Soroush

Five UDL Inspired Strategies for Online CourseDesign

Introduction

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Universal Design Principles in Higher Education

The growth of online learning in higher education over the last decade and its exponential development due to COVID 19 have opened up exciting possibilities for instructors by providing access to new modes of course design not possible within the constraints of a traditional classroom. One approach to enhancing the student online learning experience is Universal Design for Learning (UDL), in which students are able to engage with the material in a manner appropriate to their current situation. By using this approach, courses can be designed in ways that allow students to take personalized paths to achieve the course outcomes.

The purpose of this vignette is to present lessons I have learned for designing online courses using UDL. My courses provide multiple entry points for learning so that students, with all their diversities, can adapt activities to fit their needs, emergent abilities, and interests. UDL can be expressed in four sub-principles ([Davis, Samara, and Luce-Kapler, 2000](#)):

1 providing multiple means of representation, with spaces for unanticipated possibilities to emerge;

2 providing multiple means for students to express what they know and what they have learned;

3 Offering ways into and explorations beyond planned experiences;

4 permitting and nurturing specialized interests of individuals while enhancing possibilities for the collective.

Strategies I've found to be effective

I have many used different UDL-inspired strategies in my course design. In the following sections, I present five that I have found to be effective.

UDL principle 1

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Strategies drawn from the UDL principle of providing multiplemeans of representation, with spaces for unanticipated possibilities to emerge:

Strategy 1

I record a captioned (see La, Dyjur and Bair, 2018 for reasons why) personal introductory video every week and place them on the D2L homepage (as well as other e-authoring content). Although important course information is always provided in the course outline, my videos remind students of key dates and deadlines. I also highlight student-generated content from theprevious week that draws their attention to key notices in the upcoming readings. I use these videos to create a nurturing and motivating climate where meaningful communication thrives between myself and my students. The following example is an introductory video for Week 2 of my online course EDER 669.73 (Language Teaching and Technology).

Strategy 2

With this strategy, I record videos that highlight and summarize readings as well as offer insight into course design. For example, in addition to the general gist of the reading, this allows me as an instructor to discuss why I have selected the particular material for the students, what I hope the take-away is and how the assigned reading aligns with the course outcomes. Students drawupon these videos and offer their own unique interpretation of the readings, often different from mine, which opens the space for unanticipated possibilities to emerge. Note that traditionally videos are used to offer information or to build relationships (Anderson, 2008). However, when instructors offer content while sharing personal experiences and stories, purposeful communication (synchronously and asynchronously) grows (Aragon, 2003), andaffords new possibilities. The following is an example of an explanatory video for Week 2 of EDER 669.73 (Language Teaching and Technology).

UDL principle 2

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Strategy drawn from the UDL principle of providing multiple means for students to express what they know and what theyhave

Strategy 3:

Implementing Universal Design principles of Assessment by offering choice and variety can reduce anxiety and increase engagement (Davis, 2009). Assessment should be designed such that it aligns with the learning outcomes and also supports strategic and organizational abilities and allowing students to express acquired knowledge and skills in diverse ways. For example, I offer students the choice to work together on a project or individually.

I avoid allocating a heavily weighted component and offer students choice over what medium they want to use in response to the assessment activities.

UDL principle 3

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Strategy drawn from the UDL principle of offering ways intoand explorations beyond planned experiences

Strategy 4

Findings from my research have highlighted the benefits of using video in class (Sabbaghan, Pelgar, & Tweedie, 2019). Videos not only lower affective filters, but they also provide opportunities to offer multimodal feedback (or veedback). I have found that this mode of feedback is superior as it is more likely to have uptake than other methods.

When providing video feedback, instructors should first read/watch/listen to the response. If the response is text-based, students should use D2L's annotation tools or a browserplug-in called Liner to highlight the text they want to speak to. Students should then make a video, where they "talk through" the highlights they have made. If the response is a video ora podcast, they should first make note of time indexes they want to talk about and then make a screen–cast where they replay the areas of interest and offer feedback. The following video is an example of video feedback provided to a discussion post for EDER 600 - Research Methodology in Education (see consent below):

Having trouble?

Click on the button to see the video in its native player.

[SEE VIDEO]

Consent

Please see Ashley's consent (on behalf of the group) to use this video below:

Hello!

Thank you for your feedback.

We talked as a group and we'll be glad for it to be used as a demo. Happy to help the next class(es) of students.

Thanks so much. I enjoyed the course and it definitely changed my perspective on education research.

Take care and all the best,
Ashley

Click to zoom

UDL principle 4

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Strategy drawn from UDL principle of permitting and nurturing specialized interests of individuals while enhancing possibilities for the collective

Strategy 5

The idea of the non- disposable assignment came about from frustration voiced by my students who were spending enormous amounts of time completing assignments that were graded and filed away, never to be looked at again and thus, were disposable. I now have a "non-disposable" assignment policy at the design level. Wiley (2013) first introduced the idea of creating assignments that allowed students to work in any medium they prefer, which leads them to invest in what they do. A non-disposable assignment focuses on personalized learning by allowing students to work on an authentic problem in their context. They are artifacts which students value, feel connected to, and are proud to share with their peers. To implement a non-disposable assignment, instructors should provide a clear description of the assignment and ask students to revise and remix the core instructional materials of the class with their own original work in order to create an artifact (in any medium) on a topic. Students can then share their artifact with others on the discussion forum (instead of uploading to Dropbox). I invite students to review each other's work, provide constructive feedback to their peers and revise their own artifacts. The following are two examples of non-disposable assignments.

Example 1

I used non-disposable assignments for the first time in my 2019 undergraduate course EDUC 535(Specialization II – Secondary Languages). The four assignments I made proved very successful and as you can see, in a class of only 14 students, 147 threads were created. Please note once the lesson is designed and edited, my hope is that students use them in class.

Week 3 Task

Write a lesson plan sequence that shows how you could implement for reading skills practise using technology. For instance, you might plan how you would use technology for extensive reading. Specify:

- what the teaching context is (age, level, etc.)
- what preparation you would need
- what technology would be used
- how you would analyze whether the technology enhances the teaching and learning process.

14   147   July 21 at 11:27 AM

Example 2

I have started using non-disposable assignments at the graduate level for EDER 669.27 (SecondLanguage Acquisition). Again, I experienced success and student engagement.

Week6 ᵥ

Here are some examples of translanguaging {Garcia and Wei 2015}:

- A teacher introduces 2-3 key vocabulary words and their definitions at the beginning of the lesson and asks students to translate the definition into their home languages.
- A teacher has students list en t o a song in Spanish about the topic of the day. She then has them answer a series of questions about the song in English.
- A Teacher allows a student who is struggling to say something in English during a presentation to ask a classma te to translate what they are trying to say into English, which the student is then asked to repeat.
- A teacher has students look at a series of pictures and asks students to discuss in small groups what they see and wha t they can infer. They can discuss in any language they wish but are asked to share with the whole class in English.

Here are some non-examples :

- The teacher speaks in English and then translates what she just said into Spanish after every few sentences.
- A teacher does a word -fo r- word translation of a text and tells students to either read the English tex t or the tex t in their home language; all students choose to read the home language only or the English only text.
- Students are given a read ing that is chunked into paragraphs. The paragraphs alternate between one in English and an exact translation in their home language.

Please provide an example and a non-example of translangulng relevant to your context. Please provide a brief explanation of what it is in the examples (you offer) that turns the activities into an example and non-example.

Reference:

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