**R2D2 Model for Language Teachers’ Online Professional Development**

**R546 Task 1-Option D. Program or Strategy review.**

As a doctoral student double majored in both LCLE and IST departments, my professional goal is to support language educators’ preservice training and inservice professional development on their design of language instruction. With the advancement of information technology, learning is no longer limited in physical classrooms. Internet allows people to imagine a different visage of learning that is not limited by time and space. Through online learning, learners are able to take on their learning in a more flexible schedule and a more individualized learning content. For professionals like teachers, this is a crucial factor that would make them more willing to buy in the idea of professional development. Therefore, due to online instruction and professional development’s great potential for enhancing and motivating language educators’ professional growth, I want to dedicate myself to researching and supporting their online professional development.

In Dr. Bonk and Dr. Zhang’s “Empowering Online Learning: 100+ Activities for Reading, Reflecting, Displaying and Doing”, they introduced the R2D2 model, a “framework for the design of online learning environments and activities” (p.4) (not an instructional design model as they noted on page 4). I find this framework to be extremely helpful in that it helps me blueprint my future online instruction and teaching philosophy for preservice and inservice language teachers. In the following sections, I will (1) give a brief summary of the R2D2 model, (2) discuss the strengths and potential use of the model in my future online classroom, and (3) discuss the flaws or limitations of the R2D2 model from my point of view.

**The R2D2 Model**

“R2D2” stands for read, reflect, display and do. According to Bonk and Zhang, these are the four essential components we should incorporate in our instruction in order to accommodate different learners’ learning style. It is a heavily research-based framework aligning with learning theories such as Kolb’s learning cycle, McCarthy’s 4MAT system, Fleming and Mill’s VARK learning style model. The R2D2 model aims to address “individual differences in learning and associated learning preferences and styles” (p.4). As such, there is different focus in different phase of R2D2 model.

The phase one of R2D2 model is **reading**. At this phase, we focus on helping learners acquire the foundational knowledge in order to move on to the next phase. This phase also targets to address the learning needs of verbal and auditory learners. Activities that can be incorporated at this phase include online reading, videoconferencing, podcasts etc. The second phase is **reflecting**. Learners are asked to reflect on the content they have been learning at phase 1. At this phase, we are addressing the learning needs of reflective and observational learners through activities such as blogging, internship or job reflections, or self-check quizzes or exams. The third phase, **displaying**, aims at addressing “how learners can represent what they have learned or are in the process of learning” (p.118). At this phase, visual learners are allowed to enhance their understanding through creating visual representations such as concept mapping or online timeline explorations. Finally, the fourth phase of the R2D2 model is **doing**. Doing focuses on helping hands-on and kinetic learners to deepen their understanding through hands-on experimentation. This is also where learners’ effort is tested through “using new skills and competencies acquired or in the process of being acquired” to solve real-life problems. As such, simulations, case resolving or even action research could be included as the activity of this stage.

In addition, Bonk and Zhang also suggested that we should not consider the R2D2 model as a linear model; instead, it is “a dynamic approach to online learning and encourages instructors, designers, and learners to select diverse learning activities strategically from different phases and to incorporate them in various sequences to better address learners’ different needs and preferences” (p.7).

**Using R2D2 model to design online instruction for language educators**

The strength of using the R2D2 model as a framework to design online instruction is that it provides a well-structured and comprehensive way to develop our online instruction. After reading the book, I have the following teaching ideas in mind. To foster language educators’ teaching expertise, I believe the following parts should be included in my curriculum: (1) content knowledge: their linguistic knowledge about the language they are teaching, (2) language teaching pedagogical knowledge: their understanding of various language teaching approaches, and (3) their ability and interest of engaging in professional development. All learning modules of my instruction should follow the R2D2 model and address these three goals. So, for example, if I am introducing the *sheltered instruction*, at phase 1, I would have my students to read some short online readings with guided questions. If possible, I will try to set up videoconferencing with experts of sheltered instruction such as Dr. Echevarria or Dr. Pawan. At phase 2, I would ask them to join language teaching related online professional development groups through social networks such as facebook or twitter. I would like to ask students to collaboratively come up with a reflection article on sheltered instruction and post it on the online professional development group. Through this way, I am encouraging students to participate in online professional development groups and students will also receive authentic feedback from real world language educators. At phase 3, I would ask students to start developing a concept map that links what they learned and what they will do at phase 4. They will develop a concept map for a lesson plan they are going to create at phase 4. In the concept map, they also need to label out how a certain feature of their lesson plan is informed by the sheltered instruction teaching pedagogy. Finally, at phase 4, students are asked to develop a lesson plan for teaching a certain concept of the target language (e.g. present tense, nouns etc.). They will also be required to make a short teaching video based on a part of the lesson plan they developed.

**The flaws and limitations of the R2D2 model**

Although R2D2 model is a powerful and comprehensive model, there are still some limitations about this model. First of all, in reality, due to time limitation, it might be very challenging to include all four phases. Usually in class, there will be a lot of important concepts to include. Due to time limitation, teachers are forced to choose either the depth or the width of the topics. In my opinion, R2D2 model aims to delve in depth into the concept students are learning. However, to me, I feel that one of the important roles of teacher is to introduce new concepts and raise students’ curiosity toward those concepts. With the limited time I have for my class, I might want to go in width to cover as many concepts as I can. Students may later explore those concepts they are interested in by themselves through online professional development (that is also why I put the ability and interest in online PD as one of the teaching goals). As a result, it might be infeasible to use R2D2 model to introduce all the concepts in class. The second question I have is: how do we evaluate learners’ performance under the R2D2 model? In Bonk and Zhang’s book, they did not specify how learners’ performance should be evaluated under the model except that they said “learners’ mettle is tested” (p.182) on phase four. I feel that it would not make any sense if learners’ performance is only evaluated on phase four when the premise of the model is to recognize different learning styles. Wouldn’t it be unfair to the other types of learners? Yet, if we evaluate learners’ performance on every phase, then it would be an exhausting work for teachers and it also implies that we expect learners to be agile in all learning styles. As such, I feel quite a bit confused and curious how learners’ performance should be assessed under the R2D2 model. Finally, while R2D2 model addresses the general instructional design for online teaching and includes many cooperative or collaborative type of activities, it does not provide in-depth discussion on how to design online collaborative learning or how to foster beneficial online discussions. This aspect has been especially challenging in online learning environment due to the lack of face-to-face interactions. Hence, how we can foster successful online collaboration among learners is something I would be interested in looking into.

**Reference:**

Bonk, C. J., & Zhang, K. (2008). *Empowering online learning : 100+ activities for reading, reflecting, displaying, and doing*: San Francisco : Jossey-Bass.