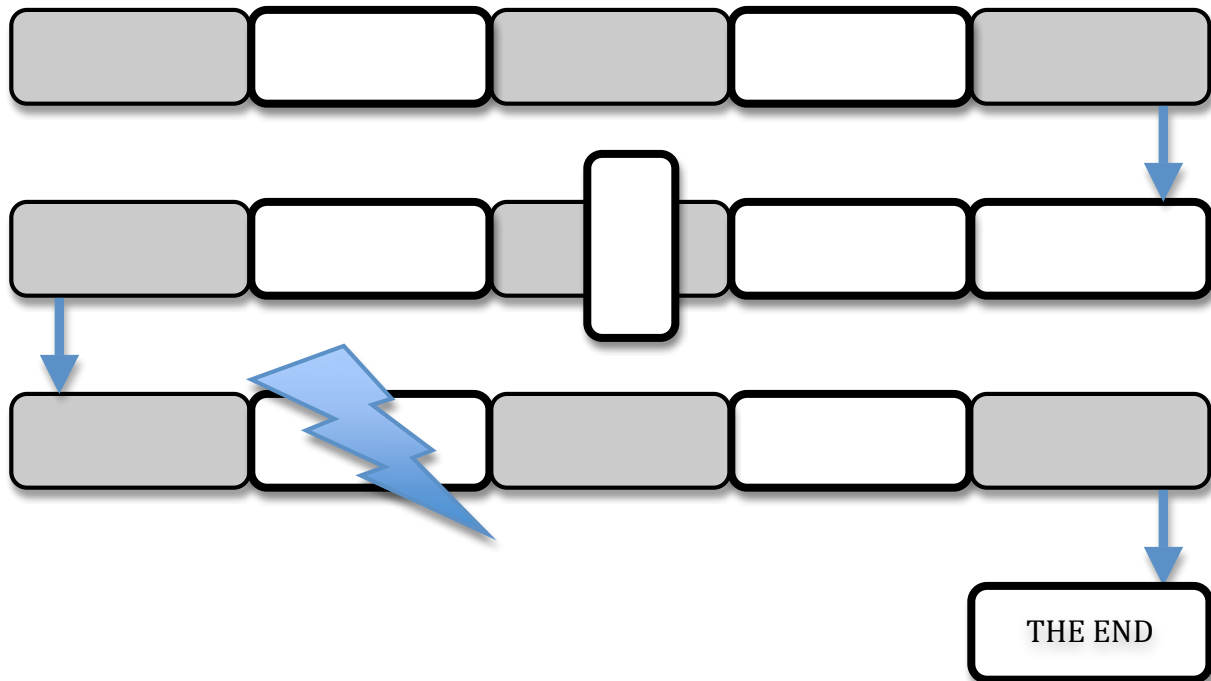
D. **PUTTING ALL THE PIECES TOGETHER**

INTEGRATING THE THREE BASIC CONVERSATION EXTENDERS

- Discrete Practice
 - Cue Cards – Asking Questions, Making Comments, Adding New Information
 - Mark cards each time a conversation extender is used:
 - What type of conversation extender is used predominantly?
 - Who is doing most of the talking?



- Choose a card and add to the conversation in the expected manner.
- The Conversation Train
 - Use colored strips, one color for each person in the conversation
 - Lay strips side-by-side for each conversational turn
 - Incorporate a “talk over” or interruption strip
 - Utilize an “off topic” card
 - Let the child catch you messing up, too!



PART 2: NARRATIVE SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Narrative development allows us to:

- Report about past events
- Tell a sequential story
- Summarize
- Tell interesting stories about ourselves or others

SIX STEPS TO TEACHING NARRATIVES

1. Report about *immediate* past events
2. Report about *recent* past events
3. *Retell stories* with and without visual cues
4. Create *novel* stories with a *partner*
5. Create *novel* stories *independently*
6. Report about more *remote* events

ACTIVITIES TO FACILITATE REPORTING ABOUT *IMMEDIATE* PAST EVENTS

- Simon Says
 - Provides opportunities to learn action words
 - Provides opportunities to work on past tense
 - Follow verbal instructions of varied length and complexity depending upon the skill level of the child
 - Give verbal instructions to others
 - Play with or without visual cues
 - Pictures
 - Written words
- Roll and Play (Discovery Toys)
- Telephone
- Hide n' Seek

ACTIVITIES TO FACILITATE REPORTING ABOUT *RECENT* PAST EVENTS

- Treatment session summary
- Multi-step activity summary
- Describe 'how to' do something (e.g., put together a game, complete a craft project)

ACTIVITIES TO FACILITATE STORY RETELLING

- Sequenced picture stories
- Repetitive line stories
- Retell familiar children's stories or new stories

- Introduce conjunctions to facilitate sequencing of events
- Introduce conjunctions to facilitate improved story cohesion

ACTIVITIES TO FACILITATE NOVEL STORY CREATION WITH A PARTNER

Tag-team stories

- Require careful listening
- Require flexibility

Sample "tag-team" story based on a familiar activity

"Two brothers went to see a movie. The movie was called...

Star Trek...

First they had to ...

Buy some tickets...

Then they wanted some food, so...

They got popcorn and M&Ms and soda...

Next they went in the theatre and...

Sat down in the back row...

The older brother liked the movie, but...

The younger brother didn't like it...

Because it was too scary. After the movie...

They went out for pizza at Barnaby's. THE END"

ACTIVITIES TO FACILITATE INDEPENDENT NOVEL STORY CREATION

- Create stories using pictures and props
- Story with dictation
- Story with pictography (Ukrainetz, 1998)

ACTIVITIES TO FACILITATE REPORTING ABOUT REMOTE EVENTS

- Home-school notebook
- Video clip sharing
- Independent reporting (*Conversation train may be helpful here*)

PART 3: GAMES AND ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE SOCIAL INTERACTION

For children with limited language:

- Simple Board games**
 - Allow for set vocabulary
 - Elicit verbal interactions that are predictable and repetitive
 - Utilize language that can be anticipated and practiced ahead of time
- Dyad or Small Group Activities**
 - Yes/no game
 - Quick hands game
 - Rock/paper/scissors
 - Gesture game (Kids on Stage)
 - Tic-Tac-Toe
 - Cooperative block tower
 - Cooperative potato head
 - Mirror Mirror
- Small or Large Group Activities:**
 - Keep it up (balloons in the air)
 - Act it out pairs
 - Tag
 - Change the action or change the leader game
 - Bingo

For children with more language:

- Showing off your knowledge or passion**
 - Jeopardy - Use columns to support special skills or areas of knowledge
 - Collections
 - Show and Tell
 - Describe something for others to guess
 - Others can ask questions and try to guess
- Barrier Games**
 - Describe how to draw it, build it, make it
 - MagnetTalk from SuperDuper, Inc.
- Cariboo**
- Role play activities**
 - Grocery store
 - Restaurant
 - Mechanic shop; race track
 - Car dealer
 - Doctor
 - Veterinarian
 - School
 - Pet shop

REFERENCES

Rice, M., Sell, M., & Hadley, P. (1991). Social interactions of speech- and language-impaired children. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Research, 34*, 1299-1307.

Ukrainetz, T.A. (1998). Stickwriting stories: A quick and easy narrative notation strategy. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, 29*, 197-207.