Title: Effects of Teaching Partner-focused Questions on the Communicative Competence of a Student with Cerebral Palsy

Since augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) system was introduced in South Korea in the early 1990s (Han, 1993, 1998; Park, 1992), tons of researches have been presented in Korea. AAC had an effect on communicative frequency and vocal imitation of nonverbal students with disabilities (Mun & Han, 2009; Jung & Han, 2012), AAC intervention was effective on the variety of communicative functions and the improvement of communicative behaviors (Kang & Han 2009; Kim & Park, 2001; Kim & Park, 2006), on the decreasing of behavior problems (Jung, & Han, 2012; Han & Maeng, 2003) and on the literacy students with severe disabilities (Kim, 2002; Sin & Han, 2009). To date, however, these researches have been only limited to investigate communicative functions and behaviors of AAC users. There has no research tried to investigate the socio-relational skills and their impact on communicative competence of AAC users in Korea.

By Light (1989), socio-relational skills was defined as such interpersonal communication skills as demonstrating an interest in others, responding to others, participating actively in conversations, putting others at ease, and so on. These socio-relational skills play a key role in the development of communicative competence and are developed through “other orientation” (Warrick, 1988). One way to demonstrate “other orientation” within communicative interactions is by asking partner-focused questions. By Light and Binger (1997), partner-focused questions are questions that an individual asks his or her communication partners about their thoughts, feelings, and experiences (e. g., “How are you?” “What did you do on the weekend?”, “What’s up?”). Asking partner-focused questions is a way for people who use AAC to engage communication partners in meaningful conversations that help foster positive social relationships.

Children who use AAC have limitation to use communicative skills to express interesting toward partner because they have limited vocabularies and have little interaction experience with other people. Usually, the interaction between AAC users and partners are asymmetrical process because of partner initiative conversation. Specially, the AAC interventions are still limited to increase some basic communicative skills like as requesting, rejecting, in Korea. Therefore, this study tried to investigate the effect of teaching partner-focused questions for a child who use AAC.

The purpose of this study was to verify teaching partner-focused questions on the communicative competence of a child with cerebral palsy. This study was undertaken with the following goals: (a) investigate the frequency of partner-focused questions of the child with cerebral palsy, (b) investigate the change of partner’s communicative interaction skills, (c) investigate the communicative functions of the child with cerebral palsy, and (d) investigate the communicative role of the child with cerebral palsy.

The research method is based on the multiple probe design across settings for a child with cerebral palsy in home, daycare center, and community cafe. An experiment was conducted by providing vocabulary acquisition training and teaching partner-focused questions by using script for 4 days per week in her daycare center. After making a video from natural activities with communicative partner for 20 minutes in her home, daycare center, and a community café, researchers collected the data, on the frequency of partner-focused questions of the child, the change of communicative interaction skills of communicative partner, the change in communicative function and the change in communicative role of the child. The child was seven year old girl with spastic cerebral palsy in a daycare center for children with disabilities. She has 61 IQ and five year old language equivalent age. The communicative partners were her sister in her home, a teacher in her daycare center, and a social welfare in the community café. She used KidsVoice (a Korean Voice Output Communication Aid) and communication board to
support the limitation of vocabularies at the KidsVoice. For teaching partner-focused questions to the child with cerebral palsy, two intervention methods were used. One was teaching partner-focused questions to the child through script and the other was training communicative partner to use communicative interaction skills for leading the partner-focused questions from the child using AAC. The communicative interaction skills which the communicative partners should use were “waiting with pause time”, “confirming child’s message”, and “asking or making some face for leading partner-focused questions form the child using AAC.” The results were as follows:

First, teaching partner-focused questions was effective on the increasing of partner-focused questions of the child with cerebral palsy. She did not know at all about partner-focused questions before intervention. Through the intervention, her partner-focused questions were increased in interaction with her sister at her home. Her partner-focused questions were increased at her daycare center and café, also even though the ratio was a little.

Second, two communication partners that is, her sister and her teacher used communicative interaction skills but the other partner used a little. Those skills were relation to the frequency of partner-focused questions of the child with cerebral palsy.

Third, while the child with cerebral palsy used partner-focused questions, her communicative functions were various. Specially, she expressed more comments, statements and advanced speech act functions in comparison with before.

Finally, the use of partner-focused questions had a positive effect on initiative communicative role of the child with cerebral palsy.

Even though the child with cerebral palsy showed the improvement of communicative functions and role after teaching partner-focused questions, the improvement was limited in the home. The child did not have active interesting about interaction with other people in other settings. This result might be explained by the opinion of Light and Binger (1998) that is, young children under age 10 are not expected to have developed the “other-orientation” skills to ask partner-focused questions yet.

REFERENCES:


