Chapter 11

Behavioral Approach to Speech, Language, Hearing, and Communication Disorders

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ABSTRACT

This chapter seeks to outline the overarching scenario of behavioral approaches to developmental and childhood speech, language, hearing, and communication disorders. By adopting the dichotomy of skill and problem behaviors, the steps or sequence, procedures, and practices of behavioral assessment and interventions are explained. While doing so, the uniquely Indian cultural underpinnings are highlighted with evidence-based empirical supports for the optimal benefits of the affected individuals. Additionally, two separate segments are focused on guidelines for skill training and problem behavior management along with case illustration on the format for their mapping procedures. The concluding section covers a critique of this approach which continues to hold promise for some more explorations in the contemporary circumstances for the optimum habilitation of these affected individuals.

INTRODUCTION

It is not the load that breaks you down, it is the way you carry it. – Lou Holtz

There are varied approaches to understanding speech, language, hearing, and communication disorders (Figure 1). This chapter attempts to explain behavioral approach.

BEHAVIORAL APPROACH

The behavioral approach focuses on here-and-now, observable and measurable actions. Behaviors are typically analyzed or understood as their antecedents and consequences within a given learning environment. Such observations must be precise, accurate, objective and unbiased. For example, the statement

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that a child ‘hits others’ is preferred expression rather than ‘naughty’ or ‘mischievous’, which would be dubbed as a subjective description (Miltenberger, 2012). The role of historical elements, organic causes, biology and heredity as causative factors to explain behavior is discounted. Any or all behaviors are presumed to be learned and they can also be unlearned. More than labeling or diagnosis, this approach underscores a functional-utilitarian relationship between the person and their behavior. As agents of behavior change, professionals in the area of communication disorders are involved in creating, strengthening, sustaining or increasing speech, or language skills. They are also concerned with decreasing undesirable behaviors that interfere with therapy. Experimental backup derived from animal or human subjects is the basis for all behavioral assertions. Behaviourally based interventions are action therapies contrasting verbal therapies like psychoanalysis or client-centered therapy (Spiegler, 2016).