Abstract

This paper reports results of two studies that sought to teach generative reading skills to a large group of Brazilian children who were exhibiting protracted failure in school. Inspired by Skinner’s analysis of verbal relations and minimal verbal units, the methodology took advantage of certain characteristics of Portuguese. Many words in this language are comprised of two-letter syllabic units (e.g., BO+LA= ball, CA+BO= handle, LA+TA= can) that can be recombined to form new words (e.g., BOCA= mouth, BOTA= boot), thus establishing a route to generative reading via recombinative generalization. Such syllabic units were incorporated within curricular framework that used matching-to-sample and learning by exclusion methods to teach matching relations involving pictures, printed and spoken words, and printed and spoken syllables. Study 1 was conducted within a university-based learning center that maintained certain aspects of laboratory conditions. It showed that teaching textual relations between dictated and printed syllables could control procedurally the inter- and intra-participant variability observed in past studies that lacked this feature - resulting in virtually universally positive teaching outcomes. Study 2 was conducted in a public school programs that applied the same basic training methodology. Positive training outcomes in an experimental group were approximately 3-5 times greater than that in a placebo control group. Together, these studies illustrate that the functional analysis in Verbal Behavior is having a direct impact in educational science in Brazil. It has led to procedures that can be effectively translated from the laboratory to the community via delivery systems that can be implemented in the developing world.

Keywords

Functional verbal relations, textual units, matching-to-sample, recombinative generalization, reading prerequisites, developmental disabilities.