



# Theories of Learning

---



# Theories of Learning

---

## ■ **Instrumental Conditioning**

- The instrumental conditioning theory of learning was given by **B. F. Skinner**, an American psychologist.
- Skinner studied occurrence of voluntary responses when an organism operates on the environment. He called them operants.



# Theories of Learning

---

- **Operants** are those behaviour or responses which are emitted by animals and human beings voluntarily and are under their control.
- The term operant is used because the organism operates on the environment.



# Theories of Learning

---

- Conditioning of operant behaviour is called operant conditioning. That is why, this theory is also known as *operant conditioning theory*.



# Theories of Learning

---

- In this type of conditioning, an action of the learner is instrumental in bringing about a change in the environment that makes the action more or less likely to occur again in future.



# Theories of Learning

---

- The theory is based on the premise that behaviour is a function of its consequences.
- Skinner proposed that operant conditioning is a form of learning in which behaviour is learned, maintained or changed through its consequences. Such consequences are called *reinforcers*.



# Theories of Learning

---

- A reinforcer is any stimulus or event which increases the probability of the occurrence of a desired response.
- The theory states that people learn through **reinforcers**, both **positive reinforcers** as well as **negative reinforcers**.



# Theories of Learning

---

- A positive reinforcer is a stimulus or event which, when it follows a response, ***increases*** the likelihood that the response will be made again.
- This implies that people learn to repeat the behaviour that helps them in getting the desired outcomes.





# Theories of Learning

---

- For example, we learn and repeat such behaviours for which we are given money, praise and other forms of rewards and that also satisfy our needs.



# Theories of Learning

---

- A *negative reinforcer* involves unpleasant and painful stimuli. Responses that lead organisms to get rid of painful stimuli or avoid and escape from them provide negative reinforcement.
- This implies that people learn to repeat a behaviour that helps them in avoiding the negative outcomes.



# Theories of Learning

---

- Thus, negative reinforcement leads to learning of avoidance and escape responses. Such behaviour is learned and repeated to avoid negative consequences.
- For example, wearing woolens during winter, wearing seat belts and helmets while driving.



# Theories of Learning

---

- A **punisher** is a stimulus or event which, when its onset is contingent on a response, *decreases* the likelihood that the response will occur again.
- This implies that people learn not to repeat the behaviour that could cause them trouble or pain.



# Theories of Learning

---

- A punisher is different from negative reinforcer. Responses followed by punishers tend *not to be repeated*, while those followed by negative reinforcers tend to become *more likely*.
- Skinner believed that punishment has only a limited role in learning and it should not be used too often.



# Theories of Learning

---

- Timing of reinforcement is an important factor in the process of learning. It is found that delay in the delivery of reinforcement leads to poorer level of performance.
- Smaller rewards immediately after doing a task would be much more effective than a big one after a long gap.



# Theories of Learning

---

- Different phenomena like extinction, spontaneous recovery, stimulus generalization and discrimination are also found in responses learnt through the process of instrumental conditioning.
- In addition, the theory mentions an important process called shaping.



# Theories of Learning

---

- **Shaping** refers to the process of learning a complex response by first learning a number of simple responses leading up to the complex one.
- Each step is learned by the application of contingent positive reinforcement, and each step builds on the one before it until the complex response occurs and is reinforced.





# Theories of Learning

---

- Since these steps are approximations of the final response, the method of shaping is also called the *method of successive approximation*.



# Theories of Learning

---

## **Observational Learning Theory**

- The observational learning or social learning theory was given by Albert Bandura who believed that acquiring new knowledge and skills by observing the behaviour of others is a common part of everyday life.



# Theories of Learning

---

- Therefore, the observational learning theory states that learning in living organisms could occur through the simple process of observing others.
- This is also known as Modeling theory or Imitation theory because learning occurs through modeling or imitating the behaviour of others.



# Theories of Learning

---

- Bandura conducted extensive experimentation in this regard and based on the results, proposed his theory with the help of a 4-step model through which he explained how learning occurs.



# Theories of Learning

---

- These steps are:
- **Attention** – the individual notices something in the environment.
- **Retention** – the individual remembers what was noticed.



# Theories of Learning

---

- **Reproduction** – the individual produces an action that is a copy of what was noticed.
- **Motivation** – the environment delivers a consequence based on which the individual learns the behaviour.



# Theories of Learning

---

- **Can young people learn aggression through watching the action of others?**



# Theories of Learning

---

- A large number of researches have been carried to answer this question. Though it's difficult to give a definite answer at this point of time, however, the majority of researches indicate that *aggression may indeed be learned through observation.*





# Theories of Learning

---

- That is why, instruments of mass media, especially television and motion pictures are directed to refrain from showing excessive violence and aggression in any form.



# Theories of Learning

---

## **Insight Theory**

- The insight theory of learning was given by **Wolfgang Kohler**, a German psychologist.
- This is a cognitive learning theory as it highlights the role of mental processes in learning.



# Theories of Learning

---

- The theory states that learning also occurs through a process called insight wherein the solution to a problem suddenly becomes clear.
- Once the solution has appeared, it can be repeated immediately the next time the problem is confronted.