

PGR Conference Committee – our thank you!

UDL = Access (no matter what)

Some reflection & appreciation for Thomas J Tobin

As a result of the contributions at the March 3, 2021, UD Think-Tank Seminar from the PGR committee – Mary Quirke, Catherine O'Reilly, (Stella) Wai Wan Choy, (Celine) Xining Wang & Ebru Boynuegri.



Our reflections on the seminar, which covered many areas including, but not exclusive to, inclusive practice and thinking and how an 'awareness of UDL' across all engagement platforms in higher education contribute to that agenda.

What we discussed today that helped me better understand the concept of UDL?

- Multiple ways for learner engagement – in all the learning spaces + places
- Multiple ways Representing information – in all the learning spaces + places
- Multiple ways to represent action and expression – in all the learning spaces + places
- The emphasis on how we need to think about how we engage and our interactions with others, the wider world, text and other methods...

What did I learn today that I did not know?

1. +1 thinking (add one more way to support inclusion)

As a way to start, this concept makes it easier for every individual to do one thing that will support a greater agenda of inclusion.

This is something easy to take on. We intend to create a 'value for our conference' - (represented in an art piece, we will use it as a mantra) and put it on our virtual office wall to remind us.

We want to be more active in promoting, supporting, and continuing to develop UDL – most especially at our PGR conference. While the conference is on graduate research – UDL is the philosophy we espouse to as researchers.

2. Many of us have considered ourselves to be a visual learners, but now we appreciate:

This is more about a learning preferences/in given times. Therefore, we also need to provide additional tools to assist ourselves and others move forward and to be aware of what works best for any individual in any given space and time.

Our Feedback for Thomas Tobin

The tone of your voice: Calm, Low, Clear, Relaxed, Knowing, Sharing, Welcoming

Take away: This way of talking has a comforting feel and is easy to engage with.

Body Language: Looked at the camera, Good hand gestures, Mindful, Comfortable, Engaging

Take away: It reminded us to look at the camera. Use eye contact to improve listeners experiences – even on a virtual platform. This is a very engaging way to connect with others on a virtual platform.

Excellent Delivery Thomas!

Feedback on content

Opening: very comfortable and stirred up curiosity.

Take away: The 5 minutes spent at the beginning on the 'meet and greet' before starting a presentation is so important. Use a variety of media – and make it look easy! music, chat, visuals, eye to eye contact

Out of our comfort zone: Virtual Platforms!! We need to learn how to use all available software (media can be unnecessarily intimidating) – and also ensure it is available to everyone we hope to engage.

Remember when considering your audience: Diverse needs requires a diversity of formats – but you can start with text.

Other highlights

1. *Social Media: re the disabled parking*. Thomas highlighted the problem and took action. Most of us say ‘that’s terrible’ but do nothing – that can also be a cultural thing. Be inspired to be more pro-active. See any ‘necessary critical’ action as a positive.
2. Don’t just train teachers in UDL. Train everyone who is involved in supporting the process. For example, the IT department, the administrators, and others – and most importantly research students!!
3. The PGR conference committee are seeking to invest in a UD and UDL approach of the 2021 virtual conference – it’s a first. We are the +1!

Concepts that will be a takeaway for research

The need for ‘Thinking time’ - Give yourself and others time to think. This is critical in the Virtual world and is underestimated in the physical world.

“And in the air we stood up to our eyes in wavered Like the zig-zag hieroglyph for life itself.” (Heaney, 2018, P. 105)

Heaney, S (2018). 100 Poems. Faber & Faber.