

**Module: Communication and Emergent Literacy:
Early Intervention Issues**

**Session 3: Communication and Language
Interventions**

Handout E: Principles of Communication and Language Intervention

EIVI Training Center. (2005). *Principles of communication and language intervention*. Chapel Hill, NC: Early Intervention Training Center for Infants and Toddlers With Visual Impairments, FPG Child Development Institute, UNC-CH.

1. Use comprehensive assessment results.
 - Communication and language goals should be based on an understanding of children’s overall development, interests, and family priorities.
 - Children with visual impairments may have high scores on receptive language tests, but they may not understand the language. Deficits in concept development should be addressed before moving on to more complex language that is beyond the child’s comprehension.
2. Develop activities that encourage social interactions.
 - Communication and language require social interaction and so goals should be implemented in the context of social interactions within daily routines.
 - Asking children to repeat phrases is less helpful than talking with children and encouraging language in a conversation.
3. Provide meaningful contexts for communication development.
 - Interventions must provide a purposeful or meaningful reason for the child to communicate.
 - Learning how to ask for more of a favorite food at dinnertime provides a purpose for saying “carrot” that does not exist when a child is shown a picture and told, “Say *carrot*.”
4. Use natural learning opportunities.
 - Naturally occurring routines and events should be designed or manipulated to provide opportunities for children to practice communication and language.
 - Natural routines can be used to encourage language by waiting for an appropriate response when asking children questions or by asking them to make choices before continuing the routine.

5. Consider differences in development.
 - Children tend to acquire language in spurts, and it is impossible to predict when or at what rate a specific child will develop communication and language.
 - The rate of language development varies depending on the type of skill and on the child rather than following a prescribed timeline.
6. Take advantage of teachable moments.
 - Make use of spontaneous events that provide opportunities to practice communication and language.
 - Though the family and interventionists should have regular opportunities for promoting language development, unexpected opportunities (i.e., “the teachable moment”) should be used. For example, when the neighbor’s dog comes into the yard, you can talk about dogs, fur, tails, colors, smells, sounds, etc.
7. Develop new information that builds on previously acquired information.
 - Do not overwhelm a child with too much new information, but incorporate new skills into existing skills.
 - Teach new vocabulary using syntax the child already uses and introduce new syntax using familiar vocabulary.
8. Model rich language.
 - It may be more important for children to understand the many meanings and uses of words than for children to use many words they only partly understand.
 - Provide many opportunities for children to acquire the concepts associated with the words they are using.
9. Make language experiences fun.
 - Plan activities that will be fun and appropriate for the child’s age or developmental level.
 - Children find different things fun depending on their age and developmental level, and what adults find fun will often not be fun for young children.
10. Develop interventions that are appropriate for the child’s developmental level.
 - Babies and toddlers learn differently, and interventions should reflect this.
 - In addition to matching communication skills to the child’s developmental level, interventions should match the child’s developmental level and skills.

Reference

Easterbrooks, S.R. (2003). Communication. In S.R. Hooper & W. Umansky (Eds.), *Young children with special needs* (4th ed., pp. 372-409). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.