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Young Children's Negative Attitudes toward Peers with Communication Disorders: What SLPs can do to help

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Young Children’s Negative Attitudes Toward Peers with Communication Disorders: What SLPs can do to help

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Webinar for speechpathology.com
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Disclosures

- Financial
  - Author of the InterACT program, for which I receive royalties
  - Co-owner of the Stuttering Academy
- Non-financial
  - Co-director of Stuttering U.

Learner Outcomes

- Describe the social-cognitive constructs related to the emergence of bias in young children.
- Explain the ramifications of negative peer attitudes toward children with communication disorders.
- Describe instructional approaches to improve young children’s negative attitudes toward peers with communication disorders.

But first a warm-up…
What are your immediate thoughts & feelings toward...

VS.

Images retrieved from www.pixabay.com
What are your immediate **thoughts & feelings** toward...
What are your immediate thoughts & feelings toward...

VS.

Images retrieved from www.pixabay.com
What are your immediate thoughts & feelings toward...

VS.

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Warm up

How would you classify your immediate thoughts and feelings? Positive? Negative? Neutral?
Warm-up

Experiences
Personal Beliefs/Values
Prior Knowledge
Social Cognition
Attitudes of Others

Inward Attitudes ➔ Outward Reactions

But how – and when – do attitudes develop?

Learner Outcomes

- Describe the social-cognitive constructs related to the emergence of bias in young children.
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Terminology

- An attitude is our general evaluation toward something or someone, which includes:
  - Affective processes: our feelings and emotions
  - Cognitive processes: our beliefs and knowledge
- We construct preferences – or biases – based on our attitudes, which can be favorable or unfavorable

Emergence of Negative Attitudes

- For preschool-aged children, affective processes largely drive children's attitudes
  - Awareness of others’ differences may lead to uncertainty, discomfort, fear, etc. This has been coined “pre-prejudice”
- “Pre-prejudice” has been documented among typically fluent children toward their peers who stutter
  - Perceived children who stutter as being “unable to talk well”
  - Held poor/uninformed knowledge about stuttering and how to respond to people who stutter
  - No effect of variables including SES, culture, gender on attitudes
- Preschool children have been shown to hold significantly worse attitudes than slightly older children and their parents

Derman-Sparks, 1989; Weidner, St. Louis, Burgess, & LeMasters, 2015; St. Louis, Weidner, Özdemir, & Nakaco, 2015
Emergence of Negative Attitudes

- For slightly older children (7+), **cognitive process** also influence children’s attitudes
  - Categorical skills become more nuanced and mature
  - More aware of others’ beliefs
  - May have increasing desire to conform to prevailing cultural/familial beliefs
  - Possible that there is a “trickle down” effect of others’ attitudes

- Upper school aged children have been shown to hold almost identical stuttering attitudes as their parents/prevailing social group in both the US and Turkey

*Derman-Sparks, 1989; Glover, St. Louis, & Wedner, 2018; Sinclair, Dunn, & Lowery, 2005; St. Louis, et al., 2015*

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Emergence of Negative Attitudes

- Glover and colleagues (2018) asked typically fluent children “what is stuttering?” Percentage of appropriate responses included:
  - 0% of preschoolers (0/73)
  - 0% of kindergarteners (0/18)
  - 5% of 1st grades (1/19)
  - 14% of 3rd graders (3/21)
  - 30% of 3rd graders (7/23)
  - 38% of 4th graders (8/21)
  - 67% of 5th graders (16/24)

- **So why address negative attitudes if children don’t even know what the disorder is?**
Emergence of Negative Attitudes

- You can still be aware of and have an *attitude* toward a difference in something or someone, even if you don’t have the *word* for it.

“Cherry eye”
A condition causing prolapse of eyelid gland

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Emergence of Negative Attitudes

- So what does this tell us?
- Awareness of differences and attitudes toward others who are “different” are related process
- Negative attitudes have been shown to develop as early as preschool
- Early development has been suggested to be an ideal time to help children learn about and be sensitive toward human differences
Learner Outcomes

- Describe the social-cognitive constructs related to the emergence of bias in young children.
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Ramifications of Negative Peer Attitudes

- Who are we talking about?
  1. Communicatively typical peers’ attitudes toward:
  2. Children who:
     - Have speech/language disorders
     - Stutter
     - Have social language impairment / ASD
     - Use AAC
     - Have hearing loss
     - Have a cleft lip/palate
     - Etc.
Ramifications of Negative Peer Attitudes

Preschoolers with communication disorders might:

- Be labeled unfavorably
- Participate in more solitary play / experience social exclusion
- Have worse attitudes toward their own communication skills compared to their typical peers
- One study showed preschoolers who stutter may have difficulty with:
  - Taking leadership roles
  - Engaging in communicatively-rich activities (e.g., pretend play)
  - Verbally resolving conflicts

Ezrati-Vinacour, Platsky, & Yairi, 2001; Langevin, Packman, & Onslow, 2009; Vannycoghe, Brutten, & Hernandez, 2005

Ramifications of Negative Peer Attitudes

School-aged children with communication disorders are at risk for:

- Fear and anxiety (parents may also experience these)
- Teasing and bullying
- Low social status among peers
- Social isolation
- Academic issues (teachers may have lower expectations)
- One study showed children with reduced speech intelligibility secondary to cleft were perceived as being:
  - Less healthy
  - Not as good looking
  - Having few to no friends

e.g., Burgess, Bailey, Wetmer, 2016; Lee, Gibbon, Spivey, 2017; Markham, van Leer, Gibbard, & Dean, 2018; McCormick, McCollie, McAlister, Harrison, 2009; O’Reilly, Carrel, & Bernthal, 2007
Ramifications of Negative Peer Attitudes

Long-term, adults with communication disorders are at risk for:

- Difficulty with relationships and social life
- Difficulties in the workplace:
  - Discriminatory hiring
  - Job advancement
  - Harassment
- Self-stigma – Internalizing prevailing social attitudes

  e.g., Blood & Blood, 2004; Boyle & Fearson, 2018, Davis, Howell, & Cook, 2002; Veríssimo, van Borsel, & de Britto Pereira, 2012

So, what are we going to do about it?
Ramifications of Negative Peer Attitudes

How can we be helpful?

Learner Outcomes

- Describe the social-cognitive constructs related to the emergence of bias in young children.
- Explain the ramifications of negative peer attitudes toward children with communication disorders.
- Describe instructional approaches to improve young children's negative attitudes toward peers with communication disorders.
Improving Children’s Negative Communication Attitudes

What’s our role?

SLPs are involved in prevention and wellness activities that are geared toward …decreasing the severity or impact of a disability associated with an existing disorder or disease…

SLPs promote programs to increase public awareness, which are aimed at positively changing behaviors or attitudes.

Effective prevention programs are often community based and enable the SLP to help reduce the incidence of spoken and written communication and swallowing disorders as a public health and public education concern.

ASHA Scope of Practice, 2016

Some general principles of intervention:

- Children learn prejudice from prejudice – not from learning about diversity (Derman Sparks & Edwards, 2010, p. 4)
- Be honest and matter-of-fact
- Talk! – Don’t make the topic “taboo”
- Evaluate your own biases
- Consider a child’s willingness/readiness to change
- Consult/collaborate with teachers, counselors, etc.
Improving Children’s Negative Communication Attitudes

- Separating the various domains of attitudes has been shown to be effective:
  - Affective component (empathy)
  - Cognitive component (knowledge)
  - Behavioral component (reactions)

**Recommendation 1:** Clarify your goal

- To improve attitudes of an individual, small group, or class?
- Prevention?
- To address current negative attitudes?
  - Is there an issue of having poor or misinformation about the disorder? (i.e., cognitive)
  - Is there an issue of having prevailing negative attitudes, such as fear? (i.e., affective)
Improving Children's Negative Communication Attitudes

Recommendation 2: Determine your approach

- Who will be involved with the intervention?
  - SLP
  - Teacher
  - Counselor
  - Special Educator
  - A child with the disorder

- Where will it take place?
  - Classroom
  - Speech Room
  - Auditorium

- Presentation given by someone who has the disorder
- Video of people affected by the disorder
- Books featuring characters with the disorder
- Guided discussion on human differences, respect, disorders, etc.
- Role-plays
- Contact
- Hands-on activity (crafts, activity books, etc.)
Improving Children’s Negative Communication Attitudes

- **Attitude Change and Tolerance Program (InterACT)**
- Comprised of:
  - Two educational videos
  - A theme song by fellow SLP, Seana Hollingsworth, and her husband, Jim
  - Small group discussion
  - An activity book

Weidner, St. Louis, & Glover, 2018
Improving Children’s Negative Communication Attitudes

Recommendation 3: Address the affective domain

- Start with what the children already know
- Expand their vocabulary
  - Nuanced feelings like “curious, uncomfortable"
  - Respect
  - Fair
- Approaches might involve teaching:
  - Perspective taking
  - Turn-taking
  - Empathy
Improving Children’s Negative Communication Attitudes

Recommendation 4: *Address the cognitive domain*

- Start with what the children already know
- Identify gaps in their pre-existing knowledge
- Be intentional
- Demystify the disorder
  - Label the disorder
  - Causes of the disorder
  - Characteristics of the disorder
  - Facts about the disorder

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**Card 3**

**Lesson 1: Same & Different**

In this scene, Ben and Rosie learned about ways people can be different.

1. What’s one way Rosie is different? (She is in a wheelchair.) That’s right. Rosie is different because she uses a wheelchair.
2. What’s one way Ben is different? (He stutters.) Yes, Ben is different because he stutters. Stuttering is what happens when his words or sounds get stuck like this.
3. Does Ben stutter because he is nervous or shy? (No.) Does Ben stutter because he’s sick? (No.) Does Ben stutter because he learned to talk that way? (No.) Does Ben stutter because he was born that way? (Yes.) That’s right. Ben stutters because he was born that way. Ben is all the same things other children can do. Stuttering is just what makes him different.

*Proceed to activity*
Improving Children’s Negative Communication Attitudes

Recommendation 5: Address the behavioral responses

- Start with what the children already know
- Show/describe helpful vs. unhelpful responses
- Role-play
- Provide positive actions they can do, versus actions to avoid
- This also involves understanding the preferences of the children with the communication disorder

InterACT Program

Helpful vs. Unhelpful Listener Responses
Improving Children’s Negative Communication Attitudes

Recommendation 6: Improving contact and exposure

- But, can contact in and of itself improve attitudes?
  - We must consider the quality of those interactions!
- “Facilitated Contact” – exposure to others, that are explained/ facilitated by an objective facilitator
  - Ideally, contact should be face-to-face, but other mediums may be effective (e.g., videos)
  - Language should be open, honest, and audience-appropriate
Improving Children’s Negative Communication Attitudes

Recommendation 7: Empower the child with the communication disorder

- Teach the child how to respond to negative peer responses
- Make the child the expert about the condition
- Help improve the child’s self talk/confidence

Summary

- Children with communication disorders are at high risk for social punishment throughout the course of their lives
- Attitudes among communicatively typically peers can be improved in relation to
  - Knowledge and beliefs
  - Reactions
- It is hoped that through talking openly and honestly about various disorders, we can foster more informed and tolerant environments
It's you I like, every part of you.
Your skin, your eyes, your feelings
Whether old or new.
I hope that you'll remember
Even when you're feeling blue
That it's you I like, it's you yourself
It's you. It's you I like.

Mr. Rogers, It's You I Like © 1971

References

References


Other Programs & Resources

- Teaching children to resist bias (Article; Derman-Sparks, Gutierrez, Phillips, 1999): http://fcs.sites.mjc.edu/127teachingyoungchildren2resistbias.pdf
- Procedures for class visits for children who stutter (Article; Murphy, 1998): http://www.mnsu.edu/comdis/kuster/therapypics/murphy.html
- The Teasing and Bullying Unacceptable Behaviour Program (Program; Langevin, 2000): http://www.tab.ualberta.ca
- Minimizing Bullying for Children who Stutter (Workbooks; Murphy, Quesal, Reardon-Reeves, & Yaruss, 2013): https://www.stutteringtherapysources.com
- Count Me In (Program in Twin Cities area): https://www.pacer.org
- Kids on the Block (Program): http://www.kidsontheblock.net
- The InterACT program (Program; Weidner, 2015): www.stutteringacademy.com
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Questions? Comments?

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