Overcoming challenges of active and passive learning and teaching

Webinar handout

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The following summary of my webinar first focuses on what passive and active learning is. Then, we see that both have some advantages and some drawbacks. Finally, we discussed ways to overcome these drawbacks.

1. What is active and passive learning and teaching?

- **Active learning and teaching methods**

  - Discussions, either in small groups or as a whole class
  - Individual and group projects
  - Independent reflection
  - Peer-to-peer teaching
  - Role-playing
  - Experiments, simulations, or skill labs
  - Games and problem solving

- **Passive learning and teaching methods**

  - Individual reading
  - Lectures and presentation-heavy classes
  - Pre-recorded videos by teachers
  - Note-taking from textbooks

2. Advantages of these types of learning

Passive	Active
Ability to cover large amounts of information	Improvement of critical thinking skills

Efficient instruction of very large groups	Heightened student attention during class
Ability to plan, prepare, and reuse material	Student empowerment via their learning process
Control over course material and delivery	Increased retention of course material
	Opportunities for peer discussion and collaboration

3. Drawbacks of these types of learning

Passive	Active
Encouragement of regurgitation rather than critical thinking	Discomfort of introverted students
Discouragement of student questions and contributions	Lack of teacher control and the possibility of student misconceptions
Difficulty in assessing student progress and understanding in the middle of lessons	Requirement for more teacher preparation, flexibility, and facilitation skills
Reliance on teacher personality or presentation skills	Increased potential for classroom distractions
Potential for superficial engagement with and poor retention of concepts	
Difficulty in paying attention during long or one-dimensional presentations	
Limit in the material which can be presented	

4. Overcoming These Challenges

It can be argued that active and passive learning styles work best when used together. Here are a few tips to help you achieve balance. I encourage movement between styles**.** Break up long stretches of passive learning with active moments, such as:

- Asking for questions and answering student questions
- Take a break during lectures for individual reflection or pair work
- Challenge your class to defend a viewpoint against what you are presenting

Read more here:

https://www.smarttech.com/en/education/resources/article/active-learning-obstacles

https://www.melioeducation.com/blog/active-vs-passive-learning/

A recording of Sandrine's webinar can be watched here:
https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/news-events/world-teachers-day-2023/world-teachers-day-2023-friday-6-october

www.britishcouncil.org
www.teachingenglish.org.uk