Active Learning Strategies in English Language Courses at Ulm University

Sarah von Delius, MA (TEAP)
Centre for Languages and Philology, Ulm University

**What** is it?

**How** does it work?

**Why** use it?

Two **examples** in practice
Active Learning is:

“any instructional method that engages students in the learning process...
... In short, active learning requires students to do meaningful learning activities and think about what they are doing.”


- clickers/polls
- discussions
- case studies
- problem solving
- role plays
1-Minute Papers/Reflections
Post-it Parade
Ticket out the Door
Give one-Get one

Think-Pair-Share
Note Taking Pairs
Say Something

Peer-Review
Respond, React, Reply
Jigsaw Reading

Social Annotation of Text
Line of Agreement
Spiderweb Graphic Organiser

Complete Turn Taking
Buzz Groups
The Final Word

Think Aloud
Round Tables
Case Studies

Dotmocracy
Four Corners
Pro-Con Grids
Group Text Reading

Snowball
Fishbowl
Quescussion
3-2-1

Index Card Pass
Line-up
Debates

Sources: University of Toronto’s Active Learning and Adapting Teaching Techniques, TATP Guide; Queen’s University Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, Active Learning Module
How does Active Learning work?

Get student attention and increase motivation
(Houston, 2009; Thaman et al., 2013)

Get students involved in higher order thinking; i.e. analysis, synthesis, problem-solving etc.
(Gosser et al., 2005; Michael, 2006)

Assess whether students understood the material
(Cherney, 2008)

Increase course content knowledge
(Anderson et al., 2005)
First year Introductory Physiology course:

Can anyone name the sensory nerves of the leg?

“You’re innocently walking down the street when aliens zap away the sensory neurons in your legs. What happens?

a) Your walking movements show no significant change.
b) You can no longer walk.
c) You can walk, but the pace changes.
d) You can walk, but clumsily.”

Source: Example used by Neuroscientist S. Leupen at University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC).
Why use Active Learning?
Failure rates are 55% higher in non-active learning classrooms.


“At this point it is unethical to teach any other way.”

Wallop, M.M. Why we are teaching science wrong, and how to make it right. Nature, 523, 272-274.

Passing grades:
55% traditional classes,
85% with active learning

Failure rates are 55% higher in non-active learning classrooms.


“At this point it is unethical to teach any other way.”

Wallop, M.M. Why we are teaching science wrong, and how to make it right. Nature, 523, 272-274.

Passing grades:

55% traditional

85% with active learning


What I hear, I forget;

What I see, I remember;

What I do, I understand.

- Chinese Proverb, often attributed to Confucius


The Marshmallow Challenge

Let’s get down to business: English in a business context
The supplies:

- 20 sticks of spaghetti
- One yard tape
- One yard string
- One marshmallow

The challenge:

Team of four
18 minutes
Build tallest freestanding structure

Source: slideshare.net & tomwujec.com/marshmallowchallenge
Lessons:

1) Prototyping matters

2) Hidden assumptions of a project
Powerpoint Karaoke

Getting to the Point: Academic Presentation Skills – Practice and Improvement
1) Encourages spontaneity, flexibility and creativity
2) Takes focus away from content
3) Improves rhetorical skills
4) Breaks the ice!
1) Encourages spontaneity, flexibility and creativity
2) Takes focus away from content
3) Improves rhetorical skills
4) Breaks the ice!

Powerpoint Karaoke
Getting to the Point: Academic Presentation Skills – Practice and Improvement

Source: flickr.com
3 Things I’ve learned:

- Active Learning can involve any method that engages students in learning
- Students perform better when Active Learning is used
- Activities can be fun and playful

2 Things I found interesting:

1 Question I have:

Sarah von Delius, Zentrum für Sprachen und Philologie, sarah.vondelius@uni-ulm.de