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The impact of aided language stimulation on the receptive language abilities of children with little or no functional speech

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University of Pretoria etd – Dada, S (2004)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS I

LIST OF TABLES VI

LIST OF FIGURES VII

LIST OF APPENDICES VIII

ABSTRACT IX

OPSOMMING XI

CHAPTER 1 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RATIONALE 1

1.1 Introduction 1
1.2 Problem statement and rationale 1
1.3 Terminology 4
1.3.1 Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) 4
1.3.2 Aided language stimulation 5
1.3.3 Facilitator 5
1.3.4 Facilitator boards 5
1.3.5 Little or no functional speech (LNFS) 5
1.3.6 Picture Communication Symbols (PCS) 5
1.4 Abbreviations 6
1.5 Chapter Outlines 6

CHAPTER 2 8

THE USE OF GRAPHIC SYMBOLS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING 8

2.1 Introduction 8
2.1.1 Scope of the chapter 8
2.1.2 Background 8
2.2 Language acquisition 9
2.2.1 Theories of language development and their application to alternative communication forms 9
2.2.2 The acquisition of alternate language forms: A model 14
2.3 The language environment 16
2.4. The Partner: the role of his or her input 18
2.5 The child 22
2.5.1 Classifications of AAC users 22
2.5.2 The role of comprehension 25
2.5.3 Mapping 27
2.6 AAC systems 29
2.6.1 Factors influencing graphic symbol learning 29
2.6.2 Studies with graphic representation systems 31
2.7 Instruction 33
2.7.1 Models of processing 34
2.7.2 Augmented Input 38
2.7.3 Aided language stimulation 41
2.7.4 Studies using augmented input strategies. 43
2.7.5 Vocabulary comprehension skills 45

2.8 Conclusions **46**
2.9 Summary **46**

CHAPTER 3 ..... **48**

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY **48**

3.1 Introduction **48**
3.2 Methodology **48**
3.2.1 Research Question *48*
3.2.2 Main Research Aim *48*
3.2.3 Sub aims *48*
3.3. Research design **49**
3.3.1 Research phases *50*
3.4 Pilot study **53**
3.5 Main study **57**
3.5.1 Criteria for selection of participants *57*
3.5.2 Description of the school *57*
3.5.3 Description of the setting *60*
3.5.4 Description of the participants *60*
3.6 Equipment and materials **61**
3.6.1 Equipment *61*
3.6.2 Materials *63*
3.6.2.1 Description of the aided language stimulation program 63
3.6.2.2 Facilitator boards 64
3.6.2.3Activities 65
3.6.2.4 Target receptive vocabulary items. 65
3.6.2.5 Teaching criteria 67
3.6.2.6 Pre- and post-intervention assessment measures 67
3.6.2.7 Reynell Developmental Language Scale 68
3.6.2.8 Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – R 68
3.6.2.9 The informal receptive language test 69
3.6.2.10 The probe test 70
3.7 Data collection **72**
3.7.2 Pre- and post-intervention assessment measures *73*
3.7.3 Program implementation *74*
3.7.3.1 Baselines 74
3.7.3.2 Training Procedure 74
3.7.3.3 Procedure for inter-rater agreement 76
3. 8 Data analysis and statistical procedures **77**
3.8.1 Analysis of transcriptions *77*
3.8.2 Frequency of aided language stimulation *77*
3.8.3 Nature of aided language stimulation *78*
3.8.4 Frequency of use of target receptive vocabulary item *78*
3.8.5 Mean Length of Utterance (MLU) *78*
3.8.6 Type Token Ratio (TTR) *79*
3.8.7 Probes *80*
3.8.9 Statistical Analysis *80*
3.9 Summary **81**

CHAPTER 4 ..... **82**

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION **82**

4.1 Introduction **82**
4.2 Reliability **83**

4.2.1 Inter-rater agreement of video recordings *83*
4.2.2 Inter- rater agreement for data in transcripts *84*
4.3 Description of the Aided Language Stimulation Input **85**
4.3.1 Comparison of the three activities *89*
4.4 Impact on Receptive Language Abilities **90**
4.4.1 Acquisition of target vocabulary *90*
4.4.2 Participants' performance for each activity *104*
4.4.3 The acquisition of specific target vocabulary items *106*
4.5 Comparison of the frequency of aided language stimulation input and correct responses **109**
4.6 Impact of aided language stimulation program on general receptive language abilities **113**
4.7 Summary **117**

CHAPTER 5 ..... **118**

CONCLUSIONS, EVALUATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS **118**

5.1 Introduction **118**
5.2 Conclusions **118**
5.2.1 Reliability of data *118*
5.2.2 Description of the aided language stimulation program *118*
5.2.3 The impact on the acquisition of target vocabulary items *119*
5.3 Implications of the Study **119**
5.4 Evaluation of the Study **120**
5.5 Recommendations for Future Research **122**
5.6 Summary **123**

REFERENCES **124**

APPENDICES **154**

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF TABLES		
Table 2.1	Summary of some theories of language development	11
Table 3.1	Research Phases	51
Table 3.2	The development of the ability to identify line drawings test	52
Table 3.3	Objectives, results and recommendations following the pilot study	54
Table 3.4	Criteria for participation	58
Table 3.5	Description of the participants	62
Table 3.6	Application of Krashens' (1985) principles to the aided language stimulation program.	63
Table 3.7	Activities used in the aided language stimulation program	65
Table 3.8	Lists Comparison of target vocabulary to standard vocabulary	66
Table 3.9	Pre- and post-intervention assessment measures	69
Table 3.10	Sections of the Informal Comprehension Test	70
Table 3.11	Pre- and post-intervention assessment measures	73
Table 3.12	Examples of the steps involved in the activities	75
Table 3.13	Reliability measures	76
Table 3.14	Transcripts that were rated by the second rater	76
Table 4.1	Inter- rater agreement results for video recording	84
Table 4.2	Inter- rater agreement results for transcripts	85
Table 4.3	Nature of aided language input for the various activities	88
Table 4.4	Means for three activities	89
Table 4.5	Number of correct responses for each participant on each activity	103
Table 4.6	The acquisition of specific target vocabulary items over the intervention period	106
Table 4.7	The raw scores of each participant on the pre- and post intervention assessment measures	114
Table 4.8	Summary of findings of pre and post intervention assessment measures	115

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF FIGURES		
Figure 2.1:	Interactive components of the language acquisition process	17
Figure 2.2	A schematic depiction of the structure of verbal and nonverbal symbolic systems	37
Figure 3.1.	A schematic representation of the procedure used in the experimental phase of this study.	72
Figure 4.1	Schematic representation of the results of this chapter	82
Figure 4.2	Participant A performance	91
Figure 4.3	Participant B performance	94
Figure 4.4	Participant C performance	95
Figure 4.5	Participant D performance	96
Figure 4.6	Acquisition of target vocabulary items	108
Figure 4.7	Mean Input for three activities	110

LIST OF APPENDICES

LIST OF APPENDICES	
Appendix 1	Facilitator board: Arts and crafts activity
Appendix 2	Facilitator board: Food preparation activity
Appendix 3	Facilitator board: Story time activity
Appendix 4	List of 23 words for identification of line drawings test
Appendix 5	Letter of consent to Principal – Line drawings survey
Appendix 6	Letter of consent to Parent – Line drawings survey
Appendix 7	Identification of line drawings test score sheet
Appendix 8	Informal receptive language test
Appendix 9	Probe Test
Appendix10	Letter of consent to Principal – Pilot study
Appendix 11	Letter of consent to Parent – Pilot study
Appendix 12	Parent Checklist – Pilot Study
Appendix 13	Teacher checklist – Main study
Appendix 14	Parent Checklist – Main study
Appendix 15	Probe score sheet
Appendix 16	Hearing screening
Appendix 17	Hearing screening results sheet
Appendix 18	Letter of consent to Principal – Main study
Appendix 19	Letter of consent to Parent – Main study
Appendix 20	Letter of consent to Teacher – Main study
Appendix 21	Feedback to parents
Appendix 22	Transcripts of video recordings Arts and Crafts Activity
Appendix 23	Transcripts of video recordings Food Preparation Activity
Appendix 24	Transcripts of video recordings Story Time Activity
Appendix 25	Analysis of transcript

ABSTRACT

The impact of aided language stimulation on the receptive language abilities of children with little or no functional speech.

Comprehension of spoken language skills are often taken for granted in research concerning early childhood language acquisition in typically developing children. While the onset of early word comprehension arguably precedes word production, traditional research has focused on language production rather than comprehension. A similar trend of focussing on expression is evident in the field of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). Traditionally, the role of AAC systems for individuals with little or no functional speech (LNFS) has been as an output mode for expressing messages. While this is an essential role and final outcome of AAC intervention strategies, the role of listeners is equally important. The comprehension of spoken language provides an essential foundation upon which language production competence can be built.

AAC users' ability to comprehend spoken language is varied from age equivalent comprehension of spoken language to minimal comprehension. Some AAC users comprehend spoken language and therefore come to the AAC acquisition task with an established knowledge of spoken language. Others who experience difficulty comprehending spoken language require AAC as both input (receptive) and output (expressive) mode. Graphic symbols play a role in facilitating comprehension of messages either through facilitating the comprehension of the spoken language or the AAC symbols. The use of augmented input strategies like aided language stimulation is one type of instructional technique used in teaching graphic symbols to AAC users. Aided language stimulation refers to a technique in which a facilitator or communication partner combines the use of AAC with natural speech through simultaneously pointing to graphic symbols and speaking.

The aim of this study was therefore to determine the impact of a three week long aided language stimulation program on the receptive language skills of children with LNFS. Four

children participated in this multiple probe study. The aided language stimulation programme comprised three activities viz. arts and crafts, food preparation and story time activity. Each activity was repeated over duration of five subsequent sessions. Eight target vocabulary items were taught within each activity. The acquisition of all 24 target items were probed throughout the duration of the three week intervention period. The results indicated that all the participants acquired the target receptive vocabulary items. There were, however, variations in terms of the rate of acquisition. There was no statistically significant improvement in the general receptive language abilities of the participants.

Key terms: Little or no functional speech; Augmented input; Aided language stimulation; Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC); Receptive language abilities

OPSOMMING

Die impak van ondersteunende taal stimulasie op die reseptiewe taalvaardighede van kinders met min of geen funksionele spraak

Gesproke taalbegripsvaardighede word dikwels as vanselfsprekend aanvaar in navorsing oor die aanleer van taal in jong tipies ontwikkelende kinders. Daar word geredeneer dat woordbegrip woordproduksie voorafgaan, maar tradisioneel het navorsing gefokus op taalproduksie in plaas van taalbegrip. Dieselfde neiging word waargeneem in die veld van Aanvullende en Alternatiewe Kommunikasie (AAK), waar die fokus op ekspressie val. Tradisioneel, is die rol van AAK sisteme om uitset metodes te voorsien aan persone met min of geen funksionele spraak sodat hulle boodskappe kan oordra. Alhoewel dit ‘n noodsaaklike rol en gevolg van AAK intervensie strategië is, is die rol van die luisteraar net so belangrik. Gesproke taalbegripvaardighede voorsien ‘n noodsaaklike grondslag waarop taalproduksievaardighede gebou kan word.

AAK gebruikers se gesproke taalbegripsvaardighede verskil en toon ‘n verspreiding van ooudersomsgelyke taalbegrip tot minimale taalbegrip.

Sommige AAK gebruikers verstaan gesproke taal, en benader die aanleer van AAK met ‘n gesproke taal. Ander persone wat probleme ondervind met gesproke taalbegripsvaardighede, benodig AAK vir beide inset (reseptiewe) en uitset (ekpressiewe) metodes. Grafiese simbole speel ‘n rol in die fasilitering van begrip van boodskappe deur óf die begrip van gesproke taal te fasiliteer, óf die begrip van AAK simbole te fasiliteer. Die gebruik van aanvullende invoer strategieë soos ondersteunde taalstimulasie,is een tipe soort onderrigstegniek wat gebruik word in die aanleer van grafiese simbole vir AAK gebruikers. Ondersteunde taalstimulasie verwys na ‘n tegniek waar ‘n fasiliteerder of kommunikasie vennoot AAK kombineer met natuurlike spraak deur gelyktydig gebruik te maak van uitwysing na grafiese simbole tesame met spraak.

Die doel van die studie was om die impak vas te stel van ‘n drie-week lange ondersteunde taalstimulasie program op die reseptiewe taalvaardighede van kinders met min of geen funksionele spraak. Vier kinders het deelgeneem hierdie veelvoudige basislyn studie. Die ondersteunende taal stimulasie program het bestaan uit drie aktiwiteite, naamlik kuns en handwerk, kos voorbereiding en storie aktiwiteite. Elke aktiwiteit is vyf keer aangebied aan die deelnemers. Agt teiken woordeskat items is aangeleer in elke aktiwiteit. Die aanleer van al 24 teiken items is aangemoedig tydens elke sessie oor die drie-week lange-intervensie periode. Die resultate dui aan dat al die deelnemers al die teiken reseptiewe woordeskat items aangeleer het. Daar was egter variasie in die tempo waarteen die deelnemers die teiken items aangeleer het. Daar is geen statisties betekenisvolle verbetering in algemene reseptiewe taalvaardighede waargeneem onder die deelnemers nie.

Kern woorde: Min of geen spraak; Aanvullende toevoer; Ondersteunde taal stimulasie; Aanvullende en Alternatiewe Kommunikasie (AAK);
Reseptiewe taalvaardighede