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- Anna Hartman, Rachel Nathan, Aarthi Madhavan, Nicole Etter, Krista Wilkinson



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- [Kearston Healey, Melissa Giomboni, Madelyn Stuart, Olivia Kiwak, Ella Burns](#)

# POSTER PRESENTATION COUNSELING TECHNIQUES IN THE TREATMENT OF MCI: SLPS' PERCEPTION



ASHA CE  
APPROVED PROVIDER

Pennsylvania  
Speech-Language-Hearing  
Association

Intermediate Level  
.025 ASHA CEUs

**JOLYNN G THOMAS, EDD, CCC-SLP, BC-ANCDS**

## Learning Objectives:

- Learner will identify three educational topics to support SLP treatment of the MCI population
- Learner will identify 3 components of a productive activity pattern to support brain health in the MCI population
- Learner will identify three opportunities to educate team and family members to maximize understanding of brain health



# POSTER ABSTRACT

This convergent mixed method study examines the current practices of speech language pathologists in the treatment of mild cognitive impairment (MCI), also known as mild neurocognitive disorder (NCD), and identifies perceived barriers and suggestions to support evidence-based treatment. A convenience sample of forty-three ASHA certified participants, who provide treatment to adults with neurogenic communication impairments, completed a survey related to demographics and current clinical practice. Various techniques are applied to analyze the data, identify themes and determine meta-inferences. Findings from this study found SLPs incorporating many vital aspects of evidence-based interventions, including compensatory strategy training and patient/caregiver education related to wellness and brain health. However, it also identifies reported barriers to include a lack of education and training of specific interventions related to counseling techniques, and the need for educational resources for patients and caregivers. This study contributes to current literature by identifying three main opportunities to enhance education. First quality educational opportunities for SLPs and incorporating current research and evidence-based practice into graduate programs. Secondly, educating providers and interprofessional team members regarding the role of the SLP, and finally utilizing quality educational resources for family and caregiver training.

# **AUTHOR BIO**

Jolynn Thomas EdD, CCC-SLP, BC-ANCDS is a clinical speech language pathologist with over 30 years' experience working with adolescents and adults with neurological speech, language, cognitive-communication and swallowing disorders. Dr. Thomas works clinically at Bryn Mawr Rehabilitation Hospital in Malvern, Pa and is an Assistant Professor at Delaware Valley University in the Graduate Speech Language Pathology Program. Clinical interest includes aphasia, motor speech disorders, and cognitive communication disorders and the impact of education and training to support maximal patient outcomes.

# **AUTHOR DISCLOSURES**

No Financial or Non-Financial Disclosures

# POSTER PRESENTATION LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SONGS AND FINGERPLAYS



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Pennsylvania  
Speech-Language-Hearing  
Association

Introductory Level

.025 ASHA CEUs

**MOLLY KLOSE, KATE MALAY,  
LAURA RICHARDSON**

## Learning Objectives:

- Describe the benefits of songs and fingerplays as a support for communication and relational development in early childhood.
- Describe the characteristics including types of songs and fingerplays, frequency of use of songs and fingerplays, and adaptations to songs and fingerplays currently used in a sample of video observations between infants and toddlers and their caregivers
- Recommend coaching practices and characteristics to improve use of songs and fingerplays and integration into daily routines for infants and toddlers and their caregivers



# POSTER ABSTRACT

Communication development in infants and toddlers happens when there is interaction (Pathways Organization, 2022).

Caregivers need to have daily interactions to expand their language, so their speech develops as they are able. There are different activities caregivers can use for this such as songs, rhymes, and finger plays (Kaiser, 2014). Songs are rhythmic and melodic music that caregivers often sing or play for infants and toddlers (Fahey et al., 2019). Rhymes are rhythmic patterns of phonemes, words, or alliterations, often repeating (Fahey et al., 2019). Fingerplays are physical hand motions or movements that are paired with the rhymes of songs (Fahey et al., 2019). Songs, rhymes, and fingerplays are important in exposing the child to the suprasegmentals of speech (pitch, intonation, melody, rhythm, etc.) (Fahey et al., 2019). Infants and toddlers are more receptive to the infant-directed (ID) singing that comes from these songs and fingerplays, specifically from a visual stimulus, where they can attend to facial expressions (Fahey et al., 2019). Given the potential importance of songs, rhymes, and fingerplays to communication development as well as their popularity with caregivers, this is investigating the following research question: What are the characteristics of songs, rhymes, and fingerplays preferred by caregivers and infants and toddlers that are supportive of communication development? The variables of interest include songs, rhymes, and fingerplays chosen by caregivers and their characteristics. The population of interest are caregiver-infant/toddler (children aged birth-3 years of age) dyads. The sample is being recruited nationally by allowing participants to upload videos to a private google drive account. We are aiming for 30-50 caregiver-infant dyads. This poster will focus on summarizing the characteristics of songs and fingerplays and interactions observed in the videos. Data collection will be complete in December 2025.

# AUTHOR BIOS

Molly Klose is a third year Communication Sciences and Disorders student at Lebanon Valley College (LVC) from Harrisburg, PA. Molly is very passionate about infant feeding and swallowing, as well as early intervention (EI) and pediatric language development. Along with her studies, she is a on the LVC Dance Team, holding an officer/captain role, as well as a member of LVC's National Student Speech Language Hearing Association (NSSLHA) and The Hidden Opponent (a student athlete mental health organization). Outside of school, she is a dance teacher at a local dance studio and loves sharing her joy for dance with her students.

Kate Malay is a third year Communication Sciences and Disorders major at Lebanon Valley College (LVC). Kate has had a passion for Speech Language Pathology since she was in middle school. She finds it very fulfilling to be able to see progress and help others improve their daily living. While she never received therapy, she recognizes how important it is. While attending LVC, she is part of LVC's National Student Speech Language Hearing Association (NSSLHA). When she is not on campus, she resides in Jim Thorpe, Pennsylvania, with her parents and brother. She has always had a job in customer service. However, this summer she started waitressing, allowing for to improve her teamwork and communication skills.

# AUTHOR DISCLOSURES

Kate has no personal or financial conflicts to disclose.

Laura has no personal or financial conflicts to disclose.

# POSTER PRESENTATION EXPLORING TELEPRACTICE COACHING WITH SPANISH- SPEAKING PARENTS AND AAC



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Association

Introductory Level

.025 ASHA CEUs

**JOSEPH SWINGLE, MS, ATACP, CCC-SLP**  
**CHERI DODGE-CHIN, MS, SLPD, CCC-SLP**  
**MELISSA HOY, MS, SLPD**

## Learning Objectives:

- Learner will describe how AAC communication partner strategies can be implemented within culturally diverse populations.
- Learner will describe how AAC can be used to support early literacy skills within culturally diverse populations.
- Learner will connect established evidence-based practices in AAC from mainstream populations to culturally diverse populations.



# POSTER ABSTRACT

Exploring telepractice coaching for Spanish-speaking parents of children with complex communication needs (CCN). Design: Randomized, nonconcurrent, multiple baseline across participants. Participants: Spanish-speaking parents of children (aged 3;0–12;11) with CCN. Intervention: Telepractice coaching related to Leer, Preguntar, Contestar (based on Read, Ask, Answer) during storybook interactions.

## AUTHOR BIOS

Joseph M. Swingle is an Assistant Professor at Albizu University and a bilingual Speech Language Pathologist and AT/AAC Specialist. He holds the SLP license and teaching credentials in California, Florida, Pennsylvania, and Nevada. He holds the ASHA CCC and the ATACP certification from CSUN. He holds a Bachelor's degree from Marywood University, Scranton, PA, and a Master's degree from CSUN, Northridge, CA. He is completing the final requirements for the SLPD degree at Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions, Provo, UT. His clinical and research focus includes AAC and Cultural and Linguistic Diversity. He is a member of USSAAC, ISAAC, CSHA, PSHA, FLASHA, ASHA, and multiple ASHA Special Interest Groups.

Dr. Cheri Dodge Chin is a published researcher, adjunct professor, and national presenter. She holds a clinical doctorate in speech-language pathology and an Ed.D. She has over 20 years of experience in empowering children, educators, and families.

Dr. Melissa Hoy is a speech language pathologist with over 15 years of experience working with children and adults with various communication and swallowing disorders. She has experience and a special interest in working with families and other individuals interested in AAC, including ways to implement an AAC device and teach language.

# **AUTHOR DISCLOSURES**

Joseph Swingle is a full-time Assistant Professor at Albizu University and is a member of USSAAC, ISAAC, CSHA, PSHA, FLASHA, ASHA, and multiple ASHA Special Interest Groups.

Dr. Cheri Dodge Chin does not have any disclosures

Dr. Hoy is an employee of PRC-Salttillo.

# POSTER PRESENTATION ADAPTATION OF ABSTRACT SEMANTIC ASSOCIATIVE NETWORK TRAINING TO THE PERSIAN



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Pennsylvania  
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Association

Introductory Level

.025 ASHA CEUs

**FARANAK KIANFAR M.A,M.A.S**  
**CHALEECE SANDBERG PHD CCC-SLP**

## Learning Objectives:

- Describe the principles of semantic-based treatment approaches for anomia and the role of abstract word training in aphasia rehabilitation.
- Identify strategies for developing culturally and linguistically appropriate therapy materials for bilingual individuals with aphasia.
- Analyze how cultural relevance and concreteness influence category selection and treatment planning in bilingual aphasia therapy.



# POSTER ABSTRACT

Most anomia therapies target concrete words, but AbSANT, a semantic-based approach, focuses on abstract word retrieval and generalizes to concrete words (Sandberg et al., 2023; Kiran, Sandberg, & Abbott, 2009). Its bilingual version, BAbSANT, has been adapted to multiple languages (Sandberg et al., 2021). No treatments specifically target abstract words in Persian-speaking people with aphasia (PWA). This study developed culturally and linguistically appropriate materials for Persian BAbSANT.

Methods: 28 native Persian-speaking adults (ages 23–66) participated. Ten thematic categories were selected. Participants generated abstract and concrete words within 2 minutes per category and rated cultural relevance on a five-point scale.

Abstract-to-concrete ratios were calculated using English translations (Brysbaert et al., 2014). Results: Participants produced 25.5–37.1 words per category, with at least four participants generating  $\geq 45$  words. A slight, non-significant negative correlation was found between word count and cultural relevance ( $r = -0.12$ ,  $p = 0.72$ ). Categories with high relevance ( $\geq 4.0$ ) included Wedding, Holiday, School, and Home. Abstract-to-concrete ratios ranged from 25% to 82%. Conclusions: Findings support the suitability of these categories for Persian BAbSANT materials. While cultural relevance was not related to word production, results highlight the importance of semantically based therapies tailored to language rather than direct

translation. References: Brysbaert, M., Warriner, A. B., & Kuperman, V. (2014). *Behavior Research Methods*, 46(3), 904–911. Kiran, S., Sandberg, C., & Abbott, K. (2009). *Aphasiology*, 23(7–8), 835–853. Lupyan, G., & Winter, B. (2018). *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*, 373(1752), 20170137. Sandberg, C. W., Khorassani, H., Gray, T., & Dickey, M. W. (2023). *Frontiers in Rehabilitation Sciences*, 4. Sandberg, C. W., Zacharewicz, M., & Gray, T. (2021). *Journal of Communication Disorders*, 93, 106143.

# AUTHOR BIOS

Faranak Kianfar is a Ph.D. student in Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD) at Penn State University. She is a graduate assistant in the SANDLab (Semantics, Aphasia, and Neural Dynamics Laboratory).

Her expertise is in the areas of bilingualism, cognitive control, and neurological language disorders. Her research focuses on how cognitive control functions in bilingual adults with and without language disorders and how this knowledge can support the development of effective, technology-based treatments.

Chaleece W. Sandberg is an Associate Professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders, Linguistics, and Neuroscience at Penn State.

She is director of the SANDLab (semantics, aphasia, and neural dynamics laboratory). Her expertise is in the areas of aphasia, semantics, and neuroimaging. Her research focuses on optimizing anomia treatment, including bilingual treatment, in aphasia. She is also interested in improving whole person rehabilitative care for people with aphasia in the areas of mental health and exercise.

## AUTHOR DISCLOSURES

Faranak is a graduate assistant

Dr. Sandberg is employed by Penn State. I am an associate editor at the Journal of Communication disorders, for which I receive a small stipend. I am a member of the Academy of Aphasia and Collaboration of Aphasia Trialists and serve as co-lead of a working group for the Aphasia Psychological Care Research Network.

# POSTER PRESENTATION

## TEACHERS PERCEPTIONS ON THE ROLE OF SLP'S IN READING INTERVENTION



ASHA CE  
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Pennsylvania  
Speech-Language-Hearing  
Association

Introductory Level

.025 ASHA CEUs

**JAIME HENRY, MS, CCC-SLP**

### Learning Objectives:

- Participants will be able to describe how K–12 teachers perceive the role of speech-language pathologists (SLPs) in supporting reading development, as informed by qualitative findings and Vygotsky’s Social Development Theory.
- Participants will be able to identify barriers and facilitators to effective collaboration between teachers and SLPs in literacy instruction across elementary, middle, and high school settings.
- Participants will be able to apply evidence-informed recommendations to enhance interprofessional collaboration, shared goal setting, and integration of language-based literacy strategies within school reading programs.



# ABSTRACT

School reading outcomes hinge on effective collaboration between classroom teachers and speech-language pathologists (SLPs), yet the SLP's role in literacy is often inconsistently understood. This qualitative study explores K–5 teachers' perceptions of SLP contributions to reading development, the conditions that enable or hinder collaboration, and implications for practice. Guided by Vygotsky's Social Development Theory, we are conducting semi-structured Zoom interviews (30–45 minutes) with purposively sampled certified teachers who (a) teach literacy and (b) have collaborated with a school-based SLP (target  $N \approx 3–5$  for a pilot). Audio-recorded interviews are professionally transcribed and analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis with an iterative codebook. Trustworthiness procedures include member checking, peer debriefing, and an audit trail. Preliminary themes expected for presentation include (1) role clarity and perceived boundaries of SLP practice in decoding, language comprehension, and progress monitoring; (2) collaboration structures (shared planning time, data exchange, co-teaching routines); (3) capacity constraints (caseloads, scheduling, service delivery models); and (4) professional learning needs around language underpinnings of reading and IEP alignment. The poster will translate findings into actionable recommendations for districts—e.g., common language for goals, brief co-planning protocols, and feasible progress-monitoring touchpoints—to strengthen teacher–SLP partnerships and support equitable literacy outcomes across elementary, middle, and high school settings.

# **AUTHOR BIO**

Jaime Henry has been in the field of speech pathology for 15 years. She is currently pursuing a PhD from Concordia University of Chicago in Reading, Language, and Literacy. Jaime is experienced in both school and private practice settings.

# **AUTHOR DISCLOSURES**

No Financial or Non-Financial Disclosures

# POSTER PRESENTATION DISCLOSURE OF COMMUNICATION DISORDER DIAGNOSES: THE PARENT PERSPECTIVE



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Pennsylvania  
Speech-Language-Hearing  
Association

Introductory Level

.025 ASHA CEUs

**KATHERINE WARNER, PHD, CCC-SLP**  
**JANE SWEENEY, PT, PHD, MS, FAPTA**  
**LINDA SPENCER, PHD**

**DEBBIE EVANS-ROGERS, PT, MS, PHD, PCS, C/NDT**  
**Learning Objectives:**

- Summarize the challenges that parents of children with communication disorders face during the diagnostic process
- Discuss the importance of using optimistic and strengths-based language when disclosing a communication disorder diagnosis to parents
- List practical strategies speech-language pathologists may use to meet the informational and emotional needs of parents of children with communication disorders at the time of diagnosis



# ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** To examine the experiences of parents after receiving news of their child's speech or language disorder diagnosis from a speech-language pathologist (SLP).

**Method:** A descriptive phenomenological approach was used to explore eight parents' lived experiences of receiving news of their child's speech or language disorder diagnosis. Codes were generated from in-depth interviews, organized into themes, and confirmed through peer debriefing.

**Results:** The following themes emerged from the data analysis: (1) parents wanted more information from the SLP during the diagnostic process, (2) parents encountered difficult thoughts and emotions related to their child's speech or language impairment, (3) parents emphasized the importance of establishing an early personal connection with the SLP (4) SLPs' words influenced how parents felt about the diagnosis, (5) parents valued an early diagnosis, and (6) parents expended considerable time and effort during the diagnostic process.

**Conclusion:** This study provided valuable insight into parents' needs and preferences regarding disclosure of a speech or language disorder diagnosis in pediatric clinical practice. Parents experienced grief, guilt, and worry related to their child's communication disorder. Attention to parent emotions and the provision of thorough, hopeful diagnostic disclosure conversations by SLPs are necessary to support positive therapeutic relationships.

# AUTHOR BIOS

Katherine Warner, PhD, CCC-SLP, is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at La Salle University. Her research interests include counseling in speech-language pathology, caregiver stress and coping, and the parent-clinician therapeutic relationship. She currently teaches didactic and clinical practicum coursework to undergraduate and graduate students

Jane K. Sweeney PhD, PT, MS, FAPTA, founded the Pediatric Science Doctoral Programs, Rocky Mountain University of Health Sciences, Provo, UT and first accredited Physical Therapy Neonatology Fellowship in the US. Her professional degrees include BA from University of the Pacific, MS from Colorado State University, and PhD from University of Washington. She is a Mary Switzer Distinguished Research Fellow of the National Institute for Disability and Rehabilitation Research and a Catherine Worthingham Fellow of the American Physical Therapy Association.

Dr. Spencer received her Ph.D. in Speech and Hearing Science from the University of Iowa. She was a research scientist on an NIH-funded Grant in the department of Otolaryngology at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics for fifteen years. She served as the program director at NMSU and then became the founding program director for the Medical Speech-Language Pathology at Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions. She retired from that position in the Fall of 2024 and returned to NMSU to continue as a college professor. Her research interests include the development of speech, language, and literacy in children who have profound hearing loss. She teaches courses in phonetics, aural rehabilitation, and language development.

Debbie Evans-Rogers, PT, PhD, PCS, C/NDT, is a pediatric physical therapist with specialization in assessment, treatment and research in children with neuromotor involvement. She is an NDTA Coordinator Instructor and teaches certification courses and seminars in the US and Internationally for NDTA. She has worked in a variety of clinical settings including private practice, schools, early intervention, home health, acute care, NICU, and outpatient hospital settings. She received her PhD in Pediatric Science from Rocky Mountain University in Provo, Utah and published her research In Pediatric Physical Therapy. She continues to teach for RMU and serves as a qualitative research expert on many students' research committees.

# AUTHOR DISCLOSURES

Katherine Warner has no relevant relationships to disclose.

Jane Sweeney has no relevant relationships to disclose.

Linda Spencer has no relevant relationships to disclose.

Debbie Evans-Rogers has no relevant relationships to disclose.

# POSTER PRESENTATION

## BEYOND THE BOOTH: HEARING AID REALITIES IN SENIOR LIVING



**ASHA CE**  
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Pennsylvania  
Speech-Language-Hearing  
Association

Introductory Level  
.025 ASHA CEUs

**HELENE YERGER**  
**SUSAN DILLMUTH-MILLER, , AU.D, CCC-A**

### Learning Objectives:

- Identify common barriers to optimal hearing aid use
- Recognize the importance of routine follow-up care
- Describe how to perform a basic listening check and troubleshooting of hearing aids



# ABSTRACT

What does hearing aid use in elderly patients really look like after the patient leaves the clinic? How are devices worn, maintained, and features understood in everyday life? In Fall 2025, a Communication Sciences and Disorders student undertook a five-week internship at a senior living facility, focusing on the real-world use and maintenance of hearing aids among older adults. Once a week, she met with a group of 19 residents, aged 72 to 100, who volunteered for brief hearing aid checks and otoscopy. Her routine consisted of assessing whether the device was worn and properly fitted, guiding the resident in removing it, performing otoscopy, cleaning the device, and evaluating its function using a stethoclip. The sessions often concluded with a Q and session. Findings will be shared.

## AUTHOR BIOS

Helene Yerger, senior in the Communication Sciences and Disorders program at East Stroudsburg University, Vice President of Sigma Phi Omega, a gerontology honors fraternity. She has been on the Dean's List during her time at East Stroudsburg. Additionally, she has been an active member in the Sign Language Club and NSSLHA since 2023 and Hear4U since 2025. She is pursuing a career in audiology and has completed a semester internship at a senior living home for her concentration in gerontology.

Dr. Susan Dillmuth-Miller is a professor at East Stroudsburg University. She has practiced as an audiologist for over 30 years. She is the advisor for the Gerontology Concentration and for Sigma Phi Omega, the honors Gerontology fraternity. She has internationally presented on hearing loss.

## AUTHOR DISCLOSURES

Neither author has any financial or non-financial disclosures

# POSTER PRESENTATION SLP GRADUATE STUDENT & SUPERVISOR PERSPECTIVES ON ESSENTIAL CLINICAL TRAITS



**ASHA CE**  
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**VICTORIA SLUSARK**  
**ERIN ROBERTS, M.S. CCC-SLP**  
**MICHAELA RAUB, B.S.**  
**SARA LOMBARDI, B.S**  
**KARA THOUROT, B.S..**

## Learning Objectives:

- Participants will identify traits associated with clinical success and the limitations of findings from previous research.
- Participants will summarize key traits ranked by participants from each group.
- Participants will compare graduate students' and supervisors' perspectives to inform future clinical education.



# ABSTRACT

Graduate Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) programs have the responsibility to prepare their students for academic and clinical demands outlined in the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association's (ASHA) Code of Ethics (2023). Defining the skills and demands necessary for clinical success, however, has been a challenge, as study results have been inconsistent. Bryne (2017) and Richardson et al. (2020), for example, used personality assessments (e.g., Big Five, MBTI) to evaluate graduate students but found no correlation between traits and clinical success. Other studies highlighted traits such as empathy, patience, and flexibility (Ebert & Kohnert, 2010), as well as executive functioning (Roitsch et al., 2020), anxiety (Tan et al., 2004), and grit (Valley et al., 2018), but findings remain varied and inconclusive, suggesting the need for further investigation. This study aimed to examine the traits graduate SLP students and supervisors believe are necessary for clinical success. Phase one involved an open-ended pilot survey that was qualitatively analyzed for common traits. Phase two was a national rank-choice survey, allowing graduate students to rank traits in order of importance and suggest additional traits they deemed necessary. Phase three was the same national rank-choice survey distributed instead to clinical supervisors from ASHA-accredited universities. The results were qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed, with traits such as empathy and communication skills among the top performers. A comparison between the rankings of graduate students and clinical supervisors will be discussed to inform clinical education needs moving forward. The combined findings from these phases will ultimately have the potential to offer important insights for graduate programs to improve their professional training, as well as align clinical curriculum with supervisor expectations.

# AUTHOR BIOS

Victoria Slusark is an undergraduate student at Misericordia University. She has completed research studies in the areas of Socially Assistive Robotics (SAR) and Gestalt Language Processing (GLP) in the field of speech-language pathology and has presented findings at national conferences.

Erin Roberts is an assistant professor in the department of Speech-Language Pathology at Misericordia University, as well as a doctoral student at Johns Hopkins University studying Mind, Brain, and Teaching. She has completed various research studies in neuroimaging, motor learning, voice, fluency, and clinical education, and has presented findings at state, national, and international conferences. Erin was also awarded Best Poster at the 2015 Fall Voice Conference.

Michaela is a graduate student at Misericordia University. She has completed research studies regarding learning and Socially Assistive Robotics (SAR) in the field of speech language pathology, and has presented findings at state, national, and international conferences.

Sara Lombardi is a graduate student at Misericordia University. She has worked on research studies regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion, socially assistive robotics, and learning in the field of speech-language pathology. She has presented findings at state, national, and international conferences.

Kara is a graduate student at Misericordia University. She has completed research studies regarding learning and Socially Assistive Robotics (SAR) in the field of speech-language pathology and has presented findings at state, national, and international conferences.

# AUTHOR DISCLOSURES

No authors have any financial or non-financial disclosures

# POSTER PRESENTATION

## A SCOPING REVIEW OF TREATMENT METHODS FOR AUTISTIC CLIENTS USING ECHOLALIA



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Introductory Level  
.025 ASHA CEUs

**ERIN ROBERTS, M.S. CCC-SLP**  
**KARA THOUROT, B.S**  
**MICHAELA RAUB, B.S.**  
**SARA LOMBARDI, B.S**  
**VICTORIA SLUSARK**  
**GABRIELLA DOBEK.**

### Learning Objectives:

- Describe the history of treatment with echolalia in individuals with ASD
- Identify current evidence based practices for treatment approaches for echolalia.
- Recognize the gaps in literature regarding treatment methods for echolalia as well as directions for future research.



# AUTHOR BIOS

Erin Roberts is an assistant professor in the department of Speech-Language Pathology at Misericordia University, as well as a doctoral student at Johns Hopkins University studying Mind, Brain, and Teaching. She has completed various research studies in neuroimaging, motor learning, voice, fluency, and clinical education, and has presented findings at state, national, and international conferences. Erin was also awarded Best Poster at the 2015 Fall Voice Conference.

Michaela is a graduate student at Misericordia University. She has completed research studies regarding learning and Socially Assistive Robotics (SAR) in the field of speech language pathology, and has presented findings at state, national, and international conferences.

Sara Lombardi is a graduate student at Misericordia University. She has worked on research studies regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion, socially assistive robotics, and learning in the field of speech-language pathology. She has presented findings at state, national, and international conferences.

Kara is a graduate student at Misericordia University. She has completed research studies regarding learning and Socially Assistive Robotics (SAR) in the field of speech-language pathology and has presented findings at state, national, and international conferences.

Victoria Slusark is an undergraduate student at Misericordia University. She has completed research studies in the areas of Socially Assistive Robotics (SAR) and Gestalt Language Processing (GLP) in the field of speech-language pathology and has presented findings at national conferences.

Gabriella Dobek is an undergraduate student at Misericordia University. She has completed research studies in the area of Gestalt Language Processing (GLP) in the field of speech-language pathology.

# AUTHOR DISCLOSURES

No authors have any financial or non-financial disclosures

# POSTER PRESENTATION SIGN LANGUAGE AND SPEECH DEVELOPMENT: WHAT IS THE IMPACT FOR DEAF/HH



**ASHA CE**  
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Pennsylvania  
Speech-Language-Hearing  
Association

Introductory Level

.025 ASHA CEUs

**EMILY LEVERING**  
**DR. SUSAN DILLMUTH-MILLER AU.D CCC-A..**

## Learning Objectives:



- Summarize current evidence from research on the relationship between ASL use and spoken language outcomes.
- Explain how sign language variations affect research outcomes.
- Discuss differences in study design that will influence research outcomes.

# ABSTRACT

Does American Sign Language (ASL) as the primary communication method for Deaf/ Hard of Hearing (DHH) children affect spoken language development? This is a question that remains highly debated in speech and hearing professions, and the Deaf community (Pontecorvo et.al 2023). While some argue that early reliance on sign language may hinder spoken language acquisition (Champoux et.al 2009), others emphasize its value as a strong linguistic foundation (Fitzpatrick et.al 2016). To address this debate, the presentation will review published findings within the last two decades on the relationship between sign language use and spoken language outcomes in deaf and hard-of-hearing children. Champoux, F., Lepore, F., Gagné, J. P., & Théoret, H. (2009). Visual stimuli can impair auditory processing in cochlear implant users. *Neuropsychologia*, 47(1), 17–22. Fitzpatrick, E. M., Hamel, C., Stevens, A., Pratt, M., Moher, D., Doucet, S. P., Neuss, D., Bernstein, A., & Na, E. (2016). Sign language and spoken language for children with hearing loss: A systematic review. *Pediatrics*, 137(1), Article e20151974. Pontecorvo, E., Higgins, M., Mora, J., Lieberman, A. M., Pyers, J., & Caselli, N. K. (2023). Learning a sign language does not hinder acquisition of a spoken language. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 66(4), 1291–1308. [https://doi.org/10.1044/2022\\_JSLHR-22-00505](https://doi.org/10.1044/2022_JSLHR-22-00505)

# **AUTHOR BIOS**

Emily Levering is currently a senior studying Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences at East Stroudsburg University. In the fall, she will be starting the ESU graduate program in Speech-Language Pathology. She is currently serving as an executive officer for the ESU Sign Language Club at ESU for the second year. She attends local Deaf social events frequently, and has taken both ASL1 and ASL2. She has completed the course, “Assistive Technology for the Hard of Hearing” and currently serves as a tutor for hearing-related courses as well as others.

Dr. Dillmuth-Miller is a professor in the Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences Department. She has been a clinical audiologist for over 30 years. She holds a minor in Deaf Education and has worked as an educational audiologist and presented internationally on educational audiology topics. She advises the ESU sign language club, attends local Deaf events, and is fluent in American Sign Language.

# **AUTHOR DISCLOSURES**

No authors have any financial or non-financial disclosures

# POSTER PRESENTATION NATIVE TONAL LANGUAGE SPEAKERS ABILITY TO PERCEIVE ENGLISH PROSODY



ASHA CE  
APPROVED PROVIDER

Pennsylvania  
Speech-Language-Hearing  
Association

Introductory Level  
.025 ASHA CEUs

**ANNA THANASI B.A**  
**JING SHEN PH.D.**

## Learning Objectives:

- Learners should be able to explain the significance of linguistic prosody perception abilities in daily communication.
- Learners should be able to explain the importance of researching patient populations with diverse language backgrounds.
- Learners should be able to describe the two contrasting theories of second language prosody acquisition.



# ABSTRACT

Prosody plays a critical role in speech perception. It is made up of patterns of stress and intonation that for English speakers, can be used to resolve lexical ambiguities and convey information. However, while perception of English prosody has been studied on native English speakers, not much research has been done to see how different language backgrounds can shape the perception of English prosody. This project focuses on the perception of tone language speakers in particular. There is a debate in the literature on whether tonal language speakers would have an advantage or disadvantage when perceiving English prosody. A language advantage hypothesis proposes that the heightened pitch perception which is required of a native tonal language speaker in their L1 would carry over into their English L2, giving them a perceptual advantage for English prosody. Conversely, disadvantage hypotheses have been proposed due to either lack of English language experience or negative language transfer from the L1 negatively affecting perception. We hypothesize that native tone language speakers will have an advantage over monolingual English speakers in the perception of English prosody because of a transfer of pitch perception abilities required for the perception of segmental cues in their tone language. This project tests the hypothesis by assessing the performance of native tonal language speakers in a prosody discrimination task and comparing them to native English-speaking monolinguals. It contributes to a growing body of research that improves our understanding of language transfer, as well as non-native English speakers' English language abilities. In a diversifying America, this research will inform speech language pathologists and audiologists on the prosody perception abilities of a growing population who speak English as a second language and can advise education and treatment plans that will better support this population.

# **AUTHOR BIOS**

Anna Thanasi is a first-year graduate student attending Drexel University's Doctor of Audiology program. She graduated from Temple University with a B.A. in Speech, Language, and Hearing Science. She worked as an undergraduate research assistant and English language tutor throughout her undergraduate studies. This work led to an interest in bilingual language acquisition and language transfer in non-native English speakers. Anna hopes to graduate, become an Audiologist, and pursue a PhD, researching to understand and treat a growing multilingual population.

Jing Shen is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at Temple University. She received her Ph.D. in Experimental Psychology from University of California, San Diego and completed her postdoctoral training in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at Northwestern University. Her research interests include perceptual and cognitive mechanisms in speech perception; the impact of hearing loss and cognitive aging on older adults' speech communication, particularly under challenging conditions. Dr. Shen is a member of the American Auditory Society and the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

# **AUTHOR DISCLOSURES**

Anna Thanasi received a 2025 ASHA SPARC award which granted her award money to conduct the study that is being presented.

Jing has no financial or non-financial disclosures

# POSTER PRESENTATION

## AUTONOMY WITH ALIGNMENT: STANDARDIZING EXPECTATIONS IN SUPERVISION



ASHA CE  
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Pennsylvania  
Speech-Language-Hearing  
Association

Introductory Level

.025 ASHA CEUs

**SARAH MOREAU M.A., CCC-SLP**

### Learning Objectives:

- Identify common barriers to effective clinical supervisor onboarding and their impact on student clinical experiences.
- Recognize core elements of orientation modules that balance program standardization with individual supervisor autonomy.
- Explain how asynchronous training models can enhance supervisor engagement and preparedness.



# ABSTRACT

University speech-language pathology graduate programs rely on clinical supervisors who bring valuable expertise but varied backgrounds, philosophies, and supervision styles. Formal supervisor onboarding is often abbreviated due to time constraints, despite the breadth and complexity of information that must be addressed. This can result in inconsistent expectations, uneven student experiences, and uncertainty regarding program procedures. Clinical education programs must balance two priorities: establishing shared standards while respecting the professional autonomy of experienced supervisors. This poster describes the development and implementation of structured Supervisor Orientation Modules created to address this challenge at West Chester University. Faculty possess deep knowledge and teach current evidence-based practices, yet previously lacked systematic ways to share this information with clinical supervisors who guide students in diverse settings. The modules bridge this gap by aligning classroom learning with clinical practice while honoring supervisor autonomy. Module components include brief videos featuring faculty expertise, evidence-based assessment and treatment frameworks, and key research in major content areas. Materials are housed on a centralized online platform (D2L). Supervisors complete modules asynchronously and attest to participation, creating common expectations without constraining individual supervisory styles. This design particularly supports supervisors working outside their primary areas of expertise. Implementation strategies, communication processes, and ongoing support structures are outlined to support replication in other programs. Practical tools will be shared to help programs strengthen connections between academic and clinical education. Learners will gain actionable strategies for building supervisory systems that are aligned, flexible, and supportive of both students and supervisors.

# **AUTHOR BIOS**

Sarah Moreau, M.A., CCC-SLP, is Assistant Professor and Director of Clinical Education at West Chester University, where she teaches at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. In her role as Director of Clinical Education, she focuses on strengthening the connection between academic preparation and clinical practice through thoughtful supervisor development and collaboration. Sarah is committed to creating systems that support consistency and shared understanding while respecting the professional judgment and expertise of clinical supervisors. Her work emphasizes practical approaches to supervision, from onboarding and communication to ongoing professional development, that can be implemented effectively in real-world settings. Additionally, Sarah maintains an active clinical presence specializing in pediatric feeding disorders, bringing real-world insight into the competencies students need.

# **AUTHOR DISCLOSURES**

Sarah Moreau receives payment from West Chester University as the Director of Clinical Education

# POSTER PRESENTATION CREATIVE ARTS GROUP FOR PEOPLE WITH COMMUNICATION DISORDERS POST-STROKE



ASHA CE  
APPROVED PROVIDER

Pennsylvania  
Speech-Language-Hearing  
Association

Introductory Level  
.025 ASHA CEUs

**JOANNE NIEMKIEWICZ PHD, CCC-SLP**  
**ALYSSA FITZGERALD M.S. CF-SLP**

## Learning Objectives:

- Discuss the unmet psychosocial needs of individuals with communication disorders post-stroke.
- Explain the benefits of creative arts and group interventions on psychosocial factors and functional communication for individuals with communication disorders post-stroke.
- Develop a creative arts group to target psychosocial factors and functional communication for individuals with communication disorders post-stroke.



# ABSTRACT

Adults with communication disorders following stroke experience mental health difficulties that are not always met. This is a multifactorial issue that may be caused, in part, by a limited ability to express abstract concepts and the stigma surrounding mental health services. Preliminary studies have shown that both artmaking and group therapy have the potential to mitigate these barriers by offering an alternative communication modality via artmaking and community and acceptance through the group therapy service delivery model. This study examined the feasibility of a creative arts group designed to simultaneously improve psychosocial factors and functional communication post-stroke. Six participants with communication disorders (i.e., aphasia and/or motor speech disorders) completed six group therapy sessions focused on post-traumatic identity and growth including creative arts as an expressive modality. During treatment, the participants discussed and explored three themes (i.e., expression of self-identity, personal experiences related to communication impairments, goals for the future) using a variety of artistic modalities. A mixed-methods analysis revealed improvements in measures of communication efficiency, quality of life, mood, and self-confidence following the course of group therapy. These results suggest that creative arts group therapy can have a positive impact on both functional communication and psychosocial factors in individuals with communication disorders post-stroke. In this presentation, the authors will discuss the clinical implications of the results and the logistics of running a creative arts group for this population, and we will showcase examples of the participants' art-pieces to illustrate the communicative value these pieces hold.

# **AUTHOR BIOS**

Dr. Joanne Niemkiewicz is an assistant professor and speech-language pathologist at DeSales University specializing in the areas of acquired neurogenic communication disorders. Dr. Niemkiewicz received her Ph.D. in Communication Sciences and Disorders and Language Science from Pennsylvania State University. Her research focuses on interprofessional approaches to promote holistic care for people with aphasia, including the restorative effects of AAC and the effects of interprofessional education and practice on mental health outcomes for people with aphasia.

Alyssa Fitzgerald graduated from DeSales University in 2024 with a MS in SLP. She is currently completing her clinical fellowship at a skilled nursing facility called Trinity Rehabilitation. Her research interests include alternative treatment approaches for adults with acquired communication disorders to address functional communication and psychosocial health.

# **AUTHOR DISCLOSURES**

Joanne Niemkiewicz has no relevant relationships to disclose.

Alyssa Fitzgerald has no relevant relationships to disclose.

# POSTER PRESENTATION CREATIVE ARTS GROUP FOR PEOPLE WITH COMMUNICATION DISORDERS POST-STROKE



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Speech-Language-Hearing  
Association

Introductory Level

.025 ASHA CEUs

**NAOMI FOSSA, BA, TAYLOR SEYMOUR, BA  
AND SUSAN DILLMUTH-MILLER, AUD**

## Learning Objectives:

- Understand the importance of preschool hearing screenings for supporting children's speech, language, and educational outcomes.
- Describe recommended hearing screening protocols (American Academy of Audiology guidelines), including the benefits of following standardized procedures and making appropriate, separate referrals to medical providers and audiology when indicated.
- Explain the significance of effective parent/caregiver communication and identify practical strategies to improve follow-through with recommendations and support carryover across settings.



# ABSTRACT

Early childhood hearing screenings are necessary in identifying and preventing early audiological disorders and hearing loss. Children from birth to 5 years old are in what is referred to as the 'critical period' of language learning, where intact hearing is essential for children to detect the speech sounds of their native language in order to build the foundation for later language learning. Early childhood hearing screenings are of great concern to speech language pathologists, educators, and audiologists, as many speech and language disorders and educational delays are due to disordered hearing during early childhood. Essential factors in the identification and treatment of early childhood hearing loss and speech-language delays are follow through and carryover from parents after recommendations have been made. This retrospective study seeks to report on pass and referral rates on ESU's preschool hearing screening program, and analyze parental follow up on recommendations. We will identify ways to improve pass, refer, and follow up rates on future hearing screenings.

# **AUTHOR BIOS**

Naomi Fossa is a first year student at East Stroudsburg University in the Speech- Language Pathology graduate program. She completed her Bachelor's degree at East Stroudsburg University in the Communication Sciences and Disorders program, and her Associate's degree at Northampton Community College. Naomi is passionate about working with the pediatric population as it provides the opportunity to impact a child's success and well-being across their entire lifespan by providing support during critical points in development. Her work as a graduate assistant involves coordinating the preschool hearing screenings for ESU Preschool Hearing Screening program.

Taylor Seymour is a graduate student at East Stroudsburg University in the Speech-Language Pathology program. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders at East Stroudsburg University. Taylor is especially drawn to working with the pediatric population because it allows her to build early communication skills and practical everyday skills that can improve a child's overall quality of life. In her role as a graduate assistant, she conducts speech and hearing screening programs. Additionally, Taylor works as a Speech-Language Pathology Assistant, acquiring practical clinical experience.

Susan Dillmuth-Miller, Au.D. is a professor in the Speech Pathology Graduate Program at East Stroudsburg University. She has practiced audiology for over 30 years and runs the ESU hearing clinic and hearing screening program.

# **AUTHOR DISCLOSURES**

No authors have any relevant relationships to disclose.

# POSTER PRESENTATION SUPPORTING CLINICAL FELLOWS THROUGH A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE MODEL



**ASHA CE**  
**APPROVED PROVIDER**

Pennsylvania  
Speech-Language-Hearing  
Association

Introductory Level

.025 ASHA CEUs

**BRIANNA GAUNT MA CCC-SLP**  
**AMY KELLEY MS CCC-SLP**

## Learning Objectives:

- Learn what current new graduate CF-SLPs are looking for in a Clinical Fellowship Experience
- Identify the framework of a Community of Practice model
- Describe applicable strategies to support new graduate CF-SLPs in your setting



# ABSTRACT

ASHA's Certification of Clinical Competence was established in 1993 along with the initial definition of a Clinical Fellow. While standards have been updated, the definition of a Clinical Fellow has remained. Our field and scope of practice has a dynamic history, which includes the evolving needs of new graduates entering the Clinical Fellowship experience. These new needs yield introspection in mentorship approaches and styles to further the goal of supporting competent, independent clinicians entering the field as CCC-SLPs. A Community of Practice model is one strategy that bridges the gap between current CF-SLP and mentors to produce clinicians who feel ready to confidently enter the field.

# **AUTHOR BIOS**

Brianna received her Bachelor's degree in Communication Science and Disorders from the University of Pittsburgh and her Master's degree in Speech Language Hearing from Temple University. Brianna has clinical experience working in early intervention, acute care and K-12 schools in Pennsylvania. Brianna currently works as the Clinical Manager of Educational Services at Nyman Associates, supporting and advocating for school age clinicians. She co-developed and oversees Nyman's Clinical Fellowship Program which provides layered support for Clinical Fellows and their mentors. Brianna also developed and oversees Nyman's School Age Dysphagia/Feeding Resource Team. Brianna currently serves as an SLP member of ASHA's Council for Clinical Certification.

Amy is a dedicated speech-language pathologist with over 20 years of experience. She received a Bachelor's in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology from Stockton University and a Master's of Science degree in Communication Disorders from San Francisco State University. She practiced in preschool-12th grade schools, acute hospital settings, sub-acute rehabs, and long-term care. Most recently, she has focused on early intervention services. She pursued her registered children's yoga teacher certification (RCYT) through Yoga Alliance and founded her private practice, Sound Speech Therapy and Wellness. In her role at Nyman Associates, she provides clinical and organizational support to the Early Intervention team in Philadelphia.

# **AUTHOR DISCLOSURES**

Brianna is an employee of Nyman Associates and an SLP member of ASHA's Council for Clinical Certification

Amy is an employee of Nyman Associates and owner of Sound Speech Therapy and Wellness.

# POSTER PRESENTATION INTCODE SWITCHING EFFECTS CORTICAL ACTIVATION PATTERNS AT PHONEMIC LEVEL



**ASHA CE**  
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Pennsylvania  
Speech-Language-Hearing  
Association

Introductory Level

.025 ASHA CEUs

**TARA CARITO M.S.CCC/SLP, LAURA  
CHAPMAN PHD, AND CHRISTIANE  
MCDONALD CCC-SLP**

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Explain how analysis-by-synthesis and mirror neuron theory relate to non-native phoneme perception.
- Describe cortical activation differences between native English and Thai speakers during categorical perception.
- Discuss implications of motor-speech area recruitment for non-native phoneme perception and fNIRS-based research.



# ABSTRACT

The University of Scranton Summer Academy for Speech and Language Enrichment is a foundational clinical experience designed for students enrolled in a distance education speech-language pathology graduate program. The program provides a four-week, in-person clinical immersion at the Scranton School for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children (SSDHHC), serving as a structured bridge between academic coursework and subsequent external fieldwork placements. The Summer Academy ensures equitable access to foundational clinical training, promotes early clinical confidence, and establishes consistent expectations for professional practice. In addition to supporting student learning, the program delivers free, community-based speech-language services to children and families. This poster will describe how the Summer Academy is designed to support early skill development. Student, staff, and parent feedback about the experience will be shared. Graduate student clinicians participate in supervised, hands-on clinical practice across multiple service formats, including individual therapy, social communication groups, movement-based activities, and art-based communication experiences. These clinical rotations are structured to support foundational competencies such as session planning, data collection, documentation, professional communication, evidence-based decision making, interprofessional practice, and collaboration. This design provides a scaffolded learning environment where students develop core clinical skills before entering external fieldwork placements; rotation-based service delivery promotes skill generalization across contexts. Community partnerships assist with participant recruitment and strengthen connections between the university and local organizations. This forms a replicable model for integrating required in-person clinical experiences within a distance education framework while balancing student development, supervision demands, and community service delivery.

# **AUTHOR BIOS**

Tara Carito, MS, CCC-SLP, is a speech-language pathologist and clinical educator with 16+ years in public schools serving K–12 students. She holds Level II Teaching Certification in Pennsylvania and is a Certified Assistive Technology Specialist. Her expertise includes AAC, child language disorders, autism spectrum disorder, and complex communication needs. Since 2013, she has supervised graduate students, clinical fellows, and early-career clinicians. She designs and supervises foundational clinical experiences, including the University of Scranton Summer Academy, emphasizing early skill development, collaboration, and community-based services.

Laura Chapman, PhD, is a speech-language pathologist and educator with expertise in communication sciences and disorders. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses spanning speech-language disorders, research methods, counseling, and multicultural communication. Her research focuses on contemplative pedagogy, student well-being, and cognitive-linguistic processing in typical and clinical populations. She has published extensively on fostering authenticity, belonging, and self-compassion in SLP education. As the Graduate SLP Program Director, Dr. Chapman is actively engaged in designing clinical and academic experiences for graduate students.

Christiane McDonald, MS, CCC-SLP, is a speech-language pathologist with 18 years of clinical experience across pediatric, early intervention, school, and adult settings. She supervises graduate SLP students in both in-person and virtual clinical experiences, including the University of Scranton Summer Academy. Her expertise includes early language development, intervention planning, and parent coaching. McDonald is committed to integrating evidence-based practice, clinical simulation, and community-based learning into graduate education to prepare emerging clinicians for diverse professional settings.

# **AUTHOR DISCLOSURES**

All instructors are salaried employees of The University of Scranton, a non-commercial academic institution.

# POSTER PRESENTATION EDUCATING MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS ABOUT COMMUNICATION AFTER BRAIN INJURY



ASHA CE  
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Pennsylvania  
Speech-Language-Hearing  
Association

Introductory Level

.025 ASHA CEUs

**ASHLEY KRIEGER MS CCC-SLP, MIA  
JAFFE STUDENT, AND KRISTI  
JANKOWIAK MS CCC-SLP**

## Learning Objectives:

- At the conclusion of this poster, the participant will be able to connect how educating middle school students regarding brain injuring increases their understanding of the communication impact.
- At the conclusion of this poster, the participant will be able to connect how educating middle school students regarding brain injuring increases opportunities for inclusion.
- At the conclusion of this poster, the participant will be able to identify how using a pre- and post-education survey measured middle school students' understanding of brain injury.



# ABSTRACT

Transitioning back into a school following a traumatic brain injury (TBI) can be challenging, especially when communication abilities have changed. Students with post-TBI communication differences, such as aphasia, may experience barriers to social connection and participation with their peers. This case study aimed to explore whether providing education about communication after brain injury could enhance peer understanding and inclusion for a sixth-grade student returning to school following a TBI secondary to bacterial meningitis. An aphasia education session was designed for two sixth-grade classes (n = 23) at the student's school. The interactive lesson introduced aphasia, modeled communication strategies, and provided a student-friendly handout to reinforce key ideas. A pre- and post-education survey was administered to measure students' knowledge, comfort, and confidence in communicating with peers who have communication differences. Preliminary results indicated an overall increase in students' self-reported understanding, comfort, and perceived ability to be supportive peers following the educational session. These findings suggest that peer-focused education can be a valuable tool for promoting inclusion and social connection for students returning to school after TBI who have communication challenges. Future directions include expanding this approach across grade levels and evaluating longer-term outcomes in peer interactions and social participation.

# AUTHOR BIOS

Ashley Krieger became interested in the field of speech-language-pathology when exploring careers tied to working with individuals with disabilities. During graduate school, she gained exposure to the role of SLP's in the pediatric medical setting. This became her area of clinical interest and after earning her Certificate of Clinical Competence she worked at UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. Throughout her 15 years in that position, Ashley supervised many graduate students and developed a passion for clinical teaching. She pivoted into higher education to support students who are excited about the field of Speech Pathology. At the University of Pittsburgh, she assists the graduate program through various responsibilities surrounding clinical education. She enjoys working with the students as they progress through their clinic experiences and looks forward to celebrating their successes at graduation.

Mia Jaffe completed an undergraduate degree in Communication Science and Disorders at the University of Pittsburgh. She continued her graduate program at that University and is in her final semester. Mia gained experience across a variety of settings, including skilled nursing facilities, schools, an acute care VA hospital, and outpatient services at UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. Mia has developed a strong passion for pediatric treatment. Looking ahead, Mia hopes to begin a career as a school-based speech-language pathologist, supporting children's communication development and academic success.

Kristi Jankowiak is a Speech Language Pathologist in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. She works with children who have various speech, language, communication and cognitive impairments that impact their academic success. She primarily focuses on school-age children grades K-8. Kristi enjoys giving back to the field by supervising Clinic 2 graduate students.

## AUTHOR DISCLOSURES

Ashley receives salary from the University of Pittsburgh

Mia has no financial or non-financial disclosures.

Kristi receives salary from the University of Pittsburgh

# POSTER PRESENTATION

## MAKING SENSE OF THE DATA: SWALLOWING IN ADULTS WITH DOWN SYNDROME



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Speech-Language-Hearing  
Association

Introductory Level  
.025 ASHA CEUs

**RACHEL NATHAN M.S., CCC-SLP, ANNA  
HARTMAN B.S., NICOLE ETTER PHD, CCC/SLP,  
AARTHI MADHAVAN PHD, CCC/SLP, AND  
KRISTAWILKINSON PH.D**

### **Learning Objectives:**

- After attending this poster presentation, attendees will describe how various clinical and lab assessments can be used to measure different factors impacting the swallow mechanism in individuals with Down syndrome.
- After attending this poster presentation, attendees will interpret each measure on average and what this tells us about the structure and function of the swallow mechanism in individuals with Down syndrome.
- After attending this poster presentation, attendees will summarize early trends in moderate and strong correlations observed in the data.



# ABSTRACT

People with Down syndrome have an increased risk of choking during a meal (Kumar et al., 2025, Thacker et al., 2008). As Madhavan et al. (2023) pointed out, this risk might compromise their ability to live independently even when they have the autonomy and skills to do so. Reduced oropharyngeal somatosensation may contribute to the risk of choking, as individuals with Down syndrome commonly aspirate (Jasien et al., 2016), even up to 90% without overt signs such as coughing (Jackson et al., 2016). Due to the presence of intellectual disability and syndrome-specific structures and functions in individuals with Down syndrome, traditional approaches to swallow assessment must be tested to ensure appropriate applicability. The purpose of this study is to measure variables that cut across and overlap the clinical and lab settings and look at the interactions between different measures of swallow by persons with Down syndrome obtained through clinical and basic lab evaluations. Data were collected through a variety of assessments and tools, including the Functional Oral Intake Scale (FOIS), the Mann Assessment of Swallow Ability (MASA), tongue strength measures, swallows per minute, somatosensory stamps, and pharyngometer measures. The research team used these measures to analyze the structure and function of the swallow mechanism in individuals with Down syndrome. At the time of submission, a total of 22 adults with Down syndrome have completed this evaluation. This poster presentation will present how this data can fit together and discuss early trends that we have observed. The presentation will discuss early statistical analyses that look at correlations between our assessment variables.

# AUTHOR BIOS

Rachel Nathan, M.S., CCC-SLP is a speech-language pathologist and current PhD student at The Pennsylvania State University working under the advisement of Dr. Krista Wilkinson. Rachel's current research focuses on augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) assessments, AAC design, and supporting currently practicing speech-language pathologists. Her work on the grant focuses on collecting and analyzing data to look at language, executive function, swallowing, and somatosensation in individuals with Down syndrome.

Anna Hartman is a first-year master's student at The Pennsylvania State University and is a part of the Speech, Language, and Swallowing (SLS) grant working under Dr. Krista Wilkinson, Dr. Aarthi Madhavan, and Dr. Nicole Etter. Anna's current research involves working with colleagues to develop a coding guide to evaluate external eating behaviors from home swallowing videos of participants with Down syndrome.

Nicole Etter, PhD, CCC/SLP is an associate professor and professor-in-charge of graduate programs in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the Pennsylvania State University. Dr. Etter's current research focuses on sensorimotor control for skilled orofacial activities, like speech, voice, and swallowing in healthy aging adults and those with neurogenic communication disorders.

Aarthi Madhavan, PhD, CCC/SLP is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the Pennsylvania State University. Dr. Madhavan's current research focus is swallowing disorders in typically-aging adults and other clinical populations.

## **AUTHOR BIOS CONT.**

Krista M. Wilkinson is Distinguished Professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the Pennsylvania State University. Dr. Wilkinson has served as Associate Editor, Editor, and Editor-in-Chief of the American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology. She currently serves as Associate Editor at Augmentative and Alternative Communication and the American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disability. Dr. Wilkinson studies how to optimize design of AAC systems to support faster and more accurate communication, promote access to mental health supports, and to tailor AAC design to unique needs presented by individuals with cortical visual impairment and/or motor disabilities.

## **AUTHOR DISCLOSURES**

This work was supported by funding from NIH NIDCD grant 1R01DC020622-01A1. The student presenters' assistantships are funded by the same grant. All authors are employed by The Pennsylvania State University.

# POSTER PRESENTATION BEHAVIORAL RISK FACTORS IN ADULTS WITH DOWN SYNDROME DURING A HOME MEAL



**ASHA CE**  
**APPROVED PROVIDER**

Pennsylvania  
Speech-Language-Hearing  
Association

Introductory Level  
.025 ASHA CEUs

**ANNA HARTMAN B.S., RACHEL NATHAN M.S.,  
CCC-SLP, AARTHI MADHAVAN PHD, CCC-SLP,  
NICOLE ETTER PHD, CCC/SLP, AND KRISTA  
WILKINSON PH.D**

## **Learning Objectives:**

- People who attend the poster will be able to describe environmental factors affecting home mealtime behaviors that may impact executive functioning in individuals with Down syndrome.
- People who attend the poster will be able to review the coding scheme for assessing home meal behaviors and environmental factors.
- People who attend the poster will be able to summarize the initial patterns found in the first 10 home meal video recordings of participants who have Down syndrome.



# ABSTRACT

Adults with Down syndrome have the autonomy and skills to live on their own. However, one of the biggest inhibiting factors can be related to the significantly increased risk of choking due to the differences in structure and function of the swallow mechanism (Kumar et al., 2025, Thacker et al., 2008). The specific risk factors within a meal have not been well studied. In the home environment, there are everyday external distractors, postural demands, and rate changes that play a part in the executive functioning demands of a meal. As part of a larger study presented by Nathan and Hartman et al., individuals with Down syndrome completed a variety of assessments related to labial strength and sensation, a clinical swallow evaluation, and an observation of functional eating in natural environments. In the observation, individuals with Down syndrome were recorded having meals virtually in their homes; at the time of submission, 10 home meal videos have been collected. A behavioral coding scheme has been developed to identify potential at-home choking risks. The purpose of this poster is to present the developed coding scheme and discuss initial patterns across observations and possible early implications.

# AUTHOR BIOS

Anna Hartman is a first-year master's student at The Pennsylvania State University and is a part of the Speech, Language, and Swallowing (SLS) grant working under Dr. Krista Wilkinson, Dr. Aarthi Madhavan, and Dr. Nicole Etter. Anna's current research involves working with colleagues to develop a coding guide to evaluate external eating behaviors from home swallowing videos of participants with Down syndrome.

Rachel Nathan, M.S., CCC-SLP is a speech-language pathologist and current PhD student at The Pennsylvania State University working under the advisement of Dr. Krista Wilkinson. Rachel's current research focuses on augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) assessments, AAC design, and supporting currently practicing speech-language pathologists. Her work on the grant focuses on collecting and analyzing data to look at language, executive function, swallowing, and somatosensation in individuals with Down syndrome.

Aarthi Madhavan, PhD, CCC/SLP is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the Pennsylvania State University. Dr. Madhavan's current research focus is swallowing disorders in typically-aging adults and other clinical populations.

Nicole Etter, PhD, CCC/SLP is an associate professor and professor-in-charge of graduate programs in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the Pennsylvania State University. Dr. Etter's current research focuses on sensorimotor control for skilled orofacial activities, like speech, voice, and swallowing in healthy aging adults and those with neurogenic communication disorders.

## **AUTHOR BIOS CONT.**

Krista M. Wilkinson is Distinguished Professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the Pennsylvania State University. Dr. Wilkinson has served as Associate Editor, Editor, and Editor-in-Chief of the American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology. She currently serves as Associate Editor at Augmentative and Alternative Communication and the American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disability. Dr. Wilkinson studies how to optimize design of AAC systems to support faster and more accurate communication, promote access to mental health supports, and to tailor AAC design to unique needs presented by individuals with cortical visual impairment and/or motor disabilities.

## **AUTHOR DISCLOSURES**

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# POSTER PRESENTATION VIRTUAL REALITY IN SPEECH THERAPY: CLINICIAN AND CLIENT PERSPECTIVES



ASHA CE  
APPROVED PROVIDER

Pennsylvania  
Speech-Language-Hearing  
Association

Introductory Level  
.025 ASHA CEUs

**LAUREN DOWD, AVA LAUKAITIS, SOPHIA  
NEWCOMER, MEGAN AARON, MEGHAN O'GRADY,  
LAUREN WALSH, GLEN TELLIS PH.D., BCS-SCF,  
CCC-SLP**

## Learning Objectives:

- Recognize the validity of incorporating VR as a therapy material into sessions.
- Identify strategies to use VR features to support skill development in clients.
- Investigate the benefits of VR on client engagement and motivation.



# ABSTRACT

Virtual reality (VR) is an engaging and rapidly growing technology that can improve speech therapy sessions for clients with a variety of diagnoses. Its application offers a unique experience which distinguishes it from traditional therapy. This study aims to explore how VR can be incorporated into treatment by assessing both clinician and client experiences, including engagement and perceived therapeutic benefits. Communication disorders can often cause stress and anxiety, leading clients to avoid certain social situations such as presentations, answering questions in class, interviews, or ordering food. By incorporating VR into sessions, clinicians can provide a safe and controlled environment where clients can practice therapy techniques. VR offers a variety of customizable features, including pre-programmed speech, AI-generated speech, real-time typed speech, distraction noises, virtual avatar eye contact, and facial expressions/emotions. The study procedure involved administering a survey to clinicians and clients to gain feedback on their experiences using VR in therapy. The clinician survey asked the client's age, main speech goal, estimated duration of use, how VR was applied in therapy, and which VR features were used most frequently. Clinicians rated how helpful the VR was in sessions, the engagement of their client, and whether their client experienced any negative effects. At the end they were asked if they would apply the VR in therapy again. The client survey examined their enjoyment of VR, whether it was helpful for practicing their speech, whether they ever felt uncomfortable using VR, and if they would prefer to use it again. Overall, initial outcomes indicate that VR can be a beneficial therapeutic material that supports clients and clinicians' goals. Additional details will be presented at the conference.

# AUTHOR BIOS

Lauren Dowd is an undergraduate student researcher in the SLP Department at Misericordia University. She is on the Dean's List and is an active member of NSSLHA. She has completed research and data analysis for this study. She has presented papers at international, national, state, and local conventions.

Ava Laukaitis is an undergraduate student researcher in the SLP Department at Misericordia University. She is on the Dean's List and is an active member of NSSLHA. She has completed research and data analysis for this study. She has presented papers at state, national, and international conferences.

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Lauren Walsh is an undergraduate student researcher in the SLP Department at Misericordia University. She is on the Dean's List and is an active member of NSSLHA. She has completed research and data analysis for this study.

# **AUTHOR DISCLOSURES**

Lauren has no financial or non-financial disclosures.

Ava has no financial or non-financial disclosures.

Sophia has no financial or non-financial disclosures.

Megan Aaron has no financial or non-financial disclosures.

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Lauren has no financial or non-financial disclosures.

Glen has no financial or non-financial disclosures.

# POSTER PRESENTATION PRESCHOOL SPEECH AND LANGUAGE SCREENING



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Association

Introductory Level  
.025 ASHA CEUs

**GRACE WEIRICH B.A. AND  
RACHEL WOLF PHD. CCC-SLP**

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Understand the importance of preschool Speech-Language screenings for supporting children's communication, social, and educational outcomes.
- Explain the value of effective communication with parents and caregivers, and identify practical strategies to enhance adherence to recommendations and support skill transfer across settings.
- Describe the importance of early identification and the implementation of proper recommendations of services to parental figures when needed.



# ABSTRACT

Early childhood speech-language screenings are crucial for early identification of communication difficulties and speech-language delays. Preschool aged children are at an important stage for detecting these delays. In addition to early identification, other essential factors involved in treatment and identification of speech disorders are parental follow through after screening as well as compliance with speech recommendations. This study focuses on the pass and referral rates of ESU's preschool speech-language screening program and analyzes parental follow up in connection to the provided recommendations. The results from this study will be used to identify ways to improve pass, refer, and follow up rates on future speech-language screenings in our program. During the sensitive period of language development from birth to five years, early childhood speech-language screenings play an important role in the initial identification of communication disorders. Early detection supports early intervention, which is key for promoting functional communication, participation, and later academic success. Speech-language screenings are a key component of evidence-based practice and are consistent with ASHA's emphasis on prevention, early identification, and family-centered care. Effective outcomes depend not only on accurate screening and referral but also on parent and caregiver follow-through with recommended services and strategies. This retrospective study examines pass and referral rates within ESU's preschool speech-language screening program and analyzes parental follow-up. Results will guide strategies to improve screening outcomes, referral processes, and caregiver engagement in future early childhood speech-language screening initiatives.

# **AUTHOR BIOS**

Grace Weirich is a first year student at East Stroudsburg University in the Speech-Language Pathology Graduate program. She obtained her Bachelor's degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders at West Chester University of Pennsylvania. Grace is passionate about the field of Speech-Language Pathology as it provides the opportunity to impact a client's quality of life and future development of communication. She serves as a graduate assistant to the chair of the graduate program at East Stroudsburg University. As the graduate assistant she coordinates Speech Language screenings at local Head Start Programs as well as assists in conducting the hearing screenings involved in the program.

Rachel Wolf, PhD. CCC-SLP is a professor and chair of the department of Speech, Language, & Hearing Sciences at East Stroudsburg University in PA. She has been an ASHA certified SLP since 1997. She completed her PhD at New York University in 2009. Her published research examines pragmatic repetition in normal and disordered verbal discourse, which led to future research on the impacts of disorder, specifically ASD, on pragmatics and discourse. Additional research has been conducted on innovative approaches for enhancing higher education outcomes through service learning, systems thinking, and adaptations for generational shift.

# **AUTHOR DISCLOSURES**

Grace has no financial or non-financial disclosures.

Rachel has no financial or non-financial disclosures.

# POSTER PRESENTATION TRAINING MAY REDUCE HABITUAL USE OF GLOTTAL FRY IN SLP GRADUATE STUDENTS



**ASHA CE**  
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Speech-Language-Hearing  
Association

Introductory Level  
.025 ASHA CEUs

**NICHOLAS BARONE PHD, CCC-SLP  
AND HANDRIN KHOJA B.S.**

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Describe the prevalence and task-related patterns of glottal fry in female SLP graduate students.
- Explain the effects of graduate-level voice training on habitual glottal fry use in reading and spontaneous speech.
- Compare glottal fry measurement approaches and their impact on prevalence estimates.



# ABSTRACT

**Background:** Previous research indicates that more than two-thirds of young adult female speakers use glottal fry, and evidence suggests that speech-language pathology (SLP) graduate students may demonstrate elevated rates, increasing potential risk for voice disorders. While vocal training has been shown to reduce pathological vocal behaviors in future professional voice users, it is unclear whether training within an SLP graduate voice course reduces habitual glottal fry use.

**Purpose:** This study examined whether participation in a semester-long graduate Voice Disorders course resulted in reduced habitual glottal fry use in female SLP graduate students.

**Methods:** Female SLP graduate students were recorded reading a 30-second segment of the Rainbow Passage and producing one minute of spontaneous speech before and after a 15-week voice course. Recordings were analyzed using Praat to identify voiced segments, unvoiced segments, and periods of glottal fry. Glottal fry was quantified as percent of total words, percent of total speaking time, and percent of total voiced time. Preliminary analyses were conducted on data from 24 participants using repeated-measures MANOVA.

**Results:** All participants demonstrated some use of glottal fry. No significant differences were found between pre- and post-training conditions for either reading or spontaneous speech. A significant task effect was observed: spontaneous speech contained a greater percentage of words produced with glottal fry than reading, despite fewer total words and voiced segments.

**Conclusions:** Graduate voice training did not significantly reduce habitual glottal fry use. Task-related differences indicate that measurement method substantially influences estimates of glottal fry prevalence. These findings underscore the need for standardized measurement approaches and targeted instruction addressing habitual vocal behaviors in future SLPs.

# **AUTHOR BIOS**

Nicholas A. Barone, PhD, CCC-SLP, is an assistant professor in the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Director of the Neurophysiology of Communication, Dysphagia, and Cognition Lab at Misericordia University. His research integrates neurophysiology, voice science, and clinical communication disorders, with emphasis on voice production, belonging and inclusion in CSD training, and the effects of therapy animals on communication. His work focuses on clinically meaningful applications to assessment, treatment, and professional education.

Handrin Khoja is a Masters Student in Speech-Language Pathology at Misericordia University is an active member of the Neurophysiology of Communication, Dysphagia, and Cognition Lab at Misericordia University under the direction of Dr. Nicholas A. Barone.

# **AUTHOR DISCLOSURES**

Nicholas has no financial or non-financial disclosures.

Handrin has no financial or non-financial disclosures.

# POSTER PRESENTATION TRADITIONAL VOICE TERMINOLOGY SHOWS PERCEPTUAL AND ACOUSTIC OVERLAP



ASHA CE  
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Speech-Language-Hearing  
Association

Introductory Level  
.025 ASHA CEUs

**NICHOLAS BARONE PHD, CCC-SLP, LILY  
GRASSEL B.A., AND HANDRIN KHOJA B.S.**

## Learning Objectives:

- Describe perceptual, acoustic, and aerodynamic relationships among Light, Dark, Front, and Back.
- Analyze discrepancies between performers' productions and voice professionals' perceptual ratings of traditional voice quality terminology.
- Evaluate the clinical and pedagogical impact of ambiguous voice terminology.



# ABSTRACT

**Background:** Traditional voice quality terms such as Light, Dark, Front, and Back are widely used in vocal pedagogy, voice therapy, and clinical instruction, yet their meanings are often ambiguous and inconsistently interpreted across disciplines. This lack of shared definitions may contribute to challenges in vocal instruction, assessment, and therapeutic carryover. **Purpose:** This study examined perceptual, acoustic, and aerodynamic relationships among the voice quality terms Light, Dark, Front, and Back to determine whether these terms represent distinct vocal qualities or overlapping constructs. **Methods:** University singers produced sustained vowels and a sung passage in habitual, Light, Dark, Front, and Back voice qualities while acoustic and aerodynamic data were collected. Voice professionals rated recorded samples on Light–Dark and Front–Back perceptual scales and provided written descriptions of each term.

Formant, acoustic, and aerodynamic measures were analyzed alongside perceptual ratings to assess differentiation and agreement.

**Results:** Formant analyses revealed similar F1 and F2 patterns for Light/Front and Dark/Back productions, suggesting shared vocal tract configurations. Acoustic and aerodynamic measures largely failed to differentiate among the four qualities. Perceptual ratings demonstrated low inter-rater agreement, and written responses showed substantial variability and overlap in term definitions.

**Conclusions:** Findings suggest that Light and Front, as well as Dark and Back, function as overlapping descriptors rather than distinct voice qualities. Inconsistent interpretation of traditional terminology may contribute to miscommunication between performers, instructors, and speech-language pathologists. Use of anatomically and physiologically grounded frameworks may improve consistency and clinical and pedagogical outcomes.

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Nicholas A. Barone, PhD, CCC-SLP, is an assistant professor in the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Director of the Neurophysiology of Communication, Dysphagia, and Cognition Lab at Misericordia University. His research integrates neurophysiology, voice science, and clinical communication disorders, with emphasis on voice production, belonging and inclusion in CSD training, and the effects of therapy animals on communication. His work focuses on clinically meaningful applications to assessment, treatment, and professional education.

Lily Grassel is a master's student in Speech-Language Pathology at Central Michigan University. She is the second author on a manuscript recently accepted for publication in *Folia Phoniatica et Logopaedica* based on this research.

Handrin Khoja is a master's student in Speech-Language Pathology at Misericordia University is an active member of the Neurophysiology of Communication, Dysphagia, and Cognition Lab at Misericordia University under the direction of Dr. Nicholas A. Barone.

# **AUTHOR DISCLOSURES**

Nicholas has no financial or non-financial disclosures.

Lily has no financial or non-financial disclosures.

Handrin has no financial or non-financial disclosures.

# POSTER PRESENTATION

## LEVELING UP THERAPY: ROBLOX IN SPEECH THERAPY FOR CHILDREN WHO STUTTER



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Association

Introductory Level  
.025 ASHA CEUs

**LAUREN DOWD, AVA LAUKAITIS, MEGAN AARON,  
SOPHIA NEWCOMER, MEGHAN O'GRADY,  
LAUREN WALSH, ERIK RAJ PH.D., CCC-SLP, AND  
GLEN TELLIS PH.D., BCS-SCF, CCC-SLP,**

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Recognize how digital gaming platforms can serve as effective and engaging therapeutic materials when used appropriately.
- Identify methods to use collaborative play for building strong therapeutic alliances.
- Acknowledge the importance of promoting client autonomy and self-advocacy through the use of digital environments.



# ABSTRACT

Among the younger generation, technology has become an integral part of self-expression and communication, particularly through digital games. This research project explores how the game Roblox can be purposefully integrated into therapy sessions for school-age children who stutter. The platform promotes the development of therapeutic alliances and creates an opportunity for the client to produce authentic communication and self-advocacy. Roblox is a collaborative and customizable environment that creates an engaging therapeutic space for clients. It provides opportunities to establish strong therapeutic alliances between clinicians and clients through multiplayer gameplay. Within these games, clients experience ownership and a sense of autonomy over the familiar digital landscape. This autonomy reflects the broader goals of therapy, which aim to help children who stutter take the lead in their own communication development. When the clinician and client enter this virtual world, they do so as co-players working together toward a shared objective. In a typical therapy session, there is a strict social dynamic in which the client follows the clinician's lead. This dynamic can increase anxiety for the client and result in reduced conversation. However, through the Roblox platform, the client and clinician become equals, which reduces client anxiety and creates a new dynamic of child-centered care. Clients can take a more active role in therapy and showcase their knowledge and skills within the virtual world. Through collaborative play, clinicians can incorporate therapy strategies and encourage self-advocacy, all while the client remains engaged and communicating. Overall, by incorporating Roblox into meaningful therapeutic materials, clinicians have the opportunity to establish strong connections and trust with their clients, while clients can experience greater autonomy over the direction of their therapy sessions.

# **AUTHOR BIOS**

Lauren Dowd is an undergraduate student researcher in the SLP Department at Misericordia University. She is on the Dean's List and is an active member of NSSLHA. She has completed research and data analysis for this study. She has presented papers at international, national, state, and local conventions.

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Megan Aaron is a graduate student researcher in the SLP Department at Misericordia University. She is on the Dean's List and is an active member of NSSLHA. She has completed research and data analysis for this study. She has presented papers at international, national, state, and local conventions.

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Meghan O'Grady is an undergraduate student researcher in the SLP Department at Misericordia University. She is on the Dean's List and is an active member of NSSLHA. She has completed research and data analysis for this study.

Lauren Walsh is an undergraduate student researcher in the SLP Department at Misericordia University. She is on the Dean's List and is an active member of NSSLHA. She has completed research and data analysis for this study.

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Erik X. Raj, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Speech-Language Pathology at Monmouth University, where he directs the Meaningful Digital Experiences Research Lab (MDXR LAB). His teaching, research, and clinical work explore the intersection of video games, digital technology, and communication development

Glen Tellis is Professor and Chair at Misericordia University. He was a SIG4 steering committee member, ASHA's 2010 Convention Fluency Topic Chair, and a Board-Certified Fluency Specialist. He teaches courses in stuttering and research methods, supervises clinics, has been invited to present at state, national and international conferences, and has published articles and books about stuttering.

# **AUTHOR DISCLOSURES**

Lauren has no financial or non-financial disclosures.

Ava has no financial or non-financial disclosures.

Megan has no financial or non-financial disclosures.

Sophia has no financial or non-financial disclosures.

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Lauren has no financial or non-financial disclosures.

Erik has no financial or non-financial disclosures.

Glen has no financial or non-financial disclosures.

# POSTER PRESENTATION

## AAC FOR CHILDREN WITH MULTIPLE DISABILITIES: PARENT AND SLP PERSPECTIVES



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Speech-Language-Hearing  
Association

Introductory Level  
.025 ASHA CEUs

**JENNA FREY AND  
TARA MCCARTY PH.D., CCC-SLP**

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Attendees will name several possible facilitators and barriers to AAC success for children with multiple disabilities.
- Attendees will discuss the importance of gathering both parent and SLP input about AAC facilitators and barriers for children with multiple disabilities.
- Attendees will discuss how survey results are beneficial towards developing future research initiatives, such as intervention approaches for children with multiple disabilities.



# ABSTRACT

Children with multiple disabilities are a diverse group of individuals who have two or more significant simultaneous impairments across domains of functioning (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). These impairments may exist in the domains of motor, sensory, behavioral, cognition, and/or speech and language. Many children with multiple disabilities have to learn to communicate in different ways due to the impact of cooccurring impairments. They may require augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) support to supplement or compensate for their needs and to allow them to communicate for a variety of purposes. Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) find AAC assessment and intervention difficult for children with multiple disabilities (Brittlebank et al., 2024), due to the limited evidence available for this population. There is a strong need for parent and provider perspectives to improve AAC service provision (Brittlebank et al., 2024). Interventions are most effective when there is knowledge of the factors that contribute to the child's success or failure. Without an understanding of possible barriers and supports to the child's communicative success, future interventions with the child and their communication partners may not address all the necessary factors that impact meaningful outcomes. This poster describes the conceptualization and development of a survey study which aims to collect and summarize the input of parents of children with multiple disabilities and SLPs working with these children to support AAC implementation. Survey development, recruitment processes, and initial data analyses will be described to help attendees understand the scope and importance of this project.

# **AUTHOR BIOS**

Jenna Frey is a 4th year Communication Sciences and Disorders student at Pennsylvania State University Harrisburg campus. Jenna will be attending DeSales University in the fall to earn a master's degree in Speech and Language Pathology. Jenna's areas of interest include AAC, social aspects of communication, and working with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Tara McCarty is a licensed speech-language pathologist and assistant professor in the Communication Science and Disorders program at Penn State University- Harrisburg. Prior to teaching and conducting research, Tara worked clinically in school-based settings. Tara's research focuses on communication solutions for individuals with multiple disabilities and concomitant brain-based visual impairments, specifically cerebral/cortical visual impairment (CVI).

# **AUTHOR DISCLOSURES**

Jenna Frey receives wages as an undergraduate student research assistant for Tara McCarty, provided through a seed grant from Penn State Harrisburg's Office of Research and Outreach.

Tara McCarty receives a salary as a full-time employee of Penn State University- Harrisburg. Tara McCarty's research which led to the creation of this poster presentation was made possible, in part, by a seed grant from Penn State Harrisburg's Office of Research and Outreach.

# POSTER PRESENTATION

## ADVANCING CARE FOR PREMATURE INFANTS: FEEDING RISKS AND THE SLP'S NICU ROLE



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**VANESSA HERNANDEZ AND ELIZABETH  
GRILLO PH.D., CCC-SLP, CHSE, EMT**

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Define premature infants and advances in medical technology that contribute to increased survival rates
- Identify potential risk factors for developing pediatric feeding and swallowing disorders
- List three strategies SLPs can use for diagnosis and/or treatment of pediatric feeding and swallowing disorders in the NICU



# ABSTRACT

Infants born before 37 weeks gestational age are considered premature. The earlier an infant is born, the greater the concern for survival. However, survival rates have increased significantly due to advances in medical technology, such as non-invasive ventilation that delivers continuous oxygen through a mask. Despite improved survival, premature infants are at increased risk for medical complications due to underdeveloped organs, immature immune systems, and invasive medical interventions that often result in prolonged hospitalization. These risks contribute to conditions including congenital anomalies, esophageal dysfunction, respiratory issues, cardiovascular disease, and pediatric feeding and swallowing disorders. Pediatric feeding disorders include difficulty with oral intake due to medical, nutritional, feeding, and/or psychosocial factors. In contrast, pediatric swallowing disorders involve difficulty safely transporting food or liquid from the mouth to the stomach. Premature infants may experience one or both of these disorders.

The speech-language pathologist (SLP), as part of an interprofessional healthcare team, identifies these disorders while the premature infant is being cared for in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). In the NICU, SLPs diagnose pediatric feeding and swallowing disorders through clinical and instrumental evaluations and provide intervention through feeding and swallowing skill development and caregiver education. Despite the critical role of SLPs, there are limited diagnostic tools to identify risks for developing pediatric feeding or swallowing disorders prior to NICU discharge, which hinders the fields' ability to improve intervention strategies. This poster will discuss premature infants, medical technologies contributing to their increased survival rates, risk factors of pediatric feeding and swallowing disorders, the role of SLPs in the NICU, and suggestions for future research.

## **AUTHOR BIOS**

Vanessa Hernandez is a speech-language pathology graduate student at West Chester University. She completed her undergraduate degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders at Western Washington University. As an undergraduate student, her research experiences included early intervention and caregiver implemented strategies which resulted in a poster presentation at the 2025 American Speech-Language-Hearing Association convention. Currently, her research is focused on the identification of pediatric feeding and swallowing disorders in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit with caregiver implemented treatment strategies.

Sciences and Disorders at West Chester University specializing in voice, medical speech-language pathology, interprofessional education, and simulation. Her NIH-funded research focuses on voice therapy efficacy, telepractice, and mobile apps. She is a Certified Healthcare Simulation Educator, Estill Master Trainer, and Fellow of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). From 2023-2025, she served as Editor of ASHA's SIG 18 Perspectives.

## **AUTHOR DISCLOSURES**

Vanessa Hernandez receives financial support as a graduate assistant in the Communication Sciences and Disorders department at West Chester University.

Elizabeth Grillo receives a salary, benefits, and support for conference registration and travel from West Chester University.

# POSTER PRESENTATION

## A CASE STUDY ON THE CVI/AAC FRAMEWORK: TIMING, TEAMING, AND THEMES



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Introductory Level  
.025 ASHA CEUs

**VIVIENNE BOOZ, TAYLOR KALIK, TARA  
MCCARTY PH.D., CCC-SLP, AND KRISTA  
WILKINSON PH.D.**

### Learning Objectives:

- Define premature infants and advances in medical technology that contribute to Define the purpose and domains of the CVI/AAC Framework.
- Explore the impact of the CVI/AAC Framework in a specific case study narrative.
- Identify applications of the CVI/AAC Framework for personal research, education, and clinical practice.



# ABSTRACT

Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) are both complex and diverse issues to navigate in the home, school, and clinical settings. Even more complex is the process of navigating both at once: creating an AAC system which is accessible to CVI visual characteristics. As CVI becomes a more common and widely recognized cause of pediatric visual impairment, the need for CVI/AAC design guidelines is becoming urgent. Wilkinson et al. (2023) designed the CVI/AAC Framework as a tool to help multidisciplinary teams navigate choices related to AAC system design and communication for individuals with CVI. This case study provides a detailed narrative about the role of the Framework in the process of developing AAC for a twelve-year old boy with CVI and a history of limited resources for expressive language development. By analyzing conversations between the research team, the boy's parents, school staff members, and clinicians, the researchers identified recurring themes and described signs of progress over time. At the beginning of the study, the participants expressed frustration, miscommunication, and a lack of momentum in the AAC development process. Through conversations prompted by the Framework, participants received education on key CVI principles, established more effective communication, and made significant progress in developing a successful AAC system. These findings demonstrate the benefits of the Framework as a grounding tool for productive multidisciplinary collaboration.

# AUTHOR BIOS

Vivienne Booz is a senior at Schreyer Honors College at Penn State University majoring in Communication Sciences and Disorders and minoring in American Sign Language. Her research interests include Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and AAC modifications for individuals with Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI). After graduation she plans to pursue a graduate degree in Speech Language Pathology.

Taylor Kalik is a senior Communication Sciences and Disorders student at Penn State University. Her research interests include augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). She plans to pursue a graduate degree in speech-language pathology.

Tara McCarty is a licensed speech-language pathologist and assistant professor in the Communication Science and Disorders program at Penn State University- Harrisburg. Prior to teaching and conducting research, Tara worked clinically in school-based settings. Tara's research focuses on communication solutions for individuals with multiple disabilities and concomitant brain-based visual impairments, specifically cerebral/cortical visual impairment (CVI).

Krista M. Wilkinson is Distinguished Professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the Pennsylvania State University. Dr. Wilkinson has served as Associate Editor, Editor, and Editor-in-Chief of the American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology. She currently serves as Associate Editor at Augmentative and Alternative Communication and the American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disability. Dr. Wilkinson studies how to optimize design of AAC systems to support faster and more accurate communication, promote access to mental health supports, and to tailor AAC design to unique needs presented by individuals with cortical visual impairment and/or motor disabilities.

# **AUTHOR DISCLOSURES**

Vivienne has no relevant financial or non-financial relationships to disclose.

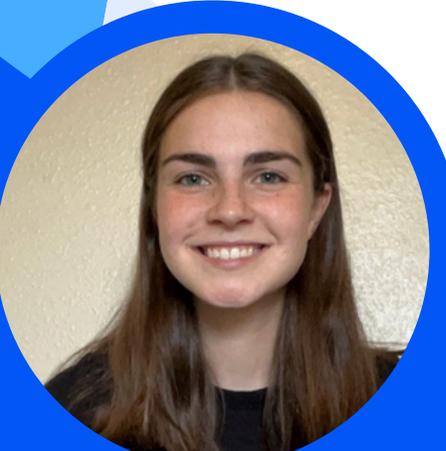
Taylor has no relevant financial or non-financial relationships to disclose.

Tara McCarty receives a salary as a full-time employee of Penn State University- Harrisburg.

Krista Wilkinson receives a salary as a full-time employee of Penn State University.



# POSTER PRESENTATION ARTISTIC INTERVENTIONS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S COMMUNICATIVE PARTICIPATION



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Introductory Level

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**MEGHAN INGLIS, EMILY TUCKER, RYLEE  
STEPHENS, AND KAYLA SMITH**

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Describe the communicative and social participation benefits associated with art-based interventions for children with communication disorders.
- Identify practical ways art-based approaches can be implemented in school settings to support engagement, inclusion, and functional participation goals.
- Summarize current evidence supporting the integration of arts-based interventions within school-based SLP practice.

# ABSTRACT

Background: Research exists on the effectiveness of artistic and creative modalities as they are incorporated into speech-language intervention for children, but uncertainty from school-based professionals may limit use. This literature review examines the effectiveness and accessibility of arts-based interventions aimed at enhancing communication and social participation for children with communication disorders. To make these findings more accessible to busy school-based professionals, the research team developed a multimedia webpage presenting the results.

Focused Clinical Question: What benefits do art-based interventions provide in facilitating communication skills and social participation for children receiving speech and language services in school-based settings?

Key Findings: The literature was searched for studies investigating the effectiveness of arts-based interventions on social communication and participation, yielding 35 usable studies relevant to the clinical question. Search results were sorted into music-based, theater-based, dance-based, and visual-arts-based interventions for appraisal. Appraised articles provided valuable insights into the effects of arts-based interventions on children's social communication and participation development, with findings suggesting artistic interventions can enhance engagement, expressive language, pragmatic skills, emotional regulation, and peer interactions. Approaches were most effective when integrated with speech-language intervention principles and aligned with functional and goals participation goals.

Clinical Bottom Line: There is emerging evidence to support the use of arts-based interventions in improving the social participation and communication skills of children. These interventions may be especially beneficial in school contexts to improve engagement and inclusion. The website created by our inter-university research team will also be shown during the presentation.

# AUTHOR BIOS

Meghan Inglis is a graduate student studying speech-language pathology at Moravian University. She graduated from Lafayette College with a B.S. in Neuroscience in 2025. She has interests in optimizing inclusion opportunities for children with multiple disabilities and increasing positive intervention experiences through arts-based interventions. She has additional research experience conducting home-based language assessments, examining the efficacy of the Parents Plus language-coaching program.

Emily Tucker is a graduate student in the Masters of Science in Speech-Language Pathology program at Moravian University. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Hearing & Speech Sciences from the University of Maryland-College Park (UMD) in 2024. She has prior research experience in the fields of speech development for children with cochlear implants and cultural competency. She is primarily interested in the pediatric population, working with children with multiple disabilities who use AAC systems.

Rylee Stephens is a graduate student studying speech-language pathology at Lamar University. She brings experience in theater-arts inclusion for children with communication disorders and their peers as well as professional experience working in public schools. In addition, she is engaged in student research focused on using a perspective-taking activity to promote learning in future clinicians.

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Kayla has no relevant financial or non-financial relationships to disclose.

# POSTER PRESENTATION PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGICAL RESPONSES TO VIRTUAL REALITY IN ADULTS WHO STUTTER



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Introductory Level  
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SLP, AND KATHLEEN SCALER SCOTT PH.D.,  
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## **Learning Objectives:**

- Assess the benefits of using virtual reality in speech therapy sessions with people who stutter to practice desensitization and enhance generalization of therapy strategies.
- Compare and contrast the stress responses of typically fluent speakers and people who stutter when immersed in casual and stressful virtual reality scenarios.
- Evaluate the benefit of assessing psychophysiological responses using autonomic nervous system monitoring equipment while participants engage in virtual reality scenarios.



# ABSTRACT

Virtual reality (VR) is emerging as a therapeutic tool for clients who stutter to desensitize to real-world speaking environments and generalize strategies to non-clinical settings while increasing their motivation and engagement during therapy sessions. While prior research has explored the clinical effectiveness of VR, there are limited studies that investigate objective psychophysiological responses of clients in VR scenarios. This study aimed to evaluate differences in psychophysiological responses between people who stutter (PWS) and typically fluent speakers (TFS) during casual and stressful VR speaking scenarios. Six PWS and 16 TFS were recruited for this study. Following a 90-second baseline period, participants engaged in two VR speech scenarios: 1) a casual café conversation and 2) a stressful job interview. Autonomic nervous system (ANS) monitoring equipment evaluated electrodermal activity (EDA) and heart rate variability (HRV) during the scenarios via electrodes on the torso and palm. Participants reported overall mood before and after the study using the Brief Mood Introspection Scale (BMIS). PWS and TFS participants were grouped for analysis based on informally observed stress responses: Group A displayed several indicators of stress, while Group B displayed minimal or no indicators. Preliminary findings suggest that across scenarios, PWS Group A and TFS Group A experienced greater decreases in the average root mean square of successive differences, a measure of HRV indicating parasympathetic nervous system activity. Greater variability in psychophysiological response was observed in Group A for both PWS and TFS, and PWS demonstrated a greater decrease in overall mood for PWS from pre- to post-study when compared to TFS. Future research will increase the sample size and account for confounding variables to strengthen the statistical power of the findings.

# AUTHOR BIOS

Ava Laukaitis is an undergraduate student researcher in the SLP Department at Misericordia University. She is on the Dean's List and is an active member of NSSLHA. She has completed research and data analysis for this study. She has presented papers at state, national, and international conferences.

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Glen Tellis is Professor and Chair at Misericordia University. He was a SIG4 steering committee member, ASHA's 2010 Convention Fluency Topic Chair, and a Board-Certified Fluency Specialist. He teaches courses in stuttering and research methods, supervises clinics, has been invited to present at state, national and international conferences, and has published articles and books about stuttering.

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. Dr. Scaler Scott received the Deso Weiss Award for Excellence in the field of cluttering and the Professional of the Year Award from the National Stuttering Association. She is co-author of *The Source for Stuttering and Cluttering* with Glen Tellis, and has conducted and published quantitative and qualitative research studies in the areas of cluttering, atypical disfluency, autism and child language and literacy disorders.

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Kathleen has no relevant financial or non-financial relationships to disclose.

# POSTER PRESENTATION PREDICTING FUNCTIONAL OUTCOMES FOR PATIENTS WITH APHASIA IN ACUTE CARE



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Introductory Level  
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**JOANNE NIEMKIEWICZ PHD, CCC-SLP,  
ELIZABETH PARMER B.S., LIA RUGGERIO M.S.,  
CCC-SLP, PATRICIA SCHLEGEL MS CCC/L,  
AND ELAINE WALSH M.A. CCC/SLP**

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Describe how multiple variables can impact a person's functional outcomes after stroke.
- Explain the importance of aphasia identification and treatment at the acute care level.
- Implement a tool to predict patient functional outcomes at the acute care level after stroke.



# ABSTRACT

Aphasia is a language disorder resulting from stroke or other brain injury which significantly impacts an individual's ability to communicate and thus participate in activities of daily living. In the acute care setting, aphasia treatment is often seen as less of a priority than dysphagia treatment, and treatment for aphasia is not always provided at this level of care. Predicting functional outcomes for people with aphasia is an important component for developing personalized rehabilitation strategies and setting realistic recovery goals. The purpose of this study was to determine if an instrument that includes the patient's aphasia severity, age, predicted discharge disposition, and baseline functioning developed by Lehigh Valley Health Network's (LVHN) rehabilitation team could predict the functional outcomes of patients once they leave the acute care setting. Data were analyzed using a linear mixed-effects model in which actual discharge status was modeled as a function of the LVHN scale score (fixed effect), with the number of treatment sessions included as a random effect. Results revealed a significant main effect of scale score ( $p = 0.05$ ), indicating that the LVHN scale score predicted actual discharge status independent of the number of treatment sessions received. In this presentation, the clinical implications of these results will be examined, which include more information about the LVHN scale and how to use it for treatment planning at the acute care level. We will also discuss how to use the scale for the development of personalized rehabilitation goals and strategies.

# AUTHOR BIOS

Dr. Joanne Niemkiewicz is an assistant professor and speech-language pathologist at DeSales University specializing in the areas of acquired neurogenic communication disorders. Dr. Niemkiewicz received her Ph.D. in Communication Sciences and Disorders and Language Science from Pennsylvania State University. Her research focuses on interprofessional approaches to promote holistic care for people with aphasia, including the restorative effects of AAC and the effects of interprofessional education and practice on mental health outcomes for people with aphasia.

Elizabeth Parmer is a second-year graduate student at DeSales University. She has completed an externship in acute care and inpatient rehabilitation, and is currently externing in a school, working with children K-12. Her academic interests include acquired cognitive-linguistic communication disorders, motor speech disorders, and cultural and linguistic diversity.

Lia Ruggerio is an acute care speech-language pathologist at LVHN-Jefferson Health. Her primary clinical focus is the neuroscience population including stroke, brain mass, and seizure. Within this population, she has special interest in patient-centered approaches to management of dysphagia and acquired communication disorders. She has presented posters at state and national conferences as a graduate student, as well as local events and courses professionally. She actively participates in leadership development opportunities, process improvement initiatives, and clinical advancements.

Patricia Schlegel MS CCC/L is a speech language pathologist at Lehigh Valley Health Network with over 40 years of experience primarily in the acute care setting. Professional interests include dysphagia, aphasia and Video Fluoroscopic Swallow Studies with a focus on evidence-based, patient-centered care.

Elaine Walsh, M.A. CCC/SLP is a speech-language pathologist at Lehigh Valley Health Network with over 20 years' experience providing evaluation and treatment across a variety of clinical settings, including acute care and inpatient rehabilitation, outpatient therapy and pediatric practice. Professional interests include dysphagia, aphasia, and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) with a focus on evidence-based, patient-centered care.

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Lia Ruggerio has no relevant relationships to disclose.

Patricia Schlegel has no relevant relationships to discuss.

Elaine Walsh has no relevant relationships to discuss.

# POSTER PRESENTATION RETENTION OF ACOUSTIC VOICE ANALYSIS CONCEPTS USING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING



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Introductory Level  
.025 ASHA CEUs

DAVID S. FORD PH.D. CCC-SLP  
AND ALYSSA BALL

## Learning Objectives:

- Duplicate the results of this study, designing a community-engaged component to speech science courses in their respective universities.
- Generalize the findings of this study to support experiential learning components in coursework they teach.
- Compare the learning outcomes of students who participated in voice screenings to the outcomes of students who did not.



# ABSTRACT

**Main Argument:** Current literature suggests the current generation of students desire community-engaged, hands-on learning opportunities. This led to the development of a community-engaged voice screening for teachers in conjunction with the Speech Science course at Duquesne University. This study investigates the effect of student participation in the community-engaged voice screening on the retention of knowledge and skills necessary to perform acoustic analyses learned in class, one year after participation.

**Method/Procedures:** A voice screening protocol was delivered to teachers at a local school district by students of the SLP 310: Speech Science class at Duquesne University. The protocol consisted of acoustic analysis of the following tasks: production of a sustained vowel at habitual pitch and loudness, pitch glides, reading a standardized passage, and a conversational sample of voicing. The analysis included fundamental frequency and intensity, measures of voice quality (e.g. jitter, shimmer, harmonic-to-noise ratio), and cepstral measures (smoothed Cepstral Peak Prominence). The students conducted all aspects of the screening, supervised by a practicing clinician. There were 11 students who participated in the screenings and 11 who abstained. A survey was sent to all 22 students previously enrolled in the SLP 310 course. The survey asked them to complete a simple acoustic analysis, explaining the procedure and results. Students were also asked about their perceived comfort level with/confidence in performing acoustic analysis.

**Results:** The results of the survey will be discussed, in the context of students' ability to perform acoustic analysis and their perceived confidence/comfort level in performing the analysis. The implications of these findings will support the use of community-engaged voice screenings as experiential learning activities in Speech Science coursework and beyond.

# **AUTHOR BIOS**

Dr. Ford is an Assistant Professor and Director of the Voice & Upper Airway Clinic at Duquesne University. Clinical and research interests include unique populations of professional voice users, acoustic voice analysis, laryngeal imaging, and scholarship of teaching and learning within CSD/SLP curricula.

Alyssa Ball is a 3rd year, pre-professional phase student in the Speech-Language Pathology program at Duquesne University.

# **AUTHOR DISCLOSURES**

Dr. Ford is a salaried employee of Duquesne University. Parts of this presentation were funded by the John G. Rangos, Sr. Prize.

Alyssa Ball has no financial or non-financial relationships to disclose.

# POSTER PRESENTATION PLAY WITH PURPOSE: AN EVIDENCE-INFORMED GAMING LIBRARY FOR SLPS



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**KEARSTON HEALEY M.S. CCC-SLP, MELISSA  
GIOMBONI B.S., MADELYN STUART, ELLA  
BURNS, AND OLIVIA KIWAK**

## **Learning Objectives:**

- To illustrate an evidence-based gaming library in a university clinical setting based on clinical relevance.
- To analyze various parameters of games that are necessary components for successful gamification.
- To classify games based on gaming mechanisms to enhance clinicians' knowledge of game-based interventions.



# ABSTRACT

Gamification in speech therapy is increasingly used to support articulation, language, pragmatics, fluency, and executive functioning skills. A recent study showed that gamified approaches enhance learner engagement, facilitate active learning, and increase motivation in sessions. However, it was found that clinicians rely on anecdotal recommendations or client interest rather than systematically evaluating gaming parameters or client goals when selecting games for therapeutic use, resulting in difficulty choosing appropriate games. The purpose of this research project was to analyze commercially available and therapy-based games to develop an evidence-informed gaming library for use in speech-language pathology clinical practice. A survey will be conducted among clinicians to determine the effectiveness and implementation of the games for differing disorders and client populations. Using a structured analytic framework, this project evaluated games across multiple domains relevant to SLP intervention, including linguistic demands, cognitive load, social interaction, adaptability, accessibility, and clinical utility across age groups and settings. All game parameters were coded using a standardized rubric developed from current literature on speech-language intervention and gamification. The outcome of this project includes a curated, annotated gaming library designed for clients and clinicians, providing practical guidance on selecting games aligned with specific clinical goals. The gaming library will include games for adults and geriatrics, who were found to be populations less exposed to gamification. This research supports evidence-based practice, reduces barriers to intervention planning, and enhances clinical training by bridging evidence-based research with real-world application of gamification.

# AUTHOR BIOS

Kearston Healey is an Assistant Professor at Misericordia University in Dallas, PA. Kearston is a licensed and certified speech-language pathologist with over 12 years of clinical, supervisory, and teaching experience.

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# POSTER PRESENTATION THE MINDFUL CLINICIAN: PERCEIVED STRESS AND MINDFULNESS IN SLP STUDENTS



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Introductory Level  
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**KEARSTON HEALEY M.S. CCC-SLP, MELISSA  
GIOMBONI B.S., MADELYN STUART, ELLA  
BURNS, AND OLIVIA KIWAK**

## Learning Objectives:

- To describe the current status of perceived stress of speech-language pathology undergraduate and graduate students.
- To explore the current perceptions of mindfulness practices' influence on the well-being, academic functioning, and clinical readiness of speech-language pathology undergraduate and graduate students.
- To examine associations between mindfulness and perceived stress in speech-language pathology undergraduate and graduate students.



# ABSTRACT

Stress is a lifestyle factor that could enhance or detract from professional and academic growth. Traditional undergraduate and graduate university students experience stress for a variety of reasons, including academic coursework demands and clinical placement expectations. With increasingly available distance-learning programs in speech-language pathology, stress factors could also include family rearing, full-time job commitments, and time-zone deadlines. Further, the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic led to negative implications in patient-facing allied health professionals. (Lin et al., 2024). However, stress wellness can be managed through mindfulness practices, including yoga, breathwork, self-care, and peer mentoring. Previous studies have examined the use of specified mindfulness activities within the educational context of academic coursework with traditional students. However, there is limited research on the current status of perceived stress on traditional and distance speech-language pathology undergraduate and graduate students with potential mindfulness-based supports. Undergraduate and graduate students participated in an anonymous survey via Google Forms that included questions about current mindfulness practice, perceived stress, and demographic information. This survey investigated the relationship between perceived stress and potential modern mindfulness practices among traditional and online undergraduate and graduate students in the Speech-Language Pathology Program at Misericordia University. By surveying emerging professionals, we sought to gather valuable insights that could inform future mindfulness practice for program-related stressors in speech-language pathology to enhance student retention and student supports.

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