

The general process of classical conditioning

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The General Process of Classical Conditioning. Classical conditioning was the first type of learning, discovered by a famous Russian psychologist Ivan Pavlov, one of the founders of the behaviorist traditions. He developed the concept and proved it as he experimented with the digestive system of dogs. The textbooks say that he found this consistent pattern accidentally, as he noticed the reaction of the dog, when Pavlov's assistant who fed it, came to the room.

The thing that surprised the scientist was that the dog began to salivate as it saw the man. After numerous experiments Pavlov developed the concept of classical conditioning. For to explain it we should first give the definition for the terms we are going to operate.

Unconditioned Stimulus - the thing that naturally provokes some response (food provokes salivation, the sight of the attractive young woman with the minimum of clothes on them provokes mild arousal in most man)

Unconditioned Response - the natural reaction to the stimulus

Unconditioned Relationship - the stimulus-respond connection

Conditioning Stimulus - the additional stimulus we present together with the first one (the bell ring is presented with food, ice-cream is presented with the attractive woman in the advertisement)

Conditioned Relationship - a relationship that emerges when conditioned stimulus is associated with the unconditioned response

Pavlov's theory of classical conditioning notes that the unconditioned stimulus arouse unconditioned response, like food and salivation. But when another stimulus, which is called conditional, is given with the unconditional one for several times (the bell together with food), than the dog will develop an unconditional response (salivation) to the conditional stimulus (the bell)

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The theory of classical conditioning is used in most of the advertising campaigns worldwide. The sellers are organizing their advertising in such a way for to create an unconditional response to the conditional stimulus. For example, a company wants to sell the detergent it produces. The thing is that the detergent market is full now, and they don't have the money or personnel for to develop the new formula for it that would make it really better than the other detergents. Than they invite attractive young people, boys and girls for to advertise their detergent. Most of people feel good when they see them, as positive emotion is an unconditioned response when you see something beautiful. When the target audience sees the attractive people that advertise the detergent for several times, they subconsciously begin to associate the detergent with the positive feeling they have when they see attractive models who advertise it.

Hill in his book *Learning: A survey of psychological interpretations* (1985) gave one more example of the usage of classical conditioning in advertising. In K-Mart when the sales are conducted the blue light is turned on. The unconditional stimulus (low prices) encourages the customers to produce the unconditional response (buy). But when the blue light is on, the cost conscious shoppers will make a line to the table where the light is, as blue light is a conditional stimulus. The research also proves that people are more likely to buy the item that is under sale, when it is on the table with the blue light, regardless of the quality of the item and its price.

Conditional learning is also the source of some phobias in people. For example, when some traumatizing situation had happened in the specific conditions, the person will associate this situation with the conditions, and he/she will always feel uncomfortable in those conditions.

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As you can see, classical condition, a behaviorist theory of learning developed by Pavlov is nowadays widely used in advertising. It can also explain some of the phobias we can observe in people around us.

References

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2. Huitt, W., & Hummel, J. (1997). An introduction to classical (respondent) conditioning. Educational Psychology Interactive. Valdosta, GA: Valdosta State University. Retrieved January 2, 2005, from <http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/behsys/classcnd.html>.