

Learning Theories

An Educational Perspective

Eighth Edition

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Dedication

*To Albert Bandura, for helping me develop self-efficacy
for leading a fulfilling life*

Preface

Learning is a lifelong activity and fundamental to education. And the study of learning is crucial for everyone who wants to live a fulfilling life and help others do so. The better we understand learning, the better we can determine how to improve it.

Over the past several years, the study of learning by researchers has continued at a strong pace. This situation is desirable because it has resulted in theoretical refinements, improved research methodologies, and implications for instruction based on sound theory and research.

Although the study of learning has changed a lot since the first edition of this book was published in 1991, the primary objectives of this eighth edition remain much the same as those of the first edition: (a) to help students become knowledgeable of learning theoretical principles, concepts, and research findings, especially as they relate to education, and (b) to provide applications of principles and concepts in settings where teaching and learning occur. As in previous editions, the focus of the current edition is on cognition. Cognitive constructivist perspectives emphasize that learners are not passive recipients of information but rather actively seek, construct, and adapt their knowledge, skills, strategies, and beliefs.

STRUCTURE OF THIS TEXT

The text's 12 chapters are organized as follows. The introductory chapter covers learning theory, research methods, and learning issues, as well as historical foundations of the study of learning. Chapter 2 discusses the neuroscience of learning. A basic understanding of neuroscience assists readers in understanding the links between brain functions and cognitive and constructivist learning principles. Chapter 3 covers behaviorism, a dominant learning theory for many years. Current cognitive and constructivist theories and principles are the subject of Chapters 4–8: social cognitive theory; information processing theory—encoding and storage; information processing theory—retrieval and forgetting; cognitive learning processes; and constructivism. Chapters 9–11 cover topics relevant to and integrated with learning: motivation, self-regulated learning, and contextual influences. The final chapter asks learners to develop their own perspective on learning.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

Readers familiar with prior editions will notice content and organizational changes in this edition, which reflect new theoretical and research emphases. Several topics have been added including sections on educational data mining, positive behavior supports,

metacognition and epistemic thinking, Neo-Piagetian theories, self-regulation and technology, and future developments in the study of learning. The text has been revised to incorporate newer theoretical principles and research findings. These revisions are most evident in the chapters on constructivism and contextual influences. Sections on technology throughout the text have been revised to keep up with the latest educational uses of technology. Added to the ends of each of the first eleven chapters are two new sections: a chapter critique and a set of reflection questions that students can think about as they review the chapter and can be discussed in classes. To keep the text current and timely, new terms have been incorporated into the glossary. More than 200 new references have been added, and several dated references have been dropped.

Applications of learning principles have been a hallmark of this text since its inception and these continue to be present in this new edition. Each chapter except the introductory and concluding chapters contains a section on instructional applications. All chapters begin with vignettes that illustrate some principles discussed in the chapters. Throughout the chapters, there are many informal examples and detailed applications. Most of the applications involve K–12 settings, but applications also address other learning contexts including college students.

The text is designed for graduate students in education or related disciplines, as well as upper-level undergraduates interested in education. It is assumed that most students have taken a course in education or psychology and currently work in an educational capacity or anticipate pursuing an educational career. The text is appropriate for courses on learning and cognition, as well as any course that covers learning in some depth such as courses on motivation, educational psychology, human development, and instructional design.

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Many people deserve thanks for their contributions to this edition. Over many years, there have been numerous professional colleagues who have assisted me to develop my thinking about learning processes and applications. I have acknowledged the contributions of these individuals in previous editions. For this edition, I want to gratefully thank Héfer Bembenutty, Herb Clark, Maria DiBenedetto, Jeff Greene, Judith Meece, Ellen Usher, Bernard Weiner, Allan Wigfield, Phil Winne, and Barry Zimmerman. My association with members of professional organizations has been most beneficial, especially the Motivation in Education and the Studying and Self-Regulated Learning Special Interest Groups of the American Educational Research Association, and Division 15 (Educational Psychology) of the American Psychological Association. It has been an honor for me to work with many excellent students, teachers, counselors, administrators, and superintendents. I also am indebted to several graduate and undergraduate student collaborators who assisted me on research projects.

I am most fortunate that again for this edition my editor at Pearson Education is Kevin Davis. Kevin unquestionably is one of the finest editors anyone could work with. He is highly encouraging and supportive, and his continued guidance has resulted in a better product. I also express appreciation to Casey Coriell and Janelle Rogers at Pearson

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It is hard to believe that it has been almost 30 years since the first edition of this book was published. At that time, I proudly gave a copy to my parents, the late Mil and Al Schunk, for their love, encouragement and support. Since then, several friends have served as inspirations to me to continue to produce new editions. For this edition, I graciously thank Bill Gattis. And I am most grateful for my wife Maria and my daughter Laura, who was born shortly before the first edition was released. Laura is a remarkable young woman from whom I have learned so much and in whose life learning has made a profound difference.

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