Communication Partner Instruction for AAC Interactions: A Lifespan Approach

Laura Ball, Ph.D., MGH Institute of Health Professions
Cathy Binger, Ph.D., University of New Mexico
Susan Fager, Ph.D., Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital
Joanne Lasker, Ph.D., Emerson College
Jennifer Kent-Walsh, Ph.D., University of Central Florida

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Overview

- Background Information
- Partner Instruction: Pediatric Populations
- Partner Instruction: Adult Populations

WHY DO WE NEED TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT COMMUNICATION PARTNER INSTRUCTION?

Nature of Communication

- Communication
  - A dynamic and transactional process
  - Varies based on the context of an interaction
  - Inherently involves participants (i.e., communication partners)

Communication Partners

- Communication Partners
  - Afford purpose and meaning for communication
  - Play a variety of roles in the lives of our clients
    - Category Example – Social Networks (Blackstone & Hunt Berg, 2003):
      1. Close Family Members
      2. Friends / Other Relatives
      3. Acquaintances
      4. Paid Personnel
      5. Unfamiliar Partners
AAC Personnel Frameworks

- Beukelman, Ball & Fager, 2008
  - Focused on general AAC needs – specifically for adult clients
- Binger, Ball, Dietz, Kent-Walsh, Lasker, Lund, McKelvey & Quach, 2012
  - Focused on the assessment process for any individual with AAC needs

Common Partner Communication Patterns

- Communication partners often (e.g., Kent-Walsh & McNaughton, 2005):
  - Take the majority of conversational turns
  - Provide few opportunities for communication
  - Ask predominantly Yes/No questions
  - Interrupt individuals using AAC
  - Focus on the technology, instead of the individual

Undesirable Client Communication Patterns

- Individuals using AAC may in turn be noted to (e.g., Kent-Walsh & McNaughton, 2005):
  - Be passive communicators
  - Initiate few interactions
  - Respond infrequently
  - Produce a limited number of communicative functions
  - Use restricted linguistic forms

A Coordinated Approach to Intervention

Communication Partner Instruction for Pediatric Populations: Sample Instructional Protocol

- The ImPAACT Program
  - Improving Partner Applications of Augmentative Communication Techniques
    - Developed by Kent-Walsh, Binger, and colleagues based on the instructional program guidelines developed by Kent-Walsh and McNaughton (2005)
    - Designed to teach communication partners to facilitate the early language and communication skills of children who use AAC
ImPAACT Evidence: Involved Partners to Date

Parents
- African-American
- Anglo/White
- Latino

Educators
- Educational Assistants
- Classroom Teachers
- Support Staff (e.g., SLPs, OTs)

Peers
- Elementary School-Aged Children

ImPAACT Evidence: Involved Partners to Date

Individual Instruction
- Home Setting
- School Setting

Group Instruction
- Day Camp
- School In-Service

ImPAACT Evidence: Participants to Date

Children
- Ages 3–12
- Cerebral Palsy
- Childhood Apraxia of Speech
- Cornelia de Lange Syndrome
- Developmental Delays
- DiGeorge Syndrome
- Down Syndrome
- Intellectual Impairment
- Prader-Willi Syndrome
- Profound Phonologic Disorders
- Autism Spectrum Disorders

ImPAACT Evidence: Outcomes to Date

Pragmatics
- Turn-Taking Skills
- Communicative Functions

Semantics
- Vocabulary Size
- Diversity

Syntax
- Message Length
- Complexity

Morphology
- Use of Bound Morphemes

ImPAACT Program: A Strategic Approach to Implementing Evidence-Based Skills

Functional Communicative Interactions

Increased Language
- Aided AAC
- Matching
- Expected Delay

Strategy Example 1
Strategy Example 2

Functional Communicative Interactions

Role Play

Clinicians Need to Know When to Do What

ImPAACT Program: 8-Step Instructional Overview

1. Pre-test and commitment to completing instructional program
2. Strategy description
3. Strategy demonstration
4. Verbal practice of strategy steps
5. Controlled practice and feedback
6. Advanced practice and feedback
7. Post-test and commitment to long-term strategy use
8. Generalization of targeted strategy use

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT COMMUNICATION PARTNERS FOR ADULTS WITH ACQUIRED IMPAIRMENT WHO ARE USING AAC?

Identifying and Including Partners for Adult Communicators

- partners as key personnel
  - consider attitude toward disability
  - response to life changes
  - financial, technological, and emotional resources
  - social networks
  - identified with Circles of Communication Partners
  - (Blackstone & Hunt-Berg, 2003)
  - needs assessment (Fred-Olson et al., 2006; Lasker, Garrett, & Fox, 2007; King & Lasker, 2013)
  - systematic clinical inquiry
  - who does client talk to, in what context, about what topic(s), using what methods, related to what communicative function, with what degree of success

What do “good” partners do? (Simmons-Mackie & Kagan, 1999; Simmons-Mackie et al., 2010)

- focus on the collaborative nature of the interaction
  - allow time
  - help control background noise (create environment for communication)
  - are open to alternative methods
  - confirm understanding
  - use clarification statements and questions
  - offer systematic guesses
  - are explicit about the communication process
  - offer persistence in the face of breakdowns
What does research tell us about partners in ALS and aphasia?

- Attention Allocation and Intelligibility (Beukelman et al., 2011)
- Communication Effectiveness and Intelligibility (Ball & Beukelman, 2004)
- Attitudes of Partners Toward Message Generation Techniques (Richter et al., 2003)
- Attitudes of Partners Toward AAC Mode (ALS, Richter et al., 2003)
- Attitudes of Partners Toward Topics and Technology (Fields-Dilerni et al., 2006)
- Attitudes of Partners Toward “End of Life” Communication (King & Lasker, 2013)
- Augmented Input
- Written Choice
- Tagged Yes/No
- Eye Linking/Pointing
- Partner Dependent Scanning
- Yes/No Hierarchy
- Facial Movement/Gestures
- Alphabet Supplementation

Example of a “Good” Partner Interaction: Client AA and Clinician

- 69-year-old man
- Stroke 15 years prior with multiple ruptured aneurysms in left MCA
- Now with chronic fluent aphasia, most consistent with conduction type
- Uses multimodal strategies to communicate including: natural speech, gesture, drawing, writing, stored information tools (notebook with tabs)
- Very competent communicator
- Benefits from partner support

What Are Some Partner Techniques?

- Augmented Input
- Written Choice
- Tagged Yes/No
- Eye Linking/Pointing
- Partner Dependent Scanning
- Yes/No Hierarchy
- Facial Movement/Gestures
- Alphabet Supplementation

A collaborative interaction

What does client do?

- Uses spoken language
- “He called” “I like him” “He’s dead”
- Combines writing and talking
- Gestures “brother” to himself to cue writing
- Uses writing to clarify point
  - “I liked him but I didn’t like him”
  - Keeps partner’s attention
  - “But listen”
  - Gestures “Beautiful girl”
  - Gestures shoveling dirt at funeral

What does partner do?

- Augmented writing support
  - She writes “cousin?”
  - Repeats what AA writes
  - References his writing
  - “Who’s 74?”
  - Summarizes message so far
  - “So he has two brothers?” “He’s dead too?”
- Enables clarification
  - “So you’re switching, was it a man or a woman?” (with finger emphasis)

How to Teach Partner Strategies (Woods, Kashinath, & Goldstein, 2004)

- Preparing
  - Conversation and information-sharing
  - Observation
  - Direct teaching
  - Demonstration
- Application and Feedback
  - Joint interaction
  - Guided practice with feedback
  - Caregiver practice with feedback
  - Mastery
  - Problem-solving
  - Reflection

Does partner training work? Conversational Coaching in Aphasia

- Strategies taught to PWA:
  - Communicate main idea first
  - Use alternative strategies (draw, gesture, write, sound effects)
  - Correct wrong information
  - Indicate “You’re close”
  - “Resulted in a greater number of concepts communicated in storytelling tasks and social validation judgments.”
- Strategies taught to partners:
  - Ask main idea first
  - Augment with gesture
  - Write down information and questions
  - Draw pictures of world ideas to confirm
  - Put “slash” through wrong ideas with right ones
  - Confirm yes/no on paper
  - Cue alternative strategies
  - Allow time for response
  - Summarize information frequently

(c) Ball, Binger, Fager, Lasker & Kent-Walsh
Summing Up:
Keys to Successful Communication Partner Instruction

- Identify communication partners and facilitators, and their key roles (we know that many are women)
- Identify meaningful and relevant activities
- Identify incongruent decisions (i.e., no AAC technology, but ventilator; willing to accept voice-output or not)
- Stress the multimodal nature of communication and the integral role of partners in sharing the responsibility for communication
- Connect communication partner with supports
- Evaluate intelligibility/utility of unaided methods
- Create communication system that provides for multiple methods of formulation (e.g., letter, word, phrase, story)
- Teach skills in context
- Support and empower partners in adjusting to novel methods and strategies of communication