

14.1 Developmental theories and milestones: evidence and transfer

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ Total: 8 marks

KEY WORDS object permanence • theory of mind

Objective

Order the major stage theories and their defining tasks; Match cognitive milestones to Piaget’s stages; Distinguish attachment patterns and theory-of-mind evidence. Original practice and authored marking guidance.

1 Key knowledge and worked examples

object permanence : Knowing that objects continue to exist when out of sight, gained in the sensorimotor stage. **theory of mind** : Understanding that others hold beliefs, including beliefs that are false.

Assimilation uses an existing scheme; accommodation changes the scheme when it does not fit. Conservation tasks examine whether a transformation changes a quantity, not merely whether children use an adult word. In a supported-learning account, distinguish a prompt that organizes a child’s reasoning from a prompt that supplies the answer. Attachment observations concern relationship-specific behaviour under a protocol, not an adult personality diagnosis.

Piaget's proposed sequence: examples

1 Sensorimotor Roughly birth to 2 years Action and perception Object permanence	2 Preoperational Roughly 2 to 7 years Symbols and pretend play Focus on one feature
3 Concrete operations Roughly 7 to 11/12 years Conservation Reversibility	4 Formal operations From about 11/12 years Hypotheses Controlled comparisons

Approximate ages; one task does not establish a complete profile.

Worked case. A child calls every four-legged animal a dog, then creates a separate category for cats after contrasting examples. Explain the two processes.

Using the existing dog category for a cat illustrates assimilation. Revising categories to distinguish cats illustrates accommodation. The example concerns changing classification, not proof of a particular stage or the child’s general intelligence. Ask for the child’s reasoning and test new examples.

2 Practice

2.1 A participant solves the pendulum problem by holding factor X constant while varying factor Y, then reversing. According to Piaget, this is: [1]

A. sensorimotor B. preoperational C. concrete operational D. formal operational E. conventional

2.2 In the strange situation, an infant who clings to the caregiver yet is not comforted at reunion shows which pattern? [1]

A. secure B. avoidant C. resistant (ambivalent) D. disorganised E. detached

2.3 Revisit the worked case. State one conclusion its evidence supports and one stronger conclusion it does not support. Explain the difference. [2]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 A child predicts that a taller narrow cup has more water after a transfer. Design a question that tests reasoning rather than giving away the answer. Give the interpretation, supporting reasoning, a relevant alternative or limitation, and an appropriate check. [4]

Solutions

2.1 Answer: D. Systematic hypothesis testing with controlled variables is formal-operational reasoning. The other options do not satisfy the stated defining conditions.

2.2 Answer: C. Clinging without comfort defines the resistant (ambivalent) pattern; avoidant infants keep distance. Compare the exact process, design or evidence, rather than an associated keyword.

2.3 Use the worked case evidence to support a bounded claim and explain why a causal, universal or stronger claim needs additional evidence. The claim must fit the specific design and observed process.

3.1 Ask whether the amount changed and why, then ask what would happen if the water were poured back. Keep the initial amount and transfer visible and avoid evaluative feedback. Reversibility or attention to both height and width would support conservation reasoning; one incorrect answer may also reflect language or task demands. Award B1 each (authored) for the interpretation, its reasoning, a relevant limitation/alternative and an appropriate check, up to four points. Accept a different justified answer satisfying these demands.