

Talk 1: *Language Intervention for Minimally-Verbal Children: Establishing Verbal Behavior Foundation*

Early language skills in young children are built upon direct reinforcement contingencies of the elementary verbal operants. During these early months, a combination of automatic and socially-mediated reinforcement promotes the acquisition of verbal operants and the expansion of verbal behavior repertoire. Apart from the development of vocalizations, the acquisition of mediating responses seems crucial in young children's vocabulary "explosion" and the refinement of verbal skills. These mediating responses facilitate the incidental acquisition of early verbal repertoire and set the foundation for the development of complex skills. The current talk will discuss strategies to foster the acquisition of early verbal behavior skills and mediating responses that can serve as prerequisites for developing speaker and listener repertoires.

Talk 2: *Emergence of Verbal Operants and the Development of Advanced Repertoire in Children with Autism*

Focused behavior interventions for children with autism and other developmental disabilities typically target each verbal operant individually and build complexity as children expand their verbal repertoire (Sundberg & Partington, 1999). Considering the extent of a person's verbal repertoire, it is unrealistic to believe that one can directly teach every topography of verbal behavior to a child with language delays, particularly regarding advanced verbal repertoire. Therefore, it is important not only to evaluate the effectiveness of verbal behavior interventions but also to identify strategies that can efficiently promote the acquisition of new responses. Research has shown that environmental conditions can be arranged to facilitate the emergence of novel, untrained verbal responses. This talk will discuss the research and strategies to promote the emergence of novel, advanced responses when programming verbal behavior instructions for children with autism.