

# Good example of classical and operant conditioning essay

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## **Introduction**

The way people behave depends on their learning processes; the learning process involves the acquisitions, accumulation, and use of knowledge in everyday experiences. The two significant theories in the learning process are classical and operant.

## **Elements of classical and operant conditioning**

In operant conditioning, a reinforcing stimulus follows a voluntary response. Due to the reinforcement, the voluntary stimulus is likely to be repeated by the person. The reinforcement acts as a stimulus which increases the chance of a repeat in behavior. The process of operant conditioning is efficient only when the voluntary response is immediately followed by the reinforcement; this helps the subject in perceiving the relationship between the response and stimulus; developed by B. F. Skinner (Givaert, 2013). Reinforcement can be negative in the form of punishment; this reduces the probability of response.

In classical conditioning, the unconditioned stimulus precedes and triggers an unconditioned response. The association of a neutral stimulus with an unconditioned stimulus creates a conditioned response. Over time, once the unconditioned stimulus is removed, the neutral stimulus still triggers the conditioned response. Pavlov's classical conditioning focused on the study of salivation in dogs; this study revealed that salivation could be elicited by the neutral stimuli after its association with a conditioned stimulus. The sound of the bell elicited salivation due to its association with the presentation of food to the dogs. After a while, they associated the sound of the bell with food

and salivated even when no food was presented. The elimination of reinforcement results in extinction; however, reintroduction of the stimulus results in spontaneous recovery of the learned response.

## **Differences**

Classical conditioning and operant conditioning have evident differences. In reference to the nature of response, classical conditioning involves voluntary and reflex responses. In operant conditioning, on the other hand, the response is voluntary and spontaneous. In classical, the reinforcement precedes the response, whereas, in operant, it occurs after the response. In classical conditioning, the learner is passive; he is active in operant. In classical conditioning, the nature of learning is evident through the change of a neutral stimulus into a conditioned one; this occurs through its association with an unconditioned stimulus. In operant conditioning, the probability of responses depends on the subsequent consequences; the responses have specific effects (Gevaert, 2013).

## **Examples**

Both principles are efficient in eliciting behavioral change in people. Operant conditioning is an associate learning process that can be used in altering a person's behavior. For instance, an infant's accidental utterance of speech sounds should be followed by positive reinforcement and encouragement. The child is likely to repeat the action due to the response it elicited. The strategy helps in language acquisition among children.

Classical conditioning, on the other hand, can be used in the elimination of fears. For instance, a person who fears snakes can be exposed to a snake in

a controlled environment. After a period of time, he reduces the association of the snake's presence with fear. It is a therapeutic process known as desensitization; the gradual exposure in a calm and relaxed state reduces fear.

## **Contribution to the study of learning and conditioning**

Both Pavlov and Skinner contribute immensely to the study of learning and conditioning. Operant conditioning is efficient when a person increases the probability of a response; this occurs in the presence of a stimulus (Gevaert, 2013). It can be used in the learning environment to encourage improvement in the performance of various activities. The learners are motivated when their efforts are constantly reinforced. The motivation occurs orally, non-verbally or through material gifts.

## **Conclusion**

Skinner and Pavlov made significant contributions to the learning process. Both provide perspectives in eliciting behavior. The use of proper learning methods ensures the acquisition and retention of proper behavior patterns.

## **Reference**

Gevaert, E. (2013). Conditioning and Learning: Chapter 6. Introduction to Psychology: Gateway theme (13th ed.).