

Improvement of discriminative learning in children: Differential out-comes and manual administration of different types of reinforcement [Mejora del aprendizaje discriminativo en niños: Consecuencias diferenciales y administración manual de diferentes formas de refuerzo]

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In recent years, several studies have demonstrated that discriminative learning is facilitated when each association to be learned is always followed by a unique outcome. This way of providing outcomes was called the differential outcomes procedure (DOP). The aim of the study reported here was to assess whether the DOP could improve learning of symbolic conditional discriminations in 5- and 7-year-old children when performing a paper-and-pencil task using different types of training in which: 1) reinforcers were given after correct choices (+), 2) reinforcers were withdrawn when errors were made (-), or 3) a combination of both (+/-). In Experiments 1a and 1b secondary reinforcers were used along with primary reinforcers, while in Experiments 2a and 2b only primary reinforcers were used. Participants showed better performance when differential outcomes were arranged regardless of the type of reinforcers (secondary plus primary or only primary) and the different strategies of reinforcement (+, -, or +/-). These results add to those found by Martínez et al. (2009, 2013) and demonstrate that the beneficial effect of the DOP on discriminative learning is also independent of the way in which the stimuli and the outcomes are presented, facilitating its use in applied contexts. © 2016: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Murcia.

Children

Differential outcomes procedure

Discriminative learning

Types of reinforcement

