{inclusion outreach}

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Auditory Scanning

Auditory scanning is a way to help a student with visual or motor disabilities access a communication system. It can be used on no-tech, light-tech, or high-tech AAC systems when the student is not able to use direct access options such as pointing or using eye-gaze to select picture symbols.

To use auditory scanning, the communication partner speaks out loud the message options and waits for the student to indicate their choice. Some communication systems also offer auditory scanning as a feature of the app.

For auditory scanning to be successful, the student will need a consistent, identifiable way to communicate that they are responding in the affirmative. This might be by means such as smiling, looking, or moving their hand or body in a specific way.

This format offers the following advantages:

- a break from answering yes/no questions
- more options for choices within a given question
- opportunities to move through questions with greater efficiency
- an alternative method of responding that does not compete with a switch site (e.g., moving a finger or hand versus using the head for a switch or answering yes/no questions)

Implementation

Develop a series of topic lists or menus that move from general to specific. In order to limit demands on memory, each menu should not contain more than 4 items.

Verbally present each of the items in the menu, and observe your student carefully for any behaviour(s) that indicate that they are selecting one of the options. If your student is not giving any indication, then periodically ask if they have something to say. If your student indicates "yes", then begin presenting the menu of topics (in sets of up to four).

Once your student makes a selection from the first menu, provide them with the next appropriate sub-menu, and so on until you get to what they want to say.

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Example of Offering and Following Menus

Menu 1   **Menu 2**   **Menu 3**
Activity
Places
People
Feelings

Your student might choose "feelings". You would then provide them with the next appropriate sub-menu from which they can select:

Sub-Menu 1 - Feelings
Happy
Mad
Frustrated
Scared

Your student selects from this list, and you add any appropriate information (e.g., "I think you are telling me you are frustrated with this activity. Maybe we should change activities?")

You can have more than one general menu list, depending on how you develop this idea with the student. You can also have more than one sub-menu list. For example, in the above example, there may be more than one sub-menu of groups of feelings.

Write out the menus and the branching sub-menus, and make a reference card that can be kept with the student. The card should include easy-to-follow instructions concerning the sequence of choices, as well as information regarding rate, need for repetition, need for cueing, and the student's "yes/no" signals.

Menus and sub-menus should always be presented in exactly the same order, so that over time your student begins to memorize them, speeding up the communication interaction. Because auditory scanning can be slow and time consuming, say those items that are the most likely to be selected at the beginning of the scan.

By numbering the menus, your student may over time be able to choose from Menu 1 or 2 at the onset, as opposed to having to go through the first menu only to find out that what they wanted to say was in Menu 2.

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