



Busy Analytical Bee

NEWSLETTER September

Welcome to the September edition! This is an exciting edition as it is our first edition including an interview. This special edition will occur every three months, talking to a variety of people within ABA. We will also be discussing research around DTT. Have a great month!

DISCRETE TRAIL TEACHING

This method is central to most ABA programmes. It's also known as Intensive Teaching Trial (ITT). The benefit of DTT is it allows the therapist to present a higher, and more varied, number of targets than what may typically occur in the Natural Environment. There are many key areas a therapist may consider when running a DTT session, including reinforcement (value and differential reinforcement) varied SDs, varied difficulty, etc.

Firstly it is important to ensure your pace is fast, you fade in your demands and consider your clients VR (variable ratio) schedule. The VR schedule is the schedule of reinforcement you client works towards. The VR represents the average number of demands that are placed before they receive reinforcement (R+). If your client is working on a VR5, for instance, for 4 trials session may look like this -

1 demand, R+, 8 demands, R+, 5 demands, R+, 6 demands, R+

For this the VR is exactly 5, which is calculated with the following method:

$$\frac{\text{TOTAL DEMANDS}}{\text{TOTAL TRIALS}} = \frac{1 + 8 + 5 + 4}{4} = 5$$

As described in Cooper, Heron and Heward (2007), the VR is an important schedule of Reinforcement as it is associated with a steady, increasing frequency of behaviour. Also as opposed to a FR (Fixed Ratio) the VR does not produce a post reinforcement pause; there is no pause of responding following reinforcement. If you place higher number of demands than the VR outlines, or is too high for your client, you risk ratio strain occurring.

It is important that you have a valuable reinforcer to use. Some therapists ask clients what they wish to work for. If the reinforcer is not highly motivating, or loses its value as demands are placed, you may notice your client is

making several errors. Preference Assessments are empirically valid method of assessing a variety of reinforcement. Roane et al (1998) demonstrate a brief preference assessment that yields significant results and identifies reinforcing stimuli. It is also important you use differential reinforcers to improve acquisition, this means using a high valued reinforcer for unprompted, correct responses and a less valued reinforcer for responses that were prompted, incorrect or latent.

When prompting responses it is important to fade to avoid prompt dependency. The teaching procedure used in DTT, Errorless Teaching Procedure, for errors requires an initial prompt from the tutor. In the following scenario the client incorrectly tacts a 'cat':-

Therapist: "What is this?" shows a 2D image of a cat

Client: "dog"

Therapist: "What animal is this? - cat"

Client: "cat"

Therapist: "What can you see?"

Client: "cat"

Therapist: "Good job!"

The prompt is given immediately, allowing the client to be successful and transfer stimulus control to the instruction. It is important the instruction is presented again following an error, so the successful response becomes contingent on the instruction and you do not chain in an error (in this example if chaining occurs in future the child may respond "dog cat").

There is a wealth of research to support these procedures including Karsten and Carr (2009). Their research supports prompt fading with differential reinforcement to ensure acquisition. They compared the value of reinforcement which differs from other papers that compared frequency. Their research demonstrated faster acquisition rates when they differentially reinforced prompted and unprompted responses. If you would like more advice on any of these procedures, speak to your supervisor.

Cooper, J. O., Heron, T. E., & Heward, W. L. (2007). *Applied Behaviour Analysis* (2nd ed.) New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.

Karsten, A. M. & Carr, J. E., (2009). The Effects of Differential Reinforcement of Unprompted Responding on the Skill Acquisition of Children with Autism, *Journal of Applied Behaviour Analysis*, **42**, 327-334.

Roane, H. S., Vollmer, T. R., Ringdahl, J. E., & Marcus, B. A. (1998). Evaluation of a brief Stimulus Preference Assessment. *Journal of Applied Behaviour Analysis*, **31**, 605-620.

Interview

Faryaneh Akhavan

Welcome to the first interview section of Busy Analytical Bee. We are honoured to be interviewing Faryaneh Akhavan. Faryaneh is a parent of a teenage boy with Autism and has been involved in ABA for many years. After implementing a home programme, Faryaneh set up Snowflake School. Snowflake School is an extraordinary ABA-VB school affiliated with Carbone Clinic. In their last Ofsted report they received Outstanding.

Welcome Faryaneh, firstly thank you for partaking in this interview. Please could you tell us a little bit about yourself and your son.

Kamy is my second child. Kamy's first year brought no concern and he was developing like any other child. It was really after his first birthday that firstly his developmental progress started to slow down, then stopped and even started to regress (not only his babbles were not turning to words, but its variety was getting less). For a year doctors were laughing at me and telling me to check myself in to a clinic. After his second birthday, I was asked to take Kamy for an assessment. I remember Kamy not sitting for a second and constantly touching things or wanting to leave.

When did you start using ABA with Kamy?

I was taking Kamy to speech therapist three times a week hoping to help him start talk. My frustration was not only his inability to talk, but his lack of interest and attention to anything the therapist was trying to do. I knew something was missing in the approach, but didn't know what. Just before Kamy turned 3, I learnt about ABA and positive pairing. I decided to give it a try as I was spending a lot of time and money for just under a year and could not see a slightest progress in Kamy. Kamy loved all the praises and would do anything to please the tutor. His progress was very good from the beginning.

Why did you decide to open an ABA-VB school?

Kamy's home programme was very organised. I had an outstanding team running and leading the programme, but Kamy was on his own and at home all the time. He needed to leave the house every day and live a normal life as much as possible. I did try to enrol Kamy in one of the existing ABA schools, but they were a little far from where we lived and they all had a long waiting list. There was a need for an ABA school in centre of London as there was absolutely nothing and the demand was definitely there.

In regards to the schools slogan "Improving the quality of family life", how do you strive to support the families of your pupils?

There is no point in having pupils who work and behave well and can generalise their learnt skills at school and not at home. Being a parent of a child with autism, I know how important it is to be able to take your child out and use public transport and go to most basic places on daily basis. Snowflake not only takes pupils to different places regularly, but it tries to address each child's unique need by addressing issues parents bring up. There are parents meeting when the school tries to bring speakers who can improve parent's knowledge on different issues. These meetings also give parents an opportunity to share concerns with school staff or chat with

other parents. School also arranges trips for pupils. This is an opportunity for pupils to become independent and generalise their learnt skills under different circumstances. It also gives parents some respite.

What is the future for Snowflake school?

Snowflake has come far. In six years, it has achieved outstanding OFSTED under the new OFSTED framework; it has reached full capacity, and has a long waiting list with parents genuinely hoping to place their children at Snowflake. This is all due hard work and dedication of every member of the staff. The school will expand and will hopefully move to a site where it is more suitable for a school and will meet the needs of more children. School's head teacher (David Haswell) has appointed new leadership positions, is training leading staff to take more responsibilities and is sending them to more advanced training courses. He is aiming to prepare staff for not only the current school, but to prepare them for when we move to a bigger site with more pupils and staff to manage.

How did you become affiliated with the Carbone Clinic?

I wanted to open an ABA/VB school and knew how the approach worked at home, but couldn't visualise it in a school setting. Because of that, I decided to visit all ABA schools and get a feel of how my school was going to be. This proved to be one of the best exercises I did towards creating Snowflake. I first of all picked a lot of little things that I definitely did or did not want to have in my school. More importantly I felt very comfortable in two of the schools that I visited and they were both supervised by Carole Roxborough from Carbone Clinic. I put all my efforts in securing Carole and it proved to be one of the best decisions I made.

What additional extra-curriculum activities do you offer?

It is so hard to know what our pupils like. We have to give them every opportunity possible to expose them to what is out there. Snowflake offers: Bike riding, scooter riding, swimming, yoga, horse riding, dance, cricket and adventure playground. All in addition to regular speech therapy and occupational therapy. We also had a personal trainer for a year to work and assess each pupil's physical ability.

Thank you so much Faryaneh for your time. We appreciate you sharing your story and wish your pupils and team at Snowflake School, and your son Kamy, every success in the next academic year.

To find out more about Snowflake School check out their website <http://www.snowflakeschool.org.uk> and their Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/snowflakeschool>



The team and pupils at Snowflake School.

NET IDEAS

“Gloop” is a great NET activity because it’s an interesting substance that is perfect for sensory play. All you need is corn flour and water (2:1 parts respectively). Add corn flour first and then pour water. You can add food colouring of your choice to the water before you add it. You can contrive motivation for mands for water/pour, down (when letting the gloop drip down) and squeeze. You could also remove the container the gloop is in to contrive motivation for a mand (i.e. bowl). You can also generalise tacts for colours and intraverbals for functions ‘you mix in a— bowl’. It can be a very messy activity and is difficult to tidy up afterwards but worth it if you’re client enjoys messy sensory play!

EVENTS

The UK Society for Behaviour Analysis have announced a two-day workshop with Jim Partington, Ph.D., BCBA-D who devised the ABLLS-R which is a fantastic assessment tool used widely by Behaviour Analysts. Day one will focus on the AFLS (The Assessment of Functional Living Skills) and day two focuses on the ABLLS-R (Assessment of Basic language and Learning Skills—Revised). There has not been a location confirmed, so check the webpage for further information : <http://uk-sba.org/workshop>.

ABA Matters are holding a one day workshop on the 27th September. The workshop will run from 10am-4pm in Essex and costs £55 per person. For more information email Kelly at kelly@abamatters.co.uk and request a booking form.

The Applied Behaviour Analysis Forum hold regular meetings for their members. They have an up coming date in November . For more information you can go to their website <http://www.abaf.org.uk/forum> email Nick.Barratt@dimensions-uk.org to become a member so you can find out more about their events.

Jigsaw School are offering numerous workshops and open mornings for professionals. There are a variety of dates available so please go to their website to find out more <http://www.jigsawschool.co.uk/events/>

There is a date for a workshop being held by Knospe – ABA in Hannover, Germany on the 11th and 12th of October. Find out more at <http://knospe-aba.com/cms/us/workshops.html>

STUDY TIP

A great resource whilst studying for the BCBA exam is the Behaviour Development Solutions programme. You have to pay for a subscription (lasting 6 months, 12 months or 24 months) and then you can access the software and work through the questions. It is a highly recommended resources and promises a money-back guarantee. To find out more and for prices please go to : <http://www.behaviordevelopmentsolutions.com>

TERMINOLOGY

This month we will review the verbal operants:

Mand—A verbal behaviour that benefits the listener, because it functions under the MO, by asking for access to something, i.e. information, tangibles, attention.

Tact—A verbal behaviour that labels something within the environment. This can be an object, an action, an emotion, etc.

Echoic— A verbal behaviour that has point-to-point correspondence to what is heard and spoken. For instance, upon hearing the word cat then saying the word cat.

Intraverbal— A verbal behaviour that does not match what is heard. The speaker response is different to the verbal behaviour of others. For example, hearing “hip hip—” and saying “HORAY!” Or if asked “What is the capital of England?” responding by saying “London”. Intraverbal represents typical conversation

Textual—Is the ability to read, although this does not include comprehension skills. As Echoic behaviour there is point-to-point correspondence from the text to the verbal behaviour, for example seeing the written word ‘cake’ and saying “cake”.

Transcription—is writing or spelling a verbal stimulus, for instance taking dictation. This can be either written or typed.

Remember to contact us at our email account busyanalyticalbee@gmail.com and like our new Facebook page!

Next month we will be looking at Functional Assessment so be sure to subscribe so you can receive the next exciting edition.

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