The Importances of Behavioral Anthropology in Class Learning Efficiency

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Abstract:
The new concept of behavioral anthropology can be used in maximizing the learning efficiency by adapting teaching methods to the way a person behaves in concordance with his habits, cultural and educational background.

The objective of the study is to prove that the relationship between our behavior and personality and the way we react to the accumulation of information are connected and can have a positive impact on how students internalize the information they get in class.

As a research methodology we used the observational method that it is the primary research method in anthropology, combined with questionnaire method in order to achieve a more accurate result. The focus group have been formed by students from Pedagogy, Communication and Romanian Language Studies from University of Craiova.

The results show that when we approached our teaching method by taking into consideration the personality and character of each student, the learning results improved considerably.

The research is only the first step taken in this direction. For a more accurate understanding of this new teaching/learning approach it is necessary not only to extend the research to a wider community of students, but also to introduce this method to smaller educational classes.

Keywords: *behavioral anthropology, learning process, teaching methods, behavioral sciences, class efficiency.*

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Behavioral anthropology is a relatively new concept in anthropology. Although it has been used in the past, it has never fully been anchored in basic anthropological research. But, as we grow more and more interested in applying the anthropological questions of *Why, What, Who* in today's societies, behavioral anthropology becomes a resourceful tool in researching and understanding our own present inside of communities/societies.

Also, because the gap between generations has never been more abyssally than today we figured out that bringing the behavioral anthropology perspective in classes, we will be able to build a bridge that offers us the possibility to improve the learning efficiency of students/pupils.

First of all, behavioral anthropology integrates more items that help generate a pertinent conclusion at the end of a research. The main items that must be taken into consideration are cultural background, educational background, psychological status, biological particularities, experiences and interactions. Each main item has a subdivision of other important elements that provides a more detailed map of a certain behavior that arises in a certain situation.

Secondly, behavioral anthropology is a concept design to help us find answers as to why someone acts the way he/she acts at a given moment. In order to achieve that, we must not only understand how a person is built (emotionally, culturally, educationally, intellectually) but also how interaction with the given environment (people and situations) affects him/her.

Last, but not least, if classic anthropology deals mainly with societies and communities, behavioral anthropology treats an individual as a social-cultural system. It is, if we're permitted, a micro analysis of the smallest particle that creates the societies.

But why is it so important to understand someone else's reactions and attitude? Well because by doing so we can eliminate the judgmental thinking that could create a wall between us and others, wall that could prevent us from seeing maybe the true value of another person. And where if not when we try to pass on knowledge it is more important to overcome such walls.

Defining Today's Generation

The kindergarten pupil enters the educational system already as a digital native and altogether, the pedagogical practice, pronunciation of knowledge forms, educational tools, mediation of the cultural heritage can become alien to them. It all seems old-fashioned and boring. This does not mean that all the pupils and students would be the same. Certain trends can, however, be observed. Individuals, who could deepen their already existing practical knowledge and skills of different practices in education and design, are not addicts of the "cool learning". Students who have accumulated theoretical knowledge, who have read the most significant texts of the by-gone times, can become strangers to the majority of the pupils. (Kuhn, 2023) Due to their overwork or lack of interest, such knowledgeable pupils do not participate in the digital society. On the other hand, digitalization can be support to the process of growing up, which makes life choices and where the first crucial choices are made that work beyond the scope of a personal life, close surrounding and family.

In discussing the influence of the digital generation on the process of university studies, academics mostly focus on whether the e-generation learners change the previous students' ways of learning, their abilities to progress logically and systematically in comprehension of the documents they study. (Aslanyan-rad, 2024). However, this

question disregards the fact that not only do the students change as the world around them does, the teaching procedures and the forms of mediating knowledge also change. Therefore, the accurate question towards the digital influence on educational activity should regard the concordance of changes both in the students' competency of e-perception and the ability of educators to resort to it, besides the conventional teaching displays. Restriction only to the learner bias in the net-generation discussion has led many educators to the incorrect conclusion that young learners possess a single set of innate skills that should determine teaching methodology from this point on or that a net-generation has appeared that is fundamentally different due to being born into the digital era from earlier generations (Hodge, 2017). The "net-generation" phenomenon, as it is frequently described, does not manifest itself as a set of traits independent of educational and cultural construction. There are only better Internet literate and worse ones.

The differently educated to the world around them have differently absorbed its manifestations. Thus, the rapid technical changes in the surrounding world have created a dual dichotomy: educated vs. uneducated and literate vs. illiterate. At this point, it has to be noted that the net was available in the early 1990's, and Google homepage entered the cyberspace world only in 1996. Thus, university students belong to the first academic generation to complete secondary school during the extensive outspreading and flourishing of the net, cell phones, and links. Activities such as buying a book online were unfamiliar even in the mid-1990's (Gros Salvat, 2012) Thus, the middle aged now academics have discovered the potentialities of the web in late phases of their university studies.

Nevertheless, even if they lack universal access to networks, academics made thorough use of rapidly growing computer-related technological potential before the widespread alliance of e-perceptions. Consequently, present day pupils and Germany students enter the learning institutions with different sets of pre-formed visions of Internet usage. As with educators, they themselves differently apply the exposure to the miscellaneous e-materials, which leads, for instance, to both the inquiry and e-learning university activities to different perception of web usefulness. In fine, upon this background diversification, convergence of similar web features could be observed as well.

Today's kids grow up in a world that was not known a few years before with modern technologies and the Internet. Throughout today's world, on several networks, adolescents have the chance to communicate. Observations note that at least one network has been used since the age of 3 and 4 (Naslund, 2020) Their entire life revolves on social media. Being used from a young age, this leads also to different ways of relating to the environment, communication and perception.

Turning points in behavioral analyses

A study published in 2014 by researchers from Yale University shows that 6 months old babies are gifted with an evolve learning mechanism that helps them identify edible plants (AE Wertz, K. Wynn, 2014). But not everything is determined by genetics, and even what it is can be shaped. Dexter Dias argues in his book – The 10 Types of Humans – that even in the case of twins, genetic preferences can be shaped by proper cultural and educational environment (Dias, 2024, p. 61). Starting from what William James wrote in 1892, that our life is a mass of habits, Charles Duhigg argues in his book about the power of habit that most of the choices we make each day are not decision-making, but they are habits. His point is sustained by a study published by the Duke

University in 2006 which showed that 40% of the actions people performed each day weren't actual decisions, but habits (Duhigg, 2022, p. XVI).

Motivation is a key component of performance, but motivations are usually unconscious. Multiple studies have revealed that there are three key motivations that drive performance: achievement, power and affiliation. Another unconscious process that influences our behavior is the emotion factor. Emotions can be a powerful motivating force; they are a spontaneous biological process that is most of the time out of our control and they can be very good messages transmitted to others. The emotions we receive from others we interpret based on our own experiences and cultural background (Al-Hoorie, 2019).

The effect that family structure has on the economic, social, and political world is evident in different sociopolitical and cultural contexts across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. The adaptability and resilience of such effect is commendable, considering the long timelines and geography across which it has been observed (Martinez, 2018). Nonetheless, several concepts have been suggested to account for the way demographic traits shape material, social, and political behavior. Since the moment a child is born, parents, teachers, priests, and media carry out the process of socialization in accordance with social norms, morals, and values. This can create stereotypes which are a "widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing" (Plaisance, 2018). Cultural norms are the unwritten rules that guide social conduct within a cultural system. They define what is considered acceptable behavior and outline the boundaries of privilege and decorum in a given society. Cultural values are the more subtle beliefs that underpin these norms.

Human behavior is a complex interaction of biological, environmental, social, and psychological influences. For centuries, scientists have attempted to understand the relationship between biology and behavior. Today we know that one's genetic makeup, physiology, psychopathology, and neurochemistry influence human behavior. Individually, each area of study is not without controversy, but together they provide a powerful argument for the biological mechanisms that underlie many of our most common human behaviors. Clinical and counseling psychiatry, psychology, social work, and nursing are professional fields that are based, in part, on basic biological principles.

Jordan Peterson emphasize for instance that mythological representations could be constituents for elements of experiences. He argues that "the world as forum for action" comprises three constituent elements and experiences and a fourth that precedes them. According to him, those are: the unknown, the knower and the known; the indeterminate preceding their emergence serves as the ultimate source of all things (Peterson, 1999)

Social interactions unfold via a complex, sequential interplay of behaviors between two or more interacting individuals. In human–human interactions, many of these behaviors are nonverbal and can be observed by monitoring a person's movements, gaze, and posture. Furthermore, an individual's gestural behavior can be initiated/concluded by other behaviors; for instance, a person is more likely to speak while gazing at the recipient of their speech. Automatically detecting these characteristic interactions is a challenging task, as they are buried within and dispersed across multidimensional behavioral sequences, are bulky and involve many interacting individuals. Interactions in a stable group are carried out frequently, behavior is frequently repeated structure scale-free networks of interaction between individuals, with few individuals participating in many interactions and many in a few. There is a multiple layer of challenges: individuals are not in a controlled environment; they can communicate in multiple ways at the same time and

can engage in different more dynamic interactions, among many others. New technologies, including wearables, video tracking, and miniaturized cameras in combination with machine learning approaches and mathematical methods from game theory, now permit us to investigate how the sequences of interactions among individuals define their success, and how social behaviors can be predicted from past interactions. (Smith, 2020)

Social interactions are fundamental for humans, as they are context for the development of individuals, their emotions, behaviors, and thoughts. They are crucial for success in establishing meaningful interactions that provide psychological and material support (Vinciarelli, 2017). It is through interactions that empathy and altruism can be developed, as well as skills to understand others. Despite the importance of interactions, the information they carry has increasingly been of interest to different research areas. One of the reasons is that face-to-face interactions are ephemeral, and their detailed analysis is both costly and difficult. However, with the technological advancements of the past two decades, vast amounts of conversational multi-modal human interaction data have been collected. (Beyan, 2023). Such conversations are mediated by various synchronous communication technologies, such as digital voice transfer, with the young shifting almost completely from voice transfer to text and voice on social media. The main aspect of such technologies is that being technological in nature, they inhibit the use of almost all non-verbal signals. This is a crucial issue because it is noted that about 25% of the time is spent on interaction and enquiring during a phone call, a significant part of which is accounted by non-verbal signals (Ruben, 2021).

Methodology

We began by collecting background intelligence about our students through the method of observation and through questionnaires. The focus group was formed by students from Pedagogy in third year of study, Communication and Public Relations first year of study, and Romanian literature – second year of Master. Anthropological behavioral profile was created at the beginning of the semester. In order to do that we gather intelligence about their age, where they are originally from, what were their preferences regarding food, sports, music, films, hobbies, leisure. We also inquire about what social media they prefer or if they use any of it.

After we established the profile for each individual, we tried to shift the course content to each one of them and see whether their interest to the content or their acquisition of knowledge increased. That was done by establishing the level of knowledge and interest in the beginning of the class and afterwards using the same parameters, measuring it at the end.

The best result was through a series of exercises that we proposed to the class. The data we will present you will be grouped by each field in part.

Data collection
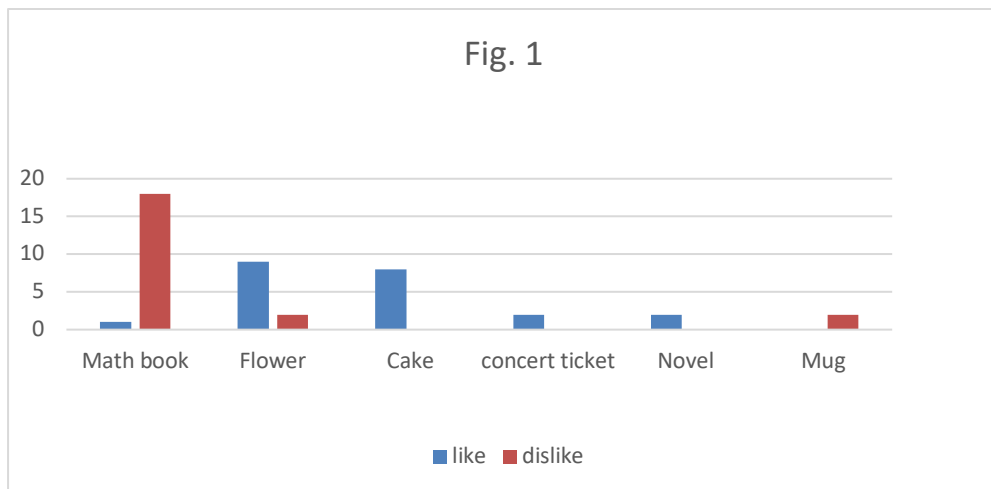### Group A – students from Pedagogy

During the Didactics of History class, we asked them to tell us if they liked history in high school. Of 32 students, only two admitted having enjoyed history, all the other 30 saying that they didn't. When asked why, they answered that they were obliged to learn by heart dates and events with no context what's so ever. So, because we already had their anthropological behavioral profile, during the semester we tried to personalize the content

according to their preferences and character. For instance, each student had to do a project about the history of a subject they enjoyed: football team, music, favorite influencer, favorite movie or TV show etc. Another assignment was to research and present, if they want to the class, some details about their place of birth or family. If in previous years when students were asked to do research in the field of history from pre-established topics, they were not interested in presenting it to others, this time all the students expressed their intention of presenting it. Moreover, all the works were original, no copy paste being detected.

At the end of semester, we asked them to wright on a piece of paper if they like history. No name was required to be on the paper. All the answers were positive, some of them stating that they didn't know history can be fun or useful, but now they find it interesting, one of the students even used the term amazingly.

Another exercise that we did with the students from Pedagogy was during the Nonformal Education and Community Development class. One of the aspects that raise concerns in nowadays society is the lack of interest among the citizens in voting. The classic speech of how important it is to exercise this right, how ancestors have lost their life in order for us to all have this right, leaves people usually indifferent. So, we designed an exercise that would help students to realize the importance of the voting process by appealing to something they could relate faster based on their own feelings and preferences.

We divided the class – 22 students - into two rows and asked everyone to choose from a group of items what they would like to receive as a gift and what they would hate receiving. The items they had to choose from were: math book, a novel, a flower, a mug, a classic concert ticket, and a cake.

Fig. 1

As seen in the previous graphic, the results showed they would prefer to receive a flower, and they would dislike receiving a math book. After this stage of voting, we told them that each of them would receive one of the items – flower or math book – and that the ones that receive the math book would have to resolve all the exercise inside and the ones with flowers should manage to keep them alive for 2 months. If so, they would receive points for the exam. However, the one who will have the right to choose who gets

what is only one of the two rows. The students in the selected row will vote what item goes to who and the ones that do not vote now only have to accept the decision made by their peers. Of course, the ones that didn't get to vote in the second part were upset and said it is not fair they have to accept a decision that influences their life (points to the exam) without expressing their will. That was an excellent reaction, and we explain to them that when you do not exercise a right is like not having it, so even if the political elections might seem like something it doesn't affect you, in the long term the political actors involved make decisions that will affect you in some way. Being just an exercise, they were happy they didn't actually have to do math exercise, but we emphasize on remembering how they felt when they thought they have to do it.

The second part of the exercise focuses on how nowadays people tend to separate from friends and family based on their preferences (whether political views or sport options or anything else). So, we took an example using the *reductio ad absurdum* method. One of their colleagues was allergic to perfumes. We asked them to imagine there are two candidates and that one of them promises that if he is elected, he will oblige everyone not to wear perfume. The other candidate promises that he will give free perfumes to everyone. For the colleague that is allergic to perfumes doesn't even matter what else they promise. If one of them intends to do something that is not suitable for her personally, then she will not vote for that person. However, this doesn't make her a bad person, doesn't change who she is and obviously if you liked her before for her character, personality, abilities and so on, all that will remain the same regardless of whom she chooses to vote for.

Group B – Students from Communication and Public Relations

For the students from Communication, we asked them during the Introduction to Anthropology class to exercises the main method of research in anthropology – the observation. But we gave them free choice according to their abilities and passions in doing so. The assignment was to observe the Christmas fairy in Craiova and to present their findings, but the presentation could be under any form they wished. The results were amazing. Two of them, which were passionate about photography, took pictures and explained to the class what they observe through the images. Another student which was preoccupied by fashion focused on how people dressed when visiting the fairy. We also had one student with amazing drawing talent which drew what he thought was relevant. Another one, fond of literature, wrote a ten pages essay about how people act during the fairy. Regardless of what they used to observe and to present the data they collected, the fact that they could appeal to their skills made them interested in the subject and succeeded in putting into practice information they receive in class.

Group C – Students from Romanian Literature Master

With the students from Romanian Literature, which were in the last year of Master, we had an optional course about *History of Ethnoanthropological Theories*. Not being part of the main body courses of their major, it was even more important to get their attention. So, after we got to know them a little bit, we proposed to them to apply the knowledge from the course aka the anthropological theories we were speaking about to their favorite novel and try to understand the societies and the communities or even the characters through an anthropological view.

Because we noticed that many of them liked Mircea Eliade (11 out of 16) and some of them (3 out of 16) were passionate about Indian culture, I choose to present them

an analyze of Indian culture through two perspectives: Eliade's point of view from *Maitreyi* and Maitreyi Devi's point of view from *Love doesn't die*, showing them how the same place at the same time can pe perceived different mostly due to cultural differences.

Being able to choose a novel they enjoyed and combining new techniques of interpretation resulted in a massif interest in the class subject and even two of the students decided to write their final thesis on subjects from this course.

Conclusions

Today, more than ever, it seems like the gap between generations gets bigger and bigger. We are like two different cultures that struggle to find the wright translation. We can do that by understanding each other and that is possible through anthropological means. Think at all the so-called strange customs or traditions you have learned from different cultures and remember how you felt when you saw people acting different from what you used to do. It is the same with the young generation. Their environment and their values are shifted differently than ours. We must find a key to unlock communication. When you interact with someone from a different culture, it is not enough to understand the words, you have understood the customs and traditions in order to have good communication with that person because what could be an insignificant gesture for you could be a horrible insult for the other person or the other way around. And all that could end up in losing a good friend or worst, just because a behavioral act was misunderstand.

Also, to maximize the learning in a class it is important to know how every student (especially in lower classes) gives the best performance. There are people that work better in the morning, others at noon, some may be able to focus if the information is accompanied by pictures and so on. This is why the research presented in this study is just the first step in defining this technique. We are focusing on studying whether behavioral anthropology works its best in kindergarten and undergraduate school. For instance, a method that uses part of this theory is the step-by-step method in primary school. What the behavioral anthropology concept proposes is that we have tools to make the learning process more efficient regardless of the main method of studying.

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