

AAC SUPPORTED SHARED READING IN PRIMARY PROGRESSIVE APHASIA

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Learning Objectives:

- Describe the rationale for integrating AAC supports within shared reading sessions for people with PPA.
- Identify strategies for personalizing AAC systems to support participation, comprehension, and emotional connection during shared reading.
- Discuss the benefits of personalizing shared reading materials and AAC support through a case discussion.



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The background of the slide features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of blue (light blue, medium blue, and dark blue) and white. The shapes create a dynamic, modern look with sharp angles and curved lines.

Primary progressive aphasia (PPA) is a neurodegenerative disease that gradually impairs language abilities, making communication and participation in daily interactions increasingly challenging. Although incurable, interventions that promote meaningful communication and social connection can help maintain engagement and quality of life.

Shared reading is a collaborative approach where the clinician and individual read and discuss a text together, using it to spark meaningful memories and discussion for engagement. The clinician follows the individual's lead in terms of what text and images are focused upon. This creates opportunities for natural conversation, reflection, and emotional expression. This activity could potentially benefit individuals with PPA by stimulating preserved language and cognitive networks, supporting comprehension through contextual cues and narrative exchange. When reading materials are personalized to reflect the individual's own life stories, interests, and experiences, the activity becomes a lived experience that the individual can potentially benefit from. This personalization increases engagement, helping to facilitate recall and participation. To maximize these benefits, Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) can be integrated within the shared reading experience. Programming personalized AAC systems with meaningful photos and contextual language support provides accessible ways for participants to express thoughts, make choices, ask questions, and share memories related to the shared reading text. Through this technical presentation, we aim to share how AAC-supported shared reading was implemented with an individual in the advanced stage of PPA (minimal spoken language). We will highlight strategies for personalizing AAC systems to complement shared reading materials and discuss clinical implications for increasing participation in this population support.

Speaker's Bio: Aleia J. Atherton is a graduate Speech-Language Pathology student at Misericordia University, expected graduation in May 2027. She is also a NSSLHA member. Aleia is working under the direction of Dr. Mamlekar. Through research experience, Aleia has developed an interest in neurogenic communication disorders and the use of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).

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Abigail R. Mosteller is an undergraduate Speech-Language Pathology student at Misericordia University, expected graduation in May 2028. She is also a NSSLHA member. Abigail is working under the direction of Dr. Mamlekar. Abigail is interested in neurogenic communication disorders and the use of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).

Amanda G. Prinzi is an undergraduate Speech-Language Pathology student at Misericordia University, expected graduation in May 2028. She is also a NSSLHA member. Amanda is working under the direction of Dr. Mamlekar. Amanda is interested in research related to neurologically based communication disorders and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).

Chitrani R. Mamlekar, Ph.D., CCC-SLP is an assistant professor who specializes in neurogenic communication disorders and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). Her primary research interest concerns designing and developing evaluation techniques for digital technology to make them truly accessible for people with neurogenic communication disorders and healthcare providers.

Kathleen Scaler Scott is a practicing speech-language pathologist, Board Certified Specialist in Stuttering, Cluttering and Fluency, and Professor of Speech-Language Pathology at Misericordia University in Dallas, PA, USA. She has been a practicing clinician for over 30 years in hospital, school, and private practice settings. She has a passion for helping caregivers to advocate for their needs.

Melissa A. Alunni is a speech-language pathologist, assistant professor and clinical supervisor at Misericordia University in Dallas, PA, USA. She has been a practicing clinician for over 20 years, working in outpatient, early intervention, long term care, assisted living, and home health settings. She strongly supports ongoing advocacy and educational support to clients, families, and interdisciplinary teams. She is passionate about combining specialized clinical practice and academic knowledge to provide quality supervision to students to best prepare them as future clinicians.