



Speaking APPropriately: AAC Apps for iPad

Prepared for the Inclusive Learning Technologies Conference, May 2012

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

- Approximately 40 year history;
- Published systematic reviews of the evidence in our area;
- Significant body of evidence on which we base our practice;
- We have a good understanding of:
 - different approaches which work for different users;
 - impact of technology
- Important factors include:
 - good vocabulary selection
 - vocabulary arrangement
 - visual characteristics
 - modeling
 - support and attitudes
- These apply to both high and low tech AAC

High technology AAC

Historically had

- Research and development before being released
- Vocabulary systems which reflected good practice
- Accompanied by teaching materials and support

Due to high production costs and low production runs the cost of these devices has also been high.

High cost led to gatekeeping model in AAC prescription - imposed by funding bodies and supported by some AAC practitioners

Many parents have told me how frustrating they found this as their children had to develop to a perceived point before getting equipment.

iPad/iPhone/iPod touch

- iPad changed the face of high tech AAC dramatically
- AAC now more consumer driven
- easily accessed technology that large numbers of people feel comfortable with
- gatekeeping has gone
- AAC has also become more mainstream and more desirable for many
- With around 200 AAC Apps on the iTunes store there is a lot of choice as well
- Anyone can now get a high tech AAC system for under \$1000



AAC Apps

- Approximately 200 on the App store
- Unfortunately many of them don't reflect good practice and research
- Example 1
 - We know that category based AAC organisation slows down communication and impedes the development of language and communication skills
 - We have known this since the 80s
 - Despite this, 43 of the AAC Apps on the App store (at the time of writing) are straight category based apps
- Example 2
 - We know that voice output encourages speech development
 - Some app developers don't include speech in their AAC Apps claiming that this is because speech output will impede speech development
- Example 3
 - We know that providing an AAC system at all times and modelling use of the system throughout the day in multiple situations leads to maximum language development and best outcomes
 - In the instructions for several AAC Apps users are advised to allow access to the user only a couple of times a week until they become more competent

Let's take a look at one...

AAC Apps

- The good news is that some apps are well designed and reflect good practice in AAC
- The number of these is slowly building

So.... let's have a look at SOME of the good apps.

We can't cover everything today (and I've tried to skip apps which are being covered in the other hands on sessions) but you can always check out which ones I think reflect good practice at:

<http://www.spectronicsinoz.com/article/iphoneipad-apps-for-aac>

PS the explanation of the rating scale is at the very bottom of the list.



[TapSpeak Sequence Plus](#)

For many AAC users we want them to learn how to be successful communicators as they develop language. For all AAC users, there are times when they want quick, errorless communication to get their message across

TapSpeak Sequence is ideal for a range of purposes, and especially for sequenced social scripts

- Jokes
- News
- Cheering at a sports event
- Gossip
- Messages
- Interviews
- etc

[Alexicom Elements Story Maker](#)

Story telling is a large part of our daily communication. For young children it is estimated to be approximately 11% of their day. As we get older it is estimated that this increases to between 50 – 80%. (See aac.unl.edu for more specific) Story telling is an important part of how we build social closeness. Roger Schank has done analyses of the way in which we use stories to identify people we might want to be friends with and how we swap stories with similar themes to build social closeness.

Alexicom Elements Story Maker is ideal for story telling – and can be accessed by touch or by switch interfaces. It even has auditory scanning as an option.

[Fat Cat Chat Apps](#)

Fat Cat Snappy Chat is one of a series of Fat Cat apps. A couple of them are “novelty” AAC Apps (Fat Cat Pirate Chat and Fat Cat Outback Chat). The other apps each address an area that is identified in the literature as a weakness in many AAC systems or as something that many people who use AAC don't use.

Fat Cat Snappy Chat specifically addresses Small Talk. Research into Communicative Competence from a number of different people tells us that Small Talk is may be an area which isn't covered in many AAC systems – but by using Small Talk a person who uses AAC can become a more valued communication partner and be seen as a more competent communicator (Light and Binger, 1998).

Fat Cat Chat Repair addresses the area of communication breakdowns – and how to repair them.



While both of these are not a fabulous stand alone communication system for an individual, they can provide great inspiration on including such phrases and language in any more comprehensive system you are setting up.

Sounding Board

Sounding Board is one of a number of apps that lets you create multiple communication pages and link them together. Sounding Board is one of the few which also has multiple access options and which can be accessed by someone using a switch. It comes with a small number of symbols, sample boards and pre-made communication boards can be purchased. The flexibility of making your own multi-level communication system means you can be in control of the language and the way in which the language is arranged.

Switch access to the iPad is mostly through Bluetooth interfaces. Some are only compatible with apps which are programmed to be switch accessible. See <http://www.janefarrall.com/html/ipad.html> for a list of all the switch accessible apps I know. Interfaces which offer greater switch access to the iPad (ie choosing between apps) etc have recently been released or will be released shortly e.g. [Tecla](#), [Switch2Scan](#).

MyVoice Communication Aid

MyVoice Communication Aid is an interesting AAC App. The vocabulary that comes with the app is not very well designed but the App was the first to make use of some of the clever features of the iPad.

Initially aimed as an App for adults who had lost speech following a stroke, MyVoice attracted a lot of attention when it was released. It was the first app to use the geolocation features in the iPad/iPhone to link vocabulary to a specific location. It also enabled all programming to be done remotely, from the MyVoice website, and then sync automatically when it opens.

Speak for Yourself

Speak for Yourself is a core vocabulary based AAC App. Core vocabulary is an evidence based approach to AAC which has been in use for a large number of years. Core vocabulary gives the user access to enough language that their language development isn't held back by other's expectations. It also allows the those in the user's environment enough language to model communication to them throughout the day.

From the main page, the user can construct a number of sentences and sentence starters and over 13,000 words can be accessed with no more than 2 presses.



Further Information

[PrAACtical AAC](#) – a relatively new website which contains a lot of information about good practice AAC and practical tips and information for setting up AAC systems. The site is run by two lecturers in AAC and they are also very active on Facebook and Twitter. They include a link on their website to all [Free AAC Apps](#).



[AAC RERC](#) – The RERC on Communication Enhancement – a research group with membership comprising some of the most prominent AAC researchers. They published a white paper on AAC on Mobile Technologies and recently also hosted a webinar on this topic.



[Jane Farrall Consulting](#) - relatively new website which contains information about AAC and Apps – and more to come! Follow me on Facebook or Twitter for information about my favourite resources and new material on my website.



And for more of my favourite AAC resources and sites go to my Delicious bookmarks at http://delicious.com/jane_farrall/aac

Facebook and Twitter are also becoming great resources in this area. In addition to the Facebook links above, there are some groups which have quite a bit of quality AAC information:

- [Augmentative Communication Resources and Help](#)
- [Assistive Technology](#)

On Twitter there are a range of hashtags worth following:

- #AACApps
- #Augcomm
- #TweetAAC
- #assistivetech
- #Slpeeps



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And finally, to finish there have been two recent blog posts on AAC Apps which have been excellent.

- [Let's Talk About AAC Apps](#) on the Tech In Special Ed blog
- [Stop with the "Little Words"](#) grab-bag in AAC

I hope you enjoy reading these two as much as I did!

The Prezi which accompanied this presentation can be found [here](#).





Speaking Appropriately: AAC Apps for iPad

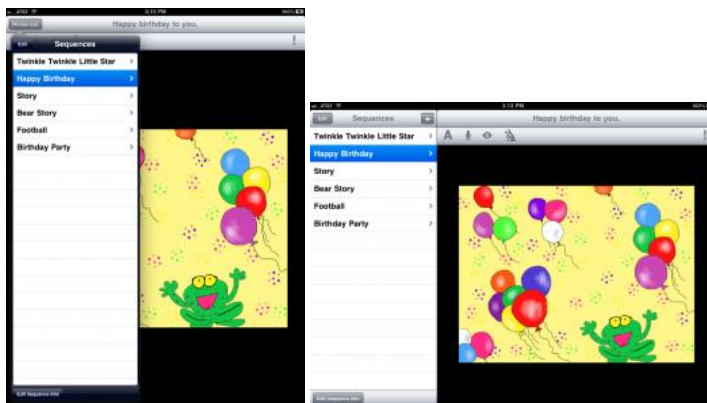
Hands-on Instruction Sheets

TapSpeak Sequence

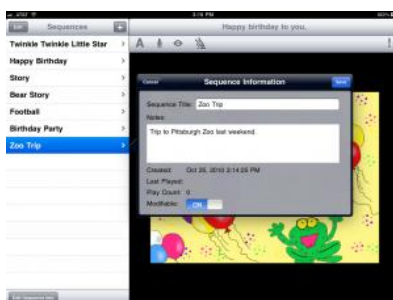


Add Sequence

1. Make sure your iPad is in landscape orientation. The "+" button only appears in landscape orientation in the current Sequence version.



2. You can add a new sequence when you're viewing the sequence list. If you see a list of phrases, tap the "Sequences" button in the navigation bar to return to the sequence list. Tap the "+" button and the sequence editor appears.

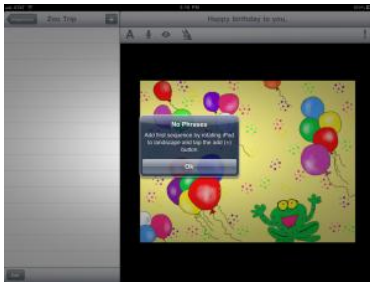


3. You only need to add a sequence name in order to save the new sequence and start adding phrases. You can optionally add some notes. After you've completed editing your sequence, you can protect it from

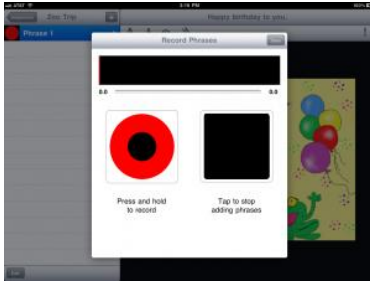


unwanted changes by turning off the modifiable switch. Tap the Save button to add the sequence or tap the Cancel button to cancel adding the sequence.

4. Tap the sequence you just added to go to the sequence's phrase list. The first time you enter the sequence's phrases, you'll see an alert box saying you need to tap the "+" button to add phrases. Tap the Ok button to dismiss the alert box, and tap the "+" button.



5. The phrase recorder now pops up. You record phrases in a sequence just as you would with a sequential message switch.

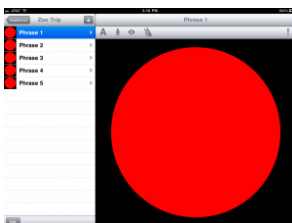


5.1 Tap and hold the record button

5.2 Speak a phrase

5.3 Release the record button.

Repeat steps 5.1 – 5.3 until you've finished recording all phrases in a sequence. To end recording, tap the stop button.





6. You can now play your sequence by tapping the red button. The sequence player will cycle through each phrase and restart at the beginning when the last phrase has played. You can also now edit any phrase title, recording, and visual target.

Taken from <http://conleysolutions.com/wordpress/support/user-guides/tapspeak-sequence/add-sequence>

TapSpeak Sequence Plus includes over 4500 Picture Communication Symbols (from Boardmaker) for inclusion in your sequence.

Examples of sequence social scripts taken from www.lburkhart.com/chat_scripts.htm

RECYCLING SCRIPT

Excuse me.
Hi!
I'm Codie
I'm interviewing people about recycling and their recycling habits.
I'm going to ask you some questions about recycling.
Do you recycle?
That's good information.
Do you have a way to recycle at home?
How about at work?
Do you have to sort the stuff you recycle?
What kinds of things do you recycle?
Do you have anything else you'd like to tell me about your recycling habits?
Thanks for your time.
Have a great day.
Happy Recycling.

SIMON SAYS

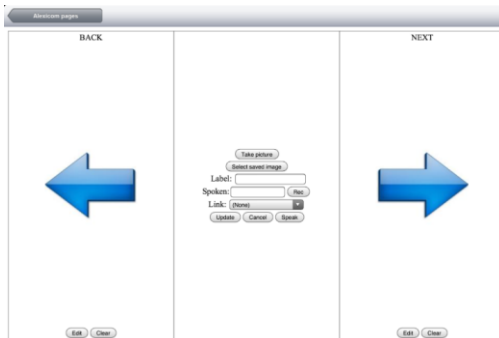
Hey.
Guys.
Let's play Simon Says.
Are you ready?
If you're ready, clap your hands 3 times.
Great, I'll be Simon.
Let's start.
Simon says, Touch your nose!
Simon says, Clap your hands!
Touch the ground!
Ha, ha - I didn't say Simon Says . . . who is out?
Simon says, Stomp the ground!
That was fun.
Who wants to be Simon this time?



Alexicom Elements Story Maker



1. In this exercise, we are going to create an 8 part story.
2. To edit, you will need to go into the settings and turn on "Enable editing, copying and deletion" (settings can be found on the bottom tool bar of the app).
3. Select the edit button on the top left of the screen
4. Select B arrows 1
5. Select edit on the central button (currently says 1) and change the picture by selecting either "take picture" or "select saved image"



6. Type a label.
7. Add speech. You can do this either by typing words to speak into the box next to "spoken"
8. Record some speech (if you want to)
9. If you don't want recorded speech, type the phrase you would like the button to say into the box next to spoken.
10. Press update – the picture you selected should appear in the button and you should be able to press the button to hear it speak.
11. Now select the Alexicom pages back button at the top left of the screen and select B arrows 2.
12. One more, add a picture and some speech.
13. Continue with this process until you have all 8 pages of your story ready to go.
14. On the page menu screen press the done button in the top left.
15. Now, select B arrows 1 from the list of pages to read through your story. If you want to make an extra comment at any time, you can press the message window at the top and the onscreen keyboard will appear.

There are different templates – some which automatically move forward when you select the image and some that require swiping.



Sounding Board



Creating a New Board - Part 1: Setting up the Board



Select the "Create a New Board" option to begin the process. You may complete the following tasks in any order, but we recommend beginning by giving the board a name to differentiate it from other boards you'll create later. Next, choose the visual layout for the board. You may choose a 1x1, 1x2, 1x3, 2x2, 2x3, or 3x3 grid for a total of 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, or 9 message locations respectively.

Note: You do not need to fill every location on the grid. For example, if you want an "8-message" grid, simply select the 3x3 grid and do not add a message to the ninth location. You can use this technique to create a number of additional configurations to suit the communication needs of the user.

Creating a New Board - Part 2: Adding Messages



Adding messages to your board is a three-step process (with an optional fourth step to link the message to another board). When you select the "messages" option, you will see available locations on the grid. Click on any message location to begin.

1. Give the message a name. That name will appear on the board under the image, so name it whatever makes sense for your communication outcome. You may choose not to name the message if you do not want that name to appear on the board when it displays for the user.





2. Select an image for the message. You may choose (and search for) a message from the included AbleNet symbol library, use a photo from your iPhone or iPod Touch photo library, or take a new photo using your iPhone camera (the last option is not available for the iPod Touch). For each selection, you will need to confirm your choice.



3. Record a message to be played when the message is touched. Simply touch the "Record Message" button to begin recording, and "Stop" when you are finished. Remember to speak clearly and close to the microphone to ensure a clear sound.



4. (Optional) To link a message to another board: Select the "Link Message to Another Board" option. The "Boards List" screen will appear. Select any existing board. When you finish your board, this message location will play its message and link to the board you specify. Click "Done" to finish.

Repeat steps 1 through 3 (and optional #4) with each additional message.



Instructions taken from <http://www.ablenetinc.com/Assistive-Technology/Communication/SoundingBoard#6.0>