



Key Concepts Quick Guide: Generative Language and RFT

A Quick Reference for Behavior Analysts and Educators

Created by: Megan DeLeon (Miller), PhD, BCBA-D

To learn more about the role of generativity and RFT in language programming and intervention, check out this
Workshop: Enhancing Language Development for the Day-to-Day BCBA: Generative Learning, RFT, and PEAK

Content Highlights

- *Phases of Service Delivery:** Overview of recommended phases for ABA service delivery before fully targeting language development
- *Relational Frames:** Definitions and examples of common relational frames.
- *Levels of Complexity in Relational Learning:** Descriptions and examples of the four different levels of complexity.
- *Key RFT Concepts for Beginners:** Essential terms and concepts for those new to Relational Frame Theory.
- *Glossary of Terms:** Glossary covering common generative language and RFT terminology.





Phases of Service Delivery

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Phase	Description/Focus
Connected Relationships	-Building awareness of people and the environment -Social Communication
Emotional Regulation	-Assess and Develop Active Engagement (Wetherby et al., 2018) -Assess and Create Low-stress learning environments
Foundational Skill Development	-"Learning to learn" skills -Generative Language Sequence (Ming et al., 2019)
Client-Centered Goals	-Commercially available assessments: PEAK, VBMAPP, ABLLS-R, ESDM, etc -Individualized priorities



Relational Frames

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Frame	Description
Coordination/Sameness	Relating things as being the same. Example: "This apple is the same as that apple."
Distinction/Difference	Relating things as being different. Example: "A circle is different from a square."
Opposition	Relating things as being opposite. Example: "Hot is the opposite of cold."
Comparison	Relating things based on some comparative aspect. Example: "This apple is bigger than that apple."
Hierarchical	Relating things in a hierarchy. Example: "A car is a type of vehicle."
Deictic/Perspective Taking	Relating things from different viewpoints. Example: "I am here, and you are there."



Levels of Complexity in Relational Learning

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Level of Complexity	Visual	Description
Non-Arbitrary		Relations based on physical properties. Example: Matching shapes by color
Cultural		Relations based on cultural conventions. Example: Associating words with pictures.
Arbitrary		Relations based on social conventions. Example: Learning that "dog" refers to a specific animal.
Complex Transformation		Complex relational responding involving multiple transformations. Example: Solving a problem by relating different abstract concepts.



Key Concepts for Beginners - RFT

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Key Concept	Visual	Description	Example
Arbitrarily Applicable Relational Responding (AARR)		Ability to relate stimuli in arbitrary ways based on contextual cues.	Learning that the word "dog" refers to the animal, even though the word itself has no inherent connection to the animal
Mutual Entailment		If A relates to B, then B relates to A.	If you learn that "A" is greater than "B", you can derive that "B" is less than "A".
Combinatorial Entailment		If A relates to B and B relates to C, then A relates to C	If "A" is taller than "B" and "B" is taller than "C", you can derive that "A" is taller than "C".
Transformation of Function		The psychological function of one stimulus changes based on its relation to other stimuli.	If you learn that touching a stove (A) leads to pain (B), and you then hear a specific sound (C) whenever the stove is on, the sound (C) can come to evoke fear (D).



GENERATIVE LEARNING AND RELATIONAL FRAME THEORY GLOSSARY OF COMMON TERMS

- **ARBITRARILY APPLICABLE RELATIONAL RESPONDING (AARR):** THE ABILITY TO RELATE STIMULI IN ARBITRARY WAYS, AS DETERMINED BY SOCIAL OR CONTEXTUAL CUES RATHER THAN PHYSICAL PROPERTIES .
- **ARBITRARY RELATIONS:** RELATIONS BETWEEN STIMULI BASED ON SOCIAL CONVENTIONS OR CONTEXTUAL CUES (E.G., NAMES, CATEGORIES).
- **BEHAVIORAL CUSP:** A BEHAVIOR CHANGE THAT HAS FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES BY ALLOWING AN INDIVIDUAL TO ACCESS NEW ENVIRONMENTS, REINFORCERS, OR LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES.
- **COMBINATORIAL ENTAILMENT:** WHEN TWO RELATIONS (A → B AND B → C) ARE LEARNED, A NEW RELATION (A → C) IS ALSO UNDERSTOOD WITHOUT DIRECT TEACHING.
- **COMPLEX TRANSFORMATION:** COMPLEX RELATIONAL RESPONDING INVOLVING MULTIPLE TRANSFORMATIONS, SUCH AS SOLVING A PROBLEM BY RELATING DIFFERENT ABSTRACT CONCEPTS.
- **COORDINATION (SAMENESS):** RELATING THINGS AS BEING THE SAME (E.G., "THIS APPLE IS THE SAME AS THAT APPLE").
- **CULTURAL RELATIONS:** RELATIONS BASED ON CULTURAL CONVENTIONS, SUCH AS ASSOCIATING WORDS WITH PICTURES.



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- **DEICTIC (PERSPECTIVE-TAKING):** RELATING THINGS FROM DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS (E.G., "I AM HERE, AND YOU ARE THERE").
- **DERIVED RELATIONAL RESPONDING (DRR):** THE ABILITY TO RESPOND TO ONE STIMULUS BASED ON ITS RELATION TO ANOTHER STIMULUS WITHOUT DIRECT TRAINING FOR EACH SPECIFIC RELATION.
- **DISTINCTION:** RELATING THINGS AS BEING DIFFERENT (E.G., "A CIRCLE IS DIFFERENT FROM A SQUARE").
- **GENERATIVE LEARNING:** THE ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND AND PRODUCE NEW RESPONSES OR LANGUAGE STRUCTURES THAT HAVE NOT BEEN EXPLICITLY TAUGHT.
- **HIERARCHICAL:** RELATING THINGS IN A HIERARCHY (E.G., "A CAR IS A TYPE OF VEHICLE").
- **LISTENER RESPONDING:** FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS OR RESPONDING TO SPOKEN LANGUAGE (E.G., IDENTIFYING OBJECTS WHEN ASKED).
- **MATRIX TRAINING:** A TEACHING METHOD WHERE A GRID (MATRIX) OF TEACHING TARGETS (E.G., NOUNS AND VERBS) IS USED TO PROMOTE LEARNING. BY TEACHING SOME COMBINATIONS EXPLICITLY, STUDENTS CAN GENERALIZE AND PRODUCE NEW COMBINATIONS THAT WERE NOT DIRECTLY TAUGHT.



GENERATIVE LEARNING AND RELATIONAL FRAME THEORY GLOSSARY OF COMMON TERMS

- **MUTUAL ENTAILMENT:** WHEN A RELATION BETWEEN TWO STIMULI (A → B) IS LEARNED, THE REVERSE RELATION (B → A) IS ALSO UNDERSTOOD WITHOUT DIRECT TEACHING.
- **NONARBITRARY RELATIONS:** RELATIONS BETWEEN STIMULI BASED ON THEIR PHYSICAL PROPERTIES (E.G., SIZE, COLOR).
- **OPPOSITION:** RELATING THINGS AS BEING OPPOSITE (E.G., "HOT IS THE OPPOSITE OF COLD").
- **RECOMBINATIVE GENERALIZATION:** THE ABILITY TO COMBINE LEARNED ELEMENTS (E.G., WORDS, PHRASES) IN NEW WAYS TO PRODUCE NOVEL RESPONSES THAT WERE NOT EXPLICITLY TAUGHT.
- **RELATIONAL FRAME THEORY (RFT):** A THEORY EXPLAINING HOW HUMANS LEARN AND USE LANGUAGE BY RELATING DIFFERENT STIMULI IN VARIOUS WAYS (E.G., SIMILARITY, OPPOSITION) BASED ON SOCIAL OR CONTEXTUAL CUES.



GENERATIVE LEARNING AND RELATIONAL FRAME THEORY GLOSSARY OF COMMON TERMS

□ **RELATIONAL FRAMES:** PATTERNS OF RELATIONAL RESPONDING, SUCH AS COORDINATION, OPPOSITION, COMPARISON, AND HIERARCHY.

□ **TACTING:** LABELING OR NAMING OBJECTS, ACTIONS, OR EVENTS IN THE ENVIRONMENT.

□ **TRANSFORMATION OF FUNCTION:** THE PROCESS BY WHICH THE FUNCTION OF ONE STIMULUS CHANGES BASED ON ITS RELATION TO ANOTHER STIMULUS WITHIN A RELATIONAL NETWORK.

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ROLE OF GENERATIVITY
AND RFT IN LANGUAGE PROGRAMMING AND
INTERVENTION, CHECK OUT THIS WORKSHOP:
[ENHANCING LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE DAY-
TO-DAY BCBA: GENERATIVE LEARNING, RFT, AND PEAK](#)**