

Generative Learning Theory was introduced in 1974 by Merlin C. Wittrock an American educational psychologist. It is based on the idea that learners can actively integrate new ideas into their memory to enhance their educational experience. In essence, it involves linking new with old ideas, in order to gain a better understanding of the instructed concepts.

Main idea of **Generative Learning** is that, in order to learn with understanding, a learner has to construct meaning actively (Osborne & Wittrock 1983, p. 493). link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-1-4419-1428-6_171

This learning style incorporates existing knowledge with new ideas based on experimentation and open-mindedness. It encourages individual and team creativity, resulting in a new way of viewing old methods. Organizations rely on generative learning style to adjust to changes in the market, technology and society.

The Quintessential of Generative Learning Theory

The concept behind the Generative Learning Theory lies on “schemata”, which are outlined in [Frederic Bartlett's Schema Theory](#). It suggests that the learning process is based on the memory that is already stored in our brains, wherein new data is added to our long term memory and becomes part of our knowledge base. The Theory of Generative Learning is based on the assumption that the human brain does not just passively observe its environment or the events it experiences, but that it constructs its own perceptions about problems, scenarios, and experiences.

4 Key Concepts of Generative Learning Theory

The Generative Learning Theory involves four key concepts that instructional designers can involve (all four of them or just one) depending on the needs of the learner and the learning materials involved.

- **Recall** occurs when the learner accesses information stored in his long term memory. The primary goal is to encourage learners to learn a content that is based upon facts by using information they have already acquired. Examples of recall techniques might be having the learner repeat information or reviewing it until the concept is fully grasped.
- **Integration** involves the learner integrating new information with knowledge already collected and stored. The aim is to alter this information into a form, which the learner can more easily remember and access later on. Examples of an integration activity might be having the learner paraphrase the content or creating analogies to explain a concept.
- **Organization** involves learners linking knowledge they've already collected to new concepts in an effective way. Examples of organization strategies may include creating lists or analyzing the main points of a specific concept.
- **Elaboration** involves the encouragement of the learner to connect and add new concepts to information that they've already collected, by analyzing the ideas. Examples of elaboration techniques include creative writing, expanding upon a sentence or thought, and visual representations of mental images.

Applying Generative Learning Theory

The Generative Learning Theory encourages learners to become fully immersed in learning, so that they can develop new strategies on how to solve problems or scenarios. It also allows instructors to not have to fill in the “gaps” when instructing learners. For example, if a lesson involves a topic that is well known to the learner, the instructor can simply provide them with new information, rather than just a background of the content. This saves time and makes the learning process more effective, especially in larger classes. According to Peter Senge (MIT professor) generative learning “enhances our capacity to create.” Engaging in generative learning involves linking existing knowledge about a subject with emerging ideas, resulting in a more individualized understanding about its systemic significance.