



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic

Milieu Approach

Description: This is a naturalistic approach using your child's communication attempts to provide the caregiver an opportunity to model words in daily routines. By arranging your child's environment with toys and/or objects he/she enjoys this "entices" him/her to communicate with the caregiver to satisfy his/her need. This strategy can be used any time as it can be incorporated within the routines of the family. Your child may communicate with you by gesture (e.g. reaching, pointing), vocalization (e.g. grunting, using vowel sounds), and/or verbalization (e.g. words, phrases). The caregiver's job is to respond modeling words or phrases to match the communication attempt.

Tips!

1. Wait for your child to communicate with you. Try not to anticipate his/her need and communicate it.
2. Once your child attempts or does communicate (e.g. gesture, vocalization, verbalization) then immediately model the words matching his communication and give the object.
3. Refrain from asking a question (e.g. "What do you want?")
4. There is no expectation for your child to imitate the word or phrase

Create an Interactive Context:

- *Eat a desired food or play with a desired toy without offering any.* Pretend as though you don't realize that the child wants some. Once he/she gestures he/she wants what you have, model basic language, such as, "Cookie, you want the cookie, or cookie please" and then given the object.
- *Start and wait.* Start blowing bubbles, pushing a car, tossing a ball, or anything that the child knows and pause before completion. Once he/she gestures, he/she wants to play, model the word that matches the gesture such as "Bubbles, car, ball etc."
- *Place desired objects* in containers that the child can't open, but you can. Once he/she gestures toward the desired object, say the object name and perform the action.

- *Do things wrong.* Put hats on upside down, walk past an intended door, “forget” parts of craft or other activities. Make it fun! Once he/she gestures, model the word matching the incident.
- *Put desired objects out of reach:* Put objects he/she favors out of his/her reach, but he/she can see them. When he/she gestures, vocalizes, and/or verbalizes then model the word to match what he/she is requesting. For example, if your child loves the iPad, put it high on the counter – so he/she can see it, but cannot reach it. When he/she gestures, vocalizes, or verbalizes then say “iPad” or “iPad mommy/daddy.”

Model and Expand:

- Provide your child language models by communicating at your child’s “target level of language.”
- *Target Level of Language:* Using language models slightly above his/her level. If he/she is at the gesture level, use single words. If he/she is at the single word level, use two-word phrases. If he/she is at the phrase level, use short sentences.
- *Expand language:* if your child is at the single word level always try and responds by expanding on his/her utterances. For example, your child says “Car,” you say “Car please.”