Preliminary Analysis of Social Word Use for Students with Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

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Florida Occupational Therapy Association Conference
Orlando, FL November 16, 2019
https://kreiderlab.phhp.ufl.edu/

BACKGROUND

- Students with learning disabilities (LD) and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorders (ADHD) face challenges in social self-management and competence, including understanding social environments, social skills, and emotional and behavioral self-regulation[1,2,3].
- Language and words reflect internal thoughts and communicate perceptions of social role and experiences[5].
- **The purpose of this analysis was to identify salient social words used by students with LD/ADHD.**

METHODS

- A textual analysis was used to identify salient social words used by undergraduates with LD/ADHD.
- Undergraduate participants with LD/ADHD (N = 52) were part of a larger four year study testing a multi-level model of holistic supports.
- Participants met as a cohort to engage in group meetings where psychoeducation content was presented followed by focused discussion.
- Transcripts from the second (*n* = 14) and seventh (*n* = 11) meetings from the first year of the study were analyzed to compare the social words used over one academic year.
- The frequency of social words used during the two meetings were analyzed using Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count software (LIWC).
  - LIWC categorizes word by domain.
  - The social domain includes the following dimensions: family, friends, female, male.
- Words identified within the social domain were analyzed for frequencies using R; frequencies were used produce word clouds using http//wordcoulds.com.
- The most frequently used social words were then analyzed as to the context of use.

RESULTS

Table 1. Second meeting social word frequencies

Second meeting	
Word	**N (%)**
you*	277 (2.39)
they*	130 (1.17)
people*	55 (0.49)
your*	39 (0.35)
who*	32 (0.29)
say*	27 (0.24)
them	26 (0.23)
she*	24 (0.22)
everything	19 (0.17)
talk	19 (0.17)

* word present in both second and seventh meetings

Figure 1. Second meeting social words cloud

Table 2. Seventh meeting social word frequencies

Seventh meeting	
Word	**N (%)**
you*	322 (2.89)
people*	44 (0.39)
you're	43 (0.39)
say*	35 (0.31)
they*	28 (0.25)
your*	22 (0.19)
who*	19 (0.17)
question	18 (0.16)
she*	18 (0.16)
talking	16 (0.14)

* word present in both second and seventh meetings

Figure 2. Seventh meeting social words cloud

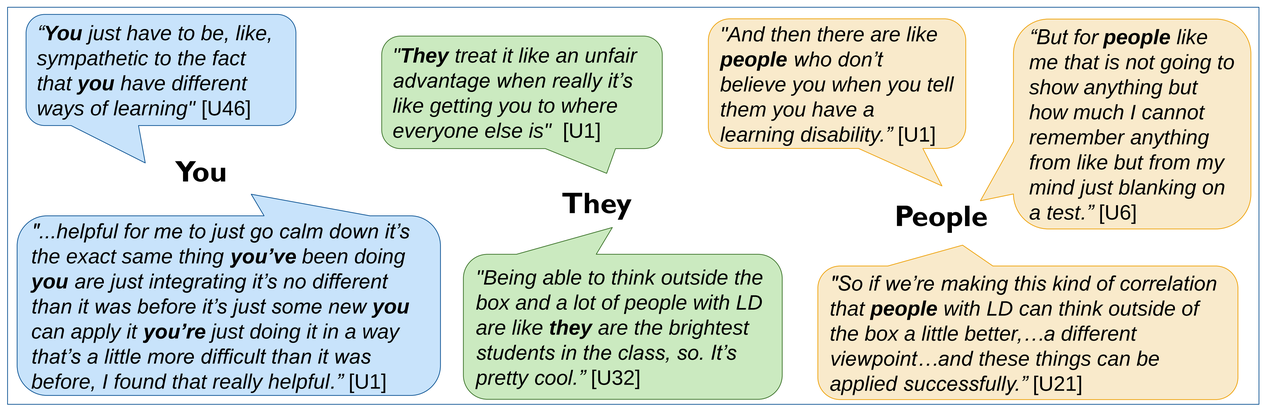

Figure 3. Representative quotes

DISCUSSION

- ✓ The most often used social words were those that referred to others.
  - "You," "people," and "they" were highly salient and nuanced social words.
- ✓ When analyzed for their use in context, the most frequently used social words referred to others and at times referred to self (the speaker).
  - Social words were used differently in various contexts.
- ✓ Using social words to refer to both self and others was a possible strategy for creating distance from LD/ADHD experiences that were negative, difficult, or stigmatizing.

IMPLICATIONS

- Findings shed light on nuances in the ways that young people use social words.
- OTs assessing social functioning should pay particular attention to the potential for multiple meanings of social words used by clients.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research is based upon work supported by the U. S. National Science Foundation under Grant Number (HRD-1246587). This work was supported in part by the NIH National Center Medical Rehabilitation Research (NICHD) (K12 HD055929). Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of NSF or NIH.

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