LEARNING TO ELDERLY
M.A. Breaz, D. Bălaș-Timar, A.Rădulescu

Maria Alina BREAZ
Lecturer, PhD
Aurel Vlaicu University of Arad

Dana BĂLAȘ-TIMAR
Lecturer, PhD
Aurel Vlaicu University of Arad

Ana RĂDULESCU
Assist.prof., PhD
Bucharest University

Abstract: The old age is a period of life in which appears numerous changes in the functionality of the intellectual abilities and skills learning. Learning capacity of the elder is influenced by natural decline due to age and also by some changes in their personality. The author presents a review of the literature in this domain and underlines the learning capacities of the elders in both learning skills categories: sequential learning and sensorimotor adaptability.

Keywords: elder people, learning capacities, senescence, psychological functioning

Changes that occur in the mental processes are influenced by cultural and intellectual experience, and, in the same time by the functional capabilities constituted the meantime (Șchiopu, Verza, 1997). We mention bellow some of the most important changes that occure at this stage of life.

Regarding memory appear several characteristic phenomena: memory impairment is more obvious for her component of short-term memory, longer memory being more resistant but in this case too, appear confusing associations.

At senescence, thinking is characterized by two aspects: on the one hand it is a discrete inflation of subjectivity on the other hand, is an increases in operation within the absolute categories. There is a greater inflexibility of ideas and judgments and also decreases gradually fluency ideas.

Intelligence can manifest relatively active. Nonspecific efficiency is preserved relatively well in the first stage of old age (65-75 years). However the
ideasm pace declines, manifests intellectual vacuum moments, followed by moments of awareness of the decline that represent those moments.

The language reflects the thinking difficulties of the elder and shows a decreases of verbal flow, a sluggish of the pace and the vocabulary frequency.

The emotionality at senescence bears the mark of a predominantly negative line (depression, apathy, decreased ability to resonate affective) reflecting in fact the dominant attitude developed by the elders towards his existential situation and his weakening, which promotes an "emotional" behavior characterized by irascibility, emotional lability.

The personality will reflect the senescence traits at all levels. Elder has time to reflect on their past comparing it with the present, to analyze his somatic, psychological, family, existential, and social difficulties. From this point of view, old age is seen by many theorists as a period of psychological development. The main tasks of this period of development are:

- adapting to the decline of physical forces and health;
- failure to face the retirement and the limited income;
- adapting to the partner's death.

According to Erikson (1998) during old age, one must solve the crisis described by the author as ego integrity vs. despair. As people approach the end of life, they tend to look back and evaluate their decisions and actions that have influenced their life. This review may ideally lead to satisfaction and acceptance that the lived life is significant and important. Such feelings lead to a stronger ego integrity. The person whose reviewing of life has feelings of regret and disappointment taout his life and consider the lived life as unsatisfactory and empty, will live despair. In terms of character it can be produced the disharmony sharpening or the enhancing existingdisharmonic traits or even to their development for the first time. It is not about psychopaths, but about the existence or development of some disharmonic traits within the limits of normality or in the category of personality pathology. So:

- Asthenic individuals are characterized by a low sense of self-esteem in conjunction with the sensation of collapsing of the social prestige that lead to feelings of devaluation and disrespect prone to depressive reactions or decompensations;
- to the depressive persons the despair and depressive reactions are intensified and may occur ideas of hopelessness and meaningfulness of life, with suicidal tendencies;
- to the chizoid people can be accumulated tendencies of isolation, denial of contact with another preference for stereotypical keeping of the room or his role, accompanied by indifference to what is happening immediately around after satisfying his essential needs. There may be feelings of jealousy, due to the decrease in sexual potency and social prestige that lead not only to increased
suspiciousness about the fidelity of the partner, but also induce anxiety-depressive states.

The American gerontologists Warner Schaie (cited by Fillit and Picariello, 1998) as a result of some studies showed that since the second decade of life there is a gradual decline of these abilities, the damage lasting up till the 8th decade of life. Fluid intelligence declines with age, in contrast with the crystallized intelligence, which is assessed by tests based on the knowledge gained, is maintained and have a continuous development with age. In terms of the speed of information processing, it decreases with age.

The affective line is dominated by depression, apathy, coldness, which generally leads to an unstable and irritable behavior. The involution depression symptoms are manifested through somatic distress, sleep and appetite troubles, feelings of guilt, worthlessness, self-accusation. Old people become apathetic, sad, everything is black and dominated by the desire to die.

- Learning - some studies show that older people can learn as much as other age groups, only time resolution is higher; a boost for learning requires a permanent motivation, here a major role starring older schools and universities of the third age, which is a reality in Western European countries and the USA.

  - Speech becomes slow due to the physiological aging of the vocal organ tract, in the same time with the deterioration of thinking, memory, attention; related to the flow of speech can be seen in the older person a decrease in the verbal flow and rhythm. To express himself is difficult, often inaccurate, with repetitions, babble; sometimes elderly are prone to verbal hyperactivity manifested by the so-called "empty talk" and "bothering" (Neamtu, 2003, p. 912).

  In terms of learning ability, some studies show that older people can learn as much information and skills as other age groups, only the time of solving tasks is higher. Chown (1972, cited by Goldstein, 1984) showed that people of the third age learn best if the material is introduced slowly, over longer periods of time and not in a concentrated form; these people find difficult to read materials in which information is presented quickly. Learning information depends on the task nature and the way in which the task is related with previous experience and also depend on the training method.

  At the third age learning process is much better realised if people have control over the pace of learning (Papalia, Olds, 1986, p. 426) Numerous studies have indicated that the ability to learn new motor skills decreases with age, the causes of this reduction are multifunctional (Howard, 1989, p.357). Recent research try to achieve a classification of learning skills in two categories and to study their evolution throughout life. The first category is represented by the sequential learning in which people learn how to combine isolated movements in a coherent action, while the second category refers to sensorimotor adaptability in which people modify their movements to adapt to changes that occur in the characteristics of sensory input, or motor output characteristics either.
A study on the differential effects of age on sequential learning and sensorimotor adaptability (2006), has found that with age appear rather specific deficits in learning skills and no generalized deficit. Despite the fact that it was not found a deficit of sequential learning to elder participants, their reaction time was significantly higher than that of young participants. Instead, older participants, obtained worse performance and a lower rate of learning to adapt to the three sensorimotor tasks.

Thus all the data from the literature suggest that, older people may have great difficulty in terms of learning motor skills that are mediated by the cerebellum.

References
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