

Manding for Information

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Manding for Information – what is it?

- Skinner¹ states “A question is a mand which specifies verbal behaviour”
- What that actually looks like is – I ask a question because I want to get more information about something.
- Examples – directions, times etc.

Example in ABA terms

- If my coat becomes valuable as a warm piece of clothing and I discover it not to be found in its usual place, then information about its location is established as a reinforcer and therefore evokes the response “where is my coat?” since that response has previously produced information that has directed me to my coat when it had a reinforcing value.

Carbone²

- Mands for information are taught by contriving and capturing motivation as it's happening.
- To teach the skill we need to manipulate the environment to be able to create that motivation
- If we want to teach a pupil to ask for 'where' questions we will hide things so they are out of sight.

How do we teach it?

Teach the following:

What: when names of people, places, things and actions would be reinforcing information

Where: when location would be reinforcing information

Who: when the name of a specific person would be reinforcing

Whose: when the name of a person who possesses something would be reinforcing

Carbone (2011)

How do we teach it?

Teach the following:

When: when information regarding time would be reinforcing

Why: when information for the causes of events would be reinforcing

How: when information for instructions and the functions of things would be reinforcing

Carbone (2011)

Manding for information – “what”

Manding “what”

Example 1

- The teacher has a bag of items that the learner is motivated for.
- The teacher will look in the bag and say “wow, look at this!” while keeping the bag closed.
- Prompt the child to say “what is it?”
- Teacher will say it’s a sweet and removes the sweet from the bag and delivers to the learner.

Example 2

- The teacher will present a field of 3 cards both mastered and target items.
- Teacher will say “what’s on the table?”
- Teacher will prompt “what is it?” when the learner comes to the unknown item.
- Teacher will tact the item and deliver reinforcement.

Carbone (2011)

Manding for information – “what”

Manding “what”

Example 3

- Teacher says “I want to play.”
- Teacher will prompt “what do you want to play?”
- Teacher says name of reinforcing game or toy

Carbone (2011)

Manding for information – “why”

Manding “why”

Example 1

- The learner is engaging in a reinforcing activity (watching TV) and the teacher turns it off with no warning
- Prompt “why did you do that?”
- Teacher says “so we can go to the playground”.
(Remember to pick an activity that is more reinforcing than the current activity)

Example 2

- Teacher says “I’m going outside to play”.
- Prompt “why cant I go?”
- Teacher says “you can, follow me!”

Carbone (2011)

Manding for information – “how”

Manding “how”

Example 1

- Teacher will have a see-through jar of desired items and the learner will mand for those items
- After the mand the teacher should acknowledge the mand. At the same time hand the tightly closed jar to the child.
- Teacher will prompt “how do I open it?”
- The teacher will then show the learner how it open the jar

Example 2

- Play with a toy that the learner cannot operate by themselves.
- Make the toy play music or make a noise.
- Prompt the learner to ask “how do I do that?”

Carbone (2011)

Manding for information – “which”

Manding “which”

Example 1

- Teacher should put a reinforcer in their hand and switch back and forth, hiding the location.
- With hands extended out, prompt, “which hand?”
- Say “this one” and deliver the reinforcer from hand to the learner

Example 2

- Teacher to offer the learner two biscuits and say, “you can only have one”.
- Prompt “which one can I have?”

Carbone (2011)

Manding for information – “who”

Manding “who”

Example 1

- Have three people in a room and say “someone has a ball for you”.
- Prompt “who?”
- Give the name of the person and the child walks to the person and gets the reinforcer

Example 2

- Using toys that are reinforcing to the child, the teacher will hide a toy behind a barrier and say “guess who is behind here?”
- Prompt “who?”
- Show the item and name the item and let the learner have it.

Manding for information – “where”

Manding “where”

Example 1

- Present the learner with a closed box that has a reinforcer in it and say, “this is for you.”
- Present the box two times with the reinforcer in it. On the third time the box will be empty.
- Prompt “where?”
- Say, “Oh, here it is” while delivering the reinforcer

Example 2

- While doing an activity, the teacher will abruptly end the activity with no warning and say “come on”.
- The teacher then prompts “where are we going?”
- The teacher will say “to play on the computer (or name a reinforcing activity than the reinforcing activity you are leaving)

Carbone (2011)

Manding for information – “Where”

Example 3

- The teacher say “get the..” or “give me the...” requiring the learner to find the item necessary for the reinforcing task (e.g. “go get your shoes we are going outside”).
- The item needed will be missing from its normal place or not available.
- Prompt the child to say “where are my school shoes?”
- The teacher should give the location of the shoes.

Example 4

- Teacher delivers lunch with no utensils
- Prompt “where is my spoon”

Carbone (2011)

Rules to remember

Only prompt the mand for information when MO is high and the learner has started to look for the information

Plan for each contrived session

You want to end up with more spontaneous mands rather than prompted mands

References

1. BF Skinner, *Verbal Behaviour*, 1957
2. Dr Vincent Carbone, *'Teaching topics in Behaviour Analysis and the application of a natural science to teaching language to children with disabilities'*, 2011