

Title

Taking EVA Park into service: Therapy case studies.

Background

EVA Park is an online multi-user virtual world, developed with and for people with aphasia (Wilson et al. 2015). A previous study (Marshall et al. 2016) provided 5 weeks of communication therapy to 20 people with aphasia in EVA Park. It resulted in significant improvements on a measure of functional communication and showed that EVA Park was highly acceptable and accessible to users.

The present study explores alternative treatment approaches delivered in EVA Park.

Methods

Five participants with moderate aphasia received one of five virtual therapy approaches, depending on their needs. Therapies were adapted from published protocols for noun retrieval, verb retrieval, sentence production/comprehension, interactive storytelling and functional script production. Each participant received twenty individual therapy sessions administered over five weeks. This presentation will focus on the noun and verb retrieval protocols. It will describe how familiar treatment techniques, such as Semantic Feature Analysis (Boyle, 2004) and VNeST (Edmonds & Babb, 2011) were adapted for virtual delivery. Partial delegation of therapy to SLT students will also be described.

Results

Studies adopted a single case experimental design. Data from each participant were collected at four assessment points: two before therapy (separated by 5 weeks), one immediately after therapy, and one 5 weeks after therapy finished. Assessments comprised: a test of functional communication (CADL-2, Holland et al, 1999), a personal narrative sample and measures specific to each therapy. For the noun and verb therapies, a naming test of matched treated and untreated items was collected at each assessment point. Assessments were scored by SLT students who were blinded to time point. Observations about the feasibility and acceptability of therapy were also recorded.

Feasibility and acceptability for both described protocols were excellent. Assessment findings were mixed. However, significant gains were demonstrated for treated nouns.

Discussion

This study shows that EVA Park can be used to deliver 'conventional' therapy approaches. The virtual therapy techniques have been documented in manuals, so that they can be replicated. The results add to the body of evidence required if EVA Park is to become a mainstream therapy resource.

References

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