The Relationship Between Allotted Response Time and Compliance in a Girl with Rett’s Syndrome

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Background
- Rett’s Disorder
  - Pervasive Development Disorder
  - Normal development for the first 6-8 months of life followed by a slowing or cessation of the acquisition of developmental milestones and by significant deviations in milestones requiring balance (e.g., walking).
- Motoric Limitations
  - In discrete trial training, the time interval allowed between the SD and the response is usually 1-3 seconds (Lovaas, 2003).
- Goal of treatment is to increase independent responding.
- Independent responding may be diminished if adequate time to respond is not allotted for children with motoric difficulties.
- Research Questions: To what extent does the length of time allotted for independent responding in the context of discrete trial training influence independent completion.

Method
Participant
- 5-year-old girl diagnosed with atypical Rett’s Syndrome but exhibits some characteristics of Forme Fruste.
  - bruxism
  - hand-clapping
  - seizure activity
  - apraxia
  - retained purposeful hand use and verbal skills

Dependent Variables
- Number of trials yielding independent compliance during five-minute sessions with one demand being delivered every 30 seconds.
- Compliance was defined as the initiation of the required task without prompting by the experimenter within the designated time period and eventual completion of the task.

Independent Variables
- Latency allowed for a correct initiation of the response to occur without prompting following command delivery.
- Levels of the independent variable:
  - 4 seconds
  - 7 seconds
  - 10 seconds

Discussion
- Highest number of independent responses occurred in the 10-second condition.
- Anecdotally, Dorothy often exhibited independent compliance after the time-limit expired in the other two conditions.
- Children with ASD often become prompt-dependent. Providing opportunities for independent responding is critical for children with ASD.

Limitations
- Short conditions with frequent breaks may have resulted in more motivation to work than in the regular classroom environment.
- No opportunity to assess actual classroom performance with a 10-second latency.

References