

Chapters 10 – 11 in *How People Learn*.

Conclusions

What conclusions are you drawing from the newly acquired understanding of how people learn that resulted from taking this course? One strategy would be to write down the key concepts that are personally meaningful to you and particularly applicable to your professional practice.

The two main themes I have learned about and will continue to focus on in my teaching career are 1) the five instructional topologies that affect how people learn: lecture-based, skills-based, inquiry-based, as individuals and in groups, and technology enhanced instruction; and 2) the interactions between the four learning environments, learner-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered, and community-centered. I believe that keeping each of these concepts in mind when developing curricula and in teaching it, will help my students to be more successful at learning the subjects being taught in the courses I teach. Being able to identify when and where a particular instructional method or tool is best utilized will be a valuable skill, no doubt. I think it is a skill, like any other, that can be honed and improved upon with practice, so I feel it is important to use what I have learned about each and apply critical evaluation each time I need to decide whether or not one is applicable or not in any given circumstance. Learning about the interactions between the learning environments has illuminated for me the need to be aware of each and adapt my teaching style to how each student responds best.

Metacognition, active learning and transfer are a few of the other topics that I have learned about while reading *How People Learn* that I find not only to be interesting epistemological topics, but also believe are very important to creating successful students. I've been giving a lot of thought to how to incorporate these ideas into my teaching strategy. Of the three, I think active learning and transfer are the easiest to implement because I already attempt to create real world environments for my students to learn in and spend a lot of time utilizing skills-based assessments. Metacognition is a bit more challenging, perhaps it's because it is a new concept for me and one that I haven't been able to clearly define for myself as to how I should implement it into a classroom environment and I find it to be especially difficult in an online course. My intent is to spend more time over summer break researching and thinking about how I can best incorporate techniques into both formats and hopefully I will come up with some strategies that I can apply during the fall semester.

I have really enjoyed reading the text *How People Learn*. I have also grown fond of the publisher, The National Academy Press, which published another book I read recently titled *Technically Speaking* and is all about how important it is for Americans to become technically literate and for education to incorporate more education about technology into its curricula. I'm sure that *How People Learn* will be a great reference tool for me in the years to come. I already find myself going back to it from time to time to re-read a particular topic. I also find that it is a great resource for finding research papers by other authors which have been written about various educational subjects that we have been studying this semester.

Next Steps for Research

Reflect on these questions: What is the purpose of educational research for instructional designers? Why is it important for instructional designers to be effective researchers and critical consumers of educational research?

As an instructional designer I think it is important to continue the practice of studying research being done in the field of education in order to be current on what is considered to be or not to be effective

pedagogical practices. I'm not sure if instructional designers should be the ones conducting the empirical studies, but most certainly they need to keep abreast of the findings of such studies as they are published. In the coming years, instructional designers, more than likely, will find a plethora of educational research studies that have been or are being published, perhaps to the point of feeling overwhelmed by the sheer volume. This is why it would be prudent for instructional designers to be knowledgeable about the authors of the studies and be able to evaluate the validity of the studies to know which ones will have a positive impact on education and which ones can be ignored or require more research to be done.

As an example, I have been interested in learning about the cognitive affects that rich media have on learning. I have found lots of research on the subject and have started to notice a trend as to the authors that have written extensively about the subject and who have produced some very credible and valid empirical studies. Researchers like Richard E. Mayer, Ruth Colvin Clark, Slava Kalyuga, and John Sweller. In the case of Richard E. Mayer, a professor at California State University, Santa Barbara, I consider him to be such an expert in the area of multimedia instruction from a cognitive perspective that I have also purchased several of his books, *e-Learning and the Science of Instruction 2nd Ed.*, *Multimedia Learning, 2nd Ed.*, and his most recently published publication, *applying the Science of Learning*. My criterion for selecting research papers has been, first and foremost, to be sure that they have been peer reviewed articles. This has saved me a lot of time by cutting out most of the "fluff" or opinion pieces I have encountered in the past.

Even after I have finished this course I plan on continuing to read as much of the current research material on education as I can in order to stay on top of the trends and to keep an edge to my teaching options. In fact I am planning to try and encourage our librarian at MSJC to subscribe to some of the peer-reviewed journals on psychology and education so that I will be able to do just that – keep current. I don't think that there should be an issue, a few years back, when I was doing research for a paper, our librarian was kind enough to order about a dozen or so books about instructional design for me. The only roadblock I see is that our school budget for this kind of thing isn't as robust as it used to be.