

Chapter 95

Students' Perceptions About the Impact of Using Padlet on Class Engagement: An Exploratory Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Student engagement is a multidimensional construct that includes four distinct, though interrelated, aspects: behavioral, emotional, agentic, and cognitive engagement. The present study investigates students' perceptions about the impact of Padlet as a learning and assessment tool on the four aspects of class engagement. Padlet is a virtual wall that allows students to interact and contribute to class discussions and at the same time provides teachers with feedback on the learning process. The exploratory study was conducted on 27 female students in a 3-credit sociolinguistics course in which Padlet was used as a learning and assessment tool. At the end of the course, a survey and a personal interview were used to get students' feedback on the effectiveness of Padlet through addressing various aspects of their perceived engagement. The results showed that using Padlet enhanced student engagement, fostered active learning and offered positive assessment experiences. Its perceived effectiveness was mainly due to Padlet features that supported student collaboration, promoted students' agency and helped in creating a positive learning atmosphere. Its major shortcoming as an assessment tool was the lack of written feedback to students. However, teachers could use a combination of online and written assessments to compensate for this shortcoming.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-8047-9.ch095

1. INTRODUCTION

Recent research in educational psychology has shown that students' active engagement is the core of successful learning and a key factor behind academic achievement (Mäkitalo, 2016; Rajala et al., 2016). Integrating web 2.0 tools in the instructional design enhances student engagement through their features; e.g., sharing posts, engaging in discussions, collaborating in projects and other meaningful opportunities for learning. They provide the platform for generating new knowledge as students share relevant materials and acquire new ideas from the materials shared by their peers (Rogers et al., 2010; Webster, 2018 & Zhu, 2012). In higher education, students particularly need to learn not just academic concepts, "but more importantly the skills of acquiring, internalizing, applying and creating new knowledge" (Dewitt et al., 2015, p.27). Using Padlet as a web 2.0 tool in an academic course can thus promote positive learning experiences and trigger more engagement (Freeman et al., 2014 & Korkealehto & Siklander, 2018)¹. It can encourage students to interact and collaborate with their peers and thus help to enhance all aspects of classroom engagement. Students' collaboration in online learning contexts creates a positive emotional and cognitive environment (see Dewitt et al., 2015; Korkealehto & Siklander, 2018; Majid, 2014; Siklander et al., 2017). This active engagement in classroom activities helps improve the learning environment and gets students more enthusiastic and motivated to learn (Shernoff et al., 2003; Freeman et al., 2014). While previous research mainly focuses on the correlation between classroom engagement and students' academic performance, the aim of the present study is to focus on how students perceive their level of behavioral, emotional, agentive and cognitive engagement while performing learning and assessment activities on Padlet. It attempts to answer the following research question:

How do students evaluate and value the use of Padlet application as a learning and assessment tool during the sociolinguistics course?

In the next section, the four aspects of student engagement in online settings will be explored. Section 2 includes the research design, participants and data collection tools. Section 3 covers the analysis of the questionnaire and interview results while section 4 includes the discussion, conclusion and suggestions for future research.

1.1. Student Engagement in Online Settings

Student engagement is a multidimensional construct that includes four distinct, though interrelated, aspects: behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, agentive and cognitive engagement. Behavioral engagement refers to how students are actively involved in learning activities in terms of looking for knowledge, seeking help and making effort to learn (i.e., working hard) (Cappella et al., 2013; Fredericks et al., 2004, 2011). Emotional engagement refers to the positive feelings students experience during classroom learning activities (i.e., working enthusiastically) (Sagayadevan & Jeyaraj, 2012; Wang et al., 2015).

Agentic engagement refers to the students' proactive and constructive contribution into the flow of the instruction. It often takes the form of contributing to course materials, making a suggestion or expressing a preference (i.e., working proactively) (Matos et al., 2018; Montenegro, 2017; Reeve, 2012; Reeve & Lee, 2014; Reeve & Tseng, 2011; Sinatra et al., 2015). Reeve (2012) defines it as "the process in which students proactively try to create, enhance, and personalize the conditions and circumstances under which they learn" (p. 161).

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