

Caregiver-Mediated Everyday Child Language Learning Practices: II. Intervention Methods and Procedures

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This paper includes a description of the methods and procedures for implementing the communication and language intervention model developed by staff at the *Center on Everyday Child Language Learning (CECLL)*. The model and associated practices were developed from research and practice conducted by Puckett Institute researchers and practitioners over the past 15 years as well as findings from research syntheses of practices in each of the components of the *CECLL* model (Dunst, Valentine, Raab, & Hamby, 2013; Raab, Dunst, & Hamby, 2013; Raab, Dunst, Johnson, & Hamby, 2013; Trivette, Dunst, Simkus, & Hamby, 2013). The paper includes information that practitioners can use to promote parents' and caregivers' use of everyday family and community activities as the sources of interest-based child language learning opportunities. A companion paper includes information on the research and conceptual foundations of the model (Dunst, Trivette, & Raab, 2013).

The methods and procedures for using the model are not intended to be prescriptive but rather constitute a set of guidelines for practitioners to use to strengthen parents' confidence and competence in providing their children interest-based everyday communication and language learning opportunities (Dunst, 2010). This is accomplished by practitioners using capacity-building implementation practices (Trivette & Dunst, 2007) to promote parents' and other caregivers' understanding and use of caregiver-mediated everyday communication and language intervention practices (Dunst, Trivette et al., 2013).

Everyday Child Language Intervention Model

Figure 1 shows the language intervention model for increasing the *breadth* and *depth* of interest-based everyday language learning opportunities provided to young children in order for parents and

This paper includes a description of an approach to intervention that uses child interest-based participation in everyday family and community activities as sources of communication and language learning opportunities and parents' use of a naturalistic instructional practice for supporting child competence in the activities. The approach includes methods and procedures for: (a) identifying child interests and everyday family and community activities, (b) selecting and increasing child participation in interest-based everyday activities, (c) using responsive teaching for promoting child communication and language competence in the context of everyday activities, and (d) methods for evaluating the effectiveness of the practices. The paper constitutes a set of guidelines for practitioners to use to promote parents' use of the intervention model practices.

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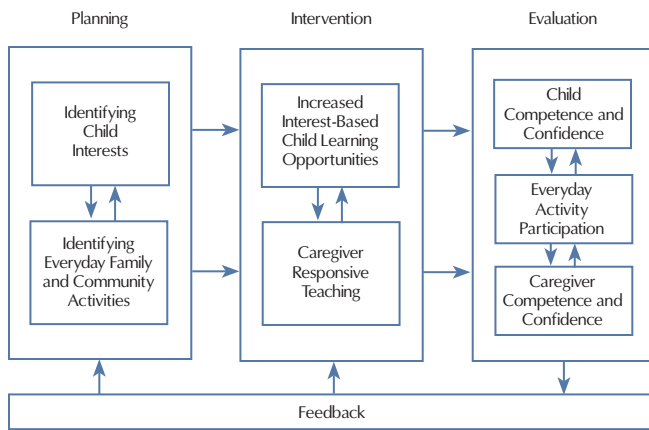


Figure 1. Procedure and process for using the Caregiver-Mediated Everyday Language Intervention Model.

caregivers to support and encourage child language learning while children are engaged in the activities. The model is implemented by using methods and procedures for: (1) identifying a child’s interests and the everyday activities that are contexts for interest-based learning, (2) selecting those particular activities that provide the best opportunities for interest-based communication and language learning, (3) increasing child participation in the interest-based, everyday learning opportunities, (4) using responsive teaching for supporting and encouraging child communication and language competence, exploration, and mastery in the activities, and (5) evaluating the effectiveness of caregiver-mediated everyday child learning opportunities in terms of both child and parent benefits. This is accomplished in a series of four phases: Planning, intervention, evaluation, and feedback.

The *planning phase* involves either or both the selection of everyday activities that are likely to be interesting to a child or using information about child interests to select everyday activities that can be used as contexts for communication and language development. The *intervention phase* involves intentional efforts by parents and caregivers to increase the number, variety, and frequency of interest-based everyday child learning opportunities, caregiver responsiveness to

child behavior while engaged in interest-based everyday activities, and caregiver efforts to support and encourage child competence, exploration, and mastery. The *evaluation phase* involves assessment of both the child and caregiver benefits of interest-based everyday child learning opportunities. The *feedback phase* involves the use of evaluative information for changing existing or developing new interest-based child everyday learning opportunities.

Six checklists are used to promote parents’ use of caregiver-mediated everyday child language learning (Table 1). The *Everyday Child Language Learning Checklist* includes practice indicators for all components of the model shown in Figure 1. This particular checklist provides a way of ensuring that all elements of the *CECLL* model are used as part of interventions to promote parents’ use of the model practices.

There are separate checklists for identifying child interests, identifying everyday activities, increasing child learning opportunities, and responsive teaching, each corresponding to one component of the *CECLL* model. A sixth checklist includes indicators for evaluating the extent to which interventions are consistent with the model practices and has expected consequences. The appendix includes the complete set of checklists.

Planning

The planning phase of the *CECLL* model involves the identification of a child’s interests and the everyday family and community activities that are contexts for interest-based child learning. Both sets of information are used to select the particular activities that will provide the best contexts for interest-based everyday child communication and language learning.

Child interests. The purpose of this component of the model is to identify a child’s *personal interests* and the people, places, events, etc. that a child finds *situationally interesting*. Child personal interests include, but are not limited to, individual likes, preferences, favorites, strengths, etc. that encourage child engagement and interaction with people and things. People, objects, and events that a child finds *situationally interesting* typically include those aspects of social and

Table 1
Checklists for Promoting Use of the Caregiver-Mediated Everyday Child Language Intervention Model Practices

Checklists	Main Focus
Everyday Child Language Learning	Implementing the key characteristics of each component of the model.
Child Interests	Identifying child personal and situational interests, preferences, etc.
Everyday Family and Community Activities	Identifying the everyday family and community activities as contexts for communication and language development.
Increasing Everyday Learning Opportunities	Increasing the number, frequency, and quality of interest-based learning activities.
Caregiver Responsive Teaching	Methods for supporting and encouraging child communication and language learning in everyday activities.
Evaluation	Measuring the effectiveness of caregiver-mediated child communication and language learning.

nonsocial environment that attract child attention, curiosity, and engagement in interactions with people and objects. The *Child Interests Checklist* is used by a practitioner and a parent to ensure all kinds of child interests are identified as part of the planning process of the *CECLL* model.

The procedures for assessing the presence of child interests are straightforward and include answers to questions such as: *What does the child like to do? What makes the child smile and laugh? What captures and maintains the child's attention? What kinds of things does the child prefer to do?* The answers to these kinds of questions are used to produce a profile or list of a child's interests that in turn are used to select everyday activities that are the best activity settings for interest-based child learning. Interest-based child learning simply includes opportunities to do what a child likes, prefers to do, and enjoys doing, and which are used as the contexts for communication and language learning.

Everyday communication and language learning activities. Everyday family and community life is made up of literally hundreds of different kinds of activities that provide infants, toddlers, and preschoolers a rich variety of learning opportunities. The *Everyday Learning Activity Checklist* is used by practitioners to provide parents a way to select from all possible kinds of everyday activities the particular activities that will provide a child the *variety* and *richness* of communication and language learning opportunities that best match a child's interests. Activities that have those characteristics are especially likely to be contexts for strengthening existing child capabilities and promoting the acquisition of new child competencies.

The process for identifying the particular everyday activities that are used as interest-based child learning opportunities for promoting child communication and language competence is straightforward. Practitioners and parents select from all possible activities those that match a child's interests, that do or could occur often enough to ensure sufficient numbers of learning opportunities, and that provide lots of opportunities for a child to practice existing communication capabilities, learn new language behaviors, and which encourage child exploration. The activities that are selected from all possibilities are then used in the implementation phase of the model.

The main outcome of the planning phase of the model is the selection of about 10 to 12 everyday activities that occur frequently enough to provide a child a host of different kinds of interest-based communication and language learning opportunities. The 10 to 12 activities will likely be a mix of everyday family and community activities. We have found for most children that about 75% of the activities are typically family activities and about 25% are typically community activities (Dunst & Bruder, 1999).

Intervention

The intervention phase of the *CECLL* model involves methods for increasing child participation in interest-based everyday learning activities and caregivers' use of responsive teaching for supporting and encouraging child communica-

tion and language competence while engaged in the activities. Efforts to increase a child's participation in everyday activities and use of responsive teaching that is known to strengthen and promote child competence have proven to be quite easy.

Increasing child learning opportunities. In order for a parent to use *CECLL* caregiver-mediated practices, the *number*, *variety*, and *frequency* of everyday activities need to be sufficiently increased in order to provide a child the *breadth* and *depth* of development-instigating and development-enhancing communication and language learning opportunities. Development-instigating activities are ones that *invite* and *sustain* child participation and engagement in everyday activities. Development-enhancing activities are ones that provide opportunities to *practice* both existing and emerging competencies and to *learn* new skills and abilities. The *Increasing Everyday Child Learning Opportunities Checklist* is used by a practitioner to promote parents' increased use of interest-based everyday child learning opportunities.

Increasing child participation in interest-based everyday communication and language learning activities is accomplished using any number of methods and procedures that facilitate parents' provision of everyday learning opportunities (Trivette et al., 2013). These include, but are not limited to, a daily reminder list of activities (something like a shopping list), a weekly calendar, or an activity schedule that prompts a parent to engage the child in the activities selected during the planning phase of the *CECLL* model. The goal is to increase the *breadth* and *depth* of participation in everyday family and community learning opportunities.

Caregiver responsive teaching. What caregivers do to support and encourage child language learning as part of children's participation in everyday activities is important for a number of reasons. Research indicates that caregiver responsiveness to and support of child behavior in the context of everyday activities is a powerful strategy for supporting and strengthening child competence expression and for promoting child acquisition of new abilities (Kassow & Dunst, 2007a, 2007b; Raab, Dunst, Johnson et al., 2013; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Strategies emphasizing responsiveness to and support of child competence expression are especially effective when children are engaged in interactions with people and objects (e.g., Dunst, Lowe, & Bartholomew, 1990).

The *Caregiver Responsive Teaching Checklist* includes the key characteristics of this instructional practice used to encourage and support interest-based everyday child learning to promote the development of child communication and language competence. The checklist includes practices for focusing caregiver attention on child interests, following a child's lead, responding contingently to child behavioral initiations, encouraging child production of new behavior, and providing the child opportunities to practice existing and use newly learned communication and language behavior. The practices, taken together, constitute a *responsive interactional style* that has been found effective as a teaching method for supporting and strengthening child competence and confidence as part

of participation in interest-based everyday learning activities (Dunst & Kassow, 2008; Raab, Dunst, Johnson et al., 2013; Trivette, 2007).

Evaluation

The focus of the evaluation phase of the *CECLL* model is to determine the extent to which: (a) a child has increased opportunities to participate in interest-based everyday activities, (b) child communication and language competence and confidence is strengthened as a result of participation in the activities, and (c) parents' competence and confidence is strengthened as a result of their efforts to provide children with interest-based everyday learning opportunities. The *Caregiver-Mediated Child Learning Evaluation Checklist* includes indicators for determining the extent to which interventions are effective in each of these outcome areas.

Child participation in everyday activities. Increased participation in everyday activities is determined by asking parents whether a child's participation in the activities used in the intervention phase has increased, remained the same, or has decreased. The extent to which participation in the activities is interest-based and the activities have development-enhancing features is determined by asking parents to assess specific characteristics of the learning opportunities. This can be determined, for example, by asking parents to indicate the extent to which the learning activities were *interest-based* (e.g., "My child got excited while engaged in the activities"), *maintained the child's attention* (e.g., "My child spent a long time in the activities"), *provided opportunities for competence expression* (e.g., "My child tried his/her hardest to get my attention during the activities"), and *strengthened a child's ability* to initiate and sustain interactions in the activities (e.g., "My child tried to start or initiate interactions with me in the activities").

Child benefits. Child competence is assessed by observations of child communication and language behavior that would be expected to be the consequence of interest-based child learning opportunities. This involves, for each everyday activity, noting or recording those communication and language behaviors that the child uses in interactions with others in those settings. Child confidence is assessed in terms of a sense of mastery and accomplishment in achieving desired effects or producing expected consequences. The behavior indicators of confidence include, but are not limited to, social-affective behavior (smiling, laughter, vocalizations) and excitement demonstrated as part of or in response to producing desired or expected consequences.

Caregiver benefits. Parenting confidence and competence are measured in terms of the extent to which the caregiver-mediated practices have a positive effect on parenting beliefs and behavior (e.g., "To what extent has your use of the practice made you feel better about the learning opportunities you have been providing the child?"). *Competence* is assessed in terms of caregiver capabilities to execute parenting roles (e.g., providing a child increased numbers of interest-based learning opportunities). *Confidence* is assessed in terms of the sense of accomplishment in having expected or

anticipated consequences (e.g., increasing child production of context-specific behavior).

Feedback

The extent to which parents and other caregivers continue to provide children interest-based everyday learning opportunities and support their children's production of competence in the activities is dependent upon positive self-evaluations of their caregiver-mediated efforts. Two types of caregiver beliefs are likely to influence parents' continued provision of interest-based child language learning opportunities: (1) the extent to which the learning opportunities afforded a child have the expected or desired child consequences and (2) the extent to which caregivers' decisions and actions strengthen their own confidence and competence in their parenting capabilities (Dunst, 2010; Goldberg, 1977).

The information obtained in the evaluation phase of the *CECLL* model is used to informally engage parents in reflection on and evaluation of their actions as a way of deciding to continue, discontinue, modify, or change the activities afforded their children. The importance of doing so is based on research showing that caregiver beliefs are important mediators of both the experiences afforded children and the benefits and consequences of the experiences (e.g., Edwards, 2008; MacPhee & Miller-Heyl, 2003; Teti, O'Connell, & Reiner, 1996; Trivette, Dunst, & Hamby, 2010). *Parents and other caregivers are more likely to continue providing children interest-based everyday communication and language learning opportunities if they judge their efforts successful in increasing child participation in the activities and the participation has benefits for both the child and parent.*

Conclusion

The caregiver-mediated approach to child communication and language learning described in this paper uses everyday family and community activities as sources of child learning opportunities and child interest-based participation in those activities as a way of encouraging and supporting child communication and language development. The *CECLL* intervention model constitutes a set of guidelines for practitioners to use to promote caregivers' adoption and use of the practices that are the focus of the *CECLL* intervention model. The approach to interest-based everyday child language learning is based on research syntheses of studies of practices in each component of the model (Dunst, Valentine et al., 2013; Raab, Dunst, & Hamby, 2013; Raab, Dunst, Johnson et al., 2013; Trivette et al., 2013) as well as findings from other research syntheses (Dunst, Jones, Johnson, Raab, & Hamby, 2011; Dunst, Trivette, & Hamby, 2012) which indicates that use of the practices described in this paper are associated with positive child communication and language development.

We conclude by noting a difference between traditional intervention practices and those described in this paper and why the *CECLL* approach is warranted as an intervention model for young children with disabilities (Dunst & Trivette,

2012). Traditional early childhood intervention practices typically involve once or twice a week intervention sessions conducted by practitioners themselves. Some simple calculations indicate that twice-a-week hourly intervention or therapy in the absence of parent involvement accounts for only 2% of the total waking hours of a one-year-old child (Roffwarg, Muzio, & Dement, 1966), hardly enough time to make any real difference in the child's life. Even when interventions are conducted in families' homes, parents are often not taught to use the intervention practices with their children. Findings from a meta-analysis of parent involvement studies indicates that many parents are not involved in their children's early childhood intervention in ways that have capacity-building characteristics and consequences (Dunst, Espe-Sherwindt, & Bruder, 2013).

In contrast to traditional intervention practices, almost every daily activity (feeding, diaper changing, bathing, parent/child lap games, etc.) making up the fabric of a child's life is experienced at least 2000 times during the first year of a child's life (Ferrier, 1978) which are easily used as sources of informal child learning opportunities. Just 20 everyday activities would provide some 40,000 learning opportunities by age one. Research, however, indicates that infants, toddlers, and preschoolers participate, on average, in about 50 different kinds of everyday activity (Dunst & Bruder, 1999). If each activity is experienced at least 2000 times a year, this translates into 100,000 learning opportunities each year of a child's life *not counting the multiple number of learning opportunities that are afforded within any single activity*. Assuming that any one activity provides only five learning opportunities, the number of times a child has opportunities to practice existing and learn new skills would be more than half a million (50 activities x 2000 times per year x 5 learning opportunities per activity equals 500,000). The fact is that any one activity can and often does include many more learning opportunities (e.g., bottle or spoon feeding). The same types of analyses performed by Mahoney and MacDonald (2007) and McWilliam (2000) resulted in similar conclusions that informal, everyday activities and interventions afforded young children provide them considerably more learning opportunities than do more traditional intervention practices.

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Appendix

Everyday Child Language Learning Checklist

Caregiver Responsive Teaching Checklist

Child Interests Checklist

Everyday Learning Activity Checklist

Increasing Everyday Child Learning Opportunities Checklist

Caregiver-Mediated Child Learning Evaluation Checklist

Everyday Child Language Learning Checklist

This checklist includes questions for you to consider for helping a parent provide his or her child interest-based everyday communication and language learning opportunities. The checklist is used to ensure key characteristics of the communication and language learning practices are implemented during your interactions with a parent. Following your interactions with a parent, complete the checklist by indicating if you did (**Yes**) or did not (**No**) have the opportunity to help the parent use the practices.

<i>Did you help the parent...</i>		Yes	No
Child Interests	1. Identify the objects, people, activities, and actions that capture and hold the child's attention ?		
	2. Identify the objects, people, events, and activities that the child prefers , are the child's favorites , and make the child smile and laugh ?		
	3. Identify the actions and behaviors that the child enjoys doing, chooses to do, does most often , or works hard at doing ?		
Everyday Learning Activities	4. Identify the activities, events, and experiences that make up the child's everyday family and community life ?		
	5. Identify which everyday family and community activities provide the child interest-based learning opportunities ?		
	6. Select the interest-based activities that are used to provide the child everyday language learning opportunities ?		
Increasing Learning Opportunities	7. Use a reminder list or other activity schedule to increase how often the child participates in the interest-based language learning activities?		
	8. Increase the number and variety of everyday activities providing interest-based language learning opportunities?		
	9. Increase the number and variety of interest-based language learning opportunities in any one activity ?		
Responsive Teaching	10. Pay attention to when and how the child uses or tries to use language in interactions with people or objects in the everyday activities.		
	11. Respond to the child's language use in ways (e.g., comments, gestures, joint interaction, etc.) that support the child's engagement in the activities?		
	12. Respond to the child's language use in ways that support and encourage the child to use new and increasingly complex language skills ?		
Evaluation	13. Determine whether the child used a greater variety of and more complex language in interactions in the everyday activities?		
	14. Determine what the caregiver did that supported and encouraged the child's language learning?		
	15. Use the evaluation information to continue, modify, or provide new everyday language learning activities?		

Caregiver Responsive Teaching Checklist

This checklist includes questions you can use to help a parent understand how to use responsive teaching for supporting and encouraging child language learning in interest-based everyday activities. The checklist includes those features of responsive teaching that are most likely to increase child language in the context of interest-based everyday learning activities. Following your interactions with a parent, complete the checklist by indicating if you did (*Yes*) or did not (*No*) have the opportunity to help the parent use the practices.

<i>Did you help the parent...</i>	Yes	No
1. Engage the child in interest-based family and community language learning activities?		
2. Provide the child time to initiate interactions with people or objects in the activities?		
3. Pay attention to and notice when and how the child uses or tries to use language in interactions with people and objects in the everyday activities?		
4. Respond promptly and positively to the child's language use in ways that match the amount, pace, and intent of the child's behavior?		
5. Respond to the child's language use with comments, joint interaction, and gestures to support child engagement in the activity?		
6. Respond to the child in ways that encourage the child to use language in new and different ways?		
7. Use different materials or arrange the environment to encourage the child to use language in new and different ways?		
8. Encourage the child to elaborate on his or her language in ways that are increasingly more complex?		
9. Provide the child frequent opportunities to use and practice newly learned language abilities in the everyday activities?		

Child Interests Checklist

This checklist includes questions you can use to help a parent identify his or her child's interests. The checklist includes indicators that ensure a broad range of child interests are identified during your interactions with a parent. Following your interactions with a parent, complete the checklist by indicating if you did (**Yes**) or did not (**No**) have the opportunity to help the parent recognize and identify child interests.

<i>Did you help the parent...</i>	Yes	No
1. Identify the objects, people, activities, and actions that capture and hold the child's attention?		
2. Identify the objects, people, activities, and actions that are the child's favorites?		
3. Identify the objects, people, activities, and actions that make the child smile and laugh?		
4. Identify the objects, people, activities, and actions that are especially exciting to the child?		
5. Identify the child's preferences for different objects, people, activities, and actions?		
6. Identify the objects, people, activities, and actions that the child chooses most often?		
7. Identify the objects, people, activities, and actions that the child spends the most time with or doing?		
8. Identify the objects, people, activities, and actions that the child works hard at doing?		

Everyday Learning Activity Checklist

This checklist includes questions you can use to help a parent identify and select everyday family and community learning activities that would provide a child interest-based language learning opportunities. The checklist includes indicators for ensuring the most appropriate everyday activities are selected as sources of language learning opportunities. Following your interactions with a parent, complete the checklist by indicating if you did (**Yes**) or did not (**No**) have the opportunity to help the parent use the practices.

<i>Did you help the parent...</i>	Yes	No
1. Identify the family and community activities that are the child's everyday life experiences?		
2. Identify those family activities that do or could provide the child interest-based language learning opportunities?		
3. Identify those community activities that do or could provide the child interest-based language learning opportunities?		
4. Select interest-based family and community activities that provide many different kinds of interest-based language learning opportunities?		
5. Select interest-based family and community language learning activities that do or could happen often?		
6. Select interest-based family and community learning activities where each activity provides lots of different language learning opportunities?		
7. Select interest-based family and community learning activities that are especially likely to help the child practice emerging language abilities and develop new ones?		
8. Select interest-based family and community activities that allow the child to try to use language in different ways?		

Increasing Everyday Child Learning Opportunities Checklist

This checklist includes questions you can use to help a parent increase the *breadth* and *depth* of interest-based everyday child language learning opportunities. The checklist includes indicators for increasing the number, types, and quality of interest-based everyday language learning opportunities. Following your interactions with a parent, complete the checklist by indicating if you did (*Yes*) or did not (*No*) have the opportunity to help the parent use the practices.

<i>Did you help the parent...</i>	Yes	No
1. Use a reminder list, calendar, or other kind of activity schedule to provide the parent a way of ensuring a child experiences interest-based everyday language learning activities?		
2. Increase <i>how often</i> the child gets to participate in interest-based everyday language learning activities?		
3. Increase the <i>number</i> of interest-based everyday child language learning activities?		
4. Increase the <i>variety</i> of interest-based everyday child language learning activities?		
5. Increase the <i>number</i> of child language learning opportunities <i>in</i> any one family or community activity?		
6. Increase the <i>variety</i> of child language learning opportunities <i>in</i> any one family or community activity?		
7. Increase participation in those activities that occur frequently enough to provide lots of child language learning opportunities?		

Caregiver-Mediated Child Learning Evaluation Checklist

This checklist includes questions you can use to help a parent assess the benefits of efforts to provide his or her child interest-based everyday language learning opportunities. The checklist is used to ensure your interactions with a parent involve the parent's judgments of the benefits of interest-based, everyday child language learning. Following your interactions with a parent, complete the checklist by indicating if you did (**Yes**) or did not (**No**) have the opportunity to help the parent assess the consequences of using the practices.

<i>Did you help the parent...</i>	Yes	No
1. Determine if the child had the opportunity to participate in many different family or community activities providing language learning opportunities?		
2. Determine if the child had chances to use language in different ways in any one family or community activity?		
3. Determine if the child initiated using more language in interactions with people and objects in the everyday activities?		
4. Determine if the child displayed a greater variety of communicative behaviors in the everyday activities?		
5. Determine whether the child used more complex language in interactions with people and objects in the everyday activities?		
6. Determine whether the child smiled, laughed, or showed enjoyment in response to his/her accomplishments using language during everyday activities?		
7. Determine those parenting behaviors that supported and encouraged child language learning in the activities?		
8. Determine which aspects of their provision of interest-based child language learning opportunities were most gratifying to the parent?		
9. Recognize the important role the parent had in providing his or her child interest-based language learning opportunities?		
10. Use the evaluative information to change the everyday activities used for interest-based language learning?		