The Usage Patterns of Communication via Email in Adolescents with Asperger Syndrome

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Background

- Prevalence and impact of the Internet
- Characteristics of computer-mediated communication (CMC) and email
- Adolescents use of CMC
- Asperger syndrome (AS)
- Use of email by individuals with AS

Research Question: How do adolescents with AS employ email as a communication modality and what are the benefits of CMC for this population?

Participants

- “Allen Brown”
  - 16-yr. old with AS
  - Using email for approximately 2 yrs.
- “Cody Davis”
  - 17-year old with AS
  - Using email for approximately 2.5 yrs.

Data Collection

- Collection of emails as artifacts
- Modified ethnographic interviewing

Analysis of Primary Data

- Open stance
- Focused stance (Systemic Functional Linguistics)
Results

- Descriptive data overview
- Open artifact analysis
  - 6 structural patterns: message length, use of acronyms and abbreviations, grammar, dialectal differences, and lexical diversity
  - 3 functional patterns: use of discourse makers, issues involving topic (email topics, topic initiation, and topic maintenance), and response function
- Systemic Functional Linguistic Analysis
  - 4 dimensions: Cohesion (reference, conjunction, lexical cohesion, ellipsis, and topic), Mood, Transitivity, and Graphological constituency
- Modified ethnographic interviews
  - Function
  - Structure
  - Benefits

Implications

- The participants used email structurally and functionally much like neurotypical email users, demonstrating an ability to adapt to this variety
- The participants had a higher comfort level with using email than other modes of communication
- Pedanticalness was evident in emails
- Much variation exists among individuals with AS

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