Action Research – Communication (complex Communication)

Focus

Communication (Complex Communication)

Strategic Aim

Students who have complex communication needs will correctly identify prepositions (position words) in pictures

Annual Aim

Students will perform a pre and post test using DLS Cards. Pretest data collected, group lesson plans designed and presented, post-test for progress

Target

Increase from base level at one to three Information Carrying Words (ICW) depending on pretest results. Posttest and progress recorded and analyzed. Conclusions and recommendations for future.

Context

Position words, or prepositions are a part of the early vocabulary of children. For most children, they develop in a reasonable set order. They contribute to the child's understanding of their environment and are necessary to develop the adverb of place at the phrase→sentence level.

Research and texts reference prepositions: /in/ /on/ and /under/ along with /up/ and /down/ as being the most likely to develop first in the child's repertoire. The Derbyshire Language Scheme is specifically designed around the concept of an Information Carrying Word (ICW). This describes the number of words the student must understand in a request to carry that request out. A word becomes an ICW if there is a choice between that word and another word. The level of choice→ICW can be manipulated by increasing or decreasing the objects-real or in a picture. As an example, if the student is presented with four pictures:

1. A cat sitting on a wall

2. A cat walking on a wall

3. A cat sitting on a bed

4. A cat walking on a bed

The words that would have a choice do not include /cat/ as there is a cat in every picture. However, there is a choice with the action words: sitting vs walking and wall vs bed. This is an example of 2.7: Action (sitting-walking) + Place (wall-bed)

The research was to assess if targeted presentation of the target vocabulary level, with the students in a group would increase the student's comprehension of the identified words.

Gathering of Information/Action

Students were observed in the classroom. Each student was assessed using the Derbyshire Language Scheme Picture card sets. They included both two and three ICW. The student was shown a selection of pictures and asked to point to or indicate through eye pointing the correct answer from the verbal question. If the student passed at the two-word level, they moved to the three-word level cards.

NB If the student described the picture correctly e.g. "That one's on the bed," at 2.7, they were marked correct. If the student failed the first set, they were presented with a second set to confirm. The posttest used the same pictures as there was a considerable time gap between testings.

Refer to Key under chart below. The card sets at the two-word level were: 2.1 Object + place e.g., key in box and 2.7 Action + place e.g., Teddy lie on bed. The set at three-word level was 3.1 Object + preposition + place e.g., spider on chair

NB If the student was unable to pass at the two-word level /up/ and /down/ were selected as a target words but they were exposed to the other words during the class sessions

The researcher designed group lesson plans and presented to the group two-three times a week. The students were encouraged to use their default/strongest communication style to respond.

The teacher and Teacher Aides observed the sessions.

Outcome

One of the students left the school and moved out of the area at the end of term four 2021

One of the students left the class in term 2 2022

One of the students was absent from school over the times SLT was provided to the class

Two of the three remaining students assessed improved their results in terms of correctly selecting a higher number of pictures correctly. The fourth student has had significant absences during 2022

Student	Pretest level	Target	Posttest level	Notes
Student one		3.1A	NA	Left term 4 2021
Student two	Below 2-word level	Up down	NA	Moved term 2 2022
Student three	Below 2-word level	2.1 + 2.7	Higher score in 2.1 + same in 2.7	AAC
Student four	Two-fourths at 3.1	3.1 in/on/under	Passed 3.1	Verbal
Student five	¾ at 3.1	3.1 under	Passed 3.1	Verbal
Student six	2/4 for 2.1 and 2.7	2.1 + 2.7	Passed 2.1 and 2.7 + ¾ 3.1	Echolalic Verbal Score affected by length of time testing

KEY: 2.1 Object + place e.g., key in box

2.7 Action + place e.g., Teddy lie on bed

3.1 Object + preposition + place e.g., spider on chair

Reflections/Implications

This research was impacted by factors such as student absence, students leaving the class (one to a different class and one out of the school altogether), and the narrow scope of assessment used. Although all students responded to the pictures one could have used objects as well as both a contrast. If the research were to be more productive, I would do the following:

- Pre and post test with a wider battery. The DLS Rapid Screening Test and targeting one skill for each student
- Be more deliberate with the aims of the group work with the teacher
- Have specific follow up activities related to the aims for the staff to use as well as the demonstrations in class

Evaluation/Next Steps

- Assess the students using the full battery of DLS and plan from the results
- Specific training of staff in development of prepositions and modelling outside the group sessions: embedding into the class day

PRETEST: can they correctly identify pictures with different prepositions at two-three ICW levels

POSTTEST: Can they correctly identify pictures at a higher ICW or higher percentage, correct?

References

Learning to use Prepositions: a case study Published online by Cambridge University Press: 17 February 2009 Michael Tomasello

Hsu Semantic Syntactic Analysis vs LARSP: presentation at SLT Conference 1986 by Ross Harland

Laura Lee Developmental Sentence analysis Laura Lee North-western University Press, 1974

David Crystal Working with LARSP

Derbyshire Language Scheme Mark Mansidlover 2021 version

Ross Harland

Speech Language Therapist   Ruru School