DEVELOPING AN AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM FOR A CHILD WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

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Abstract

An area of great interest to speech and language therapists and educators, holding promise to support the individual with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), is that of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). ASD is a very complex, often baffling developmental disability. It onsets in childhood and continues into adulthood; the types of disorders on the autism spectrum disorder range from high functioning to very severe. The most common determiner of ASD is difficulties with social interaction, including pragmatics, trouble making friends, missing social cues, lack of eye contact etc. Communication impairments can involve difficulties with pragmatics, language and speech. Oftentimes, the person with ASD cannot speak at all or struggle with language skills.

The use of AAC is becoming widely accepted as beneficial for individuals with ASD. AAC is defined as the use of other communication modalities to support or replace verbal communication. AAC systems are directed at maximizing individuals' abilities to communicate effectively and efficiently. The study aimed to develop the theoretical framework and the practice trends of AAC with ASD. The ways that the AAC is introduced to children with ASD, the promotion of a successful engagement with the AAC as a communication tool, and the development of a language system that sustains over time, were the attainable goals of the study.

Furthermore, a relevant case study was presented. The case study demonstrated a classical presentation of a step by step development of AAC communication system, for a pre-school boy diagnosed with ASD. The ways that the AAC is introduced to children with ASD, the promotion of a successful engagement with the AAC as a communication tool and the development of a language system is not an easy case. However, it becomes widely accepted that AAC is beneficial and support the individual with ASD as part of an intensive treatment approach to address communication needs.

Keywords: Autism spectrum disorder, augmentative communication, alternative communication systems.