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Communication and Language Development

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I. Communication and Language Development

a. Definition:

Social **communication** is the meaningful exchange of information by two persons.

b. Explanation:

- **Communication** can be verbal and linguistic (a child might say "I want water"); it may also be nonverbal, symbolic, or gestural (a child points to the water fountain, uses a PECS symbol, or makes a sign for water). Communication provides a means for the communicator to operate within his environment by expressing wants, desires, needs, feelings, and information.

Important communication terms:

- **Speech:** the use of verbal means to convey meaning.
- **Language:** the mode, or set of rules, by which a person communicates.
- **Language development:** the process of learning how to express communicative intent in standard, specific, and elaborate forms.
- **Basic communication forms (how a child communicates) and functions (why or what the child communicates)**
- **Three basic components of the language system:** form, content, and use**.**
- **Receptive language:** (comprehension/understanding): the child's understanding of what people say to him.
- **Expressive, or productive, language:** the child's ability to say, sign, or otherwise communicate.

c. Rationale:

The goal of the language intervention is to increase the student's ability to communicate (to share information, feelings, and intentions) using progressively more complex and elaborated verbal and linguistic forms that make the child's meaning transparent to other people. Language that is specific and easily understood is likely to affect the actions of other people more quickly and effectively.

d. Bibliography

Kaiser, Ann P. Teaching Functional Communication Skills, Snell textbook(I don't know the name or other info!!)

Owens, Robert E. Language Development, An Introduction. Fifth Edition.

Paul, Rhea. Language Disorders from Infancy through Adolescence, Assessment & Intervention. Second Edition.

e. Recommended Reading

Owens, Robert E. Language Development, An Introduction. Fifth Edition.

II. What is The Milieu Teaching Project's Approach to Communication?

Principles:

- All behavior communicates something.
- The first task of the language interventionist is to be an observer and a listener who strives to see and understand when children communicate, how they communicate, the means by which they communicate, and the communicative functions they express.
- Communication and communicative attempts by the child are viewed as opportunities for language teaching and child learning. The more a child says (or communicates nonverbally) the more opportunities exist for practice of phonological, lexical, and syntactic forms. The more a child communicates, the more opportunities exist for corrective feedback or new language input from adults.
- Our goals are to detect children's opportunities to learn, capitalize on learning opportunities, and increase child opportunities to learn.

All of the strategies used in Enhanced Milieu Teaching are designed to increase and make optimal use of child learning opportunities.

- Environmental Arrangement: The environment is arranged in order to promote the child's interaction with the adult (by providing a safe, organized, and positive environment with clear expectations), to maintain a topic of conversation (by providing interesting toys, managing materials, and not having too many stimulating materials available), and to encourage child requests (offering choices, inadequate portions, assistance needed, and other strategies).
- Behavioral Support: Behavior support strategies are designed to prevent negative behaviors, and to provide a structure for the environment that will allow the child opportunities to engage in and maintain positive interactions with the adult. When negative behaviors are prevented or minimized, both the adult and the child are able to focus their attention on the interaction, which will then lead to more learning opportunities for the child and more teaching opportunities for the adult.
- Play: Play is the "context for the conversation"…By playing with the child at the child's cognitive, language, and social level the adult creates a joint topic of conversation—an opportunity for communication.
- Responsive Interaction: By balancing turns with the child, waiting for the child to speak, and responding to all of the child's communicative attempts, the adult teaches the child that his communication is powerful, and that conversation requires listening and talking. By using descriptive language, the adult gives the child words about the topic she is interested in.
- Milieu Teaching: The adult shapes the child's communication by responding to the child's verbal and nonverbal requests and by prompting him to use target language when he wants something.

III. Communication and Language Development

Social **communication** is the meaningful exchange of information between two persons. **Communication** can be verbal and linguistic (a child might say "I want water"); it may also be nonverbal, symbolic, or gestural (a child points to the water fountain or makes a sign for water). Communication provides a means for the communicator to operate within his environment by expressing wants, desires, needs, feelings, and information.

We often use the terms communication, speech, and language as we discuss children's development, and many people may believe that the terms are interchangeable. However, each term refers to a different facet of development. Neither speech nor language alone encompasses everything that is "communication".

Speech is the use of verbal means to convey meaning. Speech encompasses the use of specific sounds, sound combinations, voice quality, intonation, and rate of talk. Children spend much of their early months experimenting with sounds, and eventually these sounds become more and more like the language of the child's environment. Finally, as children cognitively develop and begin to understand language "rules", speech becomes meaningful. Speech is not the only means of communication. Signing, writing, and drawing are other means of communication.

Language is the mode, or set of rules, by which a person communicates. Without a "**language**"--a socially shared code, or set of rules, by which we represent the meanings or concepts we are communicating about--speech sounds would be meaningless (for example, the word "dog" would just be a set of meaningless sounds to a non-English speaker, who doesn't share the English speaker's "rules" for combining sounds to form words). Like a child's physical growth, motor development, and cognitive development, language development is a *process*. For the most part, there is a developmental sequence that is predictable. You've heard the phrase "you have to walk before you can run". It is impossible for a child to run if he has not learned to balance when walking. Likewise, a child who has not developed the building blocks of language is not ready to be a competent communicator. Physically, children must develop a variety of sounds (through crying, cooing, babbling, etc.) and sound combinations(through experimenting with sounds and imitating the language sounds in their environment) in order to say words. Cognitively, children must understand that words have meanings in order to develop a meaningful vocabulary, and begin to understand more complex rules (such as how to put a sentence together, and how different word combinations of the same words may mean different things) in order to put words together and form sentences. Socially, children must have a desire to communicate, and an understanding of how language is useful for affecting their environment.

Language Development

Language development is the process of learning how to express communicative intent in increasingly standard, specific, and elaborate forms.

From very early in their development, children interact with their caregivers in nonverbal exchanges that are much like conversations. Even before children have communicative intent, their behaviors (such as gross hand gestures, opening mouth, sticking tongue out) are treated as social by their caregivers, who then respond to the action. Caregivers and children are face to face, sharing facial expressions, eye contact, cooing, and

gesturing. Within months, some very basic "turn-taking" has developed, with the child taking a turn by looking, cooing, or crying, and the caregiver taking a turn by reciprocating with looks, gestures, and actions. Children eventually learn that their behavior can have an effect on their caregivers. The responses from the caregiver teach the child that if he or she signals, the caregiver will respond ("if I cry, mom will come"). Immediate responsiveness from the parent increases the child's motivation to communicate, and the higher the child's motivation the more frequent and varied the child's initiations will be (Owens, p. 165). The caregiver and child later begin to engage in games (peekaboo) and routines (mealtime, bedtime, bathtime) which give the child a predictable structure for behavior and speech. They involve taking turns, rules for each turn (child expects adult to say "peekaboo" when eyes are uncovered, or "there you are" when the child uncovers his eyes), and predictable slots for words and actions (child knows that after the adult covers his eyes and says "peekaboo" that it is his turn).
The young child has communicative intent before she has words to express it. Intent is simply what the child wants or needs to communicate: for example, hunger (points to bottle), desire for an object (reaches for/pulls parent toward object/vocalizes to get parent attention and looks). Very young children express their intent with vocalizations (crying, cooing), gestures (reaching for mommy, pointing), and eventually with words.
As children begin to develop intentionality in communication, they also begin to understand and attach meanings—children learn that particular sounds combined in particular ways carry particular meanings; predictable, familiar words and phrases become associated with familiar things and routines, and early meanings begin to form. Once this occurs, children begin to use speech meaningfully.
Children learn language as a means of making their intentions clearer and more easily understood. Language that is specific and easily understood is likely to control the actions of other people more quickly and effectively. In other words, language develops because it is functional—it works—for helping the child control his environment.

The table below shows some of the forms (the how/the means used to communicate) and "functions"(the what/the meaning a child may be communicating with his communicative act) of child communication.

Basic communication functions

Functions	**Possible Forms**
Greetings	Waves Pointing to adult Eye contact Verbal, i.e.: "Hello", "Name"
Requests for assistance	Gesture to come Giving object for which assistance is needed Taking the adult by the hand and pulling the adult to the item/task Crying Verbal, i.e:"Help" , use of adult's name
Requests for object	Pointing Grabbing for the object Moving the adult to the object Verbal, i.e.: "gimme", "that", "want", naming object

Requests for information	Echoic imitation of adult's utterance about toy Eye contact with quizzical look Showing object with quizzical look Verbal, i.e.: "What?", "that?"
Protests	Crying Pushing Hitting Turning away from adult/peer Throwing objects Verbal, i.e.: "No!"
Comments	Echoic imitation Pointing to object Showing object to adult Verbal, i.e.: label for word; "that";

Language Development Principles

- **Language development is based in social interaction.** Language is learned in social situations. First, children learn how to interact with people. Later, they "map" these social interactions with language. In early "conversations", children take turns by looking, vocalizing, and by acting. Later, they will take turns by talking.

- **Language develops because it is functional for the child in controlling the environment and because the child is motivated to communicate.** The first words a child uses are names of things or people in his immediate environment. The first things the child does with language are usually requesting and/or protesting. Other early uses of language are greeting and commenting. Adults make language function for the child by responding to the child's attempts to communicate. When this happens, children quickly learn that their words can be powerful!

- **Language is based in what the child knows about the world.** The child must know about something before he is likely to talk about it. Children's first words reflect what they know (i.e., momma, dada, baba for bottle). As the child's cognitive skills increase, his language will become more complex—for example, moving from naming only those objects in his immediate environment (mommy, baba, doggy), to learning categories (not all women are mommies, not all beverages are his "baba", not all four legged animals that bark are doggies); from naming objects to understanding descriptive concepts (hot, cold), and feelings (happy, sad).

- **Language is most easily learned in conversations with skilled adults.** Conversations are social interactions and are motivating to both the child and adult. The child is an able nonverbal participant in the conversation. Conversations between adults and children usually center on what the child already knows.

- **Language development always proceeds from easier to harder.** Early sounds are easier to make than later ones (see "phonological development" table). In planning specific language targets, the trainer must know what sounds are in the child's repertoire. Single words are used before word combinations. The trainer must take into account the child's cumulative vocabulary before planning multi-word targets (child must have >50 words to plan two word targets). In addition it can be helpful to anchor multi-word targets in single words the child already uses: for example, if the child uses "roll" and "ball" separately, "roll ball" may be an easier (child is more likely to be successful) target to prompt than two words you've never heard the child use. Similarly, a model that uses one word the child already uses would be easier than a model with two brand new words. If the trainer has a cumulative vocabulary list, the trainer could use combinations of the words from that list as beginning two word targets. Another way to anchor the child's multi-word targets is "pivot grammar": if the child is using words such as "more", and "want", those words can be paired with many other words in order

to teach new nouns and verbs. Simple sentences are used before the child uses complex sentences. The child will likely say, "ball" as a request before he says "want ball". He will likely say "want play" before he says "I want to play", or "play with me, mommy". Social meanings become subtler and social interactions using language become more complex.

- **Comprehension precedes production** (*in most cases). Children usually understand words and sentences receptively before they use them productively. When planning targets for productive language, the trainer *must* take into account the child's receptive language and cognitive skills. As a general guide, the trainer should review the child's performance on the PPVT and on the receptive portion of the PLS to determine what skills the child demonstrated, what skills the child seemed to be beginning to learn (some sub items were correct, but not enough to receive credit in scoring), and what skills the child had not begun to master. Reviewing the items missed to see how the child missed the items can show patterns of error that will be helpful in using the intervention to bootstrap the child's receptive skills. The trainer can also observe the child's interactions with the parent to see how well they seemed to understand the parent's instructions (did the child follow simple one step instructions/two step, etc.) and comments(when the adult said, "wow, a ____", did the child look at the item?).The child's targets should match or be only slightly ahead of the child's highest receptive skills. A child cannot meaningfully use language she does not understand.

- **Language is built on a system of rules; children are learning rules as they learn language.** There are rules for sound production, for sentences, and for the social interactions in which language is used. Errors in language usually indicate that the child does not know the underlying rule, or that he is over generalizing rules he has learned (i.e., because the four legged animal at their house is a dog, all four legged animals must be dogs; every female is "mommy"; "more" is the key to the universe).

Components of the Language System

Language has three basic components: form, content, and use (see table below).

Form is the mode—or "how"—of language. Language can be spoken, written, or signed. The form of spoken language is made up of sounds (phonemes) and the rules that determine how they are used together; words and units of meaning (morphemes); and word order (syntax)--the rules for putting words together in sentences. Children must be physically able to form a variety of sounds and cognitively able to understand units of meaning in order to form words. Children must have 50 to 100 words in order to form two-word utterances, and more in order to form complex sentences.

Content is the meaning (semantics)—or "what"—of the communication. What is the child telling you? Language conveys information. A big part of the child's task in language learning is to discover the meaning of words and how to put words together in sentences that will be understood by other people. When a child acquires a new word, he is not just learning sounds, but new concepts, as well. Each word a child learns is linked to a general notion or idea about the meaning. At first, the child's

meanings for words may be very different from those of adults. For example, the child has a dog, and calls all animals with four legs and a tail "dog". An adult knows that a dog is only one type of four-legged animal, and that within that particular category there are even more different types of dogs. Gradually, through experience and feedback from his listeners, the child acquires meanings that are very similar to the meanings that adults have. At the next level, combining words into sentences is a much more complex task than using single words. Language has a structure, a set of rules for how to combine words to make sentences. The young child learning language must learn individual words, a set of rules for combining words, and the more complex, relational meanings that are expressed by combinations of words. The ideas expressed in sentences are much more complex than those expressed in early one and two word utterances. Children progress from vocalizing with gestures, to one-word utterances, to short sentences with simple rules, and finally to longer, more complex sentences with complex rules and meanings.

Use, or **pragmatics**, refers to **how** language is used to communicate within a communication context. Pragmatics is concerned with the way language is used to communicate rather than the form or the structure. Pragmatic rules apply to the coherence of the conversations, the cooperation of the partners, and the communicative competence of the communicator. Is the communicator able to appropriately express his or her intent? Is the conversation positive? Is there a successful exchange of information?

Language System Components, From Owen p.19

Form	**Phonology** (sounds) --children must be able to produce a variety of sounds and consistently combine them in a number of ways to use words **Morphology** (words, word beginnings, word endings)—units of meaning; in addition to physically producing sounds, children must be able to understand units of meaning for things and actions in order to use words; children must develop a vocabulary of 50-100 words to reliably produce multi-word utterances **Syntax** (word order)—In order to produce meaningful sentences, children must understand not only units of meaning, but the rules governing how words are to be combined
Content	**Semantics** (what is being communicated—the meaning) –The child must understand the meaning of the individual words he uses, as well as how different combinations of words will change the meaning he is expressing

Use	**Pragmatics** (how language is used to communicate) refers to the social use of language within the context of conversation—eye contact appropriate words, intonation, behavior, listening, cooperating, etc.

Language Comprehension

There are two equally important areas of language competency.

The first is **receptive language** (comprehension/understanding). This refers to the child's understanding of what people say to him. The second is **expressive, or productive, language**—the child's ability to say, sign, or otherwise communicate. To use language effectively as a communication system, the child must be able to understand what he hears and respond by producing language. Usually, children understand more language than they can say. Comprehending language is easier, in part because the child can get clues from the nonverbal context. Functionally producing language (effectively communicating) requires knowing the power of communication, knowing word meanings, and knowing rules for putting sounds and words together.

Phonological Development

This table shows the general order in which children acquire particular sounds and the general age at which the sounds are usually acquired by typically developing children.

	Age Level (years)			
First Sounds (acquired between 0 and 3 years)	2+	3+	4+	5+
P m h n w b				
	k g d t ng			
		f y		
			r l s	
				ch sh z
				j v

BROWNS STAGES

<table>
<tr><th>Stage</th><th>MLU</th><th>Approx. Age in Months</th><th>Characteristics</th></tr>
<tr><td>I</td><td>1.0-2.0</td><td>12-26</td><td>Development of first 50 words—the words most salient to child's environment; single word utterances; early multiword combinations; development of linear syntactic rules for early multiword combinations:
<table>
<tr><th>Semantic Relation</th><th>Example</th></tr>
<tr><td>Agent + action</td><td>mommy come, daddy sit</td></tr>
<tr><td>Action + object</td><td>drive car; eat grape</td></tr>
<tr><td>Agent + object</td><td>mommy sock; baby book</td></tr>
<tr><td>Action + location</td><td>go park; sit car; fall down</td></tr>
<tr><td>Entity + location</td><td>cup table; toy floor; daddy work</td></tr>
<tr><td>Possessor + possession</td><td>my teddy; mommy keys</td></tr>
<tr><td>Entity + attribute</td><td>car fast; doggy big</td></tr>
<tr><td>Demonstrative + entity</td><td>that car; this cup</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
<tr><td>II</td><td>2.0-2.5</td><td>27-30</td><td>Morphologic Development: Characterized by the appearance of morphemes that correspond to the semantic relations that emerge in stage I with word order; these morphemes begin emerging during stage 2, but are not mastered until much later.
<table>
<tr><th>MORPHEME</th><th>EXAMPLES</th><th>AGE OF MASTERY (IN MONTHS)/BROWN'S STAGE</th></tr>
<tr><td>present progressive (+ing)</td><td>Mommy driving.</td><td>19-28/ I</td></tr>
<tr><td>in, on</td><td>Ball in cup. Doggie on sofa.</td><td>27-30/II</td></tr>
<tr><td>plural (+ s)</td><td>Cats. Dogs.</td><td>27-33/II-III</td></tr>
<tr><td>past irregular</td><td>Came, fell, broke, sat, went</td><td>25-46/II-V</td></tr>
<tr><td>possessive (+ 's)</td><td>Mommy's balloon.</td><td>26-40/II-IV</td></tr>
<tr><td>uncontractible copula (am, is, are, was,</td><td>He is {i.e. response to who's sick}</td><td>27-39/II-IV</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
</table>

II	2.0-2.5	27-30	*were*)	Verb *to be* as main verb	
			articles (*a, the*)	I see a kitty. Give me the ball.	28-46/II-V
			past regular (+ *ed*)	He pushed me. She walked away.	26-48/II-V+
			third person regular (verb + *s*)	Kathy hits. The dog bites.	26-46/II-V
			third person irregular (i.e. *does, has*)	Does, has	28-50/II-V+
			uncontractible auxiliary (*am, is, are, has, have*)	He is {i.e. response to Who's wearing your hat}	29-48/II-V+
			contractible copula (*'m, 's, 're*)	Man's big. (Man is big.)	29-49/II-V+
			contractible auxiliary (*'m, 's, 're* when combined with + *ing; 've, 's* when combined with a past participle such as *has been*)	Daddy's driving. (Daddy is driving.)	30-50/II-V+

III	2.5-3.0	31-34	Sentence-form development; continued mastery of morphological forms By late Stage II, early stage III, the child has learned the most basic of sentence forming rules, and begins to modify the basic subject-verb pattern by developing noun and verb phrases within sentences, and by developing different sentence forms (declarative, interrogative, imperative, and the negative forms of each).
IV	3.0-3.75	35-40	Embedding of sentence elements (noun phrases, verb phrases, prepositional phrases, participle phrases, gerund phrases, infinitive phrases, and subordinate clauses) and continued mastery of morphological forms. Embedding emerges in late stage III/early stage IV, but is not fully mastered.
V	3.75-4.5	41-46	Conjoining of clauses (a clause is a group of words that contains both a subject and a predicate)/development of compound sentences and continued mastery of morphological forms
V+	4.5+	47+	Continued mastery of morphemes; continued development of increasingly complex sentences, phrases, clauses

Materials for Parents

- Handouts (for workshop)
  Language Development Principles for Parents
  Basic Communication Functions and Forms
  Frequently Asked Questions
  One page about child at their child's level (Joey/Jane/Jack/Jilly)
  Building Blocks (needs reworking)
  Road to Adult Language (needs reworking)
  List of early words or targets at child's level

- Communication Homework (to be completed before workshop)
  A RECORD OF YOUR CHILD'S COMMUNICATION
  PARENT REPORT OF CHILD COMMUNICATION STRENGTHS AND NEEDS

- Summary of Child Language and Communication Skills: Child specific
  Information about language, communication skills, and Targets

Frequently Asked Questions

What is communication?
Communication is the meaningful exchange of information by two or more people. Communication can be verbal and linguistic (the child says "want toys"), nonverbal (the child nods when you ask if he wants to play with a toy), symbolic (the child may sign "toy" or gives you a picture of a toy), or gestural (the child points to the toy he wants).

I've heard the words "communication", "speech", and "language". Aren't they all the same?
Actually, no, they're not. They all refer to different types of development. "Communication" is the broadest of the terms. It is a meaningful exchange of information by two persons, but can be verbal, nonverbal, symbolic, or gestural. "Language" is the mode by which a person communicates. It is a shared set of rules that represent the concepts two people are communicating about. Language can be verbal or nonverbal, such as a sign language, augmentative communication, or PECS. "Speech" is the use of verbalizations to convey meaning. Speech can only be verbal.

What is language development?
Language development is the process of learning how to communicate using standard, specific, and elaborate forms. It proceeds from easier to harder and involves several domains of growth: physical--producing sounds (kids produce sounds before they produce words), learning to produce sounds consistently; cognitive--learning meanings (kids usually understand a word before they can use it productively), learning words (kids usually say one word at a time before they say a sentence), learning rules for how words are put together, and learning how to appropriately use those words and sentences; social—children learn that language works to control their environment by affecting their interactions with others to get their needs met or to have a reinforcing interaction.

How do children learn language?
Children learn language because it is useful—it works—for controlling their environment. Language that is easily understood by a variety of people is effective for controlling the actions of others to get wants and desires met more quickly and for maintaining reinforcing social interactions.

What is the easiest way for my child to learn language?
Language is most easily learned in conversations with skilled adults. Conversations should be about what the child already knows and what the child is interested in so that the child is motivated to participate.

When my child was a baby, she seemed to want to communicate with me. Is that true?
From very early in their development, children interact with their caregivers using nonverbal exchanges. These exchanges begin before the child develops communicative intent, but often the caregiver treats the child's behaviors (such as gross hand movements, tongue protrusions, mouth opening) as social and responds by reciprocating. These exchanges develop turn-taking, a vital component of communication, and teach children that their behavior can have a powerful effect on their caregivers—laying a powerful foundation for language learning.

My child seems to understand more than he can speak. Is that typical?
Yes. A child's receptive language (or understanding of what people say to him) is usually more advanced that his expressive language (the child's ability to say, sign, or otherwise communicate). Comprehending language is easier, in part, because the child can get clues from nonverbal context. Functionally producing language requires that the child knows rules for putting sounds together to form words, word meanings, and rules for putting words together to form sentences, and socially, it requires that the child know the power of language to control his environment and/or be socially reinforced by communicating with others.

I understand my child's wants and desires. Why is it important for him to learn more "language"?
It's important for your child to learn standard and specific language forms so that he can be more successful in communicating with a variety of people—so that he is more successful in getting his needs met and establishing relationships with other adults and with peers.

It seems like my child understands almost everything I say, and follows all of my directions at home, but his schoolteachers *and the babysitter disagree. Why is that?*
A child who has limited expressive language probably has delayed receptive language, as well, so he may not be able to follow instructions as complicated as directions his peers may be able to follow. Secondly, it is likely that he has a lot of contextual support at home—meaning you probably have familiar routines, and familiar objects that will help cue him to understand your instruction.

Language Development
Principles for Parents

- **Language development is based in social interaction.** First, children learn how to interact with people. Later, they "map" these social interactions with language. In early "conversations", children take turns by looking, vocalizing, and by acting. Later, they will take turns by talking.

- **Language develops because it is functional for the child in controlling the environment and because the child is motivated to communicate.** The first words a child uses are names of things or people in his immediate environment. Early uses of communication/language include requesting, protesting, greeting, and commenting (see table). Adults make language function for the child by responding to the child's attempts to communicate. When this happens, children quickly learn that their words can be powerful!

- **Language is based in what the child knows about the world.** The child must know about something before he is likely to talk about it. Children's first words reflect what they know (i.e., momma, dada, baba for bottle). As the child's cognitive skills increase, his language will become more complex—for example, moving from naming only those objects in his immediate environment (mommy, baba, doggy), to learning categories (not all women are mommies, not all beverages are his "baba", not all four legged animals that bark are doggies); from naming objects, to understanding descriptive concepts (hot, cold), and feelings (happy, sad).

- **Language is most easily learned in conversations with skilled adults.** Conversations are social interactions and are motivating to both the child and adult. The child is an able nonverbal participant in the conversation. Conversations between adults and children usually center on what the child already knows.

- **Language development always proceeds from easier to harder.** Early sounds are easier to make than later ones. Single words are used before word combinations. Simple sentences are used before the child uses complex sentences. The child will likely say, "ball" as a request before he says "want ball". He will likely say "want play" before he says "I want to play", or "play with me, mommy". Social meanings become subtler and social interactions using language become more complex.

- **Comprehension precedes production** (*in most cases). Children usually understand words and sentences before they say them. A child cannot meaningfully use language she does not understand.

- **Language is built on a system of rules, and children are learning rules as they learn language.** There are rules for sound production, for sentences, and for the social interactions in which language is used. Errors in language usually indicate that the child does not know the underlying rule (Joey may use the word "car" only in reference to *his* family car), or that she is over generalizing rules she has learned (Janie may think that all four legged animals are "doggy").

Communication Fundamentals for Parents

*Communication is both verbal and non-verbal.

*All behavior communicates something.

*Child communication creates opportunities for learning and teaching.

*The first task in language intervention is to observe and listen to see how a child communicates, when a child communicates, and what they are communicating about, so that we can detect and make the most of opportunities to teach the child new language.

Parent Report of Child Communication Strengths and Needs

Child's Name: _____Parent's Name:_____

Interviewer/Trainer: _____ Date: _____

How does your child typically communicate (crying, words, gestures, reaching, other verbal or nonverbal ways)?

_____

On the average, your child uses _____words each time he/she talks (i.e., my turn = two words).

About how much of your child's communication would you say is understandable to *you*?
100% ____ 75% ____ 50% _____ 25% _____ 0% _____

_____

About how much of the time would you say that your child's communication is appropriate to the context (he/she talks about what he is currently doing/what is happening at the time)? 100% ____ 75% ____ 50% _____ 25% _____ 0% _____
Does your child talk about "bizarre" topics that have no relevance to the situation at hand? Yes ____ No _____ If Yes, give examples:

_____

Does your child "get stuck" on things---repeat certain words, sounds, or phrases over and over? Yes ____ No _____ If Yes, give examples:

If your child does not speak or speaks very little, describe how he/she communicates nonverbally (i.e., pointing, signing, grabbing).

_____

Do you feel that your child usually understands what you say? (all of the time, most of the time, about half the time, less than half the time)

_____

What are examples of some instructions your child can follow (i.e., from simple one step instructions to more complicated 2 or three step instructions)?

In your opinion, what are your child's strengths with regard to his/her communication skills?

What are your greatest concerns with regard to his/her communication skills?

How do you feel about 1) your child's current communication skills and 2) how do you think he/she probably will be communicating in the future?

What communication skills would you like selected for your child to work on in this training project?

In what areas do you most want specific training to aid your child's language development?

Situations in which child communication is needed:

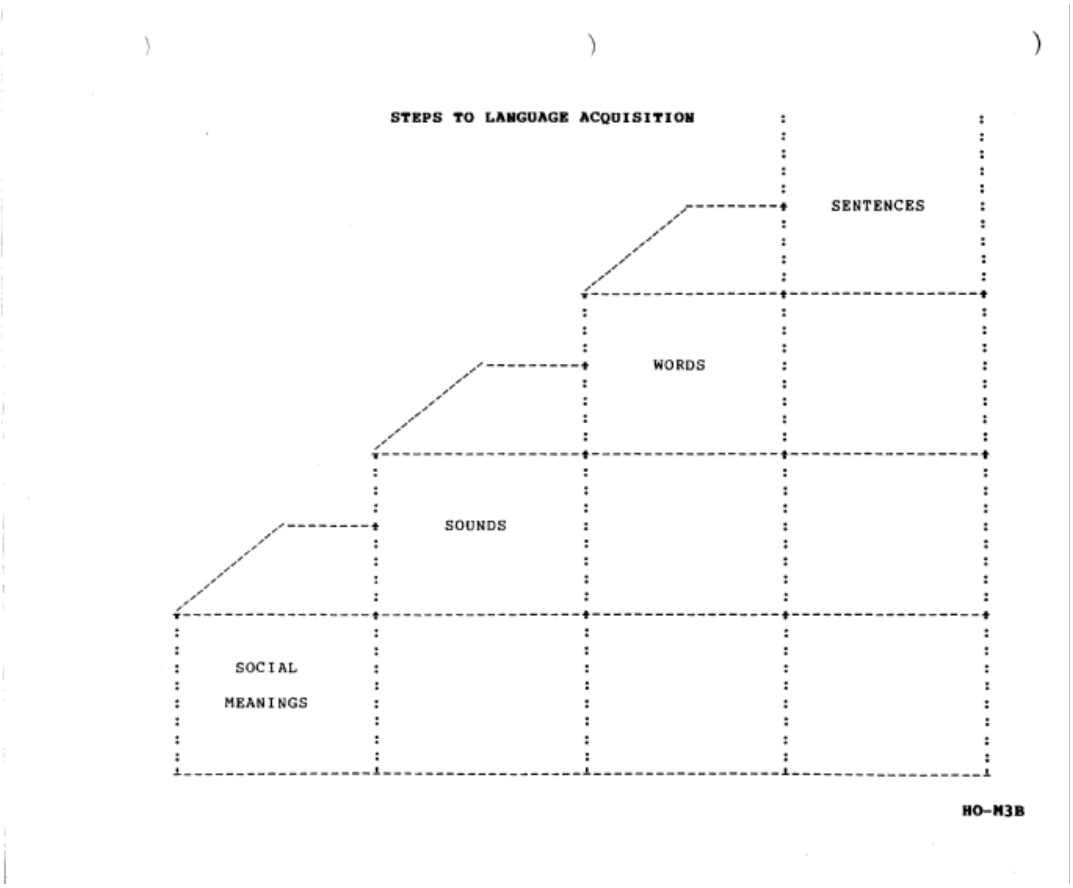
Routines where child could communicate:

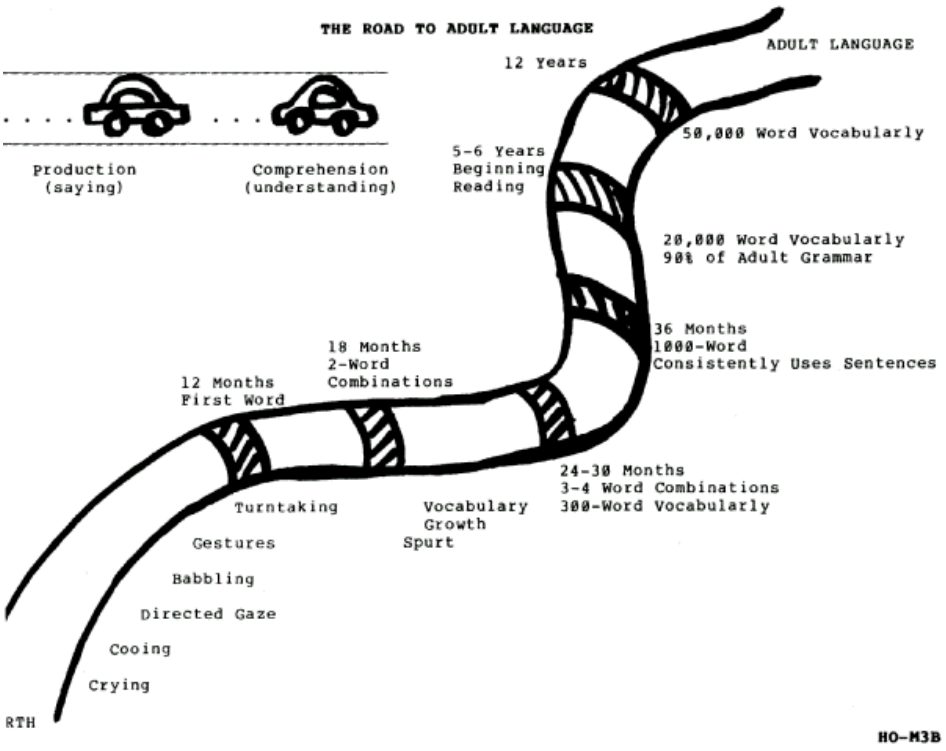
What skills do you consider most important?

Words and phrases to target:

Basic Communication Functions and Their Possible Forms
OR
Why Kids Communicate and How They Tell Us What They Want Us to Know!!

Functions	Possible Forms
Greetings	Waves Pointing to adult Eye contact Verbal, i.e.: "Hello", "Name"
Requests for assistance	Gesture to come Giving object for which assistance is needed Taking the adult by the hand and pulling the adult to the item/task Crying Verbal, i.e:"Help" , use of adult's name
Requests for object	Pointing Grabbing for the object Moving the adult to the object Verbal, i.e.: "gimme", "that", "want", naming object
Requests for information	Echoic imitation of adult's utterance about toy Eye contact with quizzical look Showing object with quizzical look Verbal, i.e.: "What?", "that?"
Protests	Crying Pushing Hitting Turning away from adult/peer Throwing objects Verbal, i.e.: "No!"
Comments	Echoic imitation Pointing to object Showing object to adult Verbal, i.e.: label for word; "that";


STEPS TO LANGUAGE ACQUISITION
SENTENCES
WORDS
SOUNDS
SOCIAL
MEANINGS
HO-M3B


THE ROAD TO ADULT LANGUAGE
ADULT LANGUAGE
12 Years
50,000 Word Vocabularly
Production
(saying)
Comprehension
(understanding)
5-6 Years
Beginning
Reading
20,000 Word Vocabularly
90% of Adult Grammar
36 Months
1000-Word
Consistently Uses Sentences
18 Months
2-Word
Combinations
12 Months
First Word
24-30 Months
3-4 Word Combinations
300-Word Vocabularly
Turntaking
Vocabulary
Growth
Spurt
Gestures
Babbling
Directed Gaze
Cooing
Crying
RTH
HO-M3B

Summary of Child Language and Communication

Communication Observed In Baseline:

Functions	**Examples:**
Greetings	
Requests for assistance	
Requests for object	
Requests for information	
Protests	
Comments	

How child communicates:

Means of Communication	**Examples of highest skill observed:**
Mostly gestures/some one word utterances	
Some gestures/many one word utterances	
Many one word utterances/a few two word utterances	
Many two word utterances	
Two, three plus word utterances	

Number of Different Words Observed: _____

Nouns _____ Verbs _____

Descriptive Words _____ Location Words _____

Speech Sounds (circle sounds the child makes):

p b m n w t d k g h ng (sing)

f s l y(yellow) sh(ship) v z r ch (chew)

Language & Communication Targets:

1)

2)

3)

4)

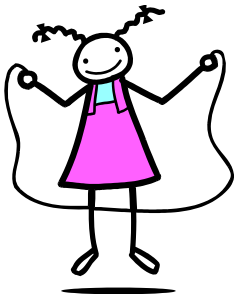
Joey, the Early Word User

What does Joey say?
Joey has just joined the Milieu Teaching Project. He consistently says about 10 words. He says mommy, hi, bye, go, sissy (for his sister), ball, whee, no, more (at dinner time), and doggy (when he sees his own dog). He also communicates by pointing, pulling his mom to what he wants to show her, and crying to protest.

What can Joey talk about?
Joey is able to talk about the names of familiar people and things in his environment. He communicates around games (e.g. peek-a-boo) and routines (bath time, bedtime, mealtime). He might also talk about appearance (example, "hi" to new people, or "sissy" when his sister enters the room), disappearance (for example, "bye-bye") or recurrence (for example "more" for more food, more toy, more game). Most of his communication is around requests—letting you know what he wants, and protests—letting you know what he doesn't want!

What does Joey know?
Joey understands the words for many of the objects in his immediate environment, he knows the names of familiar people, and likely understands anywhere from 50 to 150 words. Joey can follow simple directions about familiar objects that he can see. Joey seems to follow longer instructions in routines at home ("let's get in the car" when it's time to go to school, "come to the table" at dinner time, "take off your clothes and get in the tub" at bath time), but at other times he may not follow the same directions. This isn't necessarily because Joey doesn't want to do what Mom told him to do, but rather because it is much tougher to understand what adults are saying without the help of his familiar places, things, and routines to give him cues. Joey understands simple directions about things he knows and can only follow one direction at a time.

How does Joey play?
Joey loves to play with his favorite toys…but, he doesn't play with one thing for very long, and his idea of how to "play" with a toy may be very different from yours—he's exploring. He likes to pour the blocks from the box and put them back in—and pour them back out again! He may like to throw his toys, because, after all, no one minds when he throws that round thing (the ball!). He likes cause and effect toys—he likes to see what his actions cause the toys to do…like pushing the button to make the cars go, or hammering the balls through the holes and down the chute. Some of his favorite toys are bubbles, racetracks, playdoh, light up/musical toys, and balloons. Sometimes Joey may get so into these exciting toys that he doesn't interact at all with his play partner.



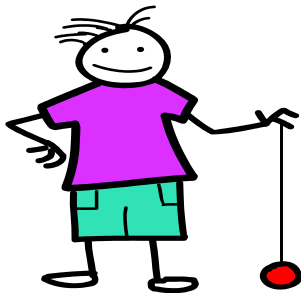
Jane, The One Word Talker

What does Jane say?
Jane has about 50 words. She has words for just about every familiar object and person, and she also has some describing words (pretty!), and action words (go, eat, drink) for things that are part of her routine. Jane communicates mostly by talking, and still occasionally uses other methods like pointing, gestures, and unintelligible vocalizations when she doesn't have the words to get her point across. Jane probably has some "rote" or memorized social phrases that are technically two or three words, but are really like one word turns for her…i.e. "thank you", "how are you".

What might Jane talk about?
Jane talks about people and things in her environment. She is able to request almost anything she wants or needs, and protest when she is not happy with whatever is happening. She comments during a conversation—she points out and labels things (points and says "dog", pushes the car and says "go") and says "allgone" when her cup is empty. She may also ask for information with her words and intonation (point to a plane and say "that?"/ " 's that?"; point to a cat and say "kitty?").

What does Jane know?
Jane probably understands anywhere from 150 to 500 words. She recognizes and responds to two, three, and four word combinations, but she may not understand the individual words or that may mean different things in different combinations. To understand longer sentences Jane needs contextual support (routines, familiar places, activities, and objects). Jane understands words for objects that are not in her sight, and can probably follow simple instructions without the support of routine and familiar objects. She will follow an adult's request to get an object that she can't see (i.e., "get your shoes" when her shoes are in the other room).

How does Jane play?
Jane plays with a wide range of toys. She loves cause and effect toys, and also is beginning to do relational and pretend play. She plays with the balls-n-chutes, bubbles, racetracks, playdoh, and water with scoops. She is also interested in playing with babies (giving them baths and putting them to bed), the barn animals, and the dollhouse, although she may quickly run out of ideas and do the same few things repeatedly.



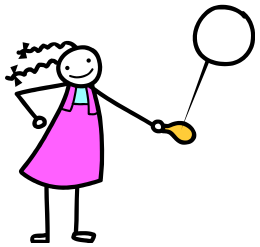
Jack, the Two-Word Talker

What does Jack say?
Jack has a vocabulary of about 200-300 words. Most of his sentences are two words, and some are three words. Jack has many nouns (names for things and people), verbs (action words), describing words (big, little, clean, dirty), and location words (in, out, off, on). Jack communicates mostly by talking, seldom having to resort to other means to get his point across.

What might Jack talk about?
Jack talks about his immediate environment as well as people, things, and activities that may be out of sight. Jack expresses his wants and desires ("my turn"; "mommy sit!"; "more milk"), talks about what's happening ("car go!"), requests information ("mommy, that?"; "Where car?"), can answer questions, and can talk about things in the other room or things that happened earlier. Jack can also maintain a conversation about the same topic for more than one or two turns.

What does Jack know?
Jack understands between 500 and 1000 words at this time. He understands two word combinations similar to the ones he says (action object; object location; action location; modifier noun), as well as longer sentences and what, where, and who questions. Jack has some understanding of the rules about putting words together and is able to not only understand longer sentences, but also form mostly two word and occasionally three word sentences. He understands longer sentences best when they are tied to routines, familiar people and things, and/or additional visual supports (pictures, objects that are present, etc.). He can follow one and two-step instructions with limited support.

How does Jack play?
Jack plays with many toys. Jack enjoys cause and effect toys, but may quickly become bored. He enjoys pretend play, plays with a wide variety of toys, and is able to do many different activities with the same toys. He is able to play with the same toy or play theme for a longer period of time. Jack's favorite toys are the racetrack (he may just race the cars or he may have the cars walk up the steps, race down the track, and go home), the doctor kit (he can be the doctor or the patient, he can label some of the toys in the doctor kit, and creatively plays with the toys), and the garage (cars may ride the elevator up and down, may have different drivers, may be going different places, or may go through the carwash).



Jilly, the 3 Word Talker

What does Jilly say?
Jilly has a vocabulary of over 300 words. Most of her "sentences" are three words, with a few longer "sentences" that are incomplete (like "daddy work green car"). Jilly has some words in every category of speech (words for naming, talking about actions, describing things, and telling locations), but her phrases may not always be complete. Jilly communicates mostly by talking. Jilly uses some "sentences" with subject and verb but has very simple sentence construction. Some might even call Jilly's speech "telegraphic"—because it may sound a bit choppy, like a telegraph ("I go school [stop] Mommy drive car [stop] that daddy car").

What does Jilly talk about?
Jilly talks about what she wants ("I want milk"); what she's doing ("I go school"; "that my car!"); what others are doing ("Daddy go work!"); and events or things in the environment ("mommy see airplane?"). Jilly can take turns in conversation and maintain a topic for more than two or three turns.

What does Jilly know?
Jilly understands over 1000 words. Jilly seems to understand most of the sentences she hears, although she may not be able to accurately repeat them or break them down into individual words and meanings. She is able to understand and follow two-step directions with little and sometimes no support. She understands location words like in, on, off, up, down, under, and is beginning to understand and use the infamous "why" question. Don't be deceived by Jilly's extensive use of words—she may have gaps in her understanding of the relationships between the words in sentences, and the rules for putting longer sentences together. She appears to be a fairly competent communicator with her parents and other skilled adults, but may seem less so in new places with new faces and less environmental support.

How does Jilly play?
Jilly engages almost exclusively in pretend play. She can play for a long time with the "same" toy and do many different things with it. She comments on what she's doing and what her play partner is doing—and may in fact tell her play partner how to play. Jilly loves dressup (she can be anyone, use any toy, and make her play partner into whoever she wants), dolls (babies, teaparties, school), the kitchen, and the barn. Jilly can play with almost anything . Jilly may also be able to play games with simple rules (candyland, hiho cheerio).

FIRST WORDS…

The child's first meaningful speech consists of single-word utterances, such as "doggie", or single-word approximations of frequently used adult phrases (such as thank you).

The child's early vocabulary is context based--names for people, toys, animals, food, body parts, and other objects in their environment. They also use verbs, protoverbs, and other substantive words that are useful for serving their early communicative functions. The toddler may request toys, call people, name pets, request food, ask for help with clothing, discuss familiar actions and routines, or protest.

Here are some typical first words:

Nouns	***Verbs***	***Others***
Mama	Eat	Mine
Dadda	Go	More
Ball	Do	Allgone
Baby	Open	No
Doggie	Look	Please
Kitty		This
Car		Byebye
Bottle (baba)		Hot
Milk		Dirty
Cookie		Hi
Cracker		That
Nose		Alldone
Eye		Here
Hat		There
Shoe		Up
Juice		Down
Water		Nightnight
		Uhoh

With children at the early one word stage, their phonemic repertoire or zpd will include the sounds p, b, m, n, h, w.

EARLY ACTION AND ACTION RELATED WORDS

Push Pull Play Pick up Paint Peek Put Pour	Brush Bounce Band Blow Buy Bump Break	March Make Move	Wipe Walk Wake up Wash Write Want Work	Open (close) Eat Again
Tickle Touch Turn around Throw Talk	Drink Dance Dump Drop Drive Do	Catch (throw) Come (go) Close (open) Clap Cry Count Comb Cut Cook Kick Keep Kiss	Giddyup Get Give Go Gimme	Hit Hold Hear Hide Hug Help Hurt Hop
Feel Fall Find Fly Feed	Sit Stand Stop it Sleep Sing Shake Shut See Swing	Lie down Look (see)	Run Ride Roll Rock Read	Jump

*Words are sorted by beginning sounds. The top row represents words that begin with sounds children typically acquire first, followed in the middle row by the next set of sounds generally acquire, and bottom row with the last sounds children generally master.

EARLY NOUNS

Foods:	***Body Parts:***	***Important People:***	***Social Words:***	***Words that Express feelings:***
Apple	Head	Daddy	Uh -oh	Sad
Bread	Hand	Mommy	Hi, hello	Happy
Meat	Legs	Names of pets	Bye	Kiss
Milk	Eyes	Friends	Okay	Hug
Juice	Hair	Siblings	Sorry	Angry
Soup	Nose	Boy	Nite-nite	Mad
Banana	Foot	Girl	No	Smile
Cake	Toes	Baby	Enough	Laugh
Water		Child's name	Yes	Cry
Drink		Teacher	Hey	
Cookie		Grandpa	Fine	
Candy		Grandma		

Household Objects:	***Clothing:***	***Toys:***	***Words that Describe:***	***Locations:***
Bath	Sock	Bus	Hot	Up, down
Bed	Shirt	Truck	More	In, out
TV	Pants	Horse	My	Off, on
Sofa	Dress	Train	Big	There
Sink	Coat	Boat	Wet	Here
Table	Shoe	Book	Cold	Under
Chair	Hat	Ball	Pretty	Over
Room	Bib	Blocks	All gone	
Light			Dirty	
Cup			Clean	
Dish			Broke	
Keys			Nice	
Soap			All done	
Spoon				
Clock				
Pillow				
Money				

TWO WORD UTTERANCES

NOUN + ACTION	**ACTION + NOUN/OBJECT**
The child names the object and the action taken. In early two word utterances, Child might use "protoverbs" or location words as actions. Car go. Mommy sit. Daddy drives. Doggy barks. Baby cries. Airplane flies! We play!	*The child names the action and the object that is acted on. Early verbs are general protoform verbs such as make, do, go.* Drive car. Roll ball. Kick ball. Feed baby. Open door. Blow bubbles. Wash hands.
MODIFIER NOUN Child describes an attribute of the object and the object. "Modifier" could indicate quality, quantity, possession, nonexistence, or recurrence. My car! Daddy's car! Two balls. More milk. Big ball. Little bubbles. Wet towel!	2 WORD REQUESTS Include "requesting words" such as want, need, help, more, mine, again. *Want* car! *Help* me! Swing *again*! *More* toys! *Need* water!
ACTION or NOUN LOCATION The child names the action or object and direction of movement or lacation Sit down Pick up Fall down Put in Daddy down. Mommy in. Mommy chair. Baby bed. Balls there.	SOCIAL LANGUAGE Thank you. You're welcome. Please. How (are) you? (I) fine.

TYPICAL EARLY THREE WORD UTTERANCES

Carrier Phrases:
I want I see I like

Agent + Action+ Object:

I throw ball	Steve pet dog
Dad push car	Jo wear shirt
I cut paper	TJ ride horse
You pour milk	I cut paper
Man ride bike	I find shoe

Location words
Added:

Dad run here	Push swing up.
Block fall down	Soap on hand.
I go potty	Put blocks down.
Throw ball up	Go to store.
Put spoon there	Splash in water.
We go home	Knock on door.
Put in box	Sleep under covers.

Descriptive Words:

Comb your hair	Want my blanket.
Turn on music	Wear clean clothes.
Want more juice	That's Mommy's hat.
Touch cold ice	Wash dirty hands.
I pet soft kitty	Get two cookies!
I see big truck	That's a soft kitty.
You get big ball	Buy new shoes!

THREE WORD COMBINATIONS

The child begins to produce three word combinations when approximately half of his utterances contain two words.

TYPES OF THREE WORD COMBINATIONS

Agent + Action + Object	Mommy eat cookie Steve pet doggie. Doggie catches ball.
Agent + Action + Location	Mommy throw (to) me. Mommy sleep (in) bed. I fall down!
Action + Object + Location	Eat pie table. Put clothes away. Put shoes on.
Person/Object + State/request + object	I want cookies. Baby needs blankie. Mommy needs help.
Action + Attribute/Possessor + Object	Eat big cookie. Make more pictures. Get two toys. Drive mommy's car.
State/request + attribute/recurrence + object	Want more cookies! Need blue ball. Want mommy's keys.
NEGATIVES not, can't, won't, don't, no	No bye-bye, daddy. It won't work. Don't touch it.

Also at this level—PRONOUNS : you, your, she, them, he, yours, we, her