



The Institute of Human Communicative Research
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
香港中文大學 人類傳意科學研究所



香港明愛康復服務
Caritas Rehabilitation Service

To News Editor
For Immediate Release

18 August 2009

Innovative 'ILAUGH' Project Improves Social Thinking of Autistic Students

A joint project conducted by the Institute of Human Communicative Research at The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) and the Caritas Rehabilitation Service sees positive results for students with autism. Funded by the Quality Education Fund and supported by the Education Bureau, it shows that a group of Hong Kong secondary school students who had been diagnosed with or was suspected of having autism has improved significantly in social communication ability after taking part in a dynamic new social thinking training programme known as 'ILAUGH'.

The name 'ILAUGH' highlights the positive improvements in social relationships and general impacts of the training. It also offers an easily remembered way of grouping social thinking skills like learning about sharing space with others, considering others' points of view, and understanding emotions, thoughts, beliefs, prior knowledge and intentions into six key areas:

- I** Initiation of communication
- L** Listening with eyes and brain
- A** Abstract and inferential thinking
- U** Understanding perspective
- G** Gestalt processing / getting the 'big picture'
- H** Humour and human relatedness

Much training in social skills has tended to teach a child just to memorize and activate a specific response with respect to a rather broad social circumstance so far, eg. saying 'Good morning' to anyone they happen to meet in the morning. By contrast, ILAUGH is more nuanced and better grounded in social reality. It encourages students to observe the complex world around them in their schools and their daily lives from multiple perspectives. It leads them to reflect more fully on other peoples' thoughts and feelings and helps them respond and act more appropriately.

To elaborate the earlier example, a student in the ILAUGH programme will not only decide, use and practice the right tone of voice, facial expression, and gesture when she says 'Good morning'. She will also learn how to deliver this greeting to different people in various settings, e.g. a playground encounter, a morning assembly or a class meeting, each of which will call for distinct differences in performance.

The six interrelated elements of ILAUGH are proved to be particularly effective in helping students to sense and act upon the hidden meanings behind messages and situations. They can then successfully reshape their behaviours and ultimately live more happily and harmoniously with the others.

ILAUGH is delivered by a multidisciplinary team including academia, speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, social workers and educators. In the initial phase between November 2007 and June 2008, 12 ILAUGH training sessions were delivered to 44 students

from 14 schools in small groups of three to four students.

A 70-item 5-point rating scale was used to measure social behaviour appropriateness among the students before and after the training. The total average score rose from 2.81 to 3.17, representing a 12.8% increase, statistically significant at the $p = <0.001$ level. Post-training improvements were shown across each of the six aspects of ILAUGH.

Parents, teachers and social workers of the students also reported that they were satisfied with the training results. They felt that the students had shown great improvements in interpersonal relationships, caring for the family and academic performance.

While social thinking is quite natural and obvious to most so-called 'normal' or 'neurotypical' children and adults, it can be really difficult for people with autism. A toddler with autism cannot readily tell from his parents' facial expression and tone of voice if he may touch a particular object. An adult with autism may not get the message that one is in a hurry or has lost interest in the conversation if he keeps looking at his watch. 'As social thinking ability in people with autism is not effectively hard-wired at birth, it cannot be learned intuitively as one develops,' said Professor Kathy Lee, Assistant Director of the Institute of Human Communicative Research, CUHK. 'This is why programmes on the carefully researched lines of ILAUGH are so essential.'

According to a 2008 report of the Census and Statistics Department, the prevalence of autism in Hong Kong is 0.1%. Among those with autism, 74.7% said they found day-to-day living and school learning difficult. Questionnaires sent by the ILAUGH working group to 436 teachers revealed that students with autism often failed to establish peer relationships. They also experienced emotional disturbances, conflicts with their classmates or teachers, teasing, rejection or bullying.

The ILAUGH working group is very pleased to launch this meaningful programme to secondary schools. In a complementary initiative, it has published *The Six Dimensions of Social Thinking: ILAUGH Practical Handbook*. This handbook gives teachers, social workers and counselling professionals a deeper understanding of the social communication difficulties faced by young people with autism. All secondary schools in Hong Kong will soon receive a copy of this handbook from the Education Bureau. ILAUGH has also published a free introductory pamphlet on *ILAUGH Social Thinking*. Interested parties can download it at the following link: www.iher.cuhk.edu.hk/events/pdf/ILAUGH_booklet_pdf-3.pdf

From a formal diagnostic perspective, the American Psychiatric Association's DSM-IV criteria for autism (autistic disorder) include three main areas of difficulty: impairments in social interaction; impairments in communication; and restricted repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behaviour, interests, and activities. Autistic disorder is regarded as a complex developmental disability that appears during the first three years of life and is the result of a neurological disorder affecting brain function.

Media enquiries: Miss To (Tel: 21445360) at the Institute of Human Communicative Research, CUHK or Miss Luke Kit Ling (Tel: 28434627) at Caritas Rehabilitation Services.



The Institute of Human Communicative Research
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
香港中文大學 人類傳意科學研究所



香港明愛康復服務
Caritas Rehabilitation Service

致新聞編輯

請即發放

嶄新「ILAUGH 社交思考訓練」 成功提升自閉症學生的社交溝通能力

在優質教育基金的資助及香港教育局的支持下，香港中文大學(中大)人類傳意科學研究所與香港明愛康復服務合作，於 2007 至 2008 年間在本港中學推行「ILAUGH 社交思考訓練」計劃。結果顯示，參與這項訓練的自閉症中學生，其社交溝通能力有顯著提升。

「ILAUGH 社交思考訓練」是六個社交思考範疇的英文字首縮寫，旨在改進自閉症人士的社交互動及情感交流，並將社交思考背後的概念，如人與人之間的距離、考慮別人的見解及明白別人的情感、想法、信念、知識及動機等，組合成六個重要的元素，分別為：

I	Initiation of communication	啟動(溝通)
L	Listening with eyes and brain	聆聽(運用眼睛及腦袋聆聽)
A	Abstract and inferential thinking	抽象(抽象及推論語言/溝通)
U	Understanding perspective	想法解讀(了解別人想法與立場)
G	Gestalt processing/Getting the 'big picture'	整體觀(完整分析)
H	Humor and human relatedness	幽默(幽默感與人際脈絡)

一般傳統社交技巧訓練計劃，著重教導學生在某個社交情景中，背誦特定的反應，例如：早上向人講「早晨」，惟這個學習模式欠缺彈性，未能達致融會貫通的效果。相反，「ILAUGH 社交思考訓練」計劃能更細緻、更真實地刻劃出社交背後精細思考過程，它鼓勵學生在日常生活或學校環境中，從多角度觀察和分析別人的想法和感受，並幫助他們作出合宜的表現和回應。

以「講早晨」為例，接受「ILAUGH 社交思考訓練」的學生，除了要決定及練習運用適當的聲調語氣、表情及手勢配合「講早晨」外，還要分析在不同的場合和面對不同的對象時，如何應用這個問候語，例如在公園、早會或課室中，均有不同形式的表達方法。

「ILAUGH 社交思考」中六個緊密相連的元素能有效幫助學生掌握說話和情景背後所隱藏的深入意思，讓他們改造自己的行為，最終可與人和諧共處。有關訓練於 2007 年 11 月至 2008 年 6 月期間推行，由大學學者、言語治療師、職業治療師、社工、教育工作者及研究助理所組成的專業團隊帶領。全港共有 44 位來自 14 間中學的學生參與。整項訓練共有 12 節，以 3 至 4 位學生的小組形式進行。

研究小組設計了一份共有 70 項題目的量表，以量度學生參加訓練前後的社交溝通行為。以 5 分為滿分，參加者的整體平均得分由 2.81 升至 3.17，上升了 12.8%，升幅達致統計學上的顯著水平($p < 0.001$)。除總分有明顯進步外，參加者在「ILAUGH 社交思考」中六個範疇的細項得分亦有所提升。同時，參加者的家長及日常與其接觸的老師和社工皆滿意訓練的成效，並指出學生在人際關係、關心家人，甚至學業成績各方面均有顯著進步。

對一般人而言，運用社交思考毋須刻意思量。但自閉症人士則難以摸索及掌握有關的思考概念。自閉症幼兒並未能按父母的表情和說話的語氣，而判斷應否觸摸某物件；成年自閉症人士則未能從對話者「不斷看錶」這個身體語言中，洞悉對方「正趕時間」或「不熱衷於該話題」的想法。中大人類傳意科學研究所助理所長李月裳教授表示：「由於自閉症兒童沒有這種與生俱來的社交思考洞察力，他們不能依靠自身的成長而建立穩固的社交思考基礎。因此，這個以研究數據為本的『ILAUGH 社交思考訓練』計劃可幫助他們有系統地掌握這些規則。」

根據政府統計處 2008 年的數字顯示，自閉症的普遍率為 0.1%，當中 74.7% 的自閉症人士對日常生活及學習感到困難。研究小組較早前向 436 位老師收取的問卷調查中，發現自閉症學生難於建立朋友關係，部分亦受到情緒困擾、與同學或老師發生衝突、被同學取笑及排斥、甚至被欺凌等。

有見「ILAUGH 社交思考訓練」的顯著成效，研究小組遂將訓練課程推展到全港中學。小組編制了《社交思考六面體：ILAUGH 實用手冊》基礎指南，供教師、社工及輔導人員參考，讓他們對自閉症青少年所面對的社交溝通困難，有更深入的了解。此手冊正由教育局派發至全港中學。另外，研究小組亦印製了簡介「ILAUGH 社交思考訓練」的小冊子，供有興趣人士索取，亦可在以下網站下載：
www.ihcr.cuhk.edu.hk/events/pdf/ILAUGH_booklet_pdf-3.pdf

根據美國精神科學會的定義，自閉症的三大特徵包括：社交障礙；溝通障礙；重複刻板的行為、興趣和活動模式，這些徵狀通常在三歲前出現。自閉症是因腦部功能異常而引致的一種發展障礙。而亞氏保加症是自閉症的一種，患者並無智能障礙及語言發展遲緩的情況。

二零零九年八月十八日

傳媒查詢：中大人類傳意科學研究所杜小姐(電話：21445360)或香港明愛康復服務陸潔玲小姐 (電話：28434627)