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 Wikipage

- **Data Analysis:** To insure the rigor of qualitative research, we analyzed the data using four procedures recommended by Cresswell (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.
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.

RESULTS

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.
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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