

Lecture 6, Jan 18, 2023

Learning

- Any process through which practice or exercise at one time can alter an individual's behavior at another time
- We learn actively and constantly
- 3 kinds of learning experience:
 - Classical conditioning
 - * Pavlov's dog
 - Initially conditioned stimulus is the food, unconditioned response is the drool
 - When the food is removed, the drool becomes a conditioned response
 - Operant learning
 - * Positive/negative reinforcement
 - Social Cognitive Theory
 - * Learning on the job

Operant Learning

- Learning in which the subject learns to operate on the environment to achieve certain consequences
 - We are controlled by the consequences of our behaviour
 - Subject learns a connection between certain behaviour and certain consequences that follow
 - We are aiming to increase probability of desirable behaviours and eliminate or reduce probability of undesirable behaviour
- Both positive and negative reinforcement aims to increase positive behaviour:
 - Positive reinforcement is the application or *addition* of a stimulus that increases or maintains the probability of some behaviour
 - * e.g. "employee of the month" – recognition for good behaviour increases good behaviour
 - * The stimulus is the positive reinforcer
 - * The reinforcer is dependent or contingent on the occurrence of the desired behaviour
 - Negative reinforcement is the *removal* of a stimulus that increases or maintains the probability of some behaviour
 - * It is not punishment; negative reinforcement is removing a barrier to increase good behaviour
 - * e.g. parents stop nagging a child when the child does the desired action
 - * When a response prevents some event or stimulus from occurring
 - * The removed or prevented stimulus is a negative reinforcer
- Reinforcement has limitations:
 - Consistency in applying the stimulus is needed
 - Someone needs to enforce the rules
- To reduce undesirable behaviour, two strategies can be used:
 - Extinction: *removing* the reinforcer
 - * e.g. moving a student when they are talking in class means they can no longer engage in the undesirable behaviour
 - Punishment: *applying* a negative stimulus
- The difference between positive/negative reinforcement and punishment/extinction is the end goal: whether to increase or decrease the behaviour
- Problems using punishment:
 - Does not demonstrate what should be done, only what shouldn't be done
 - Provokes a strong emotional reaction from the subject
 - Suppression of behaviour is temporary

Social Cognitive Theory

- Focuses on giving choice and autonomy, choice and independence (but can't be applied in all scenarios)
- Paying attention to how someone else is doing it (attentional processes), retaining some of that

information (retention processes), carrying it out yourself (production processes), and checking it against a model (reinforcement)

- This method of learning builds *self-efficacy*: confidence to successfully perform a task
- *Self-regulation* involves:
 - Collect self-observation data
 - Observe models
 - Set goals
 - Rehearse
 - Reinforce oneself
 - Compare to goals

Organizational Behavior Modification

- Organizational learning practices:
 - OB modification
 - Employee recognition programs
 - * e.g. “employee of the month”
 - Training programs
 - Career development