

Revisiting Topography-Based and Selection-Based Verbal Behavior

In topography-based verbal behavior, different antecedent stimuli control different topographies of responding, whereas in selection-based verbal behavior, different antecedent stimuli control the selection of visually distinct stimuli from an array of options. This talk will focus on variable characteristics of selection-based behavior that affect its similarity to topography-based behavior: The extent to which stimuli can be constructed from minimal units, the size and composition of the selection array, and the similarity of response-produced stimuli to verbal stimuli that are prevalent in the speaker's verbal community. The relevance of these variables to the use of speech-generating devices and other forms of augmentative and alternative communication has been highlighted by recent technological developments. Although a distinction between topography-based and selection-based behavior has merit, particular characteristics of a selection-based verbal behavior modality may often be more relevant for researchers and clinicians than its status as selection-based.

The Functional and Ethical Implications of Behavior-Speak, or: How to Talk About Behavior Analysis Like a "Normal" Person

Behavior analytic terminology allows us to speak with precision about functional relations between behavior and environment, thus allowing for greater control over relevant variables. However, some have pointed out that our technical terms can be both perplexing and off-putting to others, perhaps even more so than those used in other fields. Thus, it remains important to teach students of behavior analysis to communicate behavior analytic principles and procedures using both behavioral terminology (behavior-speak) and everyday language. This talk will provide an overview of the relevant research findings on comprehension, perception, and attitudes toward behavior analytic terminology. I will discuss these issues based on the ethics code for behavior analysts as well as Skinner's analysis of verbal behavior. (This course also counts towards Ethics CE).