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Strengthening Students' Core Vocabulary for Powerful Communication

Trina Becker, MS, CCC-SLP

Moderated by:
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continued

Strengthening Students' Core Vocabulary for Powerful Communication

Trina M. Becker, M.S., CCC/SLP

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Learning Outcomes

After this course, participants will be able to:

- Define vocabulary selection methods for AAC and explain the difference between core and fringe vocabulary.
- Identify AAC systems and AAC apps that utilize core vocabulary.
- Describe how to write goals that incorporate core vocabulary across competency areas.
- Explain how to integrate and teach core vocabulary across activities, environments and communication partners.

continued

Vocabulary Selection for AAC

continued

Challenges for Professionals

(Boenisch & Soto, 2015)

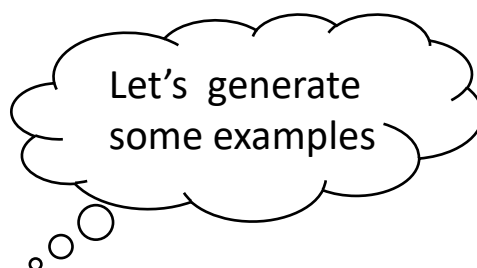
- "...providing the children with vocabulary that addresses multiple and increasingly demanding needs, including
 - Social interaction with family, friends and peers
 - Classroom participation
 - Language and literacy development
 - Academic achievement"

Vocabulary Selection Methods

- Environmental
 - Observe client in different environments
 - Get list of needed words from teachers, parents, etc.
 - Curriculum words
- Developmental
 - Knowledge of language development
 - Important to know child's language and/or cognitive
- Functional
 - Most frequently used words and phrases
 - Research-based word inventories

Types of Vocabulary

- Core – refers to words and phrases commonly used by a variety of people
- Fringe – refers to words that meet the individual's specific communication needs and interests

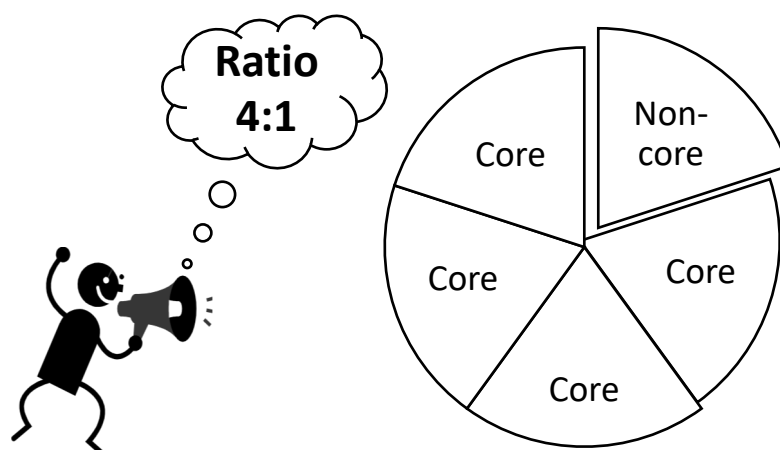


Core Vocabulary

- 250-400 words make up 75-85% of the words we say (Vanderheiden & Kelso, 1987)
 - Consist of words common to the vocabularies of peers similar in age
 - Small in size and do not change across environments or individuals
 - Provide framework for functional language
 - Promotes novel utterances
- (Yorkston, et al., 1988)

continued

Rule of thumb...



continued

Research-Based
Words Lists

continued

Initial Core Vocabulary Set

Banajee, DiCarlo & Stricklin, 2003

- 50 toddlers ages 24-36 mths in daycare and nursery schools
- Audiotaped interactions during child-directed free play activities and adult-directed activity (e.g., snack time)
- Results: 9 common words were used across both activities, total of 25 most frequently occurring words

I	Is	You	Out
No	It	What	Off
Yes/Yea	That	On	Some
My	A	In	Help
The	Go	Here	All done/finished
Want	mine	More	

EBP Substantiating Use of Core Vocabulary

- 333 Most Frequently Occurring Preschool Words: The Marvin Sampling. "Vocabulary-Use Patterns in Preschool Children: Effects of Context and Time Sampling." (Marvin, Beukelman, & Bilyeu, 1994)
 - 50 of the 333 words were specific nouns, the other 283 words were core words.
 - Boenisch & Soto (2015) compiled vocabulary from samples of 2nd, 4th, 6th and 8th graders. They specifically looked at word classes used and found that of the top 100 words:
 - 26 verbs
 - 17 pronouns
 - 14 adverbs
 - 9 prepositions
- **all other parts of speech occurred 7 or less times

continued

Core Vocab Compared to the Common Core Standards

The Dynamic Learning Maps Core Vocabulary

<https://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds/resources/core-vocabulary/>

Rank ordered list of words for social and academic settings.

Also includes link to common core standards.

**Check
this out!**

continued

A different view on word lists...

Clendon, Sturm, & Cali, 2013

- Core lists often based on spoken language samples from typically developing children
- Why not consider looking at writing samples?
 - Learning to write is similar to learning to use an AAC
 - An act of translation – language to motor skill (unnatural modality)
 - *Think about the way you write vs the way you speak
 - Quick rephrasing in speech vs rewriting an entire sentence
 - Quality and quantity of language changes when comparing verbal to written

Clendon & Erickson, 2008; Gombert, 1992; Kroll, 1981; McCutchen, 2000; Scardamalia, 1981

continued

Early Investigations of Written Language

- McGinnis & Beukelman, 1989
 - First to analyze writing samples for vocab use in TD children (2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th graders)
 - **161 words comprised 70% of total words**
 - **92 of 161 words** were represented in **at least 4 of the 5 grade levels**
- Clendon and Erickson, 2008
 - Much larger sample sizes, similar findings (kdg – 3rd grade)
 - **163 words comprised 70% of total words.**
 - **25 words** appeared on three top 50 lists among the studies

Vocabulary Based on Writing Across Genres

Clendon, Sturm, & Cali, 2013

- Examine vocabulary typically developing children's writing (Kdg and 1st grade)
- Self-selected topics from different genres
 - over 50% being narrative recounts and opinions. Others included genres such as descriptions, explanations, stories, etc.)
- Results
 - 140 words comprised 70% of words in writing samples
 - 84 of the words were content words (e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs)
 - 56 were structure words (e.g., pronouns, articles, prepositions, auxiliaries, conjunctions)

continued

Clendon, Sturm, & Cali, 2013

- Most frequently occurring two and three word sequences

I like

I went to

Going to

I am going

I am

I like to

Went to

am going to

Interesting to think about when working on conversational skills with clients.

continued

What vocabulary is available on AAC systems?

Vocabulary on AAC Systems

No and Low Tech	Mid Tech	High Tech & AAC Apps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally created specifically for AAC users. • Some predesigned no tech systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinicians typically make for pages for the devices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predesigned page sets. • Typically designed for different levels of AAC users

No/Low Tech Systems

- The Pixon Project – www.prentrom.com
 - Developed by Bruce Baker, along with other SLPs, including Gail VanTatenhove
- No/Low Tech System – Saltillo
<https://saltillo.com/chatcorner/content/29>
 - Free download to make a paper version of their high tech dynamic display vocabulary set, WordPower 60
 - Core vocabulary is the main page

Communication Apps: Core Vocabulary

Company	Application
PRC	LAMP: Words For Life
Tobii DynaVox	Snap + Core First
Saltillo	TouchChat (Multi Chat Included) TouchChat with WordPower

** Not a comprehensive List

High Tech Core

Company	Software	Device
Tobii Dynavox	Snap + Core First	Indi, Indi 7 SC Tablet (dedicated tablet)
PRC	Unity, Core Scanner, Word Core	Accent 800/ 1000/ 1400 Eco2
PRC	LAMP: Words for Life	Prio, Prio Mini (dedicated tablet with app)
Saltillo	WordPower	Nova Chat 5/8/10/12 ChatFusion 8/10
Saltillo	TouchChat	TouchChat Express (dedicated tablet with app)

**Not a comprehensive list

Integrating Core Across Activities, Environments, and Communication Partners

Writing Goals that Integrate Core Vocabulary

- Consider 4 areas of communicative competence:
Operational, Linguistic, Social and Strategic. (J. Light, 1989)
- Incorporate vocabulary that is powerful, flexible and functional.

Operational	Linguistic	Social	Strategic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • locate and navigate to core 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop lang. skills with function and lang. development in mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join in • Comments • Conversational skills • Fringe vocab important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for help • Fix breakdowns-ans. Yes/no or give choices.

continued

Making Core Work!

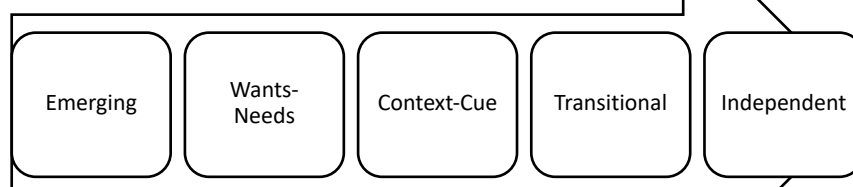
- **Grasping** why you should use core is relatively simple.
- **Embracing** using core with individuals who use AAC is not so simple.
- **Challenging** to...
 - Figure out how to incorporate words/symbols that are hard to represent.
 - Convince teachers and parents to use these words, when nouns make so much more “sense” to them.

continued

Let's make a PLAN!

- ✓First things first...figure out your client's communication independence level with AAC as well as their language level.
- ✓Determine how core is incorporated in client's AAC System.
- ✓Choose appropriate set of core words to focus on.
- ✓TEACH CORE!

Consider Stages of Development in AAC



**Provides a hierarchy of skills which can be used for establishing goals

RESOURCES .**Tobii DynaVox Dynamic AAC Goals Grid 1 and 2

**Classification system for individuals with aphasia developed by Garrett and Beukelman (1992;1998; revised in 2005)

**Adaptations to levels of functioning made based on my professional experience

Determining Client's Level of Communication Independence Level

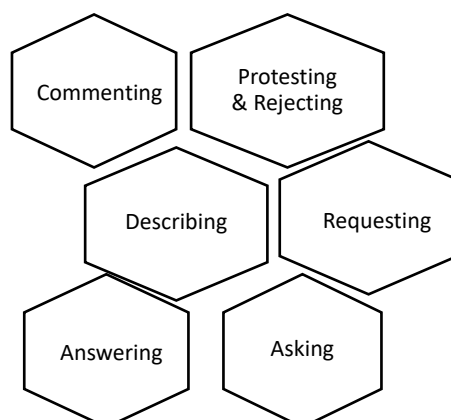
- **Emerging Communicator** - not yet using symbolic communication to communicate or just beginning to
- **Wants/Needs Communicator** – using symbolic language primarily wants/needs
- **Context-Cue** – ready to learn language! Combining symbols to create sentences, answering questions, starting to use language for social purposes, etc. Relies heavily on context and cues to communicate.
- **Transitional** – gaining more complex language and social skills and becoming more independent
- **Independent** – independent communicator

Core Vocab for Independence Levels

- **Emerging** – Definitely OK to start with **fringe vocab**, specifically...
 - Most motivating, highly desired objects
 - **Why?** Because you have to get them to “buy into” symbolic communication
- **Wants/needs** –start incorporating **functional core** words into requests
 - Actions: go, stop, help, more, all done
 - Concepts: In/out
 - Social: like, hi, bye

Core Vocab for Context- Cue Communicators

Target Variety of Communicative Functions



Core Words for Different Communication Functions

(G. Van Tatenhove)

- Greet/Part
 - Hello/goodbye
- Request Object
 - that, please
- Request Action
 - Want, go, do, up
- Request assistance
 - Help, do
- Request recurrence
 - More, again, another
- Request information
 - What, why, where
- Existence
 - This, that, look, see, there, here
- Self/Possession/Person
 - Mine, you, it, he she, mom
- Nonexistence
 - Uh oh, away, all gone, what
- Disappearance
 - Away, all gone
- Rejection
 - No, stop, don't, uh uh
- Cessation
 - Stop, all done, finished
- Comment/Describe
 - Like, bad, good, naughty, big, little, yuk, yum, hurt
- Direct actions/events
 - Go, help, stop, come, eat, read
- Name
 - Car, shoe, cup
- Associative
 - Big, hot, pretty, up, off

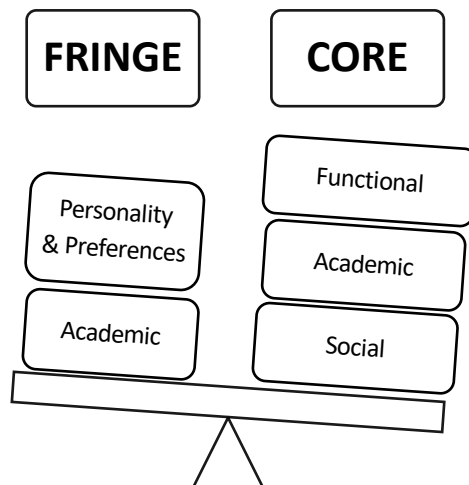
Core Vocab for Context- Cue Communicators

- Make sure and develop goals across all 4 competency areas
- Refer to core word lists for guidance on vocabulary
- Spend time developing **receptive** and expressive vocabulary
- Work towards building sentences
 - Always model higher level language on AAC system through aided language modeling/augmented input
 - When appropriate, think about grammar and syntax

Core Vocab for Context- Cue Communicators – Social Goals

- Don't forget about social competency
 - It's not all about developing language skills
 - Make sure you think about using language to...
 - Develop play skills and interactions during play
 - Social phrases
 - Age appropriate comments (more likely fringe vocab)
 - Build relationships and social closeness
 - Provide a way for client to express himself/herself (e.g., interest, pleasure/displeasure, etc.)
 - "I like this"
 - "This is fun"
 - "I am bored"

IT'S ALL ABOUT BALANCE!



continued

What core vocabulary is available on AAC system?

- Need to spend time looking at and learning client's AAC system.
- Where are the core words?
- How many are available?
 - If system is robust, may need to hide symbols as client is learning device
 - Or, if there is not enough core vocabulary, may need to consider changing the client's AAC software
 - Choose new page set
 - Add core vocabulary

continued

Get Familiar with AAC System!

- Pre-plan what core words you are going to focus on and know where they are on communication system.
- **EVERYONE** needs to spend time learning device, not just the SLPs
- If you are going to properly instruct, plan activities, develop communication skills, you have to know the device!

continued

Challenge: Convincing Parents and Teachers to use Core

- Picture symbols of core vocab are difficult to recognize - Teach Symbols!
- Want to use specific nouns for requests!
 - Okay to start with but, if going to expand language need vocab beyond fringe
 - **MYTH:** Core words may not be as motivating as fringe to make specific requests (e.g., favorite toys, videos, restaurants, etc.)
 - **FACT:** Specific requests can be made using...
 - Pronouns: this/that, him/her, there, etc.
 - Descriptors: big/little, fast/slow, colors, etc.

continued

Challenge: Convincing Parents and Teachers to use Core

- **MYTH:** Can't demonstrate knowledge, answer questions, participate in classroom activities without specific vocabulary
- **FACT:** Can answer questions with core by using...
 - Choices – This or That one, provide numerical list and child uses number to answer
 - Descriptors or Descriptors paired with generic nouns
- Think of all the language skills you are teaching when you encourage use of core.

Examples of how to answer questions using core

- Example of Science Activity: The cell
 - Describing:
 - Parts of cell – out/in, middle, body, big/little
 - Jobs of cell parts – make food/energy, work, protect
 - Labeling Parts – Use numbers, multiple choice or colors
- Example of Answering Questions About Weekend
 - What did you do this weekend? Watch
 - Did you watch a game? No Did you watch a movie? Yes.
 - Where did you watch it? Not home, go out
 - You went out to watch a movie? What did you see? Man who can fly. He fights bad men. Wears red and blue.
 - Did you see the new Superman movie? Yes. It was good.

SUMMARY: Developing Powerful Communicators

- When choosing vocabulary for AAC, consider teaching and using core.
- Although many AAC systems have page sets that use core, it is important to know what is available.
- Refer to evidence-based core word lists to help determine order in which you teach core words.
- Spend time teaching core vocabulary
- Think outside of the box...client can use core over specific vocabulary for many communication acts

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