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Exploring the Impact of Group Video Creation in Multicultural Students in the Online Platform

Ajrina Hysaj

University of Wollongong

Introduction

The pandemic of COVID-19 has made it imminent for us as educators and researchers to explore, understand and analyse ways of creating and improving inclusiveness in the Digital Learning Platform (DLP) (Sankey, 2020; Hysaj & Hamam, 2020). As people we are aware of the necessity to communicate effectively with other fellow human beings in a variety of settings. As human beings we are familiar with the benefits drawn from effective communication with other people in our face-to-face social and academic settings. Nevertheless, we have yet to explore ways of communicating effectively in the DLP from a social and academic perspective (Hamam & Hysaj, 2021). As social creatures' human beings empower each other by sharing ideas, clarifying concepts, developing thoughts and challenging misconceptions. The thought development process in people starts from the moment of birth and continues until the person can mentally generate thoughts and express emotions (Basawapatna, et al. 2013). The development of these thoughts supports our understanding of the world around us as well as its purpose and consequences (Marginson & Dang, 2017). The environment around us serves as a breeding ground for improvement or otherwise of qualities and values that we deem valuable and important (Parker, 1979). Therefore, it is substantial for us as people to be surrounded by others who encourage the development of thought creation, challenge our worldviews and open the path to the progression of human intellectual traits of fair-mindedness, self-awareness, wholeheartedness, confidence in reasoning, integrity, humility and courage (Marginson & Dang, 2017). Undergraduate students of different nationalities are required to have confidence in reasoning as much as they are required to have the courage to speak their minds and to express their opinions (Hamam & Hysaj, 2021). In other words, as intellectual beings, undergraduates feel the need of wanting to explore individual and collective thoughts and emotions that support their psychological, physical and mental well-being (Hamam & Hysaj, 2021). This individual journey towards a better understanding of oneself and others takes a special connotation in the tertiary level due to the continuous changes that occur in choosing majors, subjects or even groups to work with. Therefore, undergraduate students are on a continuous uphill journey of getting to know themselves, the people around them and their environment (Hysaj, 2021; Khan, et al. 2021). The circumstances around the undergraduates evolve constantly, and the adaptations pave the way for other changes to occur. Furthermore, the DLP imposes new challenges and offers new opportunities to scaffold undergraduates' effective collaboration and communication with others from academic and personal levels (Jaramillo, 1996; Sankey, 2020).



Literature Review

Cognitivism and Socio- Constructivism in Teaching of Academic Study Skills in Multicultural Classrooms

The theory of socio-constructivism, first explored by Vygotsky (1987) as mentioned and investigated by the likes of Jaramillo (1996), Hickey (1997), Sankey (2020) and Eun (2021), emphasizes the benefits of learning in socially constructed environments which allow all learners to participate actively in the learning process while developing their individual skills sets. Socio-constructivism allows multicultural students to develop higher order thinking skills of critical and analytical thinking as well as it empowers them with aspects of tolerance, acceptance, co-existence, self-awareness and self-worthiness (Ertmer & Newby, 1993; Sankey, 2020). Cognitivism allows students to empower themselves with knowledge and build upwards with their individual knowledge. However, socio-constructivism is very beneficial in academic study skills multicultural classrooms because it gives students the possibility of developing critical thinking and analytical thinking which are absolutely crucial for the university studies in general and of course for life as a whole.

According to Hysaj (2021) and Khan, et al. (2021), effective online teaching and learning should take place in a collaborative, interactive and engaging online environment. Furthermore, the fundamental objective of educators is the creation of a digital learning environment (DLE) that guides the social process of learning and teaching. Moreover, educators of academic study skills are required to excite, inspire and challenge their students in a progressive and rewarding way that supports students' individual and academic growth (Hysaj 2021; Khan, et al. 2021). Teaching and learning are highly interconnected and scaffold students' individual and academic progression and teachers' individual and professional development. Hence, approaches to teaching and learning in higher education need to address issues related to online classroom management and the utilization of online learning tools for the benefit of students and teachers alike (Hamam & Hysaj, 2021; Khan, et al. 2021).

The list of graduate attributes of most universities worldwide includes the aim to develop the critical, analytical and creative thinking skills of undergraduate or post-graduate students. In most western universities, multicultural students come from a variety of nations and they bring along their individual understanding about cultures and languages. Exploration and understanding of ways how multicultural students can collaborate in a multicultural environment can positively influence their mindset and support their personal and academic growth (Aguado, Ballesteros & Malik, 2003; Abacioglu, et al. 2019). Multicultural classrooms offer the possibility of exploring a variety of learning theories and their applications in the online platform. Constructing new thoughts and developing new ideas and concepts can potentially come organically in a multicultural classroom, provided that it is encouraged by the teachers and embraced by the students. Learning theories of cognitivism and socio-constructivism seem to fit naturally in an online multicultural classroom environment. Both these theories are recognized to have a constructive effect in teaching languages and academic skills in tertiary education. Moreover, aspects of socio-constructivism are known to have a motivating impact on multicultural students, especially when group work is involved; therefore, they are considered substantial factors for students' active engagement in the learning process (Sankey, 2020). This study aimed to explore any possible correlation between multicultural group work and increased levels of motivation in multicultural students. Furthermore, the study focused on exploring any correlation between improved levels of motivation and enhanced active engagement in multicultural students. The research questions for this study were: (1) Do multicultural students enjoy working in groups when creating a video? (2) Does the existence of a multicultural environment support the development of students' individual cognitive and social belongings?

Methodology

To answer the research questions this study used a mixed methods design comprised of quantitative and qualitative data. The sample size for this study was made up of 40 undergraduate students, enrolled in different majors, who answered questions related to their perceptions on group and individual knowledge construction when working in multicultural groups. To collect the data the study used a Likert scale survey and a Reflective Task. The Likert scale survey was chosen as a quantitative tool and was aimed at exploring multicultural students' perceptions related to the development of their cognitive and individual belongings. The Reflective Task was chosen as a qualitative tool that allowed students to reflect on their learning and capture a wider range of challenges and obstacles when constructing knowledge in groups. Finally, the data was categorised based on the similarities of patterns seen overall.

The video creation topic was: Where do cultures meet and where do they differ? The task aimed to allow and encourage students to conduct research on their individual cultures while considering the viewpoints of other students who belonged to the same group but not the same culture. The study aimed to encourage multicultural students to negotiate their thoughts, discuss worldviews and decide what to use, what not to use in a video, and make decisions on the length and depth of each aspect of the video content. The choice of video creation as a productive tool for multicultural students was guided by cognitivism and socio-constructivism learning theories (Sankey, 2020) and closely considered the need to develop multicultural students' cognitive abilities and their social and individual belongings. The university where the study took place has a very multicultural student body; hence, the division in multicultural groups was not seen as an obstacle. Furthermore, since the researcher was aiming at exploring the impact of multiculturalism the division in multicultural groups was deemed as important for the study's validity and reliability.

Results

The quantitative data gathered from the survey showed that over 85% of students enjoyed working in multicultural groups and learnt much about cultures while working with other group members. Students found the group work to be less challenging and demanding than previously thought and felt their contribution was appreciated and valued by all the group members. Based on the responses gathered from the survey and the reflective tasks, there were no personality clashes recorded in any of the groups. Furthermore, over 70 percent of students mentioned that they felt safe and at ease when collaborating with other group members through the technological tools like miro-map and breakout sessions for the creation of video recordings.

Three of the groups chose to use PowerPoint, one group chose to use Flipgrid and two groups chose to use Powtoon for their video creation. Two groups used different colours to differentiate the tasks in miro-map, while the other four groups opted for creating one miro-map for each task, e.g. a) guidelines on the use of miro-map, b) group charter and c) cultures, similarities and differences. This was noticed to have an impact on students' perceptions of their learning and knowledge construction process as over 68 percent of students mentioned that they felt motivated to continue the work of video creation mainly because their opinions were taken into consideration and they saw the effect of group knowledge construction.

The survey showed that over 69% of students thought that group video creation encouraged them to negotiate their thoughts, discuss worldviews and make decisions based on newly constructed worldviews. This result supported researcher's choice of technological tool to scaffold the development of critical thinking and linguistic abilities based on socio-constructivism and cognitivism theories. Furthermore, over 80 per cent of the participants expressed in their reflective tasks that working in breakout sessions and completing the task in multicultural groups stimulated them to conduct research on their own cultures and consider the viewpoints of other students who belonged to the same group but not to the same

culture. This outcome supported the researcher's choice of technological tools based on cognitivism and socio-constructivism theories (Hickey, 1997; Mayer, 2020). All the participants expressed that the task stimulated them to research their own cultures and consider the viewpoints of other students who belonged to the same group but not the same culture.

Discussion

This study paves the way towards understanding the impact of video creation and its application in multicultural classrooms. Moreover, this study highlights the need to explore the challenges faced by multicultural students when constructing knowledge in groups. These challenges could be of a linguistic and social nature and may have an impact on the knowledge created based on a socio-constructivism approach. Furthermore, the desired outcome of such tasks like video creation in groups on topics like cultures and traditions is required to be carefully aligned with the matter being taught in class. Considering the use of technological tools like miro-map, PowerPoint and Flipgrid as important during the process of video creation, it is valuable to consider the need to explore students' understanding of these tools and their usage prior to assigned tasks production. Generally, there is a common expectation that students are well-aware of the existence and use of these tools, however, as mentioned in the work of Khan et al. (2021), this is not always the case. Therefore, it is valuable to consider the individual needs of students in utilising these technological tools, so the tools do not hinder the process of knowledge construction when working in groups when completing individual tasks. Since, in this study, students belonged to different cultures, the work of each group was characterized by students' uniqueness of cultures which is known to have an impact on the learning experience from a socio-constructivism perspective (Sankey, 2020). Furthermore, this method of collaboration in video creation was chosen purposefully aiming to support multicultural students' learning processes as well as to support them in navigating their social and individual presence when working with others to complete tasks and negotiate thoughts. Nevertheless, it has to be mentioned that the video creation may create unpleasant emotions in timid students, who may not enjoy being in front of a camera, and may put them at unease. Therefore, it could be beneficial that timid students create videos by using any technological advances that they feel comfortable with, so they can still be given the possibility of developing their cognitive skillset while creating the videos. Furthermore, this would support students' understanding of their individual cognitive strengths and would facilitate the creation of collaborative knowledge through students' purposeful and active participation in the creation of the new knowledge.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it has become imminent to explore further the utilization of the technological tools to scaffold the development of critical and analytical thinking as well as to encourage active participation and development of different worldviews in multicultural undergraduate students. Furthermore, this study opens the door to further studies conducted in collaboration with researchers from other disciplines. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that scaffolding of group video creation may add to the instructor's amount of workload. Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that all instructors enjoy the use of technological advances or feel at ease to incorporate video creation in their assessment tasks. Although the technological tools do not self-create learning and teaching they are an added value to the learning and teaching process and should be assimilated to scaffold the process of knowledge transference and knowledge construction. Finally, future work should consider the appropriateness of group video creation in discipline-related subjects.

The Author

Ajrina Hysaj is an English language instructor at the University of Wollongong in Dubai; she has a Master's degree from the University of Murdoch, Perth, Australia, and is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Education. Her main research interests are Academic writing, Teaching with technology, Academic integrity, Multiculturalism, and Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.

UOWD College
University of Wollongong in Dubai.
Dubai Knowledge Village, Dubai, UAE.
Mobile: +971506326937
Email: Ajrinahysaj@uowdubai.ac.ae

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