2.5 Learning and cognition

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 30 marks**

KEY WORDS classical conditioning • operant conditioning • testing effect • spacing effect • Google effect

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on **learning and cognition** : classical and operant conditioning, social learning, the **testing effect** and spacing, and how technology affects memory.

You must be able to:

- distinguish classical conditioning, operant conditioning and social learning, with examples
- describe Roediger and Karpicke (2006) and explain the testing effect
- explain why spaced study works better than one long session
- explain the "Google effect" (Sparrow et al., 2011)
- apply learning research to advice for students and teachers

1 Key knowledge and worked examples

Ways of learning

- **Classical conditioning** : a neutral signal is paired with something that already causes a response, until the signal alone causes it (Pavlov's dogs salivated at a sound). Learning by **association**.
- **Operant conditioning** : behaviour followed by a reward becomes more frequent; behaviour followed by punishment becomes less frequent (Skinner). Learning by **consequences**.
- **Social learning**: learning by watching a model whose behaviour is rewarded (Bandura, 1.3).

Learning that lasts

Roediger and Karpicke (2006): students learned short texts. One group read a text four times; another read it once and then tried to recall it three times. After one week, the **testing** group recalled 61 % of the ideas and the **re-reading** group only 40 %. This is the **testing effect**. **Spacing** study over several days also works better than one long session.

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Technology and memory

Sparrow et al. (2011): people remembered less of new facts when they expected a computer to save them; they remembered **where** the facts were saved instead. This is often called the **Google effect**. (HL students study technology in more depth in 4.2.)

Common error: mixing up classical conditioning (association) with operant conditioning (consequences).

2 Practice

2.1 Distinguish between **classical** and **operant** conditioning. [2]



2.2 Identify the type of learning in each case:

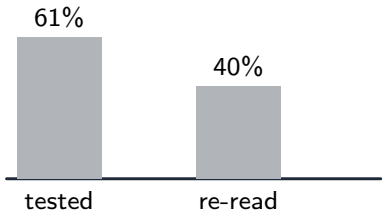
(a) A child feels afraid at the sound of the dentist's drill after a painful visit. [1]

(b) A student hands in homework on time more often after the teacher praises her. [1]

(c) A boy starts to say "thank you" after he sees his older sister praised for it. [1]

(a) drill (b) praise (c) a model

2.3 *(Paper 1 Section A.)* Describe **one** study of the testing effect. [4]

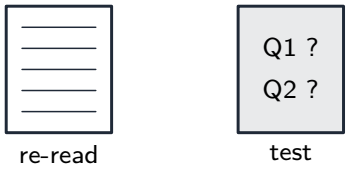


2.4 *(Paper 1 Section B, learning and cognition.)* A teacher wants her students to remember 200 new words for an exam in two weeks. Most students plan to re-read the list many times the night before. Using research, explain what the teacher should advise. [6]



3 Exam-style questions

3.1 *(Paper 1 Section C.)* "The best way to learn is to test yourself." Discuss this claim with reference to the concept of **measurement**. [15]



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