Natural Language Acquisition and AAC

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) supports language development!

Gestalt language development is described by Natural Language Acquisition (NLA)

Eezashakafarawa! Endashakaman! Evehkasabazag!

Echolalia is Stage 1 of gestalt language development! Stage 2 is mix and match! Stage 3 is single words! Stage 4 is grammar!

Stages 1 & 2 help the Gestalt Language Processor get to word + word processing just like Analytic Language Processors!

Robust AAC + Gestalts!

How to enhance language development for AAC communicators who are Gestalt Language Processors!

Suggestions for gestalts that might be added to AAC devices:

1. Connecting/requesting/inviting with "Let's" + (or "Wanna?" +)
   * Let's get + (that, in, out, snack, toys, clothes, markers, blue, Mom, friends, etc)
   * Let's go + (home, library, outside, class, store, playground, pool, beach, etc)

2. Commenting/labeling/answering questions with "It's" + (or "That's" +)
   * It's + (blue, red, ball, snack, Mom, home, friend, me, you, OK, not OK)

3. Directing attention with "Look at" +
   * Look at + (puppy, book, snow, sun, reindeer, snowman, dinosaur, surprise, TV)

4. Commenting on one's actions or intentions with "I'm" + (or 'I'm gonna" +)
   * I'm + (happy, sad, scared, tired, sick, hungry, thirsty, ready, going, done, OK)

5. Questioning with "What's" +
   * What's + (that, happening, next, going on, for lunch, their name, over there)

6. Protesting with "Don't" +
   * Don't + (like, want, touch, take, change, help, talk, go, stay, (be) sad, laugh)

7. Confirming with "Like" +
   * Like + (that, one, me, you, them, book, story, game, friend, Mom, teacher)

Natural Language Acquisition

Stage	Examples	Description
Stage 1: Gestalts Language stored verbatim from other sources. This language can be songs, sentences, scripts, or parts of media.	ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZnowIknowmyabcsnexttimewontyousingwithme Ifyourehappyandyouknowit Happybirthdaytoyou ——- *Let's get out of here!* *Want some more?*	Whole gestalts are the 'sound track' from episodes of life or media. They communicate but should not be taken literally. Help by providing language models that can be easily mitigated, but are immediately useful and emphasize those (e.g. "Let's…", "It's a…", "I'm…".)
Stage 2: Mitigations Language from Stage1 is broken down into smaller parts, then combined with other parts into new combinations.	ABCD + to you You're happy + sing with me ——- *(a) Let's get + out of here!* *Want + some more?* *(b) Let's get + some more?* *Want + out of here!*	The AAC communicator is figuring out how to 'mix and match' language. Help by continuing to provide language that helps this process of mitigating and recombining.
Stage 3: Isolation & Recombination of Single Words Mitigations are further broken down into single words that are combined without grammar.	*Get… more!* *Want… out?* ——- Ball + red, Blue + ball, Table + chair, Table + ball, Red + blue, Table + there, Here + there, Mom + home, Home + me, Me + Mom	These two-word combinations seem less sophisticated than Stage 2 combinations, but are the beginning of self-generated language! Help AAC users recognize this by creating situations to create 'referential' combinations together: nouns, attributes, and locations.
Stages 4-6: Self-Generated Grammar Original sentences are simple at first, but increase in complexity.	Home Mom me. Mom me home now. Friends school play now. Friends school home later. Want friends home Mom. I want friends home Mom	Emerging grammar is experimental, and helps establish later, more correct grammar. Now is the time to provide a wide variety of models to support this journey! Stages 5 and 6 expand the types of sentences an AAC user can produce — like their 'Analytic' peers!

Additional Resources

- ❑ Articles, Links to NLA book and NLA courses:
  http://www.communicationdevelopmentcenter.com
- ❑ NJACE webinar on NLA: https://m.facebook.com/events/533345574311656
- ❑ ASHA description of echolalia: https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/clinical-topics/autism/echolalia-and-its-role-in-gestalt-language-acquisition/

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