AACtion Point by ICAN Talk Clinic

Recasts & AAC

Maximizing the potential of someone who uses AAC is our ultimate goal. Once an individual has established a basic vocabulary using graphic symbols for spontaneous novel utterance generation (SNUG), caregivers and practitioners start to work on acquiring grammar skills. *Recasts* are one of several strategies used by a communication partner to support increasing the use of morphemes (smallest unit of meaning in a language) and sentence length and complexity.

DEFINITION

Recasts are defined as replies to child utterances that specifically incorporate a challenge to the child's current language level but maintain the child's central meaning in the adult recast. For example, if a child lacks auxiliaries and says "dog running," one adult recast would be "Yes, the dog is running" (Camarata & Nelson; 1996)

Recasts are an evidence-based expressive intervention strategy used within ongoing discourse while targeting specific grammatical goals such as using possessives and plurals, -s or verb tenses, *–ing* and *–ed* endings.

SELECTING RECAST TARGETS

The most suitable way to select grammatical constructions as targets for goals is to observe the AAC speaker's performance in communication contexts (Fey, 2008). Goals can focus on developmentally appropriate constructions that are emerging or that the individual needs, but fails to use correctly. However, for AAC speakers, observation of emerging grammar or failures to use specific grammar constructions requires careful observation, language sampling and data collection.

Comprehension of grammar constructions may be the indicator to know that the AAC speaker is ready for recasts using a specific grammar target. However, the AAC system may require learning how to access specific grammar constructions or how to navigate among several displays to access grammar constructions to generate a more grammatically complex sentence.

Targets taken directly from curriculum or developmental checklists are not viewed as individualizing intervention.

PROCEDURES

■ **Determine morpheme and/or grammar targets.**
The language components of the AAC system along with the effectiveness and efficiency of the display will influence target selection (See Hill, 2010).

■ **Provide opportunities to present targets within ongoing discourse.**
Multiple, brief communication episodes plus targets that occur naturally provide the best use of recasts. Contexts include story retelling, describing, commenting, narrating* & others.

■ **Immediately following an AAC speaker's utterance using an AAC system, give a reply that retains the basic meaning, but recasts the prior utterance into a new sentence that incorporates the targeted syntactic structure.**
The target goal is using *–ing* and an AAC speaker says "dog drink water." The communication partner verbalizes AND uses an AAC system to say "Yes, the dog is drinking water."

■ **Keep the conversation flowing naturally and allow the child to process the target within the social/educational contexts of an ordinary conversation.**
Pause to give time for the AAC speaker to process the recast. Continue with the conversation providing opportunities to again elicit the target grammar construction.

■ **No explicit prompts for imitation are requested from the AAC speaker.**
Requests for the AAC speaker to imitate the recast are not given and, consequently, the need for verbal reinforcement is not required.
(External evidence section provides additional descriptions and procedural details)

RESOURCES

External Evidence

**Binger, C. and Maguire-Marshall, M., and Kent-Walsh, J. (2011). Using aided AAC models, recasts, and contrastive targets to teach grammatical morphemes to child who use AAC. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research, 54,* 160-176.

Camarata, S. M. and Nelson, K. E. (1992). Treatment efficacy as a function of target selection in the remediation of child language disorders. *Clinical Linguistics & Phonetics, 6(3),* 167-178.

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Hill, K. (2009). Data collection and monitoring AAC intervention in the schools. *ASHA Perspectives on Augmentative and Alternative Communication* 18 58-64 June 2009. doi:10.1044/aac18.2.58

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*Soto, G., Yu, B., & Kelso, J. (2008). Effectiveness of multifaceted narrative intervention on the stories told by a 12-year-old girl who uses AAC. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication, 24,* 76–87.

VanTatenhove, G. (2009) Building language competence in children using AAC devices: Six challenges. *Perspectives on Augmentative and Alternative Communication* 18 38-47 June 2009. doi:10.1044/aac18.2.38

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TIPS FROM ICAN™ Talk Clinicians

Using Storybooks

At home, in the classroom, at the library or in therapy, reading books can provide excellent opportunities to use recasts. Our clinic has a variety of books that we've selected for specific grammar targets. In addition, we fabricate books based on a client's favorite topic or character to make sure the story provides many opportunities to use the target structure. Having the client choose a book improves attention and interest.

Story reading is limited to 15-20 minute intervals. The adult verbally reads the story while modeling the text using the AAC system** . If the AAC speaker generates an utterance about the text that could include the targeted grammar, the adult recasts using the correct grammar construction. The following exemplifies when the present progressive *–ing* is the target, "Girl eat cookie" is recasted to "The girl is eating a cookie."

We strive to include at least 10 uses of the grammar construction during our reading activity. When not prompting imitation, we will later probe to monitor use of the target structure. Consider data collection in planning your targets (see Hill, 2009).

Using AAC Systems

While aided modeling is appropriate for the adult to use the AAC system of the speaker, we frequently use another AAC device identical to the AAC speaker's system for activities appropriate for recasts and expansions.

Our use of an identical AAC system allows the AAC speaker to view us producing the entire utterance while still having access to their own device. This tip creates more opportunities for using recasts in natural discourse too.