

Figure 24—Implications Part 1

We have already briefly mentioned an implication concerning doing translation: that translations are intraverbals (see “Figure 15—Elaboration Part 2”). Since many points can be made about this complex topic, it must wait for serious later discussions (especially among those who [a] know verbal behavior analysis *and also* [b] do translation work).

But just for starters, the analysis suggests that the object of translation is more than matching word for word, or concept for concept; it is even more just achieving the same effect on the listener (i.e., hearer). Rather it is, as much as possible, to get the hearer/reader of the translation not only to behave in the same way *but also* for the same reasons (i.e., under control of the same variables) as a hearer/reader of the original behaves...

[So, how *do* you handle translating jokes, or funny stories?...]

Figure 24—Implications Part 2

Here is a more broad implication: The analysis shows that a new language learner (a newborn or new language student) learns verbal behavior through the efforts of the verbal community. (Of course, all verbal community members were once new language learners themselves...) And the community makes these efforts to teach new learners *not so much for the learners sake* (although learners clearly benefit substantially from the increasing, verbal-behavior induced, effectiveness they experience in dealing with their world) *but for the sake of the verbal community itself* which can now interact with this new member on a more sophisticated level than is allowed through non-verbal behavior alone.

And these interactions extend from simple ones like social greetings to the quite complex interactions involving the learner's private experiences. That is, the community teaches members to observe and report their own private events (i.e., "covert behaviors," such as thinking and emoting).

Figure 24—Implications Part 3

*For a change, this time we **will** look at the more complex part:* The verbal community easily shapes the individual's verbal behavior concerning *public* events because it has direct access to those events. The verbal community *also* shapes the individual's verbal behavior concerning *private* events. But how, since it has no direct access to the private events? If a person has painful experiences which only he or she can observe and report, how does she or he learn to do so?

We will look at four ways this can be achieved according to the analysis of verbal behavior that Skinner provided and that the research of others has validated. These refer to:

- ✿ Using *Public Accompaniments*
- ✿ Using *Inferences From Overt-Behavior*
- ✿ Using *Covert Proprioceptive Stimuli*
- ✿ Using *Coinciding Properties*

Figure 24—Implications Part 4

Public Accompaniments: The verbal community can reinforce verbal responses to private stimuli when there are public accompaniments to the private stimuli. For instance, when publicly observable tissue damage is present, the verbal community can reinforce appropriate responses. In the presence of a scraped elbow, the community can reinforce “It hurts.” In the presence of a small bump (e.g., a mosquito bite), the community can reinforce “It itches.” The community need not experience the itch, but it needs to find that “it itches” is likely to be an accurate enough tact of the private experience such that reinforcement is appropriate. The appropriateness of reinforcement might be less accurate if “it itches” occurs while the individual is merely scratching, say, an arm, but that is an example of our next category, *Inferences From Overt-Behavior*.

Regarding these and many other aspects of VB: Becoming a speaker automatically makes you your own reinforcing listener!...

Figure 24—Implications Part 5

Inferences From Overt–Behavior: Another way the verbal community can reasonably accurately reinforce verbal responses to private stimuli is when overt, non–verbal behavior is present from which the presence of the covert stimuli (that the learner is reporting) can be inferred. For instance, the response “toothache” will be reinforced if overt responses are present, such as holding the jaw, or moaning, from which the community can infer the presence of the private stimulus (that is, can infer that the tact [in this case] of the private stimulus is an accurate tact and so is worthy of reinforcement). *What is it if you can see swollen gums?*

Unfortunately, the inference cannot always be accurate, so consistently reinforcing the same associated (public and private) stimuli will be less accurate than when dealing solely with public events.

Next: Covert Proprioceptive Stimuli

Figure 24—Implications Part 6

Covert Proprioceptive Stimuli: The community can also reinforce responses (though more commonly these are non-verbal responses) to private stimuli by using the fact that, when overt behavior is reinforced, the covert proprioceptive stimuli that are necessarily occurring are also reinforced. (Proprioceptive stimuli arise from the position and movement of one's body parts in space and with respect to each other...)

For example, a blind person learns to go from place to place when the community reinforces her or his proprioceptive stimuli as it reinforces his or her compliance with verbal instructions regarding overt movements. The proprioceptive stimuli then gain control over her or his moving behavior (whereas for sighted persons, the control of moving behavior resides more with other contingencies such as the aversive consequences of not turning from objects in one's path...).

Next: Coinciding Properties

Figure 24—Implications Part 7

Coinciding Properties: A more significant way that the verbal community can reasonably accurately reinforce verbal responses to private stimuli is when some properties or characteristics of public and private stimuli coincide. That is, the reinforced expressions that people use to describe the private stimuli they experience are metaphors carried over from the reinforced expressions used to describe public stimuli. Examples of such metaphors are “sharp pain” and “dull pain.” The expressions get reinforced after generalizing from public stimuli to private stimuli due to the similarities (coinciding properties) between the stimulation involved with pains caused by sharp or dull objects, and the stimulation involved with various other private events.

Unfortunately, the accuracy of the coincidence between the public and private stimuli cannot be completely assured, so the reinforcement will not always be consistent, and this will lower the accuracy of the related verbal responses.

Figure 24—Implications Part 8

Note: These private stimuli can be of a wide range of types, including physiological changes (perhaps coincident with the occurrence of Establishing Operations), physical changes of body parts (e.g., a rise in skin temperature when sun bathing), felt emotions, urges, images, thoughts, even tendencies toward or away from particular overt or other covert behaviors (past, present, or future), etc.

As a result of teaching verbal responses to private stimuli, verbal community members benefit by being able to find out what each other are thinking, feeling, have been doing, are doing, are about to do, ETC.!...

For greater details on all of these methods of working with private events (both stimuli and responses), see Chapter 17 in Skinner's important book, *Science and Human Behavior* (ISBN 0-02-929040-6) [Now, on to *Applications!*]