

behaviorism ^[1]

Type of Speech:

noun ^[2]

Definition:

Theory that human behavior and learning are guided and controlled by external stimuli (from the environment) as opposed to internal psychological processes (in the mind). Learning occurs when students are given a stimulus (such as a question or request) that results in a response. Positive reinforcements, or rewards, follow appropriate responses; punishments or negative reinforcements follow inappropriate responses.

Additional Information:

In schools, behaviorist classroom and school management policies and procedures retain significant influence. Behaviorism began to influence strategies for instruction and classroom management in the 1960s. Following the research of B. F. Skinner, proponents argue that learning requires a change in behavior and that this is only achieved with appropriate reinforcements, both positive and negative.

Critics charge that behaviorism reduces human beings to machines and the mind to a "black box," reacting to the environment instead of acting with thought. In addition, critics charge that behaviorism fails to take into account all learning styles.

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