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Learning Potential in Drawing a Complex Figure: Associations with Executive Functions and Autistic Traits

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Dynamic testing is an assessment approach that evaluates a child's learning potential by incorporating instructional prompts directly into the testing process. This study evaluates a dynamic version of the Rey–Osterrieth Complex Figure Test (ROCF). The aim of the study was to evaluate the effects of graduated prompts training on ROCF performance and to examine the relationships between dynamic ROCF measures, planning, working memory and autistic traits.

Participants of the study were 145 children (M = 8.67 years, SD = 0.99). The study consisted of a randomized blocking experimental-control group design. Between pre- and posttest, the experimental group received a graduated prompts training, whereas the control group worked independently. During the pre- and posttest of the ROCF, children were required to copy the figure while viewing it and draw it from memory. Outcome measures were accuracy in drawing the figure and segmentation the figure during drawing. Additionally, the Tower of Hanoi (planning), Picture Span (working memory), and the Autism Spectrum Questionnaire were administered once.

Results showed a significant interaction effect for accuracy in drawing from memory, and for segmentation on both copy and memory drawing, but not for accuracy in copying. This showed that training led to more improvement from pretest to posttest than control tasks on all measures except accuracy in copying. The patterns of correlations showed an inconsistent picture. Working memory showed weak to moderate correlations with accuracy on copy and memory drawing. Planning and autistic traits portrayed inconsistent patterns of relations with ROCF accuracy and segmentation.

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