KidTalk: Naturalistic Communication Intervention Strategies

Enhanced Milieu Teaching (EMT)
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Outline for Today

• Introduction
• Overview of EMT
• Current EMT study at Alpha
• Choosing language targets for children
• Tea Break
• Implementing EMT Strategies
EMT at Alpha
What is Enhanced Milieu Teaching?

- EMT is an evidence-based intervention with 20 years of research.
- EMT is a naturalistic, conversation-based intervention that uses child interests and initiations as opportunities to model and prompt language in everyday contexts.
- EMT can be used throughout the day as part of your everyday interactions.
- EMT is effective!
Positive effects across settings

- **Increases child use of language targets**
  - **Early syntactic forms** (Kaiser & Hester, 1994)
  - **Moderately complex syntax** (Warren & Kaiser, 1986)

- ** Increases child frequency of communication** (Warren et al, 1994; Kaiser et al, 1993)

- **Generalization across settings, people, and language concepts** (Warren & Bambara, 1989; Goldstein & Mousetis, 1989; Kaiser & Roberts, 2012)

- **Maintenance of newly learned targets** (Warren & Kaiser, 1986; Kaiser & Roberts, 2012)

EMT Links

Developmental Principles

Child Targets

Intervention Strategies
1. All children are communicating **now**
   a. How?

   **Prelinguistic**
   - Point
   - Show
   - Give
   - Vocalizations
   
   **Linguistic**
   - Signs
   - Pictures
   - AAC
   - Words

   **Reach**
   - Lifts arms up
   - Shakes head

   **b. Why?**

   - Requesting
   - Commenting
Principle of Development: 2

- Communication is based on the social interaction between the adult and the child.
- Communication requires a speaker and a listener
  - Dyad is the focus
  - Not just teaching communication, we ARE communicating
Principle of Development: 3

- Communication develops on a platform of shared joint attention and engagement.
  - Social interaction between child and adult
  - Play with objects and partner
  - Everyday routines where communication is functional
Principle of Development: 4

- Children learn communication through modeling
  - Adults model the forms and functions of communication
  - Modeling is important for both receptive and productive language learning
  - Contingent modeling is the most powerful form of modeling
    - Expansions
    - Modeling contingent on child/adult shared attention and/or actions
Over time, children become more independent social communicators

- Communication begins in social interaction
- Adults scaffold participation and development of more complex forms in context of social interaction
- Eventually, children decontextualize language use

Goals include:
- Spontaneously initiation of communication
- Initiates commenting as well as requesting
- Initiates and sustains conversation

Children vary in the amount of practice and support they need to reach these goals.
### Linking Intervention to Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developmental Principle</th>
<th>Intervention Strategy</th>
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<tr>
<td>Children are communicating now</td>
<td>Notice and respond</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication is based on interaction between child and adult</td>
<td>Respond and model</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication develops on a platform of joint attention</td>
<td>Environmental arrangement and play</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children learn through contingent modeling</td>
<td>Respond and model, expand</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent social communicator</td>
<td>Prompting, modeling, respond, EA</td>
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What’s Unique about EMT?

- Focus on the child
  - How the child communicates
  - What the child needs right NOW to communicate
  - Teaching adult to support communication NOW

- Focus is all forms of communication: Verbal, gestures, signs, AAC
Child Communication Goals

• The same general goals apply to all children:
  – Increase duration of engagement
    • Social (i.e., joint attention)
    • Objects (i.e., play)
  – Increase rate of communication
    • Emphasize spontaneous, social initiations
  – Increase diversity of communication
    • Same level, more forms, across more contexts
  – Increase complexity of communication
    • Higher level forms (e.g., prelinguistic to linguistic, increase length of utterances)
  – Increase independence
## Linking Goals to Intervention

<table>
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<th>Child Goal</th>
<th>Intervention Strategy</th>
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<tr>
<td>Increase duration of engagement</td>
<td>Environmental arrangement and expanding play</td>
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<td>Increase rate of communication</td>
<td>Responding/Modeling $\rightarrow$ Prompting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase diversity</td>
<td>Play as context, Modeling $\rightarrow$ Prompting</td>
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<td>Increase complexity</td>
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<td>Modeling/Expanding $\rightarrow$ Prompting</td>
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Identify Communication Goals for Your Students

• How are they communicating now?
EMT components

- Setting up an interactive context to teach language
- Noticing and responding to child communication
- Model and encourage turn taking
- Keep the interaction going
Setting Up an Interactive Context
Set a Context for Communication

- The first goal is to set up an interactive context between the adult and child.
- Communication develops on a platform of shared joint attention and engagement.
  - Social interaction between child and adult
  - Play with objects and partner
  - Joint object/partner engagement
  - Coordinated object/partner engagement
  - Everyday routines where communication is functional
The Importance of Engagement

- Children learn best when they are engaged and interacting with a communication partner.
  - Play facilitates engagement and interaction
- Children are more likely to be engaged and learn language while doing activities they enjoy.
- When the adult plays with the child at his or her level, the adult optimizes the opportunity for communication to occur.
How to engage?

• Be at the child’s level.
• Join in and Play!
• Follow the child’s lead.
  – Limit directions and let the child lead the play.
  – Limit questions and let the child initiate the communication.
• Choose toys and activities that are interesting and engaging.
• Put away materials that aren’t being used.
• Substitute undesired activities with desired activities.
Notice and Respond to Communication
Noticing a Variety of Communication

All children are communicating **now**

**Prelinguistic**
- Point
- Show
- Give
- Vocalizations

**Linguistic**
- Signs
- Pictures
- Symbols
- Words

**Requesting**
- Reach
- Lifts arms up
- Shakes head

**Commenting**
How to Notice and Respond

- Wait and listen
- Notice and respond to all communication
  - Eye contact
  - Gestures
  - Vocalizations
  - Words
- Pay attention to the behaviors you want to see more of
- Continuously scan to notice and respond to all children
Why Notice and Respond?

- Noticing and responding to all communication teaches your child that their communication is important to you.
- By acknowledging all communication and communicative attempts you reinforce your child for communicating.
- The more your child communicates, the more practice they receive and the easier communication becomes.
Individualize the Response to the Child’s Language Level

- **Proximal Level:** Teachers match the children’s sentence length by speaking in sentences, which are no more than 2-3 words longer than the children’s sentences.
  - One word
  - Two words
  - Phrases

- Use rich and specific vocabulary
  - Emphasize key words
  - Think of a variety of word types and grammatical forms
Encourage Turn Taking
Take Turns

• **First Wait and Listen**
• **Allow time for the child to communicate.**
• **Play a game of “communication catch”**
  – Child communicates
  – Adult responds (and waits)
  – Child communicates
  – Adult responds (and waits)
• **Only say something after the child communicates**
• **Encourage peer-to-peer turn taking**
Why take turns?

- It allows your child more opportunities to communicate.
  - More opportunities = more practice = growth in communication skills.
- It teaches your child how to have a conversation
  - Child communicates
  - Parent communicates and WAITS, which signals to the child that it is his or her turn to communicate
Keep the Interaction Going
Expanding play and activities

- **Follow** the child’s lead to offer new choices or additions
- **Minimize** wait time by anticipating and planning the next step
Expanding communication

- Expanding play and activities gives you more to talk about!
- The best time to teach is when a child is already communicating
- Expand by:
  - Recasting
  - Adding a word
  - Extending the content
Prompting strategies to teach language

• For low-rate communicators:
  – Prompt in engaging and reinforcing scenarios
  – Set up opportunities to elicit more spontaneous communication

• For high-rate communicators:
  – Ask real questions to extend and expand the conversation
Prompting Strategies to Teach Language

- Ask a variety of Wh- questions
  - Wait expectantly for a response
- Only using Yes/No questions to obtain information and clarify messages waiting expectantly for a response, and
- Avoid test and rhetorical questions.
- Limit questions so they are not overbearing in the conversation.
Discuss

• When can you use these strategies in the classroom?
• What challenges do you see in implementing EMT within the classroom?
Thank you!

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Reviews of EMT Studies


