

GLP: Implications for AAC, beyond supporting people who communicate using echoes

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Short Abstract

The recent rise in popularity of the notion of ‘GLP’ as a communication style has highlighted three key areas for future research and practice in AAC. First, clinicians have noted how ‘GLP’ aligns with the neurodiversity paradigm, underscoring the importance of valuing diverse ways of communicating, and listening to the voices of those with lived experience. Second, there is a growing emphasis on the need to consider sociocultural perspectives alongside cognitive ones. In this paper, I focus on the third implication: the need to rethink traditional assumptions about language processing and adopt practices grounded in a contemporary science of language.

In their presentation of the topic, proponents of ‘GLP’ draw on research that challenges mid-twentieth-century approaches to language, such as structuralism, behaviourism, and generativism—frameworks more familiar within the AAC community. Advocates of ‘GLP’ propose that (for at least a subset of children) language is learned through multiword units, which are gradually abstracted, enabling flexible, creative use of language according to social norms.

Although this line of research has yet to significantly impact AAC practices, substantial longitudinal, experimental, and computational evidence supports the importance of multiword units in language acquisition and processing. These insights challenge existing AAC approaches, particularly those shaped by beliefs about language disproportionately informed by the structure of the English writing system, and suggest a need to revisit both the design and implementation of AAC supports. In this paper, I briefly review this line of empirical evidence, and suggest critical considerations for the field of AAC.

Long Abstract

The recent rise in popularity of the notion of ‘GLP’ as a communication style has highlighted three key areas for future research and practice in AAC. First, clinicians have noted how ‘GLP’ aligns with the neurodiversity paradigm, underscoring the importance of valuing diverse ways of communicating, and listening to the voices of those with lived experience. Second, there is a growing emphasis on the need to consider sociocultural perspectives alongside cognitive ones. In this paper, I focus on the third implication: the need to rethink traditional assumptions about language processing and adopt practices grounded in a contemporary science of language.

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