Are we approaching AAC modelling all wrong? Lessons from early language development and motherese

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Short Abstract

Aided language input, or modelling, has become the go-to intervention for teaching AAC. Communication partners are generally encouraged to adopt several modelling strategies, including emphasizing core words, modelling only key words, attributing meaning, verbal referencing, and modelling a slightly longer message than the user can produce. The goal is to replicate how speaking children learn language through receptive input. However, modelling AAC is difficult and most communication partners end up modelling very little. In this session, we will explore the role of language input to support comprehension for children learning language through AAC. We will evaluate how a variety of common modelling strategies align with the receptive input received by speaking children, and we will consider why partners often find it difficult to model AAC. Finally, we will propose changes to modelling practice based in the study of "motherese", receptive language development, and the cognitive and developmental needs of both communication partners and AAC users. Come join the conversation on what is working, and not working, in current modelling practice and how we can improve it!

Long Abstract

This presentation/workshop is part of the AssistiveWare stream