

*TRANSFER BETWEEN RECEPTIVE AND PRODUCTIVE  
LANGUAGE IN DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED CHILDREN*

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The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between receptive and productive language acquisition in developmentally disabled children. A single-subject operant methodology was employed to evaluate the effect of training in one mode on performance in the other mode. Noun labels for pictured objects were used as the unit of analysis. Six children with severe language deficits participated in the experiment. Each subject learning to identify a different set of five pictures in each of four successively administered training conditions. In the first condition, a set of pictures was trained in the productive mode. In the second condition, a different set was trained in the receptive mode. These training conditions were then repeated using two additional sets of pictures. Training was done using reinforcement for correct responses and prompting for incorrect responses. Nonreinforced probes were conducted throughout training to assess performance in the untrained mode. The pictures in each set were trained successively so that transfer across the language modes could be studied separately for each response trained. All subjects successfully met the criteria for learning each picture set in both the receptive and productive training conditions. The probe data showed that opposite-modality performance improved as a function of both types of training, although performance levels differed. After productive training, five of six subjects' performance was highly accurate on receptive probes. By contrast, receptive training resulted in limited correct productive performance. Transfer from receptive training was negatively related to subjects' use of extra-experimental labels on productive probe trials. In addition to these competing response errors, subjects frequently made articulation errors. The findings suggest that for retarded children similar to those studied here, productive training will be sufficient to establish accurate receptive performance on vocabulary tasks. However, receptive training does not appear to be either a necessary or a sufficient condition for productive performance. The results do not support the reception-then-production training sequence based on normal language development.

DESCRIPTORS: receptive and productive language, expressive language, generalization, verbal behavior, child retardates

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