What Role Does Social Learning Play in Developing a Growth Mindset

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS
The Contribution of Lev Vygotsky to Theory of Learning

- Lev Vygotsky, the Russian psychologist (1896 – 1934), in general, studied child development in which he emphasized individual development in social contexts [1].

- Initially a teacher himself, Vygotsky opposed a mechanistic view to “fix organic respectively individual defects” of children with special needs by an approach instead considering the socio-cultural development of a child [1].

- Vygotsky’s contribution to the theory of learning points out that learning is development and therefore influenced by human and individual development that is mediated by the social environment and culture [2].

- The development of higher mental functions develops around the meaning of words, which represent the bridge between thinking and language [2].
The Contribution of Albert Bandura to Theory of Learning

- The Canadian/American psychologist Albert Bandura (1925 – today) began the promotion of social cognitive theory (as he relabeled it in 1986) as a vital contribution to developmental psychology [3].

- Self-efficacy plays a central role in a person’s learning capacity, and academic and job performance (Freudenberg, 2011) and is defined by Bandura’s social cognitive theory as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” [4].

- Pedagogic research findings confirm that self-efficacy, together with motivation and value-expectancy, is the most influential measure of how students approach academic learning [5].
Social Learning Theory in Practice (Simplified)

- **Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory**
  - Self-efficacy (Belief)

- **Vygotsky’s Socio-cultural Development of Higher Mental Functions**
  - Meaning-making (Language)

- **Fixed Mindset**
  - Low Self-confidence (see next slide)

- **Growth Mindset**
  - High Self-confidence (see next slide)

- **Pedagogics, Education**
  - Academic Learning (Achievement Goals)

- **Meaningful? Feedback (see next slide)
Growth Mindset

**Mindset**
Mindset is the belief about the adaptability of personality characteristics like intelligence [6].

**Growth Mindset**
A growth mindset (in contrast to a fixed mindset) allows a student to overcome difficulties [6] by believing in (and consequently achieving more likely) positive motivation and results [7].

**Self-confidence (e.g., Shame)**
Shame can be a hindering factor for openness to seek learning opportunities from the social environment and is therefore detrimental to academic achievement and self-fulfillment [8].

**Feedback**
The feedback that is fostering a growth mindset should be positive language that stimulates positive change through positive beliefs [9].
Value of Social Learning Theory within a Growth Mindset (1/2)

It is about meaning-making!

Motivation & Personal Fulfillment

• Research supports that a growth mindset positively influences the meaning-making process and related ambitions, motivations, and attitudes and actions [6].

• If students learn to psychologically understand their learning journey as one that they can actively influence regardless of their starting position, their motivation for learning increases [10].

• Likely in Vygotsky’s spirit, the prospect for all to develop abilities relative to the effort put into practicing rather than being caught in biological pre-dispositions is genuinely deliberating and freeing from social divisions [11].

• A growth mindset helps students achieve more in school and life [12].
Value of Social Learning Theory within a Growth Mindset (2/2)

In line with Vygotsky, Bandura has defined factors that are contributing to self-efficacy. The following sources of self-efficacy have proven to be still important [13].

- **Vicarious experience**
  
  Meaningful reference points that helps to assess one’s own performance

- **Emotional arousal**
  
  Emotional arousal stemming from past learning experiences

Social learning theory remains valuable in providing evidence for the importance of seeking feedback and overcoming setbacks, both of which form important aspects of a growth mindset.

Teachers can induce growth mindsets in students and by doing so can shift the focus from “learning for the teacher” to self-motivated learning for the benefit of the students themselves [12].
Implications for Teachers (1/2)

Mindset is teachable through, for example, *Brainology* that shows students the malleability of the brain [12], and praise of effort put in learning (rather than praising talent or intelligence) [14].

![Diagram showing relationships between praise, talent/intelligence, effort, defense of privileges, and openness for opportunity]

To integrate social learning in a school or work environment demands trust into individuals continuing self-directing them on the growth mindset path [15]. A growth mindset allows self-regulated learning, putting the teacher in a facilitator rather than an instructor role [16]. According to research, a teacher best:

- Gives students **success experiences**, choose **positive language**, fosters their **self-confidence**, serves as an enthusiastic **role model**, allows **activity-oriented** learning, points out the **value of learning content** [5].
Implications for Teachers (2/2)

This implies that the induction of a growth mindset is a **continuous task** of parents, teachers, and other persons close to children and learners.

**Visualization** may help the construal of desired pictures that can be used through self-talk to reinforce such positive mental states [17].

Research indicates that individuals are active agents in the meaning-making process between their self and the environment. Not all individuals adopt a growth mindset the same way, but instead according to what makes sense according to their **individual interpretation/understanding** of the **rewards expected** from the environment. If there is inconsistency in the meaning-making between a student and his environment, disengagement may be the result [18].
Evidence

While Vygotsky’s theories are supported by rationality alone, rather than with empirical evidence (Liu, 2005), Bandura could evidence the **positive effect of self-efficacy on abilities and academic interest** [3].

There is research providing evidence for the **effectiveness of interventions to increase self-efficacy** beliefs that resulted in improved academic performance [19].

It would be evidenced that a **growth mindset leads to more adaptive results** [7].
Further Research

What causes fallbacks to fixed mindset?

Mindsets are changeable also towards the negative direction of returning to assuming a fixed mindset. Further research is required to understand what causes such fallbacks at under different circumstances [20].

What kind of incentive structure is most favorable for growth mindset adaption?

As the success of growth mindset interventions depends on expected incentives in the proximate social environment, the composition of such incentives requires further study [18].

What intervention at what age?

It was found that with increased cognitive maturity, the adoption rate of growth mindset interventions increased. However, the effectiveness of different interventions for different development stages (e.g., early and late adolescence) need to further investigated [21].
References (1/3)


References (2/3)


References (3/3)

