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2016 Nancy McKinley Lecture Series: Topics in Augmentative and Alternate Communication (AAC)

Guest Editor: Linda R. Schreiber, M.S., CCC-SLP, BCS-CL, ASHA Fellow

In partnership with University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

AAC Part 2: Children with Complex Communication Needs: Assessing The Student and the Communication Environment

Presenter: Gary D. Cumley, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

Moderated by: Amy Natho, M.S., CCC-SLP, CEU Administrator, SpeechPathology.com
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Peer Review Process

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AAC Part 2: Children with Complex Communication Needs: Assessing the Student and the Communication Environments

October 4, 2016

Gary D. Cumley, Ph.D., CCC-SLP
Professor Emeritus
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

Learner Objectives

Participants will be able to….

• List two reasons why determining the communication abilities and difficulties of a student with CCNs is challenging.

• Explain how the TEAM uses the assessment information in completing a “feature match” approach for a student with CCNs.

• List two reasons why it is important to determine the symbolization level of a student with CCNs.

• List two comprehensibility factors that positively impact a communication partner’s ability to better understand the speech of a student with CCNs.
Challenges of AAC Assessments

- “Student Specific Challenges”

- With the AAC assessment should I assess all areas for my student?

Communication Types

- Determining the student’s level of functional communication.

- Characteristics of types of communicators
  * Emergent Communicator-
  * Context Dependent Communicator-
  * Independent Communicator
    * Dowden, 1999.
Receptive and Expressive Assessment
- Criterion referenced assessment procedures can be developed.
- The TEAM makes observations.
- TEAM and staff members are asked questions.

Symbolization
- Determining a student’s level of symbolization. (Beukelman & Mirenda, 2013).
- Types of Symbols
  - Aided
  - Unaided
- How do you assess symbolization?
How to Assess Symbolization

• Criterion based symbol assessment

• Test of Aided-Communication Symbol Performance (TASP)

Criterion Based Symbol Assessment Kit

Matching task
Real object, photographs, colored black-line drawings, and words. (Mirenda & Locke, 1989)
Comprehensibility vs. Intelligibility

- Many children with CCNs use their speech for communicative purpose.

- Frequently intelligibility assessments are carried out but comprehensibility is overlooked.

- What is the difference between……?
  - Intelligibility
  - Comprehensibility
Intelligibility and Comprehensibility Results (Dowden, 1997)

<table>
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<th>Semantic Cue</th>
<th>Semantic Cue &amp; Visual Cue (Symbol)</th>
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<td>2/10=20%</td>
<td>3/10=30%</td>
<td>5/10=50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiar Partner Clinician</td>
<td>3/10=30%</td>
<td>5/10=50%</td>
<td>9/10=90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfamiliar Partner</td>
<td>0/10=0%</td>
<td>5/10=50%</td>
<td>6/10=60%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Environment Consideration

- Each student needs to communicate in various environments including home, school and/or community.

- Environmental Factors To Be Considered
  - Communication Partner Behaviors and Attitudes
    - Attitude Barriers
    - Opportunity Barriers
    - Knowledge Barriers
    - Skill Barriers
    - Operational Barriers (Beukelman & Mirenda, 2013; Light, 1988).
Environment Consideration Observation Tool

- Communication partners are part of every student’s environment and social network (Blackstone & Hunt-Berg, 2012).
- Social Network Inventory is a tool that allows the TEAM to look at a student’s entire social network of communication partners and consider the various communication expectations and demands across different environments.

Current and Past Tools

- Information about the student’s success and failures of their current and past communication systems needs to be determined.
- The TEAM asks questions
  - Was there a mismatch between the communication system and the student’s skill level?
  - Was there a lack of effectiveness of the system to meet the communication demands of the environment/task?
  - Was there a lack of consistent opportunities to participate in communication situations?
  - Was the communication system(s) not available across environment?
  - Was there a lack of adequate training of the communication partners?
  - Did the communication partners have either a low or to high of expectations of the student?
  - Was there a lack of adequate time for the communication partner to support the student?
Feature Match

• What is the feature match process?
  ◦ (Shane & Costello, 1994)

• Assessment data and observations

• The TEAM’s decision process

Assessment Report

• Understand and provide funding agencies with appropriate and adequate assessment information and that they deem important.

• Be sure to use the vocabulary of the funding or school agency i.e. speech generating device, voice output device, etc.

• Be clear in explaining assessment procedures.

• Have documentation of the student’s performance that is clearly presented and supported by clear and accurate data.

• If a system is recommended, then it is critical that the student be involved in a trial period with the system. Explain not only the context of the trial but also data that clearly explains how successful the student was in using the system for functional communication.
Summary

- AAC assessment process is complex and there isn’t a set “recipe” for assessing students with complex communication needs (CCNs). The TEAM needs to realize that each student doesn’t need to be assessed in every area. It depends on the “Student Specific” challenges the observations, and the information the TEAM feels is needed to better support the communication of the student.

- Make observations
- Ask questions

- Feature match process is critical to complete. This feature match process is a means of determining which features of a communication system(s) best matches the student’s abilities and difficulties.

- Assessment reports must to be descriptive with data that are reader “friendly”. If attempting to go through a funding agency for purchase of a communication system provide them the information they are looking for.

Reference/Resources


- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (WATI) Assessing Students Needs for Assistive Technology (ASNET) http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/educators/consultation/assistive-technology/wisconsin-assistive-technology-initiative