THE MULTIMODAL COMMUNICATION SCREENING TASK
FOR PERSONS WITH APHASIA
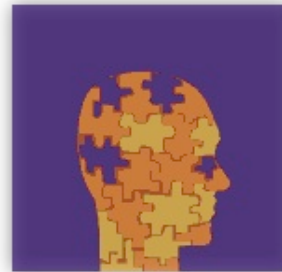
MCST - A

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SCORING FORM

Client: _____ ID # _____

Evaluator: _____ Administration Date: _____

Introduction

<u>Background</u>

People with global aphasia characteristically demonstrate a pervasive, severe language impairment that significantly interferes with communication (Collins, 1986; Nicholas & Helm-Estabrooks, 1994). They can no longer use their primary (verbal expression and comprehension) and secondary (writing and reading comprehension) language modalities to convey specific propositional information representing their ideas and needs (Helm-Estabrooks, 1984). Some clinician-researchers have attempted to teach people with global aphasia to convey their ideas by accessing symbol-based augmentative or alternative communication (AAC) techniques such as picture boards, novel symbol sets, communication notebooks with customized phrases, or voice output devices contexts (Beck & Fritz, 1998; Enderby & Hamilton, 1983; Glass, Gazaniga, & Premack, 1975; Johannsen-Horbach, Cegla, Mager, & Schempp, 1985; Weinrich, Steele, Carlson, & Kleczewska, 1989). These studies, as well as some additional case reports, showed that a small number of communicators learned to independently use complex, multi-level and multi-symbol systems to communicate in highly complex contexts, such as teaching in a classroom, conversing, or ordering food at a deli (Garrett, Beukelman, & Low, 1989; King & Hux, 1995; Lasker, LaPointe, & Kodras, 2004). Others learned to select messages for highly specific contexts when message sets are restricted in size or when prompted by a communication partner . However, a large portion of the group of individuals with severe aphasia could not initiate use of AAC strategies or use a repertoire of symbols outside of highly structured training contexts (Kraat, 1990). They remained dependent upon communication partners to offer choices for responses on a turn-by-turn basis (Garrett & Beukelman, 1995, Lasker. Hux, Garrett, Moncrief, & Eischeid, 1997).

The reasons why some communicators with severe aphasia have difficulty retrieving, constructing, and utilizing messages from symbol-based AAC systems while others are successful are not thoroughly understood. Garrett and Kimelman (2000) hypothesized that independently-accessed AAC strategies (e.g., voice output communication devices, phrase and letter boards, etc.) may overwhelmingly tax the cognitive-linguistic resources (e.g., memory, symbol recognition and association, semantic retrieval, syntactic encoding, pragmatic skills, and auditory and visual comprehension) of many communicators with aphasia. Because of this wide spectrum of competency within the more general domain of severe aphasia, it is often difficult to determine who is a candidate for low tech, partner-supported communication strategies and who may benefit from high technology AAC systems. Clinicians need a clearer understanding of both the cognitive-linguistic competencies possessed by communicators with aphasia and those needed to use a specific AAC strategy or technique.

<u>Purpose</u>

The Multimodal Communication Screening Test for Aphasia (MCST-A) is one of 3 criterion-referenced assessment tools in the *AAC Assessment Battery for Aphasia (AAC-ABA)* developed by K. Garrett & J. Lasker and available online at **http://aac.unl.edu**. The MCST-A is designed to systematically assess whether people with severe aphasia can use alternative or augmentative modalities to communicate via alternative pictorial symbols. The Systems Trials Protocol for Aphasia (AAC-STA) and the AAC Categorical Assessment (AAC-CAT) tool (the other two tools within the *AAC Assessment Battery for Aphasia – available online soon)* also will aid in determining whether the person with aphasia can benefit from partner dependent or independent alternative communication strategies.

Description – MCST-A

The MCST-A consists of 8 tasks (represented in test Sections A through H): communicating target concepts by selecting one or more pictorial (e.g., line drawing, photographs) symbols, choosing pictorial symbols to complete a category, telling and retelling a story by pointing to photos in a sequence, choosing pictures and phrases to complete a transaction in a drugstore or conversation with grandchildren, telling information about places by pointing to locations on a simplified map, and supplementing alternative communication efforts by spelling or gesturing.

The test is administered by presenting each page of the picture stimulus manual to the person with aphasia and then asking him/her to communicate a specific message. The communicator can make a total of three attempts to communicate each item; the examiner should provide whichever cues may be necessary to help the individual communicate as effectively as possible on trials 2 and 3 (see Table 1 – cues). The communicator's responses are scored in terms of accuracy of messages/symbols selected, number of cues provided, number of attempts, and the evaluators rating of adequacy (**+** = complete and accurately conveys the message, **+/-** = partially conveys the intended message, and **-** = does not convey the message). The individual's pattern of responses within the task can also be described qualitatively at the end of each section. A summary sheet allows the examiner to compile the individual section scores and cues, which can then assist in interpreting whether the communicator falls into the category of *partner-dependent* (i.e., cannot use AAC strategies without partner support/cues) or *independent*. In addition, the examiner can view which strategies were used most successfully to communicate the target messages by comparing performance across sections.

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Acknowledgements

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Available at: http://aac.unl.edu
                       http://alternativecommunicationtherapy.weebly.com

• MCST-A Picture Stimulus Book
• MCST-A Scoresheet and Instructions

II.   *Administration Guidelines*

<u>Preliminary Directions to the Communicator</u>

Place the closed MCST-A Picture Stimulus book in front of the individual with aphasia. Then say…

> "Here. Look at this book. Look at all of the pictures. You could tell me some things by pointing to them. Now, look at the rest of the pages [model. . . . turn pages. . . indicate pictures]. Take your time. I'm going to ask you to tell me some things with this book when you're done."

<u>Abbreviated Administration Guidelines for the Evaluator</u>
1. The MCST-A should be administered in a **contextual, interactive manner**. Therefore, present instructions in a manner that ensures <u>the test-taker understands what to do</u> for each item. This means that you can simplify the wording, explain in more detail, or augment the communicator's comprehension of each situational question by pantomiming or writing key words. To elicit an attempt to communicate, you can use any of the **cues** described on page 3 of this scoresheet/manual. You can also **model** how <u>you</u> would communicate through alternative symbols/gestures if you think this is necessary for the communicator to understand the task (but check that you used a 'model' in the appropriate 'cues' column).
2. Present stimuli one at a time. Emphasize underlined words when presenting each of the stimulus items. <u>Close the book between items for subtests A, B, G,H</u>; otherwise, leave the book open after the client has located the correct page for item 1.
3. Provide plenty of time for the test-taker to respond.
4. Record **actual behaviors** (spoken, gestural, picture symbols, spelling, etc.) in the third column of each subtest's scoresheet.
5. Allow the test-taker a maximum of **three trials per item**, or until they indicate they have completed the item or that they do not wish to continue. Record the **total number of trials** in the second-last column.
6. Encourage the test-taker to attempt the first trial independently. If s/he cannot begin [no response], or if the first trial is unsuccessful, attempt to elicit a <u>successful</u> communicative behavior using **cues** that you judge are the minimum needed. <u>Increase the number and/or the directiveness of the cues</u> for the third trial if necessary (e.g., narrowing down the symbol choices [NAR] is more directive than directing the test-taker's visual attention to a general area on the page (DVA). **Check off all of the cues** you used to elicit the communicative behavior for each trial.
7. In the last column, rate and record the successfulness of the communicator's last attempt (trial) to convey the message:
   - **+**   adequately conveyed the target concepts to the communication partner
   - **+/–**   partially conveyed the target concepts to the communication partner
   - **-**   was inadequate or incorrect in conveying the target concepts to the communication partner
8. Feel free to administer subtests across multiple days.
9. **Videotape** the administration for later visual analysis.
10. **Summarize** the individual's performance <u>descriptively</u> and <u>quantitatively</u> on the summary sheet at the end of the test. An example is provided, but it is anticipated that each individual's performance will differ and thus be described in unique ways.

III. Description of Cues MCST-A ©2005

	rep	exp	fb	open	page	narrow	dva	differ	conf	model
REP = **repetition** of stimuli when client does not appear to understand.										
EXP = Cue for client to **expand** their communication e.g., "I think you can tell me more…"										
FB = message **feedback** regarding an **inaccurate** attempt at conveying a message. "That means you want to turn on a light, not shoes."										
OPEN = clinician **opens** the book to get started										
PAGE = clinician locates specific **page** if client is unable to do so independently.										
NARROW = **narrow** field of **choices** by pointing to a restricted area on the page.										
DVA = **direct** client's **visual attention** to a general area on the page.										
DIFFER = instructions to use a **different modality**. "No, no don't tell me, show me/point."										
CONF = **confirming**. "You're on the right track". "I understand the first part about the grandkids".										
MOD = **modeling**. Show client what to do if unable to find symbolic representation of intended message.										

Page 1 (of Stimulus Book): **Communicating 1-Symbol Messages to Request Basic Needs or Respond to Biographical Information Questions**   **MCST-A** ©2005

Directions to evaluator: For items 1-5, read the carrier phrase, placing emphasis on the words in bold print. **CLOSE THE BOOK AFTER EACH RESPONSE**

Directions to client: Now, let's look at this page. Look at all of the pictures ([point]). You don't have to talk [shake head 'no' and point to mouth]. BUT I want you to tell me by pointing at the pictures [model]. Ready? Listen…

Stimulus	Sample Target Behaviors	Record/Describe Client Behavior (Maximum 3 Attempts)	Cues										Total # Client Attempts	Adequacy +, +/-, -
			rep	exp	fb	open	page	narrow	dva	differ	conf	model		
How would **you** tell me [point to client]…**"You need some shoes"** (augment comprehension by gesturing "walk" as needed).	a) Point to picture of shoes on page 1 b) Point to own shoes	1												
		2												
		3												
How would **you** tell me [point to client]…**"You're hungry – you'd like some food."**	a) Point to "eat" symbol on page 1 b) Gesture "eat" by rubbing stomach or pointing to mouth	1												
		2												
		3												
How would **you** tell me…**"You're really tired".** ("You need to sleep").	a) Point to "sleep" symbol on page 1 b) Gesture "sleep"	1												
		2												
		3												
How would **you** tell me…**"The light bulb burned out….it's dark over there."**	a) Point to "light" symbol on page 1 b) Point to light on the ceiling	1												
		2												
		3												
How would **you** tell me [fade point]…**"You need to buy** something.. **you need to go shopping".**	a) Point to picture of money on page 4 b) Present their own money or wallet c) Pantomime "money" by rubbing fingers together	1												
		2												
		3												
How can **you** tell **me where you live? Which state** do you live in?"	a) Point to location using the map on p.5 b) Point to first letter of city name on alphabet page c) Partially spell city/town name	1												
		2												
		3												

Directions to evaluator: For the following items, read the carrier phrase, placing emphasis on the bold word(s). **CLOSE THE BOOK AFTER EACH RESPONSE**

Directions to communicator: [Close Stimulus Book] Good! Now, do the same thing again. But this time, I want you to tell me **something more complicated**. You can point to **any picture** you want in this book -- like this. [flip pages, point to several pictures]. You can point to **more** than one picture -- like this [model "turn on the light -- it's time to eat"]. You can use **gestures** too [demonstrate "hello"]. Ready? How would you tell me…"

Stimulus	Sample Target Behaviors	Record/Describe Client Behavior (Maximum 3 Attempts)	Cues										Total # Client Attempts	Adequacy +, +/-, -
			rep	exp	fb	open	page	narrow	dva	differ	conf	model		
How would you tell me: ""I've been **walking** a lot to **lose some weight.**"	a) Point to the picture of 'shoes' on page 1 then the symbol for 'little' on page 2. b) Gesture 'walking' with fingers and then point to the symbol for 'little' on page 2.	1												
		2												
		3												
"**Close the window**; it's too **cold outside.**	a) Point to the 'closed window' then to the symbol for 'cold' on page 2. b) Gesture 'shiver' then point to a window in testing room.	1												
		2												
		3												
"I'm **glad** my **grandkids** are visiting me **next week.**"	a) Point to 'happy' symbol on page 2 then the photo of grandchildren on page 3, followed by the 'calendar' symbol on page 3.	1												
		2												
		3												
"I want to **buy** some **toys** for my **grandkids.**"	a) Point to 'toys' then 'grandchildren' then symbol of 'money'. b) Point to 'toys' then gesture towards self, then gesture 'short height' for children	1												
		2												
		3												
"I'd like to **eat** an **expensive** meal at (**name of his/her favorite restaurant**)."	a) Points to 'eat' symbol page 1, then 'money' symbol page 3, then spells name of restaurant. b) pantomimes 'eat', 'money', then spells.	1												
		2)												
		3)												

Directions to Evaluator: **Open** the Stimulus Book to page 4 (Categorization). Ask the communicator to complete each of the 4 (A-D) categories by selecting an item in the bottom row. You will assist the individual to visually review each column/category and the available choices, but you will not tell him/her the name of the category unless needed. **If you do provide the name of the category, check the second column** in the cues section.

Directions to Client: "Look here [point to column 1]. Look at each of these pictures [point from top to bottom to the 2 pictures in the column]. "Now, look here. [point to the blank]. "Which picture belongs in the group?" [point to the row of category pictures that might complete the category at the bottom of the page, then point to each picture in the row]. "Show me which one completes the group."

Stimulus	Correct Response	Record/Describe Client Behavior	Cues										Total # Client Attempts	Adequ +, +/-
		Trial	rep	Cat name	fb	open	page	narrow	dva	differ	conf	model		
Fruit	Cherries	1												
		2												
		3												
Transportation	Boat OR Tennis Shoe	1												
		2												
		3												
Celebrations	Gift Box	1												
		2												
		3												
Weather	Umbrella	1												
		2												
		3												

Evaluator Comments:

Directions to Evaluator: **CLOSE THE BOOK AT THE BEGINNING (ONLY) OF THE DRUGSTORE AND CHILDREN CONTEXTS**.

Directions to Communicator: "This time, we want to see how you would ask some questions in a **drugstore,** and then with your **children/grandchildren."**

Stimulus	Sample Target Behaviors	Record/Describe Client Behavior	Cues										Total # Client Attempts	Adequacy +, +/-,-
			rep	exp	fb	open	page	narrow	dva	differ	conf	model		
At the **DRUGSTORE.**														
"Find the page that you would use at the **drugstore**…you know, if you need a **prescription or something."**	a) Opens book to drugstore (page 4). Cue as needed.	1												
		2												
		3												
"How would you tell the clerk: 'I need some **toothpaste**…to brush my teeth'?"	a) Points to 'toothpaste' symbol b) gestures "brushing teeth"	1												
		2												
		3												
"How would you ask the clerk: Where's the **hairspray** and the **aspirin**?'"	a) points to both picture symbols	1												
		2												
		3												
"How would you ask the clerk to fill a couple of your **prescriptions?** Make sure she answers your questions, like **how many pills should I take?"**	a) Points to the message box about prescriptions and the individual questions within the box.	1												
		2												
		3												
Talking with the **CHILDREN/GRANDCHILDREN.**														
"How would you ask your **children/ grandchildren** some questions about **school?** Show me.	a) points to phrases b) gestures c) other	1												
		2												
		3												
"How would you find out **what they wanted for (holiday name)?**	a) points to phrases b) gestures c) other	1												
		2												
		3												

Directions for evaluator: First tell the communicator that you want them to tell you a story using the six pictures about the wedding on page 7 of the picture stimulus book. Record the number of referential points to key elements in the picture, whether the communicator has told the story in a left-to-right pictorial progression, and semantic elements that were communicated via other modalities (e.g., gestural, written, alphabet, verbal). Ask guided questions as needed to encourage communicator to elaborate or complete the storytelling (e.g., "What do you think happened here?" "Where do you think they were?" "What happened?")

Directions for communicator: [Open book to storytelling page]. "I want you to tell me a story using pictures. You can use these pictures of a wedding [point to pictures as you give choices]. Include ALL the things that are happening. OK?"

Stimulus	Sample Target Behaviors	Record/Describe Client Behavior	Cues										Total # Client Attempts	Adequac +, +/-, -
			rep	exp	fb	open	page	narrow	dva	differ	conf	model		
Photo #1: "Bride, groom & preacher"	Used **LEFT TO RIGHT picture progression** to tell the story? (Must point to all of the pictures in the correct order to get credit)	Circle: YES NO												
Photo #2: "Exchanging vows, 'I do'"	Communicated specific semantic elements by **POINTING**?	Circle: YES NO Tally number of instances of referential pointing here:												
Photo #3: "The reception and invitation to dance"	Communicated specific semantic elements **VERBALLY?**	Circle: YES NO List:												
Photo #4: "Flower girls dancing to the band"	Communicated specific semantic elements using SYMBOLIC **GESTURES?**	Circle: YES NO List:												
Photo #5: "Scarecrows – just married"	Communicated specific semantic elements by turning to page 9 and **SPELLING?**	Circle: YES NO List												
Photo 6: "At the beach"	Communicated specific semantic elements using any **OTHER PAGE (Symbols)?**	Circle: YES NO List:												

Evaluator Comments:

Page 7 (of Stimulus Book):: Story ReTelling (from a model) using a Descriptive Scene Sequence

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Directions for evaluator: Now tell the communicator that you want them to tell the same story using pictures, gestures, spelling, symbols, or speech after listening to your version. Then tell the story (in color text below), pointing to each picture in row 1 then row 2 as you say the corresponding sentence. After the communicator retells the story, record the number of referential points to key elements in the picture, whether the communicator has told the story in a left-to-right pictorial progression, and semantic elements that were communicated via other modalities (e.g., gestural, written, alphabet, verbal). **Ask guided questions as needed** to encourage communicator to elaborate or complete the story retelling (e.g., "What do you think happened here?" "Where do you think they were?" "What happened?")

Directions for communicator: [Open book and locate the storytelling page]. "This time, I want you to listen to how I tell the story. Watch me too – see how I use my hands, and how I spell some things. Then you tell me the same story as best you can. Include ALL the things that are happening. You can point, tell me aloud, spell, show me with your hands or your acting, whatever you want. Ready to listen?" (Tell story). "Now, you tell the story. (Close book). Ready?"

Picture 1 (top left): (Open book and located wedding story on page 7). "It was the big day -- my friend _____'s *wedding day*. She married a wonderful *young man, Ralph Johnson* (point to young man, then point to letters "R" and "J" on the alphabet page. He is from *New York* (point to the state of New York on the map page)." **Picture 2 (top middle) .** A *lot of people* came to the wedding (point to audience). It was held in a lovely *old church* (point to the architecture of the church). Here the *preacher* told them to say, *'I do'* (point to the minister, then the man and the woman). **Picture 3 (top right) .** They had a lovely *reception* afterwards. It was held *outside,* at the church (point to the trees and lawn in the picture, then back to the church in Picture 2). *Ralph asked his new wife to dance* (point to both people, then pantomime 'dance')." **Picture 4 (bottom left).** "The flower *girls* were very sweet. They had *a lot* of them! (point to all of the girls). They had a lot of *fun dancing* to *the band* (point to the band in the background)**Picture 5 (bottom middle):** "The *couple* had fun on their *honeymoon* (point to couple kneeling). They had their picture taken with *some scarecrows* here…(point to scarecrows in the background)." Look, the sign says, *"Just married."* **Picture 6 (bottom right):** "And they must have gone to the *beach*, too. It was pretty *cold,* though – she has her *coat on* (point to woman's coat)." **Optional ending:** "I hope they have a happy life together."

Stimulus	Target Behaviors	Record/Describe Client Behavior	Cues											Total # Client Attempts	Adequacy +, +/-, -
			rep	exp	fb	open	page	narrow	dva	differ	conf	model			
Photo #1: "Bride, groom & preacher"		Circle: YES NO													
Photo #2: "Exchanging vows, 'I do'"	Communicated specific semantic elements by **POINTING?**	Circle: YES NO Tally instances of referential pointing here:													
Photo #3: "The reception and invitation to dance"	Communicated specific semantic elements **VERBALLY?**	Circle: YES NO List													
Photo #4: "Flower girls dancing to the band"	Communicated specific semantic elements using SYMBOLIC **GESTURES?**	Circle: YES NO Tally number of instances of referential pointing here:													
Photo #5: "Scarecrows – just married"	Communicated specific semantic elements by turning to page 9 and **SPELLING?**	Circle: YES NO List:													

Photo 6: "At the beach"	Communicated specific semantic elements by turning to page 8 and **POINTING TO NY STATE** on the MAP?	Circle: YES NO List:												
	Used **LEFT TO RIGHT picture progression** to tell the story? (Must point to all of the pictures in the correct order to get credit)													

Directions to Evaluator: Book is **CLOSED** to begin this task. **CLOSE BOOK BETWEEN EACH ITEM.**

Directions to Communicator: "Now, I'm interested in learning about where you're from, and where you want to travel."

Stimulus	Sample Target Behaviors	Record/Describe Client Behavior	Cues										Total # Client Attempts	Adequacy +, +/-,-
			rep	exp	fb	open	page	narrow	dva	differ	conf	model		
"Which part of the book would help me learn about your **travels**?"	Opens book. Cue if needed.	1												
		2												
		3												
"How would you tell me where you were **born?** ("Which state you were born in" - if needed)	Points to state.	1												
		2												
		3												
"Tell me where you've **traveled on vacation**…or for work…or for your kids."	Points to state, location (verify).	1												
		2												
		3												
"Where would you **really like to travel to**…someplace you've never been, perhaps, or someplace you want to go back to?"	Points to state, location (verify).	1												
		2												
		3												

Evaluator Comments:

Directions to Evaluator: Book is **CLOSED** to begin this task. **CLOSE BOOK BETWEEN EACH ITEM.**

Directions to Communicator: "Sometimes you might be able to spell to communicate something. Even if you can't spell the whole word, just one of the letters would be helpful. Here…try:

Stimulus	Sample Target Behaviors	Record/Describe Client Behavior	Cues										Total# Client Attempts	Adequac +, +/-, -
			rep	exp	fb	open	page	narrow	dva	differ	conf	model		
"How would you tell someone your **last name?**"	a) spell entire last name b) spell partial last name c) spell first letter of last name d) write in the air or on paper	1												
		2												
		3												
"How would you tell me the name of your **favorite dessert?**"	a) spell entire dessert b) spell partial dessert c) spell first letter of dessert d) write in the air or on paper	1												
		2												
		3												
"Favorite s**ports team?**"	a) spell entire sports team b) spell partial sports team c) spell first letter of sports team d) write in the air or on paper	1												
		2												
		3												
"**What you drive** to get home?"	a) spell the word "car" or "bus" b) spell the make/model of the car	1												
		2												
		3												

EVALUATOR COMMENTS:

Scoring Summary Sheet

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Subtest/Skill	Total Successful Items	Response Types (pic, gest, other)	# of Attempts	Successful Navigation of Page Location?	Record Total Number of Cues across Subtests									
					rep	exp	fb	open	page	narrow	dva	diff	conf	mode
A. 1-Symbol Messages to Request Basic Needs or Respond to Biogra-phical Questions	of 6													
B. Combining 2-3 Symbols	of 5													
C. Categorizing	of 4													
D. Using Environmentally-Stored Phrases in Specific Context	of 6													
E. Storytelling Using a Descriptive Scene Sequence	of 6													
F. Story Retelling Using a Descriptive Scene Sequence	of 6													
G. Telling About Locations from a Map	of 4													
H. Spelling	of 4													
OVERALL TOTALS	of 32													

Describe client's ability to:
- think to turn to an AAC system to communicate messages
- locate a specific page
- sustain attention and search for a desired page or representation
- locate a pictorial symbol representing an intended meaning on a visible page
- locate a pictorial symbol representing an intended meaning on a hidden page
- size of optimal symbol array
- locate 2 pictorial symbols in a sequence to communicate a complex message
- categorize
- tell stories by pointing to pictures in a sequence
- communicate specific concepts by referentially pointing to key elements in a pictorial scene
- locate a map location to answer a "where" question or to communicate a location
- spell using first letter, partial word, sight words, or words/phrases
- independently communicate target message with no cues
- benefit from cues (specify type)
- initiate novel communication/comments during test administration or in other contexts
- learn to communicate with an AAC representation following a mode/learning rate
- use gestures or other natural modalities in conjunction with symbolic representations
- repair communication breakdowns
- potential to use an external AAC system **independently** (in all contexts), **in a few practiced contexts only**, or **dependently** (with partner cues and support only).
- potential to use an external AAC system **generatively** (to create <u>novel</u> messages), **to create complex messages** (1 symbol vs. symbol combinations), or to access a **limited set of stored messages** only
- best fit to one of the following communicator categories (refer to Garrett & Lasker, 2005, for complete descriptions of each category)[*]
    - Emerging Communicator
    - Conversational Choice Communicator
    - Transitional Communicator
    - Stored Message Communicator
    - Generative Communicator
    - Specific Needs Communicator

[*] Garrett, K., & Lasker, J. (2006/2012) **Adults with severe aphasia and apraxia of speech.** In D. Beukelman & P. Mirenda (Eds.) *Augmentative communication: Management of severe communication disorders in children and adults, 4th edition*. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing Co.