

Functional Communication Training with Lag Schedules of Reinforcement to Increase Variable Manding

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INTRODUCTION

Functional communication training (FCT) is a reinforcement-based intervention that teaches a socially-appropriate response (mand) to replace functionally-equivalent challenging behavior (Carr & Durand, 1985). FCT may promote rote responding, fail to generalize across contexts, or lead to a resurgence of challenging behavior when a trained mand contacts extinction (Falcomata & Wacker, 2013). FCT with a lag schedule of reinforcement may improve these limitations by training a variety of responses to increase variable manding and decrease functionally equivalent challenging behavior (Pokorski et al., 2020).

METHOD

The participant was 5-years-old with Down syndrome and limited intelligible communication. We used an A-B-A-B reversal design. We implemented FCT with increasing lag schedule (0-2) to promote variable requesting across four trained modalities (vocal, sign, AAC device, and picture card). The participant was given access to function-based reinforcer (toys and attention) for mands that were sufficiently variable, per the lag schedule in that condition

RESULTS

We observed a functional relation between FCT with a lag schedule of reinforcement and frequency and variability of mands and challenging behavior. Response patterns generalized to participant's natural context (i.e., school playground).

Functional communication training with a lag schedule of reinforcement increased mand variability and decreased challenging behavior of a preschooler with Down syndrome.



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DISCUSSION

The participant requested function-based reinforcer with increasing variability as lag schedule was increased. Challenging behavior remained low. Results support and extend existing literature to a new population. Patterns of responding were distinct from previous studies. Reinforcement-based interventions should be used to teach young children to make requests in a variety of ways.

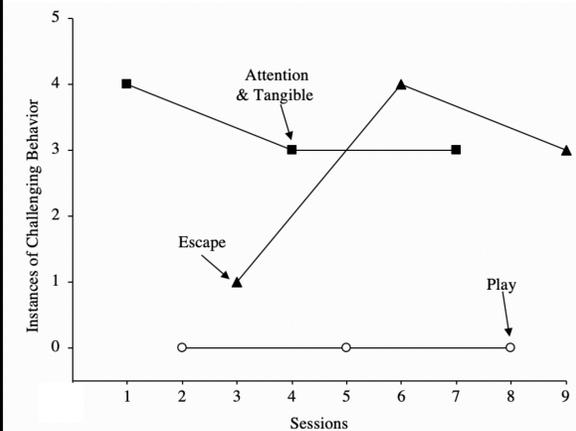


Figure 1. Instances of challenging behavior across three conditions of a functional analysis.

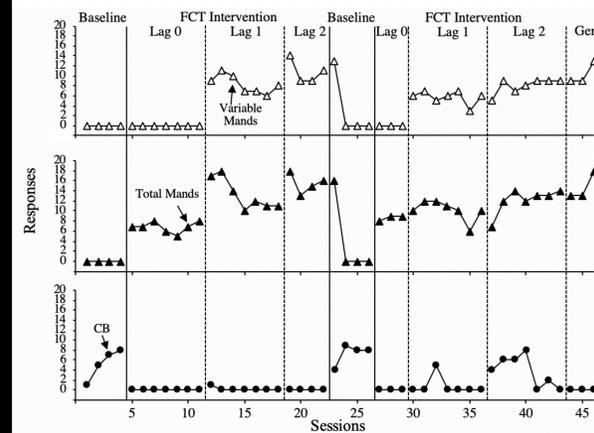


Figure 2. Variable mands, total mands, and instances of challenging behavior across conditions.