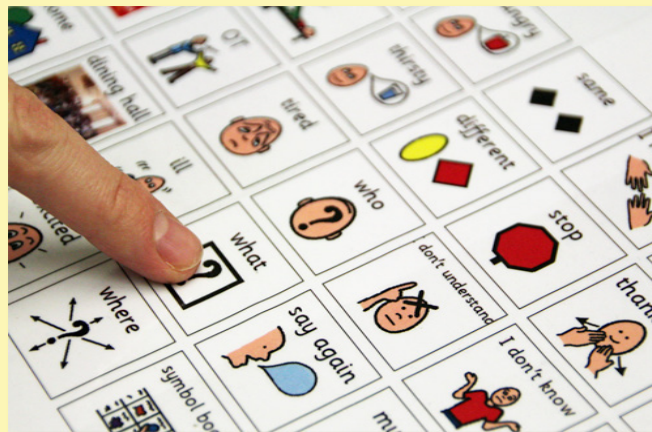


Communication Matters

Becoming an Aided Communicator (BAC) Study Day



Tuesday 21 June 2022

Esther Simpson Building, University of Leeds, Leeds, LS2 9JT (or Zoom)

Theory, Methods, Findings and Practical Implications

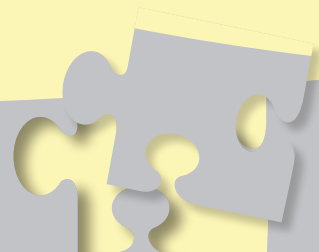
The focus of this day is on the language & communication opportunities of children & young people who are learning language using aided communication. It may be of interest to anyone involved in supporting the language development of aided communicators who use low-tech and/or high-tech systems.



Communication Matters

Booking and details:

www.communicationmatters.org.uk/what-we-do/study-days



Background

The project *Becoming an Aided Communicator (BAC): Aided Language Skills in Children aged 5–15 years: A Multi-site and Cross-cultural Investigation* includes researchers from 16 countries and several sub-studies. Building on ideas from usage-based theories of language development, the aim of the project was to get insights into the typical course and the variation that exists in aided language development. This required a large group study.

The BAC project, led by Professor Stephen von Tetzchner, investigated aided communication in a select group of 5–15-year-olds with aided language as their main mode of communication, most of them with severe motor impairments due to cerebral palsy. They were not considered intellectually disabled by their teachers and did not have a diagnosis on the autism spectrum. There was also a reference group of children matched for age and gender, without any known learning problems.

The focus was on the language achievements of the aided communicators, on their use of graphic symbols as functional linguistic elements rather than written forms corresponding to the spoken language. Particular interest was given to how they utilized their communication aids and solved communicative challenges in diverse everyday interactions. There are few studies of aided communicators telling about events that are unknown to their communication partner, and judging from the literature, aided communicators seem to have limited experience with this kind of conversation. The insights into aided language development and how aided communicators and their partners interact are needed for an optimal support of aided language development.

The BAC Contribution

The BAC tasks were designed to include different aspects of aided language comprehension and use, many of which are rarely addressed in aided language research. The comprehension part includes recognition of individual graphic symbols and a variety of tasks requiring understanding of sentences of different complexities, and stories. All the comprehension tasks were made with the graphic system each child was using or had used prior to becoming a speller. The children used their own communication aids in the production tasks. These include naming of objects, description of objects without naming, description of static scenes on pictures and dynamic events on video, completion of pragmatic cartoons and instructing partners to construct various toys. The ability to relay new information to other people is the core of human language and in most of the tasks, the child had to relay information and instructions that were novel and unknown to the communication partner. The project also included interviews with parents and teachers about the aid language history of the child and his or her educational history.

For more information about the BAC project, see Special BAC Issue, *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 34, no 1. and Stephen von Tetzchner (2022). *Becoming an aided communicator (BAC) – Basic ideas and aims. Communication Matters, in press.*

Learning Opportunities for Study Day Attendees

- The study day is open to professionals, AAC users and family members.
- The study day has two parts, a presentation part (10am-1pm) and a discussion part (2-3.30pm). Many of the project members plan to participate in person.
- The first part of the study day will present ideas and results from the project. Each presentation will involve one lead presenter and several co-presenters. The presentations can be attended in person or on Zoom.
- The second part of the study day (2-3.30pm) will have two parallel discussion topics.
- These break out discussions will be configured to accommodate face to face and virtual attendees to ensure their maximum participation.
- After the parallel sessions, the groups will come together for a 30-minute summary and wrap-up session (3.30-4pm).

Morning Presentations

1. *Cognition and assessment*: This part will present new ideas about assessing aided language competence, including assessment of children who are difficult to assess due to motor impairments.
Lead presenter: Kristine Stadskleiv, University of Oslo
2. *Vocabulary development and construction*: This part will consider vocabulary in a broad sense, in particular how young aided communicators utilize the aided lexicon to construct new vocabulary elements.
Lead presenter: Hans van Balkom, Radboud University, Nijmegen
3. *Conversations*: This part will present strategies of young aided communicators and their partners, especially when aided communicators need to relay information that has not been previously shared with the partner.
Lead presenter: Martine Smith, Trinity College, Dublin
4. *Communication aids and participation*: This part will discuss various ways in which the use of communication aids may both enable or hinder participation in social and societal activities, and the views of young aided communicators on their participation and the role of their communication partners.
Lead presenter: Beata Batorowicz, Queens University, Canada
5. *After BAC*: Participating in a study may have considerable impact on the support and social participation of children using AAC. However, in most studies, little is known about their development beyond their performance in the study. This part will present case studies following the participation of the aided communicator and their parents, teachers and peers.
Lead presenter: Catia Walter, State University of Rio de Janeiro

Afternoon Discussions

1. *Seminar 1* starts from the ideas and findings of the BAC project and discusses the theoretical and methodological bases for the work so far. It will develop into a discussion of how the ideas and methods can be built on and expanded to design new studies, with an emphasis on investigating aided language development and use in everyday communicative interactions.
2. *Seminar 2* discusses the practical implications of the findings of the current BAC project. Discussion will focus on how these findings, materials and tasks can be used to design new assessment approaches and intervention activities.

Timetable

9.30am	Registration & Tea/Coffee
9.50am	Welcome
10.00am	Presentation 1
10.30am	Presentation 2
11.00am	Presentation 3
11.30am	Tea/Coffee & Networking
12.00pm	Presentation 4
12.30pm	Presentation 5
1.00pm	Lunch & Networking
2.00pm	Parallel Discussion Sessions: Choose Session 1 or 2
3.30pm	Plenary Summary Presentation
4.00pm	Finish

Resources

- A pack introducing the BAC project and history, including question areas for you to think about prior to attending (which will be particularly useful for the afternoon discussion sessions).
- Access to Zoom recordings of the morning sessions and afternoon plenary session for two months after the event.
- A summary document of the breakout afternoon discussion sessions after the event.

The BAC Team

An international team, led by Professor Stephen von Tetzchner, University of Oslo, Norway.



BOOK YOUR PLACE ONLINE NOW

BAC Study Day

Tuesday 21 June 2022, University of Leeds or Zoom

www.communicationmatters.org.uk/what-we-do/study-days

Delegate Fees

In-Person (University of Leeds):

Includes lunch and refreshments, no VAT payable

- Non-Member £99
- Member £85
- AAC User/Family Non-Member £75
- AAC User/Family Member £66
- Accompanying Personal Assistant (with AAC User place) £0

Virtual (Zoom):

Includes access to the day via Zoom, no VAT payable

- Non-Member £66
- Member £55
- AAC User/Family Non-Member £49
- AAC User/Family Member £39

Membership: Contact us to check your membership status or number, or to join Communication Matters.

Cancellation: Notify in writing by 21 May for a refund (less £10 admin fee); no refunds thereafter.

BAC Study Day Materials: These materials are intended solely for the personal use of day delegates. No sharing or use can be made of the materials at a later date.