

3.1 Themes and Methods in Developmental Psychology

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 18 marks

KEY WORDS cohort effect 世代效应 • cross-sectional 横断 • sensitive period 关键期
• longitudinal 纵向 • developmental 发展

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on **developmental** 发展 research design.

You must be able to:

- contrast **cross-sectional** 横断 and **longitudinal** 纵向 designs
- state what a **cohort effect** 世代效应 confounds
- describe **stability against change** and **continuity against stages**
- explain what a **critical** or **sensitive period** 关键期 is

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ Two designs

A **cross-sectional** study compares different age groups at one time — fast, but the groups differ in more than age. A **longitudinal** study follows one group over years — it isolates age, but is slow and loses participants.

■ Cohort effects

People born in different decades differ in schooling, nutrition and technology as well as age. A cross-sectional age difference may therefore be a **cohort** difference, and this is the design's central weakness.

■ Two recurring questions

Stability or change: do traits persist across life? **Continuity or stages:** is development gradual, or a sequence of qualitatively different periods?

■ Critical and sensitive periods

A **critical period** is a window during which a particular input is required for normal development. A **sensitive period** is a window in which development is easiest but not exclusively possible.

2 Practice

2.1 State one advantage and one disadvantage of a longitudinal design. [2]

2.2 Explain what a cohort effect is and which design it threatens. [2]

2.3 A study finds 70-year-olds score lower on a computer task than 20-year-olds.

(a) State the design used. [1]

(b) State one alternative explanation besides ageing. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 To separate the effect of ageing from generational differences, a researcher should use a [1]

- | | |
|---|---|
| A | B |
| C | D |
- A** cross-sectional design
B longitudinal design
C case study
D correlational survey

3.2 A window in which language is learned most easily but can still be learned later is a [1]

- | | |
|---|---|
| A | B |
| C | D |
- A** critical period
B sensitive period
C cohort effect
D stage

3.3 A researcher must choose between following 200 children for 15 years and testing 200 children of three ages now.

(a) State one practical reason to choose the second. [1]

(b) Explain the cost of that choice. [2]

3.4 Applied research task. A researcher wants to know whether vocabulary grows faster between ages 4 and 6 or between ages 6 and 8. Design **A** tests 200 four-year-olds, 200 six-year-olds and 200 eight-year-olds in the same month. Design **B** tests 200 four-year-olds now and re-tests the same children at 6 and at 8.

(a) Name each design. [2]

(b) State **one** advantage of Design A over Design B, and **one** advantage of Design B over Design A. [2]

(c) Explain what a cohort effect is and why it threatens Design A specifically. [2]

(d) Identify **one** threat to Design B that does not apply to Design A. [1]
