Using Picture Books to Support the Development of Language in Young Children with Autism

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Books Rule!!

• Books are especially wonderful tools to use with children with autism:
  • They are visual
  • They are the same each time you visit them
  • They make the association between words and objects clear
  • They create a comfortable “space” between the adult and the child
  • They provide practice on any language skill
General Tips

• Simplify and shorten what is written to match child’s language level
  – A favorite book can be used for years by letting it grow as the child grows
• Be animated and expressive
  – Use voice and facial expression
  – Use sound effects
  – Exaggerate key words
  – Make it fun!
Mrs. Dumbo is in the circus. She is going on the train.
General Tips

• Show the child what you are talking about
  – Point to pictures
  – Open flaps
  – Touch the printed word
  – Show with an action or a gesture
  – Show a real object
General Tips

• Go slow!
  – Pause between words and phrases
  – Be natural
  – Create opportunities for the child to “take a turn”
    • Lift a flap
    • Wave
    • Point
    • Say a word
    • Say a phrase
    • Answer a question
  – Wait for the child to “take a turn”
  – Cue the child to take a turn
Joint Attention

- Choose a book the child will enjoy
- “Join” the child as they touch pictures, or point to pictures
- If the child make sounds, imitate them
- Make sounds, look at the child, see if he looks at you
- Choose books that follow a known song
- Enjoy!
Examples of books for Joint Attention
Pointing

• Choose a books with:
  • simple, fun pictures
  • Photos of familiar things
  • Numbers, letters
  • Animals
  • Hidden pictures
• If child touches picture, tap the picture with your pointing finger. See if child imitates.
• Mold the child into a point.
• Say a word the child knows, see if child points to the picture. If he doesn’t, you point to the picture.
• Try a book with holes so the child can point into the holes.
Examples of books for pointing
Responding Nonverbally

- Provide a way for a nonverbal child to respond, or participate in the enjoyment of a book.
- Choose books that have flaps to lift or parts to manipulate.
- Provide icons that the child can match to pictures on the page.
- Give the child an object that relates to the book.
Examples of Books that Allow a Nonverbal Child to Participate
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Making Sounds

• Choose books:
  – with animals for making animal noises
  – With vehicles for making mechanical sounds
  – With a repetitive word such as “hush,” or “snap,” or “shhhhh,” that you can exaggerate as a fun sound
Examples of Books for Encourages Sounds
Prompting single words

- Choose a book with familiar photos/pictures
- Say single words, repeat the words
- Use single icons that match the pictures.
- Choose words to prompt a yes/no response
Examples of Books that Help you Prompt a Single Word
Books to Elicit Yes/No Responses

Is it a cat?
Is it a boy?
Is it a baby?
Is it a dog?
Combining words (icons)

• With a child who is beginning to combine words or icons, choose:
  • Predictable books with repetitive words and phrases
  • Rhyming books
  • Books with very simple plots
  • Provide icons
Predictable Stories

Bill Martin Jr / Eric Carle
Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?

Mrs. Wishy-Washy

Mr. Wishy-Washy's Farm

Images of children reading books.
Books with Simple Story Plots, Rhyming
Books to Support Word Combining

"I love my white shoes, I love my white shoes, I love my white shoes."
Books with Icons to Support Word Combining

Commenting
Agent + Action + Object
Books with Icons to Support Word Combining

*Peek-a-Pet!
Written by
Marie Torres Gimnigli
Illustrated by
Stephanie Peterson

Guess who? Peek-a-
A tweet, a woof,
a ribbit ribbit, too!
These pets want to play
peek-a-boo with you!

Woof!
 Says the dog.
Books with Icons to Support Word Combining

So the hen danced a jig
and sat on a pig.

And the duck said, “Scat,”
but the bee just sat.

The duck is mad
The chicken is on the pig.
Books with Icons to Support Word Combining
Make Connections Between Books and Real Objects

- Add props and objects to increase interest, attention and action
- Use objects to act out parts of story
- Let child hold an object while story is read
- Encourage child to act out story while it is read or afterwards
Make Connections with Objects
Make Connections with Objects
Make Connections with Objects
Make Connections with Objects
Asking/Answering Questions

- Choose books that give you many opportunities to ask the child a question that he is able to answer
- Choose books that have a repetitive question that the child can ask
Books that Encourage Question Asking/Answering

- The Little Red Hen by Byron Barton
- "Will you help me?"

- Flap book
- "Who is hiding?"

- "Are you my mother?"
Books that Encourage Question Asking/Answering

Who is on the Grandma?
The boy is on the Grandma!

Who under the dog?
The boy is under the dog!
Retelling

- For a more verbal child, retelling is a powerful skill to work on.
- Choose a book with a simple plot that the child enjoys and has heard many times.
- Provide visual supports:
  - Flannel board pieces
  - Toys
  - Pictures
  - Puppets
Supports for Retelling
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- Go Away Big Green Monster by Ed Emberley
- Big Green Monster has two big yellow eyes,
- a long bluish-greenish nose,
- a big red mouth with sharp white teeth,
Supports for Retelling

Pictures from the story can be used to help children learn to sequence and tell the story.
Supports for Retelling

The Snowy Day

by
Ezra Jack Keats

Black and white