

Selecting Vocabulary to Facilitate Communication in the AAC User

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What words do children and adults really use to communicate?

78% of the words we use daily are drawn from a core of fewer than 400 words

Core vocabulary makes up 3/4 of what adults and children actually say and is often ignored in the design of AAC systems

Top Words Used by Toddlers

1. a	14. off
2. all done/finished	15. on
3. go	16. out
4. help	17. some
5. here	18. that
6. I	19. the
7. in	20. want
8. is	21. what
9. it	22. yes/yeah
10. mine	23. you
11. more	
12. my	
13. no	

Banajee, M., DiCarlo, C., & Buras-Stricklin, S (2003). Core Vocabulary Determination for Toddlers, Augmentative & Alternative Communication, 2, 67-73.

Toddler Words by Frequency of Use

<u>Words</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
I	9.5
No	8.5
Yes/yea	7.6
my	5.8
the	5.2
want	5.0
is	4.9
it	4.9
that	4.9
a	4.6
go	4.4
mine	3.8
you	3.2
what	3.1
on	2.8
in	2.7
here	2.7
more	2.6
out	2.4
off	2.3
some	2.3
help	2.1
all done/finished	1.0
	96.3%

Banajee, 2003

How many of those words were noun labels or picture producers?



Picture Producers

- The majority of words used in sentences are NOT picture producers
 - Only 1 word is a picture producer in the following sentence: "I went on a trip and saw a mountain." What is it?
- Fewer than 5 percent of words used in any activity by toddlers are picture producers (Banajee, DiCarlo & Stricklin, AAC, 2003)
- More than 90 percent of core vocabulary words are **not** picture producers

(Hill, Dissertation, Establishment of Performance Indices, 2001)

Clinical Application

First 8 Words: all done, help, want, mine, more, stop, that, what

First 15 Words: all done, away, go, help, here, I, it, like, mine, more, stop, that, want, what, you

First 30 Words: again, all done, away, big, do, down, get, go, help, here, I, in, it, like, little, mine, more my, off, on, out, put, some, stop, that, there, up, want, what, you

Gail VanTatenhove, 2005

First 50 Words:

again, all, all done, away, bad, big, come, do, don't, down, drink, eat, feel, get, go, good, happy, help, here, I, in, it, like, little, make, me, mine, more, my, not, now, off, on, out, play, put, read, said, some, stop, tell, that, there, turn, up want, what, where, who, why, you

AAC Vocabulary Considerations

- Typical language is 1 noun: 4 other words
- Vocabulary/labels are not language
- 96.3% of toddler vocabulary is 23 words

(Banajee, DiCarlo, Stricklin, AAC 2003)

Language Development

- Reasons to communicate (pragmatics)
- Word meanings (semantics)
- Word building (morphology)
- Sentence building (syntax)
- The communication dance (discourse)

Have a Vision

- Team approach
- Long range vs immediate
- Evaluate vocabulary needs
- Whose vocabulary is it?

Building Communication Competence

- Functional activities
- Repetition and routine
- Technology in these classrooms (both hi and low)
- Language learning & use

Importance of Core

Core vocabulary is consistent across:

- **Populations**
 - toddlers, adolescents, adults, elderly, people w/ DD, CP, Syndromes, Autism
- **Places**
 - at home, school, centers, restaurants, malls, churches, outdoors, hospitals, cars,
- **Topics**
 - work, fact finding, food, family life, gossip, judgments, biography, education, life experiences
- **Activities**
 - Talking to friends/family/on phone, eating, playground, shopping, playing games, hobbies, watching movies, driving, “visiting”



How do you make a communication display if Core Vocabulary is not a Picture Producer?



Communication Displays

- Activity Based or Situation Specific
- Core words?
- Allow for Expansion
- Expressive vs Interpretation vocabulary
- Ever changing vocabulary



Design Features

- Motor Considerations
- Visual features to maximize linguistic and cognitive organization
 - Color code
 - Grammatical-semantic-alphabetic
 - Left-to-right
 - Sensory input
 - Memory information

Supporting Aided Communication in the Classroom

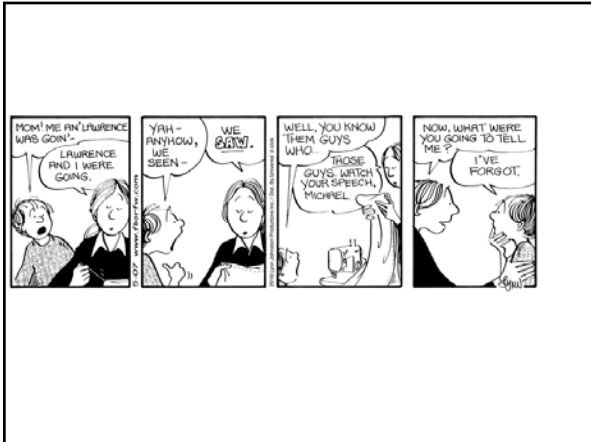
- Model what you expect
- Don't feel student needs to identify symbol before they can use it
- Teach in a functional environment
- Create language rich learning environment
- Provides receptive language base with expectation that expressive language will follow

Aided Language Stimulation - Why?

- Make language visual/tangible (King-DeBaun, 1999)
- Slows your rate of speech so comprehension is improved
- Initially emphasis is on receptive with the idea that expressive will follow
- Provides models for students they can use in the future
- Engages all children in group activities
- You have to start somewhere!

Facilitating Communication in an AAC User

- Be at their eye level & keep eye contact
- Maintain open body posture
- WAIT for them to respond
- Use open-ended ?s
- SILENCE IS OK!
- Confirm message and Prompt (only if ok w/ AAC user!)
- PAUSE



Everyone Communicates!

- Unintentional
- Intentional but not symbolic
- Intentional and symbolic

Basic Communication Skills

- Shared focus
- Early gestural complex (look, point at, reach for, give to)
- Multi-modal communication (eyes, gestures, voice, body)
 - Unaided versus aided communication

Enhancing Communication

- Analyze the Environment
- Identify opportunities to emphasize communication
- Sabotage Environment
- Model the use of communication tools (light & high tech)

Success in life can be directly related to the ability to communicate. Full interpersonal communication substantially enhances an individual's potential for education, employment, and independence. Therefore, it is imperative that the goal of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) use be **the most effective interactive communication possible**. Anything less represents a compromise of the individual's human potential.

ASHA website, 2011 Adapted from a paper by Katya Hill, M.A., CCC-SLP, Assistant Professor, Speech-Language Pathology, Edinboro University of Pennsylvania

Resources

- 12 Texts a Day – Maximizing Down Time! (Musselwhite, 2008) June 2008 Tip of the Month; www.aacintervention.com
- Augmentative Communication, Carol Goosens' and Sharon Crain (Blue & Red binders); Don Johnston Developmental Equipment, Inc.
- "Communicatin' in the community", Pat Bryant, Closing the Gap, April/May 2008 (pat@aimeesolutions.com)
- <http://www.lburkhardt.com>
- Caufield, Freda, Carrillo, Debbie, "200 A Day the Easy Way: Putting it in Practice" Closing the Gap, June/July 2010.
- Carlson, Faith, Creating Communication Displays, Poppin and Company, 1997
- Orange County Public Schools Assistive Technology Team, Orange County, Florida
- Gail Van Tatenhove, PA, MS, CCC-SLP; UAACT, 2/2011
- Dynavox and PRC websites

Facilitating the Use of Aided Communication:

- Model what you expect
- Don't need to KNOW the symbol before we can use it – often in using it is we learn it
- Create a language learning environment – Don't test 24/7!
- Single word utterances are not always requests. Don't treat them as such.
- Follow the 3 R's: Routine, Repetition, and Reward (what your AAC User and you will get with successful communication!) Repetition with variety!
- 200 opportunities a Day in order to be successful
- Expectant Pausing! WAIT for your AAC User.

Types of Displays:

- Individual or classroom displays
- Single Word Utterance Displays (often picture word displays)
- Sentence creation
 - Must have at least 2 word groupings that can be combined to make sentences
 - Best to start with at least 3 symbols so that more than one sentence can be created
 - Sequencing and word order starts to be critical
 - Important for the AAC user to SEE the sequence of symbols. Create a “message window” if you are using paper displays. If using a speech generating device they often have a message window available.
 - Left to Right orientation becomes critical
 - Color coding of symbols helps visualize sequencing
- Games
 - Can be games themselves or as a display to communicate during a commercial, traditional or self-created game
 - Memory – Barrier game: The player looks at the sequence of symbols displayed and then it is covered. The player then has to remember and recreate the sequence as the game partner places cut up symbols in the message age. The paper is lifted and the result compared with the original. Then it is the opponent's turn. You could play this with real objects as well.
 - Games are a great way to practice (repetition!!) and develop communication skills. They also provide a great opportunity to socialize and interact – building friendships.
- Keyboards ABC or QWERTY are most popular.

Resources:

Carlson, Faith. Creating Communication Displays. Poppin and Company
Patti King-DeBaun
Gail Vantenhove, 2007