Language Intervention/Facilitation at the Interface of Social-Emotional & Language Development

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I’ve Got Two Wings
Attachment

• Lack of secure attachment risk factor for both behavior problems (Swearingen, Cohen, & Owens, 2001)
• and limited language development (Van Ijzendoorn, Dijkstra, & Bus, 1993).
• Children growing up in poverty have increased prevalence of insecure attachment (Vondra et al., 2001).
• Attachment status is a strong predictor of language skills (Van Ijzendoorn, Dijkstra, & Bus, 1993, Eigsti, 2004).
Relationship-based learning (Geller & Foley, 2009)

- Relationships: regularities in patterns of interaction over time.
- Relationship between SLP and family.
- Relationship between parents and child.
- Influence of past relationships on current relationships (attachment theory).
- SLP forms “safe” relationship with and between parent and child, so that disclosures and/or errors are not judged or criticized.
- SLP reflects affect, intentions, and internal states parent and/or child are experiencing.
- SLP models relationship and level of engagement for and with parent that will facilitate language.
“What do you do with a child like this?”

“(They) are distinguished by their regrettable ability to elicit from others exactly the opposite of what they really need. Children who have had everything taken from them as punishment…won’t work for typical rewards. They’ve played that game with adults and always ended up losing. Only people rewards will work. Moments of our time, our attention, are the only things they know we can never take back. Attention-seeking behaviors is an unfortunate phrase. It sounds so devious. Children who seek attention are children who need attention. Their behavior may be ignored, but not the need.” (L. Tobin, 1991)
...so, **what** do you do with a child like this!!??

Working with a child at risk requires teaching and learning within the context of individual relationship. This is a simple statement, but far from an easy one. Relationship-based teaching begins with the relationship. Building this relationship with a child who has not yet learned to trust adults requires time, patience, energy, focus. But I believe it is absolutely the key, the most powerful tool we have to teach them.

(Wing, 2013)
Internal state words: the language of self-regulation

Children’s ability to use internal state words at 24 months predicted their concurrent performance as well as performance at 39 months on tasks requiring self-regulation (delayed gratification, suppressing dominant response, persistence), controlling for age, sex, and overall verbal ability (Carlson, Mandell, & Williams, 2004).
Perception

Taste
Physiology

Thirsty
Emotion/Affect

Cry
Volition and ability

Want/need (food)
Cognition

Play/pretend
Moral obligation

Have to (go to bed)
Emotion/Affect ("happy, sad, angry")

Mothers’ emotion/affect talk to toddlers (age 2)

Child’s emotion/affect talk (age 3)

Child’s self-regulation (ages 4 & 5)
Development of internal state words

- Volition/ability,
- Physiology, Perception
- Emotion/affect,
- Moral obligation
- Cognition
Children with insecure and/or disorganized attachment used fewer internal state words at age 3 (Lemche et al., 2004).

Maltreated children’s use of internal state words compared to control group matched for age, gender, income level at age 2 ½ (Cicchetti & Beeghly, 1987).

No differences found between two groups in receptive vocabulary.

Maltreated children used fewer different words and proportionally fewer internal state words. This difference was due to use of fewer words describing physiology and negative emotion/affect.

Maltreated children also used fewer utterances referring to self.
Persisting differences in use of internal state words

- Adolescents with history of maltreatment did not differ in receptive vocabulary, but produced fewer utterances.
- Maltreated adolescents also produced proportionally fewer utterances referring to self (both action and internal states) (McFadyn & Kitson, 1996).
Internal state word facilitation/intervention

1. Overall expressive vocabulary.

2. Developmental progression:
   a. Volition/ability, physiology, perception.
   b. Emotion/affect, moral obligation.
   c. Cognition.

3. Social-emotional status
Small group

- Think about a child or a group of children with whom you are currently working.
- Would internal state word facilitation/intervention be appropriate? Why or why not?
- What factors would you need to consider?
- Where would you begin?
- What barriers to intervention/facilitation exist?
Language in context

- Language
- Behavior episode
- Schema
Social-emotional themes

- Go Away-Come back: Attachment, extreme separation anxiety or lack of anxiety, object permanence.
- That’s mine-Boundaries, autonomy, possession.
- Holes and peeks-Body integrity, anxiety over toilet training, hair cuts, etc.
- Things I like/Things I don’t like-Self-awareness, identity formation, food anxiety.
- Hurting and healing-Body integrity, empathy, healing from trauma.
- Real/pretend-Fantasy/reality differentiation.
- Emotion/affect-Self-awareness and self-regulation.
- Unsmiling Faces; how preschools can heal (Lesley Koplow, 2007).
- Bears, Bears Everywhere; supporting children’s emotional health in the classroom (Lesley Koplow, 2008).
Language in context
## Language of self-regulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intention</th>
<th>Sounds like…..</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ask how the child is feeling.</td>
<td>“Are you upset about that?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guess how the child is feeling.</td>
<td>“Your face and voice tell me that you are very happy about your grandpa visiting you.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirror what you hear.</td>
<td>“So you tried to tie your shoes, and you couldn’t do it?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Validate feelings.</td>
<td>“I can see why you feel frustrated.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathize.</td>
<td>“You might feel very frustrated.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let the child know that the feelings are a reaction to a trigger.</td>
<td>“You got scared when the fire alarm went off.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reassure the child that her reaction is normal.</td>
<td>“A lot of children are scared of loud noises.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Beyond Behavior Management  
(Jenna Bilmes, 2004)
Language Intervention/Facilitation

- Relationship-based.
- Internal state words.
- Language in context.
- Social-emotional themes.
To take with you

- “The limits of my language means the limits of my world.”
  Ludwig Wittgenstein, philosopher

- “Feelings or emotions are the universal language and are to be honored. They are the authentic expression of who you are at your deepest place.”
  Judith Wright, poet & environmentalist

- "No one has yet fully realized the wealth of sympathy, kindness and generosity hidden in the soul of a child. The effort of every true education should be to unlock that treasure."
  Emma Goldman, author