Children Who Run Away: How to Earn Instructional Control

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Abstract

Earning instructional control is an important step for an efficient ABA-based intervention. The instructional control allows an increase in learning and in maintenance of appropriate behaviors. However, it can be difficult to introduce instructional control with children with autism presenting lots of escape behaviors.

A. is an 8-year-old child with an autism diagnosis who run from the place in presence of a new person. We used a shaping procedure to develop instructional control with him. After a free operant preference assessment, we work on the acceptance of the presence of a behavior technician beside him using a shaping procedure. Then, we control the strength of pairing by introducing a distance allowing the child to interact with the technician. After we introduce some easy demands, according to a prior skills-assessment, with the presence of the preferred item. Then, we continue the easy demands with the preferred item removed. This procedure allowed us to work independently every step facilitating the implementation of the intervention by the behavior technician, allowed to take effective data for the analysis of the progression and enabling effective implementation of instructional control.

Participant

A. is 8 y.o. boy with autism diagnostic who is nonverbal.

A. runs away from the room and starts to play in another room or goes to his bed when an unknow person comes (in this case the technician).

A functional assessment shows that behavior is escape maintained.

A questionnaire was given to the parents to know some skills of the children.

Method

First, a free operant preference assessment (fig. 1) is done to determinate potential reinforcers and the item to start pairing. This assessment gives the IPad® as the best potential item to start pairing.

- Step 1: We start a procedure of stimulus-stimulus pairing between the technician and the first result of the preference assessment. The amount of time the technician is near A. is shaped progressively. The Technician plays with the IPad® then he goes beside A. The technician freely gives the IPad® when A. tries to touch the IPad® or after the achievement of the criterion. The criterion is increased after three consecutive trials achieve the goals. The criteria are shaped from 60 seconds to 300 seconds. After this, the criterion is moved to 900 seconds but the technician keeps the IPad® and plays with A. on the Ipad®. (fig.2)
- Step 2: The stimulus-stimulus pairing is continued, but after 1 minute with A., the technician moves away to 3 meters in the same room. We measure the percentage of 20 trials per session which A. comes to reach the technician in 1 minute (fig.3). We move to the next step after three consecutive sessions at 80%.
- Step 3: We start to introduce some easy instructions (these instructions are selected by the responses to the parents' questionnaire) in presence of the preferred item. We measure the percentage of 20 trials per session where A. responds (no matter if independently or with prompt) to the instruction without challenging behavior (fig.4). We move to the next step after three consecutive sessions at 80%.
- Step 4: We start to introduce some easy instructions without the preferred item available. We measure the percentage of 20 trials per session where A. responds (no matter if independently or with prompt) to the instruction without challenging behavior (fig.5). The end of the program is af-

Results

- In step 1 (fig.2) A. rapidly met the criterion with the technician. A maximum of 4 trials are necessary to reach the criterion . Twenty-one trials are necessary to reach the goal of this step. At the end of this step, A. can stay near the technician for more than 15 minutes.
- In step 2 (fig. 3) as and when the procedure of stimulus-stimulus pairing continues, we can observe an increase in the percentage of A. going to the technician. The criterion (80% of reaching) was met at the 5th session.
- In step 3 (fig.4), some challenging behaviors (escape) appears with the introduction of easy instructions. But we can observe, little by little, as the child returns to the technician, an increase of the percentage of trials without challenging behavior. The criterion was met at the 6th session.
- In step 4 (fig.5), A. meets immediately the criterion despite the preferred item is not available.

Discussion

- Even if this program is a success with A., it needs to be improved with students who show behaviors of the same function class.
- This program measures the effectiveness of the stimulus-stimulus pairing and of the instructional control but it doesn't give some instruction on how to do. Even if the program must be individual, it can be harder for a person without training.
- This program can't be used for challenging behavior like aggression and it can be dangerous to use with self-aggression.

References

- Schramm, R., & Miller, M. (2014). *The 7 steps to earning instructional control: a program guide for developing learner cooperation with ABA and verbal behavior*.
- Kelly, A. N., Axe, J. B., Allen, R. F., & Maguire, R. W. (2015). Effects of Presession Pairing on the Challenging Behavior and Academic Responding of Children with Autism. *Behavioral Interventions,30*(2), 135-156. doi:10.1002/bin.1408

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Data

Preference Assessment

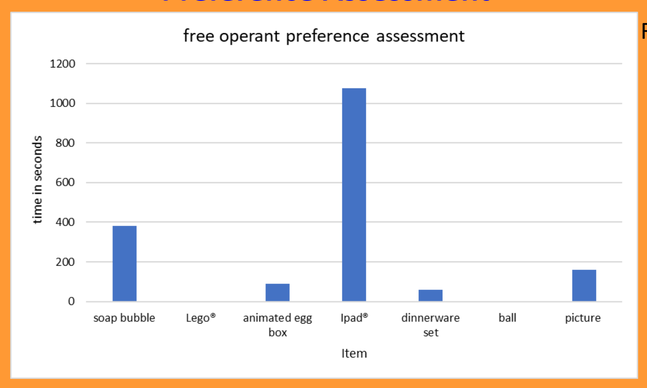

Fig.1

Time near technician without challenging behavior

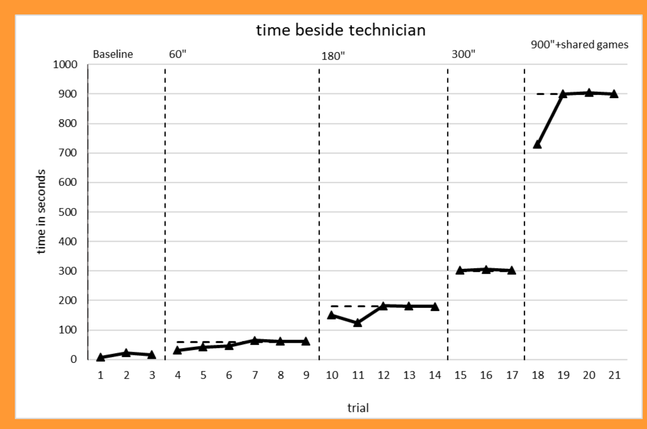

Fig.2

Percentage of reaching out the technician

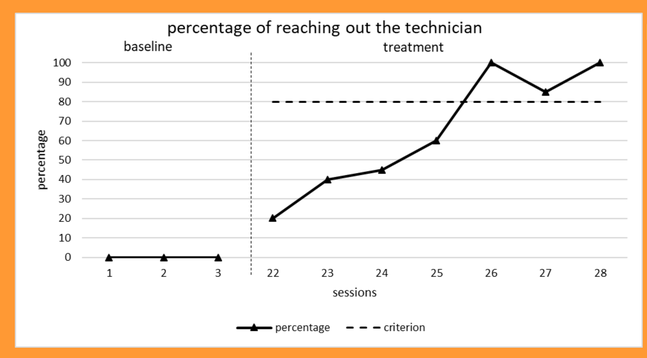

Fig.3

Percentage of without challenging behavior with prefered item

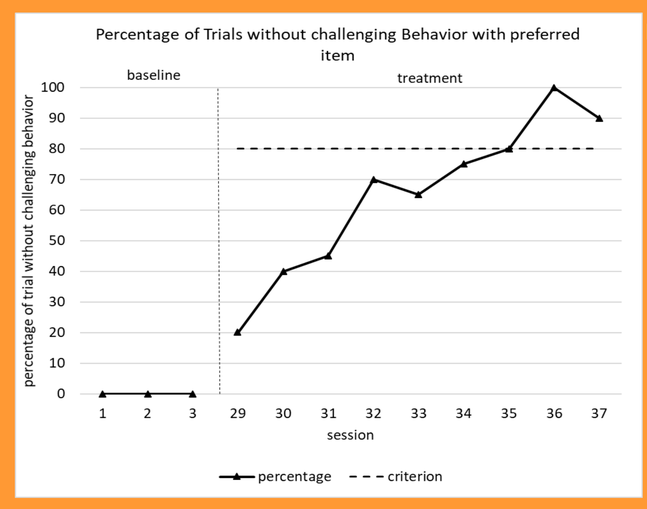

Fig.4

Percentage of without challenging behavior without prefered item

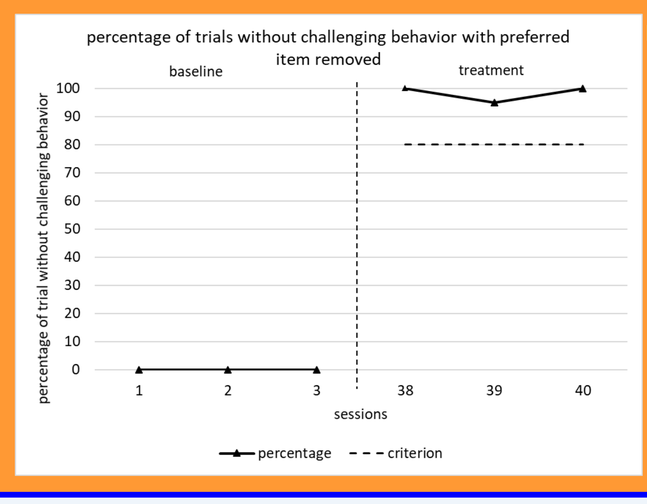

Fig.5