Toward an Auditory Digital Pedagogy

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> "Any person, brought into the presence of this fact, stops for a few moments and remains pensive and silent; and then generally leaves, carrying with him forever a sharper, keener sense of our incessant motion through space" -Leon Foucault

Need

Rapid movement and change challenges human interactions and environments, but it also makes experiential evolutionary resistance. We learn through repeated interactions with our lived environments, methodically building capacity and resilience in the face of motion and change. As with many processes in nature, learning takes time, yet it is this perceived slowness that becomes the pejorative in education with allusions to a lack of intelligence or capacity.

There is a need to reclaim the aspects of pedagogy that have been backgrounded in the era of foregrounded educational automation, standardized assessments, and granular learning objectives, where progress is measured in quantitative increments and minutiae. We look to interject aspects of stillness, silence, and (relative) slowness into our pedagogies, to build upon the pedagogy of composure (Noble & Watkins, 2009), the embodied pedagogy (Irwin, 1999), slow learning movements, and to a lesser extent the pedagogy of the psyche (Athanasou, 2003). Ultimately, pedagogy needs elements of slowness, stillness, and patience embedded into its structure to balance the foregrounded elements of immediacy, urgency, and a trend towards the avoidance of abstraction in societies accustomed to regimes of efficiency, accountability, and performance. In this short work, we demonstrate how this can be done with one particular mode, a mode prone to measurable and assessable elusiveness: audio.

Slow learning

The contemporary hype connected with digital education and mobile learning all too often emphasizes visuality as the critical element in multi-channelled learning: the predominance of text, images, emoticons, and visual navigation in digital technology. We think that this overvaluing of visuality can distort understanding of the more nuanced and complementary aspects of learning. Visuality works as part of a learning event at the beginning of the learning process, when it pre-structures or works as an orientation basis for a lingering and gradual learning event. Or the visual image or model can be used in the end as a visualization of the learning process and its contents. The image either introduces or concludes the long-lasting learning continuity. Our relationship to place, urban or rural, is instructive here. The visuality of a location serves to both structure and define our understanding of it in the first instance, yet our deeper understanding of that place is ultimately defined through a lengthy, messy, and ultimately slow process of inquiry and discovery employing multiple channels: emotion, relationships, experience, audio, video, smell, texture, and so forth. So, learning is a prolonged event, which requires time.

This slowness is especially present in aural occurrences and perceptions. A learner cannot extract from audio in isolation without focusing and following the aural event and simultaneously interpreting it for her/himself. The learner has to process the aural eventuality to construct meaning. In multi-channelled learning, the visual depicting entities benefits from auditory activity to arouse a deeper and personal meaning making. The pace of aural learning is a counterpart for the immediate visuality. Visualizations often need aural explanations to be fully understood. The slowness in the auditory refers to duration, where individual auditory impressions emerging from the surrounding environment, from dialogue and discussion, and from ourselves are sequences of time cycles that are gradually assembled to become meaningful entities; the sounds of discussion become the material of podcasts. The slowness requires trust in the emergence of learning, and to what is not yet ready and complete, a patience for expression and interpretation; it is a productive tension.

Audio complementing visual: models

Audio models like podcasts, radio dramas and voice messages provide the essential slowness template for learning. Audio is perpetual in that they are not ready nor complete, but one has to actively engage them and their incompleteness to construct meaning. Audio is ultimately relational and thus time consuming; it requires assembly and aggregation. It is also subjective because the listener has to simultaneously follow personally and actively hearable sounds and voices to reach meanings in them.

Auditory education and learning in online environments in practice relies on podcasts, which can be produced and used by learners and teachers separately and together. Radio dramas are more demanding learning audio productions but still important resources, and they should have a bigger role in modern online education. In everyday educational practices, audio can simply be both shared aural notes and observations, and descriptions of experiences and examinations of noticed soundscapes and landscapes and people´s social events. These descriptions surely are already used by learners, but they could be used pedagogically in a more robust and explicit way. Teachers for instance could make learning activities and feedback summaries and conclusions as spoken recordings.

Aural dialogue as a method

A particular case audio pedagogy we have personally developed is a set of aural descriptions of our individual environments connected with certain learning and examination themes. We begin with a theme or audio recording of moderate length detailing observations of the speaker's environment. These audio recordings are sent to the other as resources and triggers for further auditory development without accompanying visuals; we rely on auditory explanations, and our own patience, to learn what is being discussed. Finally these recordings are reflected on collaboratively via Skype to discuss our research and learning results. For instance, we have create a recorded audio dialogue on the soundscapes from our surroundings: a small creek in Central Finland and the huge Han River in Seoul. We believe similar virtual sound and voice activities can be enhanced to all educational contexts in both formal and informal settings.

Bibliography

- Athanasou, J. A. (2003). Pedagogy of the Psyche: An Orthodox Perspective. Journal of Christian Education, 46(2), 57-60.
- Irwin, R. (1999). Facing oneself: An embodied pedagogy. Art and Learning Research Journal, 16(1), 82-86.
- Noble, G., & Watkins, M. (2009). On the arts of stillness: For a pedagogy of composure. M/C Journal, 12(1).

1 . Sounds, voices, speeches

  1. Unknown, understandable and understood meanings inside events happening in surroundings

  2. Slow (as a phenomenon) in the sense of getting a touch of the whole set of events
     - Aural compared with visual information and meanings available in perceptable sound and landscapes

  4. Examples of sounds, voices and speeches carrying contents via which to learn

  5. Slowness affording space and time for processing learnables and the to be learned

  6. A manifesto for radio drama and podcast pedagogy challenging hyped visuality in multi-channelled learning.

Bibliography

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Slow Pedagogy: Audio as both podcast and radio drama
  1. Define Method
       a. Talk about our exchanges recording and responding without visuals
       b. Provide some evidence from our work so far
       c. Maybe graphic outlining method
  2. Background
       a. Other patient pedagogies (if any exist)
       b. Background in radio dramas and podcasts (borrowing familiar structures)
       c. Building from our aesthetic literacy approach: making use of of our open environments and spaces
  3. Impact
       a. How this could be used
       b. Why it is important
       c. Maybe we could develop a page for our PoS site where we discuss this method and point people to that page in the SeOppi article
  4. References

Learning takes time. Learning is a slow process. Contemporary hype connected with elearning and mobile learning too often emphasizes visuality as an only essential element in multi-channelled learning. We think that this overvaluing of visuality can distort understanding of the real character of learning. At best visuality as a part of learning event is in the beginning of the learning process, when it sort of pre-structures or works as an orientation basis for lingering and gradual learning event. Or the visual image or model etc. can be used in the end as a visualization of the learning process and its contents. The image wraps up the long-lasting learning continuity.

So, learning is a prolonged event, which requires its time. This inertia is especially present in aural occurrences and perceptions. A learner cannot catch up meanings in them without focusing and following the aural event and simultaneously interpreting it for her/himself. To use cognitive psychology jargon the learner has to process the aural eventuality to construct meanings - and to learn. In multi-channelled learning and teaching visual formations depicting entities require for their company auditory activity to arouse a deeper and personal meaning making.

The above written is a plea for podcasts and radio dramas as remarkable learning and teaching resources and methods. The principle of learning connected to them is slowness. In the following the slowness as a learning factor is examined.