

Blischak, D. (1995). *Effects of using aided AAC methods on assessment and instruction outcomes of rhyming accuracy*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Purdue University, West Lafayette. Lyle L. Lloyd (Advisor): 125 pages of text, 147 references, 7 appendices, 12 tables, and 11 figures.

Preschoolers' skill in rhyming has been shown to be a powerful predictor of later reading and spelling abilities and, as such, holds important implications for assessing prereading skills in children with little or no functional speech. Such children may use aided methods of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) such as graphic symbols, as an alternative to or to augment natural speech production. Part One of this study involved determining performance differences that may occur when graphic symbols are provided during rhyme assessment. Thirty-three 3-to 5-year-old nondisabled preschool children were assessed on tasks of rhyme detection, rhyme oddity, and rhyme production under two conditions, with and without graphic symbols. Results indicated that for children with high rhyming ability, the presence of graphic symbols did not substantially alter performance on these rhyming tasks. For children with low rhyming ability, graphic symbols appeared to have assisted them in guessing correct responses, particularly in assessment of rhyme oddity and rhyme production.

In Part Two of this study, nine preschool and young school-aged children with severe speech impairments received similar rhyme assessment to subject in Part One. They were then divided into two groups, and received six weeks of individual rhyme instruction utilizing two different AAC methods –graphic symbols and graphic symbols with synthetic speech output. Follow-up post-instruction assessment performance indicated that children who received rhyme instruction with synthetic speech output demonstrated slight increases in rhyme production in comparison to children who received instruction with graphic symbols only. Children who received rhyme instruction with synthetic speech output also demonstrated marked increases in natural speech production during post-instruction assessment. These results have implications in terms of effective rhyme assessment methods for children with severe speech impairments, as well as providing preliminary support for early provision of voice output communication aids (VOCAs) during rhyme instruction.