Reflection Paper #1

It was really interesting to have some from business to face in the first seminar talk. The answer to the question of “why was it so?” is at the heart of the present reflection paper. The answer to this question is not simple but embraces more than one subpart ranging from providing new insights into the author`s research interest to questioning how what is going on in academia and in real-life business can relate to each other. In what follows, the present paper focuses on a summary of the seminar talk first and reflects on what made the talk interesting to the author. A brief conclusion follows all these.

Rob Schnieders was a good presenter who could keep my attention on the presentation throughout his speech. He started with a to-the-point background of his regarding both previous education and business experience. The presenter`s focus on integration of film making and storytelling set the stage for what he later mentioned: learning by doing, transforming existing classroom practice, how to transfer face to face learning into online learning environments, how to build an online community, blended or hybrid learning environments, how to enhance learning in an online learning environment, goal based learning, engagement, social learning, cognitive apprenticeship, how to make learning more social and increase social aspects of online learning environments. All these were closely related to his previous education and what he really wanted to achieve. I got the impression that he started this journey with a goal or goals in mind and has been doing whatever he could to achieve these. Maybe, this is also why, I think, an important point of the presentation was goal based scenarios. The examples provided in the form of screenshots made it easier to understand what he was trying to convey to us, and it was effective to see that all these examples were not at odds with the presenters` ideas.

As for things that make this presentation interesting to me, number one is that it gave me ideas regarding my own research interest. At the time of the presentation, I really wanted to research the interactive and immersive learning environments the presenter mentioned. Suddenly, I was persuaded to combine cognitive load with such environments since to the best of knowledge, most cognitive load research has been focusing on individual learning experiences and included learning environments that are not so interactive. More specifically, one of the new effects suggested by cognitive load research is collective working memory effect indicating that in group work learners are able to overcome their individual memory limits due to collaborating with others. Would that be the case in an online collaborative learning environment?

Learning by doing is another thing that caught my attention since Mr. Schnieders talked about “doing” in online learning environments which differs from doing things physically. I automatically started to question what the difference between such environments would be in terms of the amount of cognitive load imposed on learners. Moreover, the kind of learning environments he mentioned was non-linear and complex environments that may require learners do things in an iterative fashion. So, it is reasonable to expect that such environments would inflict more cognitive load depending on the pacing of instruction compared to classical linear online learning environments, which would be a reasonable investigation to do.

Furthermore, goal based scenarios really got my attention since there is so-called goal free effect within cognitive load framework. While the presenter was talking about benefits of goal based scenarios I was thinking about how such environments could be made more effective without providing specific goals but general ones. Goal free effect suggests that providing learners with a specific goal while studying, say, a math problem would lead to more cognitive load since this strategy makes learners keep pieces of information in mind simultaneously in mind. On the other hand, if provided by general goals like calculate as many angles as possible, learners are prompted to solve the question step by step. As mentioned, I just wanted to study whether this can be generalized to complex goal based scenarios, Mr. Schnieders talked about.

The final thing that made this seminar interesting to me is that it got me to question how to bridge the gap between academia and private sector. I have the impression that academia is like more theory while business is much more like practice. The relationship between scientific theory and practice is that theory prevents practice from getting random or wild while practice informs theory in return, which would make it more comprehensive. Maybe more this, after the talk, I started to feel that what is going on in business sector may be a good practice for academia in that it provides a lot data and research opportunities. In return, business can also take advantage of scientific realities uncovered by academia, which would make business enterprises more successful. In short, I got more optimistic as a person who wants to be a researcher after Mr. Schnieders` engaging, encouraging and motivating presentation.

To conclude, the talk offered was eye-catching for me since it spoke to my research interests by giving me new questions to investigate and it gave me more insights into, and persuaded me that academia and business collaboration should be strengthened. I was implicitly led to the idea that my research should focus on what is really going on in real-life a part of which is what online learning companies do. All these were nicely supported by the influential presentation skill of the presenter, Mr. Schnieders.