

I want people to quit saying  
“I want...”

**Because children with autism can often imitate lengthy sentences it is felt that a child can just memorize structures and it will generalize into a normally developing language system. It is quite common to hear the adults tell the child, “Say ‘I want’ ...” thinking that this request for an object will help to stimulate expressive language production. However, the true results of such imitation are:**

- The “I” pronoun is generally stimulated before the child is developmentally ready for it, resulting in memorized language and unlearned concepts or
- “I want” gets over-learned as one word instead of the two concepts – a pronoun referring to myself and a verb making a request for something desired,
- It is a request for an object or action (which does not stimulate language production) instead of a comment (which does stimulate language development).
- It places the child in the role of a responder where he or she is being cued to speak versus the role of an initiator where the child spontaneously comments.

#### FACILITATION OF MORPHOLOGY AND GRAMMAR

1) Keep in mind child’s level of functioning. If they do not have 50 spontaneous single words then increase single word vocabulary targeting ACTION VERBS, early SPATIAL CONCEPTS, and DESCRIPTORS (slow, fast, big, little, scary, funny). These concepts will be needed in order to pair with the noun (car go, dog run, big ball, red truck).

2) When the child produces 50 spontaneous utterances, two word utterances will emerge. You can stimulate two word utterances and single words with a morpheme (going, blocks, Mommy’ss). These utterances are called SEMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS and involve pairing ACTION VERBS, and CONCEPTS with NOUNS. For instance, car go, dog run, big ball, red truck, no wheels, up ramp, in tunnel. It is also important to stimulate the morphemes such as ‘Mommy’ss train’ ‘cars go’ and ‘dog running.’

3) Bombard these chosen concepts within natural play or the child’s area of interest to make it meaningful and purposeful.

4) Add grammatical structures according to developmental normative data to increase typical language development and to decrease echolalic language.

**Linguistic Communication** is marked by a semantic basis of language development (vocabulary, concepts), the construction of multiword combinations, and the onset of grammar. These occur after the child has moved through the **Intentional Communication** (communicating with others) and **Symbolic Communication** (slow acquisition of first words followed by a vocabulary burst) stages. (Autism Spectrum Disorders, A Transactional Developmental Perspective, Wetherby & Prizant, 2000.) A child needs to be able to acquire language in this natural manner where concepts build on top of each other. Think of wanting to develop a thesaurus (where concepts connect with and relate to one another) instead of a dictionary (a specific definition). Mapping language onto the child’s experiences as they are happening will facilitate this process and prevent rote memorization of phrases.

Owens (1996)

APPROXIMATE AGE	PRONOUNS
12 – 26 Months	It (subjective and objective)
27 - 30 Months	My, me, mine, you, I
31 – 34 Months	Your, she, he yours, we
35 – 40 Months	They, us, hers, his, them, her
41 – 46 Months	Its, our, him, myself, yourself, ours, their, theirs
47+ Months	Herself, himself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves

APPROXIMATE AGE	PRONOUNS	EXAMPLE
19 – 28 Months	Present progressive <b>/-ing/</b>	<b>Crying</b>
29 - 38 Months	Regular plural <b>-s</b> Present progressive <b>-ing</b> without auxiliary Semiauxiliaries Overgeneralization of past tense <b>-ed</b> Possessive <b>-s</b> Present tense auxiliary	Socks Baby <b>crying</b> Gonna, gotta, wanna I <b>runned</b> Girl's hat Can, will, be, do
39 – 42 Months	Past tense modals <b>"Be"</b> verb + present progressive <b>-ing</b>	Could, would, should, must, might The baby <b>is crying</b>
43 – 46 Months	Regular past tense <b>-ed</b> Irregular past tense Regular third person singular, present tense Articles	He <b>kicked</b> She <b>ate</b> He <b>drinks</b> <b>A boy, the tree</b>
47 – 50 Months	Contractible Auxiliary Uncontractible auxiliary Uncontractible copula Irregular third person singular Past tense <b>"be"</b> verb	The boy's <b>talking</b> . It <b>is</b> big. He <b>is</b> swimming. She <b>has</b> it. She <b>was</b> dancing.

Bowen; Brown (1973); Haskill, Tyler & Tolbert (2001), Retherford (2000)