

**Web-Chat Date: September 13, 2011**

**Topic: Examining Brain-Based Instructions for EFL Literacy**

**Abstract:**

According to David Sousa, "yesterday's methods worked well for yesterday's students. But the student brain of today is quite different from the one of 15 years ago" (Sousa, 1998). It is, therefore, necessary to study how students' brains work today so that it is possible to enhance their learning. For example, "today's children spend much more time with television and other electronic media than with their parents" (Sousa, 1998). Since today's brain needs a TV like environment, both sound and animations can be used to suit today's learner. Lessons can even be better prepared by utilizing the information that is readily available on the internet. What other lessons have we learned? What exactly is "brain-based" learning pedagogy? Why is it important for professionals to consider its implications? How much do EFL practitioners aware of brain-based research data and its relevancies to English academic approach? What are some of the major findings neuroscientists specifically and academically address in compassing effective pedagogical directions? What are some of the educational concepts encompassing brain-based learning? What are some of the strategies and assessment methods teachers can use to reflect brain-based EFL pedagogies?

**Transcript:**

**Damon Anderson:** Everyone, welcome to today's web chat. Please feel free to submit any pre-chat comments or questions.

**Patrick Okoh:** Some of us are living witnesses to this fact.

**Damon Anderson:** Patrick, which fact are you referring to?

**Patrick Okoh:** The Internet, the computer games for an example were not there while the students of yesterday

**Damon Anderson:** Everyone, our chat will start a 3pm Bangkok time. Please feel free to submit any pre-comments or questions.

**Patrick Okoh:** I am trying to chip in the fact that yesterday methods worked for yesterday's student because they were less distractions to their mental focus per se

**Patrick Okoh:** Fifteen years ago, students main focus were on their homeworks, assignments,

**Patrick Okoh:** Ok, then - I guess Bangkok and Hanoi use the same time??

**Damon Anderson:** That is correct, Patirick. Bangkok and Hanoi are on the same time.

**Patrick Okoh:** Will be invigilating an exam then, hopefully will find time to join on the brain-based instructions of EFL Literacy

**Damon Anderson:** Sorry about that. Please try to join us if you can. You can see the transcript after the chat. Good luck with invigilating the exam.

**Lien Hoang:** Waiting here in Hanoi for the webchat already

**Damon Anderson:** Hello Dr. Hoang. We will begin our web chat soon. Thank you for joining us!

**Damon Anderson:** Hello Dzung, Krongthong and Lien Hoang. Thank you for joining us today. Our chat will begin at 3pm. Please feel free to submit any pre-questions or comments.

**Damon Anderson:** Everyone, we will begin in five minutes. New arrivals, Sulaiya, Kesorn and Kimkim\_VN, welcome.

**Damon Anderson:** Welcome Namfon and Nongluck. We will begin in a couple of minutes.

**kimkim\_vn:** am I so eager to join?

**Phanisara:** Why do we have to consider brain based teaching aspects in EFL?

**kimkim\_vn:** Hi Damon Anderson, I love the last webinar on Ning, I couldn't join online because my internet was broken.

**Damon Anderson:** Everyone, let's begin. We would like to focus our chat today on Brain-based learning and what it means for us in our classes.

**Damon Anderson:** Let's start with what you know about brain-based research and learning. Can you share some of your thoughts on this with us?

**Nang Saung kham:** good afternoon everybody

**Phanisara:** Brain based teaching approach will require teachers to teach beyond linguistic nature of the EFL class.

**Damon Anderson:** Brain-based research and learning have been around for about 10 years now. Yet, we are only now beginning to see the effects in our approaches.

**Namfon:** Hi, Damon Anderson: My school doesn't use this theory.

**Damon Anderson:** Namfon, it is not so much a theory, but rather an understanding about how the brain learns and what we can do as a result to facilitate learning for our students.

**Phanisara:** Only grammar based learning doesn't allow students to be creative in their learning approaches.

**kimkim\_vn:** To me, this sounds new, too

**Lien Hoang:** As far as I know, brain-based learning is learning based on how the students like and tend to learn in certain time

**Dzung 2:** I have no idea about brain-based learning but is it similar to well-known learning styles: audio, visual,....??

**Damon Anderson:** Brain-based learning does take into account the learning styles that Dzung 2 mentions, but applies them more systematically.

**Namfon:** How old are the students to learn?

**Phanisara:** Not using this theory; mostly teachers will be THE ONE--THE ONLY presenter in the classroom. Just feeding the students information. Not realizing the student as A WHOLE person with different learning abilities and preferences.

**kimkim\_vn:** is it a part of learning acquisition?

**Dzung 2:** Teachers are of different generations from students' so how can they know about their students'brain?

**Phanisara:** I think the subject and the issue is becoming more and more relevant in today classrooms.

**Nangnoi 2:** Hi! Damon Anderson: I don't use the theory because most of my student are very poor in English so do you think will it work with my class?

**Lien Hoang:** like in the past, no hi-tech or internet, ss learn without visual aids, still it works, but not now

**Phanisara:** Especially when MOE sees that the old TRADITIONAL way of teaching EFL doesn't work well in considering helping the students to learn English beyond "JUST A SUBJECT" knowledge based learning.

**kimkim\_vn:** it studies the change in the brain of learners and suggests the change in teaching techniques?

**kesorn:** It's good that students have chances to show their idea

**Namfon:** The students should use both side of brain.

**Tresha:** Good afternoon, everyone! Great to learn something new!

**nongluck:** can we manage Brain- based learning in class?

**Phanisara:** It is the generation that teachers see students almost as co-learners. partners in the learning community. teachers explore the readily available useful facts and information on the computer. using different available tools together with the students.

**nongluck: Pornsawan:** Is it the best teaching techniques?

**Nang Saung kham:** could you pls. explain in details, sounds abit advance for me

**Namfon:** Damon : How long are students can use this theory?

**Phanisara:** Teachers are the facilitator in the classroom. The classrooms where the students have their own voices, choices, selections, individual learning styles that they can take initiative in their own learning tasks.

**Dzung 2:** so finally what is brain-based learning?

**Sulaiya:** I think this theory sounds interesting for EFL teachers, but how we as teachers can apply it in our classroom?

**Tresha:** Does it mean that the brain is engaging in learning activities?

**nongluck:** and Pornsawan : How should we prepare our students?

**Phanisara:** Definition of Brain Based Learning. According to advocates of brain based learning, the human brain is an exciting source of untapped potential.

**nongluck:** \*prepare

**Namfon:** How many periods that appropriate of students?

**Phanisara:** Definition: "Brain-Based learning is a dynamic, interdisciplinary, system-wide approach based on the way current research in neuroscience suggests our brain naturally learns best."

**Nangnoi 2:** Moreover I normally use Thai in class in order to take time, if I use the theory do I have to take a lot of time?

**Bordin:** I like the idea, but how we can perform it in class.

**Pari:** Hello, I am the new member in C.M.

**Damon Anderson:** Let me give you a quick example. If you are driving down a road at night in the woods and a deer crosses the road. The deer looks into the car's headlights and freezes, so you are

likely to hit the deer. It cannot run because it is frozen. Fear freezes some of the cognitive functioning of the brain. This happens to students, especially when they are afraid if you call on them or when they take a test.

**nongluck: and Pornsawan:** We think brain-based learning can help students in thinking.

**Pari:** I would like to share about the overview of Brain-Based Education.

**Lien Hoang:** how to apply in brain-based learning in present EFL classes?

**Dzung 2:** according to the definition shown by Phanisara, our brain naturally learns best so we, teachers, only need to provoke the students' brain and their motive; in other words, when they are motivated, they and their brains learn by themselves.

**kesorn 2:** It takes a lot of time.

**Phanisara:** Aj Nangnoi, it is not using theory---ESPECIALLY NOT explaining the theory in Thai for the students. It is the APPROACH and how we assign students IN ENGLISH to learn English in our EFL classes.

**Dzung 2:** so what is teachers' role? just to be there to provoke them

**Damon Anderson:** So, to follow up my story, we need to take the fear factor out of learning and performing. I know that as a native speaker when I walk up to a student a teacher tells me is good and I say "Hi" to that student, often the student will freeze up and not be able to respond. Not because they don't know how, but because of the fear factor.

**Dzung 2:** I am a bit curious: Has anyone here been learning a new language?

**Phanisara:** That is a really excellent example by RELO Khun Damon. Once teachers know how our brain works and function, we can learn ways to relax to accommodate more of the learning opportunities for the students.

**Namfon: and Sumalee :** Our school lacks the budget. We don't have a lot of money to follow your theory.

**Damon Anderson:** Applying brain-based learning ideas does not require major changes or money.

**Bordin:** The role of the teacher is like a coach, right?

**Damon Anderson:** Another aspect of brain-based learning is helping students to remember things. We help them to build hooks on which to hang things so they can remember them more easily.

**Dzung 2:** According to Damon Anderson, when the students are afraid of something, they can learn well. I think it depends on their own style; for example if I am sometimes not cornered, I can't learn at all.

**Damon Anderson:** Dzung, I am saying that fear does not help learning and they we need to take fear out of the learning process.

**Dzung 2:** sorry, they can't learn well

**Phanisara:** Some of the brain based Instructional Strategies Principles include:1) Integration of mind-body learning2) Strong learner choices offered3) Emphasis on novelty, ritual and challenge4) Greater use of natural memory5) More immediate learner feedback6) Multi-Path strategies7) Emphasis on non-conscious processing8) Learner-constructed meaning

**kesorn 2:** For thai students (we use Thai language) they have to study a lot in an hour (listening, speaking, reading and writing) so it quite impossible to use BBL.

**Sulaiya:** If I'm not mistaken, I think we as teachers need to apply technology in our teaching, like using power point presentation and other kinds of media to make our lesson more interesting

**Nangnoi 2:** You mean hook and hold students' curiosity?

**Lien Hoang:** how to help them do this?

**Phanisara:** For the brain based environment---these are what we have to consider---The Environment Principles include:1) Create a secure, safe environment with an absence of threat2) Use of collaborative, trusting relationships3) Make it physically comfortable4) Rich, real-life and multi-sensory5) Greater time flexibility

**Bordin:** In Thai context, teachers are familiar with top-down communication, while students are likely passive. I think Thai culture might be a threat in applying this approach.

**Phanisara:** Curriculum Principles are:1) Integrated, multi-disciplinary thematic content2) More relevant, real-life learning3) Greater learner choice4) Longer time on fewer, more complex topics5) Process mastery as part of learning goals.

**Namfon: and Sumalee :** If we use theory, students will love reading, right?

**Phanisara:** Assessment Principles include:1) Demonstration of solid content mastery2) Defense of personal biases3) Demonstration of the interdisciplinary relationships4) Revelation of mental models5) Revelation of personal relevance or, when appropriate, of local, national or globalrelevance6) Specific "how-to" strategies7) Observable behavior changes

**Phanisara:** Ajarn Namfon---YES---the students will love reading. Not because of US AS TEACHERS. But because they have learned to LOVE LEARNING BY KNOWING HOW THEIR OWN brain works---and develop ways to love reading for a LIFE TIME.

**Lien Hoang:** Great!

**Phanisara:** Organizational Structures Principles are:1) Clarity and unity of purpose2) Learning as the primary priority3) Institutionalized, self-correcting systems4) Environment of safety and dialogue5) Support of staff and learner for personal and professional growth development6) A Bottom-up driven, non-bureaucratic management method system-wide buy-in of the methodology of brain-based learning

**Damon Anderson:** Learning lists of words, memorizing what other people say, repeating only what the teacher says are not conducive to deep learning and to giving students the skills they need with the language. They need to be able to use the words in a way meaningful to them, give their reactions to things, paraphrase what they heard or read in their own words. Their words being used in their authentic language are the hooks that will help them.

**Namfon:** Mena : Is it good to learn in a secondary level?

**Phanisara:** ALTOGETHER, when teachers consider how our brain works and realize the WHOLE EFL learning pedagogies, then we have better chances at success in instilling our students to OWN and LEARN English.

**kesorn 2:** In my opinion it is good for young children. Thai older students seem to waste their time on shying.

**Pari:** If we teach the student in the difference condition from the theory , how can we manage them for changing displays in the classroom?

**Dzung 2:** Some people are afraid of the threat of the culture or the like. I think many of us here are from Asian cultures so the problem here is whether teachers are flexible in applying it or not; therefore, cultures can be an obstacle but we can find ways to overcome .it

**Namfon:** In the first period, Should we warm up students before start th lesson?

**Damon Anderson:** Dan Meyer says that we need to engage our students through entry points. Entry points are things that interest them, pique their curiosity, and engage them. This is what we should do in our warm-ups/introductions.

**Phanisara:** I TOTALLY agree with Dzung. Our culture needs to be more democratic.

**Phanisara:** The culture of learning that would close the gap (at least a little :) between teachers and

students.

**Damon Anderson:** Engaging students with their preferred forms of communication is important, which is why using new technologies such as social networking tools is successful.

**Phanisara:** EFL Classrooms need to be where students can actually TALK and have THEIR OWN VOICES.

**Phanisara:** Not to always having to wait to give the teachers the "RIGHT" scientific answers to English questions.

**Damon Anderson:** It is not always about having the right answer as much as it is about being able to communicate what you think is the right answer, and then learning from your mistake if you make one.

**Phanisara:** Not to be afraid and frozen out to say anything.

**Namfon: and Sumalee :** Should we emphasize the students by art or music?

**Phanisara:** We need to understand our students' psychological natures and even their own different learning characteristics and styles.

**Dzung 2:** Phanisara, not all students love talking; some still like learning in silence.

**Sulaiya:** YES I agree with khun Damon about applying social network

**Phanisara:** Not to punish too much of those visual learners by having our EFL classes with ONLY LISTENING Activities.

**Damon Anderson:** Classes need to be have balance: Visual, audio, experiential, small group work, whole group work, and individual work.

**Lien Hoang:** we need to study their multiple inteileigences to work out their learning styles and then to decide the way to teach

**Phanisara:** Brain-based teaching push the teachers to be more of the open-minded educators. To see that even our teaching styles might or might not fit well with our how students learn. It allows us to think, to reflect back, to adjust our teaching activities.

**Damon Anderson:** I agree with you Lien Hoang. Multiple Intelligences is important to consider.

**Lien Hoang:** right

**Namfon: and Sumalee :** In your country, Do you use multiple intelligence theory every school?

**Dzung 2:** Has anyone here been in a language class trying to learn a new language?

**Phanisara:** EXACTLY Dzung!!! Not all students love talking. I KNOW I DON'T :) Then we--as teachers--needs to have different activities, assignment, choices, project based learning, options for assessment.

**Lien Hoang:** but we can hardly cater all learning styles, just the common learning styles of the class

**Damon Anderson:** Dzung, I am trying to learn my eighth language. You and everyone here has learned English.

**Namfon: Rungthip and Sumalee :** Do you have any problems in this theory?

**Damon Anderson:** Lien Hoang, I agree that we cannot cater to all styles all the time, however, we can balance our classes and change the focus and balance from class to class as we recycle information so that eventually the majority of students will be accommodated.

**nongluck: and Porsawan :** I agree with you, Phanisara.

**Phanisara:** When I was trying to learn English here in Thailand, I hated the subject. I love my French classes here that I took in Thailand. So when I went to the U.S., I continue my French studies. I later realize that the way I learn Spanish and French is through recognizing pattern. That's why I can excel in it. THEN I applied those same brained based skills to learn to study and LATER LIKE English learning tasks.

**Namfon: Rinrada and Laksana :** How long this theory effects to students?

**Dzung 2:** Damon, we all know English, at least at some level, so we are different from our students in learning English now. The reason I asked the question is that how can we understand our students if we don't try to be a student by ourselves. We suggest a lot of approaches but at teachers' point of view.

**Namfon: Namfon: Rinrada and Laksana and Sumalee :** How many students are there in your class.

**Lien Hoang:** So let's look into the learners of present time. In what way do they want/ like to study? How to work with them in EFL classes in a more specific way?

**Phanisara:** The whole perspective of learning structure will become more evident as the ASEAN communities called for learners to be able to produce language and able to communicate, collaborate, and even compete with our ASEAN communities and beyond.

**Damon Anderson:** If we go back to the use of technology, teaching students how to write a good tweeter feed (144 characters) teaches them how to say what they want to say in an economical way. Have the students read a paragraph, then condense it to a twitter. It is a great exercise, even if you don't use twitter, but just write the twitters on paper. This is a great exercise.

**Phanisara:** I agree Lien Hoang. Teachers need to look at their own individual classes. And see SPECIFIC needs that might exist to plan to accommodate the learning activities.

**Dzung 2:** Lien Hoang, not all of our students are linguistic intelligent so what can we deal with those?

**Sulaiya:** hi nina,i'm ajarn somporn ,exploiting ms'ssulaiya's...i'm really glad to know that you like french.i do like very much too.also german impresses me the most i guess.pls you forgive me for my uncapitalized letters.

**Phanisara:** Dzung, I couldnot agree more with you. We cannot teach anything, if we are not first trying it ourselves. In fact, I tend to believe that we seem to teach the way we have been taught.

**Phanisara:** We share teachers perspectives here because this is a roundtable webchat for teachers.

**Sulaiya:** Great.

**Phanisara:** We try to encourage our colleagues to share some method of teaching that would be of the lasting impact.

**Damon Anderson:** We are almost out of time for this web chat. Thank you all. Do you have ideas for what you would like to discuss in the next web chat in October?

**Lien Hoang:** Dzung 2, bu they may be more bodily or musically intelligent, so teachers should take this into account in choosing the right activities for them in EFL classes

**Damon Anderson:** Yes, use songs to teach language, or use legos or building blocks, or use drawing or painting, or designing a house or garden. There are many intelligences you can use to teach the same thing aside from linguistic intelligence.

**Phanisara:** Our Asian students---especially the traditional ones---will always JUST GO ALONG with their teachers---just so that they can get a better grade for the class. Even when that method might not AT ALL help them to learn the language after leaving the classrooms. They are not going to disagree with us. We have to think of a better way to teach and to reach them.

**Namfon:** reading technique

**Lien Hoang:** what about teaching English young learners, using brain-based learning approach for next webchat?

**nongluck: and Pornsawan:** Thank you for your helpful opinion in teaching.

**kesorn 2:** It's our first time chatting

**Damon Anderson:** Everyone, I am afraid that our time is up. It has been an interesting chat based on a suggestion from the last chat. Please join us next month on October 11th for our next chat.

**Phanisara:** Lien Hoang---so that might be the topic for the next chat? Kinaesthetic learning activities for EFL.

**kesorn 2:** Thank you, bye.

**Phanisara:** Thank you everyone for joining the chat.

**Nang Saung kham:** how can we apply this approach to autistic ?

**Damon Anderson:** Khun Nina will post the transcript for this web chat on the RELO web site.

**Lien Hoang:** Thanks a lot.

**nongluck:** Project work and integrated learning can help BBL teaching.

**Phanisara:** Nang Saung Kham---That's probably good topic for next time too. See you all next time. Have a great day.

**Damon Anderson:** Thank you all. Have a great day. The chat is now closed. We will leave the transcript up so you can read through it again, if you like. Thank you.

**Nang Saung kham:** thanks and bye

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