

Disorders of Verbal Behavior

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The problem:

Communication disorders are classified on the basis of linguistic categories of language: Voice, speech, language, and fluency. There are no such comparable categories of verbal behaviors, which are functionally organized into mands, tacts, echoics, textuials, autoclitics, and so forth. There is the difficulty of describing speech disorders and distinguishing them from language disorders. The term verbal behavior disorders is more like communication disorders; it does not distinguish the different topographic disorders of verbal behavior.

Some thoughts:

Conversational repair strategies: They are listener's attempts to gain access to the speaker's verbal behavior's controlling variables. [more about this in the article on meaning]

Vocal or Voice Disorders—no problem here

Speech Disorders (VB Production disorders?) —may be no problem here

Disorders of Verbal Behavior (the so-called language disorders)—problematic because it would technically include all other disorders; need a new term for just the “language disorders.”

Fluency disorders—no problem here

Disorders of Textual Behavior (Literacy problems)—no problem here; actually economical term because it would include reading and writing problems

The problem is that all are verbal behavior disorders. A good behavioral taxonomy of communication disorders is still problematic.

May be: **Speech and fluency disorders are topographic disorders—production disorders. Perhaps vocal disorders as well.**

Language disorders are technically not topographic disorders. Therefore, may be, instead of verbal behavior disorders, we will have specific functional unit based disorders. Can we then accommodate the traditional disorders of the following kind in a functional account?

- Morphologic disorders: These are essentially disorders of autoclitics. Morphologic and syntactic features are both a matter of autoclitic verbal operants; a missing morphologic feature denies access to the control variables of verbal operants
- Semantic disorders (limited words, word meanings, etc): Disorders of Tacts (impaired tacting)
- Syntactic disorders: Autoclitic disorders
- Pragmatic disorders: A hodge-podge from the behavioral standpoint, because:
 - narrative disorders are tact disorders (linguists should have included under semantic disorders)
 - conversational breakdowns and the resulting repair strategies are matters of access to controlling variables for the listener; both speaker and the listener, when they switch roles of speaker and listener, may have problems
 - topic initiation and maintenance are matters of intraverbal repertoire and intraverbal control
 - eye contact is
 - alternating listener and speaker roles (what is the traditional term for this?):

May be:

Disorders of verbal behavior, like disorders of communication disorder, will include specific functional units of verbal behavior and any new category that may be needed (e.g., speech production or fluency)

- Disorders of vocal behavior (voice disorders)
- Disorders of speech production (this is the single most troublesome area)
- Disorders of manding (some may be called pragmatic problems)
- Disorders of tacting (semantic problems, limited vocabulary, use of simple words, lack of abstract words, etc.)
- Disorders of textual behaviors (reading and writing disorders)
- Disorders of intraverbal control (topic maintenance, stuttering, etc) (Fluency of verbal behavior may be an independent taxonomy and thus fluency disorders may be maintained; for, normal fluency is a matter of intraverbal control, but stuttering may not entirely be)
- Disorders of fluency (if not subsumed under intraverbal control problems; may be considered a special case of intraverbal control problem)
- Disorders of autoclitic behavior (morphologic, syntactic, and some pragmatic [conversational repair] disorders)
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