TWO-TO-ONE versus *ONE-TO-ONE* STUDENT-TEACHER
RATIOS IN THE OPERANT VERBAL TRAINING
OF RETARDED CHILDREN¹

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The operant training of two retarded children simultaneously on a picture-naming task was investigated as an alternative to the more commonly reported one-to-one student-teacher ratio. In Experiment I, two conditions were compared in which the children received primary reinforcement on a fixed-ratio schedule for responding correctly on prompt and probe trials in a standardized picture-naming procedure. During the "Group Condition", the experimenter alternated from one child to the other after each primary reinforcement, after each incorrect response, after each response omission, and after each 10-sec period in which a child did not "attend" (by making a trial-initiating response) when it was his or her turn to be worked with. During the "Individual Condition", the experimenter worked with only one child, and presented trials whenever the child made attending responses. Experiment I demonstrated that the Group Condition was more efficient than the Individual Condition in terms of total correct responses and total pictures learned per unit of training time. Incidental learning was also found in that the children learned some of each others' pictures as well as their own, thus indicating a further advantage of the larger student-teacher ratio. In Experiment II, an attempt was made to equate the two conditions, except for the presence of two children in the Group Condition, by ignoring the child in the Individual Condition for brief periods equal to those that occurred in the Group Condition when the experimenter presented training trials to the other child. The results demonstrated that the greater efficiency of the Group Condition was not due to the manner in which training time was allocated to the two members of a group. It also replicated the finding that the children learned some of each others' words in the Group Condition.

DESCRIPTORS: student-teacher ratios, individual training, group training, incidental learning, picture-naming behavior

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