Teaching Inclusion Preparation Skills to Children with Developmental Disabilities

Serhat ODLUYURT*, E. Sema BATU**

Abstract
The general purpose of the present study was to examine the effectiveness of simultaneous prompting embedded in activities for teaching preparatory skills to children with developmental disabilities. Furthermore, determining the perspectives of the teachers about the skills taught to the participants and also to themselves were targeted. Depending on the performance and characteristics of the participants and the observations conducted in the classroom, three skills were determined to be taught to three children with developmental disabilities. The effectiveness of simultaneous prompting embedded into teaching activities for teaching these skills to children with developmental disabilities was planned. A multiple probe design across behaviors was used and replicated across subjects. Also, the perspectives of the teachers about the skills taught to the participants and themselves were determined through interviews conducted by the researchers. The participants of the study had Down syndrome with an age range of 36-44 months. The target skills taught to the participants were: (a) following two step instructions provided in group activities, (b) participating in group activities by raising his/her hand, and (c) nodding the head when asked “Do you want …?”. The effectiveness results of the study revealed that all three participants acquired the target skills at criterion level. Moreover, two of the participants maintained the skills in the inclusive environments where they were placed seven weeks after the study was completed. Furthermore, the social validity data revealed that the preschool teachers of the two participants were very pleased about having the participants in their classes, the participants’ skills acquisitions and also about being informed about inclusion and children with special needs at the beginning of the school year.

Key Words

* Correspondence: Assist. Prof. Serhat Odluyurt, Anadolu University, Research Institute for the Handicapped. 26470, Eskişehir/Turkey. E-mail: syildiri@anadolu.edu.tr
** Assoc. Prof. E. Sema Batu, Anadolu University, Research Institute for the Handicapped. 26470, Eskişehir/Turkey.

© 2010 Eğitim Danışmanlığı ve Araştırma Malanları İletişim Hizmetleri Tic. Ltd. Şti.
A number of professionals and trainers mention that an important part of learning occurs in the early childhood years. Early childhood is as important as the normally developing children for the children with developmental disabilities. If children with developmental disabilities cannot benefit from the opportunities of early intervention in their early childhood years, most important learning ages would be lost when they reach elementary school ages (Barnett, 1995; Gomby, Larner, Stevenson, Lewit & Behrman, 1995; Yoshikawa, 1995).

An essential milestone in the lives of children with developmental disabilities is covered during transition to an inclusion environment in pre-school education. Inclusion is providing education opportunities for children with special needs by providing the necessary support services in the least restrictive environments (Kircaali-İftar, 1992). Since children with developmental disabilities are being included to the preschool, it is very important to teach the behavioral requirements and skills to these children before they are placed into classes (Guralnick, 2001, Odom & Diamond, 1998).

Preparatory skills are also called as the “classroom survival skills” in some of the studies in the literature (Noonan & McCormick, 1997; Rule, Fiechtl& Innocenti, 1990; Salisbury & Vincent, 1990; Guralnick, 1990). In order to teach these skills to children with developmental disabilities, appropriate prompts should be used, natural reinforces should be provided to their correct responses, and adaptations should be made for them to reach these reinforces by themselves (Cavallaro & Haney, 1999; Klein, Cook & Richardson-Gibbs, 2001; Kemp, 2006).

Rule et al. (1990) found that teachers could teach various skills to children with developmental disabilities through using appropriate prompts, and reinforces. By doing this, it is hoped that the child would get used to the school easily and the teacher would be more comfortable with the child while teaching these skills to the child.

The major purpose of activity-based applications is to teach functional and developmental skills to children. In order to do this, the activity transitions and the physical and social settings of the child are turned to be teaching opportunities by the teacher (Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2004). There are a number of studies showing the effectiveness of activity-based applications on different age and disability groups. Grisham-Brown, Schuster, Hemmeter, and Collins (2000) taught making choice,

The most important aspect about activity-based applications is embedding teaching opportunities into the activities (Bricker, Pretti-Frontczak & McComas, 1998; Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2004; Swell et al., 1998). Embedding skills into the daily routine activities requires determining the aims and targets and preparing a detailed plan (Davis, Kilgo & McCormick-Gamel, 1998).

In the present study the effectiveness of simultaneous prompting embedded into activities on teaching preparatory skills. In the simultaneous prompting, during every trial, controlling prompt is being provided; therefore, the subject is not allowed to respond independently (Tekin-Iftar & Kırcaali-Iftar, 2004). Research has shown that simultaneous prompting is an effective instructional procedure for teaching both discrete and chained skills to young children with disabilities (e.g., Gürsel, Tekin-Iftar & Bozkurt, 2006; Akmanoğlu & Batu, 2005; Birkan, 2005; Akmanoğlu & Batu, 2004; Tekin-Iftar, 2003; Tekin-Iftar, Acar & Kurt, 2003; Doğan & Tekin-Iftar; 2002; Yücesoy, Ş. 2002; Maciag, Schuster, Collins, & Cooper, 2000; Parrot, Schuster, Collins, & Gassaway, 2000; Sewell, et al., 1998; Singleton, Schuster, & Ault,1995; MacFarland-Smith, Schuster & Stevens, 1993; Gibson & Schuster, 1992).

When the literature is reviewed, it can be said that there is still need for research examining the systematical applications about teaching inclusion preparatory skills. The studies conducted about this concept mention that preparatory skills be taught systematically to children with developmental disabilities (Kemp, 2003; Kemp & Carter, 2000, Rule
et al., 1990; Sainato & Lyon, 1989; Salisbury & Vincent, 1990). In the recent implementations, pre-schools provide models for students with developmental disabilities to learn new skills (Conn-Powers, Ross-Al- len & Holburn, 1990; Lamorey & Bricker, 1993; Odom & Diamond, 1998). Hence it can be said that teaching preparatory skills play an important role in the success of students with developmental disabilities in the regular education classes in the pre-schools (Kemp & Carter, 2000, 2006; Noonan & McCormick, 1997).

When the literature on simultaneous prompting was reviewed it is seen that there is not any study about teaching preparatory skills. Depending on the need for such a study, three preparatory skills were determined in order to be taught to children with developmental disabilities by using simultaneous prompting embedded into routine activities in the present study. Also it was aimed to examine the follow-up data for the students after the training has been completed. The teachers of the participant children were also reviewed by the researchers regarding their opinions about the students’ being in their classes.

Method

The participants of the study were children with developmental disabili- ties who were all three years old. The teachers of the preschool classes where the participants of the study were placed after the training was completed were also the participants of the study. Their ages were 21 and 25 years. Training and data collection of the study were conducted by the first author.

Training was conducted in the classes of the children, kitchen, play ground, and corridors of the Training Unit for the Individuals with De- velopmental Disabilities in the Research Institute for the Handicapped in Anadolu University.

The study was conducted by using one of the single subject research methods; multiple baseline design across behaviors and was replicat- ed across subjects (Tekin-İftar & Kıraaali-İftar, 2004). Social validity data were collected via semi-structured interviews conducted with the teachers of the students with developmental disabilities (Batu, 2000; Creswell, 2005).

Data on effectiveness were analyzed by graphical analysis whereas the social validity data were analyzed descriptively. Besides these analyses,
inter-observer reliability data were analyzed (Tekin-İftar & Kırcaali-İftar, 2004; Richards, et al 1999). Treatment integrity data were also collected and analyzed (Tekin-İftar & Kırcaali-İftar, 2004; Richards, Taylor, Ramasamy & Richards, 1999) during the study.

Results

Results of the study revealed that simultaneous prompting embedded into daily activities of children with developmental disabilities found to be effective on teaching inclusion preparatory skills to these children. Results also showed that the children maintained the acquired skills after the training sessions were completed. Besides, social validity results of the study showed that the teachers of the students with developmental disabilities were pleased about having those children in their classes. The teachers mentioned that both the participant children and the regular education students benefitted from having the participant children in their classes.

Discussion

The results of the study seem to be consistent with other studies conducted by different researchers. In these studies, the authors taught various skills by using errorless teaching techniques and found these techniques effective in teaching the targeted skills to individuals with developmental disabilities (Grisham-Brown, et al., 2000; Kurt, 2006; McDonnell, et al., 2002; Swell, et al., 1998; Venn, et al., 1993; Wolery, et al., 2002).

Although there are a number of studies showing the effectiveness of errorless teaching techniques in teaching various skills, there are not any studies conducted for teaching preparatory skills by using these techniques. Therefore, it is hoped that the present study will extend the literature.

In different resources, it is pointed that generalization should be planned by the implementers instead of waiting for having generalization naturally (Kurt, 2006; Özyürek, 1996). In the present study, teaching opportunities were embedded in the daily routines for helping the children generalize the targeted skills into different settings and trainers.

The participants of the study were all children with Down syndrome.
It is known that children with Down syndrome are ready to communicate with others, are willing to share with people more than the objects (Pueschel, 2001). Therefore, they are suggested to be placed into inclusion settings after they are 36 months old (Klein et al., 2001; Pueschel). The participants of the study were 36 months old and older.

In their study, Morse and Schuster (2004) examined 18 studies conducted until 2004. In that study, they found that since the daily probe sessions were conducted before each training session, there may be errors in the responses of the participants. In the present study, Berkan had 36%, Serap had 35%, and Murat had 48% errors in their responses. Social validity results were also similar to those studies conducted by embedded instruction (Horn, Lieber, Li, Sandall & Schwartz, 2000; Johnson et al., 2004; McDonell et al., 2002; Polychronis et al., 2004 Horner, et al., 2005). Besides, Kemp and Carter (2006) suggested that if the preparatory skills were taught before students were placed into the inclusion settings, teachers of the regular education classes would be more comfortable with the included students in their classes. Moving from this point, it may be hoped that the present study will extend the literature and would be an example study for the implementers of inclusion.
References/Kaynakça


