REDEFINING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

By: Julie Pline, M.S, CCC-SLP

A little bit about me.....

• Received undergraduate degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and graduate degree from Eastern Illinois University.
• Worked as a speech pathologist/AT facilitator in the public school setting for eight years.
• Spent my first two years with the Special Education District of Lake County, followed by two elementary schools in Wilmette (District 39) for five years. I then worked with the Exceptional Learners Collaborative based out of Buffalo Grove, IL serving 3 school districts.
• Now serve as an instructor and clinical supervisor at Western IL University. Supervise speech-language therapy at university clinic/local elementary school, conduct diagnostic evaluations and teach courses on normal language development and developmental language disorders.
• Worked with students with a variety of needs from ages 3-21.
• Presented on topics such as meaningful inclusion, differentiation, behavior management and paraprofessional training.

My Mary....

• Insider Perspective

• Started with Special Olympics, Special Recreation Association, Best Buddies
Back in the Good ‘Ole Days....

- In 1988, Janice Light devised 4 components of communicative competence
  - Linguistic
  - Operational
  - Social
  - Strategic

- Each domain contains multiple subtypes, outlining various stages of independence—such as emergent and context-dependent.

Linguistic Competence
- Understand the form, content, and use of spoken language
- Code switch between different audiences as required
- Develop literacy skills to convey written ideas
- Use morphological markers within words to denote plurals, variety of tenses, etc.
- Learn linguistic conventions for communication and social media tools

Operational Competence
- Open communication board, turn pages and select target symbol
- Pick up symbol and hand it to partner when using PECS
- Use selection technique to access AAC symbols (direct selection, switches)
- Navigate within system as required
- Turn device on and off
- Capture and upload photos to support communication via social media
- Use paper and pencil to draw concept
Social Competence
- Initiate, maintain, and terminate conversations
- Express a variety of communicative functions (request, protest, comment, question, provide clarification)
- Demonstrate interest in communication partners
- Project a positive self-image and maintain rapport with communication partners
- Active listening during non-obligatory turn taking:
  - Positive Comments: Right on! Awesome! Cool! Wow!
  - Negative Comments: Oh no! Bummer! Chill out! I’m over it!

Strategic Competence
- Ask partner to provide choices to overcome vocabulary limitations ("Ask me a yes/no question")
- Successfully repair communication breakdowns
- Ask partner to predict message as spelled out to increase efficiency
- Have partner assist with locating page to meet navigational demands
- Be prepared with back-up plan, such as low-tech option, should technical difficulties arise

So What’s New?
- Environmental Factors
- Psychosocial Factors
### Environmental Factors

- **Policy**
  - Legislation that supports accessibility, inclusion, policies to ensure funding, UDL
- **Practice**
  - EBP supporting competent service delivery by multidisciplinary team
- **Attitude**
  - Advisory awareness, meaningful opportunities for social interactions and generalization of skills across home, school, and community settings
- **Knowledge**
  - Skills covering AAC symbols, vocabulary set selections, positioning, funding, maintenance routines, troubleshooting and integration into activities
- **Skills**
  - Communication partner training

### Psychosocial Factors

- **Motivation to Communicate**
  - Desired goal is important and attainable
- **Attitude toward AAC**
  - Ideas tied to emotion heavily influence willingness to use AAC
- **Communication Confidence**
  - Success is achievable within a given situation
- **Resilience**
  - Capacity to overcome adversity plays large role in persistence over technical difficulties and breakdowns in communication

### Research says......

- "Without careful consideration of individual needs, skills, and preferences, there is a great risk that the technology will fail and that such failure will result in rejection of AAC solutions generally. In these cases, it is not AAC but rather an inappropriate AAC device that has failed," (Light & McNaughton, 2013)
- "8 of the 10 more frequently reported reasons for abandonment were related to partner training and support issues." (Johnson, Inglebreit, Jones, & Ray, 2006)
- "80-90% of apps are abandoned by individuals WITHOUT disabilities after a single use because they are too difficult to use or do not meet the individuals needs," (Pramis, 2013)
More stats.....

- In the U.S., 55% of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities and over 70% of children with multiple disabilities receive most of their instruction outside regular education classrooms, away from their peers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013)
- 77% of individuals with disabilities do not engage in any type of community activity, largely, due to communication difficulties (Wagner, et al., 2005)
- Less than 5% of individuals with complex communication needs are employed even part time, due to a lack of effective and efficient communication and a lack of functional literacy skills
- A total of 45% of adults with complex communication needs report that they have been victims of crime or abuse; 71% of these individuals have been victimized multiple times and 97% knew the perpetrator. The majority had no effective way to communicate about these experiences or report the crime/abuse. (Collier, McGhie-Richmond, Odette, & Pyne, 2006)

Conclusion:

- **Old Focus: Wants and Needs**
- **New Focus: Goals, Control, and Relationships!**

Environmental Factors: Inclusion Policy
Attitudes toward AAC at School

**Jack talks to people...**
- Using his voice and his hands. He knows sign language.
- He also understands Spanish!

**Kind Reminders...**
- If Jack yells or jumps and accidentally bumps into you, he did not mean to. You can ask him to stop and try to stop.
- Please use kind words when speaking to him. Jack is very polite and is not like other special needs students.
- Jack is in second grade. You can talk to him like any other second grader.
Environmental Factors: Practice and Knowledge

AAC Throughout the Day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Types of Communication</th>
<th>Vocabulary Requested (based on the type of activity)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Conversation partners</td>
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AAC at School- for Older Students

**Writing**
- Writing for a purpose: recipes, letters, email, texts

**Self-Advocacy**
- Identifying personal needs, accommodations, navigating lunch lines, public transportation
Paragraph and Poetry Templates

Pre-Vocational Tasks:
Job Manuals - Sequencing

Environmental Factors: Skills Training Communication Partners

- **Littles: (During Play)**
  - Model
  - Initiate
  - Respond (give/share objects)
  - Social reinforcement and feedback

- **Older Children/Adults**
  - Provide Choices
  - Offer Yes/No format
  - Use least to most prompting hierarchy
  - WAIT
Environmental Policy: UDL Classroom Supports

- Toolkit:
  - GoTalk 20+
  - Supertalker
  - All Turn It Spinner
  - Rokk 2
  - Big Red Switch
  - Little Step by Step with Levels
  - Bookworm
  - Time Tracker
  - Big Step by Step with Levels

- Programs: Boardmaker Online, Bookshare, Visual Supports
- Apps: Pearson E-Text, Notability, CoWriter, Popplet, Capti

Classroom Modeling/Intervention

- Pilot Program - with use of Toolkit
- Visual Recipes for Crafts, Cooking, and Science Experiments
- Weekly group for 30 minutes, alternating between cooking, craft, and science activities, with lessons planned and based off of students individualized needs, as well as IEP goals.
- Areas to be targeted include AAC use, visual modeling, and four competency areas: linguistic, operational, social, and strategic.

Pilot Program
Psychosocial Factors: Motivation to Use AAC at Home

- **Meals:**
  - Requesting food: “Can I have the ___?”; “Can you please pass the ___?”
  - “I want ___ to drink”
  - Conversation at mealtime: “How was your day?”; “I had a ___ day because ___”

- **Household Chores:**
  - “Where is the (cleaning supply)?”; “We need more ____”;
  - “Can you help me with ____?”

- **T.V./Music:**
  - “I want to watch ___”
  - “Can you turn the volume up/down”
  - “I want to listen to ______”

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Psychosocial: Confidence to Use AAC in the Community

- **Restaurants:**
  - Ordering food: “Can I have _____?”
  - Ordering drinks: “I want ______ please”; “Can I have a refill please?”
  - Payment: “How much does it cost?”; “I need change”, “I don’t need change”

- **Grocery or Clothing Shopping:**
  - Looking for items: “Can you reach this?”
  - “Can I have help please?”
  - “Do you have this in (size) ___?”

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AAC in the Community

- **Taking Public Transportation:**
  - Stops: “I’m getting off at ______”; “I got on at _______”
  - Payment: “How much does it cost?”
  - Seating: “You can sit here”, “I prefer to sit alone”

- **Going to the Movies:**
  - Tickets: “I want to see ____”; “I have a rewards card”; “What theater number?”
  - Snacks: “I want a (size) popcorn”; “Can I have a (size) drink please?”; “That’s all thank you.”
AAC in the Community

- **Bank**
  - Easy access to account information
  - Stamp for signatures

- **Doctor's Office/Hospital**
  - Pre-stored insurance information

Moving Forward.....

- **Taking the Show on the Road**
  - Consider intrinsic and extrinsic factors
  - Get out of the clinic, practice generalization, Out and About in the Community, Caroline Musselwhite
  - Identify goals from the beginning, work toward attainment across partners and settings

References

- Light & McNaughton (2013). Putting People First: Rethinking the Role of Technology in AAC Intervention