

Lesson 5: Verbal Stimulus (OA)



This lesson defines and provides examples of verbal stimulation.

- ☰ Definition of Verbal Stimulus
- ☰ Irrelevant Features of Verbal Stimulus
- ☰ Verbal Stimulus Example #1
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Definition of Verbal Stimulus



00:12

A **verbal stimulus** is a physical energy change capable of affecting an organism's sensory receptors that has a specific form or pattern which, as a unit, has controlling effectiveness and is the result of verbal behavior.

Verbal Stimulus

A physical energy change capable of affecting an organism's sensory receptors that has the following features:

DEFINING FEATURES

•	It has a specific form or pattern which, as a unit, has controlling effectiveness
•	It is the result of verbal behavior

Irrelevant Features of Verbal Stimulus



00:17

Features that are **irrelevant** to the classification of a stimulus as verbal include its modality (such as auditory, visual, etc.), its dynamic characteristics (such as size, intensity, etc.), and its functions (such as discriminative, reinforcing, punishing, etc.).

Verbal Stimulus

A physical energy change capable of affecting an organism's sensory receptors that has the following features:

IRRELEVANT FEATURES

●	Modality: auditory, visual, etc.
●	Dynamic characteristics such as size, intensity, etc.
●	Function: discriminative, reinforcing, punishing, etc.


Verbal Stimulus Example #1



00:13

When someone engages in the behavior of saying “dog,” for example, they produce sound waves that result in an auditory stimulus that can be heard either by someone else or the speaker him or herself. The auditory stimulus “dog” is a verbal stimulus.



 Note how this example has all of the defining features of verbal behavior:

Verbal Behavior

Behavior that has the following features:

DEFINING FEATURES

IRRELEVANT FEATURES

✓	It has a specific form or pattern which, as a unit, has controlling effectiveness
✓	It is the result of verbal behavior

DEFINING FEATURES

IRRELEVANT FEATURES

●	Modality: auditory, visual, etc.
●	Dynamic characteristics such as size, intensity, etc.
●	Function: discriminative, reinforcing, punishing, etc.

Verbal Stimulus Non-Example #1



00:09

A picture of a dog, or an actual dog itself, is a non-verbal stimulus. It is a visual stimulus that is **not** the result of prior verbal behavior.



Note how this example is lacking one of the defining features of verbal behavior:

Verbal Behavior

Behavior that has the following features:

DEFINING FEATURES

IRRELEVANT FEATURES

✓	It has a specific form or pattern which, as a unit, has controlling effectiveness
✗	It is the result of verbal behavior

DEFINING FEATURES

IRRELEVANT FEATURES

●	Modality: auditory, visual, etc.
●	Dynamic characteristics such as size, intensity, etc.
●	Function: discriminative, reinforcing, punishing, etc.

Non-Verbal Features of a Verbal Stimulus



00:16

A verbal stimulus may have features that are non-verbal. For example, if you say “dog” very loudly and someone says “too loud,” the response “too loud” is not controlled by the pattern of the stimulus that results from your verbal behavior, but rather by a dynamic characteristic of that stimulus.

Verbal Behavior

Behavior that has the following features:

DEFINING FEATURES

IRRELEVANT FEATURES

•	It has a specific form or pattern which, as a unit, has controlling effectiveness
•	It is the result of verbal behavior

DEFINING FEATURES

IRRELEVANT FEATURES

●	Modality: auditory, visual, etc.
●	Dynamic characteristics such as size, intensity, etc.
●	Function: discriminative, reinforcing, punishing, etc.

More About Irrelevant Features



00:14

The topography of the verbal behavior that results in the verbal stimulus is not important. Our first example involved vocal verbal behavior, but if we had written the word “dog,” then the resulting visual pattern or sequence would also be a verbal stimulus.

Verbal Behavior

Behavior that has the following features:

IRRELEVANT FEATURES

DEFINING FEATURES

●	Modality: auditory, visual, etc.
●	Dynamic characteristics such as size, intensity, etc.
●	Function: discriminative, reinforcing, punishing, etc.

IRRELEVANT FEATURES

DEFINING FEATURES

●	It has a specific form or pattern which, as a unit, has controlling effectiveness
●	It is the result of verbal behavior

Knowledge Check

You will be presented with a series of examples. Indicate whether each example illustrates a verbal or non-verbal stimulus.

Question

01/07

Someone picks up a rock and throws it at you. Seeing the throwing motion and the approaching rock can be considered a visual stimulus that is:

- verbal
- non-verbal

Question

02/07

Someone picks up a rock and throws it at you, but you don't see the person do it. Your friend says "duck." The auditory stimulus that results from your friend's vocal behavior is:

- verbal
- non-verbal

Question

03/07

You are driving down the road and see a sign that says “Beware of falling rocks.” The sign is a visual stimulus that is:

- verbal
- non-verbal

Question

04/07

When a bee flies it produces an auditory stimulus that we call a buzzing sound.
That buzzing sound is:

- verbal
- non-verbal

Question

05/07

A doughnut looks a lot like the letter “o” and you tend to say “o” whenever you see a doughnut. The doughnut is a visual stimulus that is:

- verbal
- non-verbal

Question

06/07

You see the word “Pepsi” written in the sky and say “Those are really large letters.” The size of the letters is a visual stimulus feature that is:

verbal

non-verbal

Question

07/07

You see the word “Pepsi” written in the sky. The spatial relationships between the letters and their overall pattern is a(n) _____ stimulus that evokes the response “Pepsi.”

- verbal
- non-verbal

Review

- A **verbal stimulus** is a physical energy change capable of affecting an organism's sensory receptors that has a specific form or pattern which, as a unit, has controlling effectiveness and is the result of verbal behavior.

- Features **irrelevant** to the classification of a stimulus as verbal include its modality, its dynamic characteristics, and its functions.

End of Lesson