

Teaching Semantic-Syntactic Categories to a Child Who Uses AAC

Kelly Rowe¹, Cathy Binger¹, Jennifer Kent-Walsh², Eliza Webb¹, & Marika King¹
¹University of New Mexico; ²University of Central Florida

Background

Children who use AAC:

- Usually have severe, congenital motor speech impairments
- May have large receptive-expressive language gaps (Binger et al., 2010; Kent-Walsh et al., 2010)
- Tend to use single symbol messages (Binger & Light, 2008)
- Tend to have difficulty expressing multi-symbol messages (Smith & Grove, 2003)
- Have difficulties translating spoken messages into graphic symbol representations of the messages
 - Mapping spoken language onto an SGD is not an intuitive task for young children (Sutton et al, 2010).

Research Question:

- What is the effect of an intervention designed to highlight spoken language word order on the productive use of two-term semantic-syntactic relations by a preschooler who used aided AAC?

Method

Design

- Single case, multiple probe across targets

Participant

- Jorge, age 5;1, Developmentally Delayed with motor speech impairment

Materials

- Puppets, Photographs, Dynavox 4

Measures

- Number of correct two-term semantic-syntactic relations

Key components of intervention:

- Aided AAC modeling (Binger & Light, 2007)
- Contrastive targets (Courtright & Courtright, 1976)

Results and Discussion

Possessor-entity

- Minimal gains and challenging behaviors lead to the discontinuation of the target
- Lack of salience of the target may have contributed to these issues

Action-object

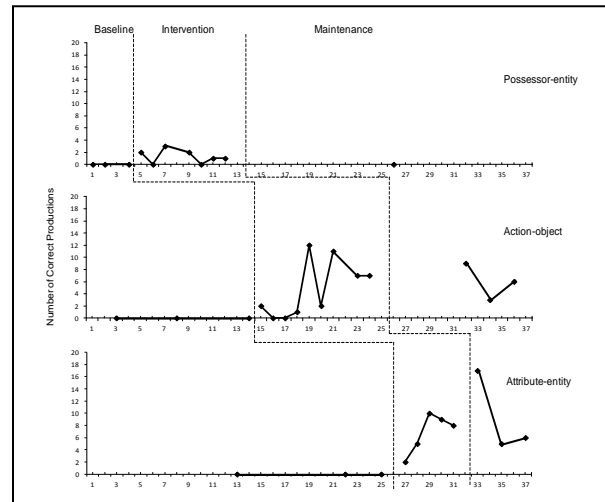
- Made considerable gains
- Success slightly delayed

Attribute-entity

- Made considerable gains
- Immediate and steady improvement
- Acquired second target more quickly than first
 - May demonstrate that Jorge was able to overcome the difficulties inherent in learning to map spoken language onto an SGD

Directions for future research

- Replicate with children with similar profiles
- Explore word order issues
- Analyze path of progress for 3-term messages
 - E.g., agent-action-object



References

- Binger, C., Kent-Walsh, J., & Taylor, S. (2010). Teaching educational assistants to facilitate the multisymbol message productions of young students who require augmentative and alternative communication. *AJSLP, 19* (2), 108-120.
- Binger, C. & Light, J. (2007). The effect of aided AAC modeling on the expression of multi-symbol messages by preschoolers who use AAC. *AAC, 23* (1), 30-43.
- Binger, C. & Light, J. (2008). The morphology and syntax of individuals who use AAC: Research review and implications for effective practice. *AAC, 24* (2), 123-138.
- Courtright, J. & Courtright, I. (1976). Imitative modeling as a theoretical base for instructing language-disordered children. *JSLHR, 19* (4), 655-663.
- Kent-Walsh, J., Binger, C., & Hasham, Z. (2010). Effects of parent instruction on the symbolic communication of children using augmentative and alternative communication during storybook reading. *AJSLP, 19* (2), 97-107.
- Smith, M. & Grove, N. (2003). Asymmetry in input and output for individuals who use augmentative and alternative communication. In J. Light, D. Beukelman, & J. Reichle (Eds), *Communicative competence of individuals who use augmentative and alternative communication*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.
- Sutton, A., Trudeau, N., Morford, J., Rios, M., & Poirier, M. (2010). Preschool-aged children have difficulty constructing and interpreting simple utterances composed of graphic symbols. *J Ch Lang, 37*, 1-26.