

Group Tests – Methods of Strategic Thinking

Britta Wiström

Jämtlands Gymnasium Östersund (Sweden)

Britta.Wistrom@zonline.se

Abstract

According to the Learning Pyramid the preeminent way to learn is through participatory teaching methods. That is, 'groups discussions', 'practice', and/or 'teaching others'. The two most ineffective methods of learning that fall within the passive teaching methods include, forms of lecturing and reading. While these are fine categorical structures – delineating our understanding of individual or person-based learning – little has been said about the meta- and sociocognitive methods of learning. This project seeks to demonstrate the benefits of such research in the pursuit of reducing homework while maximizing the learning process for individuals as well as the collective whole. This particular research is conducted with paper-based examinations to test student' ability to obtain, produce, and evaluate academic material. The proposed result of this research is that students are able to ascertain and arrive at sufficient knowledge when they are examined in a three-step process: 1) individually answer as many questions as possible, 2) form groups of three and orally discuss each question, thereby evaluating each possible answer, 3) the final step is to engage the knowledge that was produced in the group and transcribe the oral material into their individual exams.

The project has objectives apart from just learning it also presumes that every student has more development potential than they are aware of , hence with this method you increase their perception of their true potential.

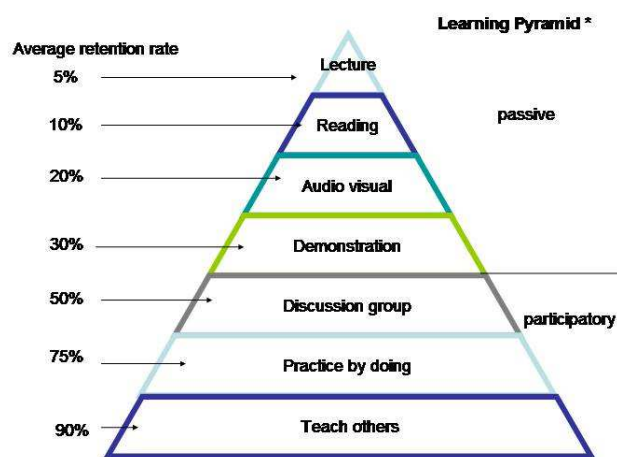
Introduction

The project has been carried out in an Upper Secondary School, Jämtlands Gymnasium Östersund Sweden. Jämtlands Gymnasium has about 2000 students whereas all must study English, less than half, take modern languages as a chosen subject.

The Swedish National Directive (LP94) is unique in the way having a double dimension of teaching that is a) social skills b) academic knowledge. Combining these two elements (morals and values, based on consideration and equality in the teaching of a language) and at the same time promoting effectiveness in retaining knowledge, was the origin of the project.

The study of a foreign language (excluding English which is compulsory) has become less popular the last decades. It is specially difficult to motivate weaker students to study a foreign language when they are returned a test result which reinforces their sense of failure. In addition students expect language to be both joyful and effective.

According to the Learning Pyramid the preeminent way to learn is through participatory teaching methods hat is discussion in group, practice by doing and teaching others. The three most ineffective methods of learning are passive teaching methods, are demonstration, audiovisual, reading and lecture.



* Adapted from National Training Laboratories, Bethel, Maine

(Fig 1)



Objectives

- To activate the students' conscientiousness of the Swedish basic value-system by forcing the cleverer students to actively help the weaker ones
- To give the students a tool to a more effective learning process by strategic thinking
- To reduce homework – while maximizing the learning process
- To use teaching methods according to the Learning Pyramid (participatory methods)
- To organize language instruction into group projects

Method

A three week assignment is set up . Students are informed what will be included during these weeks and eventually there will be a group test in the end. The students work rather freely during this time from the plan given .They are informed about what will be included during them. The lesson before the group test there is a repetition and a possible in – depth study .The students are told what to be expected on the group test and everyone should prepare themselves as they see fit.

Most importantly is the explanation of the cognitive strategies of which the group test is based. Every student is made conscious of the meta-cognitive and social cognitive strategies that are to be used during the group test.

The strategic process is important. For example instead of answering the question with the first answer, the group discusses and eventually agrees to the right answer, which is using the meta-cognitive process .The students are informed about the importance of the social-cognitive process as one discusses in a group the correct answer, having had each person express themselves and evaluate the answer before it being finalized in print.

The students are told that after one or two group tests there will be an individual test based on the previous group test/group tests.

The proposed result of this project is that students are able to ascertain and arrive at sufficient knowledge when they are examined in a three step paper based process.

- 1)Individually answer as many questions as possible
- 2) Form groups of three and orally discuss each question, thereby evaluating each possible answer
- 3) The final step is to engage the knowledge that was produced in the group and transcribe the oral material into their individual exams.

The class is randomly divided into groups of three or four students before a group test ran. Hopefully the group has both weak and strong students. Students decide themselves whether or not the groups are even and could rearrange the constellation thereby. When the group test is handed out the students are told to hand in one final result. There will be an incredible exchange of information as the students work to answer the questions .

After one or two group tests there will be an individual one. Since it is built up upon the previous test/tests weaker students benefit from taking part in the group discussions and therefore achieve a better score than ever before. The students are informed that the individual test includes the same material, but in another way, as the previous group tests.

Conclusion

- Fewer students fail to reach the goals for the course
- Our system of values is practiced in the classroom in a natural setting as the students benefit from each other's input
- Students notice that most work involved in learning a language is done at school and thereby work efficiently
- Strategic thinking illustrates the worth of a group process in a common task
- Benefits of social cooperation are; promoting each others success – providing academic and individual support, answerable for succeeding contribution to mutual objects
- Teaching concludes research thereby enhancement of quality
- This method justifies the new national Curriculum where the past view of learning was based on behaviorism shall now be based on cognition.
- Students' absence in class is decreased

List of websites used

[www.palmbeachls.org/.../cooperative learning](http://www.palmbeachls.org/.../cooperative%20learning)