Access Methods for Light Tech AAC

Light Tech Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)
Light tech AAC are communication materials which do not require electricity or batteries to operate. Examples include communication books, communication boards, paper-based keyboards, timetables, objects, etc.

Access Methods
People with physical and/or visual disabilities may find it difficult to access light tech AAC materials directly by pointing to items, sticking items or even turning pages. Several methods may be used to help them access their light tech AAC material more easily and effectively. Several examples are listed below:

1- Partner-Assisted Scanning: Partners provide scanning by showing, pointing, and/or speaking the names of items. The light tech AAC user, indicates using yes or no which item they want to select. Scanning may be visual (partner points to items), auditory (partner reads name of items aloud) or both visual and auditory (partner points to and read names of items aloud) - depending on the user’s needs. If visual scanning is used, the partner may first point to a group of items such as a column. Once the column is selected, then the partner proceeds to scan the individual items in that row.

2- Eye Pointing: The user may select items by looking at them. The communication partner observes the user’s eyes and the items the user is looking at to determine the message. Systems which use eye pointing are often placed between the user and the communication partner with an “observation” window through which the partner can observe the user’s eyes. The following are examples of such systems:

 Speakbook
 E-tran Board
3- **Sensory Feedback:** For people with visual disabilities adding dots or Velcro® on items or pages may help them in recognising the items they are selecting. Using real 3D objects may also be an option.

4- **Colour Contrast:** Bright colours are generally the easiest to see because of their ability to reflect light. Solid, bright colours, such as red, orange, and yellow are usually more visible than pastels. High colour contrast or inverted colours may help people with visual needs. Contrast sensitivity refers to the ability to detect differences between light and dark areas. If you increase the contrast between the symbol and its background, you can make the symbol more visible.

5- **Layout:** Using larger cells, or thickening the borders between the cells may help those who can use their finger, fist, hand, etc. to point but have poor control. Using colour coding can also help. For example, 1) adding a background fill to the cell, 2) adding a coloured border, 3) adding colour to the title bar (the area around the text has a coloured background but the rest of the cell does not).

6- **Pointers:** Using pointers which can be held or attached to the hand, wrist, or head may also be helpful. They provide an alternative method of accessing light tech AAC for people with limited hand use for activities including turning pages or pointing to letters on an alphabet or symbol-based communication board.

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