

Cognitivism is a theoretical framework in psychology and linguistics that focuses on the study of mental processes. It views the human mind as an information processor, similar to a computer, and argues that learning is an active, internal process of acquiring, organizing, and using knowledge, rather than a passive response to external stimuli.

Core Principles

Unlike behaviorism, which focuses on observable actions and rejects the study of the mind, cognitivism's central tenet is that internal mental processes are crucial for understanding learning and behavior. Key principles include:

- **Information Processing:** The mind takes in information, processes it through various stages (like attention, perception, and memory), stores it, and then retrieves it.
- **Active Construction of Knowledge:** Learners are not passive recipients of information. They actively interpret and make sense of new knowledge by connecting it to what they already know.
- **Mental Schemata:** The mind organizes information into mental frameworks or **schemata** that help a person understand and interact with the world.

Cognitivism and Language

In the field of language, the cognitive revolution, largely led by Noam Chomsky, fundamentally changed how language acquisition was understood. The cognitivist view posits that:

- Language is an innate, rule-based system.
- The human brain is biologically "pre-wired" to acquire language, containing a universal grammar.
- Learning language is not about imitating and being reinforced, but about the child's mind actively testing hypotheses and forming a set of grammatical rules based on the linguistic data they are exposed to.

The rise of cognitivism marked a major shift in research, moving the focus from external behavior to the internal workings of the mind and establishing the study of mental processes as a legitimate and central area of inquiry.