



Teaching and Learning about the Brain

Brian Birdsell, David Scott Bowyer, Julia Daley, John Duplice, Mohammad Khari, Deepa Kiran, & Skye Playsted

Abstract

The Brain SIG’s monthly Think Tank publication has become the focus of our efforts to learn and teach others about the brain. By drawing on the expertise of SIG members in Japan and authors around the world, we are able to address a wide range of topics related to neuroscience, psychology, and language learning. In this forum editors and authors from the MindBrainEd Think Tanks will give short, concurrent presentations related to some of the topics we have covered over the last year, then lead small group discussions to explore these topics in more depth and relate them to your teaching practices. Join us and find out how our Think Tanks help us make brain research meaningful and engaging for educators.



Session Schedule

14:30	Welcome & Opening Remarks		
14:35	Concurrent Presentations A		
	<i>In Person</i>	<i>On Zoom</i>	<i>On Zoom</i>
	Enhancing student creativity in English: The benefits of walking and letting the mind wander	Art of Listening and the Storytelling Teacher	For the Love of Teaching (and the love of your students)
15:05	Concurrent Presentations B		
	<i>In Person</i>	<i>On Zoom</i>	<i>On Zoom</i>
	Looking Back: Writing Slower to Write Deeper	Fostering resilience and a growth mindset in the LX classroom	“The Celestial Openness”
15:35	Roundtable Discussion (Hybrid)		
15:55	Closing Remarks		

Concurrent Presentations A – 14:35



Brian J. Birdsell
Hirosaki University

Enhancing student creativity in English: The benefits of walking and letting the mind wander

In this presentation, I first discuss what mind wandering is and why it has been branded as something that leads to unhappiness. Then, I present research that examines the benefits of letting the mind wander through movement-based activities like walking for enhancing creativity. Using a model, I developed to describe the creative process, I show how creativity involves the flipping between controlled (mind focused) and spontaneous (mind wandering) thinking. Next, I explain why creativity is an important skill for foreign language learners and describe some writing prompts that I have used in the past to give students opportunities to be creative in English. Finally, using the aforementioned model, I analyze the creative process in these student writings.



Deepa Kiran
*Story Arts Foundation,
Founder*

Art of Listening and the Storytelling Teacher

Storytelling has for a while been accepted and invited into the classroom as a valid and valuable pedagogical approach. There is a lot of research on the benefits of storytelling for the learner, especially in relation to speaking skill development. It is equally beneficial for the teacher when she becomes a storyteller. A significant benefit is: “listening”. The teacher who tells stories is really telling the learner that, ‘I enjoy putting everything else aside and talking to you’. ‘I enjoy having a conversation with you’. A conversation is a two-way communication. As contradictory as it sounds, the learner feels ‘listened to’ by the teacher, as she/he listens to a story from the teacher. Thus storytelling opens up door-ways for the teacher to listen to the learner. It also re-opens the door-way for listening skill development’ for the learner, who is in a multi-media inundated world which could at times distract and lower attention span.



Skye Playsted
*The University of
Queensland, Australia*

For the Love of Teaching (and the love of your students)

In this presentation, I look at the importance of relationships in the classroom: between students and other students, as well as between students and their teachers. Much of human learning is rooted in our relationships with others, and this holds especially true in a language classroom where the end-goal is communication, the cornerstone of any relationship. Together, let’s explore how we can build healthy relationships in our classrooms that can best foster learning in our students (and ourselves).

Concurrent Presentations B – 15:05



John Duplice
Sophia University

Looking Back: Writing Slower to Write Deeper

This talk is on adapting writing activities requiring students to think more deeply and therefore write more deeply. This discussion is derived from the Think Tank on Stress from June 2021. The article, titled *Looking Back: Writing Slower to Write Deeper*, discusses slight adaptations to three teaching methods, 1) using mentored texts, 2) writing checklists, 3) providing corrective feedback. These changes require the student writer to slow down the process by thinking more deeply, hence writing more deeply. Each of these methods is explained in the context of a writing lesson, so this talk will be practical rather than theoretical, enabling teachers to take something of immediate use in their writing class. It is recommended to take a few minutes to read the Think Tank article to get the most out of the talk.



David Scott Bowyer
Nagoya Gakuin University

Fostering resilience and a growth mindset in the LX classroom

Grit. Determination. The will to succeed where others fail. History shows us that successful people seem to have an almost superhuman ability to endure hardship, drudgery and failure, and to just keep on going until their goals have been achieved. Some people just seem to have that special something sauce. And it's not just politics and business where this mindset thrives, but in all walks of life and especially in our schools. In this presentation, Scott will attempt to de-mystify the concepts of grit/resilience and the growth-mindset, and provide some simple, straightforward activities that we can use by ourselves and with our LX classrooms to foster these desirable traits.



Mohammad Khari
*Ozyegin University/
Özyeğin Üniversitesi*

“The Celestial Openness”

This is what Patricia Kuhl, Ph.D. calls babies' openness to sounds, and how babies learn the sounds of the language in the “critical period” affects their pronunciation their whole life. In this talk, I will investigate the role of “Social Gating” and “Neural Commitment” in language acquisition. The link between distinguishing sounds early in life, “mapping” the prototypes through statistics-taking, listening to “caregiverese” in the ambient language, and the implications of all these things for the future language abilities will be explored. Finally, I will discuss how all this can help us have a better understanding of our learners in the language classrooms.