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Speech and language therapies to improve pragmatics and discourse skills in patients with schizophrenia

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## **Abstract**

Individuals with schizophrenia display speech and language impairments that greatly impact their integration to the society. The aim of this systematic review was to identify the importance of speech and language therapy (SLT) as part of rehabilitation curriculums for patients with schizophrenia emphasizing on the speech and language abilities assessed, the therapy setting and the therapeutic approach. This article reviewed 18 studies testing the effects of language therapy or training in 433 adults diagnosed with schizophrenia. Results showed that 14 studies out of 18 lead to improvements in language and/or speech abilities. Most of these studies comprised pragmatic or expressive discursive skills being the only aim of the therapy or part of it. The therapy settings vary widely ranging from twice daily individual therapy to once weekly group therapy. The therapeutic approach was mainly operant conditioning. Although the evidence tends to show that certain areas of language are treatable through therapy, it remains difficult to state the type of approach that should be favoured and implemented to treat language impairments in schizophrenia.

## **Keywords**

Psychiatry, rehabilitation, communication, speech-language pathology

## **1. Introduction**

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