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

References