

Learning Theories Paper

Haris Bosnjak

University of Mary

# BOSNJAK LEARNING THEORIES PAPER

## Learning Theories Paper

It is a good thing to understand a variety of learning theories when it comes to your own teaching philosophy and implementing classroom practices. For the purpose of this paper, and my own teaching philosophy and future classroom practices, behaviorism, humanism, and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are some learning theories that I can relate with and see myself using in the future when I teach. I will overview these three learning theories in general before reflecting on how they will fit in my teaching philosophy and future classroom practice. My main reason for choosing these learning theories is because I believe with their use, my students will see their value, understand themselves, know where they belong, and realize the endless limit of their abilities.

### **Behaviorism Overview**

Behaviorism is, using my knowledge, a theory where people can be conditioned by altering forms of behavior and is typically done without involving the persons thoughts or feelings. With this being said, it involves the person implementing this learning theory to be very cognizant of how they will apply the steps to achieve altering the other persons behavior. In the school setting, this is something that students can see benefit with the use of behaviorism.

*Tapping into the Power of School Climate to Prevent Bullying: One Application of Schoolwide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports* is an article that looks at implementing behaviorism. Although this article specifically looks at preventing bullying, it promotes behaviorist ideas and strategies. Behaviorism strategies will need to be learned by the students as Bosworth and Judkin suggest, “Social behaviors and behavioral expectations must be taught and practiced, just like academic skills... Simply stating the expectations and rules is insufficient; students must hear, see, and practice the behaviors before they can internalize and employ them”

## BOSNJAK LEARNING THEORIES PAPER

(K. Bosworth, & M. Judkins, 2014, p.303). Classroom environment or management can see a benefit from this through the norms and policies established, with the article suggesting, “Strong student–teacher relationships predict higher levels of academic success and lower levels of delinquency” (K. Bosworth, & M. Judkins, 2014, p.301). This translates to using a behaviorist idea through norms and policies to create a positive relationship or positive classroom environment between teacher and student.

### **Humanism Overview**

Internalizing behavior is something that is can be gained from the use of Behaviorism which can lead to the next learning theory. Humanism is, using my knowledge, a theory where a person has established a moral or ethical stance that places values on actions which typically involves critical thinking and development. This learning theory looks ahead of behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism to address the personal learning experience of students and the character growth it allows. In other words, “Humanism is the only learning theory that emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between learning and the learner and the reciprocal relationship between individual actualization and social transformation that make learning a unique human experience” (Li Zhou, 2007, p.131). This is addressed in *Supporting Humanistic Learning Experiences through Learning with Technology*, where looks at how the humanism learning theory in context of student learning. Specifically, author Li Zhou emphasizes technology (mainly use of computers and the internet) in his article. Something that can be achieved through the use of this practice is, ”Technology empowers learners both as physical artifacts promoting the experiential mode of cognition and as cognitive artifacts promoting the reflective mode of cognition” (Li Zhou, 2007, p.132). Furthermore, Zhou continues his point where he also adds, “It is methodology rather than technology that determines the effective use

## BOSNJAK LEARNING THEORIES PAPER

of computers to enhance meaningful learning.” (Li Zhou, 2007, p.132). The importance of the practice of technology comes from the implementation of the teacher to amplify the students learning rather than just the use of technology. The practice will lead students to understand themselves, others in the world, and anything else they are capable of learning or doing.

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Overview**

Behaviorism and humanism can both see use in this following learning theory; 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, using my knowledge once more, involves teaching and emphasizing four main C’s of skills. These skills include critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication. They can also extend to an additional three C’s with computing, cultural competencies, and citizenship. In the article, *The Pedagogy and Pleasures of Teaching a 21st-Century Skill* by Lori Breslow, this learning theory is analyzed and given a role in teaching. Something Breslow reflects on when looking at goals, pedagogy, and assignments is, “Identifying what the students should know or be able to do” (L. Breslow, 2015, p.426). One of these 21<sup>st</sup> century skills Breslow thinks students should know or be able to do is communication. The interdisciplinary transferability of communication to one class to another, to the whole school, and even to life outside school, is an emphasis and practice in Breslow’s classroom. Something Breslow does to teach her students is to, “Try to model good communication for my students because modelling is one of the primary ways humans learn” (L. Breslow, 2015, p.429). This involves both verbal and non-verbal methods that show and teach students the skill of communication such as the way sentences are worded and body language.

### **Behaviorism Reflection**

To me, behaviorism is something that can be used to help my future students to get to know me, as a form of classroom management in creating a positive classroom environment, and

## BOSNJAK LEARNING THEORIES PAPER

to help lead students to humanistic behaviors. The amount of work, time, and effort that will need to come from me is something I understand, as it is also something suggested by Bosworth & Judkins when they imply, “Expectations are taught within the first 2 weeks of the school year via live, scripted demonstrations; discussions; and role plays” (K. Bosworth, & M. Judkins, 2014, p.304). This is something I am willing to do, along with having classroom policies and expectations physically manifested and present within the classroom as a consistent reminder after the initial introduction. The classroom management idea that would be my go-to, mentioned earlier in the overview, is to establish that positive relationship between myself and students. This would also extend to students and students through the use of those prior classroom policies and expectations. Modeling those policies and expectations in my own classroom will be key for my future students to pick up on them because I understand the importance of being a role model in teaching along with the consistency to be present. As for modeling as a classroom practice, this will be evident in all learning theories because to me being a role model is a form of teaching.

### **Humanism Reflection**

With behaviorism learning theory, I believe that it can lead into humanism learning theory. To me humanism is what will help students learn to develop their character through the moral and ethical decisions they will think about and/or make. These can be present in my classroom, the school setting in general, and especially life outside of school. My classroom can be a place for the habituation of the humanistic learning theory, and it is something I will strive to expose my future students to. Some practices that I will implement include using technology and role modelling. The use of technology can be something that will help the humanistic learning. This is through emphasizing the importance of why we should not plagiarize work and

## BOSNJAK LEARNING THEORIES PAPER

can even go further to explain why we should not cheat. Explaining to students that claiming something that is not their own work or taking a short-cut in completing work will be key to their understanding of why it is unacceptable. Not only for my sake, but for their own as they can see a development of their character through their actions. This development can be a positive character development through self-initiated and self-directed learning, learning from self-reflection, and self-understanding. Again, role modeling this idea is something that will be something I implement in my classroom and the expectations will be clearly set from the behaviorist learning.

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Reflection**

To go with behavioral and humanistic learning, the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills will fit right into my classroom and practices. When possible, I will emphasize the importance for the four main C's, along with the other three C's mentioned, through the standards, objectives, and work in social studies. The greatness of this learning theory comes from the interdisciplinary transferable potential that I can work with others to implement (along with the other two learning theories as well, but I feel like this learning theory can be more broadly used). Role modeling and implementing the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in my class work is crucial for students to learn the skills themselves. Getting my students to critically think, collaborate, communicate, and be creative is something that I will strive to implement in each unit I will teach. Role modeling the expected skills for students is something I also need to implement as the consistent usage will see students using the skills in my class, other classes, other school settings, and life outside of school.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the use of behaviorism, humanism, and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills learning theories are important to see usage and development in my classroom. Behaviorism will allow me to

## BOSNJAK LEARNING THEORIES PAPER

establish the initial relationship with my students, a positive classroom environment, and lead into humanism. Humanism will give my students room to develop their character by addressing the importance of why they should not cheat or plagiarize through the use of technology as a practice. Finally, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills will see implementation in my units and lessons, and an interdisciplinary transferable range of use. All these learning theories will be supported with myself being the best role model possible for my future students as I teach each and every one of them their value, help understand themselves, know where they belong, and realize their endless limit of abilities.

References

- Bosworth, K., & Judkins, M. (2014). Tapping into the Power of School Climate to Prevent Bullying: One Application of Schoolwide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports. *Theory into Practice, 53*(4), 300–307. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.umary.edu/10.1080/00405841.2014.947224>.
- Breslow, L. (2015). The Pedagogy and Pleasures of Teaching a 21st-Century Skill. *European Journal of Education, 50*(4), 420–439. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.umary.edu/10.1111/ejed.12159>.
- Zhou, Li. (2007). Supporting Humanistic Learning Experiences through Learning with Technology. *International Journal of Learning, 13*(11), 131–136. Retrieved from <https://search-ebsohost-com.ezproxy.umary.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=24953907&site=ehost-live>.