

Introduction

- *Communicative competence* is defined as: “the state of being functionally adequate in daily communication and of having sufficient knowledge, judgment, and skills to communicate effectively in daily life” (Light, 1989).
- Communicative competence is not a fixed attribute of a person, rather competence can evolve and change based on individuals’ skills, motivations, supports, and communication environments (Blackstone, 2011).
- For individuals with and without disabilities, communication environments have changed in the last five years, with increased recognition that maximizing communication participation extends well beyond face-to-face interactions (Shane, Blackstone, Vanderheiden, Williams, & DeRuyter, 2012).
- Adolescents and young adults have embraced social media use and make up the largest demographic that uses these sites (Pew Research, 2010).

AIM

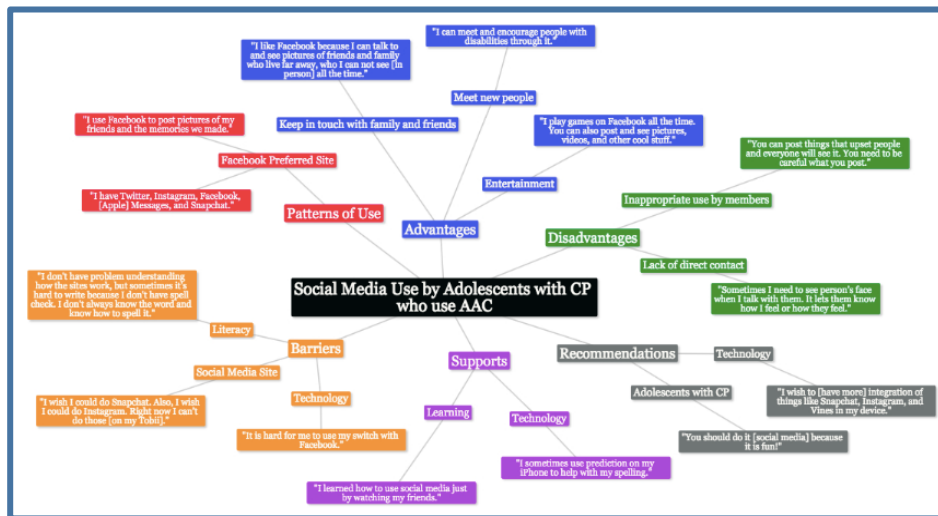
- Given the importance of social media in the lives of individual who do and do not use AAC and the limited research to date, the current study solicited the views and experiences of adolescents and young adults/adolescents with cerebral palsy who use AAC and social media.
- The overall aim of this study was to investigate these experiences to inform AAC service providers and develop future AAC social media interventions.

METHOD

- **Design:** Online focus group in a password protected Wikispaces
- **Data Analysis:** To insure the rigor of qualitative research, we analyzed the data using four procedures recommended by Creswell (2007). The data were triangulated through crystallization, peer review, an external audit, and a member-check.
- **Participants:** Seven individuals met the inclusion criteria and agreed to participate in the online focus group. Participants included four females and three males, ranging in age from 14 to 21 (mean age =18). All participants had been diagnosed with cerebral palsy and used a variety of means to communicate.

RESULTS

Adolescents with CP who use AAC used a range of communication media to participate in daily interactions, including social media. An analysis of the focus group interaction revealed that the participants used social media to: bypass the constraints of face-to-face interactions; communicate for a number of reasons (e.g. maintain relationships, share experiences); and support independent leisure (e.g. playing games, looking at pictures/videos). The results of this study are presented as per the six major coding themes that emerged from the data.



Caron, J. & Light, J. (2015). "Social media is a way of communication": A Preliminary Study of the Social Media Experiences of Adolescents and Young Adults With Cerebral Palsy Who Use Augmentative and Alternative Communication. Manuscript Accepted. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*.

Discussion/Implications

- Light (1989) argued that individuals who use AAC must develop knowledge, judgment, and skills in four domains in order to become competent communicators: linguistic, operational, social, and strategic competence. The table (adapted from Light & McNaughton, 2014a) presents examples of some of the key knowledge, judgment, and skills required for individuals who use AAC to attain communication competence within the social media environment

Domain	Examples of knowledge, judgment, and skills required
Linguistic	Skills in the native language and broader social communities, for example individuals need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate intelligible messages using appropriate vocabulary, syntax, and morphology (defined by the site and context of communication) • Develop literacy skills to read and produce written text • Use the appropriate linguistic conventions for different social media tools • Learn the meanings of commonly used abbreviations (e.g., LOL, TBT, YOLO, BTW) • Develop lexical knowledge of the symbols used to express concepts via social media (i.e., Emojis)
Operational	Skills required to access & use social media sites and AAC system(s) accurately, efficiently, and appropriate, for example individuals need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access social media sites (i.e., signing in/logging off) • Navigate within social media sites • Capture and upload photos • Capture and upload videos • Navigate between AAC system and social media sites • Generate text-based messages (in the form of a post or comment) • Share web links and information (e.g., re-tweet, send boards/pins) • Tag people (e.g., @) and concepts (e.g., #) • Participate in common functions that vary across different sites (e.g., "Like" a comment or photograph)
Social	Skills in the social rules of interaction, for example individuals need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express a wide range of communication functions via social media (e.g., request information, agree, disagree, comment, provide information, ask and answer questions) • Initiate and terminate interactions appropriately on social media • Fulfill turns • Choose appropriate tools (sites and AAC) to meet communication needs • Develop awareness of what should/should not be posted on social media • Develop an understanding of what are "public" vs. "private" conversations/posts • Demonstrate interest in others • Project a positive self-image
Strategic	Skills that are utilized by individuals who use AAC to overcome functional limitations that restrict their effectiveness as communicators, for example individuals need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize social media to increase social network • Bypass language & literacy limitations through use of photos, prediction, screen readers, videos, "likes" • Choose appropriate tools (sites and AAC) to meet communication needs • Utilize "shortcuts" (e.g., favorites, new feed settings) to reduce operational demands

Examples of Knowledge, Judgment, and Skills Required for Individuals who use AAC to Attain Communicative Competence in Social Media Environments (Adapted from Light & McNaughton, 2014).

Caron, J. & Light, J. (2015). Acquiring Communicative Competence on Social Media: Experiences of Adolescents with Cerebral Palsy who use AAC. Poster presented at the 2015 annual meeting of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Denver, CO.

CONCLUSIONS/FUTURE RESEARCH

- The ultimate goal of intervention for individuals with complex communication needs is to support the development of communicative competence so that these individuals have access to the power of communication; through a full range of communication supports (Light & McNaughton, 2014).
- As clinicians, technology developers, and policy makers move forward, it is of utmost importance that they consider access to on and offline communication, collaborate to mitigate barriers, and provide support to develop and maximize communication competence for adolescents/young adults who require the supports of AAC.
- Future Research:
 - Include replications of this study with other students with cerebral palsy, as well as individuals with other diagnoses that require AAC, especially those who are not successfully accessing social media.
 - Investigate interventions to teach necessary linguistic, operational, social and strategic skills to individuals who require AAC and to determine the effects on communication effectiveness via social media.
 - Investigate the use of social media as an intervention milieu.

OTHER

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- **Additional Information:**
 - Caron, J. & Light, J. (2015). "Social Media has Opened a World of 'Open Communication:'" Experiences of Adults with Cerebral Palsy who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication and Social Media. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 1-16.
 - Caron, J. & Light, J. (2015). "My World Has Expanded Even Though I'm Stuck at Home:'" Experiences of Individuals With Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis Who Use Augmentative and Alternative Communication and Social Media. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 1-16.
 - Caron, J. & Light, J. (2015). "Social media is a way of communication": A Preliminary Study of the Social Media Experiences of Adolescents and Young Adults With Cerebral Palsy Who Use Augmentative and Alternative Communication. Manuscript Accepted. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*.
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