Definitions and Concepts for AQA Psychology A-level

Option 1: Cognition and Development

Accommodation: Changing an existing schema, or creating a new schema, when new information does not fit the existing schema.

Assimilation: Adding new information to an existing schema when the new information fits the schema.

Class inclusion: The ability to understand that an object can belong to a smaller group and a larger group at the same time.

Conservation: The understanding that a quantity remains unchanged despite changes in its appearance or arrangement.

Disequilibrium: An uncomfortable state that occurs when existing schemas cannot fully explain a new experience.

Domain-general approach: The view that cognitive development occurs across a range of abilities within broad stages of development.

Domain-specific approach: The view that different cognitive skills can develop at different rates.

Egocentrism: The tendency to see the world from one's own perspective and struggle to understand another person's viewpoint.

Equilibration: The process of adapting schemas through assimilation and accommodation until new information can be understood.

Equilibrium: A state in which a child's existing schemas successfully make sense of their experiences.

Intermental: The development of knowledge and skills between people through social interaction with an expert.

Intramental: The internalisation of knowledge and skills so that they can be used independently.

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Mirror neurons: Neurons that become active when a person performs an action and when they observe someone else performing the same action.

Object permanence: The understanding that an object continues to exist even when it cannot be seen.

Object persistence: Baillargeon's concept within the Physical Reasoning System (PRS) suggesting that infants possess an innate understanding that physical objects continue to exist and retain their physical properties when out of sight.

Physical Reasoning System (PRS): An innate cognitive system proposed by **Baillargeon (1985)** that helps infants understand how objects behave and interact.

Sally-Anne study: A classic false-belief task developed by **Baron-Cohen et al. (1985)** to assess Theory of Mind, where children must infer where a character (Sally) will look for a marble that was secretly moved by another character (Anne).

Scaffolding: Temporary support provided by an expert to help a child complete a task within their Zone of Proximal Development, with support gradually reduced as the child becomes more independent.

Schema: A mental framework containing knowledge and beliefs about a particular object, person, place or situation.

Social cognition: The cognitive processes involved in understanding other people, including their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, intentions and perspectives.

Social perspective-taking: Understanding another person's thoughts, feelings, beliefs and viewpoint in a social situation.

Theory of Mind (ToM): The ability to understand that other people have their own thoughts, beliefs, feelings and intentions, which may differ from one's own.

Violation of Expectation (VOE): A research method in which infants' looking times are used to investigate whether an event violates their expectations about how objects should behave.

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD): The gap between what a child can do independently and what they can achieve with support from a more knowledgeable other.

More Knowledgeable Other (MKO): An expert or more knowledgeable person who provides support to help a child develop new knowledge and skills.

Selman's levels of perspective-taking: Five levels describing the increasingly complex development of children's ability to understand other people's perspectives.