



APPLICATION OF TRADITIONAL LEARNING THEORIES TO MODERN TEACHING

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MAJOR LEARNING THEORIES

Behaviorism

Constructivism

Cognitivism

Connectivism

Humanism

BEHAVIORISM

This learning theory states all behaviors are learned as individuals interact with the environment. This interaction is referred to as conditioning. Influencing factors are emphasized in this learning theory. It has been referred to as the opposite to humanism (Huitt, 2009).



Strengths

- Focuses on objective measurements
- Real life applications, such as therapy
- Scientifically test and supported with evidence

Weaknesses

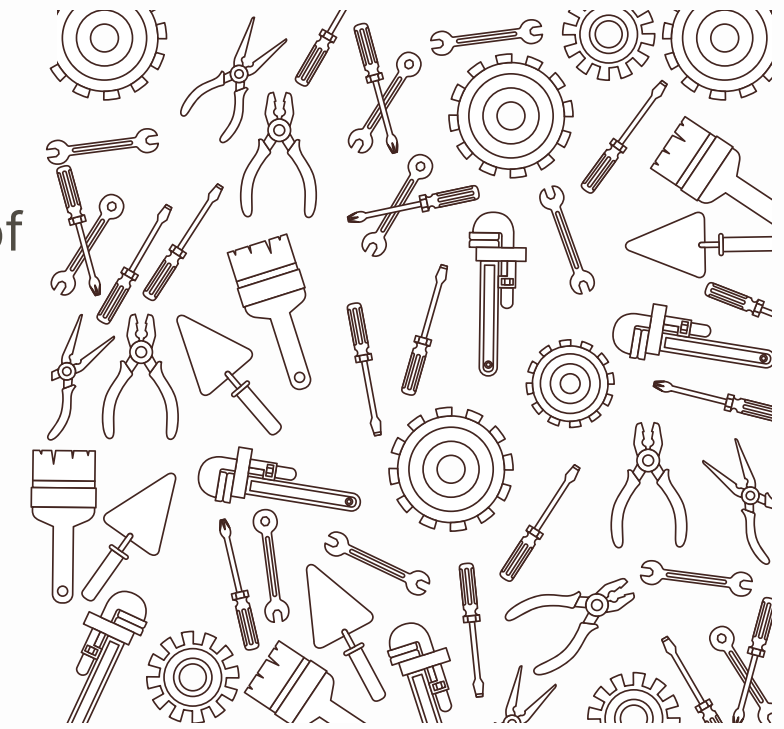
- Focused on observable stimulus responses rather than internal activities like thinking or emotions
- Holds that humans and animals are of no difference when it comes to stimuli-response structure
- Does not account for free-will
- Ignores human biology

Application

This learning theory can be best applied in the classroom via

CONSTRUCTIVISM

This learning theory asserts learning is a result of the mental construction of knowledge in the mind of the learner. Constructivists believe learning is a product of the environment in which it is acquired as well. All knowledge is based on experiences and making connections to previous experiences (Bada, 2015).



Strengths

- Requires reflection and abstraction on part of the learner
- Learners are actively fitting in new information with ideas previously learned
- Active form of learning where knowledge is transferrable

Weaknesses

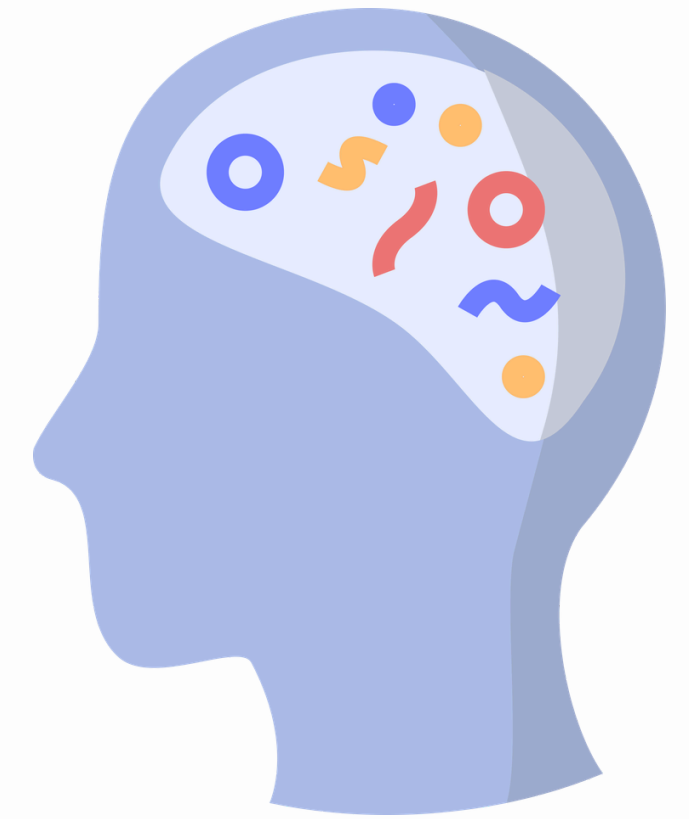
- Knowledge only exists in the mind without any real world equivalent
- Experiences change one's own perspective of the world and learners are left with only their own mental model of the world

Application

This learning theory can be best applied in the classroom via learning activities requiring students to activate prior knowledge. Active learning strategies like experiments, critical thinking, and real-world problem-solving are the best forms of application of the constructivist learning theory.

COGNITIVISM

This learning theory focuses on how and when learning occurs in the brain with an emphasis on the acquisition of both declarative and procedural knowledge. Theorists hold that 70% of a learner's formal learning time be dedicated to the development of contextual knowledge and the improvement of thinking processes (Tennyson. & Rasch, 1988).



Strengths

- Paces learning based on what we know about how the brain works for both new knowledge acquisition and memory
- Assists learners with building their own procedural knowledge

Weaknesses

- Practice should be repetitive in an environment where inaccuracies and misconceptions are prevented
- Focuses on the acquisition of declarative and procedural knowledge and not contextual knowledge or thinking processes

Application

This learning theory can be best applied in the classroom by utilizing strategies for declarative knowledge, such as worked examples and problem repetition. Peer tutoring can also be beneficial as long as the mentor possesses a similar level of intellect. Simulations and cooperative learning groups can be useful as well.

CONNECTIVISM

This learning theory considers how both technology and social interaction influence learning. Learning begins when learners begin to connect and participate in a community of learners. This theory supports academic discourse between learners and or their learning communities. Connectivism is categorized as a theory of the mind.

The learning that occurs allows everyone to leave the conversation more knowledgeable than before.



Strengths

- Allows for access of resources at any time
- Knowledge is located in no single place, but rather held within a network where knowledge is a fluid construct
- Learner knowledge changes as he or she interacts with information and observes patterns of connections
- Knowledge is ever-evolving and can be housed and manipulated with technology

Weaknesses

- No concept of transferring, making, or building knowledge
- Relevance of knowledge needs to be revisited as new information becomes accessible
- Controversial as others view this as a part of constructivist theories, not an entirely separate theory
- Lack of empirical testing on its ability to function to add value

Application

This learning theory can help learners understand how learning occurs in hybrid or online courses. It demonstrates the value of discourse via any avenue or channel. Such activities below are examples of the application of connectivism: blogs, scholarly research, online learning communities - on both social media and web-based platforms such as Canvas, tools within these platforms that allow for multiple modes of communication (chat, private message, group forum, etc.).

HUMANISM

This learning theory believes humans are different from other species and therefore possess capacities not seen in animals. The most popular view of humanism derives from the teachings of both Aristotle and Socrates with a rejection of all things supernatural and primarily focuses on reason, science, democracy, and compassion. Two sub-branches of humanism are secular and religious. Humanism places much more emphasis on learning outcomes (Huitt, 2009).



Strengths

- Promotes self-direction, self-evaluation, and independence
- Develops creativity, curiosity, and an interest in the arts
- Focus given to personal growth and development
- Motivation is an area of high interest

Weaknesses

- Lack of definition of the critical components within humanism
- Disagrees with atheistic beliefs as most views of humanism involve a God or Supreme Being

Application

This learning theory can be best applied in the classroom via student choice. Goal setting and monitoring are also a great way to incorporate this theory. Teachers should act as facilitators and promote group work.

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