

# Direct Instruction/Feedback to Increase Therapy Process Skills when Providing Behavior Analytic Services

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## Background

Practitioners who practice in the field of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) are often stereotyped as being arrogant and judgmental (Freedman, 2016). Although ABA strives for effective treatment when treating individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), research shows that parents will favor a therapeutic relationship with a warm and empathetic therapist over an effective treatment process and outcomes for their child (Chadwell et al., 2019).

The use of **open-ended questions, affirming statements, reflective statements, and summarizing statements (OARS)** (Rollnick & Miller, 2012), can help with this communication process for our practitioners. This study evaluated the use of OARS skills after direct instruction and in-vivo coaching and feedback among three graduate students who were providing services to parents of and/or individuals with ASD.

Results demonstrate all participants increased in their use of the OARS skills when working with parents of and/or individuals with ASD either after direct instruction or in-vivo coaching and feedback.

## Methods

### Participants:

- 3 participants, Age Range: 25-50 years
- Masters-Level Students
- Working with parents of children with ASD via telehealth or directly with adults with ASD

### Procedures

- Design: Multiple baseline across participants
- Baseline: OARS skills were operationally defined and participants use of skills prior to direct training was observed

### Intervention:

- Direct instruction: Training using a Behavioral Skills Training approach followed by observation of skills in participants service delivery setting
- Coaching and Feedback: Observation of skills while receiving direct coaching and feedback through bug-in-ear technology

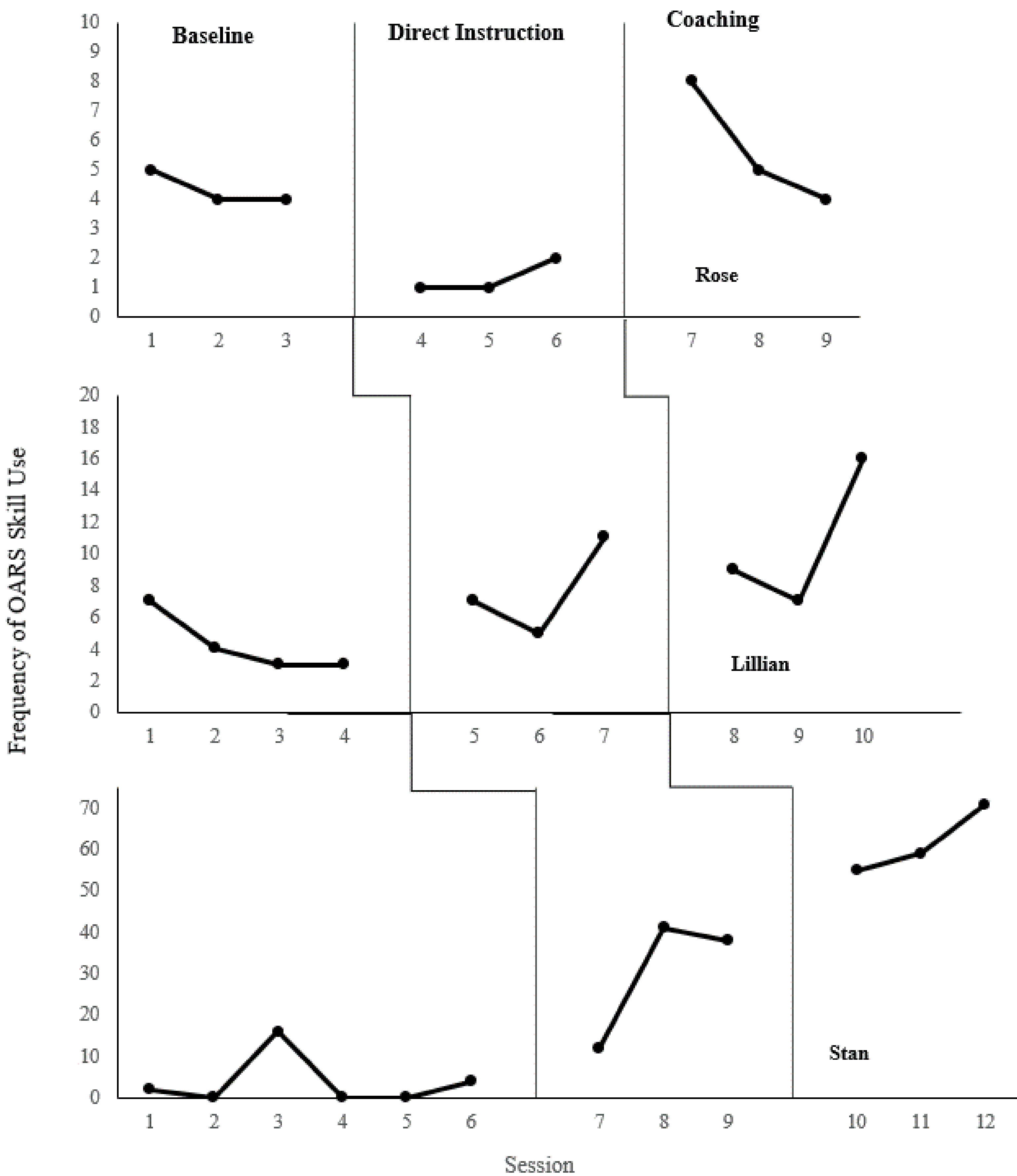
### Data Collection:

- Frequency of OARS skills
- Observed participant during natural service delivery opportunities

### Inter Observer Agreement (IOA):

- Conducted using a total count IOA method
- Total Mean IOA: 91%

Research in other fields support that the therapeutic process is important. This study provided positive results for three participants' use of OARS skills when working with parents of and/or individuals with ASD after receiving direct instruction followed by in-vivo coaching and feedback.



## Results

**Rose:** Decrease in OARS immediately following direct instruction with an average total frequency of 1.33 during direct instruction. Overall increase in average total to 5.67.

**Lillian:** Increase from baseline with an average frequency of 7.67 during direct instruction. Overall average total frequency of 10.67.

**Stan:** Increase in OARS during direct coaching and feedback with an average total frequency of 61.67.

## Limitations

The impact of participant's setting events throughout the duration of the study on their use of OARS skills. An example is seen within Rose's responding with the potential of a looming graduation and upcoming move.

## Future Research

Gather additional information on the impact of the use of process-based OARS skills from perspective of the children, parents or clients with whom they are being used. This would provide insight on how the use of OARS skills are being received by the individuals and caregivers that are receiving treatment.

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