



Partner-Augmented Input (PAI)

What is Partner-Augmented Input?

Partner-augmented input, also referred to as “Natural Aided Language,” “Aided Language Modeling,” or “Aided Language Stimulation”, is a powerful receptive training approach for children and adults who use augmentative and alternative communication.

How Is Partner-Augmented Input Provided?

Communication partners (e.g., school staff, parents, peers) use visual language themselves by pointing to the symbols on a child's communication board or device while simultaneously talking.

Skilled Providers:

- Model a *variety* of communicative functions (i.e., not just requesting);
- Use a large percentage of the available vocabulary;
- Highlight a large percentage of vocabulary items, as they appear naturally in their natural speech;
- Strive to use an 80:20 ratio of statements to questions/commands; and
- Strive to provide partner-augmented input in at least 80% of ongoing daily activities.

Tips for Providing Effective Language Input:

The purpose of providing partner-augmented input is to establish a solid *receptive* language base upon which a child's AAC use is built. The expectation is that expressive language will eventually follow. The child should be encouraged but *not required* to use symbols during your interactions. Remember SMOORRES:

- **Slow rate** - Language input should be provided at a slow rate;
- **Model** - Words and short phrases should be used to discuss what the child is hearing, seeing, doing, and feeling (i.e., parallel talk);
 - Talk about what you are doing as you are doing it (i.e., self talk);
- **Repeat** - Several repetitions are beneficial when commenting on ongoing events;
- **Respect & reflect** - When the child communicates something through gesture or word approximation **respect and reflect**, model a word or phrase to communicate the same thought or feeling *without making the child repeat himself*;
- **Expand** - Build upon the child's communication (i.e., if he/she use one word or symbol such as “BUBBLE” expand the comment to two words, for example, “Oh, that's a BIG BUBBLE.”)
- **Stop** - Provide an *expectant pause* when you're finished with your model to allow the child time to respond.

Research suggests that PAI:

- increases vocabulary comprehension (*Dada & Alant, 2009*)
- increases symbol comprehension and production (*Drager et al., 2006; Harris & Reichle, 2004*).
- provides models for appropriate language and communication (*Cafiero, 1998*).
- provides children with a model for how AAC can be used, in what contexts, and for what purposes, reinforces the effectiveness of using the system (i.e., children experience the utility and the power of the system), and makes an implicit statement to children that AAC provides an acceptable vehicle for communicating (*Romski & Sevcik, 1996*).
- is an effective method to teach early semantic-syntactic relations (*Lund, 2004*).
- increases production of multi-symbol messages (*Binger & Light, 2007*) and can improve utterance length and complexity (*Bruno & Trembath, 2006*).
- increases responsiveness and use of AAC (*Beck, Stoner & Dennis, 2009*).
- increases use of morphemes such as past tense –ed and plural –s (*Binger, Maguire-Marshall, & Kent-Walsh, 2011*).

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