Uniqueness of Communication Deficits in ASD

• Compounded by deficits in:
  • Social connectedness/orientation toward other humans
  • Understanding/using nonverbal communication
  • Responding restricted to particular stimuli
  • Complex communication needs

Access to Communication as a Basic Civil Right

• Communication is ubiquitous
Difficulty communicating leads to...

Evidence-Based Communication Interventions

- Behavioral interventions (prompts, task analysis, time delay, reinforcement)
- Augmentative and alternative communication interventions
- Functional communication training
- Naturalistic behavioral interventions (PRT, Incidental teaching)
- Modeling (video and in vivo)
- Peer-mediated interventions
- Visual scripts

Research Support:
Skills Taught

- Supports limited communicative functions
  - Behavior regulation
  - Information exchange
  - Social Interaction
- Supports early phases of communication instruction
- Unfounded concerns regarding AAC and speech
Research Support: Participant Characteristics

- Primarily preschool and elementary ages
- More support with people with ASD without co-occurring conditions
- Girls/women tend to be underrepresented
- Little support for use of interventions with culturally and linguistically diverse learners

Research Support

- Small scale:
  - Much of the research has been conducted with small numbers of participants
- Limited contexts:
  - Only limited research has been conducted in natural settings/contexts
  - Instructional strategies tend to be didactic
- Mobile tech revolution...

High-Tech Versus No- or Low-Tech

- Limited research
- Little apparent different in results between high- and low-or no-tech
  - Exception: unaided AAC (such as sign language)
  - This is an emerging area of research
Strengths of High-Tech-Based Interventions for Communication

• Social validity/acceptability
• Portability
• Affordability
• Increasingly intuitive
• Flexibility and just-in-time use
• Integrate communication with other tech tools

Mobile Tech-Based Interventions May Not be Suited for Everyone

• Preference
• Distractions on the device
• Difficulties with funding
• Future research on mobile tech...

Future Directions

• Characteristics of participants
  • Large group studies
  • Adolescents and adults
  • Matching participant characteristics to interventions
• Communicative functions
  • Behavior regulation
  • Information exchange
  • Social Interaction
Future Directions

• Intervention packages
  • Overlap between intervention components across packages
  • Same thing, different name
  • Multimodal communication interventions
  • Expansion to broader communicative functions/skills
  • Incorporating mobile technology

Future Directions: Feasibility

• Ease of use and to program
• Likelihood of adoption and maintenance
• Implementation across settings/contexts for generalization and maintenance of skills
• Social validity/acceptability
• Treatment fidelity among natural communicative partners
• Costs (money and time for implementation and training)
• Preference of individual with ASD and caregivers

Future Directions

• Improving standards in single-case research
  • Procedural integrity/treatment fidelity
  • Description of interventionists
Future Directions

• *Addressing unestablished/controversial treatments accepted by the public*

Final Issues

• Success of an intervention has more to do with the intervention techniques than materials/technology
• Avoid controversial/unproven “treatments”
• Communicative competence: People with ASD deserve access to the full range of communicative functions and broad vocabularies

References

Ganz, J. B. (2015, July). A perspective on access to communication as a basic human right. Hawks Hopes Blog: Change is a Collaborative Act (University of Kansas Special Education Department). Retrieved from: https://hawkhopesblog.wordpress.com/2015/07/12/a-perspective-on-access-to-communication-as-a-basic-human-right/


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