



Echoics

Practical kit for teaching
VB-MAPP skills to **autistic**
children

AbaTools

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Prerequisite Skills for Echoic Training

Auditory Attention

The ability to focus on and process auditory stimuli, particularly speech sounds and verbal instructions.

Oral-Motor Skills

Minimal ability to move lips and tongue to form different sounds and sound combinations.

Spontaneous Vocalization

Presence of some spontaneous vocalizations, even if unclear or inconsistent.

Sustained Attention

Ability to maintain focus during structured activities for brief periods.

These foundational skills create the basis for successful echoic training. Clinicians should assess these prerequisites before beginning formal echoic programs to ensure readiness and maximize progress.

Echoic 1M: Production of Basic Vowel Sounds

Program Goal	Increase the child's initial capacity for vocal imitation by encouraging repetition of isolated vowel sounds (such as /a/, /o/, /e/) in response to the Discriminative Stimulus (SD) provided by the therapist.
Prerequisite Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Preserved auditory attention.Minimal ability to move lips and tongue.Presence of some spontaneous vocalizations, even if unclear.
Target Behavior	Repeat simple vowel sounds within 4 seconds after the SD, producing a response that is understandable.
Materials Needed	No physical materials are required. Optional supports include a toy microphone, mirror, or visual cue cards showing open/closed mouth to aid instruction.

Teaching Procedure

- Position yourself in front of the learner and establish eye contact.
- Present the SD: "Say /a/," waiting up to 4 seconds.
- If the response is correct, deliver immediate reinforcement (e.g., clapping, smiling, brief access to a preferred toy).
- If incorrect, model the sound with exaggerated articulation ("aaa") and repeat the trial.
- Rotate between /a/, /i/, and /u/, avoiding a predictable sequence.

Echoic 1M: Strategies and Procedures

Prompting Strategies

- Exaggerate mouth movements.
- Use gentle tactile prompts (light touch on the chin) to signal vocal opening.
- Add rhythmic clapping to encourage repetition.

Reinforcement Plan

Use social reinforcers (praise, high-five) and activity-based reinforcers (e.g., bubbles, musical toys).

Error Correction Procedures

- If no response, provide a model and repeat the trial with physical/visual support.
- If an approximate sound is produced, acknowledge the effort and gradually shape toward accuracy.

Maintenance and Generalization Strategies

- Practice during music or simple songs (e.g., holding "aaaa" within a melody).
- Encourage parents to reinforce vowel sounds during play routines.

Clinical Note: If the child shows frustration after several unsuccessful attempts, lower the demand to a simpler sound to maintain motivation.

Echoic 2M: Reproduction of Simple Consonant Phonemes

Program Goal	Develop the ability to imitate isolated consonant sounds, expanding the learner's vocal repertoire.
Target Behavior	Produce simple consonant phonemes (such as /m/, /p/, /t/) within 4 seconds after the SD.
Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pictures representing words that start with the target phonemes (e.g., picture of a pig for /p/, a toy car for /m/, a tube for /t/).• Small real objects can also be used to strengthen connections (e.g., cap, toy map).
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	"Say /m/."



Teaching Procedure

Say: "Say /m/." Wait up to 4 seconds. Provide immediate reinforcement for correct responses.

Response

Child attempts to produce the consonant sound.

Feedback

For errors, slow down and model the sound, emphasizing mouth movement. Rotate phonemes to avoid predictability.

Echoic 2M: Strategies and Procedures

Prompting Strategies

- Exaggerate lip articulation.
- Pair with rhythmic cues (tapping on the table when saying /t/).
- Use a mirror for self-observation.

Reinforcement Plan

Incorporate varied reinforcers: blowing bubbles, turning on a flashing light, opening a surprise box with small toys.

Error Correction Procedures

- Incorrect emission: repeat the model with visual support (mirror).
- No response: provide a partial phonetic prompt and try again.

Maintenance and Generalization Strategies

- Integrate phonemes into play: "Who makes /m/ like the race car?"
- Practice in short social interactions, encouraging imitation with peers or siblings.

 **Clinical Note:** When working on more challenging phonemes, avoid long sequences. Focus on isolated successes to keep reinforcement frequent.

Echoic 3M: Combining Sounds into Short Sequences

Program Goal	Strengthen the ability to combine sounds into short vocal sequences.
Target Behavior	Repeat simple combinations such as "ba," "pi," or "tu" within 5 seconds.
Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Flashcards with images that represent syllables (e.g., ball for "bo," tiger for "ti").Toys that produce repetitive sounds (drum, whistle).
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	"Say 'ba.'"



Teaching Procedure

- Present SD: "Say 'ba.'"
- Wait up to 5 seconds.
- Reinforce immediately if correct.
- If incorrect, exaggerate the model ("Baaa") and prompt repetition.
- Rotate combinations in varying orders to promote discrimination.

Echoic 3M: Strategies and Procedures

Prompting Strategies

- Provide rhythmic beats while modeling.
- Pair hand gestures (e.g., clap) with the initial syllable.

Reinforcement Plan

Use sensory reinforcers such as misting water spray or turning on a small fan for novelty.

Error Correction Procedures

- Acknowledge approximations and reshape responses.
- If incorrect, repeat the SD with visual/gestural cues.

Maintenance and Generalization Strategies

- Incorporate syllables into simple songs or rhythmic play.
- Involve peers in echo games for social engagement.

 **Clinical Note:** Children may confuse similar sounds (e.g., "pa" vs. "ba"). Increase contrast with slower, clearer articulation.

Echoic 4M: Early Exercises with Intonation

Program Goal	Promote variation in intonation, helping the learner to imitate not only sounds but also tone and prosody.
Target Behavior	Reproduce vowel sounds and syllables with varied intonation (happy, sad, surprised).
Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Dolls with facial expressions.Emotion picture cards or emojis.Simple musical instruments for rhythm (tambourine, maracas).
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	Therapist models "ah!" with a surprised tone and prompts: "Do the same!"



Happy Intonation

Model: "Yay!" with rising, cheerful tone



Surprised Intonation

Model: "Oh!" with sharp, elevated pitch



Sad Intonation

Model: "Aww" with falling, elongated tone

Echoic 4M: Strategies and Procedures

Prompting Strategies

- Use facial and body expressions to highlight the emotion.
- Present visual aids (emoji or matching doll).

Reinforcement Plan

- Provide strong social reinforcers (laughter, hugs, "You did it!").
- Quick activity-based reinforcers such as jumping together or turning on a colored light.

Clinical Note: Intonation can be affected by mood. If motivation is low, reduce demands and use more playful reinforcement.

Error Correction Procedures

- If intonation is incorrect, exaggerate further and model again.
- For no response, add gestural support and re-present the SD.

Maintenance and Generalization Strategies

- Practice through pretend play ("Pretend you spilled water and say 'Oh no!'").
- Involve family members to reinforce intonation during stories.



Echoic 5M: Repetition of Two-Syllable Words in Different Contexts

Program Goal	Consolidate the ability to echo two-syllable words with clear articulation and rhythm, preparing the learner for functional vocabulary.
Prerequisite Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ability to reproduce single phonemes and simple syllables.Ability to sustain attention briefly to verbal prompts.
Target Behavior	Repeat two-syllable words (e.g., "table," "candle," "pencil") within 4 seconds after the SD.
Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Real objects or picture cards (toy table, toy candle, mini pencil).Varied visual supports to avoid repetition fatigue.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	"Say 'table.'"

Echoic 5M: Strategies and Procedures

Teaching Procedure

- Therapist presents stimulus: "Say 'table.'"
- Wait up to 4 seconds.
- Provide immediate reinforcement for correct response.
- If incorrect, model with emphasis on the missed part ("TA-ble") and prompt repetition.
- Rotate across different two-syllable words to prevent rote responding.

Prompting Strategies

- Use rhythmic tapping to mark syllables.
- Model with exaggerated, slowed articulation.
- Use a mirror for self-monitoring.

Reinforcement Plan

Provide immediate access to activity-based reinforcers (bubbles, musical instrument toys).

Error Correction Procedures

- For partial errors, reinforce attempt and reshape slowly.
- For no response, give full model with visual support.

Maintenance and Generalization Strategies

- Embed two-syllable words into songs or short stories.
- Practice across settings (classroom, playground, kitchen).

 **Clinical Note:** Some children may reverse syllables (e.g., "table" → "ble-ta"). Use differential reinforcement to strengthen closer approximations.

Echoic 6M: Repetition of Three-Syllable Words with Clear Articulation

Program Goal	Expand the learner's ability to echo longer words, supporting accuracy and speech-motor coordination.
Target Behavior	Repeat three-syllable words (e.g., "banana," "telephone," "tomato") within 5 seconds after the SD.
Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Flashcards with three-syllable words.Real objects when possible (toy phone, real banana).
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	"Say 'banana.'"

Present the Word

Therapist says: "Say 'banana'" while showing a picture or real object.

Child Responds

Child attempts to repeat the three-syllable word within 5 seconds.

Provide Feedback

Reinforce correct responses immediately or model slowly ("ba-na-na") for incorrect attempts.

Echoic 6M: Strategies and Procedures

Prompting Strategies

- Clap hands to mark the three syllables.
- Break the word into parts, prompting syllable by syllable.
- Use exaggerated intonation to highlight each component.

Reinforcement Plan

- Use strong social reinforcers (enthusiastic praise, clapping together).
- Brief access to enjoyable activities (playing a toy instrument, jumping on a mat).

 **Clinical Note:** Learners may lose breath or drop syllables with longer words. Adjust pacing and reinforce attempts that maintain rhythm.

Error Correction Procedures

- For incomplete responses, reinforce approximation and provide a slow model.
- For incorrect responses, model with slower rhythm and repeat.

Maintenance and Generalization Strategies

- Embed three-syllable words into simple songs.
- Encourage repetition during thematic play (e.g., "tomato" in the kitchen, "slide" in the playground).

Echoic 7M: Introduction to Rhythm and Prosody in Expressions

Program Goal	Train variations in rhythm and intonation, helping the learner express meaning and emotion beyond articulation alone.
Target Behavior	Repeat short expressions with different prosodies, such as "Oh no!," "That's great!," "Look out!"
Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Cards with expressions and matching emotion images.Toys that simulate surprise or error (block tower that falls, noisy figure).
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	Therapist dramatizes a situation (drops a block) and says: "Oh no!" followed by "Say it like me."

1

Surprise Expression

Therapist drops a block and says "Oh no!" with exaggerated surprise.

2

Excitement Expression

Therapist reveals a toy and says "That's great!" with enthusiasm.

3

Warning Expression

Therapist pretends something is falling and says "Look out!" with urgency.

Echoic 7M: Strategies and Procedures

Prompting Strategies

- Reinforce with strong facial expressions.
- Use body gestures (arms open, head shake) to support emotion.

Reinforcement Plan

- Combine social reinforcers (laughter, hugs, verbal praise) with activity-based reinforcers (spinning toy top, switching on colored flashlight).

Error Correction Procedures

- If intonation doesn't match, model more theatrically.
- If no response, provide a visual cue (emoji card) before retrying.

Maintenance and Generalization Strategies

- Include prosody practice in pretend play or dramatized stories.
- Encourage varied intonation during sibling or peer interactions.

 **Clinical Note:** It's common for learners to echo only words without emotion. Reinforce even minimal tonal variation as an early step.

Echoic 8M: Strengthening Phonetic Accuracy with Minimal Support

Program Goal	Enhance clarity in reproducing previously learned words, reducing reliance on prompts and promoting greater independence in echoic responding.
Prerequisite Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prior ability to echo two- and three-syllable words.• Active participation in previous sessions with moderate success rates.
Target Behavior	Repeat familiar words clearly without frequent prompting.
Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personalized word list with previously mastered items (e.g., "table," "pencil," "telephone").• Corresponding picture cards or real objects.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	"Say 'telephone.'"

Full Prompting

Partial Prompting

Independent Responding

Echoic 8M: Strategies and Procedures

Teaching Procedure

- Present the SD: "Say 'telephone.'"
- Wait up to 4 seconds.
- Reinforce correct responses and vary target items.
- For unclear responses, repeat with slowed articulation and prompt a new attempt.
- Gradually fade visual and rhythmic cues.

Prompting Strategies

- Provide phonetic modeling only when necessary.
- Use subtle facial cues at first.
- Fade prompts systematically across repetitions.

Reinforcement Plan

Use more naturalistic reinforcers: spontaneous praise, peer approval, short play opportunities.

Error Correction Procedures

- For approximations, deliver partial reinforcement and reshape.
- For incorrect responses, provide full model and retry.

Maintenance and Generalization Strategies

- Embed echoed words in short, functional dialogues ("Want shoe?").
- Encourage families to reinforce during daily routines.

 **Clinical Note:** This stage focuses on reducing prompt dependence. If prompts are still needed frequently, reassess whether mastery criteria progressed too quickly.

Echoic 9M: Intonational Variations in Short Sentences

Program Goal	Develop the learner's ability to use distinct intonations in sentences, adding emotion, intention, and context to echoic speech.
Target Behavior	Repeat short phrases with varying intonation, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "I did it!" (excited)• "I don't want it!" (frustrated)• "Look at this!" (attention-grabbing)
Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Posters with simple phrases paired with emotion visuals.• Simulated scenarios (surprise box, toy that "breaks").
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	Therapist dramatizes and models the phrase with specific intonation, followed by a prompt to imitate.



Excitement
"I did it!" - Rising pitch, enthusiastic tone



Frustration
"I don't want it!" - Emphatic, slightly lower pitch



Attention
"Look at this!" - Sharp, elevated tone

Echoic 9M: Strategies and Procedures

Prompting Strategies

- Use large gestures (pointing, clapping, folding arms).
- Provide emotion cards (happy, sad, angry faces).

Reinforcement Plan

- Blend social reinforcers (group laughter, peer approval) with quick tangible reinforcers (access to toy related to the scene).

Error Correction Procedures

- If intonation is incorrect, repeat with stronger emphasis.
- For no response, provide visual support before retrying.

Maintenance and Generalization Strategies

- Integrate echoic sentences into group storytelling games.
- Encourage use of these sentences spontaneously with family.

 **Clinical Note:** If the learner repeats words without emotion, treat even slight tonal changes as meaningful progress.

Echoic 10M: Echoic Fluency in Natural and Social Contexts

Program Goal	Consolidate the learner's ability to echo fluently and spontaneously in everyday situations without relying on constant therapist prompts.
Target Behavior	Repeat words and short phrases during natural interactions, such as in play, simple conversations, or classroom activities.
Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Simulated daily-life situations (pretend store, pretend classroom).Varied materials: illustrated books, social play toys (toy phone, play cash register).
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	Therapist embeds SDs into natural contexts (e.g., "Say 'I want to play'").

Teaching Procedure

- Therapist embeds SDs into natural contexts (e.g., "Say 'I want to play'").
- Learner repeats and uses the phrase within the pretend activity.
- If the response is neutral or incorrect, provide a model within a reinforcing context.
- Gradually fade prompts, encouraging echoic use within routines.

Echoic 10M: Strategies and Procedures

Prompting Strategies

- Use role-play scenarios (puppet theater, skits).
- Support with gestures and facial expressions, fading over time.

Reinforcement Plan

- Rely primarily on natural social reinforcers (praise, invitations to play with peers).
- Functional reinforcement: granting access to the requested item or activity.

Error Correction Procedures

- For incomplete phrases, model slowly and prompt a retry.
- If refusal occurs, embed the phrase in a playful, motivating context.

Maintenance and Generalization Strategies

- Integrate echoics into interactions with siblings, peers, and teachers.
- Reinforce through songs, group games, and school activities.

 **Clinical Note:** This milestone requires strong alignment with real life. If echoics occur only in structured sessions, increase practice in natural environments.

Detailed Teaching Procedures Across Echoic Programs

Environment Preparation

Reduce visual/auditory distractions; ensure good lighting and face-to-face positioning.

Presenting the SD

Vary phrasing, e.g., "Repeat...," "Say it like me...," "Let's say it together..."

Wait Time

Allow 3–5 seconds before providing assistance.

Varied Repetition

Rotate sounds and words to promote auditory discrimination, avoiding mechanical sequences.

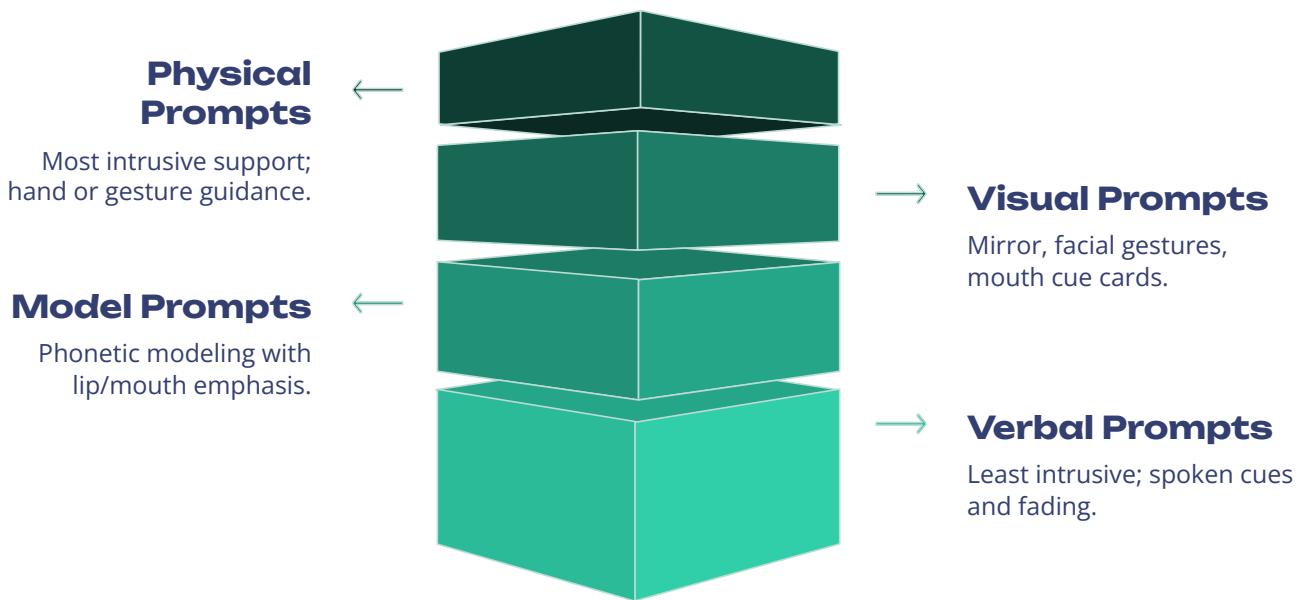
Clinical Recording

Document not only correct responses but also error types and challenging contexts.

Prompting Strategies and Fading

Strategy	Description	Fading Technique
Phonetic Modeling	Emphasize lip and mouth movements.	Gradually reduce exaggeration of movements.
Visual Cues	Use mirror, facial gestures, or mouth cue cards.	Systematically remove visual supports.
Rhythmic Cues	Clapping or tapping to mark syllables.	Fade from physical tapping to subtle gestures.
Light Physical Prompt	Gentle chin touch to indicate vocal opening (used cautiously).	Move from direct touch to hovering hand to no prompt.

Progressive fading is essential: begin with maximum support, then gradually fade to full independence. This systematic reduction of prompts prevents prompt dependence and encourages autonomous responding.



Reinforcement Plans



Social Reinforcers

Praise, clapping, high-fives, shared laughter



Access-based Reinforcers

Brief access to toy, tablet, or preferred item



Activity-based Reinforcers

Bubble play, jumping, turning on flashlight



Sensory Reinforcers

Small fan breeze, water mist, flashing light



Affective Reinforcers

Hugs, light tickles, affectionate gestures

Clinical Guidance: Vary reinforcers to prevent satiation. Observe which reinforcers are most effective for each individual learner and rotate them throughout sessions.

Error Correction Procedures

Error Type	Correction Procedure
Approximate Responses	Acknowledge effort, provide partial reinforcement, then reshape.
Incorrect Responses	Model clearly and prompt immediate retry.
No Response	Present phonetic or visual support before reattempting.
Active Refusal	Temporarily reduce demand while maintaining motivation.



Error Occurs

Child makes an incorrect response or no response.



Prompt Retry

Encourage child to try again with appropriate support.

Provide Model

Therapist models the correct response clearly.

Reinforce Improvement

Acknowledge and reinforce any improvement in the response.

Suggested Clinical and Play-Based Activities

Songs

Embed target syllables or words into children's songs.

- "Old MacDonald" with target sounds
- "The Wheels on the Bus" with varied intonations
- Custom songs featuring target words

Pretend Play

Simulate situations that naturally elicit target expressions.

- Doll play: "The doll fell down! Say 'Oh no!'"
- Car play: "The car crashed! What do we say?"
- Doctor play: "Say 'It hurts'" with appropriate intonation

Social Expressions

Practice functional phrases in meaningful contexts.

- "I want water" during snack time
- "Come here" during hide-and-seek
- "My turn" during board games

Motor Activities

Pair echoics with physical actions for multisensory learning.

- Jump while saying "up!"
- Blow while saying "fuuu"
- Clap while saying syllables

Maintenance and Generalization Strategies

Natural Contexts

Practice sounds and words during meals, bath time, outings.



Social Interaction

Encourage peers or siblings to request echoic responses.

Family Participation

Guide parents to reinforce spontaneous echoic responses.

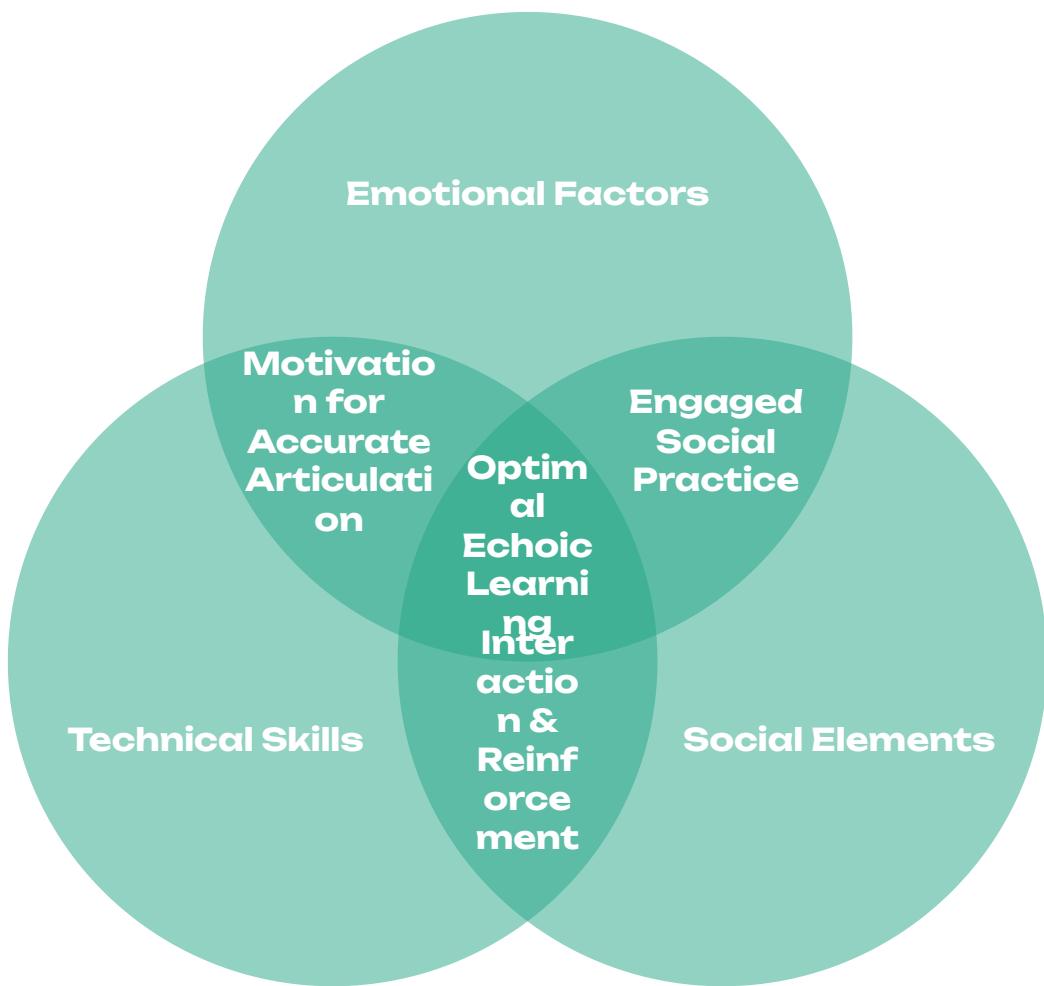
Varied Environments

Practice in clinic, home, park, or school.

Effective generalization requires systematic planning to transfer skills from the structured therapy environment to natural settings. By involving multiple people, places, and contexts, the learner develops the ability to use echoic skills functionally across all areas of life.

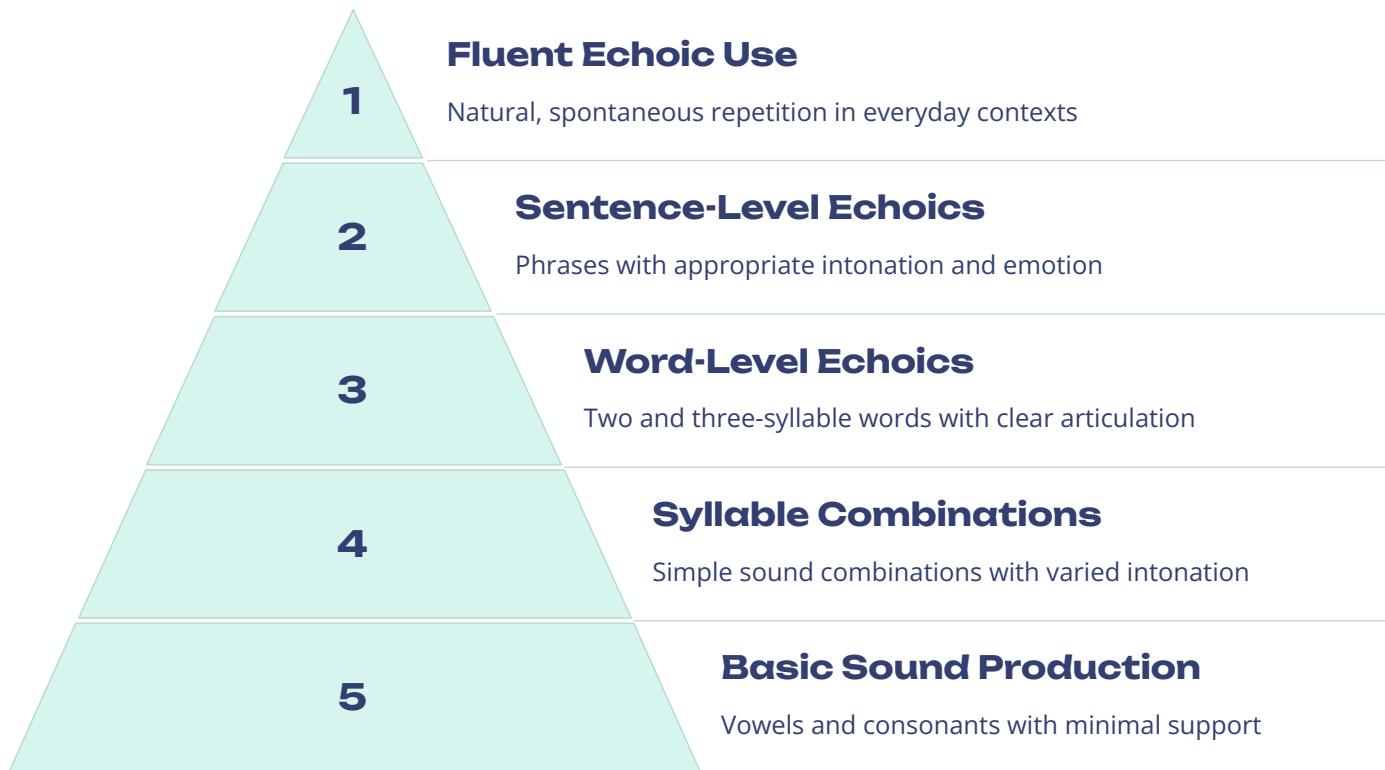
General Clinical Observations

- ⓘ Each learner may respond differently to prompts and reinforcers—always individualize.
- ☐ Progression between milestones should consider both accuracy and emotional engagement.
- ✓ Echoic development relies not only on articulation but also on motivation and the joy of interaction.



The most effective echoic training programs balance technical precision with emotional connection. When learners find joy in the process of verbal imitation, their progress accelerates and generalizes more readily to natural environments.

Echoic Training: Summary and Key Principles



Echoic training follows a systematic progression from basic sound production to fluent repetition in natural contexts. Each milestone builds upon previous skills, creating a comprehensive foundation for verbal communication. By carefully implementing the strategies outlined in this guide, clinicians can help learners develop the critical skill of verbal imitation, opening pathways to more complex language development.