

# Effect of motivation on teaching conversational skill to children with Autism

Geetika Agarwal

Dr. Rebecca Mccathren and Dr. Craig Frisby, Dissertation Co-Chairs

## Abstract

Deficits in conversational skills of children with ASD are persistent and are particularly evident in settings where there are greater opportunities for social and peer interaction (MacKay, Knott, & Dunlop, 2007). These deficits pose difficulty in these children's learning and developing social relations and interactions with other peers/ individuals (Loveland & Landry, 1986).

The present study examined the role of motivation on the acquisition of conversational skills in three children with the diagnosis of autism. All the participants possessed good imitation skills but had difficulties in asking or responding to questions, initiating and maintaining conversation. Intervention used the procedure of scripts and script fading. Scripts were based on the participants' preferred and non-preferred items.

The results of the study indicated that the role of motivation was mixed. For the majority of the hypothesis, the participants did not show an increase in initiation, increase in scripted conversation, faster learning or better generalization in the high motivation conditions when compared to the low motivation conditions. However, motivation did seem to play a role in the unscripted conversation and the participants showed an increase in unscripted conversation in the high motivation conditions when compared to the low motivation conditions.