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Classical Conditioning Theory of Learning

- P.G. Sem - 1
- Paper- CC - 1

Pavlov's Theory

- The behaviouristic theory of conditioned response was put forward by the Russian Nobel prize winner Ivan Pavlov at the turn of the century(1890s).
  It is also known as ' Classical Conditioning theory'.

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- Classical conditioning is one form of associative learning where a connection between a stimulus and a response is established.
- Behaviour of a child who avoids burning firewood after being burnt by it once is an example of classical conditioning.

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- According to this theory- “ A stimulus, which is to be conditioned (as bell)is presented again and again with unconditioned stimulus (as food),the stimulus becomes able to elicit unconditioned response (salivation). This is called conditioned reflex.

Cont..

- Before conditioning –

  CS (bell) ---------- No Response

  US (Food) ---------- UR(salivation)

  During conditioning -

  CS (bell) --- US(food) ------UR(salivation)

- After conditioning -

  CS (bell) ---------- CR (salivation)

Cont..

- Pavlov and his associates discovered several phenomena during their experimental studies on the gastric secretion in dog.

Cont..

- **INTENSITY----** One simple fact is that gastric secretion is the function of kind of food (UCS).There is a positive correlation between intensity of the stimulus and latency of response. The more intense the CS ,the more rapidly conditioning will proceed and larger the CR will be . It has also been reported that if the CS is too weak there may be no conditioning.

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- **EXTINCTION--** If CS(sound of the bell) is not followed by UCS (food), it means there is no reinforcement. A stage comes when the dog stop to secret saliva. This process is called Extinction.

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- **GENERALIZATION---** It is a process in which a conditioned response to a stimulus is generalized to similar category of stimuli. Suppose a dog salivates at the sound of buzzer of 1000 intensity ,but if the dog also salivate at the sound of 999 or 1001 intensity, it means the dog has response to the stimuli generalized. Classical experiment by Watson on Albert is an example of stimulus generalization of fear.

Cont..

- **EXPERIMENTAL NEUROSIS---** Some times the differences between stimuli are so slight that discrimination between stimuli become practically most difficult when this happens, an experimental neurosis may develop.

Cont..

- **CRITICISM --**

  • The theory has limited scope of its applicability to wide variety of learning situation. It is applicable in most simple form of learning only. It is unable to explain multi- response learning situation.