Emphasis and elongation are effective interventions for children with ASD who struggle to answer questions with prepositions

**INTRODUCTION**

- Answering questions is an important part of social interaction.
- Some children with ASD struggle to answer questions, such as when questions contain prepositions.
- Studies suggest placing emphasis or elongating words to help a child attend to those words (Axe, 2008)
- To further the understanding of treatment for communication deficits associated with ASD, this study used ABA methods to compare the use of verbal emphasis and elongation to teach children with ASD to attend to specific parts of a question.

**METHODS**

- Participants: Four children with ASD
- Setting: Home or clinic
- Experimental design: Adapted alternating treatments design
- Targets: Two questions assigned per condition; 1 question had a preposition, and 1 question had no preposition
- \[\text{What do you wash}\] and \[\text{What do you wash with}\]
- Mastery criterion: 2 consecutive sessions with 5/6 or 6/6 correct responses

**Conditions:**
1. Control: No feedback for incorrect response; reinforcement for correct response
2. Elongate: Elongated the preposition at the end of the question (e.g., "wwwiiitthhhh")
3. Emphasis: Emphasized the preposition at the end of the question (e.g., "WITH"); reinforcement for correct response

**RESULTS**

- All 4 figures indicate general improvements in correct responses as the sessions progressed.
- Figures 1 and 2 demonstrated a substantial increase as treatment was introduced.
- Figure 3 displays the positive effect of emphasis when added to the control and no-modification sessions.
- Figure 4 does not show that any of the treatment modifications were effective, as we were unable to remove the emphasis and adding the emphasis in the other conditions was ineffective.

**DISCUSSION**

- 5 s prompt delays led to a substantial increase in correct responding for B, F, and R.
- For A, emphasis could not be removed while maintaining consistent or increasing correct response.
  - May be due to:
    - Trouble attending to the modification
    - Little motivation to respond correctly
    - Distracting environment
- May be necessary to replicate this study on a larger scale.
- These results are important because they confirm that emphasis and elongation are sufficient interventions for improving communication with children diagnosed with ASD. These interventions can be utilized by anyone, and their use may have a positive impact on the lives of many children with ASD.