ABSTRACTS

THE EFFECTS OF VERBAL REINFORCEMENT COMBINATIONS
ON ACQUISITION AND EXTINCTION OF DISCRIMINATION LEARNING
IN INFANTS, CHILDREN AND FEEBLE-MINDED CHILDREN

by

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The experiments were designed to examine the effects of verbal reinforcement combinations on discrimination learning in children at different developmental levels, that is, kindergarten, 3rd grade and feeble-minded children.

S saw in front of him a series of a pair of figures which were two of three kinds, namely, circle, triangle and square, each of which was painted red, green or yellow at random, and asked to choose a figure from each pair which he thought correct and push the button at the side of this figure.

This problem was designed such as, if S could not find the cue of solution was one of three colors, he could never succeed in learning the problem.

After each response E presented one of three possible combinations of verbal reinforcement:

(a) Right for a correct response, Nothing for an incorrect response (RN).

(b) Nothing for a correct response, Wrong for incorrect response (NW).

(c) Right for correct response, Wrong for incorrect response (RW).

We treated 10 trials as a block and all correct responses in a block was set to be a criterion of learning. After S had learned to the criterion, 50 trials were continued without any verbal reinforcements, that is, extinction process.

The results were as follows:

1. Some feeble-minded children could not learn the problem, but all 3rd grade children could learn it. And under RW condition, Ss who could not learn it were the greatest in number.

2. Under RN condition 3rd grade children learned it fastest and under NW kindergarten children did fastest.

3. From the findings in the extinction process, we might think Nothing was a strong positive or negative reinforcer in normal children, but in feeble-minded children Nothing offered little positive or negative reinforcement.

4. From an analysis of rates of incorrect responses in each block, we could observe that acquisition process in normal children and that in feeble-minded children were different. That is, the rates of incorrect responses decreased linearly in normal children but decreased suddenly near the end of the learning in feeble-minded children.