

In order to achieve ideal learning outcomes, we must use teaching strategies appropriate to the learner. As is often the case, there are different kinds of learners within a group therefore; our instruction should include an overall approach to cover all types. This general approach includes managing the learner's expectations of the learning process and capturing their interest from the outset by tapping into their individual values.

Before we go into details about the four categories of learners, it should be said that, with all of these classification systems, the learner often falls somewhere along a spectrum, rather than in one, strict category. Depending on the topic, how it is taught and even the learner's 'mood,' the learner may switch from one type to another. As an instructor's method may influence the categorization of their students, it is essential that instructors can cover many instances for all types of learners. Keller's ARCS model suggests strategies that enhances the overall level of instruction and stimulates motivation for all types of learners (Driscoll, p.339).

Deep Learners (DLs)

Motivational profile

Attention: High if valued

Relevance: Unknown

Confidence: High

As the name implies, DLs have a deep desire to learn. They search for underlying relationships, relate information to previous knowledge, look for patterns, and examine logic. These are all very good traits for a learner. However, the challenge with DLs is that they are more apt to follow their interest rather than learn what is dictated by the course. In other words, they want to learn not because an authority figure demands/expects it, but because they have their own reason to acquire the knowledge.

To increase interest in the topic, the instructor must relate the material to the "bigger picture" in a logical fashion, thus DLs can exercise their approach to the material. Instructors should also help DLs make connections to previous knowledge and point out "parallel" knowledge in other subjects. In addition, because these learners need to value targeted content, relevance needs to be high and should match with the learner's goals and values.

Strategies to accomplish these goals include: stating relevance or letting learners figure out how content can be directly applied and tied to learning goals; using "concrete examples and analogies"; provide "leadership opportunities"; and provide learners with

verbal praises, incentives, and symbolic awards, in order to generate satisfaction that will boost their motivation (Driscoll, 2005, p. 336-337).

Achieving Learners (ALs)

Motivational profile

Attention: moderate to high

Relevance: Unknown

Confidence: moderate to high

Achieving Learners (ALs) need more guidance and more detailed instruction than DLs. They will follow assignments and will try to finish the learning task, but without making use of a “deeper” knowledge or creating logical connections.

To help ALs, instructors should present clear overall objectives and strategies as well as challenging goals to motivate the learner. The relevance of the subject matter should always be pointed out through material presented. In addition, instructors should address learning outcome/expectations by stressing natural consequences that provide learners with direct application of learning targets. Driscoll (2005) commented about this condition: “One of the most rewarding (and subsequently motivating) results of learning is to use the newly acquired skills or knowledge” (p. 324).

Overall, instructors should aim for student-focused approach in presenting new materials and use a teaching style that encourages a positive approach to the subject. Instructors should also discourage rote learning by giving appropriate assignments and help students develop a learning approach that encourages understanding. Finally, instructors must encourage students by giving them feedback. Even ALs can benefit from extrinsic forms of recognition, so instructors may provide public acknowledgements, privileges, and positive comments about their achievements.

Surface Learners (SLs)

Motivational profile

Attention: moderate

Relevance: Unknown

Confidence: low to moderate

Like ALs, Surface Learners (SLs) are willing to learn as well. However, they take an ineffective approach to learning or, put another way, SLs only try to produce what is needed to “get by.” Undoubtedly, this creates problems in their pursuit of acquiring knowledge.

At the outset, the instructor must ensure that the learning goals are objective and attainable, the learners have the ability to accomplish set goals, and the tasks are tasks adequate. They also require self-regulating support – instructors should guide learners to set learning goals and manage the learning process; allow learners to self-appraise

through reflective comparison with others; and monitor assessment, actions and planning strategies. “The more opportunities and ways learners can reflect on their learning and that of others, the greater the habit of self-regulation” (Driscoll, 2005, p. 332).

Some studies indicated that teaching approaches “created” SLs¹. By changing the way assignments were given and by looking for answers that required “logical understanding” of the material many SLs became DLs. This indicates that instructors should help learners see the logical connection within material and create exercises where newly-learned material is applied and implemented, thus showing its practical application.

Resistant Learners (RLs)

Motivational profile

Attention: low

Relevance: Unknown

Confidence: low

Resistant Learners (RLs) have difficulty understanding why they would need to learn. By creating situations where RLs can see their personal goals match or come close to goals set by instructors for them, RLs will develop a more positive approach to the learning process.

As RLs have experienced failure in education and have negative encounters connected to learning, the instructor should create a step-by-step process of learning where positive feedback encourages the learner. In a positive environment the learning experience can be transformed into an enjoyable activity. For example, instructors can instill confidence by allowing students to design their own goals (specific, proximal, learning oriented), communicating clear learning goals and objectives, and provide “unambiguous feedback” (Driscoll, 2005, p. 337).

In order to increase attention in the RL, instructors should present novel and varied instruction; integrate mystery and problem solving conditions; include narrative structures that embed content; and relate the learning to personal experiences. Instructors can also increase self-efficacy by providing self-satisfying opportunities for learners to be successful, by showing many competent role models being successful with learning tasks, and by using verbal persuasion. Over time, the hope is to advance RLs along the spectrum toward Deep Learning.

¹ <http://www.cdtl.nus.edu.sg/link/mar2004/learn1.htm>