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Using Milieu Language Teaching to Facilitate the Communication Skills
of Children with Severe Disabilities in Home Environments

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Abstract

This study investigated the effectiveness of training parents of children with severe disabilities to use milieu language teaching techniques in home environments to facilitate the communication skills of their children. Three parent-child dyads participated in the study. The children varied in age from 4 to 11 years old.

A multiple probe design across subjects was used to evaluate parents' abilities to correctly apply the milieu techniques and also to assess the effects of the intervention on communication skills of children. Intervention sessions were conducted for each dyad three times a week for two weeks, and maintenance sessions were conducted once a week for six weeks. Generalization probes were held once in a nontraining setting during each of the experimental conditions. A Parent Evaluation Questionnaire was used at the end of the last maintenance session to evaluate the parents' opinion regarding acceptability of various aspects of the milieu language teaching process as evidence of social validation.

Results showed that parents can be trained to apply milieu techniques. Parents' total frequency of correct use of the milieu techniques was increased within a communication training context (play time) and was maintained during a maintenance period. The improvements were also extended to a nontraining situation (meal time). Parents' number of different correctly used milieu techniques was also increased and maintained. However, parents tended to use the model and mand-model procedures more often than the time delay and incidental teaching procedures.

Results showed that all children made gains in communication responding. The frequency of communication responses was improved within a communication training context and was maintained during a maintenance period. The communication responses were also extended to a nontraining situation. However, the request/command skills of these children did not improve significantly within a communication training

context by participation in the home-based milieu language intervention program.

The results of the parent evaluation showed that parents were encouraged by their children's communication progress and mentioned spending more time interacting with their children. Importantly, parents felt that their children liked the parent-child interaction more after the intervention than before.

Keywords : Language Teaching;Special Education