

Unit 8 The Learning Process

Task 1 Learning

Comment on the following statements about learning. What are the implications for teaching?

1. THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT MAKES A DIFFERENCE
2. THE BRAIN PLAYS A ROLE
3. LEARNING IS BASED ON ASSOCIATIONS
4. LEARNING OCCURS IN CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS

Match the statements from above with the texts below:

- A) The mind is set up to process outside stimuli, to make sense of them, and to draw connections. We know that while there are critical periods for motor and sensory development, the development of the brain is lifelong, and not predetermined at birth or within the first three years. However, psychologists have observed that individuals do progress through a predictable series of stages in their cognitive development. Learning changes the physical structure of the brain through the process of continuous interactions between the learner and the external environment.
- B) People learn by making sense of the environment and of stimuli around them. Greater perceptual development and learning occur in environments that are rich with stimuli and provide useful feedback in response to a learner's efforts to act upon the environment. The nature of the task, the ways in which information is presented, and the expectations for the learner's involvement all impact the learning process. In addition, the nature of the social environment – whether and how learners have access to others who can model, describe, or provide feedback – shapes the learning process. Reinforcements from the environment and the nature of feedback from significant others can stimulate or undermine greater effort.
- C) Learning is a process of drawing connections between what is already known or understood and new information. Thus, prior knowledge is important to the learning process. People make connections and draw conclusions based on a sense of what they already know and have experienced. Learning can be viewed, in part, as a matter of encoding and storing information in memory, processing, categorizing and clustering material, and later retrieving this information to be applied at the appropriate times and situations.
- D) The associations people make and understandings they develop are dependent upon and influenced by what is valued and what is experienced at home, in the community, and within the classroom learning environment. Culture influences the knowledge and experiences people bring to the classroom, the ways in which they communicate, the expectations that they have for how learning will occur, and the ideas they have about what is worth learning. The social context created within the classroom—the ways in which communication, teachers' and students' roles, and opportunities for collaboration are structured—all influence the learner's understanding and construction of knowledge.

Summarising

Summarise the factors influencing the learning process using some of the expressions below. Are any of them close in meaning?

in other words, ...

(to put it) in a nutshell,

that is to say...

the thing is,...

essentially, learning is...

to put it simply,...

to put it another way,...

the bottom line is...

Reading comprehension

In each of the paragraphs in 1A, find one word that corresponds with the description:

Par. A) related to movement:

periods of development:

connected with thinking and conscious mental processes:

Par. B) relating to the ability to notice something, especially using your senses:

something added to provide more strength:

make something weaker, less likely to succeed:

Par. C) existing or happening before something else:

putting similar things together:

suitable or right for a particular situation:

Par. D) considered important:

chances, possibilities of doing something:

the situation in which two or more people work together:

Task 2 Countable and uncountable nouns

A) **Countable nouns** can be "counted", they have a singular and plural form.

For example:

*a student – two students. Many, a few/few, these, those students. The students **are** interns.*

Complete the sentences and explain the difference between them:

There were a few students in the class...

There were few students in the class...

B) Uncountable nouns have only one form. This means you cannot make them plural by adding **-s**, because they only have a singular form. It also means that they **do not take a/an** or a number in front of them.

For example:

information – some information, a piece of information. Much, a little/ little, this, that information. The information is accurate.

Complete the sentences and explain the difference between them:

I have a little information about the project ...

I have little information about the project ...

C) Please notice also that some words in English form **irregular plural**, for example

a means – means; a species – species; a series – series

a stimulus -

a hypothesis –

a bacterium -

a formula -

a phenomenon –

a curriculum -

D) Some nouns end in **-s** but are **uncountable** and take a singular verb, for example:

Maths is a compulsory subject.

Gymnastics is a great sport for you if you need to improve your strength and coordination.

E) Study the following examples and notice the use of nouns, either uncountable or irregular.

Some people have the perception that scientific knowledge equates to 'the truth'.

This information has many implications in the field of neurology.

The expert was asked what one piece of advice she would give to pre-service teachers.

Recent research shows that babies in the womb can be influenced by music.

Can you give us any more evidence? This evidence is not very reliable.

The news about the planned educational reform is very hopeful.

(sentences adapted from the British Academic Written English Corpus)

F) Choose the correct form of the verb.

1. Our knowledge of the subject *is / are* limited.

2. The new research *is / are* based on reliable data.

3. The money *is / are* insufficient.

5. Advice for parents of children with special needs *is / are* sorely needed.

6. First-hand experience in a school *is / are* invaluable.

7. The phenomena she studied *is / are* very complex.

8. The analyses *is / are* very detailed.

9. This species *is / are* threatened with extinction.

10. Athletics *is / are* only slightly more popular than physics.

Task 3 Academic presentation

A) In groups brainstorm and write down anything you associate with their lives and theories.

Burrhus Frederick Skinner

Maria Montessori

Lev Vygotsky

Socrates

Abraham Maslow

Carl Rogers

Paulo Freire

John Dewey

Jean Piaget

B) A GOOD PRESENTER...

Complete the principles of an effective presentation with appropriate verbs:

A good presenter...

... the presentation short, but complete

... a proper introduction of himself/herself and the topic of the talk

... the presentation with adequate volume, diction, and eye contact

... notes

... the audience

... participation and constructive comment

... too much detail

... information to make the best use of the time

... the main arguments

... an original conclusion from what he/she said

... the talk within the time limit

... questions from the audience