

Verbal Behavior Glossary

Mark L. Sundberg

2/19/04

- Audience** Anyone who functions as a discriminative stimulus evoking verbal behavior. Different audiences may control different verbal behavior about the same topic due to a differential reinforcement history. Teens may describe the same event in different ways when talking to peers versus parents.
- Autoclitics** The autoclitic relation involves two related but separate three-term contingencies where some aspect of a speaker's own verbal behavior functions as an SD, or an MO, for additional speaker verbal behavior. The autoclitic relation can be thought of as verbal behavior about verbal behavior.
- Automatic punishment** Automatic punishment is a type of conditioned punishment where a response product has punishing properties due to a specific conditioning history.
- Automatic reinforcement** Automatic reinforcement is a type of conditioned reinforcement where a response product has reinforcing properties due to a specific conditioning history. Skinner used the terms *automatic reinforcement* and *automatic punishment* in a number of his writings simply to indicate that an effective consequence can occur without someone providing it.
- Copying a text** An elementary verbal operant involving a response that is evoked by a verbal discriminative stimulus that has point-to-point correspondence and formal similarity with the response. This verbal operant is very similar to the echoic in that a speaker copies the verbal behavior of another speaker. Just as in learning to repeat words facilitates learning mands, tacts, etc., learning to copy words facilitates reading and writing.
- Echoic** An elementary verbal operant involving a response that is evoked by a verbal discriminative stimulus that has point-to-point correspondence and formal similarity with the response. Learning to repeat the words of others is essential to acquiring the other elementary verbal operants. Echoic behavior can become too strong as in echolalia.
- Formal similarity** Formal similarity occurs when the controlling antecedent stimulus and the response or response product (1) share the same sense mode (e.g., both stimulus and response are visual, auditory, or tactile) and (2) physically resemble each other. The verbal relations with formal similarity are echoic, coping a text, and imitation as it relates to sign language.
- Generic extension** All verbal extensions are a type of stimulus generalization. In generic extension a response is evoked by a novel stimulus that shares all of the relevant or defining features associated with the original stimulus.
- Impure tact** A verbal operant involving a response that is evoked by both an MO and a nonverbal stimulus, thus the response is part mand and part tact. Most day-to-day verbal behavior is evoked by multiple variables. The value of Skinner's analysis can often be seen by its identification of the relevant variables evoking a particular response as exemplified by the impure tact where a response may look like a tact, but it is also a mand (e.g., The verbal response *The garbage can is full*).
- Intraverbal** An elementary verbal operant involving a response that is evoked by a verbal discriminative stimulus that does *not* have point-to-point correspondence with that verbal stimulus. The intraverbal is the opposite of the echoic, in that the words emitted by one speaker do not exactly match the words of another speaker. Intraverbal behavior constitutes the basis for social interaction, conversations, and much of academic and intellectual behavior. Questions are mands, and answers are intraverbal.
- Listener** Someone who provides reinforcement for verbal behavior. A listener may also serve as an audience evoking verbal behavior. The distinction between listener and speaker is often blurred by the fact that much of a listener's behavior may involve becoming a speaker at the covert level (e.g., thinking about what was said). Often a speaker may be his own listener.

Mand An elementary verbal operant involving a response that is evoked by an MO and followed by specific reinforcement. Manding allows speakers to get their wants and needs reinforced by listeners. Manding plays an important role in language acquisition. However, some speakers may mand excessively with questions and other attention seeking behaviors. Much of the negative behavior emitted by developmentally disabled individuals often functions as a mand.

Metaphorical extension A verbal response evoked by a novel stimulus that shares some, but not all, of the relevant features of the original stimulus.

Metonymical extension In metonymical extension a response is evoked by a novel stimulus that shares none of the relevant features of the original stimulus configuration, but some irrelevant but related feature has acquired stimulus control.

Multiple control There are two types of multiple control. Convergent multiple control occurs when a single verbal response is a function more than one variable. That is, what is said has more than one antecedent source of control. Divergent multiple control occurs when a single antecedent variable affects the strength of many responses. A single stimulus can evoke many different behaviors.

Point-to-point correspondence Point-to-point correspondence between the stimulus and response or response product occurs when the beginning, middle, and end of the verbal stimulus matches the beginning, middle, and end of the verbal response. The verbal relations with point-to-point correspondence are echoic, copying a text, imitation as it relates to sign language, textual, and transcription.

Speaker Someone who engages in verbal behavior by emitting mands, tacts, intraverbals, autoclitics, etc. A speaker is also someone who uses sign language, gestures, signals, written words, codes, pictures, or any form of verbal behavior.

Tact An elementary verbal operant involving a response that is evoked by a nonverbal discriminative stimulus and followed by generalized conditioned reinforcement. Tacting allows a speaker to identify or describe the features of the physical environment. The elements that make up one's physical environment are vast, thus much of language instruction and educational programs focus on teaching tacts.

Textual An elementary verbal operant involving a response that is evoked by a verbal discriminative stimulus that has point-to-point correspondence between the stimulus and the response product, but does not have formal similarity between the stimulus and the response. Reading printed words involves the decoding of words, however reading comprehension involves many other behaviors such as intraverbal behavior and receptive language.

Transcription An elementary verbal operant involving a spoken verbal stimulus that evokes a written, typed, or finger spelled response. Like the textual, there is point-to-point correspondence between the stimulus and the response product, but no formal similarity.

Verbal behavior Behavior whose reinforcement is mediated by a listener; includes both vocal-verbal behavior (e.g., saying "Water please" to get water) and nonvocal-verbal behavior (pointing to a glass of water to get water). Encompasses the subject matter usually treated as *language* and topics such as thinking, grammar, composition, and understanding. As a result of his analysis of the relations among antecedent events, response instances, and mediated reinforcement, Skinner identified several basic types of verbal behavior (i.e., the verbal operants such as the mand and tact). (see echoic, intraverbal, listener, mand, speaker, tact, textual)