Editorial

The 2007 issue of TAVB includes 11 papers, including seven original research papers: Yoon and Feliciano; Verbeke; Washio and Houmanfar; Fiorile and Greer; Sweeney-Kerwin et al.; Ward, Osnes, & Partington; and Vignes. There are three conceptual/theoretical papers, all of them closely related to the behavior and processes that Skinner identifies as *autoclitic relations*, behavior controlled by ongoing behavior by the same person: Weitzman; Adelman; and Grant. There is one review of previous research (Cihon).

As described in this issue's opening paper, Yoon and Feliciano used a stimulus-stimulus pairing (automatic reinforcement) procedure to facilitate the acquisition of mands by six two- to five-year-old children with moderate to severe language and communication delays. The results were complicated by the existence of several relations between the effects of the stimulus pairing and the preexisting verbal repertoires of the participants.

Washio and Houmanfar studied the role of contextual control in second language learning. Transition from more to less complex contextual stimuli caused a decrease in measures of percent correct and in response latency for 11 out of 14 normally developing eighteen year olds (college students). These findings indicate that the change in environmental stimuli from a training to a practical language setting *could* be an important factor in second language learning; however, the present results are of somewhat questionable validity because of the high number of dropouts from the experimental procedure. In any case, the differences between the training and the practical context should certainly be considered in any second language instructional program.

Two topics are included in Volume 23 that have not previously been addressed in TAVB: Assessment of Basic Learning Abilities (ABLA), about which Verbeke wrote, and, Multiple exemplar methodology for teaching verbal behavior, a procedure described by Fiorile and Greer.

ABLA is a test of the extent to which developmentally disabled individuals can ultimately acquire new repertoires. It uses every-day objects that are inexpensive, and it is very easy to

learn and has a standardized administration procedure. It could be very helpful as a screening device when there are a large number of participants to be dealt with, and when there are few staff available.

The multiple exemplar method for teaching new verbal repertoires is a powerful tool and is not used by most of the TAVB practitioners and researchers. One can easily learn the procedure from the Fiorile and Greer paper. They taught a *naming* repertoire (Horne and Lowe) to four children with autistic spectrum disorder using the method referred to as multiple exemplar instruction (MEI) as compared with teaching tacts to mastery using echoic to tact training. They used three-dimensional bisyllabic labels (experimenter coined tacts). The three-dimensional objects were unusual hardware items such as clamps and bolts. The MEI group was much more effective in identifying the target objects than the control group.

Ward, Osnes, and Partington compared discrete trial instructions (Lovaas) with mand training (Sundberg) on the acquisition of independent requests in six children with autism. Eye contact and challenging behaviors were also assessed across conditions. Five of six children made more independent requests and acquired requesting faster in the mand-training condition, had slightly better eye contact in the DTI condition, and fewer challenging behaviors in the mand-training condition. Mand training would appear to be a more efficient method for teaching children with autism to make requests.

Sweeney, et al. transferred control of the mand from a discriminative stimulus to an establishing operation for two developmentally delayed/autistic children, a three year old male diagnosed with autism who would sometimes engage in problem behavior in the form of crying, whining, or flopping; and a seven-year-old boy diagnosed with autism in the moderate to severe range, who also engaged in problem behavior in the form of hitting, yelling, or pinching. The study was designed specifically to extend the technology of mand training by testing a modified time-delay procedure to free the mand from the discriminative control exerted by the presence of the desired item. In

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addition, this study aimed at developing procedures that could be easily implemented by teachers and instructors in educational settings. It was also hypothesized that the addition of the terminological refinements brought about by including Skinner's (1957) classification of language and Michael's (1988) identification of the MO as the primary controlling variable for the mand would bring analytic and procedural clarity to the task.

Vignes replicated an earlier study (Sundberg et al.) that compared topography-based with selection-based behavior in terms of which resulted in more rapid acquisition of tact's and intraverbal's, which was associated with few-

est errors, and which paradigm resulted in emergence of the highest number of new verbal relations. The earlier study implied that the selection-based paradigm was considerably less effective than the topography-based paradigm. The results of the present study was just the opposite in its conclusions, thus contradicting what could be considered the general wisdom of the field of verbal behavior instruction. So there is much to be learned in this area.

These papers, as well as the others, make Volume 23 a rich issue. I welcome your feedback on it, as well as ideas and manuscripts on future issues.

—Jack Michael
Editor