

CLASSICAL CONDITIONING IN APHASIC ADULTS:
DIAGNOSTIC AND THERAPEUTIC IMPLICATIONS
(Abstract)

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Current tests for aphasia attempt to discover an intact input modality by requesting a response through an intact output modality. These tests, however, often fail to differentiate between input and output disorders; a patient may fail on a given task because he cannot make an appropriate response.

We attempted to take the response out of the aphasic patient's control through the use of classical conditioning procedures which evoke an autonomic response, the eyeblink. A battery of diagnostic and experimental tests for aphasia and five classical conditioning procedures were administered to 15 aphasic patients and 15 normal subjects. The classical conditioning procedures consisted of one auditory nonverbal, one visual nonverbal, one mixed auditory-visual nonverbal, and one auditory verbal and one visual verbal "truth value" condition.

The results reveal the aphasic patients demonstrated significantly poorer conditioning on each of the experimental conditions than the normal subjects. The greatest differences between groups occurred on the verbal tasks. Latency of response was significantly greater for the aphasic subjects on all conditions.

No significant differences were obtained when conditioning scores of aphasic subjects with predominantly output deficits were compared with conditioning scores of patients with predominantly input deficits. Several significant correlations were obtained for severity of aphasia and conditioning scores.