Negative Behavior and the Role of Communication: An ABA Perspective

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This presentation is NOT

- A full account of the concepts or methods in managing problem behaviors
- Training on how to assess negative behavior and develop a management plan
- Training on the methods of behavior management
- Comprehensive training in Functional Communication Training

This presentation IS

- Recap of some basic ABA info
- Introduction to understanding negative behavior
- The Speech Therapist’s role in managing negative behavior
- Introduction to the concepts and processes involved in Functional Communication Training
- A look at the part communication plays in the negative behaviors of higher functioning individuals and the ST’s role

Little Bit-O- History

- 1970’s & 1980’s: ST increasingly influenced by social learning theory, generative grammar and generative semantics. (SLPs are facilitators of the development process)
- 1980’s & 1990’s: Limitations in generative language models noted leading to increase in information exchange

Ogletree & Oren, 2001; Kosnik & Gerenser, 2006

ABA is not...

- Just discrete trials
- Just for individuals with disabilities and or children
- Limited to functional skills
- All table work
- Only for negative behaviors
- Theoretical research of behavior
- Only the use of food as reinforcers
- The teaching of what to do, not how/why
- Aversive/punishing
- Ignoring language development/developmental levels

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

- The science in which tactics derived from the principles of behavior are applied to improve socially significant behavior and experimentation is used to identify the variables responsible for the improvement in behavior
- This includes Organizational Behavior Management
Behavior Analysis is...

- Understanding how we can arrange our environments to make the behaviors we want more likely and the behaviors we don’t want less likely.
- Arranging the environment to make ourselves smarter, more organized and more responsible, so we can encounter fewer punishments and fewer disappointments.
- To accomplish that goal, we can remake our environment much more easily than we can remake our inner selves.

Paraphrased from Don Baer, Ohio State University doctoral seminar Q&A

ASHA Knowledge and skills statement

- SLPs should have “Knowledge about and skill using systematic observation, rating scales, checklists, and questionnaires to assess relationships between behavior (including problem behavior) and communication.”

ASHA, 2002

What is a Negative Behavior

- Negative Behavior is in the eye of the beholder. Best described as socially maladaptive.
- Examples
  - Most negative/problem behaviors serve the individual a purpose/function. This is why the behavior continues to occur
  - Behaviors can be viewed as a form of communication
  - The intent is not to reduce or eliminate the negative behavior but to replace it with “appropriate” communication

What is the goal?

- Replace negative behaviors with functional “preferred” communication
- The effect of the functional communication must be equal to or greater than the effect of the problem behavior.
- Success is significantly increased by ensuring that the functional communication is no more difficult, preferably it is easier than the negative behavior.
- This is most frequently done through Functional Communication Training (FCT)

What can the SLP do?

- You are the communication expert! You should know how to help individuals communicate!
- Guide the planning of the replacement communication
- Make sure it is appropriate within the student’s current, overall communication abilities
- Make sure it is at the appropriate developmental level
- Make sure the replacement communication will foster future development of communication (not too high, not too low)
- Make sure it is pragmatically appropriate
- Ensure exposure to a large variety of situations
Why aren’t we already doing this? Why don’t we feel uncomfortable?

- Because we are minimally trained in function
- We’re trained in the form of communication (number and length of utterances, use of grammatical markers etc.)
- WHY someone is communicating is at the root of all means of communication
- WHAT one is doing to communicate should develop as they age (become more specific making it easier to get their needs met)
- Example: A baby crying- One action with lots of meanings. Eventually each meaning has lots of different actions.

Functional Communication Training - Basic Steps

1. Define the behavior
2. Determine the function of the behavior
3. Determine possible replacement behaviors
4. Select a replacement behavior (aka message)
5. Select mode of communication
6. Teach the replacement behavior

Defining a behavior

- Focus on observable aspects
- What does it look like
- Avoid inferential terms “expressing hostile feelings, intended to help, showing interest in”
- Others should be able to have the same judgment to determine if a behavior occurred or not

Determining the Function

- One behavior may have different functions (ie. crying baby) or different functions in different settings.
- One function may have different related behaviors (this is actually normal!) depending on the situation.
- While understanding that different behaviors are needed in different situations to get the same result, understanding of “appropriate” behaviors/messages is also important. (Even we as teachers struggle with this!)
- A Functional Behavior Assessment clearly defines the problem behavior and identifies setting events, antecedents and consequences maintaining the behavior.

Determining the Function

- Things to examine:
  - Setting of the Events
  - Antecedent that “triggers” the behavior
  - Negative Behavior
  - Consequence of the behavior (which is maintaining the behavior)
  - Educated guess of the function of the behavior
- Within a setting you can document ABC for each instance of negative behavior

Behavioral Assessment Tools

- ABC
- INCH
- CHAT
- M-CHAT
- Checklists
- Interviews
- Observations
- ADOS
- CARS
- ADI-R
- PI A
- GARS
- FAST
Functions of Behavior

- **Positive Reinforcement** (Get something)
- Attention
- Tangibles
- Automatic

- **Negative Reinforcement** (Something taken away)
- Escape
- Automatic

Behaviors can appear the same and have different functions

OR

Behaviors may appear different but have the same function

Positive vs. negative (aka good vs. bad).

Remember, bad behavior is in the eye of the beholder.

Generate & Select Possible Replacement Message

- What is the individual “trying to say”? What would YOU be trying to say?

- Is the new message:
  1. Acceptable
  2. Easily recognizable
  3. Applicable in most if not all settings
  4. Efficient

Determine Mode of Communication

- What is the easiest (and/or best form) for them to communicate in? Verbal, sign, picture/written symbol, single switch, dynamic display device...

- Choose behavior already in their repertoire if possible

- Get everyone on the same page and teach across a variety of situations

- Systematically decrease prompting as rapidly as possible

- Change and adapt based on the data!

   Durand, et al, 1993

Teaching the message

- Use antecedent information to prompt response before behavior occurs

- NEVER prompt during or immediately after a negative behavior

- Systematically decrease prompting as rapidly as possible based on your data.

- Problem solve, change and adapt based on the data!

- Is always best done with other behavioral interventions

Thoughts for Higher Functioning

- At least 60% of young people in young offender institutions have communication difficulties. (Bryan, K., Fawer, J. and Furlong, C. 2007)

- Those with a history of pervasive language impairments after 5.5 at significantly higher risk for mental health concerns (Conti-Ramsden & Botting, 2008; Snowling, et al, 2008)

- Many psychological approaches target increased awareness of and communication about internal states, wants & needs etc.

- Increased mastery of related vocabulary increases ability to teach students how to identify, negotiate or meet their needs (ie. Indians seeing a ship for the first time)

- Social Thinking by Michelle Garcia Winner-Teaching of a vocabulary associated to internal events and managing those events based on one’s expectations of their current surroundings and goals/needs (based in cognitive-behavioral theory)

References


References Part 2

- Koenig, M., & Greenseer, J. (2006) SLP-ABA: Collaborating to support Individuals with Communication Impairments. Journal of Speech and Language Pathology-Applied Behavior Analysis, 1, 2-11