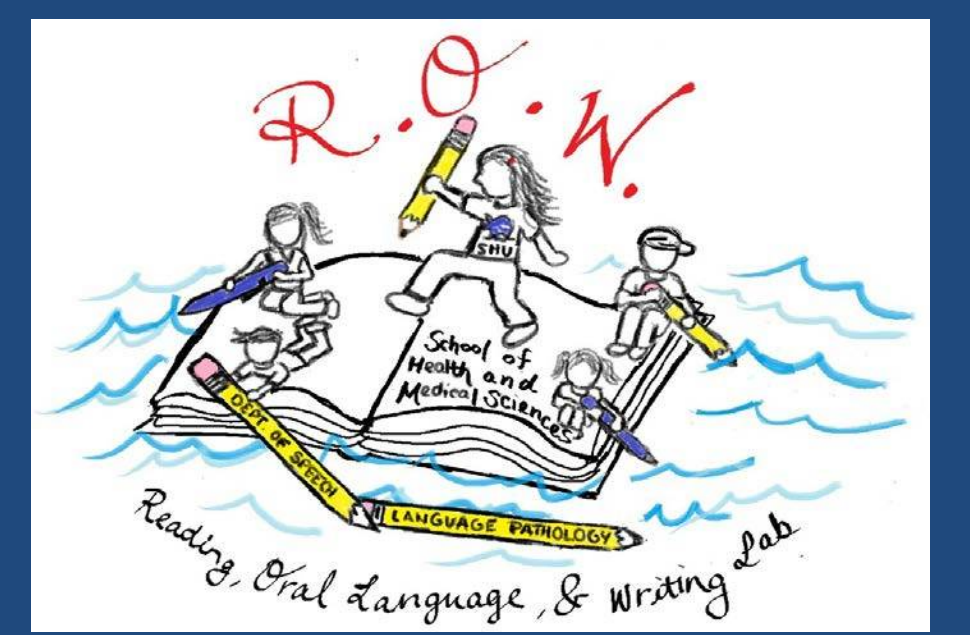




# Improving Pragmatics in Children with Autism through Collaborative Classroom-Based Intervention: A Case Study

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## Introduction

• Children learn to communicate through verbal interactions as well as nonverbal exchanges with a variety of individuals including adults and peers. An important aspect of communication is pragmatic skills which, according to ASHA (2013), is the understanding and social use of language. Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) can have difficulties in social interactions, with specific patterns of behaviors, or deficits in communication and language (Norbury, 2014).

• The term collaborative classroom-based intervention (CCBI) is used instead of the term “push-in” therapy. CCBI is meant to refer to the collaboration between the speech language pathologist (SLP), classroom educators, and staff toward the achievement of IEP goals within the classroom setting. There are few studies that have tested the efficacy of providing classroom-based speech and language interventions (e.g., Larkin et al. 2017; Falk-Ross, 2002; Blosser & Neidecker, 2002).

• Research on students with ASD has revealed important potential areas for targeting language skills during school-based interventions. Individuals with ASD demonstrate significant impairments in social interaction and communication. Focusing on pragmatic and social skills in the classroom using CCBI allows for a more consistent and individualized treatment approach when targeting IEP goals.

• In the current case study, naturalistic environments during the school day such as art, music, and lunch were utilized as the primary way to provide intervention to target language goals to assess the effect that additional therapy, such as push-in, has on pragmatic skills in a child with autism.

• The purpose of this case study was to evaluate the feasibility of improving pragmatic language skills in a student with Autism across all environments using a CCBI approach.

## Intervention

### Case History

Age	5 years
Gender	Male
Grade	K-1 Self Contained Classroom
IEP Qualifying Category	Mild-Moderate Autism
Speech Services	Group sessions 2x a week for 30 min
Additional Services	OT 2x a week and PT 1x a week

• CCBI for three days a week (Monday, Wednesday, Friday) from January through June. The intervention took place in naturalistic settings such as lunchtime, recess, specials, and during both structured and non-structured classroom activities. CCBI was provide as additional therapy.

### Goals Targeted for CCBI

- 1 The student will develop basic attention skills by sustaining eye contact and attending to clinician initiated tasks for up to 5 minutes
- 2 The student will develop basic imitation skills by imitating isolated phonemes
- 3 The student will develop expressive language & pragmatic skills to request information, ask for assistance, to inform, express emotions + feelings, initiate and prolong conversation, and ask questions
- 4 The student will develop receptive language skills to demonstrate the concept of attribution, follow a multi-step direction with assistance, and to demonstrate understanding of “WH” questions

## Summary

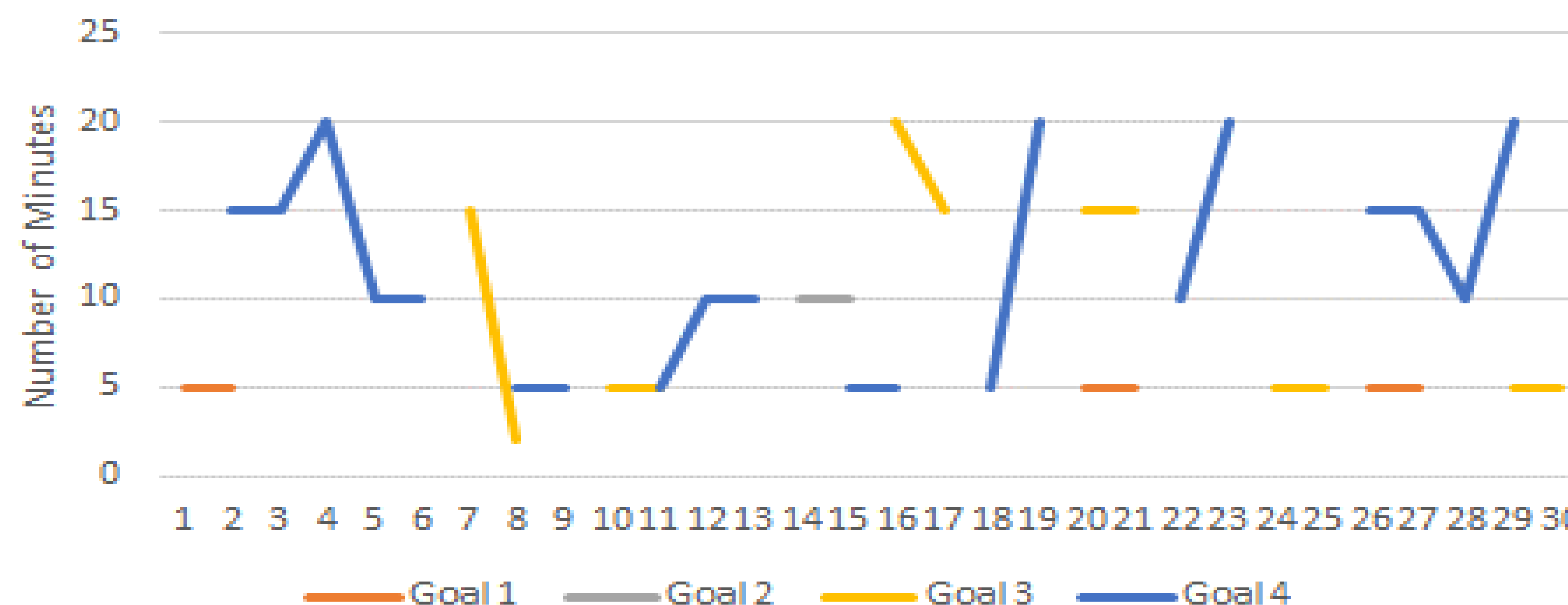
- This case study demonstrated feasibility for targeting speech and language goals for a student with ASD using CCBI approaches.
- Real world environments, such as recess, lunch, and specials, help promote social. pragmatic instruction in students with ASD, as was demonstrated in this case study.
- The CCBI approach provided flexibility for addressing goals and more natural opportunities for communication among peers and adults.

## Reflection

- CCBI has the feasibility to improve pragmatic language skills in students with ASD.
- CCBI is beneficial in naturalistic environments such as lunch, recess, and specials, where they might not be receiving additional support.
- The SLP, using a CCBI approach, is able to target the IEP goals more consistently and individualize sessions based the environment and students needs.
- The SLP is able to better asses the students daily activities and curriculum for carryover from session to classroom.
- The CCBI approach promotes communication between the classroom educators, staff and SLP regarding the students progress and current achievements.
- Some tips for implementation include: organization and timing of CCBI; SLP should have a schedule of the classroom activities and be notified of a back-up schedule if an absence is to occur.
- During CCBI, managing an equal amount of treatment time between students was difficult to maintain due to absences, other services, rotating schedules and other conflicts often occurred.

## Results

The Number of Minutes Spent Targeting Goals within the Classroom across 30 Sessions



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