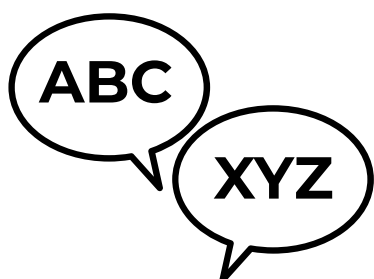


An **emergent** communicator primarily uses non-symbolic communication, such as facial expressions, body language, gestures, and vocalizations. These communicators may not understand or use symbolic communication reliably (e.g., speech, sign language, pictures). Communication is limited to the 'here and now' and not about past or future events. Highly familiar communication partners often communicate for them. Language precursors of joint attention, imitating, and turn-taking may be delayed or impaired.



LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

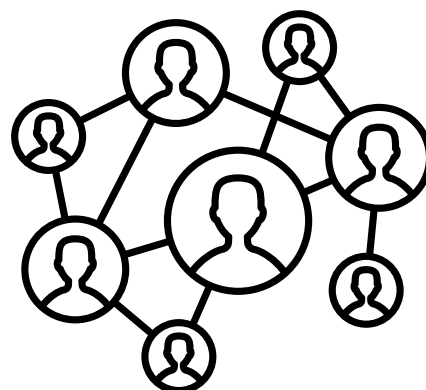
The linguistic goals for emergent communicators include:

- Identifying basic and high frequency vocabulary
- Requesting
- Rejecting/Protesting

SOCIAL COMPETENCE

The social goals for emergent communicators include:

- Understanding cause/effect for communication
- Establishing joint attention
- Imitating actions
- Participating in routines



OPERATIONAL COMPETENCE

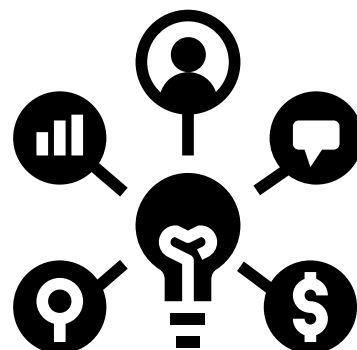
The operational goals for emergent communicators include:

- Reliably accessing symbols
- Selecting symbols intentionally

STRATEGIC COMPETENCE

The strategic goals for emergent communicators include:

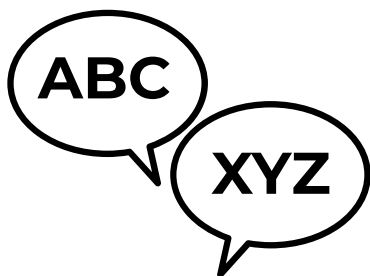
- Recognizing the need to gain their communication partners attention



MAIN FOCUS

Work towards developing symbolic communication and receptive knowledge of symbols. Use vocabulary that is highly motivating. Focus on choice making and requests. Establish a positive relationship with their communication system.

A **wants-needs** communicator understands symbolic communication. These individuals communicate primarily to meet their basic wants and needs. Their vocabulary consist of highly motivating nouns and verbs. The generally only communicate for one function: requesting. There is little to no social intent for communication. They communicate at the one-word level. They do not recognize communication breakdowns, and if they do, they do not know how to repair them.



LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

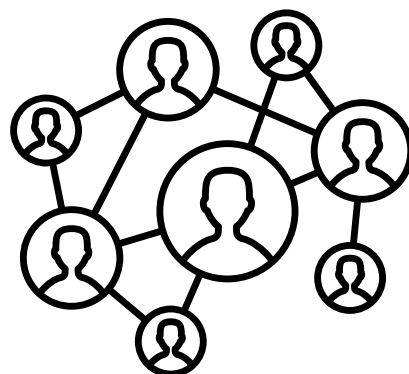
The linguistic goals for wants-needs communicators include:

- Expanding vocabulary to include nouns, verbs, and descriptors
- Answering simple routine WH questions
- Combining words to expand spontaneous utterance length

SOCIAL COMPETENCE

The social goals for wants-needs communicators include:

- Responds to greetings and farewells using a single word utterance
- Maintains attention to communication partner during conversation
- Replaces challenging behavior with messages



OPERATIONAL COMPETENCE

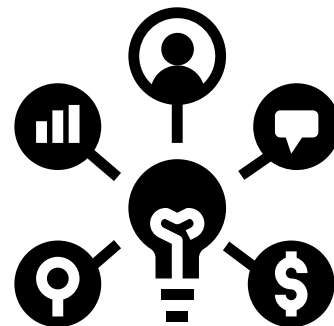
The operational goals for wants-needs communicators include:

- Transports and positions device
- Uses basic navigational symbols (e.g., home button)
- Opens communication application
- Turns device on/off

STRATEGIC COMPETENCE

The strategic goals for wants-needs communicators include:

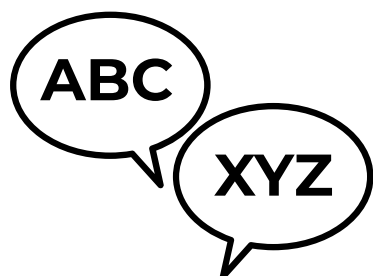
- Asking for help



MAIN FOCUS

Remember that communication is more than requesting. Focus on increasing vocabulary and target different functions of communication. Model one level above their spontaneous productions.

A **context-dependent** communicator has reliable symbolic communication that is limited to a person or context. These communicators rely on cues from familiar communication partner when using their AAC system. Their vocabulary is increasing to include pronouns. They are beginning to formulate routine short phrases. Strategic competency is beginning to develop, especially recognizing communication breakdowns and attempting to repair them.



LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

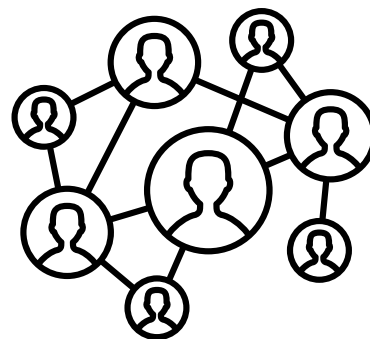
The linguistic goals for context dependent communicators include:

- Expanding vocabulary to include pronouns
- Increasing length and complexity of utterances
- Asking pre-stored simple WH questions

SOCIAL COMPETENCE

The social goals for context dependent communicators include:

- Using greetings and farewells
- Using routine comments (e.g., fun, yuck)
- Using polite social forms (e.g., thank you)



OPERATIONAL COMPETENCE

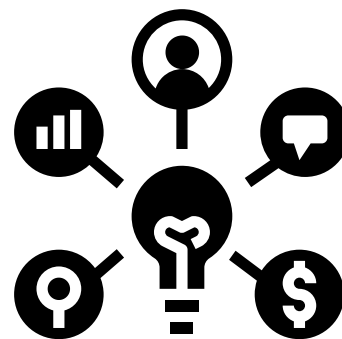
The operational goals for context dependent communicators include:

- Adjusting volume based on surroundings
- Continue developing competence with navigating the system and accurately selecting symbols

STRATEGIC COMPETENCE

The strategic goals for context dependent communicators include:

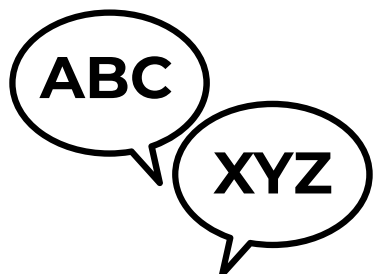
- Recognizing communication breakdowns
- Using simple repair strategies, such as repeating the message



MAIN FOCUS

Communicators at this stage communicate very well with familiar individuals and contexts. They may not be as competent with unfamiliar individuals or different contexts and will most likely require more support. Start working towards building grammatically correct phrases and sentences.

A **transitional** communicator communicates for a variety of purposes, appropriately asks and answers questions, and is formulating utterances of increased length and complexity. They communicate with a variety of different communication partners and are relying less on familiar contexts and partners. They participate in basic conversational exchanges and are beginning to repair communication breakdown. Spelling skills are beginning to emerge.



LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

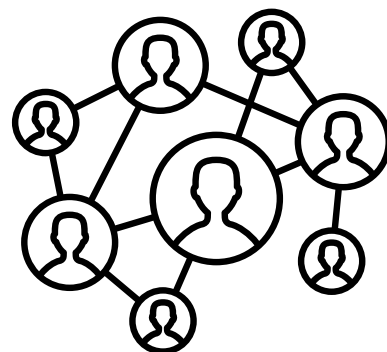
The linguistic goals for transitional communicators include:

- Expanding vocabulary to include abstract concepts
- Using plurals and verb tenses
- Improved sentence structures
- Answering higher level WH questions
- Asking more WH questions

SOCIAL COMPETENCE

The social goals for transitional communicators include:

- Engaging in 2-3 conversational turns
- Maintaining topic
- Asking partner focused questions
- Appropriately interrupts an interaction (e.g., excuse me)



OPERATIONAL COMPETENCE

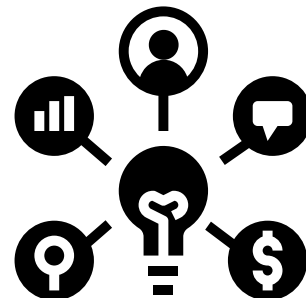
The operational goals for transitional communicators include:

- Monitoring battery life
- Navigates between using symbol-based communication, pre-programmed messages, and keyboard
- Recognizes need for additional vocabulary or topics

STRATEGIC COMPETENCE

The strategic goals for transitional communicators include:

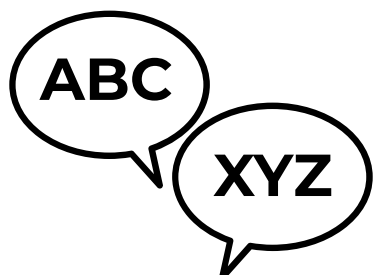
- Independently uses an introduction strategy with communication partner – tells partner they use AAC for communication, etc.



MAIN FOCUS

Communicators at this stage are gaining greater independence across all competency levels. Grammar is a big focus at this stage along with answering and asking a variety of WH questions. They occasionally rely on context and cues for success.

An **independent** communicator has achieved mastery with all 4 competence levels. They use their communication system across all environments with familiar and unfamiliar communication partners with the same level of success. They recognize barriers that may impact their ability to communicate effectively and can use strategies to overcome them.



LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

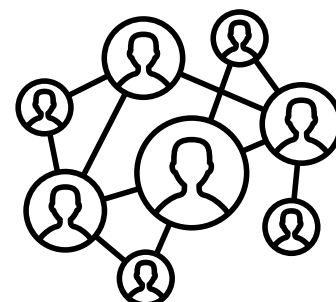
The linguistic goals for independent communicators include:

- Generates utterances of increased length and complexity
- Sequences information in a logical manner to tell or retell a story
- Uses morphological endings

SOCIAL COMPETENCE

The social goals for independent communicators include:

- Requests clarification
- Continues to maintain and demonstrate appropriate conversational skills
- Continues to ask partner focused questions



OPERATIONAL COMPETENCE

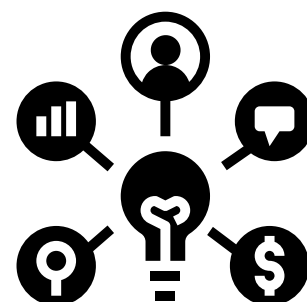
The operational goals for independent communicators include:

- Manages need for equipment upgrades and repairs
- Independently adds vocabulary
- Accesses external equipment (e.g., phone, email)

STRATEGIC COMPETENCE

The strategic goals for independent communicators include:

- Uses multiple strategies to repair breakdowns
- Plans ahead for specific communication, such as composing and pre storing messages for a doctor's appointment



MAIN FOCUS

Communicators at this stage are independent and are meeting expectations for their age. They require no support to use their device. They communicate efficiently and effectively across settings with both familiar and unfamiliar communication partners.

This resource was created in collaboration with the Functional Communication Clinic at Penn State Health.