

As a follow up to Piaget's theory, particularly on mental representation, Bruner's contribution in the debate on language and thought is, for me, very significant.

His matrix revealing children's readiness for transposition has tremendous implications on pedagogy, on teachers' apprenticeship, and, bottom line, on policy of education fundamental choice.

In a nutshell, what kind of a learner should we promote? a good reproducer or a transposer?

If the effort for the first choice is rather meaningless, that of the second is more demanding. I explain:

When a teacher provides the learner –let's say- with, as an example, Archimedes's Law of floating bodies, all that's required from the pupil is to recite the law, write it correctly if asked or choose it in a multiple choice question. By doing so, the pupil shows that he remembers the law but not necessarily that he grasps it. The teacher also would inform about the law not even bothering to extend to the purpose of the law .i.e. what is the benefit of knowing this law? How can it be used to full extent? What is its usefulness?

To be able to deploy more knowledge, the teacher's competence is at stake. If he or she knows the law simply by having learnt it by rote (by heart), then obviously he or she will not transpose or fulfill the job requirement.

In the Algerian context, the relationship between language and thought versus school performance is an acute challenge. With a learner who starts with one native language (in some instances Berber) doubled with Algerian Arabic (with a good ration of French in urban zones) and ending up facing the requirement of Standard Arabic, the official language at school, the mission is edgy.

To make it short, for any learner, to go beyond the language dilemma, the easiest solution is to learn whatever by rote. What matters is simply to be able to answer correctly on exam day. The test itself not conceived to show understanding but rather remembering.

On way of assessing what is presented here is by putting it to test: whenever I asked my students who hold "Baccalaureate Science" to solve a problem that involves the notion of density (الكثافة) they fail; Let alone when I ask about its worth. You may ask yourself the same test.

What you learn by rote has a limited time in your memory. Understanding it, remembering it in your own words and eventually using it will keep with you forever.

This is a worthwhile debate that hopefully we will engage in the first opportunity.

Stay safe.