

Natural Language Acquisition and AAC

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) supports language development!

Gestalt language development is described by Natural Language Acquisition (NLA)



Echolalia is Stage 1 of gestalt language development!
Stage 2 is mix and match!
Stage 3 is single words!
Stage 4 is grammar!

Stages 1 & 2 help the Gestalt Language Processor get to word + word processing just like Analytic Language Processors!

Robust AAC + Gestalts!

How to enhance language development for AAC communicators who are Gestalt Language Processors!

Suggestions for gestalts that might be added to AAC devices:

1. Connecting/requesting/inviting with “Let’s” + (or “Wanna?” +)

- * Let’s get + (that, in, out, snack, toys, clothes, markers, blue, Mom, friends, etc)
- * Let’s go + (home, library, outside, class, store, playground, pool, beach, etc)

2. Commenting/labeling/answering questions with “It’s” + (or “That’s” +)

- * It’s + (blue, red, ball, snack, Mom, home, friend, me, you, OK, not OK)

3. Directing attention with “Look at” +

- * Look at + (puppy, book, snow, sun, reindeer, snowman, dinosaur, surprise, TV)

4. Commenting on one’s actions or intentions with “I’m” + (or “I’m gonna” +)

- * I’m + (happy, sad, scared, tired, sick, hungry, thirsty, ready, going, done, OK)

5. Questioning with “What’s” +

- * What’s + (that, happening, next, going on, for lunch, their name, over there)

6. Protesting with “Don’t” +

- * Don’t + (like, want, touch, take, change, help, talk, go, stay, (be) sad, laugh)

7. Confirming with “Like” +

- * Like + (that, one, me, you, them, book, story, game, friend, Mom, teacher)

Natural Language Acquisition

Stage	Examples	Description
<p>Stage 1: Gestalts</p> <p>Language stored verbatim from other sources. This language can be songs, sentences, scripts, or parts of media.</p>	<p>ABCDEFGHIJKLMN OPQRSTU VWXYZnowI knowmy abcsnex ttimewontyou usingwithme</p> <p>Ifyoure happyandyou knowit Happy birthday toyou —— <i>Let's get out of here!</i> <i>Want some more?</i></p>	<p>Whole gestalts are the 'sound track' from episodes of life or media. They communicate but should not be taken literally.</p> <p>Help by providing language models that can be easily mitigated, but are immediately useful and emphasize those (e.g. "Let's...", "It's a...", "I'm...".)</p>
<p>Stage 2: Mitigations</p> <p>Language from Stage 1 is broken down into smaller parts, then combined with other parts into new combinations.</p>	<p>ABCD + to you You're happy + sing with me —— <i>(a) Let's get + out of here!</i> <i>Want + some more?</i></p> <p><i>(b) Let's get + some more?</i> <i>Want + out of here!</i></p>	<p>The AAC communicator is figuring out how to 'mix and match' language.</p> <p>Help by continuing to provide language that helps this process of mitigating and recombining.</p>
<p>Stage 3: Isolation & Recombination of Single Words</p> <p>Mitigations are further broken down into single words that are combined without grammar.</p>	<p><i>Get... more!</i> <i>Want... out?</i> —— Ball + red, Blue + ball, Table + chair, Table + ball, Red + blue, Table + there, Here + there, Mom + home, Home + me, Me + Mom</p>	<p>These two-word combinations seem less sophisticated than Stage 2 combinations, but are the beginning of self-generated language!</p> <p>Help AAC users recognize this by creating situations to create 'referential' combinations together: nouns, attributes, and locations.</p>
<p>Stages 4-6: Self-Generated Grammar</p> <p>Original sentences are simple at first, but increase in complexity.</p>	<p>Home Mom me. Mom me home now. Friends school play now. Friends school home later. Want friends home Mom. I want friends home Mom</p>	<p>Emerging grammar is experimental, and helps establish later, more correct grammar. Now is the time to provide a wide variety of models to support this journey!</p> <p>Stages 5 and 6 expand the types of sentences an AAC user can produce — like their 'Analytic' peers!</p>

Additional Resources

- ❑ Articles, Links to NLA book and NLA courses: <http://www.communicationdevelopmentcenter.com>
- ❑ NJACE webinar on NLA: <https://m.facebook.com/events/533345574311656>
- ❑ ASHA description of echolalia: <https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/clinical-topics/autism/echolalia-and-its-role-in-gestalt-language-acquisition/>