

# Abstract and critique of training teachers to use naturalistic communication stra...



Training Teachers to Use Naturalistic Communication Strategies in rooms for with Autism and Other Severe Handicaps Kathleen Dyer, Lori Williams, Stephen C. Luce

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The May Institute, Inc.

The article in focus is titled “ Training Teachers to Use Naturalistic Communication Strategies in Classrooms for Students with Autism and Other Severe Handicaps” published in the Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, Volume 22, 313-321, January 1991.

This article is about training teachers that work with autistic children and other children that have severe handicaps. The authors describe which strategies the teachers should use pending on the reaction they see in their students or do not see in their students.

The speech-language pathologist (SLP) trains the teachers following a variety of steps. The goals and objectives are used as an assessment tool. It is called the “ Individualized Education Plan”, which is a plan for each individual student.

These steps are later observed in the classroom for implementation. The teachers are observed by the SLP and at any given point the teachers will be given immediate feedback by the SLP’s corrective measures during the observation process. The teachers have to follow the suggestions given by the SLP and does not continue to the next step until the teacher has accomplished the task.

The SLP gives the teacher feedback, after a 10-minute observation is done

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by using the "Communication Maintenance Goals checklist". The SLP gives the observations to the teacher and the teacher gives the supervising teacher the feedback after reviewing them. The teacher should reach an 80% of competency after three consecutive observations.

This study was tested in two special education classrooms at The May Institute, Inc. The children that were observed had severe communication deficits, social withdrawals, aggression, and self-injuries behaviors. The children received one-to-one and small group instruction on pre academic and academic skills, vocational skills, self-help routines, and recreation programs.

There were eight children involved in this study made up by two groups of four. The children were diagnosed as having autism, severe mental retardation, or pervasive developmental delay. Their ages ranged from 7 years to 13 years. Two of the children took medications (insulin and clonidine).

There were two teachers per classroom certified in special education. Two of the teachers held masters degrees. These teachers were trained by the SLP using the naturalistic training techniques.

To measure the behavior the authors used 10-minute videotaped probes. They also had transcriptions.

For the reliability, the observers had an agreement of 86% to 96% in the frequency of elicited communication maintenance goals which was 90% and for the frequency of spontaneous communication maintenance goals which ranged from 72% to 95% reaching an agreement of 81%.

The authors selected one of the children, Tim, for an in-depth analysis. They

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presented the communication maintenance goals and the frequency of elicited and spontaneous productions for each goal and probe session. They stated that Tim did not produce any spontaneous goals and that these goals had to be elicited by the teacher and then he would spontaneously produce the goals.

During the last two videotape sessions Tim demonstrated a tantrum behavior, therefore not allowing the teachers to elicit behaviors. The rest of the seven children showed an increase in frequency elicited communication maintenance from the baseline phase to the intervention phase. The increase was maintained by six of the children and one returned to her baseline level of intervention.

The authors concluded based on the findings that having the SLP train the teachers and the teachers following the program steps, children were able to generate spontaneity by using the naturalistic communication intervention strategies. They state that there were limitations to the project and that this could be due to the videotaped sessions where teachers might have been inhibited by the videotape equipment and that the training evaluations were held during the children's instruction time.

### Critique

The article was well written. The authors explained in detail what they were researching, why they were doing this research, where the research was conducted, who the subjects were, and who they trained.

The authors seemed pleased with their findings. By having the SLP be an important part of the project, gave it more validity. The SLP had direct contact with the teachers, trained them, and gave them feedback during the

process of intervention.

The method that the authors used was quite explanatory and gave precise indications of what steps to follow, therefore the method was effective and it supported the article because the findings attested to it. The SLP might have been impacted by the children's tantrum during the last two videotapes.

I liked the article and the project's findings. I would have liked to have seen feedback from the teachers that were trained and how the implementation of their strategies effectively worked in the classroom on a daily basis once the SLP was no longer there to be giving feedback and suggesting corrective measures based on the instruments that were used. Dealing with special education children is a hard task and special education teachers should be given constant support to help them deal with all of their outcomes based on the children's behavior and interactions with them. This mechanism of validating outcomes by applying corrective measures should be helpful to teachers that are constantly looking for ways that may help them reach special education students. I would have also liked to have known if the teachers were paired by degrees (masters and undergraduate degrees) and if the family members were involved to follow-up these steps at home.

#### REFERENCES

Dyer, K., Williams, L. and Luce, S. C. (January, 1991). Language, speech, and hearing services in schools. Training teachers to use naturalistic communication strategies in classrooms for students with autism and other severe handicaps. Vol. 22, 313-321.

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