Strategies and Materials for working with Sensorimotor Level Learners

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Sensorimotor or Sensory Level Learner

• First stage of Piaget’s three stages of cognitive development
• Sensorimotor level 0-2 years
• Infant/ toddler begins to construct meaning by actively exploring
• Mental activity more likely to occur as a result of active manipulation of objects
Think about our students that function at the sensorimotor level... How are they learning and communicating ...

Through active use of their five senses
Making Connections

• In the natural environment (home, classroom, through play)

• In daily routines

• Using real objects and highly motivating, active learning activities
• These authors address strategies for working with Sensorimotor Level Learners
  – Cognition – D. Chen, M. Smith
  – Communication- Van Dijk Techniques
  – Motor – Active Learning - Lilli Nielsen
“Routine is the most highly effective strategy to teach communication.”

“Routines are predictable.”

“Communication is embedded in routines and can be worked on all day long.”

_M.Smith July 2010_
*Free Communication Assessment tool
*Help plan instruction and set goals for your sensory level learners

http://www.communicationmatrix.org/
Materials and Intervention

Resources

Sensorimotor
The Sensory Learning Kit (SKL)

Late sensorimotor, early preoperational
Symbols and Meaning (SAM)

Late preoperational, concrete operational
Tactile Connections
Project SALUTE

http://www.projectsalute.net/Learned/Learnedhtml/ComSymbols.html

Slides 9-15

In formation Source

*Communication Symbols* represents a synthesis of information from Project SALUTE’s focus groups, National Advisory Committee, staff activities, and a review of relevant literature such as the following bibliography. See website
Most Abstract 1. Traditional orthography or braille

Traditional orthography (print) for those who see and braille (for those who don’t have functional vision) are standardized and abstract symbol systems comprised of letters formed by a unique visual (lines) or tactile (dots) character. Stringing a series of these characters together creates words, which in turn stand for a very specific referent. The string of characters (whether visual or tactile) does not resemble their referent and are considered abstract in their representation. For example, the written word, "cup" has no visual relationship to its meaning.
Textured Symbols

- Textured symbols are individually created for students reading a tactile and static system. A given texture such as cotton, leather, plastic, dried glue dots, are affixed to cards and used by the student to indicate desired items, people or activities. The majority of textured symbols will have no relationship to what they represent and are therefore considered to be an abstract communication system (e.g., a pattern of glue dots represents "going for a swim"). Occasionally, an effort is made to have the texture more closely resemble what it is meant to represent. For example, a small piece of tile means a desire to go to the bathroom. When texture symbols closely resemble what they represent they are less abstract and more iconic. The more iconic textures may be easier for the student to learn their meaning.
Manual Signs

Blissymbols

Lexigrams and Logos

Line Drawings

Black and White Photographs
Miniatures are very small items that are designed to visually represent certain referents (e.g., a small elephant means elephant). As items they can be handled and therefore, have a tactile element. However, while they may closely approximate what they represent visually (a tiny house for home or a plastic animals for real animals), they are often quite abstract when perceived tactiley. Therefore, while they may be very concrete representations for those who have adequate vision, they can be meaningless and unlike their referent for those without functional vision. This critical consideration should help to determine their appropriateness for certain students versus others. The example shows a small wooden bottle that is twice the length of a 25-cent piece. While it looks like a bottle, it would be difficult to recognize tactiley.
Parts of objects can visually and tactiley resemble their referent very closely and are considered concrete symbols as a result. For example, a piece of a straw can represent drink if the child typically uses a straw to drink. Similarly, using this bottle top to indicate "drink" will only be meaningful if the child has drinks from bottles with the type of top that is shown in the example. Parts of objects as communication symbols can be large or small, however, the smaller the object part, the easier it will be to display and take where needed. Parts of objects that are to be recognized visually should be selected based on clearly representative visual information (e.g., the streamers hanging from the bike handles can be used to represent the bicycle visually). Parts of objects that are to be recognized tactiley should be based on meaningful tactile information from the child’s perspective (e.g., part of the handles from the bike can be used to represent bike because that’s what the child feels when riding the bike). Parts of objects that are not easily seen or felt by the child will be more abstract and the relationship less clear.
Whole Objects

- Whole objects are clearly concrete representations of their referent. A cup is used to mean drink, a bottle for milk, a toy ball for playing ball, etc. The object may or may not be used in the activity it represents. However, the association to the referent is very clear and therefore, may be easier to learn. As shown in the example, the computer disk is clearly connected to "working on the computer" but is not used in the activity.
Tactile Monthly Calendar
*Sharing Ideas & Make and Take Tactile Communication Symbols
Before you go!

*Visit the Resource Table

*Please Complete the Georgia Sensory Assistance Project (GSAP) Evaluation

Thank you for coming!

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