Developing Joint Attention in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder - A Pilot Study

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This thesis is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Psychology (Honours), Murdoch University, 2012.
I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary educational institution.

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Sharonia Jeyabalan
Abstract

This pilot study examined the general question; To what extent can joint attention be developed and generalised by children with Autism Spectrum Disorder? Children’s joint attention level was assessed and a behavioural intervention program based on the research of Holth (2005, 2006, 2009), was used to target deficits in responding and initiating joint attention. Four children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) aged between 4 and 7 years were assessed prior to an intervention phase which targeted the joint attention behaviours of gaze following, monitoring, social referencing, verbal tacking and manding. Post assessments were conducted after the intervention. Intervention results showed that training of specific joint attention skills were successful. In particular, high level behaviours increased at post assessment whereas the low level behaviours decreased. The results show that behavioural intervention programs can successfully teach joint attention skills and those skills can be generalised and maintained after the intervention.

Keywords: Joint attention; intervention; assessment; behaviour;
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