TEACHING CHILDREN HOW TO DISCRIMINATE NOT :
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL APPROACHES

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Abstract: *Children's ability to discriminate between different concepts, objects, and social constructs is fundamental to cognitive, linguistic, and social development. Discrimination, in this educational sense, refers to distinguishing and categorizing information to make informed decisions. This paper explores the theoretical foundations, developmental aspects, and practical strategies for teaching children discrimination skills while emphasizing ethical considerations and inclusivity.*

Аннотация: *Способность детей различать концепции, объекты и социальные явления играет ключевую роль в их когнитивном, языковом и социальном развитии. В образовательном контексте дискриминация означает умение различать и классифицировать информацию для принятия осознанных решений. В статье рассматриваются теоретические основы, этапы развития и практические методы обучения этим навыкам с учетом этических аспектов и инклюзивности.*

Keywords: *Cognitive development, perceptual learning, discrimination learning, social perception, ethical considerations, visual discrimination, auditory discrimination, linguistic discrimination, euphemisms.*

Discrimination in education is often misunderstood. While the term may carry negative connotations in social contexts, in cognitive and educational settings, it refers to the essential skill of distinguishing between different stimuli, concepts, and

values. Developing this ability is crucial for decision-making, logical reasoning, and social understanding. According to Kabilova (2023), linguistic elements, such as euphemisms, play a vital role in shaping perception and understanding, indicating that discrimination is deeply tied to language and communication.

Theoretical Foundations of Discrimination Learning.

Cognitive Development Theories: Jean Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development Piaget's theory outlines four stages of cognitive development, each of which contributes to how children acquire discrimination skills:

-Sensorimotor Stage (0-2 years): Infants learn through sensory experiences and motor activities. They begin to discriminate between different textures, sounds, and familiar faces but lack conceptual differentiation.

-Preoperational Stage (2-7 years): Symbolic thinking emerges, and children start categorizing objects based on simple characteristics such as color or size. However, they struggle with complex differentiation, often relying on perceptual cues rather than logical reasoning.

-Concrete Operational Stage (7-11 years): Logical thinking improves, allowing children to categorize objects based on multiple attributes. They develop the ability to differentiate between reality and perception, strengthening their discrimination skills.

-Formal Operational Stage (12+ years): Abstract reasoning enables individuals to make distinctions based on ethical, moral, and hypothetical considerations, allowing for more nuanced discrimination in decision-making.

Piaget's theory highlights that discrimination is a progressive skill that matures as children's cognitive abilities develop.

Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. Vygotsky emphasizes the role of social interaction and language in learning discrimination. He introduced the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where children can achieve higher cognitive functions with guidance from more knowledgeable individuals (e.g., parents, teachers, peers).When children are provided with structured guidance, they refine their ability to distinguish between different concepts. For instance, a teacher

explaining the difference between "big" and "small" by showing real-life examples accelerates a child's learning process. Vygotsky argued that discrimination is influenced by cultural values and social experiences. For example, children raised in multilingual environments develop stronger phonemic discrimination skills.Vygotsky's perspective highlights the importance of guided learning and cultural exposure in developing discrimination abilities.

Language is a powerful tool for shaping discrimination skills. Kabilova (2023) highlights that euphemisms influence how individuals perceive and categorize information. This suggests that the words we use shape children's ability to distinguish between concepts with social and ethical implications.

-Semantic Differentiation: Teaching children different word meanings enhances their ability to make fine-grained distinctions (e.g., 'happy' vs. 'content').

-Contextual Understanding: Exposure to euphemisms and figurative language helps children recognize the influence of language on perception.

By integrating language-based discrimination exercises, educators can help children refine their reasoning and categorization abilities.

Perceptual and Learning Theories.

Eleanor Gibson's Differentiation Theory. Gibson's Differentiation Theory posits that children learn to discriminate through interaction with their environment. According to her research,Infants begin life with basic sensory discrimination (e.g., distinguishing mother's voice from other sounds).Over time, exposure to varied stimuli helps refine their ability to perceive and categorize differences. Repeated experiences reinforce discrimination skills, enabling children to make finer distinctions in language, objects, and social behavior. For instance, through repeated exposure, children learn to differentiate between letters (e.g., 'b' vs. 'd'), essential for reading development. Jerome Bruner's Concept of Categorization.Bruner argued that learning is fundamentally about categorization, which is a critical aspect of discrimination:

-Enactive Representation (0-3 years): Learning through actions and motor skills (e.g., grasping different objects).

-Iconic Representation (3-7 years): Learning through images and visual memory (e.g., recognizing a triangle as different from a square).

-Symbolic Representation (7+ years): Learning through language and abstract symbols, allowing children to discriminate based on logic rather than perception.

Bruner's theory aligns with modern pedagogical practices, emphasizing that discrimination skills should be taught progressively, transitioning from concrete to abstract concepts.

-Teaching fairness and justice: Through stories and discussions, children learn to differentiate between fair and unfair behaviors.

-Perspective-taking activities: Role-playing different scenarios helps children understand diverse viewpoints, fostering empathy.

-Teaching euphemisms: Kabilova (2023) notes that euphemisms function as linguistic tools that shape social perception. By exposing children to these linguistic nuances, educators can enhance their ability to interpret language contextually.

-Encouraging discussions about word meanings: This helps children understand the distinction between literal and figurative language.

Ethical Considerations in Discrimination Learning.It is crucial to ensure that discrimination skills do not reinforce harmful biases. Teaching children to differentiate ethically and with cultural sensitivity is essential. Discussions on inclusive language, diversity, and equity should be integrated into education.

Conclusion

Teaching children how to discriminate in an educational context is vital for their cognitive, linguistic, and social development. By incorporating theoretical insights and practical methods, educators can nurture critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and perceptual accuracy. As Kabilova (2023) emphasizes, language is a powerful tool in shaping cognitive discrimination skills, further highlighting the importance of structured and conscious learning approaches.

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