Note taking template

Academic Planning Summit

January 16, 2015

Title of Session:__ Speeding Up Learning: Potential Application of Five Key Principles_____

Faculty Facilitator(s)____ Damon Rarick_____

Note taker name_____ Brittany Durgin_____

Check one:

__ __ Morning Breakout 1   _____Morning breakout 2

_____Afternoon breakout 1   _____Afternoon breakout 2

Ideas proposed/Recommendations

Video Summarization:

How can we speed up learning?

Debunking the Myth: you don't need talent to learn a language, don't need immersion per se to learn a language

Five Key Principles:

1) Focus on language content that is relevant to you
     a) Attention, Meaning, Relevance, Memory (all interconnected)
2) Use your language as a tool to communicate from day 1
3) When you first understand the message you will unconsciously acquire the language
4) Physiological training is important (not necessarily acquiring knowledge)
5) Psycho-physiological state matters - if you are happy and encouraged, you will be ready to learn and do well - if you are angry/frustrated, you will not learn
     a) Need to be tolerant of ambiguity - you can't get everything right the first time (being relaxed about your learning is important!)

Seven Actions:

1) Listen a lot (brain-soaking!)
2) Focus on getting the meaning first - body language
3) Start mixing (get creative)
4) Focus on the core (common usage in daily communication - start with the tool box "how do you say...?" "what does that mean...?" in the target language)
5) Get a language parent (mentor who knows what you understand)
6) Copy the face (get your facial muscles working)
7) "Direct connect" to mental images (remove the translation step)

Key Facilitators of Learning

Relevance:

a. Making learning topics relevant to the students' lives and future is key to facilitate learning
b. For example, emphasizing that how to solve certain math problems is useful in real life applications, or that students can use understanding of another language in any future career - making the topic relevant enhances the learning process tenfold
c. "Aha!" Moment: Victory is achieved when the student starts thinking about concepts learned in class during everyday life. When they connect common activities with course material, it solidifies their understanding

Encouragement and Comfort:

a. Must work out the ways in which each individual learns and encourage them to continue no matter which skill level he/she currently is - this can translate to any learning environment
b. Must be tolerant of mistakes at earlier levels in order to encourage advancement - too much criticism before the student gets to higher levels of understanding can be discouraging to the whole learning process. Hippocratic Oath: "do no harm" - same responsibility in all fields of teaching
c. Relaxation is important - students should be challenged to further their understanding, but too much pressure is detrimental and counter-productive

Notable Issues, Questions, Challenges:

Definition of Fluency

Very big difference between conversational language and academic language. To truly be fluent in a language, must understand its very core as well as minute details - grammar is vital and just conversational capacity is not enough.

Some claim to speak a language, but what does that mean? Are they truly proficient? All comes down to what your goal is - to learn just enough to get by, or enough to profess in it?

BUT:

Question of importance of fluency - is it better to enable more students to speak functionally rather than fewer students to speak proficiently?

We currently teach our courses assuming everyone in that class would continue on to proficiency - if we know a significant percentage of students will not (they might only take minimum requirement), should we prioritize more functionally-focused concepts in lower level courses, and only continue on to grammar-specifics and critical thinking in higher levels?

What is the Most Efficient Way to Learn? Fast and Focused, or Slow and Broad?

Should our goal be to get through the course material as quickly as possible? Will students retain it? Is celerity of learning that critical, or should we fight against the impulse to make classes larger and finish faster in favor of slower, more retainable learning?

Consensus: Slow learning is much more meaningful - each student going through the process at their own pace is more meaningful than carrying them to the goal, because it enables them to repeat the process themselves.

We must DEFINE what the best use of our resources is - determining the most efficient way for students to learn without detracting from the process itself.

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Different Delivery Methods

a. The cost of education nowadays doesn't always translate into being able to get a job - we must think in non-traditional ways to optimize education
b. Is it better to focus on one thing intensively then move on, or have concurrent, less intensive courses over a longer period of time? Is there a science as to one delivery method being better than another?
c. Consensus: Need enough time to make connections outside of class, and different students will do this at different speeds

      i. Students need to be able to work at their own pace (this depends on subject content as well) - must evaluate how much time is required in order to apply and properly comprehend course material

      ii. Graduate format of learning leaves time to think and process at your own pace like this

  d. <u>Increased Resources</u>: Other classes should follow the lead of language classes in terms of 24/7 access to learning support - providing more resources will help slower learners catch up to quicker learners to ensure better equality of course delivery

      i. Must recognize that students learn at different paces and provide supports for all paces

  e. <u>Outside Events</u>: (e.g. in language learning) Environments where students can practice a new language without fear of being wrong or being graded

Key Facilitators of Learning

<u>Relevance:</u>

a. Association is important to learning - the more connections made to a concept (e.g. using humor, real life applications, etc.), the more solidly the concept sticks

b. Needs to be a marriage between knowing just the most important concepts (useful in real-life applications, and knowing details (e.g. to pass board exams)

<u>Interdisciplinary Linkage</u>

a. Would benefit the learning process to reinforce concepts learned in one class in other classes

b. Again, the more connections made, the more solidly it sticks - e.g., in a language class, teach the words for mathematical processes and have them solve problems - reinforcing the math, and making the language relevant

<u>Cultural Competency</u>

a. Learning about different cultures and perspectives is vital to communication and gives context to learning a language (e.g. not only how to speak German, but what it means to be German and different customs, beliefs, and lifestyles therein) - can be applied to any field that requires adequate communication and understanding

Notable Issues, Questions, Challenges:

Curriculum Structure

a. Current structure of curriculum (necessity of leveling through set sequence of classes) impedes and discourages students from transferring/switching majors

b. Disconnect if students already have experience in part of the curriculum, but not all of it (e.g. heritage speakers of language) - put in beginners classes which is not reflective of their actual understanding

c. Possibility of accelerated courses to facilitate major-switching process and better apply to students with partial experience

d. We currently define learning by credits and semesters and curriculum - can we get away with less and have the same learning impact? How do we know when they have learned enough?

      i. Could we implement a different structure? Instead of in terms of credits and semesters and years attended, optimize the learning experience for students at different paces to better translate to real life skills