

PSYC 587

Discrete Trial Training Competency

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## **Discrete Trial Training Competency**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this competency was to use Discrete Trial Training (DTT) to teach my 5 year old client to learn how to respond to instructions correctly. DTT is a fast-paced and repetitive method of instruction, which consists of presenting a discriminative stimulus, an opportunity for a response and providing a consequence. DTT is a commonly used strategy to teach new skills to individuals with ASD. The client described in this competency has very limited skills. He could only “echo” (copy) what individuals say rather than giving the relevant or functional response and has escape behavior (crying for 5 seconds or longer) when the given instructions and prompts more than three times. Responding to and complying with instructions is one of the most significant abilities to help individuals learn new skills and assist with everyday interactions with caregivers. Individuals who can not respond to instructions will struggle with further skill acquisition and daily communication. The treatment described in this competency consists of two stages in which the client will 1) respond to basic instructions, 2) learn more complicated instructions.

### **METHOD**

### *Participant and Setting*

The client used for this competency is a 5 year old boy who has participated in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services at another therapy center for 3 months. He has a diagnosis of ASD. He had a previous DTT training program focused on object identification, but he was not yet successfully responding to instructions such as ‘point to the (object).’ He displayed severe challenging behavior when he was receiving services in another ABA center, so his caregivers decided to try the ABA service of BrainCo. LLC, in Hangzhou, China. His family speaks Mandarin in the home. Both baseline and intervention sessions occurred in the BrainCo.LLC clinical training room. The room contained a wall cabinet (toys inside), a small table and chairs, a whiteboard with a few magnets. Sessions occurred every morning from 9 am to 12 pm within ABA intervention sessions.

### *Dependent Variable*

The target behavior of interest in this competency was an independent response to the instruction (“Point to the...”) from three familiar object cards.

### *Data Collection*

Data were collected trial by trial. BrainCo, LLC utilizes a pen and designed table to record correct, incorrect and prompt level of each trial. The total percentage of correct responses was calculated for each session. The correct response is defined as using a finger to point to the correct card. At least ten trials were recorded in each session.

### *Procedure*

*Baseline.* Baseline data were collected in the first two sessions. The accuracy of the client response to an instruction (e.g., “Say (name)” or “Point to the (object)”) in daily routines or structured teaching segments is very low (an average of 8% accuracy in responding to “point to the (cards)”). During baseline, no prompts or feedback were provided to the client; the technician provided verbal positive and neutral feedback (e.g., “Thanks” or “Try again”) based on the child’s response (e.g., correct or incorrect response).

*Intervention-focused on individualization of the SD, target, stimuli, and response required*

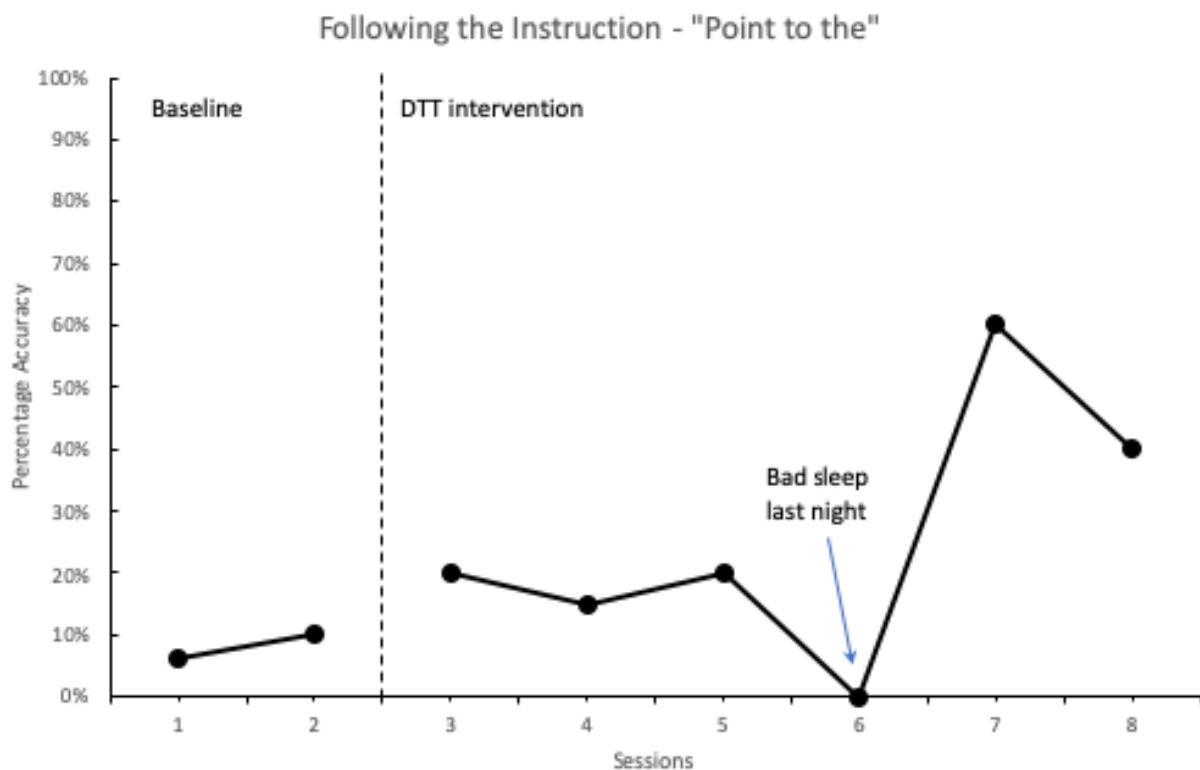
Treatment involved teaching the client how to respond to the instruction “point to (card)” in a field of three in structured, yet motivating teaching segments. The program assessor picked 3 picture cards (i.e., apple, ship) from the card pool that the client had previously mastered in DTT (100% accuracy in identifying 10 objects); the client’s preference was also considered when choosing the cards (he smiled or tried to grab the favorite cards). The purpose of using these cards that he can independently identify is to teach the client to respond to the instruction (“Point to (object)”) and eliminate the challenge of identifying unfamiliar cards.

The instructor first presented three cards on the table (i.e., airplane, apple, ship); the cards were shuffled. Then, the instructor gave the command (“Point to the apple.”), and provided a token as reinforcement after he responded correctly. The order of cards would be rotated after each trial.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

At the end of the eighth DTT training, the client displayed 40% correct responses to the instruction “Point to the (card)”. The accuracy significantly increased (except for the day without a good sleep the night before). At the same time, his challenging behavior also decreased. We will not increase any difficulty at this time. After he masters this “point to” program, the client will learn the new instruction —“say (words)”.

This competency focused on the individualization of the use of Discrete Trial Teaching to teach a foundational concept (responding to the instruction “point to the”) to a child with ASD. The skill is socially significant, which will lead to an increase in daily communication with his family members, and hopefully make the learning environment less aversive for the child.



## Reference

Amy Fuller, Brief Sample of PSYC 587