

THE EVALUATION OF GROUP DISCUSSION

The fourth group discussion

I. GENERAL INFORMATION:

Date, day and time of meeting:

19 September 2007, 16.00 – 17.00 pm

Place meeting held:

Fiatest headquarter, Transilvaniei Street, no.24, Sector 1 Bucharest

Moderator/interviewer:

Simona Gitu, Elisabeta Putere

Information about the course(s) of the participants

Persons that attended the fourth interview were trainees on training courses for foreign languages (English language).

II. Participants – personal data

Total number of participants:

- 6, out of which 4 females and 2 men. Group average age is 35 years.

- the educational level of those participants is medium. All have graduated the high school and professional courses related to public house field. They need to learn English because they need it at work. They have been working in restaurants/hotels like waitress/waiters.

III. Content analyses

Question 1. *When you think about of the media, what are your listening and watching habits?*

All the interviewees consider that they can use al type of media channel when they need to be informed. Their habits are different and are depending on type of information. Nevertheless, TV is the most used media information channel.

Interviewee 1: She prefer the newspapers because she needs to feel the paper, she needs that tactile sensation given by a newspaper in her hands: she have the newspaper in their hands and she can see and read the news. Also, in this way, she can analyze that information without being interrupted by anybody. She doesn't prefer radio or TV because, in this situation she needs a distributive attention; she can hardly focus on information listened.

Interviewee 2: He usually uses TV to get the information because, in this way, he can understand easier and he can make an opinion about the news (his understanding easier because he visualize the info that is received and get an opinion from the TV speaker). If he needs to learn something new (to improve his education) he will prefer to read the information. Thereby, he can visualize the information and he is able to make mental schemes.

Interviewee 3: She uses the radio when she needs to relax, when she wants to get just info from the divertissement area.

"If I want to learn something new, I will prefer to read the information because I can analyze, understand and learn easier."

Interviewee 6: She prefers TV because, in this way, she can have the imagines and those imagines can make easier the process of memorizing. Like the third interviewee, she prefers radio for listening news from divertissement area.

Interviewer comments:

During the discussion the atmosphere in the group was dynamic, a high percentage of attendees (80%) being very involved in discussion and providing arguments for their opinions.

Question 2. *In our daily life there are quite a lot of pictures, symbols or pictograms (e.g. no smoking sign, exit sign) especially when we use new media - PC, internet, mobile phones, touch screens e.g. ticket machines, bank cash machines.*

At the beginning it was quite difficult for the interviewers to provide an answer. The moderator had to interfere in order to clarify the requirements and to give some examples: signs on the menu of the mobile phone.

Interviewee 2: Those pictograms which symbolize a telephone (the existence of a phone machine), the signs I, which symbolize any electronically activity: electronically payments, e-communication. Also, the icons are used generally in all technical manuals of every electronically equipments. Another universal sign used from all people in the world is that one which symbolize OK (even in different culture there are different understanding of this sign).

The **interviewee 3** has given some examples of universal signs, symbols, like:

- the signs H from the hospital
- the signs which indicate a cash machine (a hand with a card),
- the signs which indicate the explosive substances (used by those who produce, transports and use these substances).

Interviewee 4: "At my job (hotel) the most useful imagines are those which indicate us the interdiction, the access way, the evacuation signs etc. For example, the sign inscripted with NO smoking helped me several times to get the attention of those who were breaking this rule, even I didn't know their language (or English).

I considered that those signs and symbols are very easy memorized and they help us all the time, in our personal and professional life".

Interviewee 5: “When I learn a new soft, probably I use the previous knowledge I’ve learned before (pictograms, symbols etc), but now, I’m not fully conscious about this. I just used them.”

Are you familiar with those “signs”? Do you like or appreciate them?

All interviewees confirmed the fact that those signs are very useful in their daily life.

Are they helpful? Why? Why not? Can you think of something that might crop up for someone in this situation?

Interviewee 1, 3 and 6: “By those symbols we can understand very well another person, even he/she is a foreigner. The universality of those signs makes the communication easier.”

Interviewee 4: “There are important because they offer us a minimum of needed information to manage in our daily life.”

Question 3. Do you remember a situation where visual learning was helpful? New media – are symbols easy?

Most of interviewees offered examples related with their visual learning experiences, but most of all are referring at the way they learned and less at the symbols used in the process of learning.

Interviewee 1: “During the high school and the college I succeed to learn easier using visual methods like: I have tried to make a picture of the learning contents and also, to memorize this imagine, I have used a lot of schemes which helped me to structure and remember the information easier.”

Interviewee 2: “I’ve made schemes to learn the information easier. I often used schemes to structure a complex content and, after that to memorize that content. The schemes helped me to make connection and, in this way, to understand the information, not just to memorize it. Also when I had to memorize a list of names, I’ve usually used a

trick: I have used the first letter for the each word I had to remember and I've made a new word:

- Alps
- Illinois
- Rwanda . The new word is **AIR** and the words I needed to remember is Alps, Illinois and Rwanda.

The third and the sixth respondents had similar examples.
Interviewee 3: "Yes, I've used and I still use this method, too. It is a fast method to memorize names of cities or different lists of words."

Interviewee 4: "I've also used this method. Another method to learn names of cities/states was to make a map with those cities (a map of a state) or those states (a world map). It helps me a lot to learn by visualizing the words (the names) and their position on that map."

Interviewee 4: "Visual learning helped me a lot in my adult life. In this moment I tried to learn a foreign language and I use a book with imagines (ex: I learned about fruits and vegetables). If I learned a new word, I would tried to make connections between fruit/vegetable imagine and the name of the fruit/vegetables. Firstly, I would tried to memorize imagine and after that to make the connections between imagine and the name of imagine."

Interviewee 5: I usually use the highlighter and, also, I use different colors in a document o help me to memorize easier (e.g.: I use a pink color for very important information, a green color for new information and yellow for things that I can use someday)."

Question 4. *What about visual symbols in relation to mobile phones, computers, internet, cash machines, ticket machines. Are they difficult, easy?*

Some of the responders gave examples of visual symbols used by them. They have offered the following examples:

Interviewee 3: "When I get the new version of the MS Office I had to suit to this new version. I used a lot the pictograms and icons known (there were no changes). I couldn't use the old methods known by me and I've had to discover that each pictograms/icons has the same significance. Also, was very helpful the Help menu."

The **fourth interviewee** used the same example. He arranged in the toolbar those symbols used often in the old version of MS Office.

Interviewee 5: When I play a new computer game it is helpful for me the pictograms and symbols known from the other games. Those symbols made me easier the learning process of that new game. Also, with these symbols I could make faster the settings needed (e.g.: the imagine of a musical note which represents the volume of sound option.)”

Question 5. *How do you learn best? Listening, reading, watching, doing etc. What kind of materials or situations do you like? Why?*

All responders answered that visual learning is a way in which we learn best. They considered that:

- taking notes on the main ideas would help the students to structure the information
- Learning by repetition is most useful for the student. Also, highlighting the main aspect it is helpful for memorizing those ideas.
- It is better to synthesise the information in schemes, but, in the same time to have a training material.

Quotations:

Interviewee 2: “I wasn’t conscious that I use a visual method to learn. I used to say that I need to see the content to learn easier but I never thought about this like a method of learning. In fact, I make schemes and I highlight the important paragraphs or words. Also, if the content of learning was bigger (a manual for exams or a book) I used to use post-its (with different colours) to organize the content in chapters and to make a scheme of the content).”

Interviewee 3: “For me, wasn’t very easy to concentrate to learn because I needed to practice what I read about and not just to memorize it. But, when wasn’t possible to apply the content of learning I used some “tricks” which helped me to make the process of learning easier, tricks like:

- Using a highlighter to highlight just the main ideas and, after that, I have created a connexions between those ideas.
- Making schemes and mind maps with the key word from the content”.

Question 6. *Is there anything that you're learning in class, or anything about the way that you're learning, that is particularly useful for you outside the classroom?*

The interviewees consider that the learning process helped them to have an analytical and an organized thinking:

- They make list and a scheme when they needed to make a bank loan (a scheme with financial issue and the planning for this activity)
- A scheme for the furniture arrangement
- The wedding planning:
 - o The arrangement of table in the restaurant
 - o The wedding invitation (the colour gradation, how to arrange the main aspects/words on the page etc)
- a layout for a website (how to structure the information in a proper way)

Question 7. *What kind of support would you like to get? How do you help your teacher decide what to teach?*

All respondent considered that the teacher should use the all kind of teaching: he should use the written information and also the imagines/schemes. But all of these aren't sufficient: he should make the course interactive. He should give examples and correlate the theory which is explained with the practice. Also, he must to ask for feedback a lot and to give feedback. He must to give general assumptions.

Another important aspect for the respondents was the climate of learning.

Some respondents consider that is very important for them to work both individual and in teams. The respondents consider that they learn better if the teacher uses examples and didactic materials, which have as main objective to facilitate the learning process

Interviewee 4: "I really enjoy the English class because our teacher is trying to use all kind of methods of teaching: firstly, she started from our level and our needs, secondly, she makes conversations

with us just in English and she use many picture to illustrate the words, scenes, situations from our domain. She gave us some imagines/words and we must to continue a conversation with her or a colleague starting from those imagines/words etc. I found this method a very interactive one and very useful for use. We have the chance to make conversation each other in English and also to get a feedback from our teacher regarding our performance”

Interviewee 2: “Because I was used to listen and take notices when someone teach me, in our first meeting with the English teacher was quite strange for me to be involved in discussions and debates. What I like most is the feeling that I’m getting home with something new learned every day (almost every day). The biggest difficulties in the process of learning English are the grammar rules’, but our teacher helped us with some lists which synthesize those rules (I can easily find the rules about verb and the tense of verbs, about the noun and preposition etc). I like to check those list when a make my homework or exercises because those list are “friendly” (are coloured, well structured, the key words are highlighted etc.)”

Reflection:

During the discussions the interviewer had to interfere just to clarify aspects which needed to be clarified. The role of the interviewer was as a moderator and an “opinion launching”, by providing concrete examples just when the group needed more details regarding one of the discussed aspects.

During the interview the atmosphere was relaxed, attendees discussed openly, without tensed situations.

Even the subject was not familiar for them, the respondents brought some interesting examples and got involve in the discussions.

Simona Cițu