The Power of Emotion in English Language Learning:

Lessons from Neuroscience Illustrated in the Experiences of Beginning ELL Teachers
Agenda

0 Introductions
0 Engaging Emotion
0 Exploring the Affective Filter in 2nd Language Learning
0 Examining 3 Findings from Neuroscience that Support Attending to Affect in Teaching ELL Students
0 Making Connections with Neuroscience Video Activity
0 Learning from the Experiences of 2 Student Teachers in the ESL Endorsement Program
Presenters

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Engaging Emotion

Pondering
Think about a time from this past week when emotion played a role in your classroom or school.

How was learning enhanced or harmed in this instance?

Partnering
Discuss your responses with a partner
Theoretical and Empirical Support: The Affective Filter

One of Stephen Krashen’s 5 hypotheses of language acquisition: Acquisition-Learning, Monitor, Natural Order, Input, Affective Filter

“A learner who is tense, angry, anxious, or bored will screen out input, making it unavailable for acquisition. Thus, depending on the learner’s state of mind, the filter limits what is noticed and acquired. The filter will be up or operating when the learner is stressed, self-conscious, or unmotivated. It will be down when the learner is relaxed and motivated” (Lightbown & Spada, 1993, p. 28).
The Affective Filter Hypothesis (cont):

Those whose attitudes are not optimal for second language acquisition will not only tend to seek less input, but they will also have a high or strong Affective Filter--even if they understand the message, the input will not reach the part of the brain responsible for language acquisition, or the language acquisition device. (Krashen, 1982)
When the filter is high, it blocks language acquisition. A low affective filter is desirable.
Neuroscience Finding #1

We can't divorce emotion from thinking—emotion acts as a *rudder* for thinking (Damasio & Immordino-Yang, 2007)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgwy-iJWjYs
Neuroscience Finding #2

“To develop meaningful, internalized skills, learners must actively build neural networks, a time-consuming process that results from the effort required for repeated trips over the same ground ... Each time learners cover this ground, the network becomes more defined.

Sometimes, progress is slowed by obstacles—a new idea or an old idea they thought they understood but didn't, or an inability to focus—but, over time, understanding or skill deepens and improves” (Kurt Fischer, 2012).
Neuroscience Finding #3: **Regression** is a critical part of learning

Even when teachers create highly supportive conditions within the same domain, students' performance fluctuates.

That's the **rhythm of learning** and the **rhythm of constructing new neural networks**.
Each success brings students closer to the limit of their ability or understanding until they stumble, go back a bit, and start again—learning from both **progress and regression** and slowly building more stable neural networks.

The significance of context: **“But I could do it in class!”**
It goes a little something like this:

Backward transition from optimal to functional levels

Abstractions

Representations

Actions

Regression
Engaging Emotion in Learning Video Activity

Go to http://learner.org/

Go to http://www.learner.org/courses/neuroscience/
Go to Videos:
http://learner.org/courses/neuroscience/videos/videos.html
Directions

1) Browse the **video titles** in:

**Unit 2: The Unity of Emotion, Thinking, and Learning**
- Measuring Emotional Response to Physics
- Depth of Field
- Emotion in Math
- Good Idea?

**Unit 3: Seeing Others from the Self**
- Music and Emotion
- Using Emotional Content in the History Classroom
- Empathy
- Peer Mentoring

2) Choose one video to view, stopping periodically to **discuss how the information connects to ELL students and emotion and learning in your context.**
Discussion

What insights about connecting emotion and learning for ELL students did you discuss in relationship to the video you watched?

How might you better recruit emotion or encourage how emotion works as the “rudder for learning” in your classroom, especially for ELLs?

Experiences connecting emotion in learning: Insights from student teachers in the ELL Endorsement program
For additional information:

Link to research on emotion and learning: http://rossier.usc.edu/faculty-and-research/directories/a-z/profile/?id=47


Link to www.learner.org neuroscience course: http://www.learner.org/courses/neuroscience/

Links to videos of Mary Helen Immordino-Yang on emotion and learning filmed at the University of Wyoming Ellbogen Symposium on Teaching and Learning (Oct, 2013):

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4jcjDe9Da4
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgwy-iJWjYs
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0PULkeNdpg4
