



Social Communication

- Social communication is a BIG part of our day.
- We use different forms of social communication – small talk, storytelling, greetings, wrap ups and farewells.



Social Communication

- Social communication is more than 50% of our daily conversation.
- Light (1998) found that reasons for communication between adults were (in ranked order)
 - · Social closeness
 - Social etiquette
 - Information transfer
 - · Wants and Needs



What do AAC users usually have on their system?

 Many AAC users have vocabulary which has been chosen to meet the needs of specific situations.
 These can have a large number of situation specific nouns and a very small number (or none) of small talk items. They may also include some wrap ups or control words e.g. finish and more.



So.... Let's get more social!







Small Talk

- Small talk is used as a transition between the greeting and information sharing stage, especially when people don't know each other well or don't possess a lot of shared information.
- · Small talk is often the first step towards social closeness.
- A quick check at Amazon showed 16 books aimed at helping people improve their small talk skills. Including "How to get people to like you in 90 seconds".
- There are even websites to teach you how to small talk! e.g. www.ehow.com, www.englishclub.com, www.ivillage.co.uk and many more!



AAC Users and Small Talk

- Many AAC users use little or no small talk
- · This can be because
 - They don't have access to small talk in their communication system
 - They don't see the need for it
 - They think it is a waste of time.
- Light and Binger (1998) found that AAC users were seen as more intelligent, valued and competent communication partners if they used small talk.



Generic Small Talk

- Generic small talk is small talk that people can use with a variety of different conversational partners because it doesn't refer to specific shared information.
- Particularly effective for many AAC users as it has many different uses.

Generic Small Talk	Specific Small Talk
How is your family?	How is your wife?
What's happening?	What are you doing?
Don't you look nice!	Nice haircut.
She's great.	She's a great teacher.



Generic Small Talk

- Several groups of researchers at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln looked at the frequency and types of generic small talk used by speakers of various ages without disabilities.
- 3 5 year olds 48% of all utterances at both home and pre-school/school were generic small talk
- 20 30 year olds 39% of all utterances were generic small talk
- 65 74 year olds 31% of all utterances were generic small talk
- 75 85 year olds 26% of all utterances were generic small talk



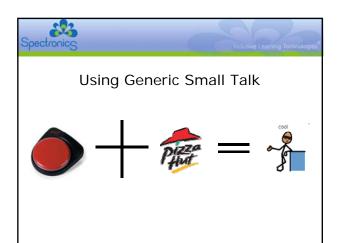
Generic Small Talk

- Most of the age groups used continuers as the most common form of small talk.
- Really? Yeah? Great! Cool!
- Go to aac.unl.edu for more detailed information.



Differences in Small Talk Vocabulary

- The small talk vocabulary lists showed that some words were used more frequently than others e.g. OK
- Some words were common across all age groups e.g. great
- Some words were specific to certain age groups e.g. "bummer" was used by the 25 35 year age group but not by the others.
- Small talk also differs based on your friendship groups, your geographical location, your interests and life experiences.



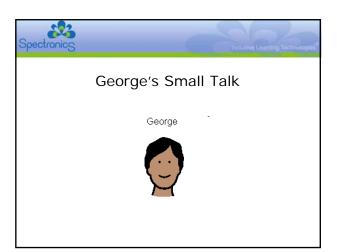


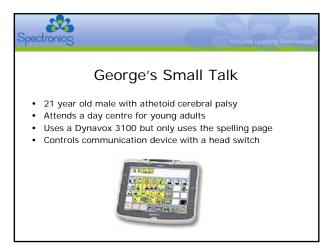
Small Talk and Mealtimes

- Balandin and Iacono (2000) found that it was nearly impossible to script the content-specific vocabulary needed for mealtimes for an adult in the workplace (although there was a good chance on Mondays and Fridays that footie would be the topic during the footie season).
- In this situation, the only predictable thing was small talk.











George's Small Talk

- Over 20 other people with disabilities and 6 staff attended George's centre, most of whom talked.
- George rarely used his device during the day.
- Staff requested a review of his device because he didn't"ever" use it
- George had previously had a setup with core vocabulary on his device but found it frustrating to find words he wanted when he could just spell them.



George's Small Talk

- A speech pathology student observed him in two sessions. He "used" his device constantly but only spoke with it twice.
- George was accessing his device with a head switch and
- George was accessing his device with a head switch and block/row/column scanning. She observed that by the time he had formulated a message the conversation had moved on and he erased and moved onto a new message. A two pronged approach was used. Firstly, a conversational topic was established before each group e.g. "What are your favourite films?". This allowed George to compose messages in advance.
- A small talk page was programmed and George practiced using this in one-to-one and then small group conversation.



George's Small Talk

- At the end of 8 weeks the same speech pathology student observed George in the same two sessions.
- George used his device 46 times. Five of these were topic setters, 41 were small talk continuers.
- Several other people in the centre commented spontaneously that "George was much cleverer than they thought" or that "They enjoyed talking to George much
- And....he's still using it!





Michael's Small Talk

- 14 year old with autistic spectrum disorder.
- Attends a mainstream school with a full-time integration aide.
- Michael has a Dynavox MiniMo but has recently developed quite a lot of speech, which is only understood by familiar people.
- Michael's device has core vocabulary with lots of fringe vocabulary around his topics of particular interest e.g. SpongeBob Squarepants.



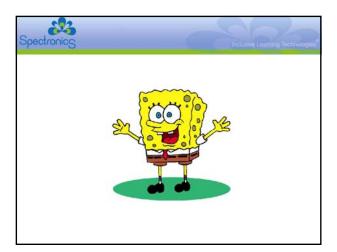
Michael's Small Talk

- Michael has been very keen to interact with his peers. However, as his peers have got older verbal skills have become more important to these interactions.
- Michael will often walk up to a group and simply stand there. The other children do not try to include him in their conversations, nor does Michael try to join in.
- Some of the children Michael was friendly with in primary years will occasionally sit down and talk with him, but always on his terms. These occasions are decreasing in frequency.

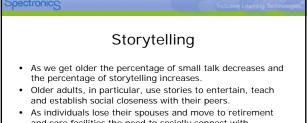


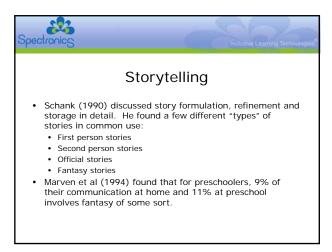
Michael's Small Talk

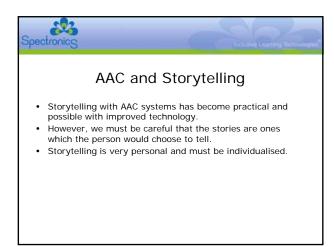
- Introduced Michael to Small Talk.
- Each of his favourite topic areas had a page built with partner directed questions and small talk continuers.
- His old friends are very impressed with this change in Michael. They are more likely to have a chat with him and will sometimes call other people over to take part in the conversation.



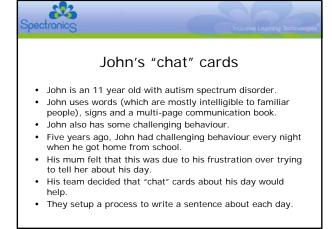


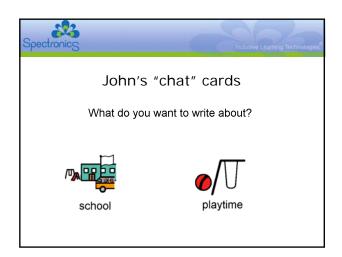


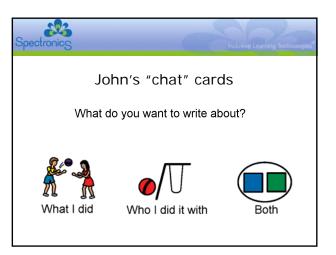




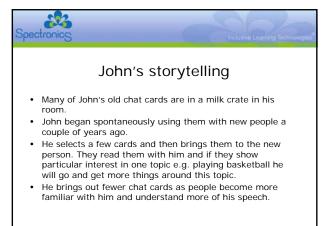


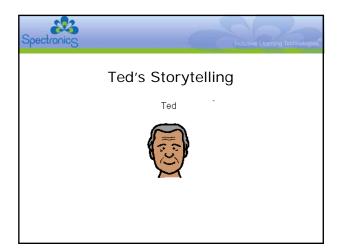


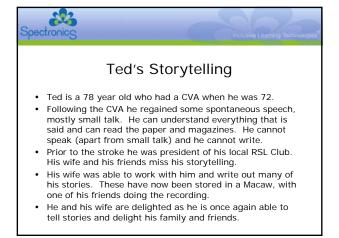


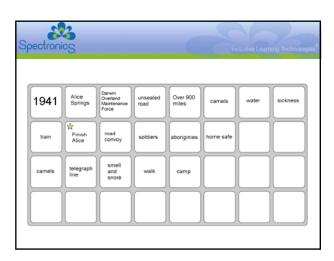
















Sarah's Storytelling

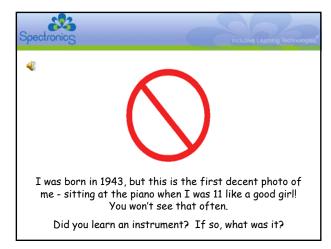
- Sarah is a woman in her sixties who lives in her own house.
- In her forties she was in a motor vehicle accident and is now a quadriplegic.
- She has a good understanding of spoken English but very limited expressive communication, including very little facial expression.
- She has control of a single switch with her left thumb, but tends to fatigue quickly, although her stamina is increasing.
- She has a multi-level communication book which she accesses with eye pointing.

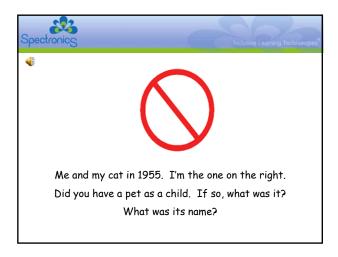


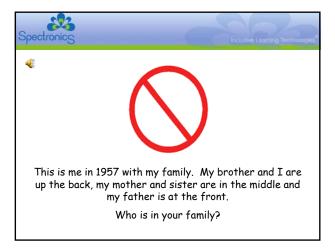
Sarah's Storytelling

- She has a range of in-house care staff who tend to stay around for between 5 months and 3 years.
- Many of these staff assume she doesn't understand what is said to her because she doesn't give body language feedback.





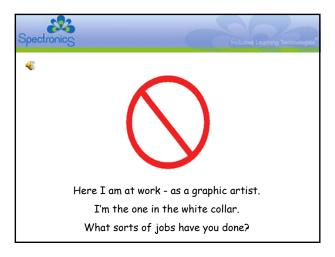


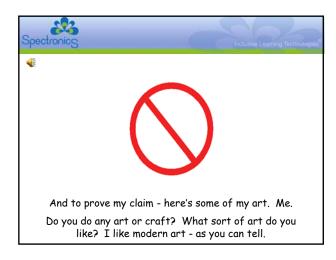


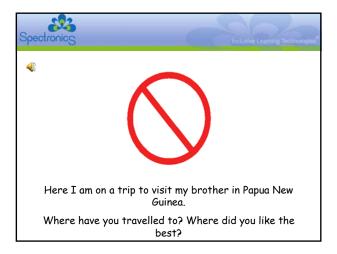
















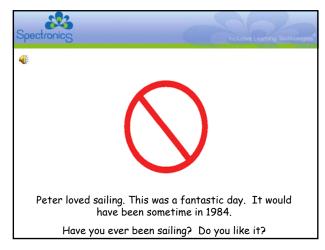












On the 12th of July 1985, Pete and I were hit by a car as we were walking to a restaurant for dinner.

My life completely changed after that. Pete died as a result of the accident and I am now severely physically disabled.

Pete and I had over six wonderful years together. I still miss him very much as you can imagine.

Luckily, I have many great friends and they, and my own determination, have helped me to keep going.











Sarah's Chat Book

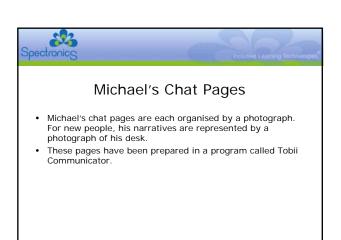
- Sarah's chat book has completely changed the way staff see her.
- Each new staff member sits down and goes through the book with her over a few different sessions.
- They realise how interested Sarah is in them and they gossip with her more.
- It also gives them topics to talk about that they think will interest her.





VSDs have been successful, and more and more frequently Michael is able to simply go to the page and then speak

before the computer does so.









Gossip

- · Well.... you already got that bit!
- Gossip is a very good way to increase social closeness.
- Create a gossip button on a person's communication device.
- Use a Step-by-Step to create a sequence.



•Just how important is social communication?

- In Building Communicative Competence with individuals who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication Light and Binger (1998) looked at just three different social communication skills.
 - 1. Use of an introductory strategy when meeting new people
 - 2. Use of nonobligatory turns to increase participation in social interactions
 - 3. Use of partner-focused questions to demonstrate an interest in the partner.



Use of an introductory strategy when meeting new people

- Teaching a 35 year old with a closed head injury to use an introductory strategy to explain his use of AAC and his communication resulted in much more positive interactions with unfamiliar people, with fewer breakdowns and made the new partners more at ease.
- Teaching a 44 year old with cerebral palsy to use an introductory strategy allowed her to be more confident and assertive with new people. Twenty adults with no previous experience of AAC viewed tapes of Maureen meeting new people pre and post. 100% of them reported she was a more competent communicator when she used an introductory strategy.



Use of nonobligatory turn taking

- Teaching a young (4½ year old) child with cerebral palsy to use non-obligatory turn taking via AAC meant that the child was initiating more frequently and was more eager to participate in group activities. One of her peers said she was more fun to play with. Her speech improved and she acquired 30 new words.
 Teaching a 14 year old with autism to take non obligatory.
- Teaching a 14 year old with autism to take non-obligatory turns also resulted in a increase in initiating and turn taking. There was a decrease in his inappropriate behaviours and he was less disruptive in class. 20 adults who were not familiar with AAC rated his pre and post videotapes and rated him as a much more competent communicator in the post tapes (although they didn't know which were pre or post).



Use of partner focused questions

- Teaching a 13 year old child with developmental disability to use partner focused questions produced a change in the focus of his interactions. His partners began to see his communication as more appropriate.
- Teaching a 24 year old with athetoid cerebral palsy to use partner focused questions meant that he became a more valued communication partner with those he regularly communicated with.



So how do I decide what's important in an AAC system?

 Beukelman (2004) wrote that "vocabulary selection in AAC can be viewed as the process of choosing a small list of words or items from a pool of all possibilities"



Choosing vocabulary for pre-literate individuals

- For people who are pre-literate those designing an AAC system face a hard task. Generally we consider there are two forms of vocabulary for this group – vocabulary that is needed to communicate essential messages and vocabulary to develop language (which includes small talk and narratives).
- Many people like to make this decision around core vocabulary ie words and messages which are commonly used and occur frequently. Small talk vocabulary fits well within these criteria.



Choosing vocabulary for non-literate individuals

 Aim to meet their daily, ongoing communication needs in a variety of environments.





Choosing vocabulary for literate individuals

 For literate individuals, they may need some phrases or words which need to be pre-stored for quick access either so they can participate in the conversation in a timely way or so they can reduce fatigue.



Do you wanna hear some more gossip?



Are you sure?

