

## **Identifying Core Vocabulary for Urdu Language Speakers Using Augmentative Alternative Communication**

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The purpose of this research was to identify a core set of vocabulary used by native Urdu language (UL) speakers during dyadic conversation for social interaction and relationship building. The most frequent words used by native Urdu language speakers in general communication during dyadic conversation were labeled. The existence of a possible Urdu language core was ascertained and compared to the cores of the English and Urdu languages for similarity. The identification and establishment of high frequency word usage lists was utilized to construct and select core vocabulary for possible use in Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) tools and strategies.

Individuals with Critical Communication Needs (CCN) utilize AAC tools and strategies to communicate. People with CCN are those who have serious physical and cognitive limitations that limit their abilities to produce natural speech and writing. This population includes, but is not limited to, individuals who are affected by congenital disorders (autism spectrum disorders, cerebral palsy, intellectually challenged and physical disabilities), acquired disorders (cancer, stroke, brain injury, and spinal cord injury), and degenerative disorders (muscular dystrophy, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, human immunodeficiency virus infection and Huntington's disease) (ASHA, 2010).

Individuals with CCN are found in all populations nationally and internationally. There is a universal need for appropriate communication strategies for the CCN populations, so that they might communicate to share their thoughts, ideas, wants, needs, and desires. Individuals with CCN may use (AAC) strategies to help them communicate

and deliver important messages. It is important that these strategies utilize appropriate linguistic material for individuals with CCN to allow them to become successful in the educational and social arenas.

In order to identify vocabulary of a language, data collection in the native environment of the language use is vital. The objective of this research was to collect data in Karachi, Pakistan, one of the areas with a major concentration of native Urdu language speakers, was made possible by the SRA award. This descriptive study used observational methods to explore the reliability of transcribing Urdu language (UL) for utterance and word identification, which could not be accomplished until a systematic and reliable approach to analyzing conversational language samples in UL is demonstrated. Many English-speaking countries, such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia, have developed technologies and strategies to assist English-speaking individuals who have CCN. These nations have used assistive technology tools and strategies that incorporate vocabulary to facilitate dyadic communication.

Most individuals with CCN use AAC. AAC users are dependent on the use of specific vocabulary to formulate novel or recurring sentences and phrases for interactions and communication. Vocabulary is the medium by which semantics of central messages are created and conveyed. The vocabularies of individuals with CCN who utilize AAC techniques must be well studied (i.e. research based), to address the development and use of language to interact and communicate. Young AAC users need well-thought-out strategies for using language because language development for them is atypical. They must use visual symbols as a means of expressing and understanding language in addition

to auditory means. The visual symbols and words provided for their language development and use typically come from core vocabularies.

This research is the first attempt to analyze language samples from native Urdu language speakers to generate a high frequency vocabulary list. The study is the first effort to identify a core vocabulary for AAC applications using the Urdu language. The study tests methods and tools for accurately segmenting Urdu language utterances into individual words rather than transcripts based on characters. The knowledge and skills gained in this task provide the foundation for continued research on AAC vocabulary selection and organization for Urdu language speakers across cohorts and across sampling conditions. There is a paucity of this knowledge in the United States and around the world when providing services to Urdu language speakers who use AAC to communicate. This data collection was made possible with the support of The Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund specifically the Sylff Research Abroad award. The findings are published in a dissertation format and will be available for viewing online shortly. For specific questions contact [mukati01@yahoo.com](mailto:mukati01@yahoo.com).

References:

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