

Structural Learning

Structural learning theory is one of the [cognitivist](#) perspectives on instructional design proposed by [Joseph Scandura](#) in 1970s. Scandura's theory suggests human knowledge is consisted of rules.

Each rule, according to has domain, range and operation as its parameters. **Domain** refers to its **applicable inputs**, **range** refers its **expected outputs** and **operation** reffers to the **procedure on the inputs**. New rules are learned through application off higher to lower order rules.

In accordance with structural learning theory, first step in instructional design or learning is **definition of the problem domain through structural analysis**. Problem domain can be both well- and ill-defined (when rules are quite simple, yet there is no direct complete solution like chess, or poetry writing). In case of an ill-defined domain, it should be divided into well-defined sub-domains which generate at least one rule. Domain sets the inputs and desired outputs for problem solving.

Domain definition is followed by **construction of hierarchy of rules** for well-defined domains. Rules should be explained on prototype problems, but can also leave some **gaps** in problem solving procedure, which **are then converted into higher-order problems** containing gap rules. Higher-order rules are then used to fill the gap, but can also validate lower level rules.

An important part of the theory is also **prior knowledge (rules)** of the learner, that will **enable construction of new rules**. This knowledge can be examined by instructor, that can be both human or artificial.

Structural learning theory's applications have been made in **mathematics** and **language learning**.

Bibliography

[Structural Learning Theory](#).

Scandura, J. M. Structural learning theory. *Instructional Design Theories and Models: An Overview of Their Current Status*: p215-245. 1984.

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