

What Can We Learn From the Digital Natives?

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What Can We Learn From Digital Natives?

- Who are these “digital natives”?
- What do we expect them to learn from us?
- What can we learn from them?

But first...a couple of metaphors

The Fish metaphor:

- “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”

Chinese Proverb



Which leads us to...

The “maps” metaphor

Semanticist Alfred Korzybski, a friend of Einstein's, and the founder of General Semantics, is known for a single quote:

“The map is not the territory”

- Language is a map.
 - Numbers are maps.
 - A story is a map.
 - A clock is a map.
 - Models are maps.
 - Metaphors and symbols are maps.
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- What else is a map?



The Oh-so-subtle meaning?

- Teach more by experience, than by description
- Teach more territories, and less maps
- Or at the very least, expand our repertoire of maps

So, getting back to these Digital Natives...

- One of the landscapes for real students (the territory) for which we need to develop a new map is the world of the “digital native”.

Digital Natives vs Digital Immigrants

□ “[O]ur students have changed radically. Today’s students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach.”

Digital Natives vs Digital Immigrants

□ “native speakers” of digital language have grown up with:

- cell phones,
- iPods*,
- compute rs,
- video games,
- CDs and DVDs,
- Sesame Street*,
- e-mail,
- instant messaging,
- the Internet
- Google*
- Yahoo*
- Hotmail*
- triple digit channels on their TVs
- TVs in their bedrooms.



What does that make the rest of us?

Digital Immigrants

- We remember, and long for, “the good old days”
- We have our own technology we thought was cool
- We sometimes try to pass as digital natives

Digital Natives vs Digital Immigrants

- Prensky: these students think in fundamentally different ways than we do.
- What is safe to say, though, is that we cannot turn back the hands of time

The Point

So we have this potentially very different breed of student entering our hallowed halls.

So what?

- **We still need to teach them**

So What Do We Do?

- How do we teach these digital natives, who don't necessarily think the way we do?
- Many of us teach the way we were taught
- Sesame Street taught them that learning should be fun

Learning to say “yes” to technology

One of the tempting answers is to simply throw technology at them, to learn the lingo, to be hip to that jive, man...

But here's the rub:

- It's not the technology that counts, but how we use the technology**
- The rules of engagement may not have changed as much as we think**

Learning to say “no” to technology

- Catering to the digital native does not mean we **MUST** use the new technology
- it means learning to use technology appropriately to teach a group who learn in radically different ways
- Sometimes that means not using new technology at all

Learning to say “no” to technology

- There are many different dialects to this new digital language.
- Dialects are influenced by
 - Socio-economics
 - Place of birth
 - “real” cultural variances

Learning to say “no” to technology

- Digital natives can still understand digital immigrants who, to them, may speak with an accent
- I learned a lot from my French Canadian grandmother

The Real Argument for Podcasting

- The digital native will use the technology (the podcast) as a tool, just as we would want them to.
 - As a study aid
 - To pick up material missed by a necessary absence
 - As an aid for students who require language or physical accommodation
- They will recognize the podcast for what it is: a recording of information, a map

The Real Argument for Podcasting

- Being digital natives, they will not use the podcast as an excuse to skip classes, if they recognize the following in the classroom:
 - That the class is an event to be experienced, rather than information to be described (the map metaphor)
 - The content is provided in a varied and engaging manner, that allows the student to process it rather than simply record it (the fish metaphor).



The Real Argument for Podcasting

- When the podcast is EQUIVALENT to attending class THEN the podcast BECOMES a viable alternative



What We Can Learn from the Digital Natives?

- We need to, or ought to, or can rely less on maps and more on territories.
- In our learning of teaching, we need to engage ourselves by doing We need to be WITH students.

What We Can Learn from the Digital Natives?

- If we are to be more effective teachers to digital learners, we should try to tear a page out of their book:
 - We should recognize that they need to change gears and direction frequently
 - We should recognize that they'll know when you use collaborative or group work badly – they are experts at it

What We Can Learn from the Digital Natives?

- If we are to be more effective teachers to digital learners, we should try to tear a page out of their book:
 - We should realize that they can be more adept at multi-tasking than we may be
 - We should recognize that they won't all use the technology provided, or use it in the same way
 - We should realize that we are still the people they need to look up to for support and direction