

Transformation of Pseudo Passive and Pseudo Active Learning to Active Learning

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ABSTRACT

It is commonly misperceived that the key characteristic of active learning is for students to be physically active in learning activities where they do not only sit but participate in hands-on tasks. However, this typical view is debunked in the article. It is argued here that the goal of active learning does not stop at physical actions, but cognitive activities are necessarily required, thus can be elaborated into 3 dimensions, behaviorally active, socially active and cognitively active. Therefore, the spectrum of learning types can be divided into at least 4 categories, passive learning, pseudo passive learning, pseudo active learning and active learning. Also, discussed in this article is a pedagogical recommendation that regardless of the types of pseudo learning, the lesson design needs effective learning objectives proposed by a model based on Bloom's taxonomy, so that the lessons, questions and activities in the classroom will be all directed toward the same active learning goal.

Keywords: passive learning, pseudo passive learning, pseudo active learning, active learning

Defining active learning

The whole point of education is learning; therefore, learning is a crucial part which matters. Active learning is an ideal expectation to be promoted in every classroom. Based on the definition of active learning by Watkins, Carnell and Lodge (2007), there are three dimensions of learning that need to be taken into account. Behaviourally, it is active learning by active using and creating materials. Cognitively, it is a dimension of active thinking and constructing new meaning. Socially, it is

learning which actively engages with others as collaborators and resources.

Active learning begins when thinking happens and is completed by actions. Thinking initiates creating a personal concept of something which helps that person to acquire understanding of content and to connect the content to other concepts and finally to apply those concepts in reality. Therefore, the key point of active learning is a continuous cognitive process. The ultimate level of cognition in this kind of learning relates to metacognition (National Research Council, 2000). The students should learn how they learn something. Most of the time, misconception shows that physical actions are the evidence of active learning.

Positioning on the spectrum of learning

There are a lot of strategies used in the current world of education and are claimed as tools for active learning. On the contrary, the classroom where students sit and do nothing is blamed as dysfunctional learning or passive learning. However, learning is not a clear-cut process and every type of learning has its own advantages. This short communication scopes four types of learning out of the spectrum from being passive to being active; passive learning, pseudo passive learning, pseudo active learning and active learning. The highest hope of active learning is that a learner can learn their process of learning, so they can acquire understanding and apply it to various contexts embedding life-long learning skills (National Research Council, 2000). The focus here is to propose some

suggestions to transform pseudo learning to actual active learning.

Obviously, passive learning doesn't reveal those three aspects from a sitting student. However, to sit still doesn't guarantee that the students are put into a stage of passive learning. If they could

actively think and construct some ideas in their head, it is more likely for them to be active in their learning. On the other hand, students who actively move around and socialize with other students might not fully experience a real active learning setting.

Table 1: Comparison among passive learning, pseudo passive learning, pseudo active learning and active learning

Types of learning	Dimensions indicating active learning		
	Behaviorally active	Socially active	Cognitively active
Passive learning	No	No	No
Pseudo passive learning	No	No	Yes
Pseudo active learning	Yes	May be	No
Active learning	Yes	Yes	Yes

To focus on the ultimate goal of active learning which leads the students to learn how they learn, what is applied in the regular classrooms nowadays need to be reclassified. Therefore, the types of learning categorized by the definition of active learning proposed by Watkins, Carnell and Lodge (2007) could divide the learning into 4 types, passive learning, pseudo passive learning, pseudo active learning and active learning (Table 1). Nevertheless, it is inevitable to admit that there are all these types of learning in any classroom. Good news is there are ways to transform the levels of learning.

Before giving suggestions for transforming levels of learning, the definition of those four types of learning need to be elaborated. Passive learning is the setting in which the students only perceive information. Pseudo passive learning is the setting in which the students get engaged in a hands-on activity without constructing any concept. Pseudo active learning is the setting in which the students acquire a mind-on experience without having an action to reflect and evaluate what they are thinking about. Active learning is the setting in which the students' cognition stays active with a tangible input and output from students' behaviors individually and collaboratively.

Transforming to active learning

To create an active learning classroom, a class size is one of the crucial factors for a classroom design. In this

communication, the discussion will be for the regular class size of 40-50 students. Actually, three dimensions of active learning should simultaneously go together. However, behavior and social dimensions mostly take place in a regular active learning setting these days which in this case, it would be called as pseudo-passive learning if cognitive action doesn't happen. The advantage of pseudo-passive learning is that the behavior and social interaction can initially draw the attention of learners which is easy to lead to the last dimension of active learning; cognitive action. The key is to blend cognitive action into the activities which reinforces students to take actions individually and collectively. However, some activity might not be effective enough to get the dormant thinking process to become active by itself. It might only take a part of an invitation to get the attention from students. Therefore, right questions play an important role to poke the thinking process of students. In conclusion, to transform pseudo-passive learning is to put another ingredient of right questions to turn the dimension of cognitive learning on. To develop cognitive learning, questions with orderly input to students based on Bloom's taxonomy are needed. According to Heer's model (2012), the model can give a guideline for well-planned lesson design of questions along with hands-on assignments.

To attain the ultimate goal of active learning which includes all three dimensions and leads to learning the learning process, it can be said that pseudo-active learning is

close to the goal. What happens in the brain is cognitive activity which should be displayed in action. The beneficial part of the behavioral and social dimension is to increase the depth of learning and to extend the boundary of learning. Even just a simple action like answering a question out loud would make a big difference (Obenland et al, 2013). The activity should be planned for two intentions, a process to awaken and develop the power of creativity which is the higher level of thinking or a diagnostic process which will help teachers to facilitate students' learning better. The advantage of pseudo-active learning is that the door of the cognitive dimension of learning is already opened. This type of learning can engage students in concepts constructing and knowledge networking (Obenland et al, 2012). Practice and other hand-on activities will promote layers of experiences in those concepts and networks (Li, 1999). As a result, the experiences through hands-on activities or practice will cause reflective abstraction which certainly is the goal of active learning. Briefly, a thinking-based classroom which is fulfilled by the relevant activities with clear objectives of being a formative assessment will become a real active learning classroom.

Framing by powerful learning objectives

However, no matter what the classroom is pseudo passive or pseudo active learning, to transform it out well needs efficient lesson design. Only random thinking might not cause learning. On the account of a model of learning objectives (Heer, 2012), each classroom should begin with a clear objective comprising intentional cognitive process and knowledge which students are expected to acquire in each classroom. Moreover, the transition of each class has to be designed based on constructing knowledge from concrete to abstract along with stimulating thinking skills from lower order to higher order. To visualize learning as a continuous process will cause a learning facilitator to create the whole lessons with learning objectives

connected to each other with well transitions developed from the hierarchical steps of cognitive process and knowledge dimensions. Therefore, both questions and activities together in any class that is relevant to well-planned learning objectives will definitely create an active learning environment.

Even if people would expect to create an active learning classroom, there are many times those lessons designs and classroom management would not support the idea. The shift from pseudo learning to actual learning is attainable. First of all, a learning facilitator is required to identify which category the learning in his/her classroom is. Any kind of learning has their own advantages and disadvantages. Each type of learning has a place to fit in depending on objectives of learning. However, the ultimate goal of education is to reinforce active learning which is believed to trigger a domino effect of constructive knowledge through different dimensions of thinking on top of the evidence of knowledge implication and application. In addition, the network of knowledge and skills will become more complex which will continuously lead to new enlightenment. Finally, all the process from the beginning will be learnt and explained by the learner. That's the hope of education, so-called lifelong learning.

SUMMARY

A calling for active learning is very intense in the 21st century even if there has been an attempt to change the whole educational system to this setting for a very long time. The change which is very popular is to change the classroom to be like a playground which engages students to get their hands on something. People usually blindly call the classroom with a lot of actions that "an active learning classroom". However, the true meaning of active learning is profound. Active learning is elaborated into three dimensions, behaviorally active, socially active and cognitively active. These create a matrix

which a learning facilitator has to carefully handle. The definition of learning actually shows a spectrum of learning from being passive to being active, to position the learning types on the spectrum are needed to begin with. Passive learning, pseudo passive learning, pseudo active learning and active learning, these can be explained by those three dimensions of active learning. Nevertheless, pseudo passive and pseudo active learning have hope to be transformed into active learning with some extra work. Pseudo passive learning is the learning which students might sit still but they actually have an activity of thinking inside their brain. This type of learning lacks behavioral and social dimensions which play important roles of stimulation and formative assessment. On the other hand, pseudo active learning might be an imposter of active learning with hands-on activities and collaborative works but students don't actually think of what they are doing. Therefore, questions play an important role for a missing piece of active learning by giving a platform of cognitive activities while they are completing their tasks. No matter what the learning is pseudo passive or pseudo active learning, the lesson design needs to be framed by the learning objectives model based on Bloom's taxonomy, so that each lesson and holistic lessons could be transformed to active learning eventually.

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