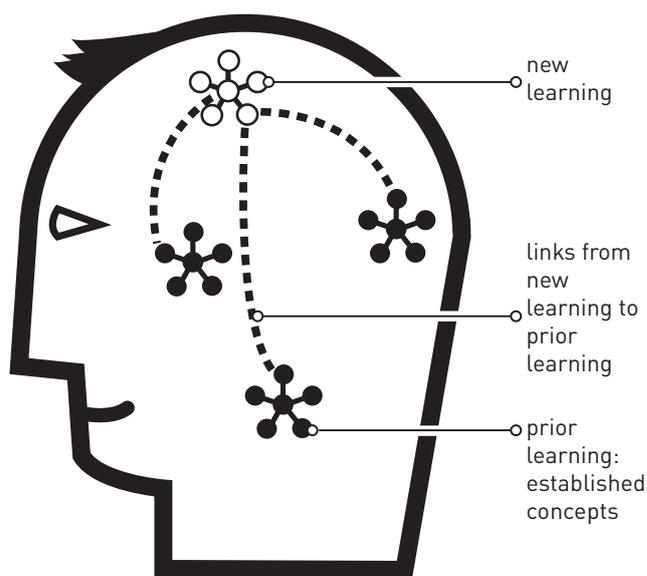


**PINPOINT**

*What we see changes what we know.  
What we know changes what we see.*

Jean Piaget

New information needs to make personal sense  
New information needs to make personal sense

**Prior learning**

Established concepts and knowledge are clustered into inter-connected networks of meaning. These structures are non-linear and are not based on the syntax we use when forming sentences.



*We must transform linear sentences into a hierarchical structure in order to assimilate them into our minds.*

Joseph Novak & Bob Gowin

**Mentalese**

We all use a private operating system to make sense and create personal understanding. Daniel Goleman calls this language *mentalese*.

**New learning**

When you are presented with new information, you try to make sense of it. But how exactly? By translating it into your own mentalese.

This means that all classroom talk and text has to be successfully translated into mentalese in order to be understandable.



*Maps make sense of chaos, define the abstract with the concrete.*

Richard Saul Wurman

**Accommodation and assimilation**

Jean Piaget's contribution to child psychology was his explanation of how we deal with new information from the world. Essentially, we compare it to what we already know. This is why connecting to prior learning is so important in planning lessons.

If the new information makes immediate sense, then it fits neatly into the child's existing mental model. It is *accommodated*.

If, however, the new information doesn't easily drop into the child's personal world view, something else has to happen. In this instance, deeper learning is prompted. The child is forced to adapt, develop or reconstruct her existing notions of reality. This harder and more challenging process is called *assimilation*.

**Theory of learning, not a method of teaching**

The great abuse of constructivism was to mistake a theory of learning, for a method of teaching. And following on from that imposing so-called universal truths such as Piaget's stages of learning. As a theory of how humans create knowledge, constructivism is both interesting and valuable. As a method of teaching, it leads to ideological dead-ends.

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