

<https://doi.org/10.47100/conferences.v1i1.1015>

THE REFLECTION ON THE NECESSITY OF LEARNING THEORIES IN TEACHING

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Abstract. The article discusses the necessity of learning theories in teaching. It refers to three learning theories such as constructivism, behaviorism and cognitivism. It describes the role of learning theories in teaching. The article gives a comprehensive and clear idea of necessity of using learning theories. This article will be useful for teachers who are in constant search of effective methods of teaching that motivate students, reveal their potential, independent thinking and other skills.

Keywords: learning theory, constructivism, behaviorism, cognitivism, teaching, to analyze, to apply theory, to reflect, desirable learning, motivational states, educational perspective, knowledge process, schemata.

Аннотация. В статье обсуждается необходимость изучения теорий в обучении. Это относится к трем теориям обучения, таким как конструктивизм, бихевиоризм и когнитивизм. В нем описывается роль обучающих теорий в обучении. Статья дает исчерпывающее и ясное представление о необходимости использования теорий обучения. Эта статья будет полезна учителям, которые находятся в постоянном поиске эффективных методов обучения, которые мотивируют учащихся, раскрывают их потенциал, самостоятельное мышление и другие навыки.



Ключевые слова: теория обучения, конструктивизм, бихевиоризм, когнитивизм, обучение, анализировать, применять теорию, размышлять, желаемое обучение, мотивационные состояния, образовательная перспектива, процесс познания, схемы.

Many teachers are engaged in a discussion around the necessity of learning theories. Some of them are looking for the 'best' learning theory and even avoid applying old theories in the era of digital and social learning.

Before giving practical lessons, teachers study lots of theoretical material, but only after applying theory into practice one could feel the strength of studied theory. Many teachers think, that learning theory is not important in order to speak and teach a language or another subject. Whether we are aware of these theories and the related jargons or not, all teachers and learning designers approach training in a way that is governed by one of the learning theories. When we choose a particular way to teach, it has consequences related to how people learn. We are like learning designers, our goal is to make sure that learning is relevant to the needs of our audience. We also want to select and apply the right strategies that help the audience achieve their goals.

“Teachers intuitively understand the idea of motivational states. Their goal is to have students in a motivational state for learning. At any given moment, some students will be in that state, but others will be experiencing different states, including apathy, sadness, hyperactivity, and distraction. To change these states, teachers may have to first address the present states (e.g., attend to why Kira is sad) and then attempt to focus students’ attention on the task at hand. The integration of cognition, emotion, and behavior posited by neuroscience is important. The individual components will not lead to desirable learning. For example, students who believe they want to learn and are emotionally ready to do so nonetheless will learn little if they engage in no behavior. Likewise, motivated behavior without a clear cognitive focus on learning will be wasted activity. Students who are



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experiencing emotional stress yet want to learn and engage in learning actions are apt to find their learning less than maximal because emotions are thwarting synaptic connections from being formed and consolidated”.

Learning theories are important for teacher’s profession. For instance, theory of constructivism can help teachers find appropriate methods of developing such students’ skills as being a part of a team, thinking and analyzing. According to Vygotsky, L. S, constructivism states that learning is an active, contextualized process of constructing knowledge rather than acquiring it. Knowledge is constructed based on personal experiences and hypotheses of the environment. Learners continuously test these hypotheses through social negotiation. Each person has a different interpretation and construction of knowledge process. The learner is not a blank slate (tabula rasa) but brings past experiences and cultural factors to a situation ^[3]. Constructivism assumes that all knowledge is constructed from the learner’s previous knowledge, regardless of how one is taught. Thus, even listening to a lecture involves active attempts to construct new knowledge.

The theory of behaviorism, in my point of view, will help teachers understand how to motivate their students and make them do what the teacher wants them to do. As Ertmer, P. A mentioned in his work “Behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism: Comparing critical features from an instructional design perspective. Performance improvement quarterly”, people are rational beings that require active participation in order to learn, and whose actions are a consequence of thinking. Changes in behavior are observed, but only as an indication of what is occurring in the learner’s head. Speaking about cognitivism theory it is worth mentioning that it will be helpful in finding a method of teaching the students think, solve problems and be ready for any discussion. According to Cooper P. A, cognitivism uses the metaphor of the mind as computer: information comes in, is being processed, and leads to certain outcomes. Cognitivism focuses on the inner mental activities – opening the “black box” of the human mind is valuable and necessary for understanding how people learn. Mental processes such as thinking,



memory, knowing, and problem-solving need to be explored. Knowledge can be seen as schema or symbolic mental constructions. Learning is defined as change in a learner's schemata ^{[1][2]}. Learning theories make teachers think about the state of things during the classes. How everything works, and what they can do in order everything worked more effectively.

Let me give you an example of using learning theories in the class. One of the classes was focused on exploring the learning theories but this process was organized in several stages and involving technology as we had to complete an individual task first and share it through the Telegram group.

Individual tasks required us to provide personal views on the learning theories. Also, the tasks had to be done in different modes - written form, videotape or it could be a voice message. Tasks were different but they required the students to relate their ideas to learning theories that were studied. The instructions included the following:

- Write about anything specific (knowledge or skill) that your child learnt to do. Relate it to any of the theory that we studied.
- Describe how you read a book with your child. Try to see the reflection of any of the theories that we studied.
- Design a learning space for the newly opening school. Its founder's believer in Social Constructivism theory and they want the environment of the school to reflect the theory fully.
- Describe the most important things to know about the learning theories.
- Discuss your personal approach to people who think that one theory is better than the other one.
- Suggest a scenario for the game for an IT company. The game should stimulate students' critical thinking and improve cognitive skills in general. The game should comply with social constructivism principles.
- Explain which of the learning theories is more effective to produce the desired results for your teaching.



- Formulate several questions that you would want to discuss with Lev Vygotsky.
- If you had a chance to meet and talk to one of the founders of any learning theory, who would this person be and why do you want to meet this person?
- Create your own learning theory.
- Do you think there is a necessity to be aware of the learning theories? Give examples from personal experience.
- Imagine that behaviorists decided to write a new book. They invited you to contribute a chapter or a part of the chapter. What would that be about?
- Imagine that you are a Principal of a private school. You aim to hire the most talented and prominent teachers. How would you organize the selection process? What are the criteria to determine the suitability of candidates? Do you think the knowledge of learning theories (e.g., behaviorism, cognitivism and constructivism) is important?

As it can be seen, there are different categories of the tasks: giving personal opinion, personal experience description, question answer, design ideas and personal suggestion. The tasks were given that specific way in order to provide diverse approach to students and to observe the approach to learning theories from different angles.

Students were divided into groups of 3 - 4 people created by the teacher of the course in telegram app where they had to send their tasks. Once the tasks were completed individually or in some cases in pairs, prior to the class the students were asked to give written feedback to each other on

- clarity of the message conveyed in the home task
- evidence of the reading around the topic
- how the produced task contributes or adds to their personal understanding of the theory
- thing they find confusing



Moreover, they could write the further questions and give suggestions if they had any.

During the lesson, first hand all the students briefly presented what they had done. The whole group then selected a couple of tasks that captured the interest most. They were chosen by the whole group to explore the further in more depth. Those students, whose tasks were chosen, presented the tasks they prepared and the rest of us had a chance to ask questions for clarification or comment.

Once we finished the discussion, the teacher summarized the theories by demonstrating the concept of each theory using a box and some colorful ribbons. At this point it was easy to follow an explanation because we could visualize how it really works.

Furthermore, a new term of ‘schemata’ was introduced during the same discussion. You may read about this concept in F.Bartlett , J. Piaget or R.Anderson works.

Many people think that only practice makes perfect, but there is another side of a coin that shows us that sometimes it is necessary to analyze the process of learning and teaching, and try to find more and more theory and approaches to make the engine go.

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