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Derived emergence of WH question“answers in children with autism

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Abstract

Children with autism spectrum disorder often struggle to respond to conversational questions involving words such as “who,” “what,” and “where.” One reason for this may be that answering these types of questions requires a repertoire of relational responding in which the individual must select an answer based on the class memberships of stimuli found in the question. For example, answering the question, “Who do you see at the hospital?” requires identifying a potential response that is in coordination with both “who” and “hospital,” e.g., a doctor. The present study sought to examine this premise by providing training designed to promote relational responding to community associations, associations of noun types, and associations between wh- words and noun types. Three participants diagnosed with autism, between the ages of 10 and 12, were exposed to a multi-phase relational training sequence designed to establish equivalence class membership between community helper stimuli,

noun-class stimuli, and wh- word relations using protocols from the PEAK Relational Training System (Dixon, 2015. *PEAK relational training system: Equivalence module*. Shawnee Scientific Press: Carbondale, IL; Dixon, in press. *PEAK relational training system: Transformation module*. Shawnee Scientific Press: Carbondale, IL). A concurrent multiple baseline across skills and participants design was used to evaluate the functional relationship between the establishment of these relations and the emergence of correct responding to wh- questions. Results indicated that for two of the three participants, mastery of these relations was functionally related to the emergence of accurate responding to untrained intraverbal wh- questions.



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Keywords

Autism; Equivalence; PEAK; Relational frame theory; Wh- questions

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