


Chapter 6

Social Learning Theory

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ABSTRACT

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) focuses on how learners can acquire knowledge and change their behaviors and attitudes by observing people around them and through their social interactions. People's behaviors, social media tools, and verbal instructions can be called as models, and the actions desired to be taught are regarded as modeled behaviors. Both the modeled actions and reactions to those actions in learning environment can lead to behavior or attitude changes in learners. In order to increase the likelihood of the desired outcome, four steps are suggested: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. All these steps are intertwined, and affect learning. Therefore, teachers embracing SLT should plan their teaching considering these four steps; be aware of their roles as models; and enrich learning environments by adapting diverse strategies to increase learners' attention, to ease the retention process, to encourage the reproduction of the behavior and lastly to motivate learners.

INTRODUCTION

Human beings, who are almost unique in having the ability to learn from the experience of others, are also remarkable for their apparent disinclination to do so (Adams, D.).

As the author Douglas Adams once stated, human beings learn from each other what to do, what not to do or how to do something based upon their or other people's experiences during their interactions with them or observations in various fields starting from their childhoods. For the purpose of understanding how individuals

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acquire competencies, values, and behaviors, and how they are motivated to learn and regulate new behaviors, different learning theories are proposed, and Social Learning Theory is one the most prominent theories proposed to understand these complex issues. Social Learning Theory (SLT) was developed by Bandura during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, and it focuses on how social interactions can affect and shape individual beliefs and behaviors (Bandura, 1977). Bandura claimed that learners develop an understanding of the world, build their knowledge, and adapt behavioral patterns based upon the information they get via observing other people, i.e., models, they interact with (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, SLT is essential for promoting desirable behavioral changes (Muro & Jeffrey, 2008; Samsudin et al., 2017), and is thought to have a dramatic impact on learning (Khozin et al., 2024).

SLT, later renamed to Social Cognitive Learning Theory (SCLT), describes the cognitive aspects of learning, and has significantly improved our understanding of how individuals acquire new behaviors and knowledge through their observation of others and imitation of those observed patterns (Bandura, 1977). Bandura extended his theory into SCLT since he wanted to highlight the cognitive processes where individuals internalize and reproduce observed behaviors as internal parts of this process (Bandura, 1977). Unlike behaviorist theories, SLT includes individual factors and environmental factors to elaborate on the effects of behavioral influences through social interactions on the learning process. Therefore, it can be stated that SLT acts like a bridge between behaviorist and cognitive learning theories by encompassing the influence of attention, memory, and motivation on behavioral changes or adaptations (Muro & Jeffrey, 2008). In other words, cognition is incorporated to explain human behaviors due to the effects of individual abilities such as motivation, performance, self-efficacy, self-regulation, and personality changes in response to the observed behaviors or modeling influences on behavior change or adaptation of a new one (Bandura, 1977).

Moreover, SLT has a constructivist perspective by focusing on interactions among people in various fields, environments, (Chuang, 2021) since it underscores how individuals learn through observing other people and integrate these observations into their own behaviors and attitudes (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (1965) emphasized the importance of the environmental factors in terms of their influence on people's learning process as behaviors were thought to be adjusted in accordance with the environment, i.e., people's actions or results of actions observed in a specific environment, so the theory. Hence, SLT supports collaborative learning environments where students interact, exchange ideas, and collectively explore issues (Cilliers, 2021), which also aligns with Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism, emphasizing the importance of social interaction in learning (Nabavi, 2012).

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