

Lilienfeld, M. (2000). *The attitudes of children toward unfamiliar peers who use AAC*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa. Erna Alant (Advisor): 65 pages of text, 59 references, 11 appendices, 15 tables, and 5 figures.

AAC aims at improving the interaction of adults and children with LNFS in their natural daily environments. Despite the considerable research of the past few decades into various aspects of AAC and the concurrent rapid advances in clinical practice during the same period, the social participation of many AAC users remains problematic. The lack of interaction by children who use AAC with their peers has been extensively documented. The potential of technological features of an AAC system to influence the attitudes and interaction of peers forms the basis of this investigation.

The purpose of this research was to determine the impact of voice output, as a characteristic of a child's AAC system, on the attitudes of unfamiliar peers. The effect of the gender of the peers on their attitudes to children with disabilities and LNFS was also of interest as previous studies generally indicated that girls held more favorable attitudes to peers with disabilities. The need to develop a suitable tool to measure the attitudes of peers to a child with disabilities and LNFS was ascertained. The present investigation, therefore, also included an attempt to design a scale, the CADAQ, to measure differences in attitudes toward children who are AAC users, dependent on the output mode of the device.

A descriptive survey design was used and, prior to the main study, the suitability of the attitude scale was tested in a pilot study. Initial attitudes toward the peer with physical disabilities and LNFS were measured by the CADAQ, according to three dimensions: affective/behavioral, cognitive/belief and communication competence. Results reflected more favorable attitudes to the presence of voice output in comparison to the no voice option. Girls were also found to hold more positive attitudes to the peer with disabilities and LNFS. Good internal consistency of the CADAQ was demonstrated through an item analysis.

Clinical implications and recommendations for additional research are discussed.