

# Balancing Presumed Competence with Appropriate AAC System and Goal Selection

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## Learning objectives

- **Objective 1:** Identify 3 limitations to presuming competence (PC) without consideration for an individual's current abilities and zone of proximal development.
- **Objective 2:** Define stimulability and the zone of proximal development as they relate to the AAC system selection and goal development.
- **Objective 3:** Identify 2 tools that provide data to aid in in goal development within the zone of proximal development.



# Disclosures

- Speakers have no financial or non-financial relationships to disclose.



# Boston Children's Hospital Augmentative Communication Program



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## Why this topic?

- Experiences in our practice: system abandonment or mis-match
- Increasingly consumer-accessible SGD market (Gosnell, Costello, & Shane 2011)
- Increasing prevalence of recommendations being posted to social media sites



## Why this topic?

- Investigate the origins and efficacy of presumed competence
  - “The recent adoption of PC [presumed competence] and returning popularity of FC [facilitated communication] does not appear to be coincidental” (pg. 372, Travers and Ayres, 2015)
- Concern for growing popularity of an intervention strategy without knowledge of its efficacy
- Commitment to evidence-based practice and upholding ASHA’s code of ethics



# “Presumed competence” (PC)

- **Presume:**
  - Suppose that something is the case on the basis of probability. (Oxford dictionary)
  - To believe something to be true because it is likely, although not certain (Dictionary.com)
- **Competence:**
  - The ability to do something successfully or efficiently. (Oxford dictionary)
  - *Linguistics* A person's subconscious knowledge of the rules governing the formation of speech in their first language. (Oxford dictionary)



# Presume competence- contemporary

- *“Start by presuming that your client is a learner on his/her way to developing competence. Good intervention, consistent language models, the right tools, and plenty of practice will move them along the journey toward improved communication. It’s important that, as clinicians, we truly believe that. Yes, your clients may be impaired, perhaps significantly so, but they will certainly know if you don’t believe in their abilities. **Presume competence.**”*
- Carole Zangari, Ph.D., CCC-SLP  
<http://praacticalaac.org/strategy/strategy-of-the-month-engaging-the-learner/>



## Presumed Competence- contemporary

“Because we just don’t know the person’s skills or potential, we make the least dangerous assumption and **presume competence**. This does not mean, however, that we must presume that the person is already fully literate with age-appropriate receptive and expressive language skills. It means we don’t and can’t know what that person’s potential is until we provide him or her with accessible tools, and the training needed to use those tools. Everyone can learn and grow, given appropriate training and tools. This doesn’t mean that everyone can learn everything. Everyone has potential, but the proper AAC system and instruction are needed before that potential can be revealed and realized.”

- Everyone can learn: Presuming competence on vocabulary design, *Jennifer Marden* (AssistiveWare Blog post)

<http://www.assistiveware.com/everyone-can-learn-presuming-competence-vocabulary-design>



## Historical perspectives on disability

- Late 1970s - early 1990s
- IQ scores as a measure of ability
- Mass institutionalization (Travers and Ayers, 2015)
- Proof before progress (candidacy model)



## Presumed competence- origins

- The Criterion of the Least Dangerous Assumption (Donnellan, 1984)
  - “In the absence of conclusive data, educational decisions should be based on the assumptions which, if incorrect, will have the least dangerous effect on the student.” (p. 142)



## Presumed competence- origins

- “Communication Unbound: Autism and Praxis” (Biklen, 1990)
  - “Attitudinal Dimensions of Facilitated Communication [...] 6. Assume the person’s competence”
  - “Biklen was the first to suggest that practitioners and leaders presume competence in his endorsement of and guide to facilitated communication (FC).” (Travers & Ayers, 2015)



## Presumed competence- origins

- “In its simplest articulation, presuming competence means that the outsider regards the person labeled autistic as a thinking, feeling person”
  - (Biklen (2005) as cited in Travers and Ayres (2015))
- Biklen (2006) article *Presuming Competence*, discusses “...the importance of *presuming competence* of students with disabilities, as for all students, and the link between this concept (presuming competence) and inclusive education.”



## Evidence for PC

- There are no published experimental studies of PC in the professional literature.
- No empirical evidence for the efficacy of presuming competence, nor that it ensures the dignity of individuals with disabilities.

(Travers & Ayres, 2015)



## Related evidence

- Studies have shown that the beliefs held by teachers regarding their students' abilities to learn to communicate more effectively, is the strongest influence in their willingness to implement AAC. (Soto, 1997)
- Historical studies (Smith-Lewis and Ford, 1987 and Huer and Lloyd, 1990) cite perceived negative attitudes of professionals towards people with disabilities that decreased communication opportunities as major factor mentioned by AAC users.



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## Limitations of PC

### False dichotomy

- Thinking critically about PC does not mean that we aim to *presume incompetence*
- Travers and Ayres (2015) note that there is a “false dichotomy that failing to embrace PC means non-subscribers must believe students are inherently and therefore eternally incompetent” (pg. 373)

## Limitations of PC AAC system selection

- Importance of feature matching
- Opportunities that are mismatched or a poor fit are missed opportunities
- When PC is NOT the “*least dangerous assumption*”



## Limitations of PC AAC system selection

- Slow rate of progress
- Underestimation of skills due to mismatched system
- Missed time and opportunities
- Total system abandonment



# AAC System Abandonment

- AAC system abandonment occurs in approximately 1/3 of cases (Zangari & Kangas, 1997)
- System abandonment due to a variety of factors including (Johnson, J., Inglebret, E., Jones, C., & Ray, J. (2006):
  - Vocab/messages do not meet daily living needs
  - System too difficult or too simple
  - User's cognitive abilities are over or underestimated
  - System is not modified in relation to the user's progress or deterioration in communication
  - Mismatch between expectations and the user's actual ability.
- "When a person who used AAC experienced success with the system and when that user and his or her communication partner highly valued the system, this resulted in success more than 90% of the time." (Johnson et al, 2006)



# Striking a balance



## Striking a balance

- Many positive elements to the way many people in our field are using this term.
- However, we must acknowledge the wide range of skills and abilities of individuals with CCN and match a system that meets her/his individual needs.
- False dichotomy--“That a failure to embrace PC means embracing a position that the person is incompetent” (Travers & Ayres, 2015)



## Evidence-Based Practice

- “It is the position of the American Speech Language Hearing Association that audiologists and speech-language pathologists incorporate the principles of evidence-based practice in clinical decision making to provide high quality clinical care. The term **evidence-based practice refers to an approach in which current, high-quality research evidence is integrated with practitioner expertise and client preferences and values into the process of making clinical decisions.**”
  - ASHA Position Statement on Evidence-Based Practice in Communication Disorders retrieved from <http://www.asha.org/policy/PS2005-00221?>



# Evidence-Based Practice



Image retrieved from: <https://www.asha.org/Research/EBP/>.

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# Evidence-based practice

## Thoughtful system selection



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# Evidence-based practice

## Dynamic assessment considerations

- Gather information about all domains of assessment (motor, cognitive/linguistic, sensory, literacy, etc.)
- Feature matching (Shane & Costello, 1994)
- Stimulability testing
- Adapting and re-assessing over time
  - “In the broadest sense, the goals of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) interventions are 1) to assist individuals who rely on AAC to meet their *current* communication needs and 2) to prepare them to meet their *future* communication needs.” (Beukelman & Mirenda, 2005)



# Learning objectives

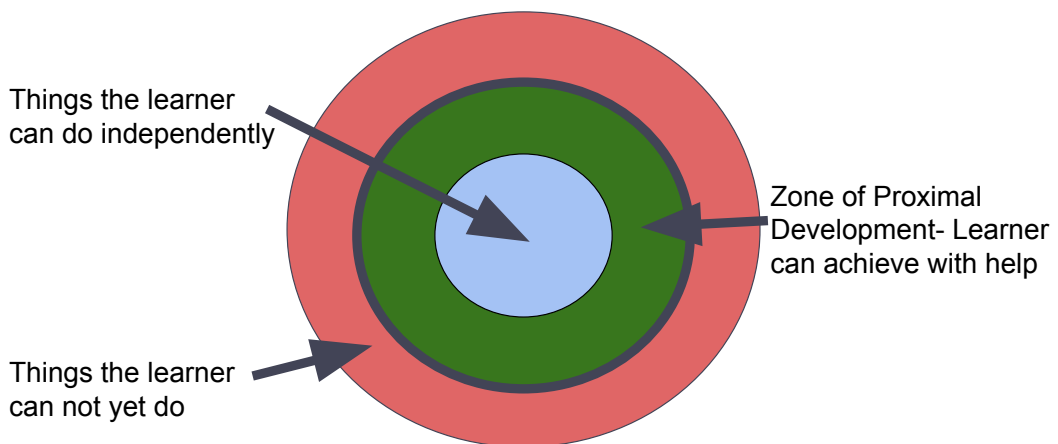
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# Stimulability

- Term generally used in speech sound assessment and choosing treatment objectives.
  - “Stimulability assessment seeks to determine whether production of an erred sound is enhanced when elicitation conditions are modified (i.e., simplified)” -(Powell, 2003)
- Assess during evaluations and ongoing trials/dynamic assessment
  - e.g.: symbolic understanding, linguistic complexity, navigation skills, etc

# Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)



# Learning objectives

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# Evidence-based practice

## Dynamic Assessment: Assessment tools

- **Formal assessment tools (examples)**
  - *Dynamic AAC Goals Grid 2 (DAAG-2)*
  - *Communication Matrix*
  - Functional Communication Profile-Revised
  - Augmentative & Alternative Communication Profile: A Continuum of Learning
  - Test of Aided-Communication Symbol Performance (TASP)
  - AAC Evaluation Genie





# Evidence-based practice

## Assessment tools

THE DYNAMIC AAC GOALS GRID 2

DAGG-2

### ABILITY LEVEL CONTINUUM\*

Use this guide to help provide insight to current and potential target skills and strengths. Mark the statements that best describe an individual's observable communication behaviors. You may not check all of the boxes in any skill area. You may also find that you check boxes in more than one Ability Level.

Ability Level 1: Emergent	Ability Level 2: Emergent/Transitional
<b>Understanding</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited or no understanding that symbols (e.g., pictures, words) represent ideas.</li> <li>Pictures may or may not help increase understanding and expression.</li> <li>Difficult to determine how much he/she understands verbally.</li> </ul>	<b>Understanding</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responds to common gestures (e.g., come here, go away, greeting).</li> <li>Shows understanding of the use of common objects.</li> <li>Pictures seem to help increase both understanding and expression.</li> <li>May be starting to follow simple directions within familiar routines and activities.</li> </ul>
<b>Expression</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May communicate most successfully using facial expression, body language, gestures, and/or behavior (either socially appropriate or challenging).</li> <li>May indicate acceptance (e.g., smile) or rejection (e.g., turn away) but does not reliably answer other yes/no questions.</li> <li>May desire or try to communicate in familiar and motivating activities.</li> <li>Requires help from communication partner to communicate successfully (e.g., narrowing choices, interpreting gestures/body language/behavior).</li> <li>Sensory behavior is very important for calming (e.g., rocking, smelling objects) and determining likes and dislikes.</li> </ul>	<b>Expression</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understands symbols (e.g., objects, pictures) for basic, common or concrete items.</li> <li>Starting to use clear and simple symbols (including objects, photographs and picture symbols) in motivating situations or favorite activities.</li> <li>If using picture symbols, he/she will use one picture at a time to communicate messages.</li> <li>May use gestures, body language, facial expression or behavior intentionally to communicate (e.g., pointing, showing, giving); however, reliability varies from day to day or activity to activity.</li> </ul>
<b>Social Interaction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reacts to familiar people and/or motivating activities.</li> <li>Takes turns in familiar and motivating routines (e.g., "high five") or when someone comes to him to receive a hug.</li> <li>May respond to direct physical interaction by looking, smiling, or reaching.</li> </ul>	<b>Social Interaction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows clear preference for certain objects, activities, and people.</li> <li>May be starting to show some interest in social interactions, especially in specific situations.</li> <li>May not use symbols to interact socially.</li> </ul>
<b>Literacy Skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May not be interested in reading or book activities.</li> </ul>	<b>Literacy Skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May demonstrate a beginning interest in participating in shared reading and/or in beginning to engage with books more independently.</li> <li>May be able to identify own name and a few other frequently seen words.</li> </ul>
<b>Other</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance with forms of AAC may be inconsistent.</li> </ul>	<b>Other</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance with forms of AAC may be inconsistent.</li> <li>Benefits from help from his/her communication partner as skills are developing.</li> </ul>

### LINGUISTIC COMPETENCY

Ability Levels	Goals	Chain of Cues**
Emergent	S1 Communicates behaviorally (e.g., eye gaze, point, pull partner toward) to request/avoid/comfort and socially interact.	IC DVC DFC PA
	S2 Rejects undesired propositions or items behaviorally (e.g., brief glance, nod, eye contact, smile or touch).	IC DVC DFC PA
	S3 Accepts propositions, activities and/or offered items behaviorally.	IC DVC DFC PA
	S4 Demonstrates intent to communicate with a partner such as selecting single button message in a joint action routine (e.g., repeated story line, request repetition of preferred activity).	IC DVC DFC PA
	S5 Signals a desire for something (e.g., gesture, device, speech).	IC DVC DFC PA
Emergent/Transitional	S6 Engages in turn-taking for one communication exchange (can include gestures, pointing, facial expression, eye movements).	IC DVC DFC PA
	S7 Demonstrates joint attention toward an object with partner.	IC DVC DFC PA
	S8 Uses at least 3 reliable signals (e.g., sign/sign approx, object symbol, verbal/verbal approx) to control their immediate environment (e.g., "More", "All done", "Help").	IC DVC DFC PA
	S9 Requests/comments/labels a tangible object with single noun symbol given an array of 2 or more symbols in familiar natural context.	IC DVC DFC PA
	S10 Requests/comments/labels a familiar concrete action with single verb symbol given an array of 2 or more symbols during a familiar routine/context.	IC DVC DFC PA
Context-Dependent	S11 Uses abstract descriptive concepts (quantitative/qualitative) at least 2 in each category.	IC DVC DFC PA
	S12 Uses learned sentence constructions (marker phrases) for creative 2+ word phrases (e.g., "I want ___", "I see ___", "I have ___") in structured or routine activities.	IC DVC DFC PA
	S13 Uses action concepts (at least 10 verbs across situations).	IC DVC DFC PA
	S14 Generates novel or creative 2+ word simple sentences.	IC DVC DFC PA
	S15 Uses plural "s" to denote more than one.	IC DVC DFC PA
Independent	S16 Recognizes letter-sound associations.	IC DVC DFC PA
	S17 Demonstrates early use of letter combinations (e.g., initial sound recognition, creative spelling).	IC DVC DFC PA
	S18 Generates simple grammatical sentences using present ("I'm") and past ("I'd") tense.	IC DVC DFC PA

\*Chain of Cues Prompting Hierarchy  
 GM: Goal Met (Natural Occ) - IC: Instructive Cue - DVC: Direct Verbal Cue - DFC: Direct Physical Cue



# Evidence-based practice

## Assessment tools: TD Pathways for Core First companion application

KATIE
MY STUFF

Core First
Goals Grid

Getting Started
Build Skills
Customize Core First
Top Tips
Goals Grid
Help & Resources

Tap column names, row names or individual sections to view goals and suggestions for lessons to address them.

	Linguistic	Operational	Social	Strategic
<b>Emergent</b>	0/14	0/23	0/29	0/21
<b>Emergent/Transitional</b>	0/18	0/4	0/6	0/4
<b>Context-Dependent</b>	0/32	0/10	0/9	0/3
<b>Transitional/Independent</b>	0/28	0/8	0/7	0/3
<b>Independent</b>	0/21	0/6	0/5	0/3

Total: 0/113 0%



# Evidence-based practice

## Assessment tools: Communication Matrix

**Key:**

- Surpassed (White)
- Not Used (Grey)
- Emerging (Yellow)
- Mastered (Blue)

	A1			A2			A3															
I	Expressive Vocabulary			Expressive Syntax			Expressive Semantics (Other People)															
II	B1			B2			B3			B4												
III	C1			C2			C3			C4			C5			C6			C8		C9	
IV	I1			I2			I3			I4			I5			I6			I7		I8	
V	V1			V2			V3			V4			V5			V6			V7		V8	
VI	VI1			VI2			VI3			VI4			VI5			VI6			VI7		VI8	
VII	VII1			VII2			VII3			VII4			VII5			VII6			VII7		VII8	
VIII	VIII1			VIII2			VIII3			VIII4			VIII5			VIII6			VIII7		VIII8	
	Motor			Social			Social			Social			Social			Inventive		Inventive				

Communication Matrix Profile for Parents and Professionals Standard View



2018 Charity Rowland, Ph.D.



## Trials

- Trial periods are critical for determining the effectiveness of a selected AAC strategy/tool.
- Component of evidence-based practice



# Trial data collection

## General Guidelines:

- Provide the individual with **ample opportunity to explore the vocabulary** within the device.
- **Model the language on the device** by using the device as you talk.
- Choose activities that are **fun and motivating**.
- Support use of the device for **many pragmatic functions**.
- Avoid frequently **‘testing.’**
- Use a **prompting hierarchy**.



# Trial data collection: Planning

Activity	Language goals	Support
<p><i>Example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- music</li> <li>- snack time</li> <li>- after school</li> </ul>	<p><i>Example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Child will select if the song will be played loud or quiet</li> <li>- Child will select "eat" + "[specific snack]"</li> <li>- Child will share 3 activities completed at school and offer a comment (e.g., it was fun, it was boring, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p><i>Example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher's assistant will provide initial model</li> <li>- Parent will help child navigate to page of school activities, ask multiple choice questions, and prompt as needed</li> </ul>



# Trial data collection

TRIAL SUMMARY	
Pre-trial	Using device (at the end of the trial)
<i>(circle #)</i> Generally uses <b>1 2 3 4+</b> word phrases <i>(may include all modes of communication, speech, signs, devices, pictures, etc.)</i>	<i>(circle #)</i> Generally uses <b>1 2 3 4+</b> word phrases <i>(may include all modes of communication, speech, signs, devices, pictures, etc.)</i>
Communicates for the following functions: <input type="checkbox"/> Requesting <input type="checkbox"/> Asking questions <input type="checkbox"/> Commenting <input type="checkbox"/> Directing activities <input type="checkbox"/> Providing information/answering questions <input type="checkbox"/> Gaining attention <input type="checkbox"/> Conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	Communicates for the following functions: <input type="checkbox"/> Requesting <input type="checkbox"/> Asking questions <input type="checkbox"/> Commenting <input type="checkbox"/> Directing activities <input type="checkbox"/> Providing information/answering questions <input type="checkbox"/> Gaining attention <input type="checkbox"/> Conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
Communicates about: <input type="checkbox"/> Things/activities within the physical environment <input type="checkbox"/> Events in the past <input type="checkbox"/> Events in the future	Communicates about: <input type="checkbox"/> Things/activities within the physical environment <input type="checkbox"/> Events in the past <input type="checkbox"/> Events in the future
Use the following parts of speech: <input type="checkbox"/> Nouns <input type="checkbox"/> Verbs <input type="checkbox"/> Pronouns <input type="checkbox"/> Adjectives <input type="checkbox"/> Prepositions <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	Use the following parts of speech: <input type="checkbox"/> Nouns <input type="checkbox"/> Verbs <input type="checkbox"/> Pronouns <input type="checkbox"/> Adjectives <input type="checkbox"/> Prepositions <input type="checkbox"/> Other:



- Does the child?**
- Seek out the device?
  - Turn it on/off independently?
  - Use 'operational buttons' such as clear, go back, home, etc.
  - Attend to others when using the device? (i.e., shift attention between the device and communication partners)
  - Access the device easily and with accuracy?



Date/Time	Activity/Task the device was used in:	Level of Prompting:	Interactions observed:	Number of times it was observed (tally)	Examples:
EXAMPLE: 2/6 @ 8:30	Morning meeting	<input type="checkbox"/> Independent <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> Maximum	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> initiating <input type="checkbox"/> commenting <input type="checkbox"/> requesting <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> responding to ?s <input type="checkbox"/> Directing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> sharing information	I  III  III	"The weather is + sunny"  "This weekend I went to granny's!"
		<input type="checkbox"/> Independent <input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> Maximum	<input type="checkbox"/> initiating <input type="checkbox"/> commenting <input type="checkbox"/> requesting <input type="checkbox"/> responding to ?S <input type="checkbox"/> Directing <input type="checkbox"/> sharing information		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Independent <input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> Maximum	<input type="checkbox"/> initiating <input type="checkbox"/> commenting <input type="checkbox"/> requesting <input type="checkbox"/> responding to ?S <input type="checkbox"/> Directing <input type="checkbox"/> sharing information		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Independent <input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> Maximum	<input type="checkbox"/> initiating <input type="checkbox"/> commenting <input type="checkbox"/> requesting <input type="checkbox"/> responding to ?S <input type="checkbox"/> Directing <input type="checkbox"/> sharing information		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Independent <input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> Maximum	<input type="checkbox"/> initiating <input type="checkbox"/> commenting <input type="checkbox"/> requesting <input type="checkbox"/> responding to ?S <input type="checkbox"/> Directing <input type="checkbox"/> sharing information		

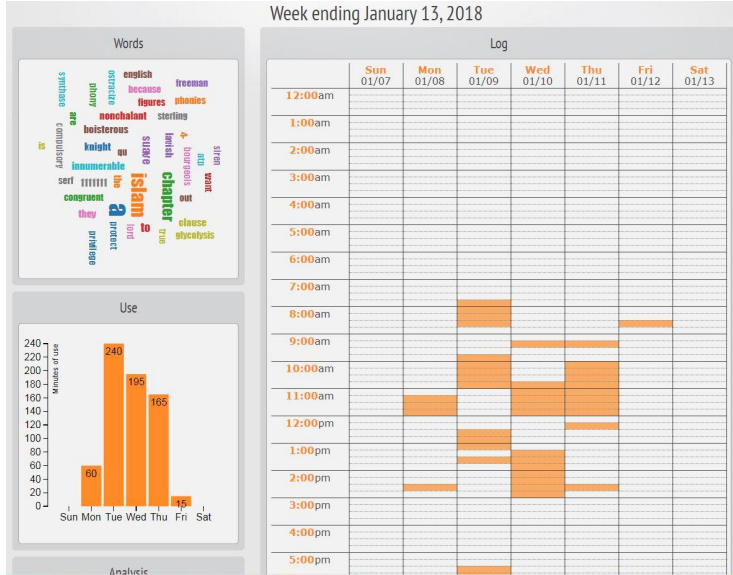


Created by Jessica Caron, Ph.D., CCC-SLP  
2013

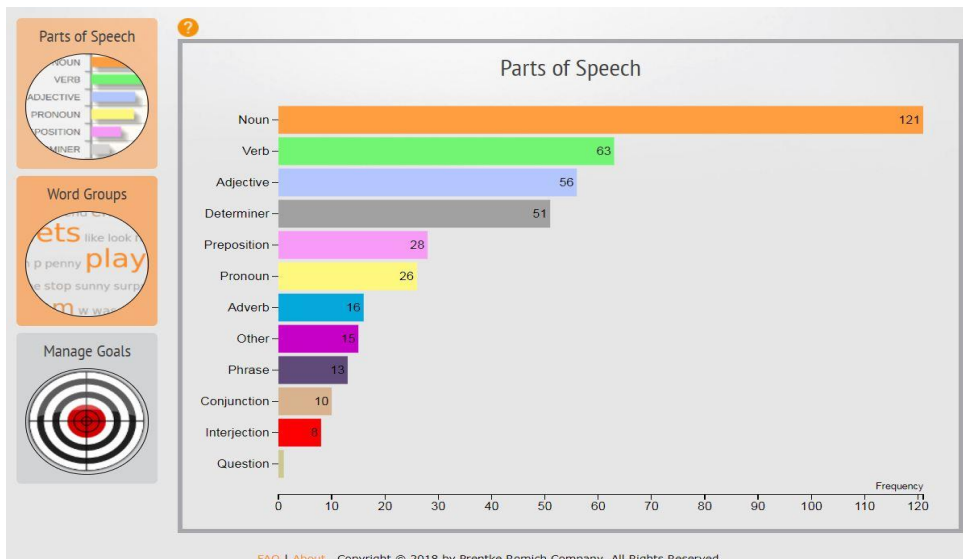


# Trial data collection- Realize Language

Week ending January 13, 2018

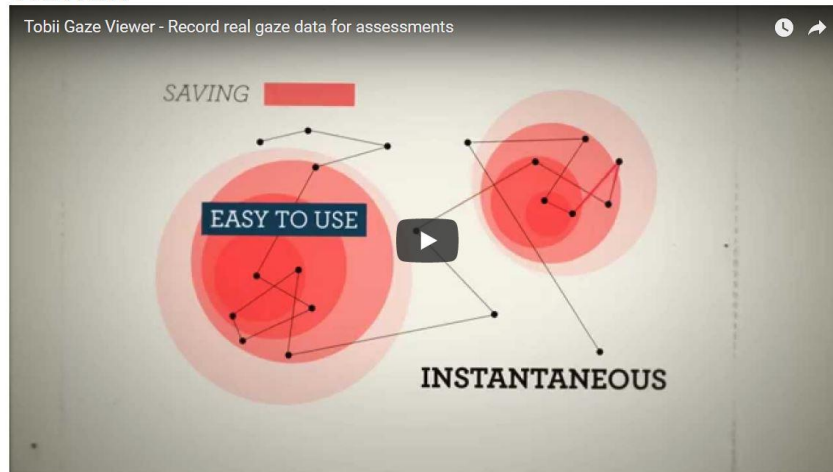


# Trial data collection- Realize Language



# Tobii Gaze Viewer

## UNDERSTAND A USER'S CAPABILITIES WITH GAZE VIEWER



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## Short term goal development

- Base goals on ZPD and stimulability testing
- Consider goals in all areas of AAC competence
- Consult objective data (e.g., DAGG-2, Communication Matrix, other formal testing measures)

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# SGD tools that support current ability and long-term growth potential

- Hidden buttons features
- Progressive vocabulary sets (Progressive language in Proloquo2Go, Vocabulary Builder in PRC Unity)
- Multi-level vocabulary sets (e.g., WordPower, Proloquo2Go Crescendo, Snap + Core First)



## Hidden buttons: TouchChat HD with WordPower



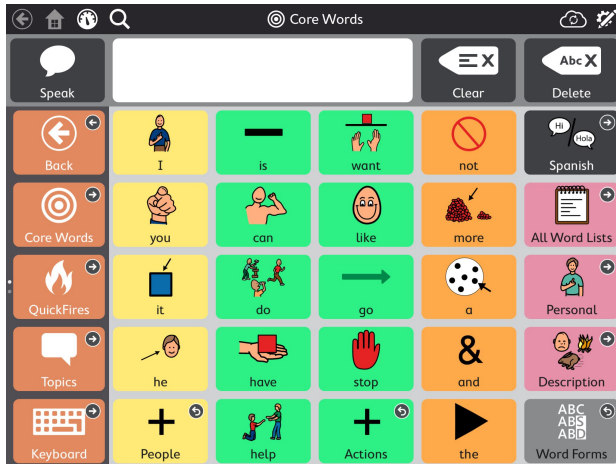
Hide mode

User interface



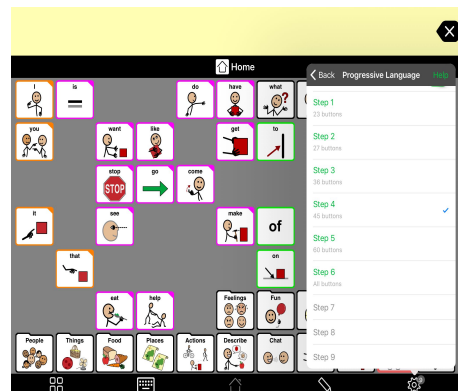
# Hidden buttons:

Tobii DynaVox Snap + Core First



# Progressive vocabulary sets:

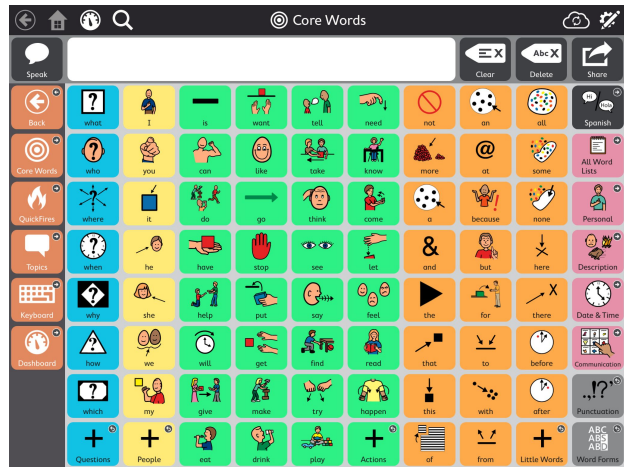
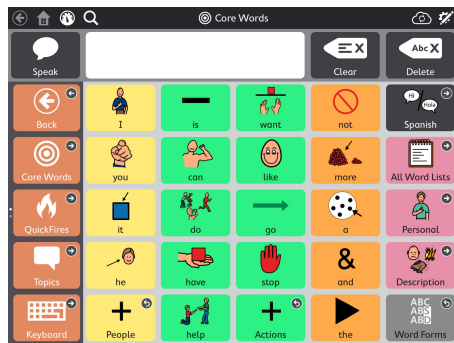
Proloquo2Go



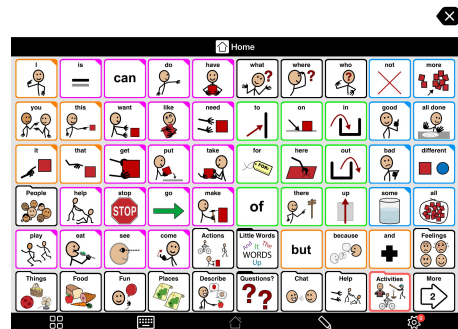
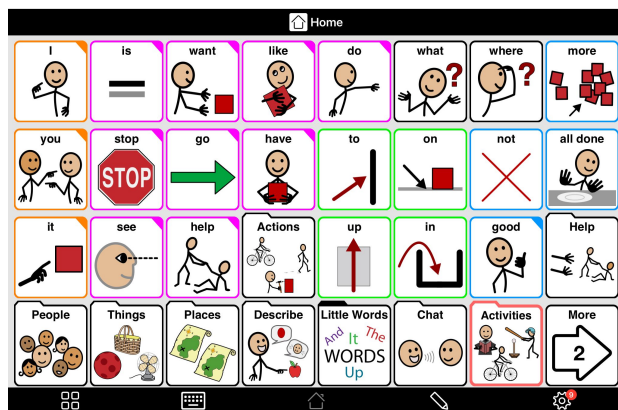




# Multi-level vocabulary sets: Snap + Core First



# Multi-level vocabulary sets: Proloquo2Go Crescendo



# Multi-level vocabulary sets: PODD

**PODD**



Image retrieved from:  
<https://cpec.org.au/store/podd/>

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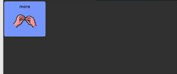



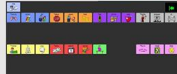

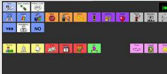

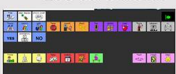






# Multi-level vocabulary sets: CoreScanner (PRC)

**CoreScanner**

Welcome to CoreScanner

An AAC language program designed for switch scanning  
*Select a level to learn more*

 <p><b>JUST MORE</b> 1 core word</p> 	 <p><b>CORNERSTONES</b> 8 core words</p> 	 <p><b>PRE-PATHWAY</b> 23 core words</p> 	 <p><b>PATHWAY</b> 25 core words</p> 
 <p><b>PRE-JAM</b> 108 core words</p> 	 <p><b>JAM</b> 190 core words</p> 	 <p><b>BLAST</b> Top level – thousands of words</p> 	

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## Summary points

- The phrase “presumed competence” has pseudoscientific origins.
- Some contemporary use encourages frequent opportunities and high expectations.
- Limitations of presuming competence without evidence may include system mismatch, system abandonment, and missed opportunities/time.



## Summary points

- Thoughtful/evidence-based system selection is necessary to reveal each individual’s potential.
- Assessment should include stimulability testing to determine the zone of proximal development and guide goal development.
- Many tools exist to aid in assessment, data collection, and goal development.



“The only presumptions required are individual worth, dignity, and a right to effective interventions and supports.”

-Travers & Ayres, 2015



*Questions?*



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# Thank you for attending!

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