Teaching Semantic-Syntactic Categories to a Child Who Uses AAC

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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
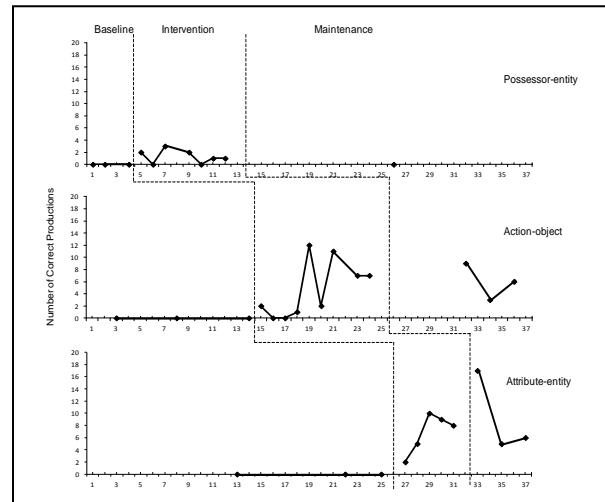
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