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Enhancing Social, Emotional, and Language Learning in Children with Language Impairment

JUNE 25, 2019 BY ADMIN

Bonnie Brinton, PhD and Martin Fujiki, PhD, Communication Disorders

Introduction:

We were extremely grateful to receive a 2016-2018 Mentored Environment Grant. Our project was entitled Enhancing Social, Emotional, and Language Learning in Children with Language Impairment. The purpose of this project was to employ a multiple baseline, single subject design to investigate the efficacy of a social communication intervention designed to foster emotional and language learning simultaneously for children with developmental language disorders (language impairment). The treatment program was designed to be administered within the service delivery model (and constraints) of the public school system.

Evaluation of How Well the Academic Objectives of the Proposal Were Met:

We aimed to conduct this intervention within the public schools because our overarching research aim is to design effective treatments that can be carried out in the context where children with language impairment actually receive their speech-language pathology services. In other words, we are committed to devising effective interventions that would be available to all children who needed them. This meant that we had to get permission to work in the schools, establish relationships with special service providers responsible for children, select and recruit children to participate, and work within the public school schedule. The school we worked with was very cooperative, but we did not begin this portion of our project as soon as we had hoped. This set our timeline back. Initially, in Fall, 2016, we identified children for the study, obtained the appropriate permissions, and administered testing measures to describe participants’ developmental profiles. During Winter semester, 2017, we administered pre-intervention probes and conducted one 10-week intervention program where we worked with each child participant for two treatment sessions per week. We performed follow-up testing finishing in April, 2017. We then worked to analyze data. We identified and tested another group of children and completed another additional 10-week intervention program starting in September, 2017 and finishing in December 2017. The major portion of data were collected by December, 2017. We analyzed portions of the data collected from the first intervention period (January-April 2017) by February, 2018. For the data collection period ending in December, 2017, completed transcription and analysis of the pre and post intervention testing and probes as well as the intervention sessions and probes by and we stopped drawing on the MEG funds as promised by July, 2018. Since July, 2018, students have completed additional analyses and all theses have been completed.

Evaluation of the Mentoring Environment:

We involved both undergraduate and graduate students in this project. First, we met with all students on our research team to help them to understand the rationale, goals, and methods used in the project. Then, we assigned each student a specified role on the team with significant responsibilities. Undergraduate students assisted with various aspects of the data collection and analysis. Graduate students also assisted with these aspects, but in addition, they played coordinating and project management roles interacting with undergraduates and the public school personnel. The undergraduate and graduate
students worked very well as a team. They performed testing measurements, administered probes, videotaped all sessions, and conducted the intervention program. We met with them regularly for research meetings where we evaluated the progress of the project, dealt with the inevitable difficulties in working in real-life settings, discussed the child participants’ needs, and made adjustments as necessary. We also met with the research team regularly when we were in the process of preparing presentations to disseminate our work.

**List of Students who participated and the Academic Deliverables:**

The following students received MEG funding to work on this project.

- Capri Seaberg ASHA
- Cammy Peterson
- Molly Alldredge
- Analise Luddington
- Cammy Peterson
- Naomi Asai
- Julia Vincent Hetherton (Vincent) ASHA
- Sara Seeley (Avila) ASHA
- Breeana Bell
- Rebekah Forbes
- Allison Barney
- Courtney Gengler

Each of these students was involved in presentations at the David O McKay School of Education Mentored Research Conferences either in 2016, 2017 or 2018. Additional products are listed below. Student names are bolded:

Presentations at the American Speech Language Hearing Association Annual Convention (the flagship conference in our discipline):


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Other presentations drawing data from this project:


Journal articles drawing data from this project:


Master’s Theses Completed using data from this project:

Breanna Bell, 2017, Using a Social Communication Intervention to Increase Emotion Word Use in Children with Language Impairment

Naomi Asai, 2017: The Ability of Five Children with Language Impairment to Describe Mental State in Story Narratives in Spontaneous and Prompted Condition: Does It Help to Ask?


Aimee Diehl, 2018, Developmental Language Disorders and Reticence in Childhood


Sara Avila, 2018, Facilitating Emotion Word Learning in School-Age Children with Developmental Language Disorders through Social Communication Intervention


Miranda Miller, 2019, Sociability in Children with Developmental Language Disorders

Description of Results/Findings of this Project:

We collected all our data in 2017. We also analyzed portions of the data collected from the first intervention period (January-April 2017). Because we were set back in terms of our timeline, although we had gathered all our data, but we still needed to analyze half of it (gathered from September to December, 2017). We were very grateful to receive a time extension to do this.

Our findings (from the January to April intervention program) investigating the efficacy of the treatment program to improve sociability indicate that prior to intervention. Indicated that all children were rated at least one standard deviation below the mean on both impulse control/likeability and prosocial subtypes of sociability. Following the intervention, ratings for four of the five children showed improvement in prosocial behavior. Two of these children were rated within a standard deviation of the mean for their age and gender. On the impulse control/likeability subscale, two children’s scores remained the same pre-and post-treatment, one child’s rating improved slightly, and two children’s scores decreased. These results suggested that teachers reported markedly improved prosocial behavior for four of the five children following the intervention program even though problems with impulse control/likeability persisted. The improvement was associated with the treatment focus on emotion understanding.

Additional findings regarding the ability of children with LI to describe mental states in story narratives suggested that the ability of these children to understand the intentions, motivations, and emotions of characters in stories is constrained by their limited emotion knowledge. This finding underscores the importance of intervention programs (such as the one we implemented) that target language processing as well and social and emotional learning.

Description of How the Budget was Spent:

Student wages: 15201.10

Supplies: 873.64 (intervention materials, poster presentations, transcription equipment, etc.)

Student travel: 2422.26 (travel to the ASHA Convention in Los Angeles, CA)