*THE EFFECT OF EXPERIMENTER FACIAL ORIENTATION
DURING IMITATION MAINTENANCE*¹

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The training and maintenance of imitative responding has become an important therapeutic process with language-handicapped children, as indicated by Garcia and DeHaven (*American Journal of Mental Deficiency*, 1974, **79**, 169-178). Typically a training "package" is used, that might entail the use of operant shaping, fading, reinforcement, and punishment techniques designed to increase correct imitation and decrease incorrect responding. Only recently have studies begun to concentrate on the components of these training "packages". Steinman (*Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 1970, **3**, 159-167) highlighted the roles played by less conspicuous but functionally important components of these packages. The present study attempted to provide a systematic extension of this work within an applied context. Using subjects who were responding at high levels during an imitation-maintenance procedure, experimenter facial orientation (experimenter's eyes and head oriented towards the subject's face and head), was systematically manipulated for experimentally determined "types" of imitative behavior. Differential responding within these parameters provided an evaluation of facial orientation as a functional component within this training package. Three retarded children participated in the study. Two types of topographically different imitative responses were defined for experimental purposes ("standing" and "sitting"). Each subject progressed through four conditions of the study, which called for the reinforcement of all imitative responses. But during preselected conditions, experimenter facial orientation was removed from the therapeutic package for one of the two topographical types of imitation. Results indicated that imitation of the two topographical types of models was dependent on the presence of experimenter facial orientation within the experimental procedure.

DESCRIPTORS: attending behavior, facial orientation, imitation maintenance, experimenter, retarded children

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