

**Critical Review:
Variables Affecting Perceived Communicative Competence of Adult AAC Users**

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This critical review examined the variables affecting perceived communicative competence of adult AAC users. Study designs included three balanced incomplete block designs and one randomized block design. Variables examined included aided message length, partner reauditorization, observer background, speech output type, and pre-utterance pause length. Overall, the evidence from this review suggests that aided message length and pre-utterance pause length may influence perceptions of communicative competence. Recommendations for future research and clinical practice are provided.

Introduction

being functionally adequate in daily communication and of having sufficient knowledge, judgment, and

The perception of communicative competence is an important area of research because speech-language pathologists are often required to evaluate communicative competence in adult augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) users. To be a competent communicator, one must have the

skills. Without the opportunity to use those skills of judgment and knowledge, they will have limited function (Light and Gulens, 2000). Unfortunately, adults who are dependent on an AAC device for communication often are not given the opportunity to fully communicate and make decisions. The perception of communicative competence is an important consideration with regard to other individuals in the AAC social environment. If other individuals, such as family members, medical personnel and rehabilitation professionals incorrectly perceive an

than it actually is, they may preemptively make decisions for the individual and take communicative opportunities away from the AAC user (Light and Gulens, 2000). Thus, it is important to identify the factors

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intention), and observer background on perceptions of
communicative competence for adults using AAC.
Participants were divided into one of two groups to
study the impact of observer background on perceptions
of communicative competence. To be included in the
no educational or professional experiences related to

four subjects were assigned to the conditions with synthesized speech and the remaining 24 participants

Discussion

Three of the four articles were written by the same group of authors. Any biases or methodological weaknesses inherent in one of their studies may have influenced their subsequent studies. One strength of having the same group of authors work on multiple studies was that some of the weaknesses noted by these authors during the first study were addressed in their follow-up studies.

AAC Users Own Perceptions of Competence

The first two studies involved the perceptions of non-disabled individuals and one critique was that those studies should also address how AAC users or other individuals with disabilities would be affected by these variables (Bedrosian et al., 1998). However, a subsequent study, also included in this critical review, did investigate how these variables affect the perceptions of communicative competence AAC users themselves.

Variables

In the studies addressing the influence of aided message length there were two distinct levels, phrase and single word. The phrases level included just 2 to 4 lexical

<i>Bedrosian, J. L., Hoag, L. A., Calculator, S. N., & Molineux, B. (1992).</i>	Examined effects of aided message length, partner reauditorization, & observer background	2 groups of subjects – naïve adults with minimal exposure to nonspeaking persons and speech language pathologists currently working with AAC users	No appropriate questionnaires that evaluated communicative competence existed, therefore authors developed a 5-point Likert-type scale questionnaire	ANOVA was run on dependent variable (i.e., summation of subjects' ratings of AAC user on the 30 questionnaire items)	Sig interaction effect found b/w subject group and aided message length. Ratings by SLPs showed ratings for phrase vs. single word conditions. No sig dif b/w phrase conditions with naïve adults. No sig results found for partner feedback.
<i>Hoag, L. A., & Bedrosian J. L. (1992).</i>	Examined effects of speech output type, aided				