



Meet gil Gil is a teaching method with a strong focus on self induced learning and communicative skills

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Abstract

GIL — the acronym for Guided Independent Learning — is a teaching method in use since 2000 at the Department of Speech Therapy and Audiology of the Artevelde University College Ghent (Belgium). The main objective is to stimulate students into gradually studying more independent. Since these are valuable competencies for any caregiver, GIL also gives students the opportunity to collaborate and improve their communicative skills and meeting techniques. The teaching method is based on three pillars: tasks, self-induced learning and guidance. Some of the traditional lectures have been swapped for tasks, which students have to solve in little groups or individually. Teachers transform parts of the curriculum into tasks around which students are more inclined to organise their own studying process.

During the first year a portion of the group moments are guided by a tutor. His task is to observe and facilitate the group process and guide the individual process of each student. Through continuous assessment, the personal evolution, the deficits and the improvements become apparent. Guided by their tutor the student gradually becomes more in control of his own learning process.

During a successful process the tutor has to fulfil three roles. He starts out as a teacher who's training and modelling his students. He then has to alternate between being a coach and an evaluator. On a regular basis, there are evaluation moments where the students have to reflect on the group process, as well as their own evolution. They learn how to supply each other with constructive feedback and to formulate new individual and group challenges. A selection of different instruments were developed to facilitate GIL. The presentation will present these foundations of GIL.

1. Introduction

No matter what their choice of occupation is, students all over the world should at the end of their education, be competent to take care of their own professionalization. Indeed, in function of his personal growth each professional should be able to work out his own development plan. Therefore students should acquire skills and attitudes such as: responsibility, creativity, critical thinking, flexibility, taking initiative, working independent, solving problem behaviour and willing to follow additional training. Furthermore, in the field employers expect their employees to collaborate constructively and efficiently, always using social and communicative skills [1].

Scientific research shows about learning, that the effect of traditional lecturing is very low. Only five to fifteen percent of the information will be memorized by the students [2]. An alternative to these little encouraging figures are active, self-induced and constructive learning, which leads to better learning outcomes.

The competencies described above and the awareness of the limited effect of traditional lecturing were the main reasons why in 2000 the Department of Speech Therapy and Audiology started with an innovative teaching method named 'Guided Independent Learning' (GIL).



The innovative character of this method lies in the combination of stimulating self-induced learning by using tasks and simultaneously being trained in communicative and meeting skills.

2. GIL as an teaching method

Nowadays active, self-induced and responsible learning should be one of the main goals of higher education. Therefore a stimulating learning environment should be created. GIL tries to realise this by using tasks and by focusing on the self-studying activities of the students. It is a teaching method through which, under the supervision of a tutor, students gradually evolve to achieve a higher level of internal control of their own study process.

2.1 Tasks

Some of the traditional lectures have been substituted by tasks, which students have to solve either individually or in little groups. Teachers transform necessary parts of the curriculum into tasks, around which students are more inclined to organise their own study process. This requires quite some responsibility of the teachers, since making a good selection and developing good tasks are the key to the success of this teaching method.

The benefits of using tasks are numerous. Working with tasks [3]:

- improves the processing and remembering of new information,
- promotes skills in problem solving,
- promotes the integration of knowledge from different courses,
- teaches students to learn,
- promotes active learning of the students,
- increases students' motivation.

Students are gradually being stimulated to work more self-induced. Therefore we make a difference between: group, individual and combined tasks. Combined tasks partly solve the students individually and partly in group.

Inspired by the teaching method 'problem-based learning' we developed different kinds of tasks namely: problem tasks, discussion tasks, study tasks, strategy tasks and application tasks. All tasks are written down in the same template using a consistent number of parameters.

Figure 1: Template of tasks

Course Name of the teacher Professional training Specialization	Number of the task Kind of task Way of fulfilment (individually, in group, combination) Time required Academic year Training year
Goals Description of the task Procedure Learning tools Prerequisite knowledge Assignment Feedback (date and mode) Relation to practice	



The teacher is not obliged to fill in each parameter. For various reasons he can decide which parameters he fill in and which parameters he rather leaves blank.

For example: because students should develop problem solving skills at a certain moment, it can be meaningful to let them organize their own work. In that case the teacher can leave the topic 'procedure' open or just indicate his expectations.

Like we said above it is the responsibility of the teacher to select the content and to develop good tasks. Experience and evaluations have learned us that this is an important but also difficult issue. What is a proper task? The answer depends on who is concerned: the teacher, the student or the tutor. For instance, students find it very important that the tasks stimulate them to discussion. They prefer practical tasks instead of study tasks, to solve in a group. Study tasks are preferred to be solved individually. Teachers on the contrary see a value in solving study tasks in groups because explaining certain issues to each other is a powerful way of studying.

All teachers are joined to give feedback or if necessary to offer a solution. There are different ways to do this:

- a digital solution,
- digital feedback for the whole group or in a small group,
- a class discussion afterwards for the whole group or for students interested,
- proofreading of a report or paper,
- personal written feedback

As it turns out, receiving enough feedback is very important for the students. They prefer getting personal feedback or in small group. It's their right to get enough feedback and it is the duty of the teacher to properly inform his students.

Generally students don't get marks on their solution. If this is the case, it is communicated by the teacher prior to the task.

2.2 Composition of small groups

All the students of the first year are split up in small groups ranging from 6 to maximum 8 members. The group composition remains unchanged during the entire academic year. This fixed group composition has a positive impact on group dynamics. Students are getting to know each other, which in term leads to an increase of collaboration and self-reliant conflict management.

In the second and the third year the students are self responsible for the composition of their groups.

2.3 Alternating division of roles

Working in their small groups, students should perform different meeting roles in an alternating way.

As a moderator the student has two types of functions: task-oriented functions and group process-oriented functions. As a secretary on the one hand the student should be able to take notes, but on the other hand he should be supportive in structuring the discussion, for example by using a flip chart. As a participant each student is equally responsible for the smooth and efficient conduct of a meeting.

During those meetings they should focus on training their communication and meeting skills as well as solving the task in question.

At the end of their first year all students will be assessed regarding all those different meeting roles and associated functions. Therefore students should get enough opportunities to practice so that they can grow and evolve over the span of the year. An alternating division of roles, which is programmed by the students, helps to ensure achieving these goals. At the end of each meeting, students are asked to evaluate the group process and are enticed by their tutor to give constructive feedback on each others performance.



2.4 Personal and group diaries

Some instruments such as a personal and a group diary help to facilitate and reflect both on the learning process of the small group and the students individually.

A personal diary supports the student to focus on and outline his own learning process and evolution. It contains different checklists to observe and evaluate his communication and meeting skills. At regular intervals the student should evaluate his own process using those checklists and keeping up his diary. This diary also invites him to formulate personal challenges and outline how he can achieve them.

In the group diary students should take notes on the evaluation of the group process. It is also a meaningful instrument to plan their alternating division of roles and to give feedback on the tasks and the teaching method.

2.5 Efficient method

We developed a method, which gives the students support: before, during and after the meetings. The figure below gives an overview and speaks for itself.

Figure 2: GIL-method

Phase 1: Before the meeting	Preparation of the task and the meeting	
Phase 2: During the meeting	Control of the arrangements made Performance of the task Evaluation of the group process and the preconditions	Step 1: Make sure the task is clear and unambiguous Step 2: Insert the solution strategy Step 3: Perform the task Step 4: Check the result on its accuracy
Phase 3: After the meeting	Feedback on the task	

2.6 Guidance

During the first year a part of the group moments are guided by a permanent tutor, each of whom is responsible for four small groups.

Throughout the year the tutor fulfils three roles: he will be a teacher/trainer, a coach and a evaluator.

The first week of the program he will be a teacher who's informing, modelling and training the students on the GIL-teaching method, group dynamics, communication and meeting skills.

He then has to alternate between being a coach and an evaluator.

As a coach he observes and facilitates the group process. Guided by their tutor students gradually become more in control of their own learning process.

The tutor is not responsible for the solution of the task. If the students have questions about the content or the solution of the tasks, their tutor should encourage them to contact their teacher and ask for additional information or feedback.



He fulfils his role as an evaluator in different ways and moments:

- He joins the evaluation with the students at the end of the meetings and gives his oral feedback. He teaches them to reflect on their group process, to supply each with constructive feedback and to formulate new individual and group challenges.
- Thereafter he sends a more detailed report of his observation to all members of the group.
- Minimum three times a year he checks the personal diaries and gives personal written support.
- At the end of each semester a formal evaluation procedure takes place in the form of both a group moment and a personal talk. Students are obliged to reflect on the group process, as well as on their own evolution using a self- and peer assessment instrument called 'Evasale'.
- The final score is given at the end of the year and is the result of co-assessment.

2.7 Permanent evaluation

We expect students to commit themselves 100% and be prepared to learn and improve themselves. At the end of the first year the students get a score, which counts for 40 percent for their final result of the 'communication' course. Because of this, students will be notified from the start of the academic year of our expectations and they get a list of the goals they should achieve. They get enough opportunities to practice during the meetings but also in other practical lessons. If necessary they can additionally train their communicative skills in daily life.

Through continuous assessment, the evolution, the deficits and the improvements of each student become apparent. Several instruments are available for the tutor:

- an evaluation form,
- the personal diaries of the students,
- the group diary of the small groups,
- The results of the formal evaluation at the end of the first and second semester.

3. Current affairs

The power, but also the weakness of this teaching method lies in developing interesting tasks, organizing good feedback as a teacher and becoming an excellent coach. When this is achieved, GIL becomes a worthwhile teaching method to try-out.

Since last year in order to improve this teaching method, an inquiry has been set up in which all students, teachers and tutors are involved. We expect to have the results available in June.

References

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