A Look at Communicators through an AAC Lens

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|  | Key Ideas |
| **Janice Light** | **Communicative Competence**: “The ability to communicate functionally in the natural environment and to adequately meet daily communication needs” (Light, J. 1989) Development of communicative competence requires the acquisition and integration of skills in all four areas:  ***Linguistic Skills***: receptive and expressive language,(skills to understand spoken language) learning the “linguistic code”-symbols of the AAC system and how to combine them to make meaning (mastery of the AAC system linguistic code). Use of both “languages/linguistic codes during a communication interaction.  ***Social Skills***: knowledge, judgment and skills in the social rules of interaction. Skills to express a full range of communicative functions and develop positive relationships and interactions. i.e., active participation in conversations, desire to communicate, discourse strategies, interaction functions-(requesting, commenting etc…).  ***Strategic Skills:*** compensatory strategies for effective communication. A collection of skills that allow individuals who use AAC to compensate for limitations imposed on them by a variety of factors including; partner constraints or AAC device.  ***Operational Skills***: technical skills required to use the system accurately, efficiently and appropriately. Ability to access system and use features (on/off, volume)  ***Light, J.* (*1989*). *Toward a definition of communicative competence for individuals using augmentative and alternative communication systems*. Augmentative and Alternative Communication, *5*, *137*-*144*** |
| **Pat Dowden** | **Communicative Independence: 3 levels**  **The Emerging communicator** has unreliable symbolic language.  The **Context-Dependent Communicator** uses symbolic language reliably, but he or she is limited in terms of the vocabulary available or the partners who understand. We have to work on expanding vocabulary and expanding the partners for these individuals.  The **Independent Communicator** is no longer dependent on others to provide vocabulary; they have the spelling skills to communicate about anything they wish to. These individuals are also not dependent on familiar partners; they have the ability and the means of communication (the AAC system) that works for any listener, familiar or not  ***Dowden, P.A. (1999). Augmentative & Alternative Communication for Children with Motor Speech Disorders. In Caruso, A., and Strand, E. A. Eds.) Clinical Management of Motor Speech Disorders of Children. New York: Thieme Publishing Co.*** |