LEARNING THEORIES · IAL WPS02 · A LEVEL 9PS0

SLT vs Operant Conditioning

Operant: learning from your own consequences. SLT: learning by watching others.

	Operant conditioning	Social learning theory
Key researcher	Skinner (1948)	Bandura (1961, 1963, 1965)
How learning happens	Direct experience of consequences	Observing and imitating a model
Reinforcement	Direct	Vicarious (seeing the model rewarded)
Thinking	Not needed	Central: attention, retention, reproduction, motivation
Learning vs performance	Learning shows in behaviour	Can learn without performing
Key terms	Positive/negative reinforcement, punishment, schedules, shaping	Model, identification, imitation, vicarious reinforcement, mediational processes

ARRM

Process	Example
Attention	Leah notices her older brother swearing
Retention	She remembers the words
Reproduction	She is able to say them
Motivation	She saw him get laughs, so expects a reward

Evaluation

Operant conditioning

+ Strong experimental evidence (Skinner).
+ Practical uses: token economies, behaviour modification.
− Ignores thinking; cannot explain learning by observation.

Social learning theory

+ Bandura (1965): learning without direct reinforcement.
+ Explains imitation of role models and media.
− Bobo doll studies lack ecological validity; mediational processes are hard to measure.

© PsychHack · For personal and classroom use