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IS CORE AND FRINGE VOCABULARY STILL A RELEVANT TOPIC FOR PEOPLE WHO USE AAC?

Susan Balandin

A perfect supervisor

- Selfless
- Quick to respond
- Thorough
- A great editor!!
- Endlessly positive
- The joy of work that was more black than red

Vocabulary

- To communicate our thoughts and feelings through words, gestures, signs, and/or symbols we need a vocabulary
- For years many people using AAC were 'stuck' with systems that focused on 'wants and needs' and systems based on 'picture producers'
- An understanding of core and fringe vocabulary helped create new systems and new programs that not only enhanced communication for people who use AAC but also increased the speed
 - BUT NOT FAST ENOUGH

Core and fringe vocabulary

- Core vocabulary is the words we use most frequently in our day-to-day conversations. In fact, 80% of what we say consists of only 250-300 words. These words are used in different ways across multiple situations. Core vocabulary is mostly made up of verbs, pronouns, prepositions and adjectives.
- Fringe vocabulary is used in fewer situations and at a particular time (e.g. 'swing', 'teddy ', 'car'). Fringe words are more specific to a subject, or individual. They represent approximately 20% of our vocabulary. Fringe vocabulary is not made of general words and can not be used beyond many different situations

Words across time and place

- Vocabulary and topics of conversation used in meal breaks at work
- In 1995 the only vocabulary list to contain 'fuck' in the most frequently used 250 words
- A board with comb, TV, book, toilet, please

or

I want, that, no ask me, who

CORE VOCABULARY IS STABLE ACROSS TIME PLACE AND COUNTRIES

Core and fringe vocabulary in use

- Many AAC systems used across the world now have a focus on core vocabulary as well as fringe
- Core vocabulary is being used successfully to teach german to children from non german speaking background

BUT

- With AI programs such as Deep Seek and Chat GPT are these vocabularies still relevant?

Pros and Cons

Griffiths et al. 2024

- Speed
- Access
- Moving the field forward
- Enhancing linguistic competency
- Enhancing social media use (Hemsley et al.2024)
- Bias
- Ableism
- Small samples
- Ownership and authorship
- Lack of transparency
- Privacy issues
- Training?

Safeguards and guidelines - A code of practice

Conclusion

- AI communication tools are under researched in AAC
- There are perceived advantages but very real concerns
- Facilitators of facilitated communication?
- Core and fringe vocab continue to be important in AAC
 - Readily available
 - Strong research
 - Important for learning language and literacy
 - Less opportunity for damage

From the Guardian

Elon Musk put a chip in this paralysed man's brain. Now he can move things with his mind. Should we be amazed - or terrified?