

The Sounds of Success: Exploring the Integration of Music-Based Intervention into Speech-Language Therapy to Support Pragmatic Language Development in Children with Social (Pragmatic) Communication Disorder

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to explore the use of music in speech-language therapy to support the development of pragmatic language skills in children with a social (pragmatic) communication disorder (SPCD). More specifically, I examined how the integration of music-based interventions in speech-language therapy can enhance social-pragmatic skills (e.g., turn taking, storytelling, and role-playing) in children in grades kindergarten through eighth grade.

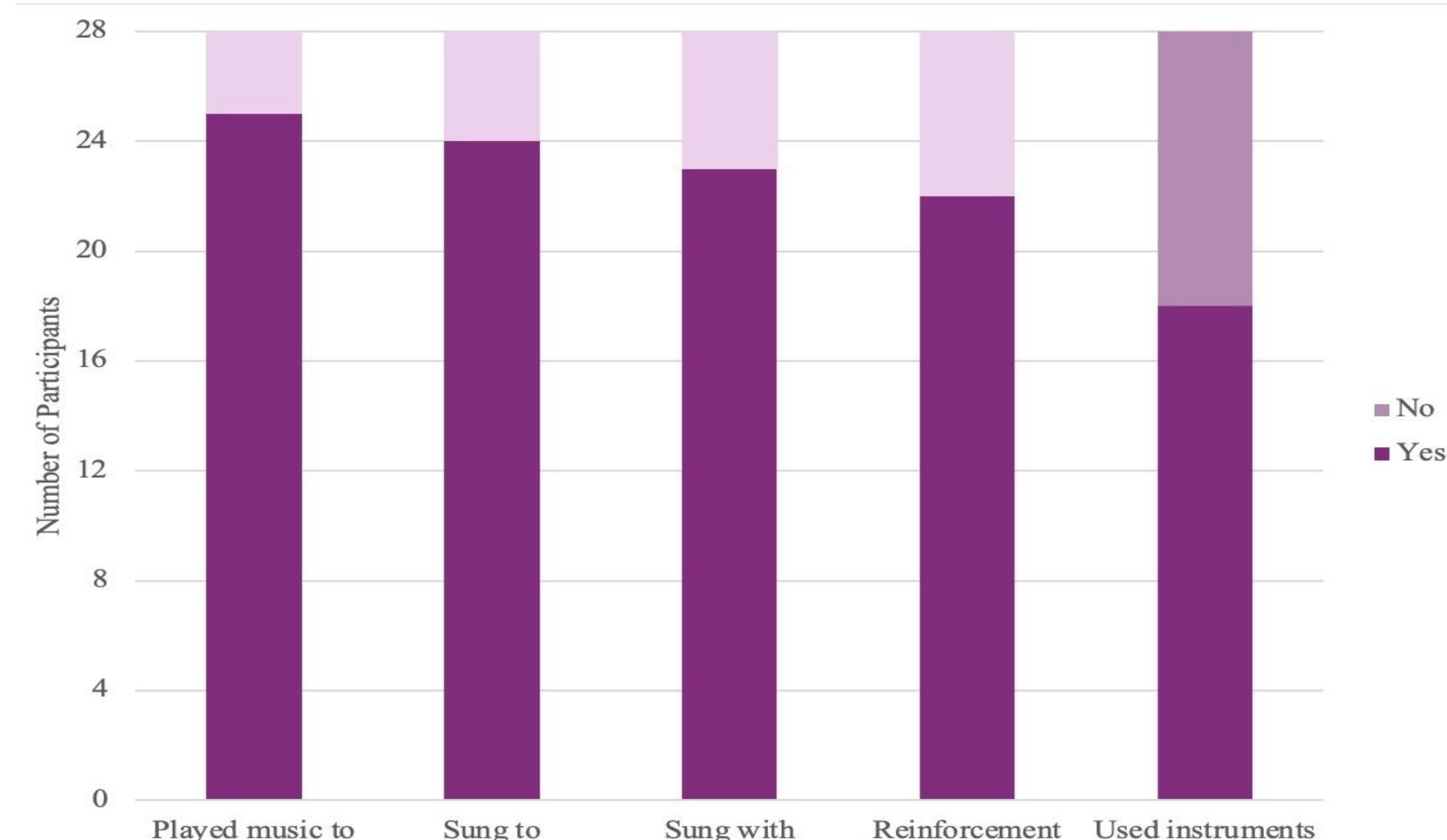
METHOD

- I collected data by means of a 22-question electronic survey
- I grouped the 22 survey items into four main categories: demographics, experience using different forms of music with pediatric clients, familiarity/experience working with children with SPCD, and clinical perceptions of using music to enhance communicative skills in children.
- I recruited participants via contact with personal connections, and posts on relevant pediatric SLP groups on Facebook.
- A total of 30 participants responded to the survey. Of those participants, 28 (93%) had a master's degree, and 2 (7%) had a research doctoral degree. Additionally, the most frequent responses selected by SLPs for settings in which they provide therapy were "Speech and hearing outpatient clinic," "Preschool," and "Elementary school."

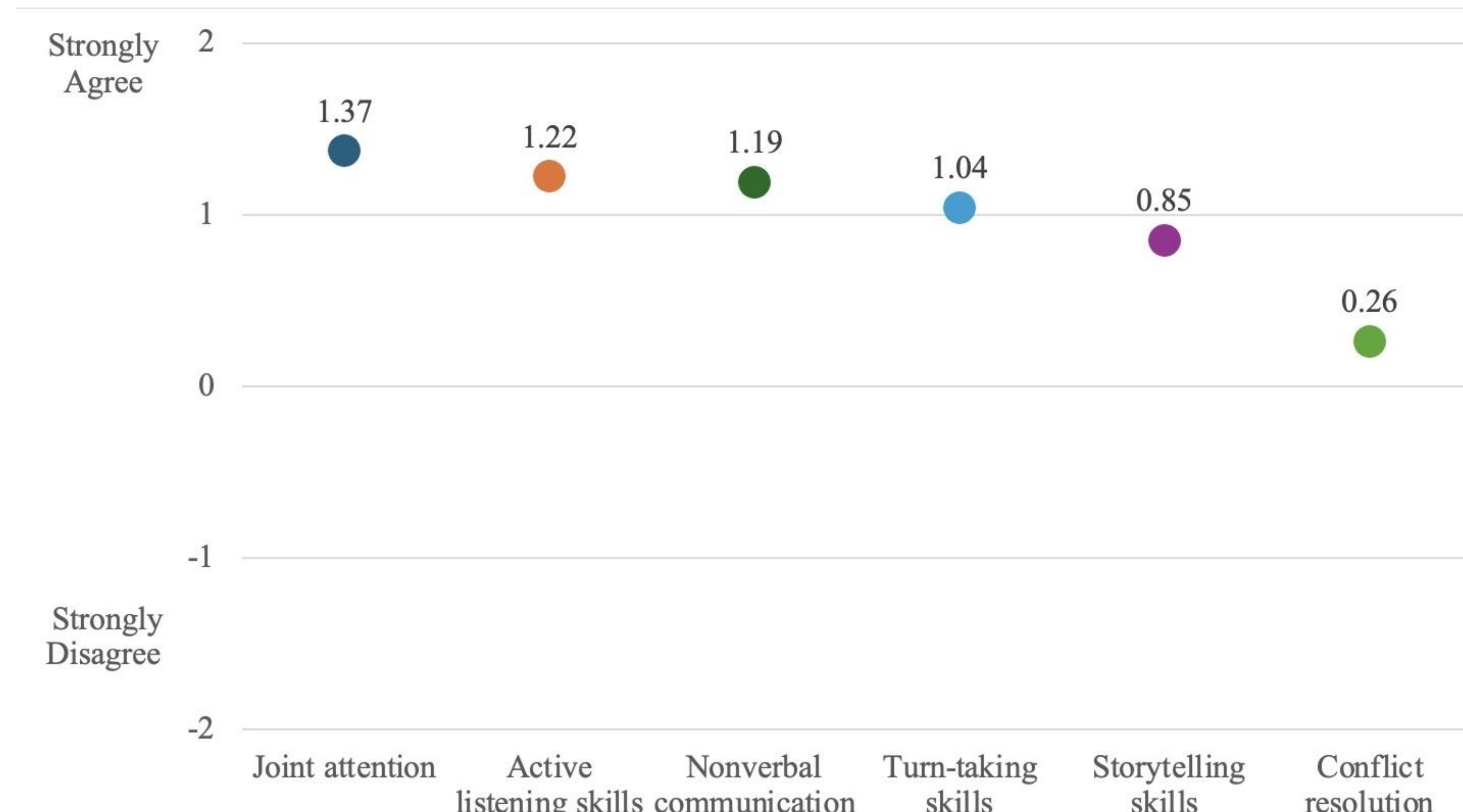
DEFINITIONS

- Social (pragmatic) communication disorder* is "characterized by a persistent difficulty with verbal and nonverbal communication that cannot be explained by low cognitive ability" (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Individuals with a SPCD may struggle in social, academic, and occupational settings, and symptoms are often present from a young age.
- Music-based intervention* is a method of evidence-based treatment that may involve activities of improvisation, composition, re-creation of existing music, and reception of existing music (Law Insider, 2025, para. 1). These interventions assist in developing language, emotions, social cognition, and reducing pain or anxiety (Law Insider, 2025, para. 2).

Participants' Experience Using Music in SLT Sessions

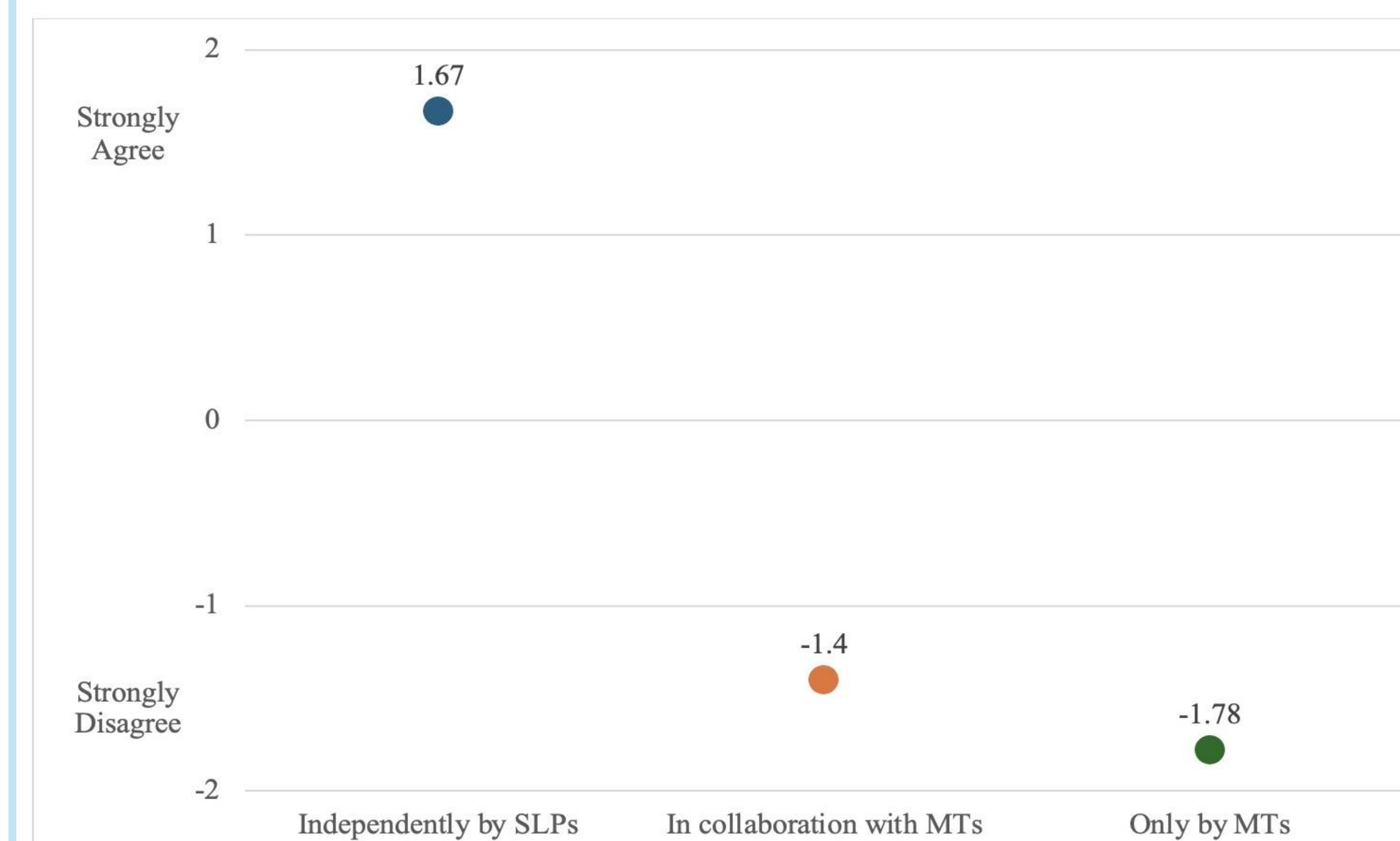


Participants' Level of Agreement with Using Music to Improve Selected Pragmatic Communication Skills



Note. Participants responded to each of these items using a five-point Likert scale, where -2 represented *Strongly Disagree*, -1 represented *Somewhat disagree*, 0 represented *Neither agree nor disagree*, 1 represented *Somewhat agree*, and 2 represented *Strongly agree*.

Participants' Level of Agreement Concerning the Incorporation of Music



Note. Participants responded to each of these items using a five-point Likert scale, where -2 represented *Strongly Disagree*, -1 represented *Somewhat disagree*, 0 represented *Neither agree nor disagree*, 1 represented *Somewhat agree*, and 2 represented *Strongly agree*. SLP represents speech-language pathologists, and MT represents music therapists.

MAJOR CONCLUSIONS

- SLPs agreed that music has the potential to improve communicative skills and they had experience using musical activities in therapy. However, they did not view music to be equally beneficial in targeting every pragmatic goal. Participants also had a high level of agreement that musical activities can be used independently by SLPs to improve speech and language skills in children.
- Despite SPCD being a relatively new diagnosis, participants reported being knowledgeable about the disorder and experienced in treating it. SLPs reported being *very familiar* with the diagnosis of SPCD ($M = 1.07$, $SD = 1$, range = 1-4) and *moderately to very experienced* working with a child with the disorder ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 1.02$, range = 1-4).