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AAC in the General Education Classroom: Using Descriptive Talking to Teach Students Using Robust AAC Systems

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Disclosure

• I have the following relevant relationships in the products or services described, reviewed, evaluated or compared in this presentation.
  – Financial
    • Speaking fee from SpeechPathology.com
    • Author/Seller of the Natural Aided Language Board and the Core Vocabulary Classroom Kit.
  – Non-Financial
    • Prentke Romich Application and Support Software (PASS)
Learner Outcomes

• As a result of this Continuing Education Activity, participants will be able to:
  1) describe the vocabulary needed in an AAC system to support descriptive talking.
  2) describe the benefits of descriptive talking
  3) explain how to plan a lesson using the principles of descriptive talking

Descriptive Talking

A technique that focuses on using core words for lesson-specific words
Descriptive Teaching, Talking, and Talking
Gail M. Van Tatenhove, PA, MS, CCC-SP
Conversations with Gail, April 2015

- core words?
- core for lesson-specific words?
- robust AAC systems?
What is and is not core vocabulary?

• Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country. (John F. Kennedy)

  common
  frequently used
  versatile
Re-Usable Words are Core!

ask not what your
country can do for you

More Math Facts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A person ....</th>
<th>Number of words known</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>starting school at 6*</td>
<td>5000 to 6000 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>without a formal education</td>
<td>35,000 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with a high school education</td>
<td>50,000 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with a college education</td>
<td>50,000 to 75,000 words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* David Crystal, linguist
Descriptive Teaching, Talking, and Talking
Gail M. Van Tatenhove, PA, MS, CCC-SP
Conversations with Gail, April 2015

20,000 words in your active, speaking vocabulary

Susan Dent: http://www.lingholic.com

Dr. Suess

255 words

50 words
Vocabulary Usage

**CORE**
- 40-50% of what you say comes from a set of 50 words
- 60% of what you say comes from a set of 100 words
- 80%-85% of what you say comes from a set of 250 to 350 words

**EXTENDED or FRINGE**
- 20% of what you say is from the other 19,750 to 19,650 words in your active vocabulary

I’m working on learning the core vocabulary in my device but I’m a long way from knowing all the words.

My teacher is asking questions about the lesson and the words to answer her questions aren’t in my device and, I’m not a good enough speller to spell them.

How are my teachers going to teach me?
“Program in the lesson-specific words.”

“Use a computer program instead of the AAC device.”

“Focus on teaching the core words.”

“Teach him to spell ASAP.”

“Put the lesson-specific words on a MCB”

“Teach with Descriptive Talking!”

Why Teach with Descriptive Talking?

Practical

Strategically Necessary

Educationally Sound
Descriptive Teaching, Talking, and Talking
Gail M. Van Tatenhove, PA, MS, CCC-SP
Conversations with Gail, April 2015

When Teaching-Testing with their students ALL teachers go back and forth between the use of Referential* and Descriptive* techniques.

* Coined by Bruce Baker, 2005; Personal conversations and various presentations.
Referential Style with Speaking Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Probe for the recall of facts</th>
<th>Where is the race held?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What do we call the race?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who drives the sled?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quick, one-word answers, usually only one correct answer</td>
<td>Alaska</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Iditarod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>musher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example used with permission.
Musher… but I can’t say that word or spell it!

What do we call the person who drives the dog sled?

Efficient
## Descriptive Style with Speaking Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Probe for understanding, application, opinion</th>
<th>What does it mean to be experienced?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why does a musher need an experienced lead dog?</td>
<td>did it before, knows how to do it, did already, good at it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answers are multi-word sentences, usually no one exact answer</td>
<td>help stay safe, show the other dogs, all dogs work together</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**What does it mean to be experienced?**
- did it before, knows how to do it, did already, good at it
- help stay safe, show the other dogs, all dogs work together

**What does a musher do?**
- drive
did it before, knows how to do it
take care dog
he go
Benefits of Descriptive Talking

- Stable vocabulary
- Practice putting words together
- Core vocabulary in different contexts
- Literacy learning

Why Teach with Descriptive Talking?

☑ Practical

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STRATEGICALLY NECESSARY

Essential Skill for No/Low Spellers

Necessary with Limited Vocabulary Systems

team team team weekend fun

drink, green, Taco Bell, fall, down

over water, up fast, loud, cold

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EDUCATIONALLY SOUND

Encourages Active Learning

Supports the “Verbs” of the CCSS

Active Learning
The Vocabulary Bits of Active Learning Involves....

- **TEACH**: Information Input – Taught with core vocabulary words, modeled on the device.
- **TALK BACK**: Review and rehearse to support recall.
- **TELL**: Recall and explain to someone else.


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Teach with Core – Talk Back with Core

- **TEACH**: Information Input – Taught with core vocabulary words, modeled on the device.
- **TALK BACK**: Review and rehearse to support recall.
- **TELL**: Recall and explain to someone else.
Supports the “Verbs” of the CCSS

3rd Grade Social Studies – Civics & Government
Florida Next Generation Sunshine State Standards

**Explain** the purpose and need of government.
- keep people safe, give people rights, take care of things I can’t do myself

**Describe** how government gains its power from the people.
- we pick them, say no when they do bad things

**Identify** the levels of government.
- state, local, federal

**Define** civility, volunteerism, respect.
- civility = be nice to others
- volunteerism = do work for no money, do together what town needs
- respect = everyone listen, no fighting when not thinking the same
How do you help teachers learn what words are and aren’t in the device?

Use terminology teachers know

- Core Vocabulary words = Dolch and/or Fry Sight Word Lists
- Extended Vocabulary words = Key Lesson Vocabulary

Use examples of vocabulary from their own classrooms
Core Vocabulary = High Frequency Words for Reading & Writing

Extended Vocabulary = Subject and Lesson Specific Words
The Strategy Preferred by Gen Ed Teachers

- Provide an at-a-glance “visual dictionary”
  - that shows the most important words in the device (core and some extended) that the student needs to learn how to say
  - but not ALL the words that are in the device or which the student needs to learn how to say

Visual Dictionary with 350+/- words

This visual dictionary is a commercial product (Natural Aided Language Board-NALB) sold by Gail Van Tatenhove and is pre-made for students using Unity or LAMP Words for Life; or with printed words only to customize for any program or AAC device/app. The NALB comes on a CD for you to print and put together. Go to www.vantatenhove.com for more information.
What words ARE in the device?

- Teach how to look-up words NOT on the visual dictionary
  - check in the paper or e-manual (if provided)
  - use emulation software on an external computer (if available)
  - use the “dictionary” in the device (if available)

- Explain the purpose and need of government.
  - The government keeps people safe.
  - The government takes care of things I can’t do myself.
  - They vote on stuff.
  - They pass laws.

✔ How do you help teachers learn what words are and aren’t in the device?

How do you organize and conduct lessons using descriptive talking?
Discuss use of Visual Dictionary

Teacher or Instructional Assistant:
- Circle words to use during the lesson as single words or in phrases or short sentences
- Point at words as say words, phrases and short sentences

Student:
- Visual reference when giving answers
- Visual reminder for new ideas

Example Lesson

Steps
- Identify and introduce the key concepts of the lesson
- Teach, Model and and “Talk Back” about the concepts
- Review and test learning

Identify

1-Identify and Introduce Lesson Vocabulary
"emergency"

Available at Gail's YouTube Channel: gvantatenhove
## Example Lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teach/Model/Talk Back</th>
<th>Review/Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2-Teacher Teach and Student Talk</strong>&lt;br&gt;Define lesson key words with core vocabulary</td>
<td><strong>3-Review and Test</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Available at Gail's YouTube channel: [gvantatenhove](https://www.youtube.com/channel/gvantatenhove)

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## Get Organized!

- Collect supplies for use with the visual dictionary / wall chart
  - dry-erase pen & eraser
  - foam paint brush
  - light pointer
  - clicker pointer

© Van Tatenhove, 2015
Display the Wall Charts

Adapt Activities, Lessons, and Materials

What, if anything, would you do to adapt this activity, lesson, or material to encourage the use of core vocabulary?

What is the role of the instructional assistant (or teacher)?

What kind of additional visual supports (beyond visual dictionary) are needed?
Show Simple, Sample DT Materials

Say the name of each picture. Write the letter I if the word begins with the sound of I.

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
9. 
10. 

1. What do to adapt?
2. What is role of IA?
3. What visual supports?

Work on the BIG WORD GROUPS – have lots of words from which to choose to do the activity.

1. Picked VERBS because pivot of any sentence.
2. The student was prompted to "find a green word" from his wall chart.

1. What do to adapt?
2. What is role of IA?
3. What visual supports?
1. What do to adapt?
2. What is role of IA?
3. What visual supports?

Plan a Lesson to Fully Implement Descriptive Talking

Identify KEY vocabulary of the lesson

Check for KEY vocabulary already in the device

Define KEY vocabulary and lesson concepts with CORE (from visual dictionary)

Address expectations & support questions
Science Class Example: Current Lesson Plan on Plants

1. Plant seeds and watch the plants grow over the next 3 months
2. Describe the different parts of the plant
3. Discuss the functions of the plant parts in the growing process
4. Complete a worksheet on the parts of a plant
5. Write a response to an application question

Step 1: Identify Key Vocabulary

1. plant (noun) 9. water
2. plant (verb) 10. light
3. flower 11. sun
4. leaf/leaves 12. air
5. stem 13. photosynthesis
6. root 14. support
7. ground 15. absorb
8. seed 16. nutrient
Step 2: Check Key Vocabulary in Device

plant
flower
leaf
leaves
stem
root
ground
seed
water
light
sun
air
photosynthesis
support
absorb
nutrient(s)
Step 3: Define Key & Concepts with Core

1. photosynthesis – light into food
2. support – keeps it up
3. absorb – take in
4. nutrients – good things from food

If you are looking up the words using computer software, SAVE your work and turn it into a VSM to use during the lesson.
Science Class Example:
Current Lesson Plan on Plants

1. Plant seeds and watch the plants grow over the next 3 months
2. *Describe the different parts of the plant*
3. *Discuss the functions of the plant parts in the growing process*
4. Complete a worksheet on the parts of a plant
5. Write a response to an application question

**Step 4: Address Expectations & Educational Support Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>Jordan will</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Plant seeds | • Opportunity: Plant a seed at same time as other students  
• Accommodation: Direct others (dig up, put in, cover up, water over)  
• Language: Use preposition and verbs in phrases  
• IA Role: Modeling, Prompt hierarchy  
• VS: VD book, Prep and verb cards |
At-A-Glance “Sentence Builder Chart”

This sentence builder chart is a commercial product from a product (Core Vocabulary Classroom Kit) sold by Gail Van Tatenhove and is pre-made for students using Unity or LAMP Words for Life; or with printed words only to customize for any program or AAC device/app. The NALB comes on a CD for you to print and put together. Go to www.vantatenhove.com for more information.

Step 4: Address Expectations & Educational Support Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>Jordan will</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Describe the parts of the plant</td>
<td>• Opportunity: Describe at least 1 part during group activity, describe each part during 1:1 time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Flowers = top, pretty part</td>
<td>• Accommodation: Use CV descriptions from Step 3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Stem = Long, middle part</td>
<td>• Language: Describe with an adjective and/or preposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Leaves = outside or side part</td>
<td>• IA Role: Modeling, Prompt hierarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Root = bottom part, under ground, dirty part</td>
<td>• VS: VD, adjective and preposition cards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Step 4: Address Expectations & Educational Support Questions

#### All Students
- Discuss the functions of the plant parts in the growing process
  - Flowers – has seeds, helps make more plants
  - Stem – keeps plant up, carries water and food
  - Leaves – makes light into food
  - Roots – keeps plant in ground, bring in food and water
  - Photosynthesis – light into food
  - Support – keeps up
  - Absorb – take in
  - Nutrients – good things from food

#### Jordan will
- Opportunity: Discuss 1 function during group activity, discuss each function during 1:1 time
- Accommodation: Use CV descriptions from Step 3.
- Language: Discuss with a simplified verb or verb phrase,
- IA Role: Modeling, Prompt hierarchy, circle words, present phrase cards
- VS: VD, function phrases

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### Step 4: Address Expectations & Educational Support Questions

#### All Students
- Complete a worksheet on parts of a plant

#### Jordan will
- Opportunity: Complete worksheet with a peer
- Accommodation: Number each line (1, 2, 3, 4); ABCD each part
- Language: Name of parts or A, B, C, D
- IA Role: Adapt worksheet, supervise completion with peer
- VS: codes for part words
**Step 4: Address Expectations & Educational Support Questions**

**All Students**
- Write a short paragraph (of at least 3 sentences) on why plants are important to us

**Jordan will**
- Opportunity: Write with EcoPoint connected to computer with writing program
- Modification: Write 2 sentences
- Language: at least 3 words/sentence, prompt use of verbs
- IA Role: Prompt verbs, help arranging words, do capitalization and punctuation
- VSM: VD, vocabulary cards

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**Realistic Expectations**

**Simple Start**
- one-on-one before small or large group
- short, manageable lessons
- limit use of extra materials and visuals

**Selective Implementation**
- with the fellow students in small groups
- subjects/lessons

**Systematic, Steady**
- build in accountability as a team
- incrementally increase use across subject areas, lessons, and communication partners

**Some becomes Spontaneous**
- learned words in AAC system
- can implement DT “on-the-fly”
Perspective on Extended Vocabulary

- Extended vocabulary words are usually the specific content words of a lesson
- The content words of the lesson are NOT bad words
- Hearing and learning content words is important for language enrichment,
  – but putting the emphasis on them in a lesson, when the student hasn’t learned the core vocabulary, is not a good use of time when learning to talk with an AAC device/app

Essential Subject-Specific Words

- Some subject-specific content words are essential to a subject and should, if not already, be added.

Example from Unity®60 Sequenced, from Prentke Romich Company. Used with permission.
Subject-Specific Academic Words

- Identify essential subject-specific words
  - How many concepts of a subject are core vocabulary words?
  - What words make participation in a subject a lot easier because they are programmed in the device?
    - Example a: Add critical language arts words
    - Example 2: Add math words that NOT in most AAC vocabulary sets: fraction, difference, borrow, pattern, difference, equation, remainder

Descriptive Talking and Writing

- Written text requires a topic sentence which generally requires specificity. After the topic sentence, then core vocabulary can take over to express supporting ideas, but for the topic sentence, you need lesson content words.
- Example: Which is the better topic sentence?
  - "My favorite person who writes books is the woman who wrote about old days when women needed a husband."
  - "My favorite author is Jane Austin."
Lesson Fact Writing

• Assignment: Write a paragraph of what you learned about Saturn. Include at least 3 facts.

• Peers writing: “Saturn is the 6th planet from the sun. We can see it from Earth. It has rings and many moons. It is made up of a lot of gas. It is very light and turns fast.”

Lesson Fact Writing

• Assignment: Write a paragraph of what you learned about Saturn. Include at least 3 facts.

• Peers writing: “ is the 6th from the . We can see it from . It has and many . It is made up of a lot of . It is very light and turns fast.”
Lesson Application Writing

• Assignment: What would it be like to live on Saturn?

• Peers writing: “Living on Saturn would be hard. You would need a floating house because it is made up of gas. It is very cold and moves so fast you would blow right off. I don’t think anyone should try and live there.”

Joshua’s Writing

Paragraph with 3 Facts:
Saturn is 6. 
Ring around it. 
It goes around fast. 
It is light.

Application:
I don’t want to live on Saturn. 
No fun because cold. 
No Cars movie there.
Simple, Supplemental AAC Solutions

1. Sticky Notes with words/drawings on them
   – Lay them out and student eye/hand selects needed word

2. Lesson-specific Manual Communication Boards
   – Develop manual boards with the lesson-specific vocabulary
   – Create and maintain a paper and/or e-file of board

3. Encoded Text
   – Add letters or numbers to key words in print-based materials
   – Student says the letter or number to “say” the word

4. Word Banks or Word Lists
   – Copy type or select from bank/list
   – Useful with print-based materials
   – An option with some educational software programs
Simple, Supplemental AAC Solutions

3. Spelling Strategies
   – Traditional spelling (with use of word prediction)
   – Approximated Spelling (with use of word prediction)
   – Initial Sound Spelling
     • Student – provides initial letter or key letters (J A)
     • Teacher/Assistant spells the rest or helps student select word from Word Prediction window

Testimonials

Lucy (IA): I never knew what was in the machine or how to say it. Now I do, I can model and I can help him!

Cynthia (teacher): It helps me know what the student has learned. And it is so much easier to work with him!
Thank you.

To contact Gail for further discussion and questions, email her at gvantatenhove@cfl.rr.com