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## **Behaviorism in Psycholinguistics**

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## **Introduction**

Behaviorism is a psychological theory that focuses on learning and observable behavior. It views all behavior as learned through interaction with the environment, where behavior is a response to stimuli, and only observable actions are studied scientifically.

## **Definition of Behaviorism in Psycholinguistics:**

**Behaviorism in Psycholinguistics** is a theory that views language acquisition as a learned behavior shaped by the environment. It argues that children learn language through **imitation, repetition, and reinforcement**, not through inborn mental abilities. Influenced by **B.F. Skinner (1957)**, the theory explains that correct language use is reinforced (e.g., praise or rewards), while incorrect use is corrected or ignored, gradually shaping language behavior.

## **Concept of behaviorism and the behaviorists:**

### **1-Classical Conditioning ( Pavlovian Conditioning )**

**Classical Conditioning** (Ivan Pavlov) explains learning through stimulus–response associations. Although not focused on language, it influenced behaviorist views that language can be learned through association and repetition. Later theories argued that this approach is limited and emphasized innate abilities and mental processes instead.

### **2- Operant Conditioning (Instrumental Conditioning)**

**Operant Conditioning** was proposed by **B.F. Skinner**. In his book *Verbal Behavior* (1957), he argued that language is learned through imitation and reinforcement. Children repeat words and structures that are praised or rewarded, while incorrect forms are corrected or ignored, shaping language behavior over time.

### **3- John Watson and the Rise of Behaviorism**

**John Watson** was the founder of behaviorism. He believed that environmental stimuli, not innate ability, shape behavior, including language, and claimed that any child could be trained to become anything through learning and experience.

#### **Principles of Behaviorism**

##### **1-All behavior is learned from the environment:**

Behaviorism assumes that behavior is learned through experience, not inherited. Learning occurs through classical conditioning (association) and operant conditioning (consequences). It emphasizes environmental influence and views the mind at birth as a tabula rasa (blank slate). Classical conditioning involves learning by associating new stimuli with natural reflexes.

##### **Pavlov's Experiment**

Pavlov showed that dogs could learn to salivate to a bell through classical conditioning. Initially, the bell was a neutral stimulus (no salivation), and food was an unconditioned stimulus causing unconditioned salivation. After repeatedly pairing the bell with food, the dogs **salivated** to the bell alone. The bell became the conditioned stimulus and salivation became the conditioned response.

##### **Examples of Classical Conditioning in Real Life**

- **Taste aversion:** people avoid foods linked to sickness.
- **Learned emotions:** love or attachment develops through association.
- **Advertising:** products are linked to attractive images.
- **Phobias:** fears are learned through associations with negative experiences.

**2-**Behavior is the result of stimulus-response.

**3-**Psychology should be seen as a science.

4-Behaviorism is primarily concerned with observable behavior, as opposed to internal events like thinking and emotion.

5-There is little difference between the learning that takes place in humans and that in other animals.

**Applications of Behaviorism in Language Learning (from a psychological perspective):**

- **Audio-Lingual Method (ALM):** Uses repetition and drills to help learners form correct language habits.
- **Reinforcement and Feedback:** Teachers praise correct responses and correct errors, strengthening proper language use.
- **Practice with Flashcards:** Vocabulary is learned through repeated exposure and positive reinforcement.
- **Sentence Repetition and Role-plays:** Learners repeat sentences or act out dialogues to form automatic language responses.
- **Reward Systems:** Correct answers or language use are reinforced through rewards or praise.
- **Focus on Pronunciation and Grammar:** Behaviorist methods are effective for developing automatic responses in basic grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

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3-**Pavlov, I. P.** (1927). Conditioned Reflexes: An Investigation of the Physiological Activity of the Cerebral Cortex. Oxford University Press.