Effects of Language for Learning on Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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ABSTRACT

*Language for Learning (LL)* is an oral language curriculum that uses Direct Instruction (DI) methodology. DI is well researched, but only limited studies exists on the use of *LL* with children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This study used a multiple baseline research design, across four, four-year-old participants, to measure the effects of *LL* on the language development of young children with ASD. This study also measured the generalization of learned skills to the narrative language of the participants. Finally, changes in the participants language microstructure were analyzed throughout the study. A researcher-created acquisition probe was used to measure language skills taught in three tracks in the *LL* curriculum. A weekly narrative story retell was used to calculate two measures of language microstructure, and assess generalization of three language structures taught through *LL*. *LL* instruction was systematically introduced across participants in a step wise fashion, over time, and effects on the dependent variables were measured. Results indicate that the curriculum increased accurate performance on the researcher-created *LL* acquisition probe. An increase in copula use was found in the language samples of three participants immediately after *LL* instruction was introduced, but these increases were not maintained throughout the study. Pronoun use in the language samples of three participants decreased during the intervention phase. Finally, while some changes in language microstructure were observed, a functional relationship could not be established between these changes and *LL* instruction. Limitations of the study and implications for future research are discussed.