

Impact of Combining Digital illustrated Books and Print Picture Books on the Development of Language and Social Skills in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) significantly affects language development, with the severity and nature of these challenges varying across individuals. However, many individuals with ASD exhibit strong visual-spatial processing abilities that allow them to associate, organize, and interpret environmental stimuli through visual input. Consequently, studies suggest that combining the visual-auditory and tactile experiences provided by picture books can be instrumental in promoting reciprocal social interactions and fostering both verbal and social communication skills. Additionally, children with ASD have demonstrated heightened interest and engagement with digital formats, which may serve as a powerful motivational tool in language learning. Although the literature acknowledges the advantages of both digital and print media, there is ongoing debate about which format is more effective in fostering language development in children with ASD. To further explore this issue, a multiple-probe design was employed involving two children with autism, aged 24-30 months. This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of a combined digital-and-print picture book approach in promoting language development and social engagement in young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Over a seven-week period, participants were exposed to digital and printed versions of the same picture book. Performance was evaluated through baseline and probe sessions conducted prior to training. Findings from the study indicate that children exposed to both digital and printed picture books demonstrated improved use of two-word phrases, enhanced receptive language skills, and increased social interaction with caregivers. This combined approach leverages the motivational appeal of digital media while maintaining the sensory and interactive benefits of traditional print materials. Although these results highlight the potential value of integrating highly preferred tools—such as e-books—with conventional educational resources to support communication and social development in young children with ASD, further research with larger sample sizes is needed to validate these findings and determine their generalizability.

Keywords: Autism, digital picture books, print picture books, social skills, reciprocal interactions, language development, receptive skills, expressive skills.

Biography

Arianny Avrile Savinon holds a Master's degree in Early Childhood Bilingual Special Education from Lehman College (2014) and an Advanced Certificate in Applied Behavior Analysis from Saint Joseph's College (2021). She is currently pursuing her BCBA-LBA credentials. With over 20 years of experience in education, Arianny has delivered services across diverse educational settings, including public schools, higher education institutions, and early intervention agencies. She has also presented at numerous international education conferences.

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