

Beyond Greetings : Using social checklists to teach a child with Autism social skills

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Abstract

Children diagnosed with autism frequently lack the complicated language necessary to interact socially with peers. While some children with autism have a desire to interact with peers, their social skills are frequently limited by their difficulties in initiating verbally to peers or answering a peer's questions with more than one word utterances. The present research study explores the use of social checklists to concurrently improve social skills and encourage verbal initiations to others. The subject has an autism diagnosis and is mainstreamed in a typical pre-kindergarten classroom. While the subject has delays in speech, he is academically and behaviorally similar to the peers in his class, none of which have an autism diagnosis. The subject has difficulty with complex social interactions, specifically in the areas of initiating to peers beyond a greeting. The study used a social checklist to develop more complex social skills and then faded the checklist to increase independence in social interactions.



Introduction:

Previous methods of improving social skills, specifically social initiations, have included:

- Social stories (Chan & O'Reilly, 2008)
- Manipulating reinforcers associated with social interaction (Koegel, Vernon & Koegel, 2009)
- Self-management systems of reinforcement to increase initiations (Newman & Eyck, 2005)

The current study will merge components of all three interventions, called a social checklist and test its effectiveness in increasing social initiations and reciprocity.



Subject and Setting

- Subject: 5 yr. old boy diagnosed with autism.
 - Vocabulary of 2-3 word phrases with novel words acquired easily
 - Academically and behaviorally similar to peers in general education class
- Setting: A general education pre-kindergarten classroom



Method

- *Design:* AB Design
- **Dependent Variables:** physical initiations to peers and adults, verbal initiations to peers and adults and verbal reciprocations to peers and adults.
- **Independent Variable:** Social skills Checklist
- *Baseline:*
 - data was collected on target behaviors
 - Weekly averages for six weeks.



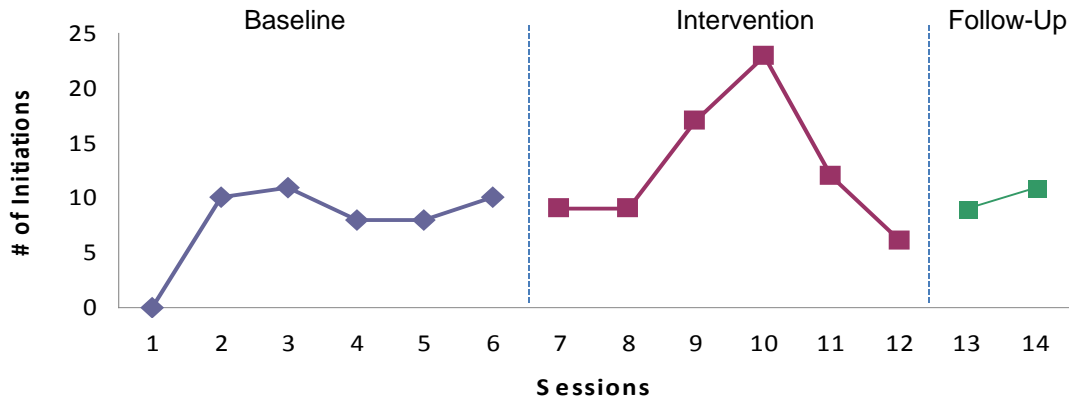
Method

- *Social Intervention:*
 - Participant was given the social checklist
 - If the checklist was completed by the participant, he was allowed to engage in an activity of his choice as a reinforcer.
- *Follow-up Probes:* data was collected on the target behaviors. The observation period was three hours. Data was collected for five days a week, for two weeks.

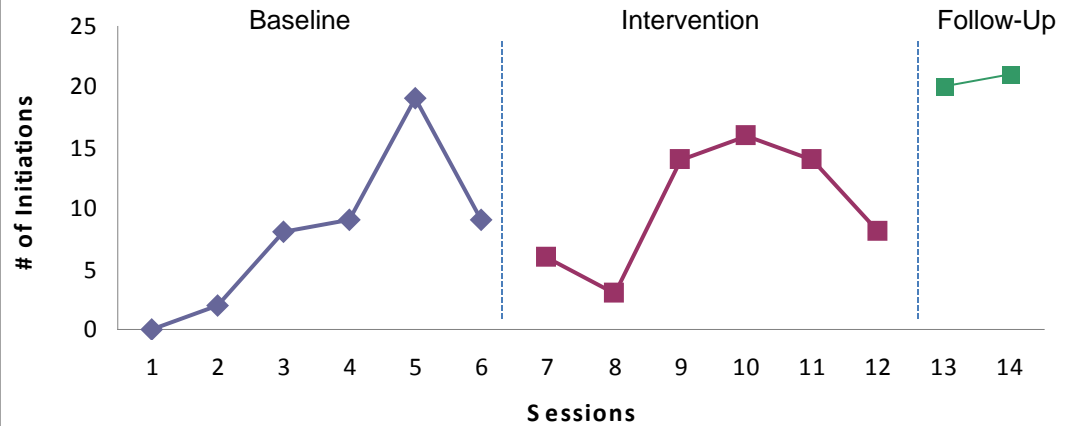


Results

Total Patient to Peer Initiations

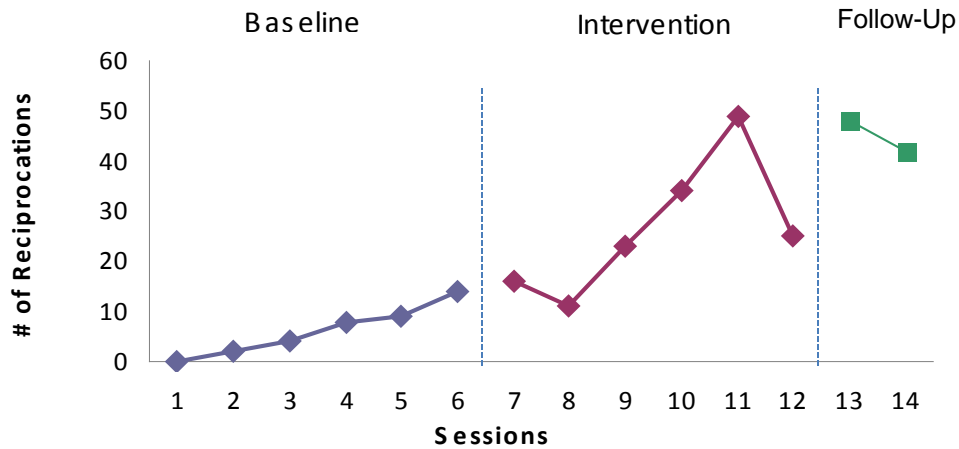


Total Patient to Adult Initiations

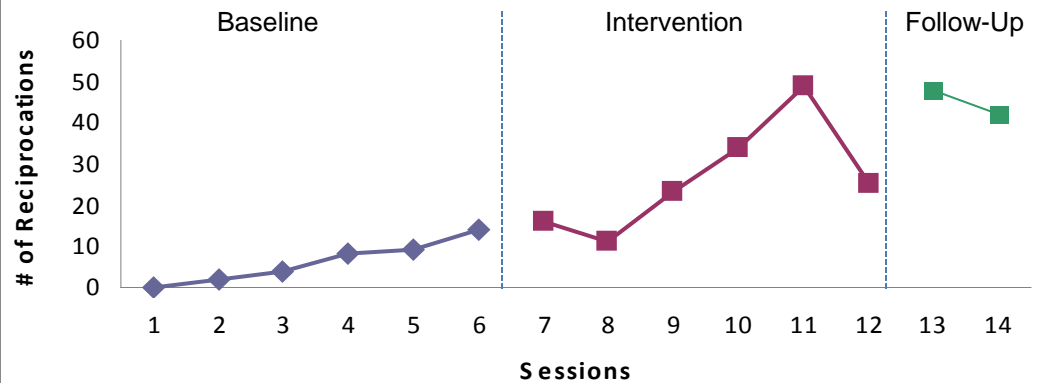


Results

Total Physical Reciprocations



Total Verbal Reciprocations



Discussion

- Using the social checklist may increase verbal initiations and reciprocations to peers and adults.
- More research needs to be conducted in the area of social skills, specifically in the area of initiating to peers. Research can be conducted using a social checklist with non-verbal children or children who cannot read.
- Future research could employ a multiple baseline design across social skills to control for habituation



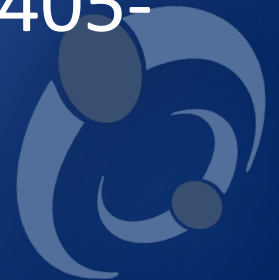
Limitations

- No IOA due to the limitations of the inclusive classroom environment.
- Habituation: Social Behaviors may improve over time as a result of becoming comfortable in the inclusive setting
- No control over an inclusive educational setting



References

- American Psychiatric Association. (2000). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (4th ed.) Washington D.C. Author, text revision.
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- Koegel, R.L., Vernon, T. W. & Koegel, L.K. (2009). Improving social initiations in young children with autism using reinforcers with embedded social interactions. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 39, 1240-1251.
- Newman, B. & Eyck, P. T. (2005). Self-management of initiations by students diagnosed with autism. *The Analysis of Verbal Behavior*, 21, 117-122.

