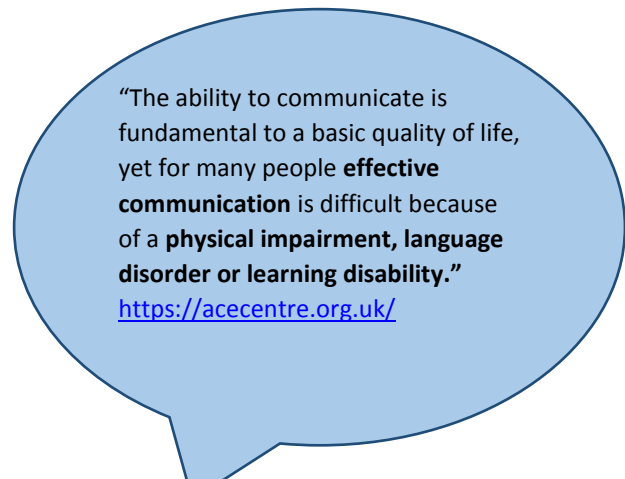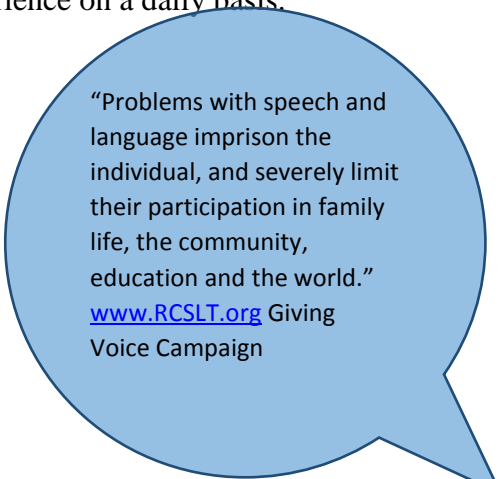# INCLUSION THROUGH COMMUNICATION – THE OBSERVATIONS OF A SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPIST

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Why inclusion through communication?

The following two quotes express the exclusion that those with difficulties communicating experience on a daily basis.

"Problems with speech and language imprison the individual, and severely limit their participation in family life, the community, education and the world." www.RCSLT.org Giving Voice Campaign

"The ability to communicate is fundamental to a basic quality of life, yet for many people **effective communication** is difficult because of a **physical impairment, language disorder or learning disability.**" https://acecentre.org.uk/

Communication is a basic human right and has been acknowledged as such in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is a central part of our lives from when we wake up in the morning to when we go to bed at night. Communication helps us to understand the world around us, express our thoughts and opinions and maybe most importantly build social relationships. In short it enhances not only our lives but also the lives of those we interact with.

However, what is communication?

The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines communication as:

- *the exchange of meanings between individuals through a common system of symbols.*

Communication has also been defined as:

- *the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium*
- *the successful conveying or sharing of ideas and feelings*
- *social contact*

    https://www.lexico.com/definition/communication

Communication is the active process of exchanging information and ideas. Communication involves both understanding and expression. Forms of expression may include personalized movements, gestures, objects, vocalizations, verbalizations, signs, pictures, symbols, printed words, and output from augmentative and alternative (AAC) devices.'

    https://www.asha.org/njc/definition-of-communication-and-appropriate-targets/

The Means, Reasons and Opportunities Model of Communication (Money and Thurman 1994, 1996)

The Means, Reasons and Opportunities Model of Communication was developed by Money and Thurman (1994, 1996) to teach a group of staff working with people with learning disabilities. The original model below has been expanded and developed further, however I believe the principles that underline the original model are just as relevant today as they were when it was developed. It considers what is needed for good communication.
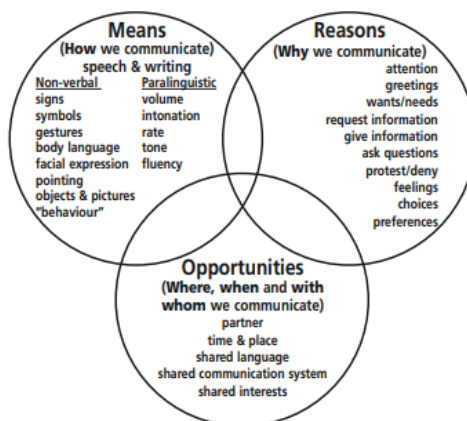

Figure 1
Means, Reasons and Opportunities: The original model

Money and Thurman (1994, 1996) cited in Inclusive Communication – Coming Soon, Speech and Language Therapy in Practice Autumn 2002.

The means, reasons and opportunities model of communication will be explored further below and practical examples of how it can be applied will be discussed in the presentation. It allows us to consider the relationships between these different aspects of communication and what skills our students need, how we can adjust our communication skills and adapt our environment to support students to be included within the education and social environment that we live in.

Reasons

Why do you communicate? For what reasons?

O'Kane and Golbart (1998) describe how from the moment humans are born they start to communicate. At first this will be unintentional, as a baby cries in response to their physical state e.g. to indicate that they are hungry or cold or need their nappy changing. Those caring for them then respond, trying to work out what the baby needs.   They might wrap the baby in blankets or feed them or change their nappy. Gradually these unintentional messages become more intentional as the baby learns that when I cry, my caregiver offers me food or wraps me up or gives me some attention. They also learn when I smile or make a noise, my parent makes a noise and smiles back. They begin to realise that they can have an impact on those in their environment.

Babies then develop joint attention and learn that 'initiations of joint attention are communicative acts used to direct the communication partner's attention with the aim of sharing the focus of an entity or event as opposed to obtaining something.' (O'Kane and Goldbart 1998 P7). It may be to say 'look, there's a duck.' Babies will have also learnt to reject things, pushing items away or turning their head away, and eventually by saying 'No!'

Money and Thurman's (1994, 1996) model lists other reasons that we communicate; in order to gain attention, greet people, make requests for information, make our wants and needs heard, to ask questions, to protest, to express our feelings, to make choices and express preferences. These are functions that we use on a daily basis and allow us to be included in education and society. We would be very different people if we only ever communicated to say 'hello' or to ask a question.

Money and Thurman (1994, 1996)

Within the educational environment students should be encouraged to communicate for a range of reasons not just to request information or respond to a question. As communication partners within an educational setting for those with communication impairments we can look to provide opportunities for students to extend the range of reasons that they communicate. There are many ways that we can provide our students with reasons to communicate in a graded way. For example if a child does not yet ask for items, you may hold onto the item and wait for them to gain your attention or reach for it. After they have vocalised or reached for the item, you may label it and say 'George wants the pen.' In this way the child begins to learn that they can gain your attention by vocalising and also that they can request something they need by pointing or by saying the word or by using another means of communication.

For some children we may also need to teach them to greet others, initiate interactions, express their opinion or feelings.

'Learning to be engaged by something somebody else has on offer is one of the foundations of all other learning' *A practical guide to Intensive Interaction Nind & Hewett (2001)*

Opportunities

Ioney and Thurman (1994, 1996)

Money and Thurman (1994, 1996) also advocate that in order to communicate we need to be given the opportunity to communicate. This part of their model incorporates the timing of interactions, the place of interactions and the person we are communicating with.

People have often said to me 'they don't communicate' when I have first met a child. In fact what they mean is 'they don't speak' however my observations have frequently been that they do communicate but their communication is not recognised and they have not been given opportunities to develop their communication skills. We need to recognise each individual's attempts to communicate. We need to give them time and be responsive communication partners.

Pepper and Weitzman (2004) place a high level of importance on the 'Tuned In Parent.' 'Tuned in Parents give their children opportunities to start an interaction and then they respond immediately with interest.' (Pepper and Weitzman 2004 P28)

According to Prizant, Wetherby, Rubin, Laurent & Rydell (2006) responsive communication partners are associated with effective practice that supports optimal engagement and learning for children. Responsive partners should; follow the child's focus of attention, attune themselves to the child's emotion and pace, respond to the child's signals, recognise and support the child's behavioural and language strategies to regulate arousal and recognise signs of dysregulation and offer support (Prizant et al 2006).

Ways in which we can give children opportunities to communicate:
- Offer small amounts of items / activities at a time. This allows a child to ask for 'more.'
  This may be at snack time, in a craft activity, within a story, within a physical game.
- Give the child time to respond and don't anticipate you know what they want already.
- Don't answer for them, wait for their response.
- Expect that the child will respond
- Know how the child communicates and what you can do to facilitate them.
- Have the child's communication method available and accessible to them at all times.

Means
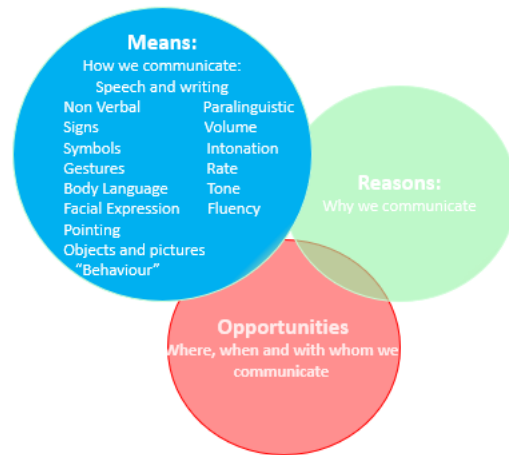
Finally, Money and Thurman (1994, 1996) describe that we all need a method of communication. For many people, this will be a combination of both verbal and non verbal (facial expression, body language, gesture) communication.

Nind and Hewitt (2001) state that if a child is at an early stage of communication development this may be by:

- attending to others and enjoying it
- attending to environment
- giving eye contact
- facial expression
- physical contact
- taking turns
- gesture
- vocalising

The Means, Reasons and Opportunities original model includes signing and symbols, both forms of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Systems.
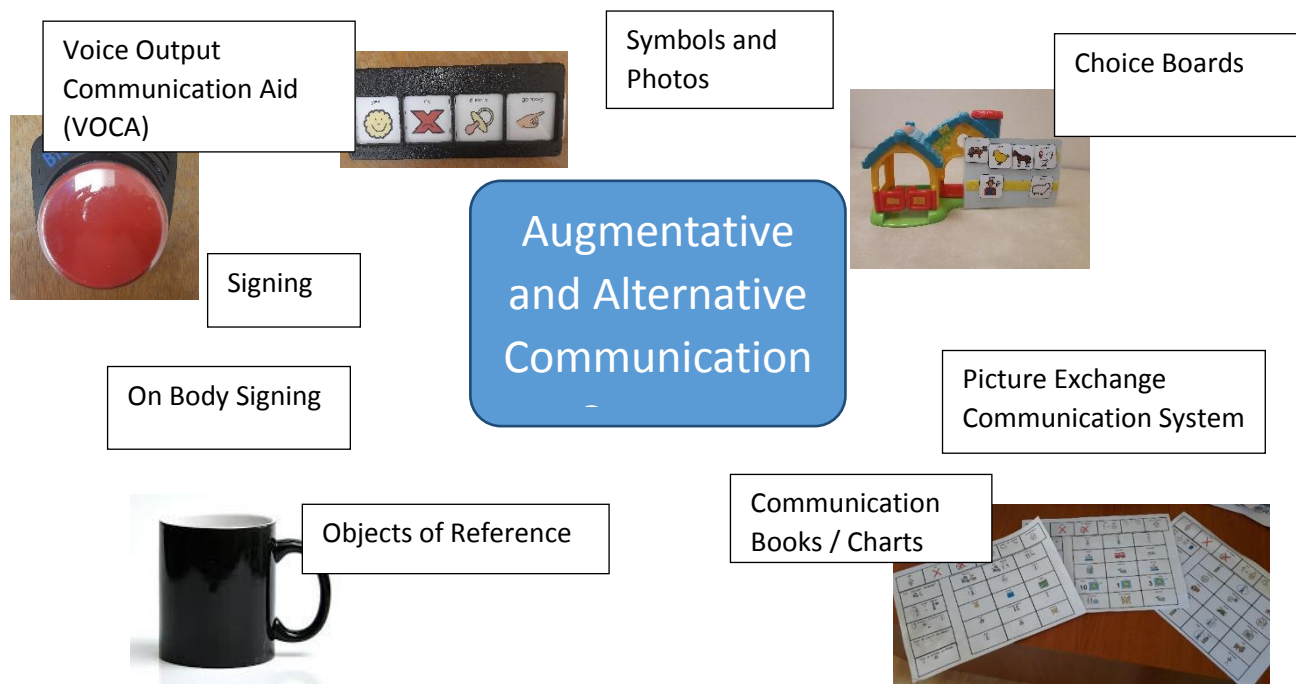
Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) is a range of strategies and tools to help people who struggle with speech. These may be simple letter or picture boards or sophisticated computer-based systems. AAC helps someone to communicate as effectively as possible, in as many situations as possible.

AAC may replace or support spoken communication

https://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/overview/

AAC is an important tool when including and educating children and students who find it difficult to understand and/or use traditional communication methods e.g. spoken language. It allows them to have a voice.

Within my presentation I will discuss how I have used some of the following methods of AAC to promote a child's inclusion within their educational environment:

Voice Output Communication Aid (VOCA)

Symbols and Photos

Choice Boards

Signing

Augmentative and Alternative Communication

On Body Signing

Picture Exchange Communication System

Objects of Reference

Communication Books / Charts

It is important for all those in the child's environment to be aware of the child's method of communication whether it is verbal and/or non-verbal or AAC. 'Children with complex communication needs are prone to social isolation, which is realized, in part, through limitations in everyday participation.' (Clarke, Newton, Petrides, Griffiths, Lysley & Price 2012)

In 2013 The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists created 'The 5 Good Communication Standards' for use within residential settings and hospitals for those with learning and communication disabilities. Whilst not designed specifically for education settings, as the paper states 'Everyone needs to know what good communication support 'looks like' and what reasonable adjustments they can expect.' (The Five Good Communication Standards 2013 P1)

The 5 Good Communication Standards are:

Standard 1:   There is a detailed description of how best to communicate with individuals

Standard 2:   Services demonstrate how they support individuals with communication needs to be involved with decisions about their care and their services

Standard 3:   Staff value and use competently the best approaches to communication with each individual they support

Standard 4:   Services create opportunities, relationships and environments that make individuals want to communicate

Standard 5:   Individuals are supported to understand and express their needs in relation to their health and well being.

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ROLUL TERAPIEI OCUPAȚIONALE ÎN INTEGRAREA SOCIALĂ A PERSOANELOR VÂRSTNICE

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Rezumat
Înaintarea în vârstă este caracterizată de transformări al căror caracter diferă puternic, psiho-individual, prin raportare la factori precum- predispoziţii genetice, stil de viaţă, caracteristicile mediului de viaţă, realizări profesionale şi personale. Terapia ocupaţională ca domeniu fundamental cu largă adresabilitate din punct de vedere al vârstei şi caracteristicilor de dezvoltare ale beneficiarilor, dar şi al tipurilor de intervenţii specifice, prezintă perspective complexe privind formele ocupaţionale majore ce susţin integrarea socială a vârstnicilor.