

MAND-TO-TACT TRAINING TRANSFER ACQUISITION RATES IN CHILDREN DIAGNOSED
WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER WITH LIMITED VERBAL SKILLS

A study in attempts to fulfill the requirements of the ARCH program and the Psychology Departmental
Honor's Thesis requirements

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Abstract

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is defined as “the presence of severe and pervasive impairments in reciprocal social interaction and in verbal and nonverbal communication skills” (Diagnostic & Statistical Manual, 2000). It is estimated that 1 in 68 children across the United States are diagnosed with ASD. One of the most common delays that children diagnosed with ASD experience are language delays. Children with ASD that have a language delay will often develop maladaptive behaviors as a result of poor communication skills (Carr & Durand, 1985). The failure to develop mand acquisition in typical fashion results in behaviors ranging from social withdrawal to self-injurious behaviors (Cooper et al., 2007). A lack of a strong tact repertoire can further impede and complicate the learning of other necessary components of language due to the inability to successfully label items and events in the physical environment of the child. The purpose of this study is to replicate with a reversal in verbal operant training of the procedures described in Wallace et al. (2006) in which two children with ASD underwent tact training to facilitate the formation of mands; essentially this study aims to accomplish mand training first to establish as tact. It is hypothesized that mand training will result in a greater repertoire of tacts due to strength of the relationship between mands and the control over the social environment (Cooper et al., 2007). The two children in the study will be taught to mand items that will be ranked in order of preference via stimulus preference assessment. This study is of great importance due to the indispensable value of effective social communication skills. Data gathered on improving communication skills is of great value to the ASD community as the implications for functional skills result in better communication with family and greater control of individual functioning.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder, tacts, mands, verbal training, verbal behavior

References

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***** Subject recruitment and data collection is set to being Spring 2015 (January).**