

TEACHING GENERALIZED RECEPTIVE AND PRODUCTIVE
BEHIND-FRONT DISCRIMINATIONS TO TWO
RETARDED CHILDREN¹

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Typically, a generalized discrimination for two linguistic forms (*e.g.*, "behind the (noun)" and "in front of the (noun)") has been developed in a sequence of three treatment conditions, with generative usage developed for each form consecutively in the first two conditions and a generalized discrimination developed for those forms in the third condition. Moreover, generalized discriminations have typically been measured by a set of unreinforced probes, rather than by first-trial performances across a series of new tasks, as in some studies that have taught generative usage of a single form of language. In this study, successive sets of instructions were presented to two children. Each set contained four tasks, the four possible combinations of two new nouns with the linguistic forms "Put the (noun) behind the (noun)" and "Put the (noun) in front of the (noun)". For each set, receptive usage of nouns was taught, and then the four instructions were presented, once each, to test for generative usage of the prepositional forms. First-trial performances were never prompted. After a baseline of five sets of tasks, correct first-trial performances earned praise and tokens. Also, in each set with three or fewer such performances, the specific receptive discriminations were taught to a criterion before presentation of the next set. Successive sets were presented until all first-trial performances were correct in five consecutive sets, whereupon this generalized discrimination was reversed and subsequently reinstated. Similar procedures were then used to teach the same children a generalized productive-discrimination for the forms "behind the (noun)" and "in front of the (noun)". This study demonstrated the development of generalized receptive and productive behind-front discriminations without the prior development of generative usage in each linguistic form and with measurement of the generalized discrimination across first-trial performances. The method may offer a less time-consuming procedure for the development and measurement of generalized discriminations in receptive and productive language.

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