

*CREATIVITY and INNOVATION
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Into the Business Brains of Learners: fundamental findings from neuroscience research which can guide the development of language learning materials

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Abstract

The development of effective learning materials is a major challenge in education. This may be even more so with tertiary foreign language (FL) learning in non-lingua Faculties where FL-coursework, like basic Computer Science and Maths courses, is a mandatory "service subject". Indeed, for students who have enrolled to pursue degrees in the Sciences, Engineering, Economics, Sociology, Medicine, Pharmacy etc., FL courses are often seen as a necessary evil: FL-courses are not what students foresaw as a step on their professional paths. While students pursuing Business and Economics Degrees may realize that mastering a FL is an essential requisite for entering an increasingly intertwined and international economic market, a myriad of other challenges face FL instruction in such contexts, e.g. very large mixed linguistic ability classes plus the need to develop, in a limited time, the fluency needed for establishing professional and interpersonal rapport in business settings. Finally, at the tertiary level, FL-coursework is usually offered by experts of the target foreign language who are not, however, experts in the degree course content. This calls for the ad hoc development of FL-learning materials which respects learners' professional interests. Although there is no prescriptive formula for developing such materials (or any other, for that matter), some basic findings from neuroscience research can guide the development of more motivating and effective learning materials. In fact, an increasing number of scholars are recognizing that neuroscience research findings may provide educators useful insights towards good education practice.

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This talk will first present English FL-learning materials for tertiary Business curricula which mirror those developed for a Science curricula and the effectiveness of such materials will then be evaluated in light of research regarding the neurobiology of learning, memory and motivation as well as how the brain processes incoming textual and verbal information.

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