Functional Communication, Storytelling, and Identity: 
Incorporating LPAA Goals to Take AAC to the Next Level

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Disclosures

Kelly and Brianne are full-time, salaried employees at Lingraphica, and thereby receive financial compensation from the Company.

Brianne is a contracted speech-language pathologist at TalkPath Live, and thereby receives financial compensation from the company.

Katie Strong:
- Financial: Receives salary as an Assistant Professor at Central Michigan University
- Non-Financial: University Liaison for Virtual Connections for Aphasia
Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to:
1. Identify three ways an AAC device can be customized to target functional conversation goals
2. Describe the importance of storytelling in relation to identity in adults with aphasia
3. Identify two methods for using AAC to support storytelling in adults with aphasia

Agenda

• Customizing AAC Devices and LPAA Goals
• Importance of Storytelling and Identity
• High-tech AAC to Support Storytelling
• Questions and Answers

Introduction
Who is Appropriate for AAC?

- Persons with Aphasia from CVA
- Degenerative Disease Processes
- Primary Progressive Aphasia (PPA)
- Parkinsons Disease with Voice
- Head and Neck Cancer
- General Voice
- Articulation Disorders
- Any Issue Where a Person is Unable to Effectively Communicate Verbally

Negative Impact of Aphasia
(Simmons-Mackie, 2018)

- Adverse impact on quality of life
- Negative impact on community engagement
- Depression
- Sense of helplessness
- Reduced participation in former activities
- Reduced, limited, or no friends

General Effects of Social Isolation

Social isolation can have direct effects on cardiovascular disease risk factors, brain deterioration, and mortality.
(Cacioppo, et al., 2014)
Feelings Attached to Aphasia...

Aphasia is associated with feelings of alienation, inferiority and shame in social setting.
(Nystrom 2006)

Social Isolation

One year post CVA, 80% of people with Aphasia report having "no friends"
(Hillari & Northcott 2006)

Research

Friendships and rich social networks are highly associated with levels of participation, life satisfaction, physical health, and overall quality of life.
(Brown et al, 2013)
Customizing AAC Devices and LPAA Goals

Small Stories

BIG STORIES

Life Participation Approach (LPAA)
Small Stories – Entertainment (Football)

Importance of Storytelling and Identity
“Words are how we think, stories are how we link.”

– Christina Baldwin

A-FROM

Storytelling

Identity

Story

Co-construction
Storytelling

- Identity
- Co-construction
- Story

Importance of Story

- Story can be a vehicle to make meaning (Romanoff, 2001)
- Stories are told to cultivate relationships. (Frank, 2007)
- Story contributes to a healthier identity (Lucius-Hoene et al., 2018)
- Story relies heavily on language.

And Then Comes Aphasia: A kind of identity theft

- Aphasia strikes at core of who we are – our sense of identity and self
- It disrupts continuity of our life story
- Making sense of life change and its impact is usually negotiated through sharing of revised stories but...
- Aphasia damages critical communication tool we use in this process

(Shadden, 2005)
How Healthcare Providers Play a Role in Narrative Processes and Identity Reconstruction

- Identity is developed through language-based narratives that are socially constructed
- Aphasia alters language and identity
- Requires a process of reconstruction or renegotiation of identity
- Healthcare providers can support identity work through support for personal narratives

Interventions for Aphasia that Use Narratives to Support Identity

- Guided Self-Determination (Bronken et al., 2012; Knevel et al., 2014)
- Biographic Narrative Intervention (Condon et al., 2013, 2015)
- Guided Autobiography (Inmer et al., 1996)
  Adapted for Stroke Keegan 2013; Adapted for Aphasia Richman & Hartman 2013
- Your Life Looking Back, Moving Forward (Sindon, 2015)
- ‘My Story’ Project (Strong, 2015)

Stepped Psychological Care

- Biographic narrative therapy identified as a Level 1 intervention to address depression in individuals with aphasia
- Level 1
- Level 2
- Level 3
- Level 4

(Baker et al., 2018)
May not be fully aware of power of narrative in reconstructing identity (Hinckley, 2008)

**Challenge For Us As Clinicians**

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**Story as Product**

**Story as Process**

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**Permanence**
All relationships are opportunities for co-constructing stories in support of identity.
Clinician-relationship particularly crucial to those with aphasia.

**Uniqueness**

**Listening**
No clinical role may be more important than listening.
We must listen for:
- The stories
- The expressions of unique aspects of self
- The experience of aphasia and its impact.

**Supporting**
Be prepared with collection of supporting materials that assist in telling stories about a person’s life, interests, and daily interactions.

**Expanding**
Develop a genuine interest in learning more than just the etiology, the nature of the language deficit, responses to testing, etc.
My Interest in Story

Chris, Nikki, Katie

'My Story' Project
Protocol for co-constructing a personal narrative with persons with aphasia
Story framework based off McAdams (2006)
- Who I was before my stroke and aphasia
- My stroke and aphasia
- Who I am today
- My future/goals
- 8 individual sessions and 3 group 'story sharing' celebration over 4 weeks

Reflections From a 'My Story' Participant

“I was stoked to do it. Yeah, I didn’t know it would be a be a choice my [XXX] my words. It did. It really did it came out great. You know? I loved. The whole thing just blows my mind it’s an amazing story. Not the story, just the whole, not the story, my story is just a story, my life. But the whole the whole thing we did here, it changed my life. It really did. It’s amazing.”
High-Tech AAC to Support Storytelling

Using High-Tech AAC to Support Storytelling

Paper Book to High-Tech AAC Device
The Process

Co-construct → Customize → Modify → Practice

Co-Constructing the Story

Customizing a Story Script on the Lingraphica Device
Outcomes

- Renegotiation of identity
- Improvements in speech
- Increased confidence
- Increased participation
- Improved relationships

Concluding Thoughts

- Social isolation is very real, and we can change a client's narrative with communication alternatives.
- Developing communication goals based on LPAA help a PWA remain an active participant in their own lives.
- Small and Big stories are important vehicles for making meaning out of life events.
- The process of story co-construction can be transformative in moving forward.
- SLPs may play a powerful role in supporting stories about life in persons with aphasia.
- Using High-Tech AAC to support storytelling can be a powerful tool

How Can You Work with Lingraphica?

SLP Device Trials

- When you CAN see your patient
- Submit for a trial at Aphasia.com
- Device shipped to SLP
- SLP completes trial with Lingraphica assistance
- SLP does Language Assessment and determines device appropriateness

Patient/Care Partner Trainings

- When you CANNOT see your patient
- Lingraphica does a Needs Assessment
- ID LPAA goals for both patient and Care Partner
- Customize device based on goals
- Refers patient back to you for Language Assessment and to determines device appropriateness

Smart Paperwork
Next Steps
Visit AACBeyond.com

- Earn your CE credit/certificate of completion for today’s course
- Schedule a consultation or call to learn more or begin a trial

Join the Conversation on Slack
- #storytelling

Questions & Answers

References

# References