

Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction in Covid-19 times

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We used to teach in a context conditioned by macro and micro policies as well as by the circumstances of our own classrooms till Covid-19 turned our routines upside down. There is a passage that could summarise teaching in lockdown and which says that unpredictable situations requires from teachers to develop their skills to create 'varied and situation specific ideas within a general framework that makes sense in terms of pedagogical and theoretical knowledge' (Kumaradivelu, 1992, p.41). And this is exactly what we have been doing in the MFL Department at WA. Reflecting on action (Schon, 1983; cited in Burton, 2009) and evolving in our teaching practice because what works in one situation may fail in another.

However, this progression is neither being easy or quick. Lessons in the MFL Department are still in constant development as we are becoming more confident users of the available technology, also we keep reflecting on our practice and on how Rosenshine's instructional principles (2012) need to be embedded in the planning of our lessons for us to be able to cater for the needs of all learners.

[Some of these principles have been straight forward to apply online. Nevertheless, we have also encountered some challenges. Here, there is synopsis of how MFL 'new classroom' practice implements Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction as well as some of the theories that support them.](#)

1. Not only does the value of a well-balanced starter task allow students to work without teachers' intervention and helps students settle down at the beginning of a lesson but also it provides students with an opportunity to revise content previously learned. It is for this reason that, even though we are teaching online, in Spanish we keep commencing lessons with a short task which help our students to refresh their memories.

2. Cognitive science has proved that for our working memory to be able to retain new information, learning must be gradually processed by breaking down the information in smaller chunks and practising it subsequently. This is especially relevant in MFL as language learning is supported when learners actively and frequently respond to stimuli. Nonetheless, this would occur faster and smoother whenever complex structures in the second language are broken down into their component parts, transferred and linked to students' first language.

3. One of the difficulties we have encountered teaching online is to assess pupils progress during the lessons. This should be an on-going approach that would give us the opportunity to diagnose our students' strengths and weaknesses. However, some students were reluctant to participate in online lessons, this being one of the major challenges we encountered.

We have, at different stages of Spanish online lessons, included a range of approaches for students to demonstrate their understanding. However, and due to their initial introversion, we tend to promote a range of approaches which allowed us to increase students' engagement as well as to build positive rapport between us and our students and our students amongst themselves.

Some of the strategies we have been using to elicit answers are: using the Teams chat to receive written answers; using the little orange hand on Teams members list to answer yes, no or multiple choice questions; promoting discussions by pairing students to build up answers; nominating more extrovert students and/or volunteers; and more recently we have started using Pear Deck.

4. Rosenshine highlights that for our students to achieve their self-regularisation stage, they need teachers to help them reach deeper understanding as well as become autonomous learners. This modelling stage allows us to scaffold learners by focussing on elements that are originally beyond our students' ability. In MFL, this is a common practice as students tend to compare linguistic rules and structures between English and Spanish. This Contrastive Analysis (Lado, 1964) justifies the fact that there are structures in Spanish that are similar in English and which are normally mastered by students more easily. Conversely others can be difficult because of their differences with English. For us to help students overcome these obstacles, we model answers as well as tasks step by step and also, we provide a wide range of examples. We also support these explanations by using visual elements, for example colour coded explanations, which facilitate the comparison and understanding of certain linguistic aspects. In addition to this and during lockdown in the MFL department, we have been sharing narrated PowerPoints of the lessons with students where explanations and tasks' answers have been recorded and elaborated step by step.

5. For students to store new information in their long-term memory and subsequently retrieve it, this needs to be sufficiently rehearsed. In language learning, behaviourist theory (Skinner, 1958; cited in Pritchard, 2014) corroborates that for language learning to take place, behaviours must be reinforced by repetition as well as by providing positive responses. In fact, guided practice in languages is more effective whenever the information to be practised is presented through gradual stages (Rosenshine's 2nd and 4th principles). These two principles (4th and 5th) go hand by hand with the next principle (6th) as new language is presented and rehearsed gradually for our students to attain more accurate production. It is for this reason that we are providing our students with an array of practice, such as quizzes, on-going pieces of writing and worksheets, that allow us to assess their output, give them feedback accordingly and plan subsequent lessons.

6. Assessment for learning 'is at the heart of effective teaching' (Black and Wiliam, 1998b, p.2) and it is closely related to Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), as the outcome of assessment allows us to compare students' guideless attainment and what they may be able to achieve with relevant guidance. In Spanish, this is a bottom-up process as students encounter new linguistic structures, schemas, which needs to be accommodated by means of sufficient retrieval and as well as effective feedback. For instance, Year 9s and 10s are now in the process of completing a piece of writing. Each week, they improve their work according to the grammatical feature being learned at the time and also in line with the corrections and suggestions that we had previously given them.

7. Checking for understanding promotes a 'culture of success' (Black and Wiliam, 1998b) which helps students concentrate on the gaps in their knowledge of Spanish, their interlanguage, and on the achievable goals needed to improve their production. However, this feedback must be understood and correctly applied by students for them to avoid fossilization of ungrammatical linguistic features. It is for this reason, that platforms like Pear Deck provide us with enough information for us to be able to identify the success rate of a group during an online lesson.

8. The concept of scaffolding refers to the action taken by teachers through supportive dialogue to guide students along their ZPD for them to attain a higher developmental level (Wood et al., 1976). However, not only can this mediation be carried out through collaborative dialogue between teacher and students but also teachers can provide students with tools for them to be appropriately supported and therefore to be able to achieve the desired outcome. Regarding tool-mediation, the MFL Department at WA has produced a range of materials that have been shared with students and which are also available on the SharePoint. These documents, such as vocabulary lists, verbs/tenses tables, grammar tables and narrated lessons have been created to support learners during lessons as well as when they are working independently in and out the classroom.

9. For new information to be stored in our working memory and also to be able to be recalled automatically, this has to be sufficiently practised. As previously mentioned, new information needs to be gradually presented as well as modelled prior to being independently practised in the classroom and after. One of the difficulties we encountered in the MFL Department at the beginning of the lockdown was the way to monitor students' independent practice during online lessons. We tried a range of approaches -some were more successful than others- until we started working with Pear Deck. Thanks to Pear Deck we can monitor students' production during online lessons as well as to help them when required. In addition to this, students of Spanish are also carrying out an on-going piece of writing where they can put into practice new as well as previously learned materials. Students received feedback every week and had the opportunity to improve and/or modify their paragraphs according to the given comments/corrections.

10. For students to be able to use information previously learned, they need to have the new schemata accommodated in their long-term memory by means of extensive practice .During lockdown in MFL Department, we ask our students to complete quizzes on Showmyhomework, after almost every lesson for them to have access to further practice. Additionally, Year 9s and 10s are carrying out a topical writing in which they need to apply a range of grammatical structures, tenses as well as vocabulary which some have been recently learned and others that were learned in previous years or modules.

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