

Abstract

This study examined the effects of pre-session attention on the acquisition of tacts (Experiment 1) and intraverbals (Experiment 2) in children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. There were 3 conditions in each experiment. In the first 2 conditions, the experimenter first exposed the participants to a 15-min interval of either pre-session attention (PA) or no pre-session attention (NPA), then immediately conducted a teaching session. The third condition was a control condition, which involved no pre-session interval or teaching procedures. In the first experiment, all 3 participants learned the tacts assigned to the NPA condition more effectively and efficiently (in terms of sessions to criterion and duration of training) than the tacts assigned to the PA and control conditions. In the second experiment, 2 of the 3 participants learned the intraverbals assigned to the NPA condition more effectively and efficiently than the intraverbals assigned to the PA and control conditions. For the third participant, there was no differentiation between the PA and NPA conditions. For some participants, the difference in efficiency were more pronounced than for others. A functional analysis of language confirmed that the newly acquired responses functioned as tacts or intraverbals, respectively. These outcomes support the notion that antecedent manipulations traditionally reserved for mand training can positively affect the acquisition of other verbal operants. Theoretical implications are discussed.

Keywords: attention, autism, deprivation, efficiency, intraverbal, motivating operations, satiation, pre-session, social interaction.