What does it take to become “fluent” in a language?

What do we mean by…?

Engineer:

Immersive:

Environment:
## Partner Augmented Input Self-Assessment
Adapted from Senner & Baud 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When I’m working with students who use AAC systems...</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I touch symbols while I’m speaking to model words, phrases, or sentences throughout an activity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I talk about what the student is doing as he/she is doing it and touch corresponding symbols on his/her AAC system.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I pause to give him/her time to take a conversational turn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I speak in a slow and clear manner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I use the AAC system to make several different types of messages such as asking questions, commenting, protesting, and requesting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I repeat target words and phrases throughout an activity.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When the student activates a single symbol on his/her AAC system...</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I build up the message by selecting 1-2 more symbols to make a more complete message.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If a student I’m working with uses a gesture (i.e. point) or word approximation that I understand...</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I point out the words/symbols with the same meaning on his/her AAC system while I’m talking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I respond without making him/her say it again on the AAC system.</td>
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</table>
ATIA 2016 Agreements Regarding AAC

- Repetition with moderate differences is important to avoid habituation.
- Core vocabulary should be taught.
- Modeling should be done on a system that is robust and can allow all pragmatic functions.
- There should always be a light tech option as part of an AAC system.
- The student should not have to exit out of his/her communication system in order to engage in academic or leisure activities.
- The AAC system should always be available within arm's reach of the user.
- The AAC system should never be removed for disciplinary reasons.
- Motor planning is an important consideration of an organizational structure of an AAC system.
- A single switch or sequenced switch device is appropriate to use as a component of a multimodal communication system.
- Modelling (aided language stimulation) all day, every day, is desired in AAC, with no requirement of a response.
- Don’t demand more language than is pragmatically appropriate for the interaction.
PROMPT HIERARCHY

ALWAYS USE AIDED LANGUAGE STIMULATION (aka: Modeling, Aided Language input, Partner Augmented Input) intensively, across all environments. This is the umbrella under which all AAC learning happens.

CREATE MOTIVATION - Create circumstances which are highly engaging and make communicating more likely. Be a motivating communication partner.

INVITING/EXPECTANT PAUSE - Pause and wait for the individual to respond. Consider using a clock to ensure you are waiting long enough. Some individuals need just a few seconds, others need much longer. For individuals with anxiety, an inviting, distracted pause may be more effective.

INDIRECT VISUAL CUE - Use a gesture, point a light at, move the communication system closer or otherwise help the individual direct attention to communicating a message. Use an inviting, expectant pause.

DIRECT VISUAL CUE - Directly point at or otherwise indicate possible messages the individual may want to use. Use an inviting expectant pause.

INDIRECT VERBAL CUE - Give a hint, use a partial verbal cue such as phonemic cue or unfinished sentence. Ask what they think. Use an inviting, expectant pause.

DIRECT VERBAL CUE - Directly tell the individual possible messages they might want to share. “I wonder if you think it’s...” Use an inviting, expectant pause.

NON-DIRECTIVE MODEL - Tell the individual something like “Some people might say...” or “I think it’s...” and then model some possible messages. Use an inviting, expectant pause.

INCREASE MOTIVATION AND RE-EXPOSE TO TARGET VOCABULARY - Communication is always a choice, which means that it is ok if the individual does not communicate or says something other than what you were expecting. When this happens, increase motivation and re-expose to target vocabulary. Avoid physical prompts as these remove the choice and increase risk of physical and sexual abuse by grooming compliance behaviors.

(C) Kate Ahern, M.S.Ed 2016 with Shelane Nielsen
The Communication Bill of Rights PDF can be found in the files of the Facebook Group “AAC Through Motivate, Model, Move Out Of The Way” (by Kate Ahem)

Beth’s 70 Words (Gail’s First 50 + Beth’s favorites)

☐ again  ☐ drink  ☐ here  ☐ now  ☐ stop
☐ all  ☐ eat  ☐ hungry  ☐ off  ☐ tell
☐ all done  ☐ fast  ☐ I  ☐ on  ☐ that
☐ away  ☐ feel  ☐ in  ☐ orange  ☐ there
☐ awesome  ☐ finished  ☐ it  ☐ out  ☐ thirsty
☐ bad  ☐ funny  ☐ like  ☐ pink  ☐ turn
☐ big  ☐ get  ☐ little  ☐ play  ☐ up
☐ black  ☐ go  ☐ look  ☐ purple  ☐ want
☐ blue  ☐ good  ☐ make  ☐ put  ☐ what
☐ brown  ☐ green  ☐ me  ☐ read  ☐ where
☐ come  ☐ happy  ☐ mine  ☐ red  ☐ white
☐ do  ☐ hard  ☐ more  ☐ sad  ☐ who
☐ don’t  ☐ hear  ☐ my  ☐ slow  ☐ why
☐ down  ☐ help  ☐ not  ☐ some  ☐ yellow
☐ you
Instructions: Complete the fields with vocabulary that you wish to have added to your communication device.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nickname:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birthday:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Address:</td>
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<tr>
<td>City/State/Zip:</td>
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<td>Phone:</td>
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<td>Email:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diagnosis:</td>
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<td>Allergies:</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medical or Personal Care Needs (medication, positioning, equipment, etc.)</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of People and Pets (family, friends, caregivers, doctors, therapists, teachers, colleagues, pets, etc.)</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Places (community, school, home, work, restaurants, vacation, etc.)</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities (community, school, home, work, sports, teams, etc.)</th>
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<tr>
<th>Multimedia (music, TV, movies, video games, apps, etc.)</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Food or Drinks (favorites, instructions for preparation, etc.)</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Social Language (slang, jokes, swear words, greetings, etc.)</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Miscellaneous or additional vocabulary to be included:</th>
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</table>
Other Ways to Engineer the Environment
Descriptive vs. Referential Teaching
Written by Beth Browning for the “Stories and Strategies for Success” blog
on the AAC Language Lab in August 2017

It’s time to take a test. Answer these questions:

- Which planet is sixth from the sun, is very big, spins fast but moves around the sun slowly, and has large rings?
- What do we call the time between 1760-1840 when life was changed by how things were made?
- Name a type of housing that Native Americans used.

The answers to these referential questions are Saturn, Industrial Revolution, and Teepee. Did you get them right?

Imagine you are a Person Who Uses AAC (PWUAAC). Would you be able to answer those referential questions with the words available in your device? Or would someone have to spend time programming those words into your device and teaching you where to find them before you could answer? Do you think taking the time to program and teach words like Saturn, Industrial Revolution, and Teepee is a good use of time? Are they words you will use over and over again all throughout your life?

Now for a different kind of test. Answer these questions:

- Tell what you know about satellites.
- Describe natural resources.
- Contrast an author with an illustrator.

The answers to descriptive questions like these will contain a lot of core vocabulary such as “something little goes around something big” (satellite) or “things that come from water or earth” (natural resources) or “person who writes and person who makes pictures” (author vs illustrator). Hopefully, these core words are already programmed into your device, you’re already using them in other contexts throughout your day, and they are words that you’ll continue to use throughout your life. For these reasons, it is a much better use of everyone’s time to implement a Descriptive Teaching Model!

There is a misconception that one-word responses are easier for PWUAAC – but that’s not true if the key words must first be identified in the lesson, then programmed into the device, then taught to the student! Who has time for all of that? Who is responsible for making sure these words are available in the device? Is it worthwhile to have hundreds of “temporary” words programmed when they are not likely to ever be used again? No! Therein lies the problem with the Referential Teaching Model.

Descriptive Teaching allows communication partners (teachers, para-professionals, parents, therapists) to model core language while teaching content-specific vocabulary. The idea is that we use core words to define and describe the key vocabulary in the lesson. Here are some examples:

- Plot – story about
- Setting – where
- Conflict – problem in story
- Orbit – to go around something in a circle
- Gravity – the Earth pulls things to itself
- Tide – water goes up and down
- Fuel – makes things go/work/run
- Economy – the way money is made and used by people

Is there a time when curriculum words should be added to a communication device? Sure! Certain academic vocabulary will be used frequently throughout a person’s schooling (i.e. author, angle, president). Words like these will be used over and over again throughout a person’s life and would make sense to program into the device.

What if teachers still want to assess whether or not a student knows the name of a concept? Well, there are several alternatives to programming curriculum words into the device such as spelling, true/false, multiple choice, and post-it notes.

Here are three fun resources for boosting your use of descriptive teaching:

1. Watch “The Language Stealers” video
2. Try describing a word with The Upgoer5 Text Editor. If you use a word that is not included in the 1,000 most frequently used words, it will flag it. You can then try to use different core words to describe that one until you have no red flags!

3. Check out the Expanding Expression Tool for a multi-sensory approach to improve oral and written language skills through defining & describing, making associations, comparing & contrasting, and categorizing.

The EET and AAC: Expanding Language with a Multi-Sensory Approach
Written by Beth Browning, Summer 2017

"Tell me everything you know about an apple" I asked my verbose 4-year-old daughter.
"You eat it, it’s red, and it tastes good!" she replied enthusiastically.
"Do you know anything else about an apple?" I probed.
"It’s a fruit that grows on a tree" she stated.
"Is that ALL you know about an apple? Is there anything else you can tell me?"
"Nope that’s all I know, mommy."

Five attributes. That’s all she could generate on her own. But I knew she knew more, so I taught her a strategy for defining and describing vocabulary called the Expanding Expression Tool (EET). It took 2 minutes to teach her the song while walking through the different colored beads on a chain - each representing a different language element.

Sung to the tune of Skip to My Lou:
♫ Green group ♫ Blue do ♫ What does it look like? ♫ What is it made of? ♫ Pink parts ♫ White where? ♫ What else do I know?

"Now tell me what you know about an apple. Start with Green Group. What is the category?"
"Food or fruit."
"Okay, Blue Do – what do you do with an apple?"
Excitedly and with wide eyes, she said, “You eat it, bake it, bite it, pick it, cut it, peel it, dip it!”
"Yep! What does an apple look like?"
"It’s round and smooth. It’s small. It’s yellow, red, or green."
"Okay, but what is it made of or where does it come from?"
"A tree! It grows from a seed into a tree and then you pick it at the orchard!"
"Fantastic! Now, what are all its parts?"
"It has a stem, seeds, peel, and juice."
"Where do you find it?"
"In the grocery store, in my lunchbox, on the teacher’s desk."
"What else do you know about apples?"
"They are healthy. They taste good with peanut butter or caramel. They are sometimes sweet, sometimes sour. They are crunchy and juicy."
"You sure do know a LOT about apples!"
"Yep!"

From 5 attributes to 30+ in a time span of about 5 minutes. That is the magic of the EET! Now imagine the possibilities of using this tool with students who use augmentative-alternative communication (AAC) for expressive language!

With the EET you can start at a single word level or advance to phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and even reports which makes it an ideal tool for students of all ages and abilities who use core vocabulary based AAC systems. You can break it down into each component (categories, functions, attributes, parts, places, etc.) to teach the different language elements and then put it all together to define and describe words. There are endless ideas for implementing the EET and all can be adapted for use with an AAC device: riddles, secret object guessing game, show & tell, language webs, compare & contrast, biographies or autobiographies, writing from prior knowledge, summarizing… It will not only increase your students’ verbal expression, but their written expression as well! Use the
EET to write with the AAC device - it's a great way to target syntax and morphology with kids who are putting 3+ words together in phrases and sentences!

You might be thinking, “But a lot of the language created with the EET is noun-based. How does that help my AAC student build their use of core vocabulary on the device?” First, I recommend you read this blog article I wrote on Descriptive vs. Referential Teaching. It will help explain how to take a content or academic word and break it down into a core word description. This is an important skill for AAC users because if a particular word is not stored in their device or if they don’t know where to access it, they can use core words to “talk around it” by defining and describing it. And the EET gives them a systematic and organized way of doing so! For example, if I were trying to tell you something and the word wasn’t in my AAC device, could you guess what I’m talking about if I said, “animal, magical, looks like horse, thing on head, in stories”? Likewise, in the example above, if my daughter didn’t know the word “peel” when she was explaining the parts of an apple, she could have substituted it with “part on the outside that is shiny and red”. An AAC user at the 1-2 word level might just say “outside” or “shiny stuff” which would then give me an opportunity to model other vocabulary in the device to build on what they’ve said.

The Expanding Expression Tool was created by Sara L. Smith, speech-language pathologist (SLP). It is a multi-sensory approach to improve oral and written language skills through defining & describing, making associations, comparing & contrasting, and categorizing. It is an awesome tool for general and special education teachers, literacy coaches, reading specialists, parents, and SLPs to build language with students of any age or ability level. Although the EET Kit comes with a manual, I highly recommend attending a full-day training for a thorough explanation of the research behind the technique and the methodology to implement it correctly in a fun variety of ways across subject matter and age groups. If you have questions about the EET, contact Sara directly at eetsmiths@gmail.com or (989) 225-0436.