

Storybook Interaction: A Comparison of Vocabulary Usage

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Designing an augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) system presents considerable challenges for those providing or selecting the necessary communication system to be used by individuals who present AAC needs (Beukelman, Jones, & Rowan, 1989; Beukelman, McGinnis, & Morrow, 1991). Vocabulary selection is one of these challenges. Careful consideration should be given when selecting vocabulary for users of AAC who will be using a communication board or system since this may increase their interaction and participation opportunities. The purpose of the present study was to obtain samples of vocabulary used by typically developing kindergarten students during one-on-one, adult-child storybook interactions. Storybooks for which communication boards are commercially available were used. The vocabulary offered on these commercially available communication boards was compared to the vocabulary used by typically developing children during storybook interactions. It was hypothesized that the vocabulary most frequently used by typically developing children was not within the vocabulary offered to users' of AAC in these commercially available communication boards. The goal of the present study was investigated how the vocabulary contained within commercially available storybook kits with communication boards compared to the vocabulary used by typically developing kindergartners during storybook interactions. Since users of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) cannot independently generate their own messages and have to rely on the messages provided by others, the significance of this study relies on how this comparison will benefit users' of AAC future storybook interactions as well as their participation.

There are several different commercially available materials that have been designed to use with users of AAC in order to accommodate their communication needs during different activities. Within these materials we can find communication boards that could be used during storybook reading interactions. Based upon clinical experience, we know that teachers and clinicians use these materials with users of AAC during different activities. What is interesting is that Light and McNaughton (1993) stated that teachers and other professionals working with children who use AAC systems have not received any training in reading and writing instruction for persons with severe disabilities. We do know, based on our clinical experience, that these materials are being used more frequently and liberally during different activities with children who are AAC users. What we don't know is if the vocabulary offered in these materials is adequate for language, communication, and literacy development. Therefore, it is hoped that by taking careful consideration to the vocabulary used by typically developing children during these interactions, we can provide better services to individuals with communication needs. The main objective of this presentation is to offer an understanding in the importance of vocabulary selection during different activities and how the vocabulary used by typically developing children can offer a means to create adequate communication boards for individuals with communication needs in order to become active participants.

A descriptive research design was used to determine the vocabulary most frequently used by typically developing kindergartners and how these words compare to the vocabulary offered in commercially available storybook kits. Participants ranged in age from 6-years to 6-years 7-months with a mean age of 6-years 3-months. All participants were exposed to and offered the opportunity to interact with reading and writing materials across the classroom in a typical day. Storybook reading interaction with an adult (teacher) was a regularly occurring activity in each classroom. The book, *Old MacDonald Had a Farm* (Child's Play, 2004), was used during the adult-child, one-on-one reading interactions throughout this study. For the vocabulary comparison, the books and/or communication boards used were those that were commercially available based on the same story. The story kits and communication boards used were *Old MacDonald Had a Farm* by Breakstone (1997), and *Hands-on-Reading* by Kelly and Friend (1995). Prior to data collection, parents/guardians of the participants completed a three-question survey regarding their child's previous experience with the target storybook. Its intent was to determine each child's previous experience with the story. A return rate of 72.41% was obtained from the survey sent to

the home of the participants. Survey results indicated that 85.71% of the children “did not own this book”, 95.23% “never” selected this book over others, and 23% of the children who owned the book, had previously read it between one to six times. This investigation determined if any adaptations or modifications are needed in two commercially available communication boards in order to offer users of AAC more appropriate vocabulary during storybook interaction. This comparison provides parents, teachers, and clinicians with an understanding on how to meet the communication needs of users of AAC.

Results indicated there was a significant difference between the vocabulary used by typically developing kindergartens and that provided in two commercially available communication boards. In order to best compare the results obtained, data were divided into the upper 25% most frequently used words and the upper 50%. The results indicated a significant correlation, $r = .782$ at the 0.01 level. This suggests a significant association between the high frequency words in the book and those used by participants. Results indicate that commercially developed communication boards to be used during storybook interaction may not offer the most frequently used words by typically developing kindergartners nor compare to the words that most frequently appear in books. Results suggest that careful consideration should be taken when selecting vocabulary for users’ of AAC during storybook interactions. Future research directions are suggested focusing on vocabulary selection and increasing AAC users’ participation.