

Affordances (Chapter 4)

The “relationship between an organism and a particular feature of its environment” (van Lier, 2000, p. 252). While an affordance allows action, it neither triggers nor causes that action: “What becomes an affordance depends on what the organism does, what it wants, and what is useful for it” (ibid.).

Affordances

For example, a leaf offers “different affordances to different organisms:

- crawling on for a tree frog,
- cutting for an ant,
- food for a caterpillar,
- shade for a spider, medicine for a shaman, and so on....”



Affordances

“...In all cases the leaf is the same: Its properties do not change....”



Affordances

“It is just that different properties are perceived and acted upon by different organisms” (ibid.).



Affordances

Summary:

We learn through interactions with the world, including encounters with people and things.

What we make of our encounters with those people and things constitutes affordances.



Resources

van Lier, L. (2000). From input to affordance: Social-interactive learning from an ecological perspective. In J. P. Lantolf (Ed.), *Sociocultural theory and second language learning* (pp. 245-259). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.