EARLY CAREER ACADEMICS' REFLECTIONS ON LEARNING TO TEACH IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Gabriela Pleschová and Agnes Simon (eds.)

SEDA, London, 2018

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCING EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR UNIVERSITY TEACHERS IN CENTRAL EUROPE

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Over the past decades, universities in most parts of the world became global and this is also true for Central Europe. Increasing numbers of foreign students study in the region, either as part of exchange programmes or for entire degrees. The teaching staff members are also becoming more international and it is now very rare to find an academic who has not spent at least a semester abroad. This has spurred a great deal of discussion on how teaching is done here and elsewhere. A few university instructors and some newly established colleges use learning and assessment methods that are different from traditional approaches characterised by frontal lecturing and end-of-the-semester oral exams or seminar papers. Yet, these efforts have not translated into a comprehensive transformation of local teaching practices.

This book presents case studies by participants, doctoral students mostly, in a new educational development programme that introduced them to student-centred approaches[1] and innovative teaching methods. Using their newly acquired pedagogical knowledge, participants redesigned their course sessions to stimulate good learning. The chapters are mostly accounts of how participants addressed problematic issues encountered in their previous teaching. Each chapter starts with a description of a teaching challenge and one or two pedagogical concepts that were used to address the challenge. Then the authors outline their data collection and research methods and apply these to evaluate the impact of the new ways of teaching on student learning. Chapters conclude with a reflection on whether the teaching change met the expected outcomes and what can be done to enhance student learning further.

Teaching context

The contributors come from two universities: Masaryk University in Brno and the University of Economics in Bratislava. Masaryk University is the second largest university in the Czech Republic with over 40,000 students who enrol in a wide range of programmes. It was placed by the 2018 Times Higher Education ranking among the top seven universities in the new EU member states. With about 7,500 students, the University of Economics in Bratislava offers degrees mostly in economic disciplines and is one of the largest universities in Slovakia. To limit the diversity in the participants' disciplinary backgrounds, at Masaryk University we recruited only from departments offering degrees in the social sciences and humanities. While most of the authors teach at

1 We understand learning-centeredness as meaning that the teacher's focus is on how his or her students learn, rather than on the teacher's own performance. Students' choice in their education is facilitated; the student is encouraged to do more than the lecturer, and/or a shift in the power relationship between the student and the teacher can be observed. The teacher pays attention to who his/her students are and how they learn, so that good learning can occur.

these two universities, a few of them were teaching elsewhere (for example, in Kosovo or Iran). The teaching context largely determined the participants' level of autonomy and authority over their courses: most of them could not influence the curriculum design, choose the classes they would teach, or decide on their own assessment methods. This left participants responsible almost solely for learning activities in their seminars. Institutional rules on what a doctoral student can and cannot do, especially when working as a teaching assistant for an experienced professor, thus significantly restricted participants' ability to teach in line with what they learnt in the development programme. Aside from these rules, two more factors influenced participants' teaching: 1) typical departmental pedagogic practices and 2) the level of tolerance of the department chair towards novel ways of teaching. These factors made participants constantly balancing what their programme coaches recommended with what their supervisors, course leaders or departmental chairs wanted. Bringing change to a course hence implied not only introducing new teaching methods but, more importantly, finding ways to navigate the system and change old habits[2].

Engagement in our programme was quite an exceptional experience for these early-career teachers because educational development is only an emerging area of practice in Central Europe. Academics usually get very little recognition for teaching as they are promoted based on their publication record. And even if almost all doctoral students are assigned as teaching assistants, they get most credit for their dissertation and related research work. Conferences where teachers can present and discuss their teaching experiences are non-existent. Furthermore, there is no national teaching framework like the one in the United Kingdom (UK)[3] and there are no institutional resources (or at best very few) to support teaching such as, for example, a fund for innovative or collaborative teaching projects. In this sense, the situation in this geographic region resembles that in the UK – or a similar English-speaking country – fifty years ago.

The programme

The programme, Learning-centred and reflective teaching: from theory to good practice was designed as part of a collaborative international project with the purpose of enhancing participants' teaching capabilities. More specifically, the programme aimed to help doctoral students

1. become more learning-centred in various aspects of their teaching: from class design through class conduct to assessment and class evaluation. We saw this as particularly relevant as we introduced a teaching development programme at institutions where teaching-centred practices have a long tradition and remain prevalent in many disciplines;

2 While we would have preferred participants to teach an entire course or a significant number of course sessions, sometimes they were limited to innovating and teaching a few sessions. However, in several cases course participants were responsible for teaching their own courses, and had relative freedom to shape the ways of student learning in all course sessions.

3 See the UK Professional Standards Framework, available at https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ukpsf, accessed 12 October 2018.

2. learn a set of fundamental concepts, principles and approaches related to higher education teaching and learning. We considered such a knowledge base essential for participants to design alternative and more effective ways of learning than those traditionally used at their institutions;
3. become more reflective about teaching and student learning. Because there is enough evidence from elsewhere that teachers' reflection can improve student learning (McAlpine and Weston 2000; Kreber 2004), we wanted participants to reflect on teaching and learning more often than is likely the current practice at their institutions.

The programme built upon an experience from a similar course that we offered in 2011-2013 for 82 teachers from various universities in Slovakia and where we could evidence improvement in all three outcomes for the pilot cohort of participants (Pleschová and McAlpine 2016). This time, however, we designed the programme specifically for doctoral students from two institutions: the University of Economics in Bratislava and Masaryk University in Brno. The programme comprised a summer school and a follow-up online component. The first cohort of participants admitted in the 2017/2018 academic year included 18 individuals: two of whom had recently defended their doctoral dissertations and the rest in various stages of their doctoral study. The programme started with an eight-day summer school, which consisted of 21 face-to-face workshop sessions and provided a foundational conceptual orientation for teaching at the university level. All sessions engaged participants in a range of activities that required them to apply theory to the courses they teach. Participants also received feedback from the session leaders on how they completed assigned tasks.

During the online phase, which took nine months, the participants were expected to integrate knowledge and skills developed during the summer school with their teaching practice. Each participant was asked to prepare a teaching innovation, implement and evaluate it at least three times, i.e., in three different course sessions. Given the constraints on participants' freedom, these innovations were mostly in relation to in-class instructional strategies. We called these projects teaching innovations because of the novelty they brought into the teaching approach and practice of the departments. Finally, the participants wrote a reflection report, in which they considered the impact of their new ways of teaching on student learning; these accounts make up this book.

For the innovation to follow sound pedagogic principles and at the same time be feasible in terms of the teaching context, each programme participant worked with a coach who was a professional educational developer. The role of the coach was to offer feedback on the programme assignments that included the design and evaluation of the innovation, the reflection report, and a statement of the participant's teaching philosophy. For more details on the programme design,

please see https://qualityteaching.euba.sk. The coach also served as a critical friend whenever a participant faced a difficulty in the teaching process and sought informed advice.
The programme was accredited both locally, by the University of Economics in Bratislava, and internationally, by the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA), UK. All graduates received 10 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credits and an internationally recognized certificate from SEDA, namely the Supporting Learning Award, as evidence of their professional development and achievement. Initially, we estimated that each participant would spend 135 hours studying for the online segment, but many participants engaged with the programme far beyond this, as they shared with us after completing it.

Book chapters

In this book, we present a collection of reflection reports written by programme graduates that were selected for the content of their innovation, research design, and quality of academic writing. These papers were substantially reworked for the book, which sometimes included six different revisions, to improve data analysis, level of reflection and presentation style.
Striving to improve their students' learning, the innovating teachers came up with creatively different approaches and their stories are therefore varied. For example, Minin writes about introducing podcast feedback to student essays instead of merely giving a mark and a few lines of textual comments. Another author, Kováčová, had a unique opportunity to teach psychology in Teheran and compares student reactions to the same active learning exercises which she did with her students from Brno. Voca shows how he changed a lecture-based course for over a hundred students by engaging them in pair work. Kašpárková discusses redesigning a personnel psychology course, which students initially perceived as unimportant, despite the high demand for personnel psychologists on the job market. Kovačević offers inspiration for helping students to master presentation skills and group work rather than expecting them to reproduce learnt material on the exam. Other authors offer similarly interesting stories, distinguished for their personal commitment and passion to engage students in meaningful learning, despite the constraints from their teaching environment.
Because many authors faced similar teaching difficulties, for example a lack of student participation or students struggling to embrace disciplinary concepts or develop academic skills, the book chapters naturally formed seven thematic clusters, an overview of which can be found in table 1. A commentary by an external expert (educationalist) accompanies each cluster in order to highlight its theoretical and practical implications.

Table 1. Grouping of book chapters by teaching challenges experienced by authors

Cluster	Teaching challenge	Learning method introduced	Authors	External commentator
1.	lack of student participation	group work, cut-ups and topic maps	Godwin K. Awuah, Michał Tkaczyk	Lynn McAlpine
2.	low quality of student learning in a research methods course	combination of mini lectures and active learning tasks	Kateřina Fridrichová, Ivana Rapošová	Katarina Mårtensson
3.	low level of student understanding of concepts, lack of student participation and engagement	pair work, group work	Stanislava Kováčová, Ina Schmidt	Peter van Petegem
4.	students' underdeveloped teamwork skills, presentation skills and academic writing skills	group work, audio feedback with two-stage feedback	Dubravka Kovačević, Nikita Minin	Torgny Roxa
5.	low level of student motivation, lack of student concentration and engagement	continuous assessment, pair work, active learning tasks to develop higher order thinking	Ludmila Kašpárková, Shpend Voca, Barbora Padrtová	Kathleen M. Quinlan
6.	transforming lecture into active learning	debate, group work, cut-ups, case study, role play, authentic assessment	Martin Karas, Alexander Pechersky, Petra Srnišová	Kate Thomson
7.	introducing peer and teacher feedback to enhance learning	peer feedback to student papers, online formative quiz (Socrative), a case study followed by a discussion	Alica Rétiová, Natália Gachallová, Daniela Jaklová-Střihavková	Allan Goody

Using this book

As the editors, we compiled this book to encourage discussion on what individual teachers can accomplish at the class level to enhance student learning at institutions and in countries new to educational development. Our aim is for readers not only to enjoy reading the book chapters, but also to respond to them since the authors welcome suggestions for a) alternative ways of dealing with their teaching problems, b) recommended literature, and c) contacts for colleagues using similar methods or facing such challenges. Alternately, you might want to encourage the authors to do more in the future, or show appreciation for what they have achieved. This can all be done easily through SEDA's blog: https://thesedablog.wordpress.com/ or the Active Learning in Political Science blog (ALPS): http://activelearningps.com. You can also contact authors via their email addresses.

We hope that teachers reading this book will find it an inspiration for making their courses more learning-centred and conducive of effective learning, even if the teaching environment does not make much scope for change. Moreover, teachers will see how teaching innovations can be evaluated using action research and how reflection can advance teaching further.

We also hope that for educational developers the book will become a useful source to learn about how the teaching context can constrain the ability of programme participants to change student learning. In addition, the reader will find a range of methods and approaches used by the innovating teachers to overcome institutional barriers and to design teaching that is learning-centred, uses novel ways of learning and assessment, and significantly improves student learning.

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The posts are available at http://activelearningps.com
https://thesedablog.wordpress.com/early-career-academics-reflections

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CHAPTER 1. USING CUT-UPS AND TOPIC MAPS IN SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS SEMINARS TO ENHANCE STUDENT PARTICIPATION, INTEREST AND KNOWLEDGE

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Keywords: active learning, cut-up cards, group work, media studies, quasi-experiment, semiotic analysis, topic map

Introduction

This chapter discusses the outcomes of the teaching innovation I introduced while leading seminar sessions in semiotic analysis of media content in the Fall 2017 semester. These semiotic analysis sessions combine two methods of teaching: lecturing and group presentations with discussion. At the beginning of each seminar, we review key concepts that are covered in the obligatory readings. Then, two or three groups of students present how they applied the concept under consideration to the analysis of some media content. After each presentation, a short plenary discussion follows among seminar group members in which participation is particularly rare. The innovation was designed to improve on this shortcoming.

Participation in seminars means that students interact, respond or comment (Abebe and Deneke 2015: 75) – when this is done reluctantly or not at all, the level of student participation is low. Active classroom participation plays an important role in knowledge acquisition (Murray and Lang 1997), which is why participation is a mandatory part of these seminar sessions. Students' active involvement in negotiating the shared meanings of media content during the post-presentation plenary discussions should enhance their understanding of key concepts and ability to use them correctly.

The reasons for low student activity during these seminar sessions are threefold. First, students tend to perceive semiotic analysis as contradictory to practical skills development which they expect to find in the curriculum. They do so even though the processes of meaning making, which semiotics try to explicate, are constitutive parts of media content production, and therefore, have practical applications.

Second, as Perkins (2006) noted, some parts of knowledge can be especially troublesome and attempts to adopt it can give rise to experiences of alienation or anxiety. Semiotics is a specialized field of knowledge and uses a conceptual apparatus that is rooted in structuralism, and as such, it is not relatable to the knowledge that first-year students learnt in high school (see Bignell 2001; Chandler 2007; Fiske and Hartley 1978).

Third, the context in which the learning process takes place additionally and significantly strengthens this kind of experience (Kahn 2014: 1008). While in high school students were required to

listen and memorize, in our seminars first-year university students are expected to participate and contribute their own thoughts on abstract matters using sophisticated terminology in front of people they are not familiar with.

Hence, I introduced an innovation that transforms the above context in order to enhance students' active participation, increase their interest in the course and improve their acquisition of key concepts. My innovation focused on the use of small group work during which students worked with cut-ups, and they concluded the exercise with a debriefing that utilized concept maps. Outcomes of the innovation were evaluated with a minute paper and a set of survey questions. Results show that, when compared to lecturing, activities in small working groups enhanced knowledge acquisition, but the innovation did not bring about an increase in participation and interest.

Institutional context

Seminar sessions on the semiotic analysis of media content are part of the mandatory course, Introduction to Media and Communication Studies in the undergraduate program of Media Studies and Journalism. This is a course primarily designed for first year students. During six mandatory seminar sessions, which follow six weeks of lectures, students are expected to practice components of the semiotic analysis of media content. Rather than providing comprehensive insight, the seminars aim at familiarizing students with the sign-like nature of mass communication and demonstrating how its latent meaning can be reconstructed with the help of basic semiotic concepts. Lectures are taught by a senior professor and seminars are led by less experienced instructors and doctoral students.

Students enrolled in the course are divided into six seminar groups taught by three seminar leaders (two groups for each leader). In fall 2017, my two seminar groups had nineteen and twenty two students, respectively, most of whom were taking this seminar in the first semester of their university career. As there is no explicit teaching philosophy in the Department of Media Studies and Journalism at the Faculty of Social Sciences, the actual approach to teaching varies from course to course and instructor to instructor. Nonetheless, lectures tend to be based mainly on frontal teaching, while seminar sessions support the active participation of students usually in form of group presentations. In this particular course, my control over teaching content and method was greatly constrained because each seminar group is expected to follow the same structure and content to assure that demands on all students are equal.

Theoretical background of the innovation

To improve active student participation, I decided to change my general approach to teaching by shifting my focus from teaching to learning so that the emphasis was on the student as an active learner. Students learn both passively and actively. Passive learning takes place when students

take on the role of 'receptacles of knowledge'; i.e. they do not directly participate in the learning process (Ryan and Martens 1989: 20, in Bonwell and Eison 1991: 18). Active learning means engaging students in activities that include higher order thinking tasks, stress on student's values and attitudes, and skills development rather than on knowledge transmission (Bonwell and Eison 1991: 19). It 'requires students to do meaningful learning activities and think about what they are doing' (Prince 2004: 1).

Considerable support exists for the benefits of active learning. Existing studies conclude that active learning leads to better student attitudes as well as improvements in students' thinking and writing. Introducing activity into lectures can significantly improve the recall of information (Prince 2004: 2-3). Active learning can also improve student engagement (Barkley 2010: 3-8). Thus, if the students' low level of activity is to be overcome, some changes in the seminars' workflow need to be adopted, namely, students should be more closely involved in activities that relate to what they are doing in the seminar so their participation increases.

Although our seminars already contained elements that required active student involvement, namely group presentations, it occurred quite often that non-presenting students stayed passive. In order to resolve this teaching challenge, I used cut-ups in a small working group environment (Exley and Dennick 2004: 63-64). Groups of five students were given a set of cards that contained key concepts for the session and were asked to arrange these according to the content of the mandatory reading for the session. When the cards were sorted, each group member was asked to pick a card with a concept and try to explain the concept in no more than three sentences to the other group members. Students thus negotiated the meaning of key concepts with their peers in a more intimate, and therefore, less stressful environment.

Additionally, as a debriefing method I used topic maps (Exley and Dennick 2004: 58). In practice it meant that students were to add suitable cut-up cards voluntarily to the concept map on the board and explain the concept listed on the added card. This form of debriefing not only allowed for further discussions but also helped verify if students understood concepts correctly.

Thus, compared to those who continued to learn about semiotic analysis according to the old seminar format, I expected that students who participated in the innovation would

H1: assess their participation as reaching a higher level; H2: declare increased interest in the semiotic analysis of media content; and H3: learn more.

Methods

Teaching two seminar groups allowed for a quasi-experimental design where one group was used as a treatment group and another as a control group. In the control group, instead of group work, I started the session with a mini-lecture to recapitulate key concepts for the session. In addition, I used a flipped pre-post design: I implemented the innovation in the first seminar session of the treatment group because I found it crucial to get students interested in the subject before they

formed their attitude toward it. Thus, the seminar session with the original design followed the actual innovation (see table 1 for the research design). This unusual setup allowed me to compare not only the performance of the control and treatment groups but also how each group performed across the two types of teaching methods.

Table 1. Quasi-experimental and flipped pre-post design used to test the impact of the innovation

	Treatment group	**Control group**
Seminar session 1	innovation	no innovation
Seminar session 2	no innovation	no innovation

To test the impact of the innovation I used two types of measures. First, at the end of each seminar session students filled out a minute paper to indicate their level of knowledge acquisition. On each occasion, the questions concerned a concept introduced during that seminar session: after the first seminar students had to list three types of signs by Pierce (2 points) and explain one of them in two sentences (3 points), while at the end of the second session they had to name two types of structural relations between signs (2 points) and also explain both in two sentences (3 points). Answers were scored on a scale, with values from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest).
Second, in order to have a more comprehensive idea of the innovation's impact I asked students to answer three survey questions indicating if and how strongly they agree with the statements that (1) the method of teaching supported their active participation in the seminar; (2) the seminar session raised their interest in semiotic analysis of media content; and (3) the teaching method helped to enhance their understanding of the subject matter. Each of their responses was recorded on a 5-point scale (1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neither agree nor disagree; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree).
Since I asked students to sign their papers, I could use paired t-tests when comparing one group's performance over two seminar sessions. When I compared the two groups' performance during the same seminar session I used independent samples t-tests. The quantitative data was augmented with information coming from the end of semester evaluations.

Findings

Not all students enrolled in the course participated in the innovation. There were seventeen students in the treatment group (which decreased to sixteen by the second session) and twentyone in the control group (nineteen in the second session). No support was found for H1. Members of the treatment group who participated in the innovated session and students of the control group who were not exposed to the innovation evaluated the impact of their respective learning

activities on their participation level similarly, resulting in no statistically significant differences in the mean scores between them (see table 2).

Table 2. Differences in mean scores between the treatment and control groups in the first seminar session: survey questions

	Treatment Group			Control Group			Difference of Means	t-test	df	p-value	Sig.
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD					
Participation	17	4.35	0.606	21	4.29	0.463	0.067	0.388	36	0.701	No
Knowledge acquisition	17	4.24	0.664	21	3.52	0.928	0.711	2.655	36	0.012	Yes
Interest	17	3.71	0.849	21	3.76	1.044	0.56	0.178	36	0.859	No

Tests: Independent samples t-test with equal variances.

Likewise, difference within the treatment group between the seminar with the innovation (mean=4.31, SD=0.602) and the one without (mean=4.06, SD=0.772) was not found (p=.0333; df=15). However, there was significant difference between the control group's first and second seminars: students in the control group evaluated the level of their participation in the first seminar as significantly stronger ($mean_{s1}$=4.31, SD_{s1}=0.47 cf. $mean_{s2}$=3.58, SD_{s1}=1.07) (p=0.005, df=18). This may be due to differences in content between the first and second seminar. The general practice is that in the first session the seminar leader is supposed to practice the analysis with the whole group. In the second seminar, two or three group presentations take up most of the time. Thus, it is possible that students who did not present during the second seminar felt uninvolved in the activity.

The findings are very similar for H2, which predicted students who participated in the innovation would declare stronger interest in the semiotic analysis of media content after the first seminar compared to those who received the traditional instruction. There were no statistically significant differences in the reported levels of interest either between the treatment and control groups (table 2), or between the treatment group's first (mean=3.63, SD=0.806) and second sessions (mean=3.56, SD=0.814) (p=0.774, df=15). These results confirm that participation and interest, as assumed in the literature (see e.g. Astin 1999; Flowerday and Shell 2015), are related: without perceiving an increase in one's participation, one's interest is unlikely to grow either.

More importantly, the findings show that the innovation did have a positive effect on knowledge acquisition, confirming hypothesis 3. First, students who were exposed to the innovation were convinced that the methods used in the first seminar helped them to enhance their understanding of the studied concepts more than students in the control group (see table 2).

Second, the minute papers administered at the end of each session – which are more objective measures of actual knowledge acquisition – show (table 3) that, after the first seminar session, members of the treatment group performed better than members of the control group at a statistically significant level. The size of the impact of the innovation on knowledge acquisition is medium (0.5). Furthermore, as expected, if the innovation was responsible for the above difference, during the second session when neither group was exposed to the innovation members of the treatment group achieved slightly better results, but the difference between the two groups' performance was much smaller and not significant. Hence, activities that were part of the innovation turned out to be more effective for the recapitulation of the assigned concepts than the mini lecture: students learning through small group work with cut-ups and concepts maps learned more than their peers who followed the original session design.

Table 3. Differences in mean scores between the treatment and control groups: concept acquisition minute paper

	Treatment Group			Control Group			Difference of Means	t-test	df	p-value	Sig.
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD					
After the first seminar	17	4.76	0.664	21	2.62	2.269	2.146	4.121	36	0.000	Yes
After the second seminar	16	4.44	0.814	19	4.00	1.247	0.438	1.203	33	0.238	No

Tests: Independent samples t-test with unequal variances for the first seminar and with equal variances for the second seminar.

The positive impact of the innovation is further supported by qualitative data. In the end of semester student evaluations, three students in the treatment group decided to include verbal evaluation.[1] All three students not only found it important to refer to the innovation, but also left positive feedback about the innovated seminar.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the outcomes of a teaching innovation which addressed the problem of low levels of student participation in semiotic analysis seminars. The innovation involved students in activities in small working group activities to address the teaching challenges. I have

1 Compared to just one in the control group.

found that although student interest and participation did not increase, the innovation resulted in greater knowledge development. Thus, the logic that more participation leads to more interest which then results in knowledge enhancement did not work in my case: with the innovation I achieved a higher level of knowledge acquisition without increased participation or increased interest. Partly, this could be because I had to rely on student self-assessment when evaluating the level of participation. Next time, I would use a different and possibly more objective measure like classroom observation by a colleague.

Partly, the academic disposition of students may also be responsible for the results. In addition to the Media and Journalism program, each student is registered in another study program. If their other program is, for example, Human Resources, International Relations or Environmental Studies, probably they find little reason to get deeply involved in the semiotic analysis of media content. In the end, the students may not have enough understanding of the importance of the field's practical applications.

Third, interest and knowledge may not be as closely related as the literature claims. Results suggest that active learning exercises may achieve greater knowledge acquisition without positively increasing student interest. The activities that I implemented seemed to work better at increasing students' attention to and comprehension of class content than for inspiring their imagination. The innovation probably worked so well in terms of enhancing concept acquisition because even students who had not completed the required reading could acquire the knowledge therein from their peers or look up the concepts when working with the cut-up cards. This, together with debriefing via concept maps, could also facilitate the elimination of possible confusion or misunderstandings of those concepts.

Nonetheless, while the teaching challenges that prompted this innovation – the low level of student participation and lack of interest in the semiotic analysis of media content – were not resolved, the ultimate goal – greater learning – was achieved. In the long term, this may not be enough, and students' overall course performance will only increase if they are more interested and more active – and they perceive themselves as such. This requires me to rethink whether cut-ups and concept maps together with small group work are the best choices to these ends, or if they should be replaced and/or augmented with other activities.

Alternatively, if we disregard the question whether the simple comparison of means with a t-statistic is an appropriate way to account for such a multidimensionally conditioned process as learning, the episodic nature of the innovation may account for the lower reliability and validity of the results. To overcome this deficiency in validity, in future the innovation should be implemented in a more systematic way, ideally in each seminar session for the treatment group. Such a solution would not only allow for observing the continuous impact of the innovation but would also enable me to introduce much more relevant measures, including regular homework results, final tests and final paper results, and course evaluations.

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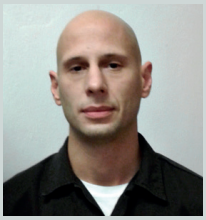

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CHAPTER 2. GROUP WORK AS A TOOL TO IMPROVE PARTICIPATION AND OVERCOME FEAR OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AMONG NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS

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Coach: Agnes Simon, Masaryk University

Keywords: active learning, group work, learning in a foreign language, management, participation, teaching large groups, topic map

Introduction

Effective learning naturally occurs in a classroom setting where there is sharing of ideas through a two-way communication between teachers and students (Wade 1994). Yet, my experience is that even when students are required to participate, they shy away from communicating their ideas. This reluctance to speak is often caused by their fear of grammatical errors while communicating in English, which is typical for non-native English speakers. This limits immediate learning as students are unable to contribute in class.

In the quest to improve students' learning experience, I deviated from the traditional lecture-style teaching that characterised my previous classes and introduced learning through group work. In this paper, I describe and assess the impact of this innovation. I find that not only does group work increase students' participation, it also makes the class lively and improves learning outcomes as well as student communication in a second language.

Aims and theoretical underpinning of the innovation

The aim of the innovation was to increase student class participation through group work. Throughout this chapter, I use the terms *active learning* and *participation* interchangeably. By participation I mean volunteered and unsolicited responses as well as comments given, or questions asked, by students in the classroom (Burchfield and Sappington 1999; Fassinger 2000).

While the traditional mode of teaching has been characterised by a teacher playing the predominant role as a knowledge transmission agent in a class of passive students, there has been growing consensus on a better approach where the teacher plays the role of transformative agent. Approaching the job of teaching as a transformative agent allows students to actively participate in class, through interaction and knowledge sharing. Previous studies have found that the participation of students in class ensures they focus on meaning and understanding rather than on knowledge reproduction associated with passive learning (Trigwell et al. 1999; Exley and Dennick 2004). Since it has been proven that students' attention span deteriorates over time in a lecture-based class (Nilson 2014), participation in class has been found to also improve the attentiveness of students.

Notwithstanding the positives of class participation discussed in the literature, several challenges hinder students from participating. One such challenge, according to Mustapha et al. (2010), is self-limitation – a barrier an individual creates mentally or physically that limits his or her activity. Self-limitation can take the form of students staying passive in class for fear of not showing intelligence, or peer intimidation (Karp and Yoels 1976). Indeed, Wade (1994) alludes that students will only participate in class if they feel that what they have to say is important and interesting. Furthermore, students who are not native English speakers tend to participate less in class when English is the language of instruction (Kao and Gansneder 1995; Tatar 2005). Majid et al. (2010) identify class size as another factor that influences students' participation. In their view, most students may stay passive in large classes where they find it intimidating to contribute in front of a large crowd for fear of peer disapproval. Consequently, many students find it more comfortable speaking in smaller groups with their peers after first becoming familiar with them (Neer and Kircher 1989). Also, through group work, students get used to talking in class, which can positively affect their willingness to speak in front of their peers since they only need to repeat what they have already discussed in small groups.

To overcome the challenges of peer intimidation and xenoglossophobia[1], I introduced group work which I expected to serve as a preparatory ground for the students to master English terminologies with their classmates before speaking up in class. In addition, I anticipated the innovation would help overcome this challenge because having students participate in group activities provides an opportunity for reciprocal peer learning[2]. It should also allow students to make an input to discussions and interact with peers who are also non-native English speakers. Consequently, deriving from the Popperian Principle of Falsification, I formulated null hypotheses, i.e. two statements used to test whether or not my findings confirm the findings in the literature:

H_{j0}: There will be no difference in student participation in lecture-style and activity-based classes

H_{k0}: There will be no difference in student assessment scores in lecture style and activity-based classes

Though the group work was intended to overcome the challenges resulting in non-participation, the extent to which this can be achieved is predominantly dependent on the choice of group activity. While some group activities may be appropriate for avoiding boredom, others may be apt for enhanced learning and participation. To this end, topic maps were used as the chief activity during the group work. Topic maps are visual representations of the relationship between ideas, concepts and things. They can also be a collection of topics or concepts showing relationships by associations (Exley and Dennick 2004).

1 Xenoglossophobia is the fear of foreign languages.

2 Peer learning refers to the use of teaching and learning strategies in which students learn with and from each other without the immediate intervention of a teacher. In reciprocal peer learning, students within a given cohort act as both teachers and learners (Boud et al. 2001).

Notwithstanding that topic maps have traditionally been utilised to help resolve instances of writers' block, the literature reports that topic maps can also be adapted to problem-solving (Kamble and Tembe 2013). According to the British Council (2005), topic maps allow students to see relationships between concepts. Also, topic maps have been found to work well when created in groups because they spark discussions, which helps the production of ideas and makes learning tasks livelier and more enjoyable (British Council 2005). Considering the interrelated nature of concepts in this course, the topic map technique was modified so that student groups mapped out the relationships between studied concepts in a projected word cloud.

The nature of the innovation

The innovation took place at Masaryk University in the Bachelor level course, Introduction to Theory and Management during the 2017 autumn semester, for which I served as a teaching assistant. The purpose of the course was to enhance student understanding of the processes and dynamics in organisations. The course had a total of thirteen weekly sessions. The innovation was applied in only three of these sessions because, except for these three sessions taught in English, all the other sessions were taught in the students' native language (Czech), in which I have no proficiency.

The course had thirty-two registered students who were mainly in their first and second years of study. Except for the course in which the innovation was applied, all the other courses of the students were taught in Czech. The course is compulsory for Social Policy students, but it is also open to students from other study fields. Since its introduction in 2009, the course has always been organised as lectures by both a professor responsible for the course and two assistants who are either PhD students or fresh PhD graduates. The assistants are selected based on experience having undergone the same course in the past or having researched similar topics as part of their thesis.

The innovation took the form of engaging students in group work, with a twenty-minute duration of actual group activity and presentation, for two out of the three sessions. The group dynamics included randomly-formed three or four groups[3] of three to four students. While students worked in these groups, I walked around the classroom monitoring each group's discussions and encouraging student contributions. This was followed by peer feedback or questions that lasted about ten minutes. A member of each group then presented the group's work using the format of a topic map (five minutes) while the other members responded to peer feedback and questions.

Methodology

In this study, data collected through direct observation of student learning and quasi-experimental techniques were triangulated to evaluate the innovation results. Specifically, the tech-

3 The number of groups differed across class sessions due to fluctuations in student attendance.

niques included tracking the quantity of student participation, a five-minute assessment paper and assessment of the content of student contributions. The second and third course sessions were used as treatment classes while the first served as the control class in which the traditional (lecture-based) teaching was used. I made a tally to keep a record of how many students participated, i.e. contributed to discussions and asked or answered questions. To prevent instances of missing out on the tally, the class was audio recorded which I later used to check and improve the original in-class tally. I addressed each student by name during their contribution to avoid double counting, especially in instances where voices sounded similar.

Another data set included students' five-minute papers taken after each of the three classes. Students were asked to explain shortly (maximum 250 words) the threshold concepts studied in the course (public policy, organisational culture and organisational management) and apply these concepts to real-life situations (see table 1 for sample questions). Students could score up to five points (maximum) for each of the five-minute papers. Also, I assessed the quality of each group's topic map by posing questions to each group to assess their understanding of their output.

Table 1. Five-minute assessment questions used in the three innovated seminars

First Class – 24 October 2017
Think of any organisation and indicate the type of culture existing and explain your answer in not more than six sentences.
Second Class – 7 November 2017
Think of any organization and give examples of the three types of managers and their functions in not more than ten sentences. Put in a sentence on the activities of the organisation.
Third Class – 14 November 2017
As a manager what are the possible considerations in a situation with an employee with a negative, 'I can't do it' attitude in performance management.

Data were analysed using cross tabulation and paired sample T-test. The choice of the T-test was based on the class size of thirty-two and the need to compare the results of the teaching innovation in both the treatment and control classes. The T-test, in general, is suitable for samples between six and fifty and for comparing means among groups (de Winter 2013).

Findings and discussion

Findings from this study (table 2) suggest that the innovation significantly improved student participation by a net difference of about 70% and also impacted positively on students' scores with a mean net difference of approximately 25%. As presented in table 2, the average score of the five-minute paper in the control class was 2.31 while that in the treatment class was 3.38 out of a maximal score of 5. Student participation frequency increased from 0.54 in the lecture-based class to 3 in the class based on group work. These values were significant at the 95% confidence level from the t-test for test scores for the control (M = 2.308, SD = 1.233) and treatment (M = 3.826, SD = 0.844) classes t(12) = 3.590, p = 0.004. Similarly, there was a significant difference at the 95% confidence level for participation frequency in the control (M = 0.54, SD = 1.198) and treatment (M = 3, SD = 0.841) classes t(12) = 6.752, p = 0.000.

Based on these findings I reject the two null hypotheses, i.e.,

H_{j0}: No difference exists in participation frequency in lecture style and activity-based classes

H_{k0}: No difference exists in assessment scores in lecture style and activity-based classes

Table 2. Differences in students' participation and before and after the innovation

	Average Score		Average Participation Frequency	
	Mean	Percentage	Mean	Percentage
Control	2.31	37.6%	0.54	15.2%
Treatment	3.83	62.4%	3.00	84.8%
Difference	0.52	24.8%	2.46	69.6%

The findings are indicative that increased participation in class resulted in students focusing on meaning and understanding, which the literature associates with active learning. This contrasts with knowledge reproduction, which is associated with passive learning (Trigwell et al. 1999; Exley and Dennick 2004).

From my observation of the class, I could see students busily discussing and sharing ideas during the group work. Unexpectedly, they frequently laughed if someone chose an inappropriate English term to use. Thus, apart from improving participation and learning, the innovation was seen to have had a rippling effect on the class – it brought more fun for students. Since according to Nilson (2014) attention span deteriorates over time in class, the lively class helped maintain students' attention and curtailed the deterioration of attention span that often characterises lecture-based classes. Though the laughter during the group activity may be intimidating for some students and inhibit participation, I interpreted the situations as funny and amusing rather than

intimidating. Possibly, this was because all the students were non-native English speakers and they found it interesting to learn from their mistakes. Therefore, while this innovation worked well in a class of non-native English speakers, care must be taken when implementing it in a class with non-native English speakers in the minority.

Also, I observed all the various groups at one point seeking translations from Czech to English on the internet when they were unsure of a proper term. This served as a preparatory stage for students to improve their English terminology within their comfort zone, i.e. by discussing with their colleagues before addressing the entire class. Hence, the fear of disapproval or intimidation from colleagues, as reported, for example, by Karp and Yoels (1976), was overcome. I was therefore not surprised to see every student in the class – even those who never spoke a word to the entire class – either asking a question or contributing during the group work. Group work thus appears to have helped overcome barriers to student participation by building students' confidence.

My observation during the group presentation also evinced a thorough understanding by the students of the studied concepts. The students not only produced topic maps, which were correct, but came up with practical examples and additional concepts, which were originally not included in the projected word cloud or discussed in class. This is a clear indication that the interaction within the groups helped with the production of ideas, as suggested by practitioners (British Council 2005).

A major limitation to these findings was absenteeism, which considerably reduced the sample size by about fifty per cent. The reduced sample size was a result of my decision to limit data collection only to those students who were present in the control class and at least one of the treatment classes. Having more class sessions for both the control and treatment classes would have increased the reliability of the results. In view of this, it is unclear how well this innovation could be utilised in a class of fifty or more students vis-a-vis allotted teaching time. There is, however, no doubt the innovation worked well in a class of about thirty-two students.

Conclusion

This study explored whether engaging students in group work where they produced topic maps improves student participation when compared with traditionally used lecturing, and where participation is moreover hampered by the use of a second language. The study found that the innovation increased both class participation and quality of student learning.

Introducing group work was effective in overcoming barriers to classroom participation, especially fear of communicating in a second language. This is important as these days more and more universities are becoming international with an increasing number of foreign students. Though unintended, group work was also found to have a rippling effect of improving student attention span by making classes livelier and more fun. It also served as preparatory grounds for students to build their confidence before sharing their ideas with the entire class.

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CLUSTER 1. COMMENTARY
YOUNG ACADEMICS' STORIES FROM LEARNING TO TEACH: TAKING THE PLUNGE INTO GROUP WORK

Lynn McAlpine, Oxford University (emeritus) and Masaryk University

Context

'Group work' represents a large array of activities, which can take place both in- and out-side the classroom. Many instructors are hesitant to try group work since they are unsure how they will handle the issues that can arise, e.g., equity of participation, sharing of responsibility. Students also may be hesitant about the implications (e.g., Burke 2011). So, it was a pleasure to read these two stories, one by Awuah, the other by Tkaczyk. Both explored the potential of group work in their teaching and felt positive about the outcomes based on their evaluations of student learning (in both cases, quasi-experimental). Below I briefly summarize their experiences, then describe some key instructional design concepts – which I then draw on to reflect on their desire to design more effective in-class learning.

The cases

Awuah: Awuah chose group work (in a course with thirty-two students) as 'preparatory ground for the students to master English terminologies with their mates before speaking up in class'. Students in randomly-formed groups of three to four used concept maps to explore the relationship among subject matter concepts (management). In two classes (twenty minutes each time), they used the concept maps while he monitored student contributions – and posed questions in order to assess the quality of the work. Afterwards in plenary, a member of each group presented the group's work with other members responding to class questions. Finally, students completed a five-minute paper for individual assessment. Awuah used observation and audio-recording (quantity of participation) combined with the individual papers and the group worksheet (learning) to evaluate the impact. His evaluation showed both an increase in student participation (small group) and quality of students' actual learning.

Tkaczyk: Tkaczyk teaching a seminar of twenty students shared similar concerns: insufficient student interaction in class discussion. He intended to 'enhance students' active participation, increase their interest in the course and improve on their acquisition of key concepts. He gave groups of five students cards, each with a key subject matter concept, which they sorted based on the required reading. Once finished, members each took turns explaining a concept briefly. Later, in plenary, students added concepts voluntarily to the concept map on the board, explaining the concept and why it was needed. This helped verify that students understood the concepts. To evaluate the effect of the innovation on student learning, he used a minute paper

(similar to Awuah's five-minute paper) and three survey questions. Like Awuah, he found activities in small working groups enhanced knowledge acquisition. *But the innovation did not bring about an increase in participation and interest.*

Practice: a design concepts to enhance learning

When designing instruction, decisions should centre around helping students achieve the desired learning outcome. A critical concern, one often overlooked by teachers, is designing instruction to ensure students have sufficient practice of the desired learning before they are assessed summatively (McAlpine 2004). By practice, I mean *guided or scaffolded instruction* accompanied by *monitoring and feedback*. Practice can occur in- and/or out-of-class. If in-class, it can be done individually, with a peer or in a small group. The same modes are true out-of-class, with the addition of online or blended interaction. Finally, it can be particularly helpful for both the students and the teacher if students are asked to briefly demonstrate their learning after the practice (e.g., muddiest point, sentence-summary) since this reinforces the learning and provides assessment information to the students as well as the teacher.

Reflections

Both Awuah and Tkaczyk had a clear and similar purpose for their innovations, and drew on sound pedagogical principles in their rationales for using group work. Further, their instructional decisions can be mapped onto the key concepts noted above. They each chose to use in-class group work in which they provided a *structure* (cards, concept maps) to ensure students had enough *guidance* to complete the task effectively: an activity which included first a collective task and then a shift to individual articulation of subject matter concepts. During this time, they *monitored* group discussion and *intervened* as appropriate. Next, they both used plenary sessions to open up the discussion more broadly (more practice), which *reinforced the learning*. Finally, the short assessment activities (five-minute paper, one-minute paper) were designed to be used as formative feedback to the students and data for the evaluation of the innovation. Both cases are excellent descriptions of how the use of sound learning principles and appropriate instructional design can support student learning.

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CHAPTER 3. 'DESIGN YOUR OWN FLYING CARPET': HELPING STUDENTS TO MASTER RESEARCH PROPOSAL WRITING

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Coach: Mátyás Szabó, Central European University

Keywords: active learning, group work, higher-order thinking, sociology, undergraduate research

Introduction

A body of studies documents that students benefit from a student-centred teaching style which pushes them into a more active role in their process of learning (Blumberg 2004; Fink 2003). Although this finding might sound intuitive to many, in higher-educational settings a frontal style of teaching often prevails instead, as embedded in the very idea of a university lecture (Brown and Atkins 1988). In sociology, this trend is perhaps even more prevalent due to the high number of theory-laden classes, which are often information-dense and based on the idea of passing a large body of knowledge down to students. Yet, frontal teaching often puts students in the role of passive consumers of knowledge rather than as active knowledge producers and leaves little space for awakening their interest, creativity and capability.

In this chapter, I offer a critical reflection of a teaching innovation in which the principles of active learning (Faust and Paulson 1998; Mulcare and Shwedel 2016) were used to help students master complex tasks, namely, research proposal writing. The innovation was introduced during one session of the course and the learning objective for students was to learn how to create research proposals. By combining short lectures with follow-up activities and discussions, students were encouraged to work step-by-step on their draft research proposals during the entire session. In this way, they immediately moved towards more complex cognitive learning tasks, including knowledge application, analysis, evaluation and creation.

By drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data coming from the teachers' assessment of the research proposals, a student feedback survey and classroom observation, I answer the following research question: In what ways can students benefit from active learning when they face complex tasks, such as research proposal writing?

Description of a teaching challenge

The course, Social Inclusion: Perspectives, Practices and Challenges within the Visegrad Region was first introduced into the curriculum at the Department of Sociology of Masaryk University in autumn 2016. I designed the course together with a fellow doctoral student, Lenka Kissová, in order to fill a gap in practice-oriented sociology courses at our department. Our initiative also came as a response to the fact that most courses offered at our department were lecture-based. The course was designed in an unconventional way as a block of thematic sessions taught by

invited lecturers, with my colleague and I teaching an introductory theoretical session, a concluding methodology session and organising two field trips. The course sessions lasted 180 minutes each and combined shorts lectures with classroom discussions and other learning activities. The language of instruction was English, and the course was worth ten ECTS.

In terms of institutional requirements and institutional support, we had a free hand in orchestrating the course according to our vision and perceived needs of our students. This freedom reflects the working style at our department: its general openness towards new ideas and projects, and a significant level of trust amongst all staff members, PhD students included. Because the course was financed mainly from a grant awarded by the International Visegrad Fund, we could, moreover, bypass most of the usual inter-departmental negotiation.

The course was open to both undergraduate and graduate students. In the autumn semester of 2017, during which the innovation described in this chapter was applied, altogether sixteen students signed up for the course, of which thirteen completed it. The group was rather diverse in terms of educational backgrounds, level of academic skills, ethnicity, language and experience with different educational systems. Nine students were in their third year of sociology studies at our department, while the remaining four were visiting students from USA, Greece and Japan and had backgrounds in sociology, social work and global studies.

Nature of the innovation

The concept of *active learning* refers to different techniques which create favourable conditions for the active engagement of learners with knowledge (Mulcare and Shwedel 2016). In a classroom setting, these can include discussions and different individual or co-operative activities (Faust and Paulson 1998). Integral to most active learning techniques is engagement in higher-order thinking, which entails more complex cognitive operations. Such engagement can be designed with the help of the upper levels of Bloom's taxonomy, which is a framework used to define and measure levels of expertise acquired in the process of learning (Krathwohl 2002). The upper levels include application, analysis, evaluation and creation. In a functional active learning setting, the learners become co-producers of knowledge and are able to transfer the information and/or skills learned into different contexts (Tabrizi and Rideout 2017).

This chapter covers a teaching innovation introduced during a single session of the course with the aim of helping students master research proposal (RP) writing by pursuing active learning principles. By engaging students actively, we expected them to stay focused and engaged during the entire session, apply research proposal guidelines in relation to topics of their choice, and comment on the proposals of their colleagues. The overarching expectation was that the active learning environment in the classroom would prepare students well for later individual work on their RPs.

In order to submit a satisfactory RP, students have to become familiar with formal aspects of RP writing (structure and style) and prove their knowledge of the field they want to research (content). Even though structure, style and content are tightly interrelated, the focus of our methodology session was mainly on the first two aspects of RPs – we wanted students to understand the structure of RPs and become familiar with the writing style, so that they will be able to create their own RPs at the end of the course. Students could choose to work on the proposals either individually or in pairs. RPs served as the main course assignment and were worth forty per cent of the mark, with an additional twenty per cent awarded for peer-review.

To meet the session's learning objective, we introduced a compound activity with the playful name, 'Design your own flying carpet'. The reference to a flying carpet was used metaphorically to illustrate that if the RP was carefully 'woven', it would carry students safely through their entire research project. The activity had the structure of an imagined roadmap: first, students were asked to think about a topic for their research, and then follow the activity milestones. Our aim was to guide students step-by-step through a RP preparation by keeping them constantly engaged through tasks and discussions. The activity was thus comprised of several mini-lectures covering the basic elements of RP structure (title, research question, research justification, literature review, etc.), which were immediately followed by individual or small-group tasks requiring students to put theory into practice in the context of their own proposals.

At the beginning of the session, the students got fifteen minutes to think about a course-related topic of interest and to formulate a research problem. We did a short debriefing, inviting students to share their ideas with classmates and offering additional brainstorming for those who needed it. Once the topics were settled, my colleague and I went through the respective stages of RP writing and introduced the basic guidelines. After each stage, we left time for students to enhance their draft proposals individually, in pairs or in larger groups. At more complex stages, such as formulation of a research question, we then introduced additional activities – for instance, asking students to sort out well- and badly-formulated research questions based on the guidelines provided. At the end of the session, the students had a basic structure for their research proposals, which still lacked content-comprehensive parts, such as the literature review, but otherwise held together thematically.

Naturally, students could not prepare their RPs solely during this activity. Nonetheless, our assumption was that focusing on a single research topic throughout the process would help them to translate otherwise abstract guidelines for RP preparation into concrete examples and formulations. Such a 'translation' represents a shift towards active learning – a shift from knowledge acquisition through comprehension towards application, analysis or creative use (Tabrizi and Rideout 2017). The 'Design your own flying carpet' activity thus followed the principles of active learning by eliciting students' immediate responses to the RP guidelines introduced during the methodology session and by leading students towards creation of their own research proposals.

The latter learning objective corresponds to the uppermost stage of Bloom's taxonomy (Tabrizi and Rideout 2017). The partial tasks within the activity, moreover, engaged students in several other cognitive operations: evaluating research questions, justifying research relevance, and comparing and choosing from different research methods, among others.

Data collection and research methods

My research conclusions draw on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of a body of data coming from our assessment of research proposals, a comprehensive online feedback survey answered by our students at the end of the course, and my classroom observations. The analysis thus takes into account both the teachers' and students' perspectives.

The first way my colleague and I determined the learning outcomes of this activity was to assess the quality of the students' RPs. Their proposals were submitted in two rounds, as first drafts at the end of the semester and as final drafts during the examination period. Both versions were subjected to teachers' assessment and peer-review, but only the final drafts were marked. As the peer-review and teachers' comments significantly improved the quality of proposals and served as a learning experience in itself, I will focus specifically on the assessment of first drafts to determine the outcomes of this activity.[1]

The first drafts were assessed independently by my colleague and I on a scale of 1 (very unsatisfactory) to 5 (very satisfactory), and I subsequently made a compiled mean of our two sets of scores. For the purposes of this analysis, I focused on five criteria: a) compliance with the required RP structure; b) clarity of research problem formulation; c) clarity and quality of the research question; d) clarity and quality of research justification; and e) coherence of the research problem, question and justification. The quality of the literature review and methodology were not assessed, as they were not elaborated upon in detail during the in-class activity.

The anonymous survey took place online after the end of the course and combined multiple-choice and open-ended questions. While twelve out of thirteen students completed the survey, the response rate to different questions varied and was generally lower for open-ended questions. With respect to classroom observation, I took notes about the classroom dynamics and students' engagement during the session and wrote a more comprehensive reflection immediately after.

1 This analytical decision, however, might result in a bias of its own. Students were informed that we expected them to submit comprehensive first drafts containing all required sections, yet they also knew the first drafts were not going to be marked and they would have an opportunity to develop them further later on. In some cases, this might have led to a conscious decision not to spend too much time on the first drafts, potentially leading to lower quality submissions.

Findings

Quality of research proposals

All students performed between rather satisfactorily (4) and very satisfactorily (5) overall in their first drafts (table 1). Altogether, ten proposals were assessed by two teachers (N=20), because six out of thirteen students chose to work in pairs. The difference in the overall score between the weakest RP and the two strongest RPs was 0.9 points. Both the weakest and the two strongest RPs were submitted by individuals; pair-work thus did not automatically translate into a better (or worse) output.

With respect to individual categories of the assessment, the least problematic for students was to accurately apply the RP structure (mean score 4.96). The identification of a research topic and the justification for research both proved to be relatively easy for students (mean scores 4.81). What seemed to be more problematic was to formulate a research question (mean score 4.27), even though the guidelines and the activity covering this step were quite comprehensive. A closer look into the data, however, reveals that the score was mainly lowered by the performance of the three visiting students with backgrounds outside of sociology, who, according to their own words, had very limited experience with social science research prior to the class. Taking this into consideration, even their comparatively weaker performance can be understood as educational progress. Finally, the most problematic task for the students was to maintain coherence between their choice of research topic, research question and research justification (mean score 4.08).

Table 1. Mean scores of the ten first drafts of students' RPs for its five components as assessed by the two teachers

	Structure	Topic	Research question	Justification	Coherence	Overall
Compiled means (N=20)	4.96	4.81	4.27	4.81	4.08	4.8
Compiled means – weakest RP overall (N=2)	5	5	3	4.5	3	4.1
Compiled means – strongest RP overall (N=4)	5	5	5	5	5	5

Note: The closer the score to the number '5', the greater the compliance with the criteria of quality and guidelines introduced during the activity.

Student feedback

When asked about the usefulness of the activity for their own learning, almost all the students (ten out of eleven) responded on a 5-point scale that the activity was rather useful (4) or very useful (5). Their opinions about the usefulness of the activity were further elaborated with three open-ended questions asking students to specify what worked well (or not) for them during the activity and what they learned.

When responding to these questions, the majority of students (six out of seven) praised the step-by-step character of the activity ('step-by-step method was really helpful to manage the structure of my research') together with the opportunity to talk to the teachers directly ('I really loved the option to talk to you face to face about [my] research'). One student appreciated written guidelines, which we made available to students after the session. Aside from that, four out of six students appreciated that the activity helped them to understand the RP structure better. Moreover, two students offered answers signalling they might have gone beyond the intended learning outcome of the activity: one of them wrote that the activity enhanced their understanding of academic writing in general ('I've learned [that] structure and form are [a] basic part of [a] good academic text'), while the other reflected on his or her individual learning style ('[I have learned] that it is hard to think about such a big topic when I have so little time').

A variation on the latter statement, written by the same student, appeared as a single answer to the question about what did not work well; the student said s/he felt under pressure and could not think properly in the timeframe offered by the activity. Although this was only one answer, it should not be disregarded as it highlights the diversity of students' learning styles. While 'one activity fits all' is clearly a utopian scenario, classroom activities could also be used to initiate discussion with students about their learning needs and, if necessary, teachers may need to adjust learning activities accordingly.

Classroom observation

Asking students to focus on their own research project during the entire session also proved to be an effective strategy of making them engaged and focused. Students stayed focused throughout the entire three hours-long session and showed genuine interest in their proposals. They appeared to be working hard on the tasks, discussing things enthusiastically with their classmates and posing a lot of relevant questions. Although some students were initially shy about sharing their ideas, with time a relaxed atmosphere developed, which also eased the barriers between students and teachers; students appeared more comfortable approaching me or my colleague and asking for help and clarification.

On the teachers' side, the complexity of this activity demanded reflection-in-action (Rogers 2001): my colleague and I had to closely observe what was going on in the classroom and notice if some of the students were getting lost or needed additional help. For instance, while one ex-

change student demonstrated extensive knowledge and skills in RP writing, the three others, who had their background in the less research-oriented field of social work and global studies, had significant difficulties catching up. To address these diverse needs, we had to flexibly adjust the time spent on respective RP stages. Moreover, while we initially planned to conclude the activity with a mini-conference, which would provide the opportunity for students to present their draft proposals in front of their peers, we had to improvise and leave the last twenty minutes of the session for individual work and small-group discussions instead.

Discussion

These findings have three implications for determining the success of this teaching innovation. First, the principles of active learning, as put into practice through our 'Design your own flying carpet' activity, fulfilled the expectations related to learning processes: the activity awakened students' interest, it kept them focused and engaged, and it created a collaborative working environment.

Secondly, the generally high quality of research proposal first drafts documents that the activity was successful in meeting its main learning goal; students learned how to create their own RPs and thus demonstrated their ability to apply the knowledge and skills acquired in this session. This conclusion is, moreover, supported by the students' favourable evaluations of the activity. The overall impact of the innovation on the students' process of learning can be thus interpreted as positive.

Third, a detailed look into the teachers' assessment of the RPs, however, indicates a need to put a greater emphasis on the synthesis of respective RP parts, the category in which the students scored the lowest. Research proposal writing is a complex task which requires a synthesis of several written sections. While the activity helped students with the individual sections, there was no specific focus on their synthesis or integration. Students might thus benefit from additional support related to this aspect, for instance by an additional in-class activity, a handout with guidelines for self-assessment of RP coherence, or a peer-review – the latter of which we introduced in our course as the second major innovation, and peer-review forms included a section concerning RP coherence.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I assessed a learning activity which followed the principles of active learning and was introduced to help students master the complex task of research proposal writing. My findings document the overwhelmingly positive impact of the activity on the students' learning process, mainly in terms of their ability to fulfil the learning outcome – to master RP writing on a satisfactory level – but also by keeping students focused and engaged.

My findings are most relevant for teachers of undergraduate students in courses of up to twenty students but could be easily adapted for bigger classes. The activity discussed in this chapter was specifically designed to help students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for RP writing, but its structure and principles can be altered with ease for the active learning of social theories or threshold concepts.

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CHAPTER 4. USING THE FLIPPED CLASSROOM APPROACH TO TEACH QUALITATIVE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Coach: Vicky Davies, Staff and Educational Development Association
Keywords: classroom observation, flipped classroom, international relations, qualitative comparative analysis, teaching research methods, teaching small groups, thematic analysis

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to report on the experience with innovative teaching during an elective course on research methods for Master's (MA) students of international relations studying at Masaryk University in Brno. The Research Methods in Social Science course covers three different research methods, one of which is the Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) method. All methods are allotted two sessions comprising 180 minutes each. Only four students were enrolled in the course and I had full control over the contents of the classes and was given free rein to innovate these. However, the overall assessment has to fit the parameters of the course so that these could not be changed. My colleagues co-teaching this course supported the idea of employing a more student-centred approach during the sessions.

There is not one standard way of teaching at the Department of International Relations and European Studies at Masaryk University. Most of the core courses have big classes and are taught by means of frontal lecturing sometimes combined with discussion seminars. Czech students, who make up the majority in most courses, often prefer less interaction during class time. In addition, there are several colleagues who lecture very well, and consequently are highly appraised by students. Usually, teachers adjust their styles to fit the size of the classroom, reflecting on their courses, and update these accordingly when applicable. Some of the younger faculty members even experiment with a diverse range of teaching methods. Although there might be occasional chagrin about these 'innovative' ways of teaching (especially from the older faculty members), the head of the department encourages the idea of implementing new teaching methods and also supports teachers in enhancing their teaching skills. Consequently, the effectiveness of a teaching innovation that uses the flipped classroom model instead of frontal lecturing will be explored in this chapter. To evaluate the outcomes of student learning the thematic analysis is used and it has been found that the new learning method is successful.

Description of the teaching challenge

The overall aim of the course sessions for which I have been responsible is to help students to apply the qualitative comparative analysis as a research method. Students will be expected to (1) understand its mathematical foundations (Boolean algebra, necessary and sufficient conditions),

(2) apply these properly (conceptualization, truth-table construction, data calibration), (3) comment on its use in the assigned readings and (4) evaluate its usefulness regarding their future MA theses. Students attending the course have typically previously never come in contact with the QCA method. In earlier sessions I had assumed a lecturing style that allowed for some interaction with students. However, this method left both students and teacher exhausted. Students' attention would wane by the third hour of the session despite the course being elective which would otherwise ensure students to be highly motivated and willing to comply with the course requirements.

The teaching challenge then, has become to enhance student learning of the QCA research method while overcoming the abovementioned teaching and scheduling conditions. The aforementioned learning objectives align to fairly high levels of Bloom's taxonomy – i.e. application and evaluation (Armstrong 2018; Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching 2018) – and in a relatively short period of time students are expected to maintain their attention and actively participate during class.

Pedagogic concept applied and expected outcomes

I addressed this teaching challenge by banking on the fact that students attending the sessions are already familiar with the concepts by being required to submit a reading summary before classes which naturally lends itself to utilising the flipped classroom model. Flipped classrooms have the potential to enhance student learning by shifting the bulk of the informing process (McAlpine 2004) outside of class while leaving space for active engagement within the classroom. This leads to higher student involvement and better assimilation of the content. The flipped classroom approach is thus assumed to be suitable for the acquiring of procedural knowledge, which relates to how things are done (the coding of data, calibrating these and the conversion into a truth table) (Milman 2012; Whyte 2018). Moreover, a well-implemented flipping of the classroom coupled with opportunities and encouragement towards cooperative learning are believed to lead to better academic performance (Foldnes 2016). It is also suggested that students learning via the flipped classroom method appreciate the mix of lecturing and cooperative learning activities that have a direct connection to the content material (Cavanagh 2011).

Based on what the literature predicts regarding the outcome of the flipped classroom, I expect that applying this method during classroom sessions would help students assimilate the extensive content and at the same time remain engaged.

Nature of the innovation

Content-wise, the threshold and core concepts need to be identified (Meyer and Land 2003) and the practical skills employed need to be put in their appropriate sequences, which in turn leads to rethinking the assigned readings and adding explanatory videos to strengthen students' pre-

class home preparation. Students enrolled in the course are required to submit a summary of the readings before each session, as this has been a part of the course requirements before the introduction of the method. Unfortunately, it was not possible to check these summaries before class because they were only due after the actual session took place. However, previous experience has shown that it becomes evident that students who regularly complete their readings and hence enjoy familiarity with the content distinguish themselves by the level of their interaction during sessions.

A questionnaire was designed to measure the level of pre-course familiarity students have with QCA and this questionnaire was distributed via the university's virtual learning environment, which also serves as a tool for the mock collection of data. The questionnaire reveals that two out of four of the attending students are familiar with QCA through previous courses. This information has been used to pair students so that those familiar with QCA would be able to help their novice peers and this in turn enhances the collaborative aspect of learning.

The teaching innovation discussed in this chapter consists of an almost complete redesign of all session plans. The lectures have been restructured into mini-lectures and various learning activities are introduced to assist students to revise and deepen their theoretical knowledge from pre-class readings and to facilitate the application of procedural knowledge. Before innovating the sessions, I used to lecture for around forty-five minutes which was followed by short breaks. Now the longest lecture takes no more than twenty minutes. During these mini-lectures I only include information that needs further explanation. Breaks are also included during which the lecturer poses questions to students or administers short quizzes to ascertain the level of students' understanding.

The second step is the designing and revising of learning activities where students are expected to apply the concepts they learned before class. One of these activities consists of using mock data obtained in the pre-course survey from students for the purpose of demonstrating the sequence of analytical steps taken in QCA by manually coding it in collaboration with students and then transforming it into a truth-table. In addition to this practical demonstration, supplementary exercises are added: (1) an activity to revise the set theory by using post-it notes and ropes to illustrate borders between sets that were created by writing words on the notes, (2) a short multiple-choice quiz to check students' knowledge of the necessary and sufficient conditions in logic, (3) a Boolean minimization exercise, which entails cooperative interpretation of data from the existing articles and (4) the re-formulation of the abstract of a research article that uses alternative methods to apply the QCA method.

Data collection and research methods

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to design a comparative study to evaluate the outcomes of the innovation that uses a control group. No parallel courses or sections were taught in the

Fall of 2018 and the final marks from students of the previous year could not be used because the teaching innovation covers only one third of the content of the course. Moreover, the small number of students (four) taking the course does not lend itself very well to quantitative analysis. Therefore, it has been decided to use a qualitative approach, namely the thematic analysis of text corpora collected from student assignments and other sources as described below.

Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to identify themes (patterns) in a corpus or dataset of textual data. Moreover, it allows for the analysis and reporting of these themes in detail. Thematic analysis has various uses and its application is broadly deductive (top down) as the data are analysed within a theoretical framework. The analysis in this study was framed by means of posing three research questions (Braun and Clarke 2006):

(1) Were the learning objectives achieved during the QCA sessions?
(2) Have the newly introduced active learning tasks and the flipped classroom model helped students to achieve the learning outcomes?
(3) What are the lessons to be learned from the process?

I look for themes on a semantic level in this research and choose to focus only on explicit themes. This does not entail that latent ideologies or underlying issues are attempted to be uncovered, but instead that the theme as a unit of meaning should be identified. Such a theme would be classified as such when it captures something within the text in relation to the research question and represents some level of repeated response or meaning within the dataset (Braun and Clarke 2006). The importance of a theme is then brought to the surface by its relative quantity of occurrences across datasets.

The dataset consists of textual data collected from six different sources from three different subjects and is typically translated into English, however, not all students were able to provide feedback in English (see table 1 on page 39 for a summary of data sources).

When analysing the data six recommended steps were followed for the undertaking of the thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006): (1) becoming familiar with the data, (2) generating the initial codes which were contextualised through the three research questions (theory-driven), (3) searching for themes amongst the codes and collating those and putting these into relation with each other, (4) reviewing the themes by refining and judging these according to their coherence, (5) defining and naming the themes, and (6) writing up the report.

Due to the small number of students the dataset is small, which certainly limits any generalisation based on this case study. Nevertheless, it is possible to enhance the validity of the research by triangulating various data from several sources. The coding process itself has been carried out by one coder (me). The selected themes appeared quite homogeneous across the dataset.

Table 1. Data sources used for building the dataset

Subjects	Sources	Purpose and/or nature of data	Language	Respondents
Students	Pre-course questionnaire distributed via university learning environment	About students' previous knowledge of QCA as a method	Czech	4 out of 4
	A minute paper after the first session	About students' understanding of the QCA as a method and evaluation of the instructor teaching style.	Czech or English	3 out of 4
	Post-session questionnaires distributed after both sessions on QCA	About active learning components of the sessions and quality of teaching.	Czech or English	3 out of 4
	Student homework assignments for the QCA sessions	These were submitted for assessment; Used for evaluating the student learning outcomes, but did not become part of the dataset for thematic analysis.	Czech	4 out of 4 for both sessions
Colleagues	Class observation form provided by the Erasmus+ course	Both answers to the question in the form (mostly about classroom management and student-centeredness) and related verbal comments	English	2 for the first session 1 for the second session
Teacher	Recorded personal observations	Reflections written during the first session and notes taken after the second session.	English	1

Findings

Three wide themes (italicised in the text) have been identified across the dataset, broadly corresponding to the three research questions. In this section, these results are reported as a story that has emerged from the data (Braun and Clarke 2006) and is illustrated by quotations.

The first theme is related to students achieving the learning outcomes and can be described as '*progress*'. By progress, not only the *progress through the process* shown as a dynamic aspect of students *mastering* various specific concepts is meant but also the progress with procedures previously not understood. For example, students said that 'I understand what QCA is [...] and I also understand the steps we took in Excel' and 'I've learned a lot about applying QCA to various research in IR...'.

Findings from student feedback is supported by the analysis of student homework which reveals that content-related analytical/interpretative tasks were completed satisfactorily by all (four) students. Student homework thus provides more evidence of student *progress* while embracing threshold concepts and the required procedural skills. This finding has been supported by my observation in class where students demonstrated their mastering of learning objectives one to three by interacting with the lecturer (me) and the material accordingly.

It could further be observed from student participation in class that students were *demonstrating knowledge* by asking the teacher content-related relevant questions and interactively cooperating during class. *Progress* was also clear from students' *initial ignorance and insecurity* about using QCA that was evident from the pre-course survey and their ultimate *confidence in considering the method* to be used for their MA theses as shown in the questionnaires administered after the final session. Even those familiar with QCA before taking the course but felt unsure if they would use it showed *progress*. They felt confident they could use the method if it would be in line with their dissertation topics: 'I thought about it before and it confirmed it for me. Also the parts I was worried about, but most of these are clear to me now', 'I can imagine it [using QCA] for my MA thesis', and '[QCA] made me excited and has even led to my decision to use it in my thesis in the future'.

The second theme centred on the flipped design and the learning activities themselves. The overall design of the course was found to be *aligned with the learning objectives.* Student reactions to the learning activities during time spent in class could be described as 'appreciative' in various ways. Students found learning activities *fit for the purpose* of facilitating their learning as these provided illustration and explanation of the studied method. Students expressed this as *connecting theory and practice*, which was an aspect most valued by them: 'today and also last time there was a confrontation with real research and you described it as it really is', 'the main contribution [of certain exercises] was the transfer to social reality', and 'it helped me understand [how research works] in practice'.

In addition to these general qualities of learning activities, students and to some extent also the observers visiting the sessions pointed to *different aspects or learning activities as being helpful,* e.g. student-student collaboration, especially pairing those students with some knowledge of QCA with those without it. This element of peer instruction has also been particularly valued by the students.

Students also described the sessions as *engaging,* which indicates that the teaching challenge described at the beginning of this chapter has successfully been addressed: 'a very interesting method and a catchy presentation', 'it was interactive the whole time', 'students cooperated', or '[the exercises are] more interesting and better than the textbook'.

However, regarding the design of the learning activities, a third theme emerged; *imperfect preparation*. First, my colleagues also suggested preparing more examples in the future before sessions so that it would not be needed to improvise so often. Second, the learning activities would require some 'polishing' to look 'more professional' as one of the observing colleagues put it. This theme also resonated in the student feedback. Most of the comments concerned the exercises that indeed needed to be *improvised,* because the number of students was not sufficient for the exercise that was originally planned. When reviewing the number of students before class I realized that it would not be possible to use the exercise I devised before and I came up with suboptimal questions and became nervous, which students noticed. This theme, even if encountered with the least frequency as compared to the other three themes, poses a challenge to my further practice.

Conclusion

The aim of the teaching innovation was to enhance the learning experience of students in a content-intensive part of a course on research methods. This challenge has been addressed by redesigning the course using the flipped classroom model: by asking students to learn theory through pre-session readings instead of frontal lecturing during sessions and introducing active learning tasks to increase student engagement while facilitating the application of theory by students via learning by doing. Qualitative data were collected before, during, and at the end of each of the two course sessions when the students were expected to learn the qualitative comparative analysis method. They were triangulated by three subjects– students, observers, and myself. The thematic analysis was applied to the collected data that point to three broad themes: (1) student progress through the process of learning the method, (2) different aspects or learning activities as being helpful to achieve course aims and (3) my imperfect preparation as a teacher. Overall, these outcomes confirm the expectations that were mentioned in the literature on the flipped classroom model, that is, students were more engaged than when being exposed to frontal lecturing, they appreciate the collaborative aspects of learning and they report valuing QCA as a research method.

At the same time, it needs to be added that more time and effort could be put into the preparation of future classes, as I underestimated how much time the preparation would take. Feeling underprepared breeds nervousness and having to improvise leaves one stressed and frustrated. As this happened at the beginning of the first session, it was further coupled with stage fright as an observer was present in the classroom as well. This was a situation which called for carrying on with what needed to be done at that time. To avoid such situations in the future, I will more consciously seek out information regarding the number of students enrolled in the class and consider its implications for in-class activities prior to the teaching of the first session. Furthermore, it cannot be expected that in the future there will be a sufficient number of students available who are already familiar with QCA so that peer collaboration can take place. Moreover, not only should collaborative group exercises be prepared differently in such a case, but the number of exercises might have to be adjusted accordingly. Notwithstanding these issues, the positive outcomes of the innovation have prompted me to keep the class format unchanged because it allows me to engage students and help them to understand QCA as a method, evaluate its usefulness, and apply it in practice.

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CLUSTER 2. COMMENTARY
STEPPING STONES IN A LEARNING JOURNEY AS UNIVERSITY TEACHER

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The chapters showcase and analyse two different ways to support student learning of research methods. Rapošová designs a step-by-step process to help students learn how to write a good research proposal in sociology and Fridrichová introduces a flipped classroom activity so that students can learn theory from pre-session readings instead of frontal lecturing, in international relations. The common theme in these chapters is to encourage students' active learning, not for its own sake, but in relation to identified subject-specific pedagogical challenges and learning thresholds in their courses. The papers are excellent, contextualised examples of how, by relatively small means, and in single sessions within a course, students can be supported towards high quality learning. Perhaps for future references the authors might want to look at what David Kolb (1984) has described as main parts of a process of *experiential learning*: concrete experiences – reflections and observations – abstract theorisation – planning in an iterative learning cycle. It seems to me that there are many similarities between the authors' experiences and Kolb's model. It also seems to me that this is what the two authors themselves have engaged in, by engaging in their teaching innovations and evaluating them. Learning is a process and a journey, also for academics.

Both authors have made explicit how they planned, implemented and evaluated their innovations. The chapters are underpinned by relevant literature, so that their motives and arguments for doing what they did is properly theorized and convincingly argued. It is striking how the authors are very thorough in their description of what they wanted to achieve, how and why they did what they did, as well as the attention they have paid to a careful and deep evaluation.

In particular, these two innovations are evaluated through several sources: not only by student evaluations, which is of course important, but also through assessing the quality of students' actual learning – the result of the teaching innovation. These two – student evaluation and learning outcomes – always have to be paired in order to properly evaluate what actually happens when an innovation is introduced. Furthermore, Rapošová used documented personal reflections during the innovation as a basis for reflective evaluation and Fridrichová used classroom observers as a third evaluation source. These sources add even more to the credibility of the evaluation. Thereby these two chapters are excellent examples of the *scholarship of teaching and learning* (Boyer 1990; Chick 2018; Kreber 2002). As early career academics it is admirable to have learnt and adopted such an approach already, and as organisers of courses, this is something educational developers can encourage.

The two authors also reflect upon their own teaching environment, their departmental culture in relation to teaching. Basically, they both seem to have a quite supportive, open-minded local col-

legial context, where innovations are if not actively promoted then at least not actively hindered either. Fridrichová mentions how her innovation breaks the traditional lecture-style teaching in her department, but also that her departmental leader is supportive. It would have been interesting to read how these two innovations have been received in the department. Do the departmental colleagues know about this innovation? How have they reacted? Have the ideas spread to other sessions in the same courses, or even to other courses? Could Rapošová and Fridrichová perhaps give a seminar in their departments to talk about their innovations? Or have colleagues in their department been asked to read these excellent papers? The latter is a potentially powerful strategy to use in a course for early career academics: to ask participants to identify one or more 'critical friends' (Handal 1999) in their own department who might read and comment on the report of the innovation. Thereby even stronger links can be built (Mårtensson 2014) between ideas and initiatives developed in a course, and the local context in which the academics live their professional lives.

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CHAPTER 5. DOES ACTIVE LEARNING WORK? THE EXPERIENCES OF BRNO AND TEHRAN PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS

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Keywords: active learning, comparative study, group work, lecturing, psychology, social contact theory

Introduction

As a psychology student, the teaching approach I have experienced the most during the course of my higher education studies has been teacher-centred. My teachers have been the main authorities in class, while the students' role has been to receive information passively and to demonstrate what was learnt at the end of the semester during the final assessment. I have personally missed the social aspect of learning and the opportunity for self-expression. Moreover, I often felt I could not show my full potential if I was expected to interact with the teacher only once at the end of the course.

The teacher-centred approach has been subject to criticism on a broader scale as well. According to critics, if students are only expected to listen, they may miss important facts. Students' attention declines to a great extent after the first ten minutes of class (Hartley and Cameron 1967). Furthermore, teacher-centeredness does not empower students' independent study skills and eventual development of lifelong learning skills (Trilling and Fadel 2009: 38). Psychology, as a modern scientific discipline that borders on various other fields, requires its graduates not only to master the theories, but also to develop skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and effective communication. Therefore, psychology students would benefit from the employment of active learning methods in class both in the short and long run.

In this chapter, I challenge the traditional teaching approach by comparing lecturing with student-centred teaching at Masaryk University and the University of Tehran. Contrary to my expectations, students did better after the lecture than after active learning. However, the differences were not statistically significant. I reflect on the possible reasons for this result in detail at the end of the chapter.

Institutional contexts and innovation

I implemented my teaching innovation at two locations: the Department of Psychology at the Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic, and the Faculty of Psychology and Education at the University of Tehran in Tehran, Iran. At the Department of Psychology in Brno the majority of classes are teacher-centred. Lecturers usually use PowerPoint slides to present the content to their students. The situation regarding the prevalent teaching approach

at the Faculty of Psychology and Education in Tehran is very similar. Teachers lecture to groups of students. The difference is that, instead of PowerPoint presentations, teachers rely on the oral dissemination of information. Bromley et al. (2011) have confirmed that the formerly communist countries of Eastern Europe and the Islamic countries of the Middle East score approximately the same on a scale measuring student-centeredness. The scores of these two regions are lower in comparison to, for example, Western and Latin American countries.

A growing body of literature points to the need to rethink the traditional teacher-centred approach and move towards student-centeredness. Being aware of the institutional contexts at both universities, I developed a teaching innovation in which I compare levels of student participation while learning, knowledge of the topic and engagement in the class after lecturing versus after the active learning part of the class. The innovation was used at both universities for a class on the topic of intergroup contact theory. The aim was to find out if the student-centred approach is more effective, or, more precisely, if it benefits students at the Department of Psychology in Brno and the Faculty of Psychology and Education in Tehran more than the teacher-centred approach. In addition to comparing the effectiveness of the teaching innovation at the two institutions independently, I compare students' levels of participation while learning, knowledge of the topic and engagement in the class between the two locations to find out if there are any differences in student responses in Brno and in Tehran. A comparative study of this kind between a post-socialist country and an Islamic country is unique.

The topic of the class taught at both universities was intergroup contact theory. The lecture part consisted of a presentation on individual forms of contact between different social groups defined, for example, by nationality, religion, age, lifestyle or social status. The active learning part of the class consisted of two exercises completed in groups of three. First, students were asked to close their eyes and imagine their own social contact experience with a person from a social group they did not belong to, and consequently to share this experience and their impressions of it with their group. The second exercise consisted of reading about examples of contact theory applications and identifying optimal contact conditions in them. I chose to implement the lecture and active learning exercises in the same class rather than devoting an entire class to each approach because of my limited teaching assignment. A combination of the two approaches within one session was the only possible way to compare the effects of active learning and lecturing in the given circumstances.

The first measured indicator of teaching effectiveness was participation while learning. It has been shown that learning improves when students are curious, or interested, and tends to suffer when students are bored, or disengaged. Evidence shows that students' participation can be enhanced by employment of active learning exercises in class (Bonwell and Eison 1991: 6). Thus, I hypothesized that *students at both Masaryk University and the University of Tehran will participate more while learning during the active learning part of the session than during lecturing* (H1).

The second indicator of teaching effectiveness I focused on was knowledge of the topic. The student-centred approach challenges students to develop skills such as the ability to frame, investigate and solve problems; to acquire and evaluate information; and to collaborate effectively with others (Zhao 2012: 165-185). Active learning thus is expected to result in improved knowledge retention and create a deeper understanding of material than passive learning (Littlewood et al. 2013). Therefore, I predicted that *students at both Masaryk University and the University of Tehran will display higher levels of knowledge after the active learning part of the session than after lecturing* (H2).

The last measured indicator of teaching effectiveness was students' engagement in the class. The students I taught belong to the Millennial generation of individuals (born between 1982 and 2002). Unlike previous generations, Millennials have lived through a period of great technological advancement, which has, according to Prensky (2001), resulted in their decreased tolerance for lecture-style dissemination of course information. Incorporation of active learning strategies into the classroom is therefore critical in order to attract Millennial students' attention. Consequently, my expectation was that *both Masaryk University and the University of Tehran students' engagement with the class content will be higher after the active learning part of the session than after lecturing* (H3).

Finally, based on the above-mentioned research findings that Eastern European countries score approximately the same in student-centeredness as the Middle Eastern countries, I further hypothesized that *there will be no difference between the students' participation while learning, knowledge of the topic and engagement in the class either after lecturing or after the active learning exercises at Masaryk University and the University of Tehran* (H4).

Research design, data and methods

In order to collect data on participation while learning (H1), first I asked one fellow PhD student in each location to observe class activities. They tallied how many students raised their hands and asked a question during plenary discussions that took place at the end of each part of the session. Second, I decided to collect notes that students took during both parts of the sessions and compare them. Note taking represents a means for students to understand the class content effectively.

To measure students' knowledge of the topic (H2), I used a minute paper (Angelo and Cross 1993: 148-53). After each part of the class students were asked a content-related question that consisted of two sub-questions. After the lecture they had to name at least two forms of indirect intergroup contact and explain the difference between indirect and direct intergroup contact. After the active learning part of the session, students were requested to name at least two applications of intergroup contact theory and explain what conditions should ideally be met for contact to reduce prejudice. Students were given seven minutes to write down their answers on

a pre-prepared answer sheet after each part of the class. The Tehran students were allowed to express themselves in Persian if they did not feel confident with English. As for the transformation of qualitative data into quantitative, complete answers were coded by a value of 2, incomplete answers by a value of 1 and missing answers by a value of 0.

To collect the data on students' engagement in the class (H3), I also used a minute paper. Students were asked if they found the lecture/activities on intergroup contact theory interesting. When they did, I assigned a value of 1 and otherwise 0.

To test hypotheses one to three and verify whether lecturing or active learning was more effective, I compared the first and second parts of the class in Brno and then the first and second parts of the class in Tehran. I conducted within group analyses using paired t-tests.

Then I investigated if the students at Masaryk University and the University of Tehran responded differently (H4), and compared the data from the lecturing part of the session in Brno with the data from the lecturing part of the session in Tehran. Similarly, I continued with the data from the active learning part of the sessions in Brno and Tehran. I conducted between group analyses using unpaired t-tests[1].

Results

At Masaryk University I taught one session in the autumn 2017 semester within a course called Political Psychology and Intergroup Conflict. The expected number of students was thirty-five, however, only twenty-three showed up to class that day. At the University of Tehran, I also taught one ninety-minute session in the spring semester of 2018, this time within the course called Information Technology in Psychology. The expected number of students was thirty-five, but only thirty-two students were present for my lesson. The language of instruction was English at both universities[2].

Regarding the assumption that active learning will motivate students to raise their hands, discuss the topic and take notes more than lecturing (H1), the class observations partly confirmed the predictions. At Masaryk University, no students started a discussion after the lecture, while three out of the twenty-three students voluntarily contributed to the plenary discussion after the active learning part. The pattern at the University of Tehran was similar: three of the thirty-two students voluntarily asked a question during the plenary discussion after the lecture, while five students did the same during the plenary discussion after the active learning part of the class. Although the differences were small, in line with the hypothesis, the active learning parts of both sessions elicited higher rates of participation while learning than the passive learning parts. Concerning note-taking as an indicator of participation while learning, the lecture notes data was successfully collected in Brno but not in Tehran because I only learnt upon arriving in Iran that

1 Students' engagement in class was not compared statistically since the number of active students was too low.
2 A translator from English to Persian was present in the classroom in Tehran.

the custom at the Faculty of Psychology and Education in Tehran is to record lectures instead of taking notes. Masaryk University students took notes only during the lecture and not during the active learning part of the class, which contradicts the first hypothesis. This observation can be explained by the fact that students may not have known how to discern what information is necessary to take away when the information was presented in the form of active learning.

As for the hypothesis on the level of knowledge learnt (H2), the students at both universities performed better after the lecture than after active learning exercises when comparing group means (table 1). At Masaryk University, this result occurred both when students were required to list the names of two concepts we talked about in class as well as when they were asked to compare the two theoretical concepts. At the University of Tehran, students similarly recalled more when they were asked to write down the names of two theoretical concepts after the lecture than after the active part of the class. Unfortunately, in Tehran I could not compare knowledge levels when the students were asked to compare the theoretical concepts because the instructions were not adequately adjusted to the level of the students' English language proficiency and therefore they were misunderstood. Nonetheless, none of the above differences are statistically significant, and thus, the second hypothesis cannot be confirmed.

Table 1. Comparing the level of knowledge acquired by students in Brno and Tehran after lecturing and active learning

	University	Lecturing		Active learning		N	t-test	df	p-value	Sig.
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD					
Knowledge listing	Brno	1.09	0.90	0.74	0.96	23	-1.32	22	0.20	No
	Tehran	1.13	0.75	1.09	0.93	32	-0.15	31	0.88	No
Knowledge comparing	Brno	1.39	0.84	1.22	0.85	23	0.79	34	0.44	No
	Tehran	Not available								

When it comes to the hypothesis on students' engagement in class (H3), the story is similar to the previous one: there is no statistically significant difference in the scores for the two parts of the class either at Masaryk University (t=.00, df=22, p=1.00), or at the University of Tehran (t=-1.14, df=31, p=.26). The students in Brno indicated that they enjoyed the lecture and the active learning exercises equally (M=.87, SD=.34 for both teaching methods), while the students in Tehran preferred the lecture (M=.84, SD=.37) to active learning activities (M=.75, SD=.44). Thus, the third hypothesis has not been confirmed either, as active learning did not evoke higher engagement among students.

With regard to the hypothesis comparing the two locations (H4), the level of student participation while learning during the lecture in Brno was lower than during the lecture in Tehran (zero per cent of the Brno students raised their hands and contributed to the discussion versus nine per cent of Tehran students). Similarly, the level of student participation while learning during the active learning exercises was lower in Brno than in Tehran (thirteen per cent of Brno students raising their hands and discussing versus sixteen per cent of Tehran students). However, a definitive conclusion that students in Brno participated generally less cannot be drawn since the data pool is too small for a reliable statistical test.

Comparing group means on student engagement levels revealed that Masaryk University students found both the lecture and the active learning exercises more engaging than did the University of Tehran students (table 2). Nevertheless, the students in Tehran learned more after both parts of class as is indicated by the knowledge listing results. Despite the differences between the two locations, none of the results reached statistical significance. I can therefore conclude that the fourth hypothesis has been confirmed. There is no difference between the students at Masaryk University and the University of Tehran in terms of participation while learning, knowledge of the topic and engagement in the class either after lecturing or after the active learning exercises.

Table 2. Comparing students at Masaryk University and the University of Tehran regarding their levels of knowledge and engagement after lecturing and active learning

	Brno			Tehran			t-test	df	p-value	Sig.
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD				
Knowledge listing lecture	23	1.09	0.90	32	1.13	0.75	-1.70	53	0.87	No
Knowledge listing active learning	23	0.74	0.96	32	1.09	0.93	-1.38	53	0.18	No
Class engagement lecture	23	0.87	0.34	32	0.84	0.37	-1.14	53	0.79	No
Class engagement active learning	23	0.87	0.34	32	0.75	0.43	1.09	53	0.28	No

Conclusion

Passive learning methods, where students receive information from the lecturer and internalise it, are prevalent at both the Department of Psychology in Brno and the Faculty of Psychology and Education in Tehran. When comparing teacher- and student-centred methods implemented within the same class sessions at both universities, the results suggest a tendency for lecturing to be more effective than active learning. However, the differences within each class and between the universities were not statistically significant.

There are a couple of possible explanations for active learning not being more effective than passive learning in this study. First of all, many students at both Masaryk University and the University of Tehran were more familiar with traditional lecturing than active learning methods. They may have felt forced into active learning with no preparation. Some students may not be used to doing anything that requires them to go beyond what is necessary preparation for the final exam and they may see the active-learning approach as a waste of time.

Another possible reason active learning was not as effective as I expected were flaws in the implementation of the innovation. Gaps in the dataset resulted from relying on the translator and not adjusting the data collection measures to the English language level of the students. Similarly, the dataset would have been richer if it had been possible to collect students' note data in Tehran. Future research should explicitly compare note-taking during lectures with recording lectures to find out if they are equally influential.

An interesting discovery I came across was that the students in Brno took notes only during the lecture and not during the active learning part of the class. This had no immediate consequence on the quality of their learning experience. However, insufficient note-taking may be a problem for students in the medium and long run since they do not have any written record to refer to when, for example, they prepare for final exams. Instructors should be sensitive when debriefing after active learning to help students understand the take away message, i.e. what to record in their notebooks. The lack of notes also stopped me from looking at students' engagement in learning in more detail.

In the future, I hope to examine the effectiveness of the teacher- versus student-centred approaches by using a more conventional setup. Instead of using both approaches within one class, I would apply active and passive learning techniques during whole class sessions. Thus, students would, firstly, have more time to adjust to the new style of teaching and learning. Secondly, the data on the effectiveness of the innovation could be collected over a longer period of time, which would make the results more reliable. In addition, it is also desirable to increase the sample sizes for the potential effect to become evident.

Finally, more research is needed to better understand the dynamics of student-centred learning in the Czech Republic and Iran. In their feedback, the students I had a chance to work with said they appreciated both styles of teaching and learning. Altogether, these results and observations

imply that both forms of learning and teaching are important. The main recommendation of this chapter on how to improve the effectiveness of classes on intergroup contact is to sensitively employ both passive and active learning methods.

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CHAPTER 6. STUDENT PERCEPTION OF ACTIVE LEARNING METHODS IN A POLITICAL SCIENCE COURSE

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Keywords: active learning, content analysis, group work, motivation, role play, security studies, teaching large groups

Introduction

This scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) study reports on a teaching innovation based on active learning methods, which was implemented in a political science course at Masaryk University in Brno. The first-half of the course was based on a teacher-centred approach using traditional lectures, which might, as literature claims, merely lead to surface learning as opposed to deep learning (Biggs and Tang 2011). In order to prevent this, the teaching innovation encouraged students to actively engage with the topics in the second half of the course and aimed to help them understand these topics in depth. I evaluated the outcomes of the teaching innovation based on students' feedback on the seminars, classroom observations, and the analysis of student minute papers. In this chapter, I report on student perceptions of active learning methods and link these to how I could see my students learn using these methods.

Students appreciated the active learning methods that were employed, stating that they achieved a better understanding of the studied themes after the seminars in which they actively worked with a topic. Aside from that, they perceived student to student interaction as more beneficial for their understanding than student to teacher interaction as became evident from the analysis of the minute papers. As their seminar teacher I was very satisfied with the level of student participation in those seminars which were based on well-designed active learning tasks. My observations confirmed that student participation decreased when active learning activities were not planned well.

Description of the teaching challenge, the pedagogic concept applied, and the expected outcomes of the innovation

The main teaching challenge that inspired this innovation consisted of motivating students to engage actively with the topics after they had spent the first half of the course passively listening to lectures. Also, most course participants have not been in the higher education system for a long

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time or might not have come into contact with active learning methods before, as the course was designed for bachelor students. Another challenging aspect was that for most students the course was not held in their native language, but was taught in English instead. This and the comparably large size of the group (twenty-six students) contributed to some students being intimidated and reluctant to actively participate in activities during seminars.

The concepts of active and passive learning distinguish two different ways of how people learn, which significantly influences how well they understand the things they learn, whether they can use the knowledge in other contexts, and how long they will remember the learned material (Hahn 2016). In passive learning approaches, students are perceived as 'empty vessels' that are to be filled with knowledge by their teachers (Herr 2007). The knowledge which is acquired in such a way and in such an environment is usually superficial and will not stay with students for a longer period of time. Moreover, the approach often demotivates students as they are not doing anything else than listening and are not actively involved in the learning process. In this type of learning the teachers and their knowledge instead of the students and their learning that are the focus of the learning process (Hahn 2016).

Contrary to passive learning approaches, active learning methods use in-class discussions, group work, the sharing of experiences, connecting material with practice and other activities which can be applied in larger as well as in smaller groups (Surgenor 2015). The teacher undertakes the role of a coach or instructor who guides and leads the students (McManus 2001). Active learning might include student to teacher interaction but above all it strongly encourages various types of student to student interactions, which were already identified in the literature as being highly beneficial for learning (Hurst et al. 2013). Active learning, also called rich learning, is usually perceived by students as more motivating and leads to in-depth understanding and conceptual understanding (Hahn 2016). Active learning ensures that the acquired knowledge does not remain superficial and short-term and promotes an in-depth understanding of the topics discussed. Due to the rather passive approach taken in the first half I found it important to switch to active learning in the second-half of the course when I began teaching my seminar sessions. I hypothesized that student participation would increase when they would consider active learning methods to be beneficial for their learning and understanding.

Nature of the innovation

The teaching innovation was implemented in a seminar group of twenty-six undergraduate students participating in the mandatory International Security Policy course which is part of the political science degree program 'Security and Strategic Studies' at Masaryk University in Brno. During the first half of the course students were introduced by other professors to different

security policy concepts in a large class setting of around one hundred students in a traditional lecture format (Allain 2017). Subsequently, the students were split into three seminar groups in which the theories were to be illustrated using case studies selected by the respective seminar leaders (including myself).

The implemented innovation consisted of different active learning methods during my seminars, including an icebreaker in the first seminar, various discussion formats such as plenary and group discussions, brainstorming, and the drawing of mind maps, as well as a role play session. The role play session was organized in the form of a mock trial in small groups (of three to six students) and entailed a simulation of a court procedure connected with the seminar topic. Students were assigned to either represent the judge, prosecutor or the defendant who was accused of travelling as a foreign fighter to a different country and later returning to the country of origin and allegedly trying to spread radical ideas. Students received a case study and were then asked to argue their cases based on the assigned roles and simulate the process in court.

The organizational framework for the course was predefined by the department and there was no room for me to make adjustments to these framework conditions which related for example to the assessment methods, the structure of the course, and the requirements to pass it. My tasks included selecting the topics and literature for my seminar group and assessing the position papers which contributed towards student grades. Overall, this course already underwent significant changes in the years prior to the introduction of this teaching innovation and became a lot more student-centred than before. It originally consisted only of frontal lectures where students learnt via listening, but later seminars were added where students were expected to learn via discussions. I taught six seminar units during which three different security policy concepts were illustrated based on selected case studies. An overview of the seminars and the employed active learning methods together with the security policy topics and case studies is provided as an analysis of the results in table 3 (see the Findings section).

Data collection and research methods

Minute papers were used as a qualitative instrument to collect feedback from students (Stead 2005). After each seminar students were asked to briefly answer one positively and one negatively formulated question and in the last seminar they were asked to complete at least two out of four questions that referred to all seminars to get a more general idea of what students perceived as successful and where improvement was required. All questions can be found in table 1.

Table 1. Questions used for the minute papers after each seminar

Seminar	Questions
1	What was the most useful learning point from the session? What you did not understand from this session?
2	What was the most useful learning point from the session? What would you like me to stop doing, because it hinders your learning?
3	What did you find most difficult from the session? What would you like to learn more about?
4	What did you find most difficult from the session? What do you do that hinders your learning?
5	What part/content of the class did you find most useful to learn more about the topic? Why?
6	The thing I found most helpful/difficult was... The most useful thing/skill I learned was... The thing that most changed the way I learned was... What made learning most effective for me was...

Source: Moore (2009).

I analysed the minute papers via content analysis (Shannon and Hsieh 2005, Halbmayer and Salat 2011) and an open coding system (Kohlbacher 2006), focusing on the content of the feedback and coding the complete text corpus I had compiled from all minute papers (N=107). In the process of coding I developed eight different coding categories which subsequently served as a basis for the analysis and are further explained in table 2.

Table 2. Coding categories and rules based on responses in student minute papers

Category	Comment type	Description/Examples
1	Positive statement about active learning	Student expressed that he/she liked some of the active learning methods used in the seminar
2	Negative statement about active learning	Student expressed that he/she disliked some of the active learning methods used in the seminar
3	Miscellaneous	Comments on the discussed topics that did not belong to any other categories
4	Understanding	Students stated that they understood the topic

5	No understanding	Students stated that they did not understand the topic
6	Feedback on the position paper	Comments by students on my (negative and positive) feedback about the usefulness of position papers including both positive and negative feedback.*
7	Positive remarks on the teaching style	E.g. 'friendly approach of the tutor, patient – lecture more interesting'
8	Negative remarks on the teaching style	E.g. 'topic too complex' and 'treated too abstractly'

* Students commented on the position papers only at the end of seminar 2 and 6 during which I provided feedback on their position papers.

Aside from reading and evaluating student minute papers, I relied on my own observations of student learning in seminars, which I noted down after each seminar in order to keep an overview of whether the activities were well received or not and what must still be improved.

Findings

The evaluation of student minute papers for the individual seminars (see figure 1) showed that in all but the third and fourth seminars the number of positive comments on the active learning methods significantly outweighed the number of negative comments (categories one and two). Seminars one, two, five and six also received low amounts of negative comments on the employed teaching style (categories seven and eight) and students often expressed having understood the topic well (category four). Additionally, student to student interaction in these seminars was perceived to be more helpful than the student to teacher communication in seminar three.

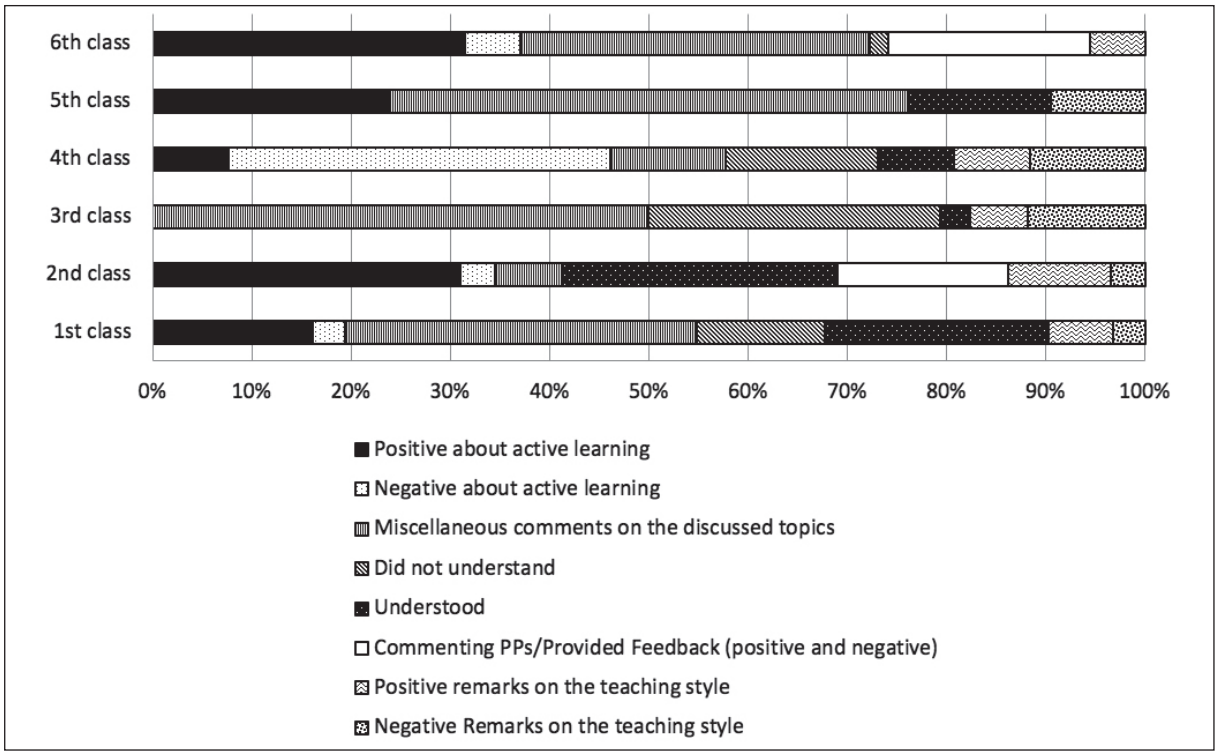
Students' low appreciation for seminars three and four was likely due to the learning method or the imperfect design and implementation of the learning activity. The third seminar, which received more negative than positive comments on the learning method, was held by a guest lecturer who heavily focused on teacher to student interaction instead of encouraging student to student interaction. No active learning task was part of this seminar, and in their minute papers many students expressed confusion about the topic (category five). The learning method in the fourth seminar, which also had a higher number of negative than positive statements on the learning methods, was probably evaluated less favourably by students because the time allocated for group work was insufficient and because the assigned reading was too complex.

For the fifth seminar, student perceptions of the learning method and of the teaching style differed, as the students were satisfied with the teaching method but raised a comparatively high

amount of negative comments on the teaching style. A student commented '...too much information that was not presented interestingly', which was consistent with my own observation of having made a mistake when preparing the lesson based on a book on the topic.

Student views on the position papers and on the feedback they had received from me were mainly positive. In their minute papers students stated that writing the position paper helped them to understand the topic. One student wrote that 'writing papers was fun and an effective way for me to learn' and another student liked the model of having a seminar on a topic, writing a position paper, and having another seminar on the topic.

Figure 1. Analysis of the minute papers written after each seminar



Students not only perceived the various active learning methods as useful for their learning, but their positive evaluation of these methods translated into a good level of participation in the individual seminars. All students participated in the group discussions and other active learning methods with the exception of seminars three and four, which were either not based on active learning or the active learning exercise was not designed well. Detailed information on the connections between the active learning methods, student perceptions of these methods, and my observations of student activity are presented in table 3. The study thus confirmed the expectation raised at the beginning of the course when students considered active learning methods beneficial for their learning and understanding, and their participation in seminars was noticeably higher than in seminars where students did not appreciate the learning method.

Table 3: Overview of case studies, seminar topics, active learning methods, student perceptions and my observations

Seminar number and case study	Seminar topic	Active learning methods used	Students comments and/ or reactions in minute papers	Observations on student learning
1 Foreign Fighters Introduction	International Security Policy Law	Group discussion based on two prompting questions and a summary of discussion results in class	Many positive student reactions concerning the active method, few critics on the icebreaker	Students engaged well in icebreaker and group activity; took longer than expected
2 Foreign Fighters Discussion	International Security Policy Law	Mock trial – Students taking on different roles based on a case study	Many positive comments made by students, the mock trial praised as an interesting experience	All groups actively working; even if not at the same pace
3 Security Policy of Israel Introduction	International Security Policy Actors	Frontal lecturing by a guest lecturer; only teacher-student interaction	Students frequently expressed confusion about the topic	Only a few students actively involved, mostly teacher-student interaction
4 Security Policy of Israel Discussion	International Security Policy Actors	Reading a text during the seminar and discussing it in smaller groups	Critique of group work based on text reading	Students got stuck in group work but asking individual students for their opinions worked well

5 German Foreign and Security Policy Introduction	International Security Policy Development	Brainstorming and the drawing of mind maps, both in small groups	Students said the topic was not presented interestingly, however, both parts of the group work were evaluated positively	All students were actively involved, students were discussing and going through their notes in groups
6 German Foreign and Security Policy Discussion	International Security Policy Development	Discussing the topic in class with all students	Positive overall evaluation of the seminar and the active methods by students	Most students were engaged in the discussion and were bringing up their own questions as well

Limitations and suggestions for future improvement

Although the above results of the study are encouraging, it is important to also take into account the study's limitations. First, due to the relative shortness the study could not address the long-term effects of the active learning methods. Second, other factors for which this study does not control may have influenced the achieved results, such as differing complexity of the selected topics, or personal factors etc. Third, in this paper I explored and confirmed the relationship between the use of active learning methods and student understanding based on somewhat sporadic student self-assessment input. In future analyses, students should be specifically asked about their understanding after every seminar in order to ensure that the data collected will be sufficient.

Additionally, other data might be used as indicators for student understanding, such as the results from small quizzes or students' summaries of the main lessons learnt from each seminar (Briggs 2014). Student position papers could have been a natural choice in this particular context except that they were written after the first of the two seminars addressing a topic, and thus could not provide a full representation of student learning on the topic. Not surprisingly, when I analysed the position papers no correlation could be established between the learning methods and student performance. It is unclear whether the results are due to a lack of impact of active learning methods or the partial exposure of students to a topic. The data collection methods suggested above could remedy this situation.

In order to help students improve their learning in the future, seminars will continue to be based on student to student interaction. Although the innovation was largely successful, it did not function entirely as planned. Improvement is needed for the role play session which was evalu-

ated very positively by the students despite all working groups getting stuck at a certain point. This could be avoided in the future by providing more specific and more extensive instructions to students. Another active learning method that left me and the students a little frustrated took place during the fourth seminar when students were assigned to read a text and discuss it in small groups. The selected text was too long and complex and the groups were not able to finish the task in time. When this became evident, I interrupted the group work with a video I had prepared, which was appreciated by the students and helped ending the seminar in time. In the future I will select shorter texts for active tasks during seminars to avoid problems such as described above. This teaching innovation convinced me that if the activities are planned well and properly integrated into the seminar, they can lead towards improved student understanding.

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CLUSTER 3. COMMENTARY
ACTIVATING TEACHING METHODS: MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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The active participation and engagement of students may significantly contribute to their learning. In-depth involvement can be helpful to increase students' understanding of the concepts, methods and skills taught within a course. For a teacher it can be challenging to foster a learning environment that enhances deep learning.

Teaching methods: means that serve an aim

The chapters from Kováčová and Fujdiak describe the efforts and results of the research they have conducted to increase participation and engagement by activating students during their respective courses. In many educational development programs, active teaching methods are propagated. The variety of activating methods covered in the two papers is impressive: different discussion formats (plenary and group), brainstorming, mind mapping and role play as opposed to and presented as an alternative to classic lecturing methods. However, when being caught up in the enthusiasm of applying alternative teaching methods, the fallacy can arise that their usage becomes an aim on its own. Before considering alternative teaching methods one has to bear in mind the learning outcomes of the course or program. In that sense, lecturing can serve a number of aims (for example to offer an introduction to concepts, structures and frameworks) while active teaching methods are more appropriate for other aims (such as the application of concepts and skills in a complex problem or case study). Fortunately, this goals-means displacement is not the case in the two aforementioned chapters.

Impact of teaching methods versus assessment

When reading the chapters, it is relevant to keep in mind that both authors are in an academic position that limits their degrees of freedom in regard to the redesigning of their learning environments. Of all the efforts mentioned, one of the strongest measures is to foster deep learning and higher order thinking skills by redesigning assessment criteria. The way students are assessed (and their perception thereof) is decisive and actually determines the way they learn: an assignment that requires skills and the application of the subjects' concepts that go far beyond the traditional method of learning by heart, will challenge students to study accordingly. Despite this well-documented importance, both authors are not (yet) in a position that they can redesign the assessment criteria of their courses. Therefore, the relatively small impact that both authors found upon evaluating the outcomes of their teaching innovations might not be very surprising:

changing only the teaching method without a more holistic approach to alter and align all course elements is likely to result in limited success.

Context matters, also for teaching methods

The case studies in this cluster originate from the Czech Republic and Iran, two very different contexts with surprising similarities in the findings of both papers but also with interesting differences. In the latter country, it is curious that note-taking during lectures seems not to be a habit. This particular difference is obviously observable in lecture halls, the differences in approaches towards learning in groups are not directly visible but they might be more important. The familiarity of students with teaching methods that foster students' active learning (as compared to, for example, traditional lecturing) has its impact on the feasibility of the implementation of the innovation. This too might be a reason for the limited significant findings in both studies. This remark also illustrates that the transferability of professionalization programs to other contexts and cultures is limited and needs to be approached with intercultural sensitivity.

Teaching methods as a trade-off between giving autonomy and providing structure

The two chapters are indicative of the delicate balance one has to bear in mind when activating students on the one hand and providing guidance and structure to students on the other hand. In order to engage students, the role of the teacher moved away from being the all-knowing expert to being a coach. However, that should not contradict with the crucial role of the teacher to provide students with sufficient structure. Students' autonomy needs to be guided in order for the learning process to be effective. When students experience a lack of structure and guidance, they might feel lost and express feelings of frustration. For a teacher this balancing act is quite challenging: it is easier to build structure via well-prepared lectures than to create structure in a learning environment where students have a lot of autonomy and responsibility over their own learning processes.

Applications of the self-determination theory to the educational context might offer inspiration for educational developers. This theory highlights the importance of three basic psychological needs: autonomy (the need to perceive one's true self as a source of motivation and action), relatedness (the need to feel connected and having a sense of belonging and competence (the need to feel effective and capable) (Ryan and Deci 2000). These needs impact students' well-being, motivation and engagement. In order to meet those needs (e.g. in the context of higher education), providing structure *and* creating an autonomy conducive style as a teacher are crucial (Vansteenkiste et al. 2012). As the discussion of the teaching context from the chapters suggest, students are little used to learn in an environment that nurtures autonomy and increased responsibity, which might have had an impact on the findings as well.

Educational development research challenges

Both chapters showcase the opportunities that can be created by challenging teachers to become researchers of their own teaching practice. In view of educational research, a strong operationalization and instrumentalization of the concepts studied (e.g. active versus passive learning) are desirable. Next to that, a multi-method approach might avoid that the complex reality is reduced to simplistic contradictions. Hence, the variety of methods used in the papers is impressive: apart from questionnaires, student feedback; minute papers; assignments; and observational evaluations are collected. Concerning the latter: we have to be aware of the limits and bias that might occur when observing while teaching. A very powerful addition to educational development purposes next to own observations is peer-observation. This applies both to the observer, who can serve as a critical friend, and to the teacher being observed. As is the case for student feedback, the feedback one receives from a peer-fellow teacher can be very enriching and inspiring as a formative assessment approach, in the true meaning of the concept.

Sustainable innovation through educational development

As educational developers we hope to introduce new learning approaches and methods by professionalizing young staff at our institutes. But if the context does not (or only partially) allows for this, or when young staff is met with cynicism by more senior colleagues, many efforts and good intentions can die a sudden death. It would be naïve to neglect these circumstances. When we aspire that educational innovations, like those described in the chapters, get consolidated not only at the course level, but also incorporated at the study program or institutional level, it is not sufficient to focus only on competence development of staff at the early stages of their careers. These actions need to be complemented with efforts focusing at the level of senior staff, and people with policy power, such as heads of study programs, heads of department, educational deans at the faculty level and educational policy makers at the institutional level. One cannot expect from the youngest generation to change educational practices according to new principles advocated in the educational development program in a sustainable way without the explicit support, involvement, and contribution from senior staff. The latter group should then be subject of designated educational development programs as well.

Get inspired

I invite the audience to read both chapters to find out to what extent the teacher-researchers succeeded in their efforts to apply student-centred methods to make their teaching more effective. These chapters are inspiring examples on how to encourage active participation as a teacher in a variety of ways and in different contexts and how to make its impact visible as a researcher.

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CHAPTER 7. LIFE AFTER ACADEMIA: PREPARING STUDENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION

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Keywords: collaborative learning, European Union, group work, presentation, workplace skills

Introduction

Based on my experience as both an instructor and an international relations officer at the University of Economics in Bratislava (EUBA), I have realised that one of the significant challenges that our students face while on student mobility abroad is working in groups. Their earlier education did not equip them with the necessary skills to be able to function in groups effectively. Additionally, students do not have the know-how for preparing and delivering a good-quality presentation. Their idea of a good presentation rests merely on using PowerPoint slides. Besides, students are often asked to present individually and never as a group. Therefore, I decided to introduce an innovation in my teaching that combines group work and presentations.

My rationale for introducing group work to prepare and deliver presentations in my European Union (EU) Enlargement course was that working in groups helps students explain, summarise, apply, analyse, synthesise and evaluate certain topics. It also allows them to practice essential social, problem solving and communication skills (SAW Program 2007). These skills are not only directly related to the principles and values of the University of Economics in Bratislava (Code of Ethics 2018) but are also necessary to succeed in any working environment.

To assess the impact of this approach, I mixed qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, used during three class sessions. The data support all three of my hypotheses: the introduction of group work into classroom activities created a positive environment, made students interested in learning about the EU, and facilitated their learning, including both fact-base knowledge and skills development. I also gained significant insight regarding both research and teaching design that I shall address at the end of the chapter.

The context

Courses at EUBA are either lecture- or seminar-based. According to Slovak legislation, only those with a PhD degree are entitled to lecture, leaving PhD students to teach seminars. The teaching content is set by the course supervisor, especially the lectures. Seminars tend to follow the structure of the lectures but can be altered by the seminar instructor, PhD students excluded. Seminars typically encompass working on case studies, writing seminar papers or essays, and making individual presentations. Classroom interaction between students and instructors is usually one-way, teacher-to-student communication and students often complain about lectures and semi-

nars being alike. Courses are evaluated in the following way: forty per cent of the final grade is earned during the semester for attendance, participation in class and completing various in-class and/or homework assignments. The remaining sixty per cent comes from the (usually written) final exam. To successfully pass the course, a minimum of fifty-one per cent is required overall.
As a PhD student, I have taught three seminar sessions in the EU Enlargement seminar-based course. This is a three-ECTS credit, compulsory elective course[1] within the International Trade Management Programme at the Faculty of Commerce. The course was offered during the Autumn 2017 semester in English to non-native English speakers in the final year of their Master's degree studies. It is comprised of ninety-minute seminar sessions with up to twenty-six students divided into two seminar groups.

Group work and education

My teaching innovation focused on the development of presentation skills through group work and was rooted in the observations that (1) student presentations often suffer in quality and that (2) students are not taught how to prepare and deliver high-quality group presentations. The importance and development of group work in (higher) education, including making a good presentation, have been abundantly researched and debated (e.g. Friedmann 1989; Colbeck et al. 2000; Oswal 2002; Lotan 2003; SAW Program 2007; Koh et al. 2009; Allen 2012; Hammar Chiriac 2014; Magogwe et al. 2015; Lavy 2017; Naseem and Fleming 2018). Susskind and Borchgrevink (1999) define a student group as 'a collection of two or more individuals assembled for a common purpose, share a temporal exercise [...], and interact with one another yet remain independent in some form or another'. It is important to distinguish working in a group, or group cooperation, and working as a group, or group collaboration. The former encompasses students sitting together working on the assignment individually. The latter is the true gist behind group work, representing a synergy effect emerging from the aligned abilities of group members to achieve a shared goal (Colbeck et al. 2000; Lotan 2003; Hammar Chiriac 2014). My students, thus, could ease into group work by moving away from working individually through cooperation and toward collaboration.
Group work and its application in the curriculum is an incentive for learning and teaching (Friedmann 1989; Colbeck et al. 2000; Hammar Chiriac 2014). To be successful, Allen (2012) suggests encouraging a classroom culture that supports collaboration and group work, and that has structure and tasks, including strategies that foster group work throughout the semester. Teaching the course in a language other than the students' native tongue makes it even more important to provide an environment that supports positive feeling and develops students' motivation to learn (Shor 1992). Therefore, I put great effort into creating a welcoming environment, for example by encouraging students to participate, or by giving away small prizes to motivate them to learn and

1 An obligatory course for a minimum credit value chosen according to the students' personal preferences.

excel in presentation and group work skills on issues concerning EU enlargement.

Group work also represents a direct answer to the needs of the labour market, which demands both an educated and skilled work force (Colbeck et al. 2000; Koh et al. 2009; Lavy 2017; Naseem and Fleming 2018). Even when abilities within the group vary, evidence for the multiple benefits of group work are many: it leads to flexibility (Friedmann 1989), improved social interaction and higher motivation (Colbeck et al. 2000; Koh et al. 2009; Hammar Chiriac 2014), lower stress and anxiety level due to social support (Koh et al. 2009; Lavy 2017), and learning and problem solving through collaboration and utilisation of the group's competencies (Colbeck et al. 2000; Hammar Chiriac 2014). The positive impact extends to instructors, too, who welcome the atmosphere of interest and eagerness (Friedmann 1989).

Applying group work to presentations represents one of the essential instructional approaches because students need to go through the process of planning, preparing and delivering a presentation, which emphasises the importance of independent learning, group work, interaction and communication in the successful learning of presentation skills (Magogwe et al. 2015). Contributing to the class by *doing* makes students more alert, perceptive and interested, which results in better understanding and potential inclination to learn more.

Based on the abovementioned, I had the following expectations about the impact of my innovation:

Hypothesis 1: The innovation – i.e. group work – takes place in a classroom environment that is supportive of learning via collaboration.

Hypothesis 2: Preparing presentations in a group has a positive impact on students' interest in learning about EU enlargement.

Hypothesis 3: Student learning, including knowledge and skills after collaborative group work, is noticeable.

The innovation

My innovation was implemented through three seminar sessions and in both seminar groups. The first session introduced students to group work through the shared task of creating a poster to evaluate the EU enlargement process in general and the controversial case of Turkey in particular. I chose poster-making as the first output of group work activity because it required neither computer skills nor equipment, which allowed students to ease into group work.

The second session gave an explanation and demonstration of a good presentation by pointing out how to avoid the most frequently experienced problems in presentations. Students started with reading the assigned text about EU enlargement and the European Neighbourhood Policy, on the basis of which they then prepared a PowerPoint presentation. They needed to include the title, table of contents, introduction, core of the topic, conclusion and sources in a maximum of ten slides. The third session also encompassed making a PowerPoint-based group presentation

but this time summarising the compulsory reading on possible alternatives to the enlargement of the EU.

During the sessions, students were divided into two or three groups. I monitored their activity and, when necessary, answered their questions and offered encouragement. Each session concluded with a debriefing that combined oral feedback from their peers and instructor. Students of the non-presenting group(s) assessed the presentations based on a two-question peer evaluation rubric and were expected to share their comments afterwards in a constructive manner.

Data collection and methods

I collected data from three sources. First, I relied on the method of reflection-in-action (Giaimo-Ballard and Hyatt 2012). I observed student activity and behaviour during sessions with attention to both positive and negative developments, resulting in qualitative data.

Second, student opinions were collected through a short questionnaire (SQ) after each of the three sessions using exactly the same open-end questions: What is your opinion of today's seminar session activities? What part of today's seminar session do you consider as particularly beneficial? What changes would you like to see in the future? Of the twenty-six students registered for the course, during the three seminar sessions seventeen, nineteen and twenty-two students filled in the SQ, respectively.

Third, at the end of the fourth session (which included film watching), students were asked to fill in a long questionnaire (LQ) with the aim of evaluating potential student progress in acquiring group presentation-making skills. It included a mixture of dichotomous and Likert scales and open-end questions (table 1). All twenty-six students completed the LQ.

Table 1. The long questionnaire

Questions	Answer options
Indicate the effect of the session(s) on your knowledge of the EU enlargement process by circling the most accurate answer:	No effect Minimum effect Some effect Major effect
How do you perceive the effect that the previous four seminar sessions have had on the quality of your presentation skills?	No improvement Minimum improvement Some improvement Major improvement
During the session(s) I have perceived the instructor as (one answer only):	Insignificantly student-oriented Modestly student-oriented Moderately student-oriented Very student-oriented

What do you think are the most positive outcomes of the sessions?	[Open-ended question]
What do you think are the most negative outcomes of the sessions?	[Open-ended question]
Would you recommend this and/or similar types of seminar activities to your younger peers? Explain your answer:	No. Yes. [Open-ended question]

Results

The first hypothesis about the presence of a supportive classroom environment for learning through collaboration was confirmed. 80.8 per cent of students found the instructor very student-oriented, while 15.4 per cent perceived the instructor moderately and 3.8 per cent modestly student-oriented. None of the students answered that the instructor was not student oriented (LQ). Similarly, when students were asked whether or not they would recommend the course to their peers (LQ), the majority (92.3 per cent) responded positively. They explained their position with the fact that students were encouraged to speak up in a friendly and supportive atmosphere.[2]

In line with the statistical data, I witnessed that students eagerly participated after they overcame their disbelief that they needed to engage in an activity, group work, with which they had no experience. With each new session student-to-student communication improved and group work evolved from cooperative to collaborative. Leaders and followers emerged in the groups and students' verbal and non-verbal communication progressed from initially timid and insecure to outspoken and confident. Instructor-student communication also changed: the primarily one-way, instructor-initiated conservations were replaced by two-way communication where students did not shy away from either initiating the interaction or answering the instructor's questions.

The second hypothesis, which expected that preparing presentations in groups would make students interested in learning about the EU, also received support. When asked to list the most positive outcomes of the innovated sessions (LQ), some students stressed that they developed 'a stronger interest about the topics of EU politics and administration'. Answers given on the SQ provided further support: several students described both the second and the third sessions as 'interesting' due to stimulating and challenging topics and collaborating in groups with previously unknown peers.

This corresponds strongly to my observations that focused on students' verbal and non-verbal cues. The sessions were carried out at the very end of the day, and many students were tired, clearly looking forward to the end of classes. Yet, when asked to interact with their peers during

2 The 7.7 per cent said they would not recommend the course to their peers because they did not see the added value as they had already taken the European Union course during their bachelor studies.

the group work, they gradually overcame their exhaustion. Students seemed to grasp the benefits of group work as they were able to share and debate their understanding of the reading material and divide tasks according to their personal preferences. A lively and positive competitive buzz developed between the groups. Because they presented together, rather than having just one designated speaker, the feeling of collaboration intensified, and group members mutually encouraged each other. This resulted in a more equally shared and generally increased level of participation in comparison with my previous years of experience with the seminar. Peer evaluation offered students additional opportunities for learning and helped maintain their attention and interest.

The third hypothesis concerning the positive impact of group work on student learning also received support. Responses to the question about the impact that the three innovated sessions had on their knowledge (LQ) showed that students perceived these sessions as contributing to their knowledge of the EU enlargement process: 26.9 per cent of students saw them as having major effect and 73.1 per cent said that the sessions' impact on their knowledge had some effect. No students answered either 'no effect' or 'minimum effect'.

Answers to the already cited questions on the positive outcomes of all sessions that included group work (LQ), and on the most beneficial aspects of each session (SQ), revealed what the students saw they were learning. A few mentioned content-related items such as acquiring a lot of new and interesting information about EU enlargement, facts about the EU, new vocabulary, and new knowledge. They praised group work for helping them comprehend the topic and reading material.

There was a very strong focus on skills development, too: as one student put it, 'the course taught not only theory but also very practical tasks/skills'. Students specifically highlighted improvements in skills such as cooperating with peers, knowledge sharing, time management, and using their English for practical and academic activities. Several students brought up how the exercise improved their presentation skills. Indeed, when directly asked about it (LQ), 38.4 per cent of students perceived that seminar sessions resulted in major improvement in the quality of their presentation skills, 46.2 per cent felt some improvement, while 15.4 per cent perceived their improvement as minimal. No students said that their skills did not improve at all.

However, improving their skills did not come easily to them. They looked stressed during presentations: their voices and hands were shaking, and they had timid body posture. Additionally, the lack of active English proficiency diminished students' self-esteem, which they noted as negative outcomes of group work and presentations (LQ). Their confidence was improved through peer and instructor evaluation during debriefing, allowing presenters to gain information on their strengths and learn how they could improve in the future. The increased confidence was evident from the more relaxed body posture and facial expression but especially from their decreased reluctance to present.

Conclusion

In this chapter I presented the evaluation of a teaching innovation that equipped the students with valuable knowledge and improved their presentation skills, which was applied on the grounds of group work. Enhancing their ability to collaborate with peers and to prepare and deliver an effective presentation will serve them well when competing on the labour market even with a higher education degree at hand.

Implementing the innovation taught me valuable lessons both about its realization and evaluation. As for the former, even though I was aware that the students' English skills were not the best, I felt somewhat unprepared for the differences in their English skills and for their low self-confidence when it comes to communicating in English. These shortcomings were evident not only during the presentations but also in their commonly not completing the assigned reading ahead of class time. In the future, I would like to focus on helping students improve their critical reading skills and gain confidence using their English by preparing different types of activities, teaching them how to read effectively, and possibly assigning material that uses simpler English structures.

Finally, I realized that what is practical for teaching purposes is not always beneficial for a research project that evaluates the applied teaching methods. For example, teaching two parallel groups of the seminar originally prompted me to design a quasi-experimental research. However, several things made its implementation infeasible: first, there were not enough students registered for the course to conduct a reliable statistical comparison of the treatment and control groups. Second, it was very difficult to justify why I would teach one group of students with a method that I consider inferior. Lastly, to increase participation students could change between the two seminar groups, which made contaminating the control group unavoidable. Nonetheless, I plan to conduct similar pedagogical studies once I am in a position to test a larger pool of respondents because similar studies at EUBA, and at any university, are necessary for the university management to understand and successfully address challenges related to student skills development. I find this vital not only for students but also for the university's reputation.

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CHAPTER 8. ENHANCING FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AS THE WAY OF BOOSTING STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE AND ACHIEVING LEARNING OUTCOMES

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Coach: Eszter Simon, Masaryk University

Keywords: audio feedback, Bloom's taxonomy, constructive alignment, formative assessment, international relations, quasi-experiment, sequential assessment

Introduction

After assisting for the Master's degree course on international relations theories, I noticed that despite studying hard and spending considerable time preparing for classes, students found it difficult to grasp the idea of writing a critical position paper, shaping their opinion into a concise and coherent argument. While some managed to make considerable progress throughout the semester, the majority did not noticeably improve their writing and argumentative skills, and thus, failed to achieve the learning outcomes of the course. I assumed that such performance resulted from flaws in the practice of formative assessment and decided to improve that component of the course.

Accordingly, I made three alterations in this year's iteration of the course. First, the introductory lecture devoted more time to organizational instructions, providing students with the assessment rubric for position papers as well as examples of good papers. Second, the quality of the feedback was improved through addressing both strong and weak sides of the papers. In addition, instead of traditional brief textual remarks in the university's Information System (IS), students were provided with audio feedback on their position papers ahead of classes. Thirdly, I made use of sequential assessment. Namely, original audio feedback was provided without the grade; then the grade was inserted into the IS soon after the class.

The research herein demonstrates that the teaching innovation was successful in part and has managed to address the teaching challenge to an extent. Quantitative analysis in the form of t-tests showed that the innovation had positive impact on the final performance of the treatment group. Qualitative analysis revealed that improved instructions as well as the re-iteration of certain points during in-class discussions were useful and helped students to better understand the task at hand. Moreover, most students appreciated verbal feedback and preferred it over the written one. At the same time, students did not clearly see the benefits of separating the feedback from the grade.

Context of the innovation

The innovated course International Relations Theory and Energy Security was taught at the Department of International Relations and European Studies of Masaryk University (Brno), where teachers are fairly free to prepare their syllabi. However, the teaching staff of the Energy Security Studies Master's degree program, of which this course was a part, coordinate the activities they expect students to complete across various courses in order to make those as diverse as possible. This course has weekly ninety-minute sessions, each of which is divided into a forty-five-minute lecture and a forty-five-minute seminar. Seminars are focused on discussing the required readings for each class and students' weekly position papers that they prepare before the class takes place. Since this particular Master's degree is taught in English, the class was comprised of five international students from various countries. My main responsibilities for the course included facilitating seminar discussions and dealing with students' position papers. In addition, I gave two lectures.

Theoretical background

Biggs (2018) came up with the idea of constructive alignment, suggesting that activities should correspond to learning outcomes, helping students to acquire necessary competences. However, my previous experience with the course showed that position papers were not contributing to student learning the way they were expected to. In theory, this activity was aimed at helping students to be able to apply theoretical approaches to the analysis of particular issues of today's international politics and assess the viability of those approaches. These outcomes belong to the third and sixth levels of Bloom's taxonomy (Krathwohl 2002), which are adequate for the Master's level.

Nevertheless, students found it difficult to grasp the idea of writing a critical position paper, shaping their opinion into a concise and coherent argument related to the theoretical aspects of international relations. The majority did not noticeably improve their writing and argumentative skills, having difficulties achieving learning outcomes. Thus, the problem seemed to reside in the practice of formative assessment, which had hitherto offered only brief textual remarks in the IS, explaining the grade.

In order to make it work for students, feedback should be constructive and formative, stimulating their reflective learning and allowing for improvement throughout the course (Gibbs 2015; Juwah et al. 2004). Hence, I decided to change how feedback is provided to students, and thus, address the teaching challenge in a theory-driven way. First, the introductory lecture of this year's course provided explanations on what position papers were, their structure and how they contributed to the learning outcomes. Moreover, in addition to a thorough clarification of the assessment criteria, students were provided with the assessment rubric for position papers and examples of good papers from the previous years.

Second, another measure addressed the quality of feedback by taking into account both strong and weak sides of the papers and presented them in the 'sandwich' format. Furthermore, instead of traditional written feedback, the students were provided with audio comments on their position papers before classes. Listening to an audio feedback is more personal and comprehensible for students, since it makes them focus on what they are listening to: 'There are reports that students are altogether more likely to listen to feedback than to read feedback, and to return to the same piece of feedback more frequently when it is audio feedback' (The Higher Education Academy 2012: 3).

The last part of the innovation was sequential assessment. Namely, the podcasts were provided without the grade; then the grade was inserted into the IS soon after the class. This way, I avoided using feedback for simply justifying the grade. There was also a strong probability that it would encourage students to read the feedback as the only way to get a sense of how well they had performed (The Higher Education Academy 2012: 4).

Research design

I opted for a two-fold evaluation of the impact of the innovation, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Quantitative component

The quantitative component used a quasi-experimental design. The treatment group included students enrolled in the innovated course. I had two control groups: the first one (control group 2016) was comprised of the students from the previous iteration of the very same course; the second one (control group 2017) was comprised of the students enrolled into the Czech version of the course, which was not subject to the innovation. For all 3 groups I was the instructor using the same assessment criteria, assuring the comparability of data. Quantitative analyses were based on descriptive statistics as well as on one-tailed independent t-tests with the standard α=0.05 cut-off point for evaluating the statistical significance of the innovation's impact, admitting α=0.1 cut-off point for marginal significance[1], using the R software[2]. One-tailed t-test was used because the hypotheses below are unidirectional expecting a positive impact.

Specifically, my first hypothesis expected that the treatment group would obtain better final grades compared to the control groups. Accordingly, I compared the average final grade of students in the treatment group to those of the members of the control groups. Since the grades at the university have the letter denomination, I transformed those into numbers, using the official Masaryk University grade classification (see table 1).

1 Such an approach has been gaining wider acceptance recently, see Pritschet et al. 2016.

2 I am indebted to Petr Ocelík, during whose course I could implement the innovation and who has also helped with the quantitative analyses in the R software.

Table 1. Grade classification for academic courses

Level	ECTS letter grade	Value
Excellent	A	1
Very good	B	1.5
Good	C	2
Satisfactory	D	2.5
Sufficient	E	3
Failed	F	4

Source: Masaryk University 2012.

In hypothesis 2, students of the treatment group were expected to perform better over time than students in either of the control groups. Position papers selected from the beginning, middle and the end of the course allowed me to assess students' progress towards learning outcomes over time. The chosen papers for all groups were devoted to the topics of Realism, the Copenhagen School and the Welsh School of Security Studies, assuring their comparability.

Operationalizing this second hypothesis led me to specify it into three sub-hypotheses. In short, I expected that students in the treatment group would show greater improvement from one assignment to another than the students in either of the control groups. That is, the change in group means from position paper 1 to position paper 2 (H2a), from 2 to 3 (H2b); and from 1 to 3 (H2c) should be higher for the group exposed to the innovation.

Qualitative component

The qualitative component, which aimed at strengthening the findings of the research and focusing on students' perceptions of their own progress and the usefulness of the innovation, was comprised of the textual analysis of the data collected in the forms of minute papers and a final questionnaire.

Minute papers were collected for all relevant sessions (n=10) and were designed to encourage students to listen to the feedback they were given, providing information regarding students' satisfaction with the formative assessment. They also allowed me to trace the trend (or lack thereof) towards the convergence of students' self-assessment and the actual grading. In addition, they helped me with adjusting the feedback to the particular needs of each student.

The final questionnaire was filled in at the end of the semester. It was used to grasp students' overall experience with the innovation and to understand whether or not the improvement in

their performance could be attributed to the innovation. It was also instrumental for me in deciding which aspects of the innovation should be preserved, abandoned or adjusted in the future.

Results

Quantitative component

First, I tested hypothesis 1, using descriptive statistics. Comparing the average performance of groups over their final grades revealed that the treatment group demonstrated a tangibly better score of 1.5 compared to the control groups' scores of 2.4 and 2.36[3] (table 2). In other words, based on the grade classification presented in table 1, the average grade of the treatment group was B (very good), while the averages of both control groups were closer to D (satisfactory). In addition, figure 1 shows that the best grades corresponding to the values of 1 and 1.5 comprised 75 per cent of all the grades obtained, which equalled only 20 per cent and 43 per cent for control groups 2016 and 2017 respectively. At the same time, the share of the 2 worst grades in the treatment group was null, while it reached 40 per cent for control group 2016 and 50 per cent for control group 2017. Thus, the treatment group performed better.

Table 2. Comparing the change of student performance on grades (hypothesis 1) and position papers (hypotheses 2a, 2b, 2c)

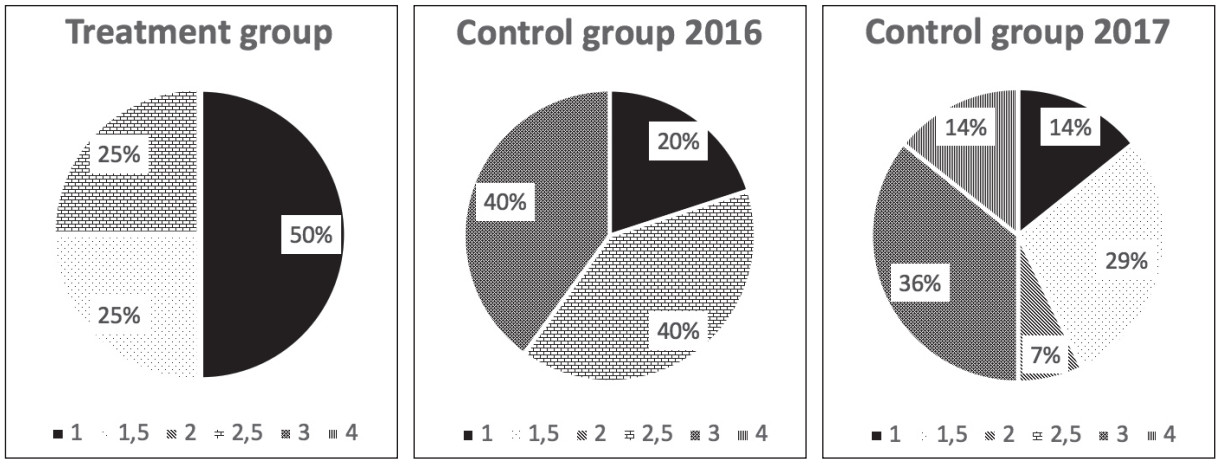
	Control Group	N		Mean		t-value	Adj. df	p-value[3]
		Treatment Group	Control Group	Treatment Group	Control Group			
H1	2016	4	5	1.5	2.4	-1.765	6.923	0.061†
	2017	4	14	1.5	2.36	-2.001	7.942	0.04*
H2a	2016	5	5	0.7	0	2.333	5.539	0.969
	2017	5	14	0.7	0.18	1.634	16.299	0.939
H2b	2016	5	5	-0.1	0.3	-0.843	7.549	0.213
	2017	5	14	-0.1	0.36	-1.071	13.114	0.152
H2c	2016	5	5	0.6	0.3	0.572	7.997	0.709
	2017	5	14	0.6	0.6	0.134	10.056	0.552

Test: independent t-tests, one-sided.

* p≤.05; † p≤.1

3 One of the five students from the treatment group had health-related issues throughout the semester, which has affected his overall performance. Hence, while there were data collected from his position papers, there was no final grade in the system at the time of writing, which was treated as 'not available'.

Figure 1. Shares of final grades values across groups



The t-tests support this conclusion as well (table 2). There was a significant difference in the scores for treatment group and control group 2017 (p=0.04). There was also a marginally significant difference in the scores of treatment group and control group 2016 (p=0.061).

Figure 2: Shares of grades across groups at various stages of assessment

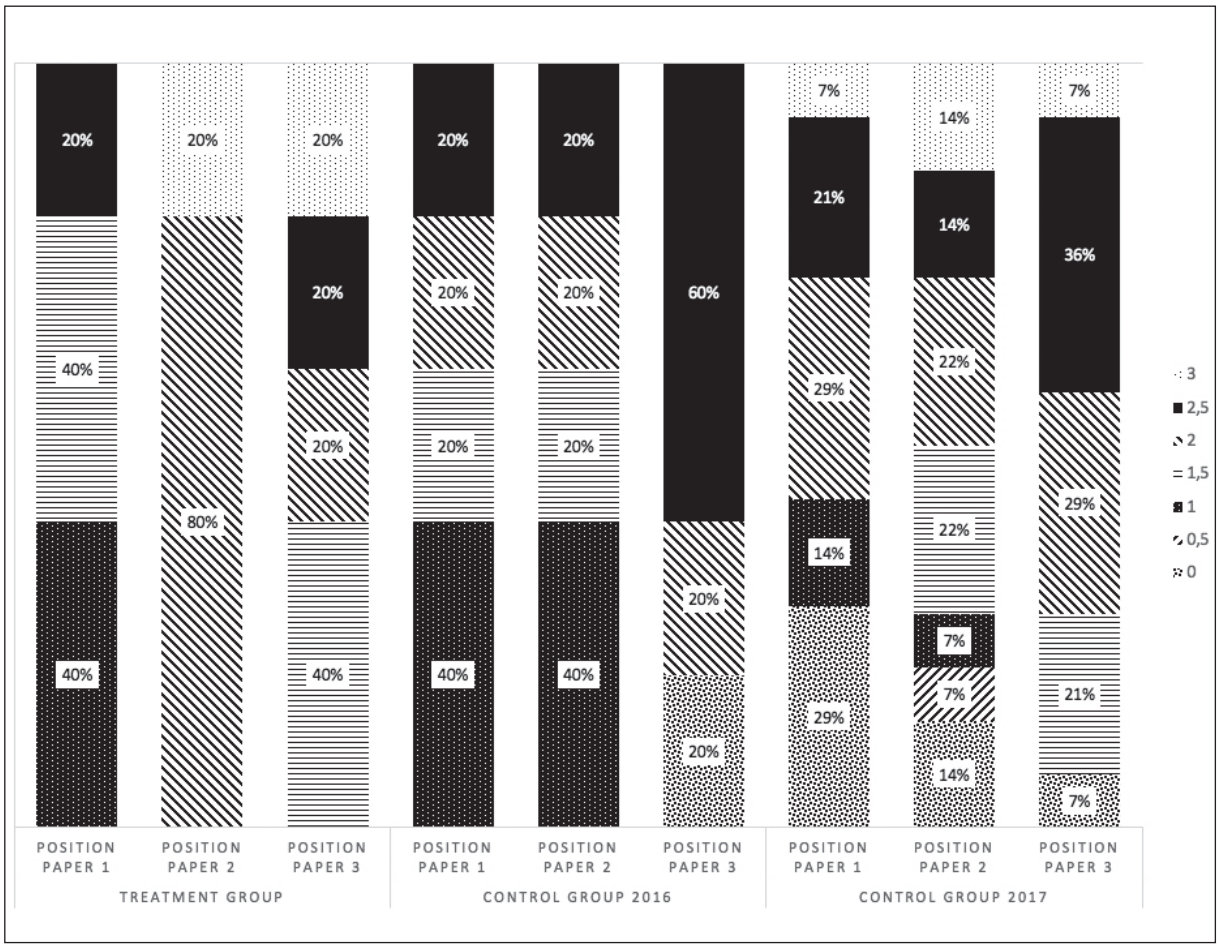
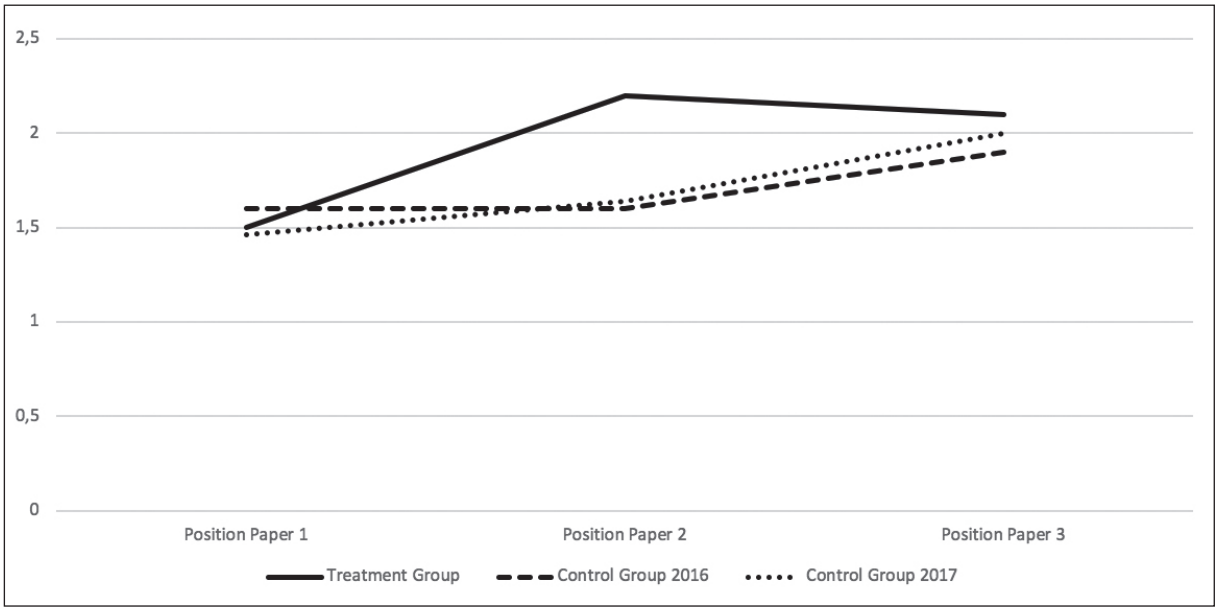


Figure 2 helps to make a preliminary assessment of hypothesis 2 and its derivatives that expect that students in the treatment group performed better over time than students in either of the control groups. Position papers were graded from 0 to 3 points, with 3 being the highest grade. The treatment group had no cases of two lowest grades, while in both control groups some students received 0 or 0.5 points for some of the assignments. Also, in the case of the treatment group the percentage of the highest grade surpassed those of the control groups. There is also a clear trend of improvement in the former case (i.e. increasing percentage of higher grades), while in the latter cases the higher grades stagnate.

Figure 3 provides intriguing details about these trends. First, on average, the treatment group performed better than the control groups. Second, neither of the control groups made higher progress throughout the semester than the treatment group. Similarly, treatment group made a drastic improvement from the first selected position paper to the second one, while control group 2017 made a very modest improvement and control group 2016 showed no improvement at all. At the end, all groups grasped the idea of writing critical papers, but the treatment group did it a lot earlier and, thus, it partially explains why it outperformed both control groups in grade averages.

Figure 3. Group averages at various stages of assessment



Nevertheless, t-tests showed that (H2a) in terms of the progress from assignment 1 to 2 there was no statistically significant difference in the scores between the treatment group and either of the control groups. The same is true for hypotheses 2b and 2c. Therefore, it is not possible to quantitatively confirm hypotheses 2a, 2b and 2c and to attributing differences in performances at various stages of assessment to the innovation. The reasons for this lack of finding are two-

fold. Firstly, the sample size of the treatment group was fairly small, which tends to distort statistical analysis. Secondly, the treatment group and control group 2017 had greatly differing number of students (n=5 vs n=14), which could also negatively affect the results.

Qualitative component

Qualitative data shed lights on student perception of the innovation and their own performance. When it comes to the minute papers, the four regularly attending students of the treatment group[4] were overwhelmingly satisfied with the quality and clarity of the feedback they were provided, agreeing with the points I raised therein. After a scale of satisfaction was added into the minute papers[5], out of twenty minute papers, eighteen indicated full satisfaction, while the other two expressed satisfaction.

However, it is instrumental to look into those where students disagreed with some parts of the feedback. Out of total thirty-eight papers collected, ten of them included some critical remarks[6]. In four cases, students disagreed that their papers were overly descriptive and lacked critical thinking. Another four critical remarks were made by the same student about the same issue: he could not grasp the idea of using empirical evidence instrumentally, that is, to substantiate his position. Although I tried to adjust my feedback and be more explicit after the first occurrence, it did not have much effect. The reason most certainly was that the student was coming from another discipline and had difficulties with adopting the norms and requirements of political science.

Notably, almost all students in their minute papers for the first two sessions of the course mentioned that they needed more guidance with regard to the structuring of position papers. One student even asked for more examples (in addition to two example papers already provided). While the fact that such requests disappeared from the minute papers as the course progressed signalled that students obtained the skill at stake throughout the semester, it also means that I should further improve the initial instructions.

As for the final questionnaire, all students believed that the initial instructions and in-class comments regarding the position papers were useful (all of them graded it as 9 or 10)[7]. Three out of four students also indicated their satisfaction with the form and quality of the feedback provided. Similarly, three out of four recommended to preserve audio feedback in the future iterations of the course. Therefore, based on the opinion of the majority, these aspects of the innovation were successful: initial instructions as well as the re-iteration of certain points during the in-class discussions were satisfactory and helped students to understand the task at hand better. More-

4 This was a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated 'not satisfied at all' and 5 'very satisfied'.
5 Minute papers underwent a few changes to improve data collection.
6 Two of those remarks referred to technical issues (language, deadline).
7 To measure student satisfaction and dissatisfaction, I used a 10-point Likert scale that ranged from dissatisfaction (1) to satisfaction (10).

over, verbal feedback, although not uniformly, was preferred over the written one.
At the same time, only one student strongly agreed with the idea that separating feedback from grading helped in concentrating more on the feedback itself. Two other students could neither agree nor disagree, while the remaining student opposed the aforementioned practice. Hence, students have not clearly seen the benefits of this innovation, which refutes the theoretical reasoning that conditioned the implementation of this measure. Therefore, I will omit it in the future.

Conclusion

My analysis demonstrates that the teaching innovation was quite successful and have managed to achieve most of its expected outcomes. On the one hand, comparing final grades of the treatment group to those of the control groups showed that the average grade of the former was B (very good), while the average of the latter was closer to D (satisfactory). Moreover, the t-tests showed that the difference was statistically significant in one case and marginally significant in the other, confirming that the innovation had a positive impact on the final performance of the treatment group. At the same time, the analysis revealed that, on average, the treatment group performed better throughout the semester and grasped the idea of writing critical papers a lot earlier than either of the control groups even though this difference has not reached statistical significance.
Furthermore, the qualitative analysis confirmed that instructions as well as re-iteration of certain points during the in-class discussions helped students to better understand the task at hand. Moreover, verbal feedback was preferred over the written one. However, students did not clearly see the benefits of separating the feedback from the grading. Hence, I plan to keep the innovation in future iterations of the course, albeit not the two-stage feedback. Collecting students' feedback via minute papers proved to be very useful, and, therefore, I plan to use it again in order to reassess and, if necessary, to refine my innovation further.

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CLUSTER 4. COMMENTARY
SMALL-SCALE SCHOLARLY TEACHING INNOVATIONS THAT MIGHT SPARK WIDER CHANGE

Torgny Roxå, Lund University

Two scholarly teachers

In this cluster, two academic teachers describe how they improve their students' learning through a scholarly approach. In both cases the described innovation is formulated out of a thorough analysis of previous experiences in combination with consultation of the literature. Nikita Minin works on helping students to improve their writing skills, especially their capacity to write positions papers related to theoretical material presented in the course. The initial idea is that by writing the position papers the students develop a better understanding of the course content along developing writing skills. But the position papers written in previous courses were not of the quality Minin looks for. So, how can changes in teaching help students to write better, and thereby, to reach a better understanding? In the other chapter, Dubravka Kovačević faces a different challenge. From her previous observations she concludes that students, coming from various backgrounds, need to improve their ability to work in groups and to, prepare and deliver good-quality presentations together with their group mates.

To achieve his goal, Minin first presents to students how to structure a position paper and shares with them a rubric for assessing these papers. He focuses on giving feedback to students on their writing, much more detailed than a few sentences offered in the past. Through the introduction of audio feedback, he wants the feedback to be experienced by the students as more personal than before.

Kovačević, on the other hand carefully designed a sequence of tasks that become for students increasingly more difficult. In groups, students prepare and present a poster first and move on to design traditional presentation afterwards.

In both cases the authors describe an elaborate procedures for evaluating the results of their teaching innovations and provide evidence for positive impact.

As a reader I am struck with how much can be achieved when academic minds are turned towards student learning. Minin and Kovačević are both trained in their disciplines. They know what it means to be scholarly in their respective fields. They demonstrate here what can be achieved when teaching is treated scholarly: if teaching and its outcome are analysed, if some pieces from scholarly literature on student learning are used to generate a teaching innovation, and when teaching is carried out carefully. Of course, teaching will improve and, as a consequence, student learning will improve as well. This is what SoTL (The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning) is all about: taking teaching seriously (Bernstein and Bass 2005), using the academic mind and focus on a course, a portion of teaching, or student learning.

Collegial response

What is not apparent to the reader obviously is what happens next? The innovation is designed, carried out and evaluated. This is what chapters are about. These teachers have improved their teaching and they have told the story of how it was done. They have been scholarly about their own teaching. And, the papers are published. But as a reader one might be interested in the response from these two teachers' closest colleagues.

I will not pretend in any way that I know the answer. I will simply take the opportunity to point out the fact that academic teachers do not work in isolation. They belong to disciplinary communities and these communities have different approaches to teaching and student learning. Trowler (2008) describes these approaches as 'teaching and learning regimes', collectively formed tacit assumptions, recurrent practices, and other elements of teaching traditions. Any young academic has to orient him or herself to these regimes. In a celebrated article Jawitz (2009) follows four early career academics as they start to work within new contexts. He is especially interested in how these young academics acquire the local tradition in grading student work. As it turns out, they all encounter ways different from their previous experiences.

It appears that academic teachers, even though they are often situated alone with students in the classroom, have to relate professionally to colleagues who collectively construct the specific disciplinary community to which they belong. Becher and Trowler (2001) talk about academic tribes and territories. The territory is the discipline and the individuals who inhabit a certain context constitute the tribe. Different tribes develop different traditions for teaching even though they teach the same discipline.

So, I can only assume that Minin and Kovačević also belong to academic tribes where over time different teaching and learning regimes have evolved. These microcultural constructs (Roxå and Mårtensson 2015) that constitute the cultural patchwork and form our higher education institutions can encourage innovation in teaching to various degrees (Ginns et al. 2010).

Sparkling wider change

I know from thirty years of developing teaching in faculties and universities that change almost always starts with ordinary teachers changing their classes, which looks like small-scale. The excellent chapters presented here by Minin and Kovačević are examples of not only innovations in teaching, but also because of how the story is told and the innovation is evaluated, they illustrate in an excellent way how large-scale change starts. In fact, what Minin and Kovačević report has the potential, together with many followers, to change institutions to places where students learn and grow more effectively. Of course, it takes time to make this happen, yet it is dependent on courageous, curious, and skilful innovators – like the two teachers in these two chapters.

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CHAPTER 9. REDESIGNING AN UNPOPULAR UNIVERSITY COURSE: WAYS TO PROMOTE STUDENTS' MOTIVATION AND QUALITY OF LEARNING

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Coach: Roisín Curran, Staff and Educational Development Association
Keywords: Bloom's taxonomy, constructive alignment, continuous assessment, flipped classroom, motivation, participation, psychology, teaching large groups

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to share my experience from teaching a course redesigned to enhance students' motivation to study personnel psychology. In the past students had shown little affinity toward this course, finding personnel psychology distant from their preferred career choices. Thus, the course was revised in order to help even those students who are not genuinely interested in personnel psychology to acquire the essential concepts of this subfield and to learn to apply these properly. There were five teachers[1] involved in teaching the course and our main effort was directed towards changing students' attitudes: we wanted the course to be perceived as interesting and useful for all students regardless of their future career plans.

Therefore, we aligned the course objectives, learning activities, and assessment methods more closely. This included changing the teaching and learning methods to allow for the developing of student competences more effectively and in line with the demands of the contemporary labour market. We introduced exercises to develop students' critical thinking, problem solving, and collaborative skills. We also increased the demand for students' pre-class preparation by assigning them readings and group work outside of the classroom. The effects of the innovation were assessed by my observation of students' behaviour during classes, analysis of the final marks, and via a student feedback survey. The innovation enhanced students´ motivation to study the course, and thereby their quality of learning. The chapter concludes with discussing the limitations of the presented approach and suggests further course enhancements.

Teaching challenge, pedagogic concepts applied and expected outcomes of the innovation

Personnel Psychology is a mandatory, innovated course, and is offered to sixty psychology students in the third year of their Bachelor studies at Masaryk University. The purpose is to introduce students to the main concepts and theories within the field of personnel psychology and to develop students' higher order thinking skills such as the ability to integrate different types of information and arguments. The course is composed of six lectures and six seminars during

1 Special thanks to my colleagues Martin Vaculík, Jakub Procházka, Marcela Leugnerová and Kateřina Hašková for all the effort they invested to redesign and deliver this course.

the semester's twelve weeks. The classes are delivered by a mixture of experienced teachers and doctoral students

Before the innovation, students were expected to attend lectures in order to familiarize themselves with the main concepts and theories, then deepen their knowledge through self-study. The general assessment method was a test at the end of the semester that included both open-ended and closed-ended questions. However, as lectures were not mandatory, a number of students did not attend these or failed to pay attention. Also, students typically read the assigned literature superficially and memorised the material for the exam, but they could not apply their knowledge and forgot it quickly.

Thinking about the reasons why students underperformed in this course, we identified students' low intrinsic motivation to study personnel psychology as the main barrier to student learning. Students did not consider the subject useful because most of them intended to find jobs in counselling or healthcare. However, as a survey among the earlier programme graduates uncovered (Cígler and Horská 2015), most psychology students did eventually become personnel psychologists.

As we aimed at increasing the quality of student learning by boosting their motivation to learn and increasing their active participation, we made a series of changes to the course. Firstly, constructive alignment was applied to increase student motivation and engagement. This principle suggests that all components in the teaching system (i.e. the curriculum, the intended outcomes, the teaching methods, and the assessment tasks) are to be aligned with each other (Biggs 2003). Following this principle, at the beginning of the semester, students received a course syllabus which was significantly more detailed than before and included the description of the course assignments. During the first seminar, my colleague went through the syllabus with students to ensure they understood what they were expected to learn (in terms of content), why (rationale and philosophy), how (process), when (structure), and how they were to demonstrate the outcomes of their learning (assessment). At the beginning of each class, the teacher clearly specified the session's goals and concluded with a summary of what students learned and how they could use it. The class objectives were chosen to be relevant not only for future personnel psychologists, but also for psychologists working in other domains.

Second, new learning activities were introduced in order to help students to develop higher-level thinking based upon Bloom's taxonomy (for details see Krathwohl 2002). During lectures and seminars, students were invited not only to summarise what they had learned from the literature and classes, but also to understand, apply, analyse and evaluate the information. Devoting extended class time to these activities became possible as a result of the use of the flipped classroom approach (Bishop and Verleger 2013). Students were introduced to the learning material before seminars, which reduced time necessary for in-class lecturing and allowed for this time to be used for active learning exercises such as discussions with peers, role play, and problem-solving facilitated by teachers.

Third, innovating the learning activities required changing the assessment as well, in order to make it more supportive of deep learning, more objective, and also to be perceived as more motivating by students. Coll et al. (2007) report that the use of continuous assessment rather than assessing students at the end of the semester can enhance the quality of student learning. If students are invited to demonstrate their learning progress in different situations, this typically leads to the employment of different learning strategies and helps to achieve learning outcomes (Scouller 1998). Therefore, instead of requiring students to write a single final exam, students would collect points during the entire semester. We introduced three multiple choice tests during the semester in order to motivate students to read the assigned literature continuously. Test questions were changed to assess higher order thinking, i.e. including the application, the analysis of hypothetical situations and the evaluation of possible solutions. For example, students read about a situation from the workplace and they were required to evaluate the appropriateness of the listed potential solutions and choose the most optimal one. Whenever possible, verbal feedback was provided alongside any grading.

Students received points also for their active participation in discussions during seminars where they often worked in teams on the assignments simulating issues taken from practice. Moreover, when students prepared two bigger group projects outside of class, they presented their progress at seminars and received verbal feedback both from their teachers and peers. Points assigned for group projects contributed towards student's final grades as well. Whenever possible, two teachers assessed student performance to limit any possible bias. Therefore, students had many opportunities to demonstrate their learning during the semester and if they underperformed in one component, they could compensate it through other assessment tasks.

Data collection

Despite the team effort in innovating the course, I was solely responsible for evaluating the outcomes of the innovation. I decided to use three data collection methods. Firstly, I observed and reflected on student learning in one lecture and two seminars. I focused on students´ active participation and classified their oral contributions to seminars into two categories: (1) relevant argumentation that is supported by the literature, and (2) the effort to communicate their own opinions. I evaluated student contribution on a 0-3 scale in each category, and then combined these two scales into a cumulative measure of the quality of student contributions.

Secondly and following Moore (2009), I designed an anonymous student feedback questionnaire as depicted in table 1. The survey was administered at the beginning of the last seminar when students already knew their grades and thus could express not only positive but also negative ideas without the fear of being punished. Thirdly, I considered the marks students received for the course.

Table 1. Anonymous feedback questionnaire answered by students

1. The most useful thing/skill I learned during this course was...
2. The thing that made learning most effective for me was...
3. The thing I struggled the most with was...
4. What I need to stop doing, which hinders my learning, is...
5. What I can start to do that will help me to learn more effectively, is....
6. What I would like the teacher to stop doing, because it hinders my learning, is...
7. What I would like the teacher to continue doing, because it helps my learning, is...
8. I wish to work as a personnel psychologist one day (yes, maybe, or no)

Findings

My observations led to mixed results. Some of the expected positive effects of the applied innovation were confirmed. Firstly, the expectation that students will show interest in the course was confirmed and it was apparent that students' attendance of lectures increased. Since the attendance in lectures was not obligatory, I supposed students came because they perceived the lectures to be meaningful to them. Secondly, seminars became more interactive and most students participated actively – they started to talk more often, their answers were mostly correct, and they communicated not only with the teacher (as before) but also among themselves. After some initial difficulties, students gained the confidence to ask questions and express their opinions even if these would be contradictory to the opinions of others. Thirdly, I could observe a bigger interest in the subject itself. During seminars where students presented their progress on group projects, they were curious about how other groups had solved the fictional case studies and asked questions to learn more.

Second, during the two seminars where I observed and assessed students' participation in a group discussion when they were asked to solve a chosen hypothetical situation, I found some evidence for student engagement taking place at a relatively high order of thinking. Thirty-two per cent of students demonstrated higher-level thinking as in accordance with Bloom´s taxonomy, i.e. an ability to analyse, evaluate and create arguments based on the knowledge acquired in this course. Out of these students, ten per cent discussed the problem on a professional level (evaluated by five or six points) and twenty-two per cent presented valid arguments supported by the literature (three or four points). However, thirty-eight per cent expressed their opinions actively but without arguments supported by the literature (one or two points), not demonstrating their understanding of the studied concepts, and another thirty per cent of students – those scored zero on both scales – remained passive and did not contribute to the solution.

While the performance of the upper first third of the class is in line with my expectations, the performance of the other two thirds of students requires some reflecting. The fact that not all students could participate actively in a group discussion at the same time must be taken into consideration when interpreting the results. I supposed that even more students were able to analyse, evaluate, and create an argument based on the knowledge acquired in this course, but some of them did not demonstrate higher-level thinking in the discussion (they could be too shy, etc.). In addition, these results are only based on two seminars.

More evidence of students´ higher-level thinking skills arrived in the guise of the results of the continuous assessment during which students had to apply their knowledge in a hypothetical situation and presented a solution to a complex realistic scenario (e.g. recruiting a new employee to a particular organization). An analysis of their final marks showed that fifty per cent of students received an A or B in the course, that is, accumulated more than eighty per cent of the possible number of points. The rest of the students received a C (38 per cent) or a D (12 per cent), none of the students failed. This can be understood as an indication of students´ motivation and quality of learning.

Feedback from students lent support to the expectation about the improved quality of their learning regarding work place skills. Feedback questionnaires were completed by forty out of sixty students who were present during the last seminar (the response rate was 66.7 per cent). Thirteen students (33 per cent) identified critical thinking as the most useful competence developed during this course. For example, a student remarked that 'The most useful thing I have learned during this course is a way of thinking about job content and the essential criteria needed for its performance, a comprehensive reflection on this issue'. Secondly, five students (12.5 per cent) appreciated that they had improved their team work skills as one student put it very aptly: 'I am used to working on my own, and even when working in a group, I do my part separately. This time we worked really well together – brainstorming etc., the work was more fun, and I believe we achieved better results. It took more time than individual work, but I believe it was worth it'. Thirdly, four students (10 per cent) reported an increased ability to discuss their points of view, as for example: 'I feel I improved my skills in expressing myself, the ability to defend my opinions, the ability to respond to others' comments, listen to them, and discuss with them'. Lastly, some students also listed enhancement of subject knowledge among the main course outcomes – how to conduct a job analysis, select a new employee, measure employees' performance on the job, etc.

Although the above quotations already hinted at it, there is a further signal that the improvement of their skills can be directly linked to the activities introduced by this innovation. Some students explicitly reported that they particularly valued the seminar that focused on different approaches to learning in the workplace and where students learned by doing. Case studies were the learning activity that students appreciated the most: altogether twenty-one students (52.5

per cent) named this activity to be the most beneficial to their learning. Students greatly valued practical examples because they made theories easier for them to understand and remember, as expressed by this quote: 'My learning was effective because most of the theory was immediately tested in practice'. Students claimed to be often motivated to study something in advance so that they could participate actively in class. Most of them said they attended lectures even though attendance was not obligatory, as one of them described: 'My learning was effective because I read assigned literature before lectures and then really participated in class'.

Group projects where students applied knowledge to real workplace situations were valued by twenty-four students (60 per cent). Students felt motivated by the opportunity to cooperate with peers and learn from them, present progress of their learning on seminars, discuss the encountered difficulties and receive feedback from teachers in a friendly atmosphere, as exemplified by these words: 'The best thing were the group projects presented on seminars – to see the work and hear the opinions and practices of classmates, and get feedback from teachers'.

Moreover, students showed appreciation for the benefits of the other aspects of the innovation: eight of them (20 per cent) said that the assigned literature was well chosen and the volume of the readings was not overwhelming. Even though an appreciation for the increased number of assessment activities was not generally shared, one student noted how helpful it was: 'My learning was effective thanks to the continuous tests covering smaller units of the curriculum'. Finally, students perceived the aims of the course as being formulated clearly and they felt the course was meaningful and interesting.

To conclude, regarding their perception of personnel psychology as a career choice, at the beginning of the course, and in line with our observations from earlier courses, students were not particularly interested in becoming personnel psychologists: during the first class only a few of them expressed their interest in becoming a personnel psychologist when responding to my colleague's direct inquiry. Yet, at the end of the course, a majority of students stated that they want (27.5 per cent) or maybe want (30 per cent) to work in this field and some of them explicitly said that their attitude had been changed by this course.

Conclusion

This chapter reported on the innovation that aimed to increase student motivation and to help students achieve higher-order learning outcomes (Krathwohl 2002). In the context of departmental teaching, this innovation provided a new approach centred on student learning. Its novelty was that students presented the ongoing results of their work and reworked their assignments based on feedback from their teachers and peers alike. There was an increased emphasis on the applicability of the results of students' work. Therefore, students developed competences in line with the current demands of the labour market, such as the ability to present the results in a concise, understandable and interesting way.

Specifically, my colleagues redesigned the course following the logic of constructive alignment, changed its content to be more appealing and students were invited to participate more actively both in and outside of the classroom. Students' feedback suggested that the innovation largely met its goals. Students appreciated the opportunity to develop their capacity of critical thinking, work in teams and apply their knowledge about personnel psychology to real-life scenarios. Moreover, they valued the continuous assessment aspect, which, as students reported, motivated them to study the assigned literature continuously. Furthermore, they found the content of the course appealing and there has been a significant increase in the number of students interested in working in this area of psychology at the end of the semester as compared to the first seminar. My observations evidenced an increase attendance of the lectures, improved student engagement in seminars, and the development of student higher-order thinking in line with course aims, although this became fully evident only for about one third of the students.

Despite of the innovation, there were still students who lacked motivation to study and remained passive – which they specified as the aspect that they struggled with the most. Some students complained about the assessment being too heavy. To reduce possible stress resulting from the increased assessment, it is recommendable to frame opportunities to earn bonus points positively and to make sure students do not feel penalized. Additionally, students reported they had difficulties to fully familiarize themselves with the course requirements, because the syllabus included many different activities. Therefore, it is advisable to provide a clearer, more structured and straightforward syllabus.

Further improvements could cover e.g. technology enhanced learning, offering students an opportunity for self-assessment, or the possibility to listen to the lecture once more at their own pace and convenience. Another form of improvement would be to apply just-in time teaching, where quizzes shortly before class would provide information about problematic issues. Last but not least, there is a possibility to apply feedback in the guise of the muddiest point or minute paper as proposed by Angelo and Cross (1993). Notwithstanding the need for further improvements, the innovation was successful and can serve as a starting point when redesigning another course – whether it be at our university or elsewhere.

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CHAPTER 10. IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO: HOW TO GET INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS STUDENTS ENGAGED IN THEIR LEARNING

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Keywords: classroom observation, interactive mini-lecture, international relations, motivation, pair work, Skype call

Introduction

A lack of sufficient levels of student's attention and active class engagement are considered to be the biggest challenges in teaching in higher education in the last few years. This chapter describes the results of a teaching innovation to remedy this challenge at Masaryk University during the Autumn 2017 semester. The innovation started out from the observation that in the past students had neither been focused nor motivated in class and that they were passive observers rather than active learners. In order to elevate student participation in the classroom, to heighten their interest in the subject matter, and to assist in their learning, I replaced the traditional ninety-minute frontal lecture format with several shorter interactive activities. These consisted of Skype calls, pair/group work, and interactive mini-lectures.

My chapter investigates whether these activities met their expectations by being as motivating for students to take part in as expected and whether their heightened interest manifested in the form of improved learning outcomes. The three activities that I have introduced were found to be interactive and students not only participated but also showed genuine interest in these activities. As a result, the level of student interest in an activity corresponded with the amount of learning students attributed to that activity.

Nevertheless, my expectation that the activity I estimated to be the most interactive would also be the most interesting for students was not met. However, these findings suggest that the students' motivation to engage and learn has improved so that it can be concluded that the innovation has reached its main objectives.

Context and aims of the innovation

The innovation has been implemented in my Arctic Geopolitics course, which was offered for the first time in Autumn 2017 at the Department of International Relations and European Studies at Masaryk University in Brno, the Czech Republic. The course was optional and open to bachelor students of the new International Relations and European Politics program offered in English. Arctic Geopolitics was a semester-long course with thirteen weeks of sessions lasting ninety minutes each. Since I was the only teacher of the course, I enjoyed relative freedom regarding course design.

The characteristics of the course and of the student body could negatively impact student motivation. First, the department approved the course with a pass/fail grading option, which could demotivate students since once they reached the minimum threshold required for passing the course, there was no incentive for additional effort. Second, the nineteen students who enrolled in the course came from different countries from all over the world with different knowledge levels and affinities toward Arctic issues. Since only a few originated from Arctic countries and the majority were from countries distant from the Northern Pole (for example, China, Kazakhstan, France, Spain, or Mexico), this topic might have seemed remote or even exotic to them. These, together with my earlier observations about students' classroom behaviour, made the motivating of students to further engage with the topic even more essential.

Student engagement during class in the guise of e.g. participation and interest, is strongly connected to their motivation. There are two main types of motivation: extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic motivation focuses on establishing students' initial interest in the given topic by drawing them in the learning process via e.g. engaging classroom activities. An interactive class session composed of several break activities, is an excellent way to help students to stay focused and re-activate their attention span every fifteen to twenty minutes. As Nilson (2014) points out; well-chosen student-active breaks, aptly named 'brain breaks', comprise the heart of the interactive lecture. If the activities implemented in the classroom are interesting and intriguing enough, students' willingness to engage with classroom material will increase. Extrinsic motivation is particularly important at the beginning of the semester when most students have not yet acquired a taste for the subject matter. Ideally, after some time extrinsic motivation evolves into intrinsic motivation, when the incentive to learn comes from within due to a genuine interest to learn more about the topic (Kvasz 2005). Intrinsic motivation, however, is not guaranteed to emerge. In that case, the instructor's best option is to continue to rely on extrinsic motivation.

Since I assumed that my students' wandering attention resulted from them having little intrinsic motivation to learn about the Arctic, my classroom innovation focused on extrinsic motivation. Accordingly, I divided each of my classes into three interactive sessions: a Skype call with an expert; pair/group work; and an interactive mini-lecture.[1] The first session centred around a short video Skype call with an expert on a specific issue related to the Arctic. Experts called in from various locations and gave fifteen-minute presentations after which students had the opportunity to ask questions.[2] The expert Skype call was inspired by earlier findings that the use of digital instruments in class can improve the interactive aspect of classes. As several academics (Felten 2008; Sealey 2008; Swimelar 2013; Glazier 2015) pointed out; engaging students in international relations by getting them online not only exposes them to current international developments,

1 Additionally, depending on time limits, various other 'supporting' activities were included in class – e.g. a quiz – which allowed students to recap the most relevant content from previous classes.

2 During the course ten experts from different Arctic locations participated in the Skype call.

but also provides them with the opportunities to develop communication skills and visual literacy. The expert Skype call fulfilled a similar role: students could learn about recent developments regarding the politics of the Arctic from scholars who did not only have vast knowledge of various aspects of the issue but who also spoke from their personal experience of living in the Arctic.
The second session was composed of student pair/group work, where they discussed the assigned issues. This was followed by a moderated plenary discussion which confronted students with the opinions of all their peers. This approach allowed them to practice building and defending their arguments based on what they had learnt about the topic. That is, students learned via performing and at the same time applying the class content (Nilson 2014).
The third session included an interactive mini-lecture. In this part I explained different concepts to students and combined front lecturing with the frequent asking of substantive questions. At the same time, students were encouraged to engage by asking questions themselves and giving comments. This way, students could formulate their own questions and apply new concepts. Such an interactive format of sessions was to help students to learn new skills and further develop their critical thinking.

Research design

In order to evaluate the outcome of the innovation, I collected data from three consecutive classes (15 November 2017; 22 November 2017; and 29 November 2017). I used two main data collection instruments: peer observations and student surveys. Student surveys were voluntary filled out by each student who attended the actual class session: of the nineteen students enrolled in the course fourteen (seventy-four per cent) were present during the first innovation session, eleven (fifty-eight per cent) in the second, and thirteen (sixty-eight per cent) in the third.
Peer observations were completed by three colleagues. Ideally, classroom observation data should have been collected and analysed by the same person attending all three sessions. However, due to the tight schedules and workload of my colleagues, each of the classes were observed by different persons. The potential inconsistency stemming from this variation was balanced with detailed observation instructions. In addition, I would argue that the diversity of their responses is a considerable contribution to the collected data and research in itself.
I used the collected data to evaluate three hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 (H1) expects that *the learning activities and associated teaching styles were interactive* as intended. Although I have chosen three activities – Skype calls, pair/group work, interactive mini-lectures – that I considered all highly interactive, it is vital for the innovation that these would lead to the expected interactive student behaviour in practice. Therefore, I used my colleagues' peer observations to assess H1. Observers were asked to (1) keep count of three different types of interactions: teacher-to-student, student-to-teacher and student-to-student. In the teacher-to-student interaction, observers further focused on the distinction between voluntary and non-voluntary responses to see

how forthcoming students were with their answers. Additionally, observers paid attention to the level of activity/passivity of students during pair/group work (student-to-student interaction). Finally, observers were asked to monitor the interactivity of the entire class and provide written comments. I used quantitative methods – means and frequencies – to analyse the first two and qualitative methods to assess textual information.

In hypothesis 2 (H2) I expect that *the more interactive an activity is, the more interesting students will find it to be*. H2 analyses whether the level of the presumed interactivity of a learning activity is aligned with the level of student interest. Since the observers evaluated class sessions as a whole and did not provide separate information on the interactivity of each learning activity, I used my own educated assumption to rank the activities based on how interactive they were. My expectation was that the pair/group work would be the most interactive, and thus be evaluated as most interesting because the core of the activity is comprised of communication between the students. I also expected it to spill over to the subsequent plenary debriefing. The second most interactive and interesting would be the Skype call as it has an element of possible interaction between students and someone else than their teacher who is equipped with a different expertise, life experiences, and perspectives. Even though the mini-lecture was interactive, I considered it the least interactive because it was very similar to the expert Skype call but lacked the element of personal experience from living in the Arctic.

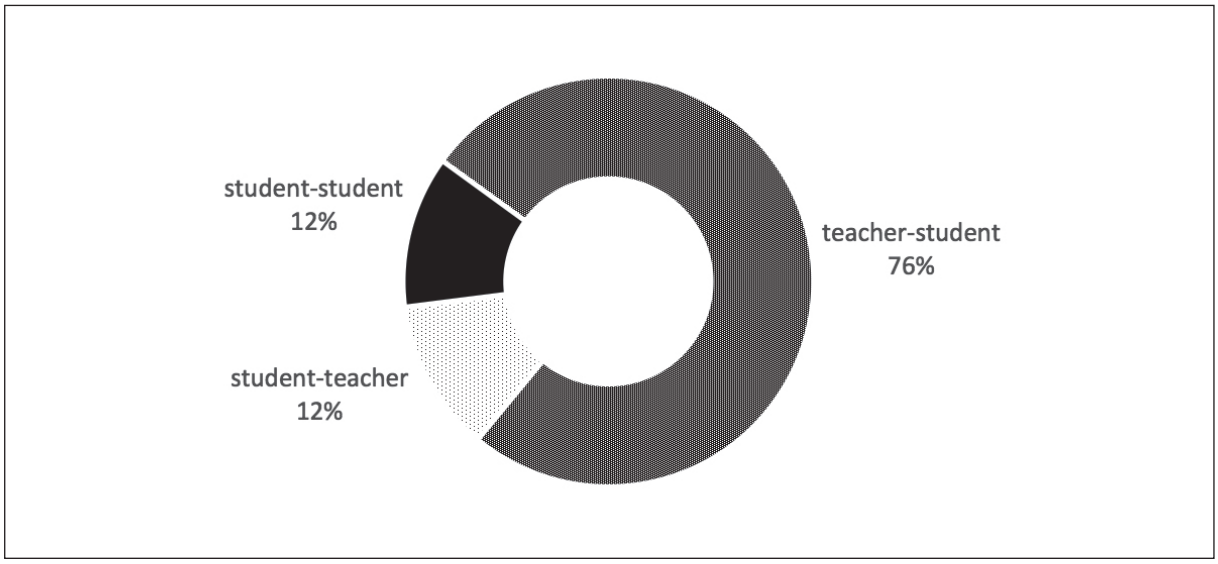
To test H2, I used student surveys, which were distributed among students at the end of all three classes. I asked students to evaluate how interesting they found each activity on a scale ranging from 1 ('not interesting at all') to 10 ('very interesting'). Students were also asked to provide a verbal explanation of their evaluation, which enabled me to check whether or not their reasoning fell into the scope of the dimension of motivation. When comparing students' levels of interest with the assumed level of interactivity of the learning activities, I used both descriptive statistics and textual analysis.

Finally, hypothesis 3 (H3) anticipated that *the more interesting students find an activity, the more they learn from it*. H3 follows up on H2, which already investigated students' level of interest in the three interactive activities. Since, as mentioned above, this course was graded pass/fail, I could not rely on grades for the evaluation of student learning. Hence, I used information provided by students. Specifically, I asked students to answer two minute-paper-style questions after each class. They had to name three pieces of information they remembered most vividly from that day's class and identify in which activity they learned about those. For the evaluation of students' responses, I primarily used textual analysis, which enabled me to identify their most vivid learning moments.

Findings

All three observers' written comments conveyed that my innovative methods were interactive, and students took part in those interactions confidently and without reservations providing evidence in support of H1. As illustrated in figure 1, the most frequent form was teacher to student interaction. During all three classes, there were more than forty direct questions initiated by me towards students, which constitutes seventy-six per cent of all class interactions. More interestingly, eighty per cent of all my questions received voluntary responses by students (thirty-two out of forty), demonstrating their willingness to participate and a fairly high level of engagement. Hence, it happened only on a few occasions that there was no voluntary answer forthcoming and I had to call on a student.

Figure 1. Distribution of the three types of class interactions based on classroom observation



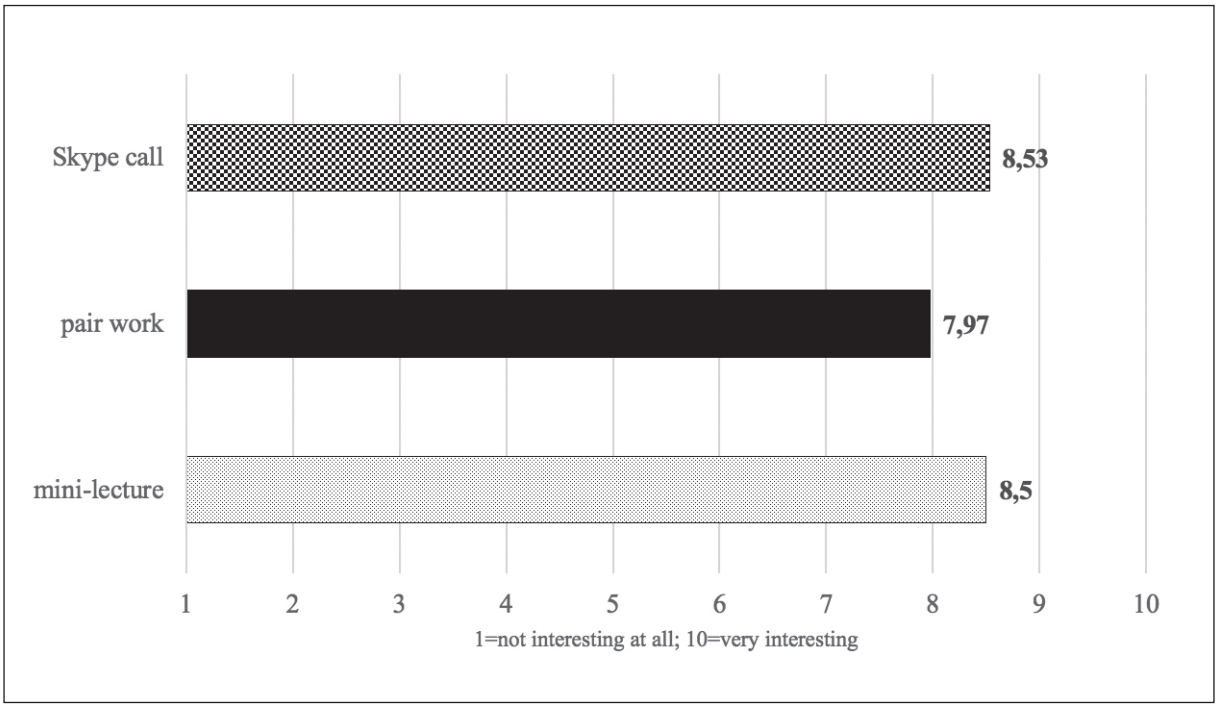
Although the number of interactions initiated by students was rather limited, they do signal the motivation of some students to participate. Students asked me questions six times during the three classes, i.e. twelve per cent of all class interactions. The same figure reflects student-to-student interaction during in-class plenary discussions (excluding pair/group work). Certainly, a positive outcome of the observation is that twenty-four per cent of the interactions in all three classes were dominated by students. Student performance during the pair/group work is even more encouraging: students willingly, sometimes even very passionately, interacted with each other. Indeed, my observers noted that, unlike during traditional frontal lecturing, no student remained entirely passive. Thus, the interactive nature of my classes motivated students to become more active.

My expectation that exercises of a more interactive nature would be more interesting to students (H2) was not confirmed. In general, students found the activities quite motivating – and

attributed higher scores than midpoint. The results show that, according to students, the least interesting to them was the pair/group, evaluated with a 7.97 score on average. The Skype call was evaluated as the most interesting activity with an 8.53 average score for all three classes, followed by the interactive mini-lecture with an average score of 8.5 (figure 2).

These choices were also supported by students' verbal explanations. Several students expressed a high level of interest in the Skype call activity: 'The Skype call enables you to get inside information on Arctic issues. I enjoy it because it is better than reading a book and it is more personal. Different points of view have a large benefit', and 'the very interesting speaker made the Skype call a really interesting part of the course'. Students also expressed their appreciation for the interactivity of the mini-lecture and interest in having even more interactive lecturing during classes: 'I like the concept of the mini-lecture. I think we should spend more time on it as this is the part of the class where I learn the most', or 'I love the mini-lecture. It provides a thorough explanation of the topic in an interactive way. Much better than regular lectures'. Thus, it seems students found these two exercises particularly motivating.

Figure 2. Students' evaluation of how interesting the activities were in three consecutive classes (average)

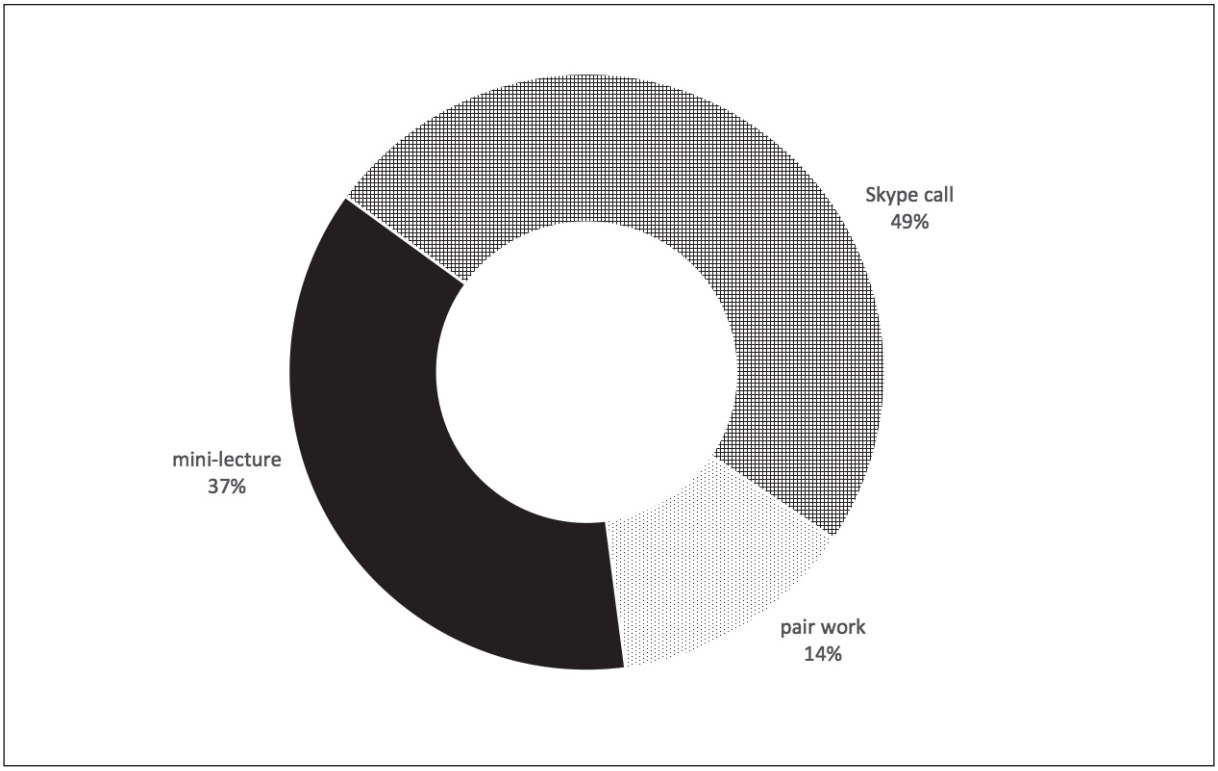


A relatively low level of student interest towards pair/group work and reasons why H2 was not confirmed could be explained by several factors. First, by chance, the topics selected for the Skype call and the interactive mini-lecture could have been more appealing to students. Second, pair/group work discussions may have lacked sufficient guidance, thus students may have been

uncertain about the benefits of their discussions. Third, the shift from lecturing to student-centeredness might have been too dramatic. Students were more comfortable with activities where interactivity augmented a practice (lecturing) they were familiar with and thus could engage with it more easily. Pair/group work could make them uncomfortable – because they were not prepared, or suffered from shyness, so that they could not enjoy it and find it motivating.

Finally, H3 about student learning was confirmed. Figure 3 illustrates the frequency of the most vivid learning moments and activities during which these took place. According to their answers, students learned the most from the Skype call (forty-nine per cent), followed by the interactive mini-lecture (thirty-seven per cent), while they found the pair/group work the least influential to their learning (fourteen per cent). These results are in line with the findings in H2. Students not only considered the Skype call the most interesting, they also indicated that they learned the most from this activity. The interactive mini-lecture was ranked as the second most interesting activity and also appeared in second place when it came to self-assessed learning. Interestingly, while the average student interest was nearly identical for both the Skype call and the interactive mini-lecture, a larger gap emerged between the two activities regarding their impact on student learning. Nonetheless, pair/group work remains a distant third: students believed it was the least interesting and claimed they had learned the least from it. Thus, results show a correlation between students' perception of how interesting an activity was and that of their learning.

Figure 3. Distribution of the most vivid learning moments across the three learning activities in all three classes



Conclusion

This chapter presented the outcomes of an innovation to motivate students to participate in and learn from classroom activities. Students were introduced to three interactive activities: Skype call, pair/group work, and an interactive mini-lecture. While observers found students active during all three activities, students identified the Skype call as most interesting, followed by the interactive mini-lecture. Contrary to my expectation, the pair/group work which I considered the most interactive, was evaluated by students as the least interesting. Since results showed that the more interesting students found the activity, the more they learned from it, the role of student interest should not be underestimated. We often tend to direct our attention solely towards learning, however from a motivational perspective it is also important how appealing the students find the learning activity.

The results also show that the context, in this case student expectations vis-á-vis their learning methods, remain very important while shifting from teacher-centred to student-centred approaches. This is because a dramatic diversion from previously experienced learning methods may be counterproductive to both student motivation and learning. Introducing innovations via baby steps may be a more successful strategy as student learning from pair/group work indicated. In general, enough evidence surfaced to support that pair/group work was beneficial to student learning as it assisted them to increase their factual knowledge and to learn argumentation. Nevertheless, my experience from this innovation suggests that improvement is necessary in terms of future design and implementation. This time all students were expected to read the same text before class and then discus it during pair/group work, which they perhaps found not very interesting. Next time, I could opt to split the text, and give different sections to different pairs/groups to read these at home. Subsequently, the jigsaw group method can be applied to discussions in the classroom. In this way, students will be dependent on each other to succeed in understanding the text. I also plan on making pair/group work more structured where students' attention is directed toward the most critical issues in the text. With these modifications, students' interest in and their learning gained from pair/group work could be enhanced even further. This is particularly important as I want my future students to benefit at least as much from pair/group work as from the Skype call and the interactive mini-lecture, making this innovation even more beneficial to their learning.

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CHAPTER 11. STUDENT PAIR WORK AS A TOOL TO PROMOTE ACTIVE LEARNING AMONG STUDENTS IN KOSOVO

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Keywords: active learning, Bloom's taxonomy, classroom observation, interactive lecture, pair work, psychology, quasi-experiment, teaching large groups

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the outcomes of a teaching innovation project that was designed for the Cultural Psychology course offered at AAB College in Kosovo. Cultural Psychology is a mandatory course for students in the psychology degree programme and is attended by forty to seventy students. The aims of this course are (1) to introduce students to the main concepts and theories of cultural psychology and their applications and (2) to enhance students' capacity to understand and analyse cultural influences on human behaviour. The course consists of fifteen lectures offered on a weekly basis. My responsibilities for the course were to design and teach the course, including assessing students.

Students usually remain passive in this course, which could be due to the preferred teaching method in our college. Teaching large groups is mainly done using the traditional lecturing format. The instructor is expected to transmit information to students though lectures using PowerPoint slides. Instructors most often use multiple choice or some other form of written tests to assess students. These neither require nor encourage students to become actively involved in the learning process.

To address the challenge of the low level of student activity, I used pair work and asked students to engage with the material presented during the lecture to stimulate their participation and learning. I expected that pair work would have a positive impact on both the quantity and quality of students' participation in the classroom. I also assumed that students engaged in pair work would acquire more knowledge of the course material than students who learnt via the traditional lecturing format. I found that pair work had a positive impact on the quantity of students' participation in the classroom and that students who participated in pair work learnt more than their peers who were exposed to lecturing only. Pair work had a positive, although limited, impact on the quality of students' participation in the classroom because most student questions and comments focused on the clarification, understanding and application of concepts rather than on analysis, synthesis or evaluation.

The teaching challenge

The teaching challenge that prompted me to innovate the course was the lack of active participation among students. Passive student behaviour is often observed in large group settings with traditional lecturing, and is attributed to the many students in the classroom because most students may not have the time or space to express their opinions in such a teaching environment. Another reason for the lack of participation can be students' insufficient engagement with the material and their focus on memorization, which is usually associated with lower-level thinking skills in Bloom's taxonomy (Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence 2018).

Addressing this challenge, ideally, would consist both of having fewer students per course and implementing innovative teaching practices so that students could enhance their higher order thinking skills. Very often, however, instructors like me have no control over class size and need to turn to other tools to deal with teaching challenges. Therefore, I used pair work activities to address the lack of active participation in this large group setting, ultimately aiming to prompt students to engage in learning associated with higher-level thinking skills.

Teaching innovation to promote active learning in a large group setting

Passive and active learning describe two perspectives of teaching. Passive learning is associated with traditional lecturing where the teacher is the presenter and the student is the passive recipient of information. Conversely, in active learning the teacher is the supervisor of the teaching process and students learn through reacting and doing (Ramsden 2004). Students do more than just listening: they engage in activities that require higher-order thinking, such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Bonwell and Eison 1991).

Extensive evidence points to the need for teaching strategies that promote active learning. Students involved in active learning are better at retaining the material than passive learners (McKeachie 1972). Active learning promotes students' thinking and writing skills and correlates with higher levels of academic achievement. A significant number of students have learning styles other than learning through listening and generally prefer active engagement to being passive recipients (Bonwell and Eison 1991). Therefore, instructors should be knowledgeable about active learning strategies and integrate them into the teaching process.

There are various ways to promote active learning in large group classes with the traditional lecturing format. For instance, Ruhl et al. (1987) showed the benefits of pausing three times for two minutes each during the lecture so that students can clarify notes in pairs to acquire knowledge of the course material. Menges (1988) reported that implementing non-assessed test quizzes immediately after the lecture increased students' retention of the material. Asking students to respond to a question in pairs/groups, or demonstrations of experiments in the laboratory or through videos and implementing pre- and post-test quizzes, have also been found to increase the effectiveness of lectures (Bonwell and Eison 1991).

Considering these examples, I decided to engage students in pair work to break up the monotony of traditional lecturing and, thus, to recapture students' attention and increase student participation via active learning. Student pair work has the advantage that it can be implemented in any class size. Since in large lecture rooms it is difficult for students to move around, I asked them to work with a peer sitting next to them during the two four-minute student pair work activities per lecture.

Nilson (2014) outlines many pair work activities, of which I chose to use 'pair and compare' and 'pair, compare and ask'. In 'pair and compare', students pair up and compare lecture notes, filling in what they may have missed. In 'pair, compare and ask', students additionally ask and answer questions about a concept from the lecture notes. Students were instructed to focus on questions about topics or issues that seemed unclear or needed further elaboration. Student pair work also served as a basis for a follow-up plenary discussion.

I implemented student pair work in six lectures. I selected those lectures which introduced the concepts that students generally struggle to understand. While students were discussing in pairs, I monitored some pairs and listened to their discussions. To stimulate the subsequent plenary discussion, I asked students to share their experience, if they thought they had learnt anything new during the discussion, or to raise questions.

All in all, I expected that my teaching innovation would have a positive impact on both the (a) quantity and (b) quality of students' active participation in the classroom, and (c) that the teaching innovation would lead to more learning among students who were exposed to the innovation in comparison with students who learnt via the traditional lecturing format.

Data collection and research methods

I assessed the outcomes of the innovation based on four different types of data. First, an anonymous student questionnaire was administered during the last class of the semester. Items one, two and three of the questionnaire related to the interaction of students in the class and their engagement during the pair work and was used to evaluate my expectations about student activity. Items four, five and six focused on evaluating whether pair work helped students to clarify and understand the concepts covered during the lectures. Item seven asked students if pair work assisted them to get better grades on tests (for the exact questions see table 1). These four items allowed me to evaluate the impact of the innovation on student learning. Responses to each survey question were recorded on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). I used descriptive statistics with the help of SPSS 21 to analyse students' responses to the questionnaire.

Table 1. Frequency of student responses to questionnaire items

No.	Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total Responses
1	I felt engaged during student pair work.	5 (7.93 %)	8 (12.70 %)	7 (11.11%)	24 (38.10 %)	19 (30.16 %)	63 (100 %)
2	Student pair work made the lecture more interactive.	0 (0 %)	8 (12.50 %)	8 (12.50 %)	21 (32.81 %)	27 (42.19 %)	64 (100 %)
3	Student pair work was a waste of time during the lecture.	50 (78.13 %)	7 (10.94 %)	3 (4.69 %)	3 (4.69 %)	1 (1.56 %)	64 (100 %)
4	Student pair work helped me process the content better.	1 (1.56 %)	8 (12.50 %)	10 (15.63 %)	19 (29.69 %)	26 (40.63 %)	64 (100 %)
5	Student pair work helped me clarify the concepts/ideas.	1 (1.56 %)	5 (7.81 %)	9 (14.06 %)	14 (21. 88%)	35 (54.69 %)	64 (100 %)
6	During student pair work we discussed a concept more thoroughly rather than simple description.	1 (1.59 %)	3 (4.76 %)	11 (17.46 %)	20 (31.75 %)	28 (44.44 %)	63 (100 %)
7	Student pair work helped me perform better on the test.	0 (0 %)	5 (7.94 %)	10 (15.87 %)	30 (47.62 %)	18 (28.57 %)	63 (100 %)

Second, I asked a colleague to visit one lecture and complete an observation protocol. My colleague attended the fifth teaching innovation lecture. The protocol included questions related to the instructor's and students' activities during the class, and thus provided me with additional information to evaluate student participation.[1]

As the third source of data, I recorded students' questions and comments following the pair work immediately after each of the five lectures[2]. I categorized the students' questions and comments based on Bloom's taxonomy, which classifies learning into six levels of difficulty: (1) knowledge, (2) comprehension, (3) application, (4) analysis, (5) synthesis and (6) evaluation. Levels one, two and three are associated with lower-order thinking skills and levels four, five and six with higher-order thinking skills (Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence 2018). For instance, student questions like 'what is' or 'can you recall' would be categorized as the knowledge level and 'how can we apply this concept in a particular situation' as the application level. Table 2 provides the rubrics for categorizing students' questions and comments.

Table 2. Coding student questions/comments based on Bloom's taxonomy

Levels	Domains	Type of questions
1	Knowledge	Questions to clarify facts from the lecture, terminology or definitions of concepts, like 'what is', 'can you recall'.
2	Comprehension	Questions to understand facts, terms or basic concepts, like 'explain', 'demonstrate'.
3	Application	Questions about the situations when acquired knowledge can be applied, like 'apply', 'make use of'.
4	Analysis	Questions about motives or causes behind particular ideas, like 'what is the function of', 'what ideas justify'.
5	Synthesis	Discussion about how a concept can be applied to situations different from the cases introduced by the teacher.
6	Evaluation	Critical evaluation of concepts and their applications.

Lastly, I compared the final grades of two groups of students: students engaged in pair work during the lecture (the treatment group) and students solely listening to the lecture (the control

1 The observation protocol was provided by the organizers of the teacher development course I was taking, within which framework this study was completed.

2 I did not code students' questions/discussions for the first teaching innovation class because I was preoccupied with the implementation of the teaching innovation. I recorded the data from the second to the sixth teaching innovation sessions.

group). A parallel section of the same course served as the control group. As opposed to the sixty to seventy regular attendees of the lectures in the treatment group, forty to forty-five students attended the classes in the control group[3]. Both groups were exposed to the same material, learning topics and assessment processes, but the teaching innovation was implemented only in the treatment group. In each group, grades represented student achievement in terms of gaining knowledge of concepts introduced during the course. The final grade consisted of four elements: mid-semester and end-of-semester tests, which included multiple choice and a few open-ended questions (thirty-five per cent each); a 700-word essay on an issue of cultural psychology chosen by the student (twenty per cent); and class attendance (ten per cent). Grades in Kosovo are measured on a 5 (worst) to 10 (best) scale.

Findings

First, I analysed items one, two and three in the students' questionnaire, the tally of student questions and comments that I recorded, and data from the observation protocol to see if the teaching innovation had a positive impact on the extent of students' active participation in the classroom. Most students (sixty-eight per cent) either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they felt engaged during the pair work. Similarly, seventy-five per cent said that pair work made the lecture more interactive. Furthermore, the overwhelming majority (eighty-nine per cent) disagreed that pair work was a waste of time. Thus, students considered pair work both engaging and beneficial to increasing classroom interactions.

Counting the frequencies of questions and comments from my recordings revealed that students posed ten questions and initiated four discussions during the plenary debriefing. This roughly equals one question or comment after each instance of pair work. While this is a rather modest number of student contributions, it is fair to assume that some of their questions had been answered and confusion had been cleared up during the preceding pair work. In addition, students need time and practice to get accustomed to speaking up in front of the whole class.

Observations of the pair discussion are encouraging: the class observer using the observation protocol gave the highest possible score to the question whether students interacted with ease during the pair work and marked the level of student engagement in the pair work 'medium'. Hence, the teaching innovation positively contributed to the quantity of students' active participation in the classroom.

Second, the expectation that my teaching innovation would have a positive impact on the quality of students' active participation received mixed support. Regarding students' self-assessment, most students (seventy per cent) responded with either 'agree' or 'strongly agree' when asked if pair work helped them process the content better, and seventy-seven per cent said that pair

3 The difference in attendance between the treatment and control groups was due to differences in enrolment: 118 students enrolled in the treatment group and 82 in the control group.

work helped them to clarify the concepts discussed earlier during the lecture. Finally, seventy-six per cent indicated that they had discussed a concept with their peer more thoroughly than merely describing it. Thus, while students believed that pair work assisted with their learning, this involved the use of lower-order thinking skills such as knowledge and comprehension, with only some indication that learning may have occurred at higher levels.

The analysis of students' questions and comments during the plenary debriefing tells a similar story. Most questions and comments (sixty-four per cent) fit levels one and two of Bloom's taxonomy, and seven per cent of questions or comments are at the application level. Typical questions at these three levels were 'what is the difference between the concept of secure and ambivalent attachment' or 'can you explain a bit more the object permanence concept'.

Certain discussions about particular concepts and theories in the post-pair work plenary discussion signalled thinking at the higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy: twenty-nine per cent of discussion contributions were at either level four, i.e. analysis, or level five, i.e. new ways that a particular concept can be applied. To illustrate, students during a class session about culture and emotions discussed whether patriotism and its emotional aspects (e.g. pride, shame) are the same across several cultures, and then compared those other cultures to Kosovo. All in all, although there was some indication of higher-order thinking among students, most questions and comments focused on the first three levels of Bloom's taxonomy.

Third, I expected that students who were exposed to the innovation would learn more than students who only listened to lectures. The majority of students (seventy-six per cent) responded with either 'agree' or 'strongly agree' to the last item in the survey, that is, if pair work helped them to obtain a better grade on the test. Comparing the grades of students who engaged in pair work (i.e., the treatment group, N=55, M=8.00) with those who did not (i.e., the control group, N=36, M=7.10) revealed a grade difference between the two groups. A grade of eight indicates a very good grasp of the course material compared to a grade seven, which indicates a good grasp of the material. This evidence shows that students exposed to the teaching innovation learnt more about the course material than students who learnt via traditional lecturing.

Conclusion and suggestions for improvement

As part of my teaching innovation in the Cultural Psychology course, I implemented pair work among students in six out of fifteen lectures. The aim of this activity was to increase both the quantity and quality of students' participation in the classroom and to boost their knowledge of the course material. I found that the teaching innovation had a positive impact on the quantity of students' active participation in the classroom and knowledge of the course concepts. I also found that the innovation had a positive but limited impact on the quality of students' participation in the classroom: most student questions and comments focused on knowledge, comprehension and application and there were only a few attempts by the students at analysis and syn-

thesis of the various concepts, activities which are associated with higher-order thinking skills.
Although these results demonstrate the benefits of pair work activities in a large group setting, the implementation of the innovation can be improved. For instance, extending student pair work activity from five to ten minutes can provide more space for students to ask and answer questions and engage in discussions. As a consequence, student comments and questions in the plenary debriefing may take place at higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy. Another way to improve pair work is by preparing a set of questions for students to address during pair work sessions. Well-prepared questions by the instructor can perhaps stimulate higher-order thinking during pair interactions.
It is also important for me to be more patient and wait until a student poses a question or initiates a discussion during the debriefing. My initial assumption was that the students had already formulated questions or comments while working in pairs and would be ready to share them. When no question or comment was forthcoming I often intervened quickly and asked a question myself. However, whenever I managed to keep silent until a student volunteered to contribute, I noticed that there was more interaction.
All in all, I plan not only to keep this innovation in my future courses but would like to experiment with the impact on classroom activity and student learning of extending the length of time of the pair work, preparing questions for pair discussions and giving more time to students to take initiative in plenary sessions.

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CLUSTER 5. COMMENTARY
ENHANCING STUDENT MOTIVATION, INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION: YOUNG ACADEMICS' EXPERIMENTS WITH ACTIVE LEARNING

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Stimulating interest is vital to education, as the level of a student's interest influences their attention, goals, ability to self-regulate, study strategies, and learning outcomes (Renninger and Hidi 2016). Despite its importance, there is little higher education research on how different forms of instruction promote students' interest. Therefore, it is gratifying to see these early career academics experimenting with ways to capture students' interest and promote participation.

Kašpárková hypothesised that active learning, connecting theory to practice, and real-world group activities would be motivating to students. Her evaluation supported these assumptions. She revised the objectives, learning activities and assessment in a personnel psychology course to highlight relevance to all students, not just those who intended a career in human resources. Introducing learning material before seminars reduced in-class lecturing and allowed time for discussions with peers, role plays, and facilitated problem-solving. Continuous assessments involved projects, presentations, and application of principles to real life scenarios. By framing her work in terms of Biggs' (1996) theory of constructive alignment, she explicitly recognised that students' behaviour is shaped not just by their interest in the subject, but by how they will be assessed. Thus, aligning assessments to revised objectives is an important principle for supporting student engagement. While I would have liked to have seen more detail of the revised objectives, as the revised objectives capture what she assumes will interest students, her attention to the overall system of alignment in a short report is commendable.

Padrtová also assumed that active learning would stimulate students' interest and, in turn, learning. She designed three activities for each ninety-minute session: a Skype call with an expert on the subject, student discussions in pairs, and interactive mini-lectures. Bringing in expert speakers by Skype is an unusual and promising innovation. While guest lectures are not new, technology now makes it easier to bring in experts from around the world for short interactions with students. Using peer observation, she was able to document the extent and nature of interaction in each of the three types of activities, showing that teacher-to-student interaction was most frequent, followed by student-to-teacher and student-to-student. She surveyed both students' interest and knowledge to assess the extent to which students were interested in and learned from each of the three types of activities.

While the pair work generated lively discussion between peers, students found the expert mini-lectures via Skype and the interactive, teacher-led mini-lectures to be most interesting. They also learned the most from those activities they found most interesting, consistent with research on interest (Renninger and Hidi 2016). However, higher degrees of interaction alone were not

associated with higher interest or learning. Again, this finding, though counter to Padrtová's hypothesis, is consistent with the literature on interest (Bergin 1999; Rotgans and Schmidt 2011). The nature of the task set for students (i.e. the extent to which it is novel, prompts thinking and questioning, is controversial or surprising, and relevant and important) seems to matter more than the classroom format itself (e.g. whether it is paired discussions, or interactive lectures).

Voca also focused on interaction, though the stated and evaluated goals were to enhance interaction and higher order cognitive learning, rather than interest or motivation per se. To overcome student passivity in lectures, he introduced two four-minute pair-work discussions per lecture. The innovation was successful in that students engaged easily and reported that the activities were useful for their learning. The learning outcomes were more positive for the group who engaged in pair-work during six of the fifteen lectures than the control group who did not. Although the pair work seemed to contribute to more participation in the plenary session, students were generally focused on comprehension and understanding, rather than higher order questions. This result may be because of the nature of the task set for the pair work, which required students to share their lecture notes to fill in gaps and ask questions that clarified concepts. As with Padrtová, attending to interaction alone is not sufficient. One also needs to attend to the cognitive demands of the tasks (e.g. are they focusing on comprehension, application, evaluation or synthesis). To the extent that Voca is not fully satisfied that students engaged at higher levels of thinking, it is also worth reconsidering the assessments, by setting the innovation within the wider framework of constructive alignment (Biggs 1996), as Kašpárková did.

Each of the three cases represent impressive accomplishments for early career educators. All three teachers succeeded at designing thoughtful innovations that supported student interaction, participation and learning. The authors clearly stated the goals of their innovations, developed appropriate teaching methods to address those goals, designed bespoke evaluation tools, and reflected thoughtfully on the outcomes. These innovations offer lessons for all educators about how to increase student interaction and how to use cognitively stimulating activities that capture students' interest, such as applications to the real world and interactions with leading experts on the topic. Taken together, they also remind readers to consider the whole system of instruction and how teaching activities are aligned with objectives and assessment.

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CHAPTER 12. ENGAGING NON-MAJORS IN AN INTRODUCTORY POLITICAL SCIENCE COURSE VIA DEBATES, PRIMARY SOURCES AND CUT-UP CARDS

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Keywords: active learning, classroom debate, content analysis, cut-up cards, group work, motivation

Introduction

This chapter focuses on active learning as a means of achieving higher levels of student engagement, improving knowledge retention, and understanding. While the problem of student engagement is very common at all levels of the education system, it is of particular significance when teaching an introductory political science course to undergraduate students whose major is not related to the topics covered in class, and who do not expect to have any professional use for the knowledge that they could potentially acquire. In order to address the issue of low student engagement, I introduced three active learning exercises – a debate, a group analysis of a primary source, and cut-up cards – to distinguish between various political science concepts. In order to study the effects of the innovation, I collected both qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate the nature of the relationship between active learning, student engagement, and knowledge retention. Results show that while active learning methods lead to higher levels of student engagement, they do not seem to significantly affect knowledge retention and understanding.

Teaching innovation

The teaching innovation was conducted during the Introduction to Political Science course at the University of Economics in Bratislava in the fall semester of 2018. The course was taught to first year students from the Faculties of Economics, Informatics, and Commerce. The total number of students subjected to the innovation was forty-three, who were split into three seminars. When I was teaching this course in spring 2018, I was disappointed by the fact that students often seemed disinterested with topics that I considered to be inherently engaging myself. I also regularly noticed students being distracted, which was also confirmed by a colleague observer. I assumed that this was because I was mostly lecturing to the students. Their disinterest was reflected in their final exam performance as well. Therefore, I trialled three active learning methods in three different sessions aside from a short – 15-30-minute – introductory lecture at the beginning of each class.

The first exercise consisted of a debate. I began by dividing the students into groups of four to five. Then I introduced a statement related to the subject of the class (for example, nationalism as a political ideology). The groups were subsequently asked to choose either to defend or op-

pose the statement and find arguments to support their positions. The groups then presented the results to fellow students, which was followed by a general discussion. I concluded the session with a summary of the various points of view presented.

The second exercise was a group discussion related to primary sources. Each group received an extract from a manifesto of a political party and they were asked to identify the essential ideas and link those to a relevant political ideology. Based on this, the groups developed an ideological profile of the party which they presented to their classmates who offered them feedback in return.

The third exercise consisted of using cut-up cards to identify the key characteristics of political ideologies. The cut-ups contained the titles of basic concepts, major figures, and major propositions, such as for example: 'tradition', 'Edmund Burke' or 'a priori sceptical view of social change' for conservatism. Students worked in groups again and matched the cards with the relevant ideologies. They were asked to justify their choices. Finally, I rewarded the most successful groups with points towards their final mark.

Conceptual foundation of innovation

The practical issue that led to the introduction of the teaching innovation was the low level of student engagement and subpar student performance on the final exam. The innovation was informed by the established distinction between passive and active learning, often used in the context of the debate between traditional teaching methods and progressive education. While in passive learning students simply act as a recipient of knowledge (Petress 2008), active learning aims to involve the student directly in the learning process (Bonwell and Eison 1991) because it is believed to encourage a higher engagement level of students and better educational results. Student engagement, which represents a key concept for active learning, is understood here simply as 'behavioural intensity and emotional quality of a person's active involvement during a task' (Reeve et al. 2004: 147). In terms of educational achievement, I am mainly interested in knowledge retention and understanding, referring to the lowest levels of learning outcomes according to Bloom´s taxonomy (Armstrong 2018).

The design of the active learning exercises stem from the distinction between passive and active learning, and thus are aimed at engaging students directly with the material, as opposed to simply exposing them to information, as is the case with traditional frontal lecturing. The goal of the active learning exercises was twofold: to provide external motivation and to encourage students. External motivation is especially important when attempting to engage students who are not familiar with a particular subject (Kvasz 2005), and both peer collaboration – through peer challenge – and the focus of the exercises – debate, working with primary sources, and the use of cut-up cards – were designed to stimulate engagement via motivation. Additionally, the extra points that students could collect towards the final mark at the end of the last innovated class

exposed students to another external motivating component. The group format was intended to provide students with some scaffolding, eliminating any potential insecurity arising from limited familiarity with the subject matter and the need to speak out in front of a larger audience (Sajedi 2014).

The aim of this study was to evaluate the effects that these three active learning exercises have had on student engagement, knowledge retention, and understanding in the context of teaching the Introduction to Political Science course to non-major students. In order to accomplish this goal, I tested two hypotheses: (H1) Students will be more engaged with the active learning task than during a traditional lecture; (H2) Students who completed the active learning exercise will score higher on the final exam in those questions that were the subject of the active learning exercise than the students who did not complete the active learning exercise.

Data collection and methods of analysis

The data necessary for verifying the hypotheses were collected during and after the innovated classes. In order to verify hypothesis one, three kinds of data collection instruments were developed: a teaching diary, an observation form and a student survey. The teaching diary and the observation form had the same structure, but the teaching diary was filled out by myself right after each innovated class, and the observation form was completed by an observer from the ranks of my colleagues at the university during those same classes. I had three different observers, each covering the same class session across the three different classes of students. The data collected from both sources were used to compare the impact of the two parts – i.e. the traditional lecture and the active learning exercise – of each innovated class upon student engagement.

The structure of both the diary and the observation form purposefully encouraged the collection of qualitative data. The main structural requirement of the form, which I also stressed to the observers, was that student engagement was to be recorded in relative terms with regard to the two parts of the class (i.e. the introductory lecture and the active learning exercise). This allowed me to evaluate not only the level of student participation, but to a certain degree, also their enthusiasm and attention during the different parts of the classes. Even though collecting data on the latter two may lower the level of objectivity of the study, this approach is invaluable for realizing the aim of this study.

This data was analysed by performing a content analysis (Kohlbacher 2006; Shannon and Hsieh 2005). The logic of the analysis was deductive: I used three main categories (traditional lecture, active learning exercise and student engagement) as pre-established codes. Based on the definition of student engagement discussed above, I came up with five operationally relevant concepts and used them as lower level codes for student engagement: enthusiasm, attention, disinterest, distraction (qualitative aspect), and participation (quantitative aspect). The analysis proceeded

by going through the data, assigning parts of the text to the pre-established codes[1], and comparing the connections between these codes and the traditional lecture/active learning exercise respectively.

The student survey was also designed to supply data in order to evaluate the first hypothesis and was administered after each innovated class. Students were asked (1) to report, on a ten-point scale, how engaged they felt during the class, and (2) to think of an average session of a typical course during this semester and indicate if they felt more engaged during that day's class or during a typical course session. This data was analysed using descriptive statistics.

In order to verify hypothesis two, quantitative data was generated based on student performance during the final exam. I used a quasi-experimental design, which consisted of a point score evaluation for four specific questions from the final exams of twenty two students from the Spring 2018 semester (the control group), and the final exams completed by the forty three students who participated in all three of the innovated classes in the Fall 2018 semester (the treatment group). The exams were different across the two semesters, but they intentionally included the same four questions related to political ideologies, which the students covered during the active learning exercises. For example, one of the questions consisted of listing the fundamental ideas of liberal political thought, which was directly addressed by the cut-ups exercise during the third innovated class. The same issue was covered solely via a ninety-minute lecture in the control group.

I analysed this data by performing a one-tailed independent samples t-test that compared the point scores of the treatment and control groups in order to establish if there was a statistically significant difference between the students who answered the relevant question based on knowledge acquired during traditional frontal lectures, and students who were engaged in active learning exercises.

Results

The results of the content analysis offer support for hypothesis one, and suggest a link between active learning methods and student engagement despite the fact that the course is unrelated to the academic majors of the students. While those concepts that were positively connected with engagement were far more frequently mentioned in relation to active learning than to traditional lecturing, the concepts negatively related to engagement were more prevalent for the lectures (table 1). The results are most pronounced for participation and distraction. References to *participation* were almost four times more frequent for active learning exercises than for lectures. *Distraction*, on the other hand, was mentioned more than five times more frequently for the traditional lectures than for the active learning lectures. The results are fairly consistent across the

1 Both explicit and implicit references to the categories were taken into account.

teaching diary and observation forms, which offsets, to a certain degree, the subjective character of the data.

Table 1. The number of references to engagement-related issues with regards to passive and active learning as recorded in the observation forms and the teaching diary across the five coding categories

	Traditional lecture		Active learning	
	Observation forms	**Teaching diary**	**Observation forms**	**Teaching diary**
Attention (+)	4	4	5	4
Enthusiasm (+)	0	0	2	1
Participation (+)	2	1	7	4
Disinterest (-)	3	2	1	1
Distraction (-)	9	7	1	2

Qualitative content analysis of the data supports the hypothesis about the positive impact of active learning on student engagement even more strongly. While for *attention* the traditional lecture scored similarly to active learning, a more detailed look at the data showed that the mention of attention during lectures appeared mostly in connection to the beginning of the lecture. In all four cases when the observers referred to attention in relation to the traditional lecture, they also mentioned *distraction.* Distraction also characterized the end of the traditional lecture. Similarly, distraction also had a qualitatively different character in active and passive learning. In relation to active learning, it referred to a specific situation when students finished their group work and waited for classmates to complete the task. Low attention was thus caused by the timing of the task rather than the entire design of the task and could therefore be avoided. *Distraction,* as reported in relation to the traditional lecture was not qualified in any way, which suggests that it might be caused by the structure of the traditional lecture itself. Furthermore, when identifying *disinterest* in relation to active learning exercises, the observer only mentioned 'slight disinterest', while the references to disinterest for traditional lectures were not specific. *Enthusiasm* was reported three times, each time in relation to the cut-ups exercise during the third round of innovated classes.

Results from the student survey offer some modest support for H1. Since the survey was administered at the end of the class, the return rate of the survey was one hundred per cent. However, the response rate was lower for both questions, as some students chose not to answer them. For

question one, the number of responses was 84 out of the total of 127 surveys returned (66%). 74 per cent out of the total of 84 surveys that contained an answer to this question indicated that the student felt more engaged by the just concluded innovated class. However, since I did not ascertain what a 'typical course session' meant to the students, support for H1 is limited.

For question two, the number of responses was 97 out of the total of 127 surveys returned (76%). In general, the students felt engaged by the innovated classes, with the average engagement score being 6.93 (out of 10). The third innovated class (the cut-ups exercise) scored the highest, with an average of 7.5. The first (debate) and the second (primary sources) innovated classes scored 6.8 and 6.5 respectively.

When it comes to the second hypothesis no significant support was found. As shown by the results of the one-tailed t-test that compared student knowledge and understanding of key concepts based on their responses to exam questions, students from the treatment group were not found to perform better on the exam questions than members of the control group (see table 2).

Table 2. Differences in mean scores between the treatment and control groups for knowledge retention and understanding in four selected questions from the final exam

Treatment Group			Control Group			Difference of Means	t-test	df	p-value	Sig.
N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD					
43	12.84	2.78	22	13.00	2.93	0.16	-0.22	63	0.42	no

Test: independent samples t-test, one-tailed.

Conclusions

This chapter reports on a teaching innovation which sought to stimulate higher levels of student engagement for first year students of the Introduction to Political Science course and improve the retention of knowledge and understanding. The results confirm extant findings in the literature and thus the link between active learning and student engagement (Buckley and Reidy 2014; Bromley 2013). However, this study could not find robust evidence for the existence of a similar link between active learning and knowledge retention/understanding. While the student survey offers limited support, the statistical analysis of student responses on the analysed exam questions do not. This result contradicts most existing studies, including those related to education in political science (e.g. Shellman and Kürşad 2006; Schnurr et al. 2014). One explanation for this could be the small sample size of forty-three students. Also, the study only focused on the effects of active learning on knowledge retention and the understanding of key concepts, which refer to the lower levels of Bloom's taxonomy (Armstrong 2018). The next logical step is therefore to test the relationship between active learning exercises and knowledge retention for the higher levels

of application – analysis, synthesis and evaluation – where the positive effects of active learning could potentially be more visible.

Another possible explanation was noted by one of the observers, who said that while more students participated during the active learning activities than lectures, students only took notes at the lectures. This suggests that the students probably did not see active learning exercises as a learning opportunity in terms of knowledge retention and understanding. I could perhaps conclude each section not only with a summary of the presented viewpoints as I did in relation to the first innovated session, but also with the major points that students could take away from the applicable class. The problem could also be partly addressed by designing the assessment more in line with the desired learning outcomes (Biggs 2003). Since the teaching methods that I employed as part of my innovation were not only aimed at knowledge retention, but also at understanding, it might be useful to assess students through a writing task, such as an essay.

My findings about active learning and knowledge retention resonate with Kováčová's chapter in this volume (chapter five) that included a similar study partly in virtually the same cultural setting at Masaryk University in Brno. This suggests that Slovak and Czech first-year university students have been so accustomed to the traditional methods of teaching and learning, which are prevalent in both the secondary education of both countries, that they simply learn better this way than through active learning. It might therefore be worthwhile to look at cultural differences as an intervening variable between active (and passive) learning and learning outcomes.

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CHAPTER 13. COMPARING CLASSES WITH DIFFERENT LEVELS OF STUDENT CONTROL WHILE CULTIVATING STUDENTS' INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES

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Keywords: cultural studies, group work, intercultural competences, quasi-experiment, student-centred learning

Introduction

I have experienced student-centred approach for the first time as an undergraduate student at a business school in Vienna, Austria. While some teachers there approached teaching in a teacher-centred way, the majority of the teachers there employed student-centred methods which taught me independent study skills, allowed me to better develop my critical thinking and communication skills, and made it possible to retain the study material better. Teachers had clear teaching objectives and utilized multiple teaching methods to facilitate student learning. Some teachers also managed their own businesses and brought their entrepreneurial experience into the classroom, giving students the opportunity to work on real-life case studies and to apply their knowledge in practice.

When I began my postgraduate education at the University of Economics in Bratislava, I found myself listening to session-long lectures with occasional assignments at the end of the session and there was little room for interaction or questions. Those classes left me with the feeling that I learned very little and rarely prompted me to reflect on the material covered in the classroom. The contrast between these two very different learning experiences has raised my interest in exploring whether the undergraduate students that I teach respond to those different teaching approaches in a similar manner. In order to find the answer, I designed an experiment where three classes of my students were given different levels of control over their learning while studying the same topics. In this chapter I present the results of the comparative analysis that underpinned this experiment. It revealed modest evidence for the expectation that the higher the intensity is of student-centred activities in the classroom, the higher the level of student satisfaction and retention of information will be. However, this will not necessarily result in a higher level of engagement. I conclude this chapter by explaining why the findings are somewhat fickle in this regard and stress the importance of cultural and educational factors within the learning process.

Institutional and theoretical background

This teaching experiment was implemented at the Department of International Trade of the Faculty of Commerce at the University of Economics in Bratislava during the spring semester of 2019. The sessions I taught were part of the Intercultural Leadership and Communication course,

which was on offer to local students and students of the Erasmus program. The language of instruction was English. The focus of the sessions was to introduce students to intercultural awareness and to develop their intercultural competencies. Since it was the first course session it had to serve as the cornerstone for the later development of intercultural leadership and intercultural communication. My objective was to introduce the concepts of culture and cultural influence, evoke awareness of personal identity and expose students to the notion of cultural relativism.

At the Faculty of Commerce, the majority of the classes are taught using the teacher-centred approach. This approach was criticized for being too passive in terms of student learning, having a low level of teacher innovation and disregarding students' needs (Emaliana 2017). Although the instructivist approach where the teacher transmits information which is then merely absorbed by students is considered to be effective when teaching complex subjects to novices, student engagement is reported to be very low (Roucau 2016). At the same time, the fast-moving pace of our lives shortens the attention span of students and makes them susceptible to being easily bored and distracted, which further reduces the effectiveness of lengthy frontal lectures. In the twenty-first century, due to a turbulent and fast-changing business environment the mere transfer of information will not adequately prepare a student to move toward a successful future. The ability to critically assess and internalize information, the ability to draw conclusions, cross-cultural communication competence, and the ability to work in groups constitute only a few of the necessary skills that are crucial in the field of communication and culture.

In student-centred learning (SCL) the teacher assumes the role of facilitator and invites students to participate in the learning process by relating information to prior knowledge and using that knowledge to engage in discussions with others. SCL puts students in the centre of knowledge construction which in turn improves their motivation, knowledge retention and facilitates a deeper understanding of the material (Serin 2018). Wijayanti and Listani (2018) assumes that two of the core traits of SCL are student reflection and control over learning. However, it is unclear from the literature how much student control is optimal for effective learning. Even though various studies presented by Roucau (2016) emphasize positive outcomes in terms of engagement and predict a higher level of participation (see also Lantis et al. 2010), lower abstention rates and better grades, SCL class sessions do not automatically lead to high engagement levels (e.g. Raymond 2012).

Moreover, student engagement and ultimately student learning, are multidimensional concepts consisting of behavioural, relational and cognitive dimensions (Davis et al. 2012) and should not only be studied through the dichotomous lens of the student- versus the teacher-centred approaches, but should be viewed within the context of the varying degrees of SCL. It is possible that the differences found in the effectiveness of student-centredness, especially when compared to teacher-centred methods, were due to a variation in terms of how involved students

were during student-centred learning activities. Thus, I decided to study the outcomes of classes with different levels of control that students have over their own learning.

The experimental innovation

Teaching the same topic to three different classes offered an opportunity for a quasi-experimental research design to test the impact of various levels of student control over the learning process. In order to do so I designed three classes with different levels of student-centredness reflected in classroom activities and labelled these accordingly as (1) minimally (n=17), (2) moderately (n=14), and (3) highly (n=13) student-controlled. While I assigned the session designs randomly to three classes of students, I had no control over who enrolled in which class. As a result, classes differed in terms of their levels of cultural diversity. The minimally student-controlled class was the most diverse with a high proportion of students coming from a variety of Western countries, while the moderately and highly student-controlled classes had only one and two foreign students respectively.

For each class, the session was split into three parts. The first part of the session comprised a mini-lecture, which I used to introduce social categorization theory, the developmental path that leads from stereotyping to racism and ways in which this can be avoided. An exercise followed the lecture during which students were asked to summarize the information from the mini-lecture by voluntarily answering quiz questions. The exercise was designed to create a climate of freedom of expression and reduce the fear of participation. The content and presentation of the lecture as well as the first exercise were identical for all three classes.

The second part of the session focused on understanding the theoretical development of culture and Hofstede's cultural dimensions, and was concluded by a group exercise designed to explore cultural self-awareness. The exercise was different across the three classes even though all classes included three-to-four-member group discussions. For students in the minimally student-controlled class, the teacher summarised the outcomes of the group discussions. In the moderately student-controlled class, group presentations were followed by group discussions. The exercise implemented in the highly student-controlled class started with individual reflections which were followed by a group discussion and concluded by a presentation of the outcomes to the class.

I introduced the construct of intercultural competence and the pathway for its development in the final part of the session. This was followed by a case study during which students had the opportunity to apply the knowledge that was gained during the mini-lecture. It described two business parties who possessed limited self-awareness from opposite cultures conducting a business meeting but were oblivious to cultural norms and the influence of culture upon their actions. Students in the minimally student-controlled class were separated into two groups and asked to analyse the case study. They later presented the outcomes of their collaboration in front of the class. The moderately student-controlled class was also divided into two groups but each

group analysed the perspective of one business party and subsequently presented the reasons for its behaviour and actions to the class in the form of a role play. At the end of the class the teacher summarized the learning outcomes. In the highly student-centred classroom, each student was first asked to write a short reflection paper on the case study, then participated in the same kind of group discussions and role play as the students with a medium amount of SCL, but with a teacher-led discussion summarizing the learning outcomes of the exercise at the end of the session.
Thus, while each of the three session designs included SCL, the degree of control that students had over their learning differed. I expected that the more control students have over their learning process, (H1) the higher their level of satisfaction would be, (H2) the more engaged they would be with the material, and (H3) the more information they would retain.

Data and methods

To compare the impact of the varying degrees of student control, I collected two sets of data: a student survey *and* classroom observation. The student survey comprised of questions that collected information on both students' opinions (questions one to four) and their actual learning (questions five to eight) (see table 1 for details). Opinion items were measured on a six-point Likert-scale where students were asked to rate their agreement with each statement from 1 ('not at all') to 6 ('very much'). Question one was used to measure hypothesis one regarding satisfaction, the purpose of question four was to evaluate hypothesis two on engagement and questions two and three contributed to the understanding of students' perspectives on their own learning (H3). All opinion related results from the survey were analysed with the help of descriptive statistics (means) and a variance analysis (ANOVA) test.

Table 1. Survey questions used to evaluate the three hypotheses

Question	Hypothesis tested	Measurement and method of analysis
Opinion items		
How much did you enjoy the lecture?	H1	6-point Likert scale; descriptive statistic and ANOVA
How useful do you consider the lecture for learning? How useful do you consider the case study for learning?	H3	
How engaged did you feel during today's session?	H2	
Items about student learning		

What are the two [three, four, five] most significant things you have learned during this session? What question(s) remain unanswered in your mind? Is there anything you did not understand? Please add any comment regarding the session	H3	Open-ended questions; see coding scheme in table 2

The open-ended questions of the survey assisted in evaluating whether more control by students resulted in a higher level of information retention and internalization (H3). Using thematic analysis with an open coding system, I established two main categories: concepts students learned/understood and what they did not learn/understand. I divided the former into four subthemes that related to the actual concepts learned, i.e. mentioned by students: culture, respect, prejudice/stereotype, cultural perspective (see table 2 for a more detailed explanation).

Table 2. The coding scheme for the open-ended questions in the survey

No.	Category	Description
1	Understanding of concepts	*Sub-categories:* Culture – theoretical understanding and impact of it Respect – individuals of other cultures Prejudice/Stereotype – the process and concept Perspective – relative concept of own culture and behaviour of others
2	Lack of understanding of concepts	Concepts that left students confused at the end of the session

Finally, in evaluating hypotheses two and three, I also used information from a colleague's classroom observation. The observer did not use any protocol or standardized form to structure the feedback but only discussed her spontaneous notes with me afterwards.

Findings

The initial assumption that the more control students have over their learning, the more satisfied they would be with the learning process (H1) was partially confirmed. Out of the three classes, the one in which students had the most control over their learning had the highest mean score of satisfaction ($mean_{HIGH}$=5.75), followed by the moderately student-controlled class ($mean_{MODERATE}$=5.50) (table 3). The lowest satisfaction level was reported by students with the least control over their learning ($mean_{MINIMAL}$=5.35) In other words, as the number of SCL activities increased, so did student satisfaction. However, the result of the ANO-

VA test showed that these differences were not statistically significant (F(2,41)=2.25, p=0.11). The assumption about a positive relationship between student control and a higher level of student engagement (H2) was not supported by the results. The classes with the highest and moderate level of student-centred activities had the lowest reported mean engagement ratings at 5.07 each, whereas the least controlled class had the highest engagement level ($mean_{MINIMAL}$=5.23). Even though the results are not statistically significant (F(2,41)=0.22, p=0.80), both the observer and I noted that the class with the most control by the teacher enjoyed the highest level of attention, motivation and participation. This was the opposite of what I expected and was possibly the result of the least student-centred classroom having the highest proportion of students who had experience in SCL.

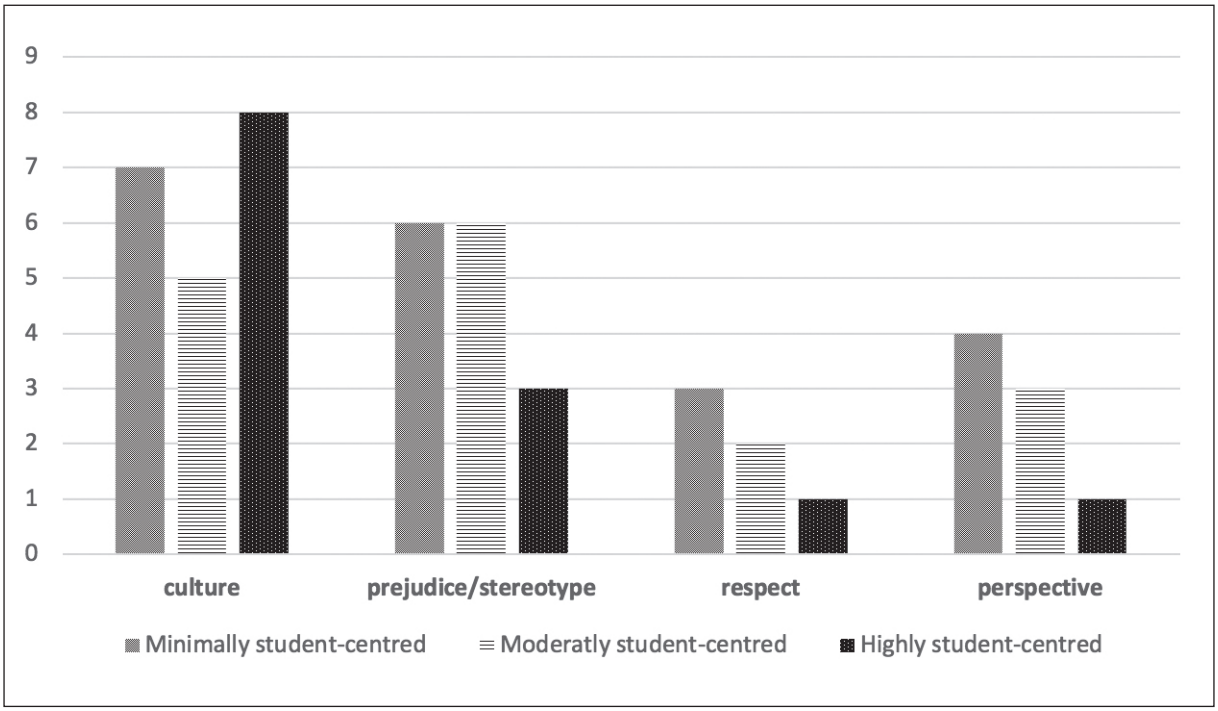
Table 3. Descriptive statistics for opinion items in the survey according to the level of control students had over their learning

	N	**Mean**	**SD**
Satisfaction			
Minimal	17	5.35	.49
Moderate	14	5.50	.65
High	13	5.76	.44
Engagement			
Minimal	17	5.23	.70
Moderate	14	5.07	.86
High	13	5.07	.96
Usefulness of lecturing			
Minimal	17	5.53	.62
Moderate	14	5.57	.75
High	13	5.08	.95
Usefulness of case study			
Minimal	17	4.88	.75
Moderate	14	5.14	.61
High	13	5.38	.95

I found only partial evidence in regard to the assumption that the more control students have over their learning, the more information they retain and internalize (H3). As expected, upon being asked how useful they found the case study for their learning, the highly student-controlled class reported the highest level of usefulness ($mean_{HIGH}$=5.38) compared to both the moderately and minimally student-controlled classes ($mean_{MODERATE}$=5.14; $mean_{MINIMAL}$=4.88). However, also in this case the results of the ANOVA indicated that these differences were not statistically significant (F(2,41)=1.3, p=0.27). Nonetheless, both the classroom observer and I found the highly student-controlled class not only better at presenting more sophisticated perspectives, but also displayed a deeper level of internalization of concepts when working with the case study. They had applied the various cultural dimensions outstandingly when analysing the case study and, as a result, produced the most convincing justifications and more culturally sensitive perspectives on the behaviour of the business parties. This was also in line with my expectations.

The logic of this investigation suggests that, if active learning is to be found most useful by those who are exposed to it at the highest level, then lecturing should influence those who take part in the least amount of student-centred learning. The minimally student-controlled class did score ($mean_{MINIMAL}$=5.53) higher than the highly student-controlled class ($mean_{HIGH}$=5.08), but not higher than the class where students had moderate control over the learning process ($mean_{MODERATE}$=5.57) although the difference was small. Not surprisingly, a comparison of the differing means did not render statistically insignificant differences (F(2,41)=1.07, p=0.19).

Figure 1. Learning outcomes based on open-ended questions



The qualitative component of the study shed light on information retention in the three classes and (see figure 1) provided details on the key learned concepts indicated by students in the open-ended questions. Since the learning objective of the session was to introduce culture and cultural self-awareness, the subcategory of culture provided the most significant information about student learning and other subcategories were treated as positive by-products. The most highly student-controlled class made the highest number of comments relating to the objective of the session and the fewest comments about related concepts. The moderately and minimally student-controlled classes exhibited similar trends: in both, students focused on culture and prejudice/stereotypes, but more importantly more frequently mentioned concepts that were by-products rather than those that correspond with the intended learning outcome.

When it comes to issues that students did not understand, they did not mention any concepts discussed in the session in response to the question. Across the three classes, only three comments in total referred to topics not related to the learning objective. For example, even though we discussed globalization in the context of interculturalism, one student noted that he did not understand 'whether globalization was good or bad', which was not the point of the discussion. One student failed to grasp the benefit of learning about interculturalism complaining that 'it's all common sense and why do we even need to learn this'. All in all, the number of responses to the questions that aimed to uncover what students did not learn/understand were not sufficient to adequately evaluate the third hypothesis.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have analysed the effect of differing degrees of student control over the learning process and anticipated that the more control they have, the higher their levels of satisfaction, engagement and learning would be. I have found scant evidence to support these assumptions. That is, more student-centredness is not automatically more beneficial to learning. However, these results may have occurred due to a variety of reasons; one of which might be the small sample size that was used. This could be remedied in the long term, for example by executing several iterations of this experiment.

The findings were most convincing regarding student satisfaction and perceived learning as measured via the usefulness of the case study. Satisfaction is sometimes considered to be a learning outcome in itself and is understood to influence the learning process and enhance student motivation (Elliot and Healy 2001). In addition, the positive relationship between the level of student-centredness and its perceived benefits to learning provide support for SCL. Both findings suggest that the experiment was worthwhile and the issues it uncovered deserve further attention.

The little evidence for engagement and the lack of a clear pattern in the usefulness of lecturing can point us to the right direction toward improvement. First, if the level of engagement is con-

sidered to be a direct reflection of – and a measure of – assessing active learning in the classroom (Lee et al. 2019), then the engagement levels being highest in the least student-controlled class is troubling. This may have resulted from differences in terms of the makeup of classes. Namely, members of the student-controlled class were all from Central and Eastern Europe and they might have been little accustomed to active learning techniques so that they considered this form of learning as not being engaged in learning but perhaps rather a form of classroom entertainment. In this case, the meaning of and attitude toward engagement could differ regionally based on the educational background of students, which would require the need for a different approach to measure the concept and design of classroom activities.

In the latter, path dependency could be an important factor to consider: since the majority of classes in this region are conducted in a teacher-centred manner, students are used to being guided by the teacher and feel more comfortable in that type of learning environment. Introducing sudden and unfamiliar student-centred learning activities could present the student with frustration and an inability to guide themselves, leading to lower engagement. In this case, it would be pertinent if I prepared students better for learning via SCL either by introducing it gradually or extending the innovation over several or all sessions. Better instructions and possibly fewer exercises might also prove to be useful. It is also possible that the learning of the various concepts requires varying levels of student-centredness. For example, intercultural competence may be best learned in a highly student-centred setting, whereas understanding cultural dimensions and the concept of cultural self-awareness is best studied in a much less student-controlled context.

All in all, a study that was built around teaching intercultural competence should emphasize the importance of controlling for cultural diversity in today's multicultural classrooms. The majority of especially older studies of teaching and learning tend to focus on the learning experience of nationally and culturally homogenous classes of students who often sit in American or Western European classrooms. More recent studies have started to add the perspectives of other regions. However, as multiculturalism, student mobility and permeability of education systems increase throughout Europe and the world at large, it is crucial to know how effective the various teaching and learning approaches and methods are when the classroom includes students of very different educational, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

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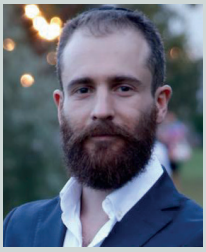

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CHAPTER 14. IMPLEMENTING CONSTRUCTIVE ALIGNMENT AND ACTIVE LEARNING WHILE LEADING ACCOUNTING SEMINARS

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Keywords: accounting, active learning, authentic assessment, constructive alignment, group work

Introduction

This chapter reports on a teaching innovation based on constructive alignment and active learning methods during an accounting course at the University of Economics in Bratislava. The course is mandatory for all second-year students, regardless of their field of study. In the Autumn 2018 term, I applied the teaching innovation for two seminar groups of students from the Faculty of Commerce. When teaching this course last year, I realised that the students' field of study is an important determinant when designing the classes. Depending on their major, certain students' personal characteristics can be expected. The Faculty of Commerce's students are typically communicative and creative personalities, who tend to think 'big' and are not worried about minute details. Contrariwise, accounting as a discipline requires the focusing on details and exact and numerical thinking. It corresponds with the established learning practice at my department: going through a large number of exercises from the workbook with students one by one telling their solution to that exercise. However, this learning practice did not work for students from the Faculty of Commerce. They appeared disinterested and even bored, their engagement was low and they rarely interacted with each other. Some of them failed the course.

Therefore, I decided to redesign three sessions and adapt to these students' abilities. I expected that the innovation would increase students' engagement during the sessions and improve their assessment results. To evaluate the impact of the innovation, I collected quantitative and qualitative data, which indicate that the innovation achieved its goals. Even though, as I will explain in the concluding section, the innovation could be further improved upon, the results suggest that the innovation is nevertheless worthwhile. Therefore, when I teach the seminars next time, I plan to implement active learning methods in each session.

Context of the innovation

The accounting course consists of weekly lectures followed by seminars. The lectures provide students with theoretical knowledge, while the seminars are designed to help students learn how to apply the theory in practice. The leading of the seminars is strongly influenced by the mandatory assigned literature: workbooks with exercises and calculations. The workbooks are helpful for several reasons: seminar leaders do not need to create their own exercises, the level

and difficulty of the exercises corresponds with the lectures and all students can do the same exercises regardless of whom their seminar leader is. The content, which should be taught during the seminars is given, but there is space for designing the classes in a different way from the other seminar leaders.

The assessment criteria of the course are institutionally determined as well. Three written assessment exercises contribute to the final grade: the first two make up thirty per cent of the final grade and take place during the term. They assess students' practical skills in accounting: compiling a balance sheet, opening accounts, booking accounting cases and closing accounts. They are also a precondition to take the end-of-semester exam: students need to score fifty-one percent or higher on these two assessed exercises before they are allowed to take the final exam. The course concludes with the mentioned final exam, which represents seventy per cent of the final grade. It assesses students' theoretical knowledge and consists of two parts: one includes multiple choice questions and the other open-ended questions. Students need to score above fifty percent in each part of the final exam to pass the course.

Conceptual foundation of the innovation, description of the innovation and expectations

My teaching innovation is rooted in two concepts: constructive alignment and active learning. Constructive alignment is a principle focusing on what and how students are to learn, rather than on the topics that the teacher will teach. In a constructively aligned course, all components – intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities and assessment tasks – support each other (Biggs and Tang 2011). Judged through the lens of Biggs' concept of constructive alignment, the learning activities in this course were not aligned with the mid-term assessed exercises: students did something else during the sessions than what they were later assessed on. As I had a relatively free hand in choosing the learning activities, I decided to design activities to directly address what the students were supposed to learn. Rather than asking students to solve all exercises from the workbook related to the topic of the session, I carefully considered what students need to learn to get prepared for their graded assignments.

I based these exercises on active learning methods that promote a deep, conceptual understanding of a topic and occur through discussion and collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, and connecting new learning with one's own world (Hahn 2016). Because students have a better chance to pass the course (and get a good grade) if they understand the logic of accounting, I decided to introduce activities that are oriented towards understanding rather than the memorization of facts. I made a selection from those listed by Exley and Dennick (2004): group discussions, post-its, brainstorming, small group and pair work. The foundation for each activity was an exercise from the workbook but I used them differently than in the past: instead of reading pre-formulated accounting cases from the workbook, students now worked on case studies or with real accounting documents. The activities were introduced between the two mid-term as-

sessment exercises.

During the first innovated session that covered measurement in accounting, each student received a Post-it note with a micro case study. Their role was to determine the correct measurement base used in the case and stick the note next to the correct measurement base listed on the blackboard. The second innovated session involved students in group work. While learning the accounting principles, each group received a list of micro case studies. Their task was to identify the correct principle corresponding to each case study. During the third session students learned about accounting documentation through pair work. Students were provided with a set of accounting documents and had to identify which accounting cases arose in relation to the accounting documents. Based on the documents, students were tasked to set the balance sheet to the date of the creation of the accounting entity, open the accounts, book the identified accounting cases and then close the accounts.

Based on the literature presented above, I expected that aligning learning activities with the assessment criteria and introducing active learning methods would result in improved student' interest and a higher than usual level of motivation and engagement, and would help students to better understand and apply the theory, and thus, perform better on the second practice oriented mid-term assessment exercise that followed the innovation.

Research design and methods

To evaluate the outcomes of my teaching innovation I collected both quantitative and qualitative data. I used a student feedback questionnaire to measure students' engagement with the course topics and their personal motivations. In this questionnaire I selected questions from the CLEAP feedback survey, which provides a tool for instructors to explore perceptions of student learning and engagement in the classroom (Savory et al. 2012). I selected five questions – two about student' interests, one each on motivation, engagement and preparations (for the exact questions see table 1 below in the results section). Student responses to each of the five questions were measured on a Likert scale that ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) with the exception of the last question on preparedness which was measured from significantly less (1) to significantly more (5). The data was collected at the end of the term.

Students' engagement with the course topics and their interactions during the session were also observed by a peer observer. The observer visited both of my seminar groups during the third innovated session on accounting documentation. He was asked to pay particular attention to the level of student engagement during various active learning exercises. The observer commented both on the instructor's and students' activity by completing an observation form provided by the organisers of a teacher development course I attended. I later met with the observer to discuss his feedback. I compared his notes with my own observations regarding student' learning.

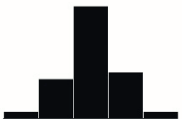
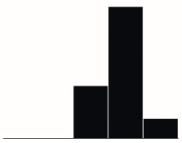
Students' points gained at the two mid-term assessment exercises served as another source of

data to measure the impact of my innovation. The exams assessed student' application of the theory and practical accounting skills. Last year's data served as the benchmark. All other conditions, except for the learning activities during the three innovated class sessions, remained unchanged.

Results

My expectation that the innovation would result in improved student' interest and a higher-than-average level of motivation was not confirmed. The survey served as a basis for these analyses and it was completed by eighty-five per cent of students who indicated that before taking the course their interest in accounting was 'average' with a 3.00 score on the Likert-scale: similarly twenty-nine per cent of students were either interested or not interested in accounting before taking the course and the answers of forty-two per cent of students were neutral (all survey results can be found in table 1).

Table 1. Student' responses to the questionnaire, five-point scales

No.	Question	Distribution of student response	Mean score
1	Before taking this course, my interest in this course subject was very high		3.00
2	After taking this course, my interest in this course subject is very high		3.00
3	I consider myself a motivated student in this course		3.06
4	For class sessions I attended, I typically focused or paid attention		3.84
5	Compared to other courses, the time that I have put into this course was		2.32

Source: questions are from Savory et al. 2012.

The level of interest remained the same after taking the course although the distribution of student opinion shifted somewhat: the percentage of students who were either interested or not interested in accounting after taking the course dropped from twenty-six to nineteen per cent, while the proportion of students who felt neutral toward accounting had increased from forty-two to fifty-three per cent. Student' motivation to study in this course was also common (mean=3.06): twenty-nine per cent of students considered themselves not motivated for this course, 35.5 per cent perceived themselves as neither motivated nor lacking motivation and 35.5 per cent of students saw themselves as motivated. Thus, contrary to what the literature suggests, based on their self-evaluation students' interest did not increase during the course nor did their motivation to study accounting accede average levels. Possibly, this may be due to the fact that the active learning methods were only introduced during three sessions.

To measure engagement, I used the indicator about student attention. A large majority of students said they typically focused or paid attention during the session (seventy-four per cent) and no student disagreed with the statement. Indeed, the mean score for their engagement was 3.84 on the five-point Likert scale, which is above average. My own observation of all course sessions, including those using active learning exercises and the traditional workbook-oriented sessions, was also that engagement during the sessions based on active learning methods was higher. Certain students, who used to be disconnected from what was going on in class, appeared engaged during active learning exercises and actively cooperated with their peers. Interestingly, according to the observer, the level of student engagement during active learning exercises was only medium, which seems to contradict my own and my student's opinions. Since he did not indicate what his baseline of the evaluation was, nor how he thought students normally engage with accounting, his verbal feedback seemed more useful. He found the type of active learning exercise implemented during the observed session to be appropriate because all students were involved in the activity and contributed to the result. What is also important, students did not hesitate to ask questions related to the exercise, which was previously rarely done. However, the observer considered the activity too difficult for the students as they not only needed the entire session to complete it but also struggled to finish on time. The level of student engagement and confidence decreased towards the end of the session, when they were expected to speed up in order to finalise the task. Because completing the exercise took longer than I had expected, we did not have time for explanatory mini-lectures nor debriefing, which could potentially decrease the observation's impact on student learning. While it is possible that the observer's judgement about the level of student engagement was clouded by the design flow, his observations gave valuable information on why the exercise could not be completed. I plan to redesign the exercise in the future by splitting it into two sessions.

There is sufficient evidence to confirm my expectations about an improvement in student' performance during the second mid-term assessment exercise as a result of the innovation. First,

student' results improved compared to 2017 (table 2). On the one hand, in 2017, only sixty-seven per cent did well enough on the mid-term assessment exercises to be able to take the final exam, whereas in 2018 eighty-seven per cent could partake in the final exam. On the other hand, in 2017, on average, students received fifty-nine per cent for the first assessment exercise and 61 per cent for the second. In 2018, the average grade from the first exercise was 64 per cent, whereas the average grade from the second exercise was seventy-six per cent. This shows a five percentage point increase in the first and a fifteen percentage point increase in the second assessment exercise. Since the results in 2018 were better than in 2017 even for the first assessment exercise, which was not affected by the innovation, it is not possible to exclude the possibility that students may have arrived to university more prepared – due to perhaps studying some accounting in high school – in 2018 as compared to 2017. Yet, because the increase in their performance in the second assessed exercise is three times greater than in the first, I am confident to conclude that the innovation had a substantial impact on student performance.

Table 2. Results from the two assessment exercises written during the semester

	Grade categories						**Average**
	0-50%	**51-60%**	**61-70%**	**71-80%**	**81-90%**	**91-100%**	
2018 (n=39)							
Exercise 1	36%	10%	15%	18%	13%	8%	64%
Exercise 2	15%	5%	23%	5%	18%	33%	76%
2017 (n=15)							
Exercise 1	40%	7%	33%	20%	0%	0%	59%
Exercise 2	33%	7%	13%	20%	13%	13%	61%

This conclusion is supported when looking at the changes in grade categories of the second assessed exercise. From 2017 to 2018, the percentage of students with points at the lower limits (0 – 50 and 51 – 60 per cent) has fallen by half, while the percentage of students with the highest score category (91 – 100 per cent) was four times higher.

Based on the answers on the fifth question from the survey about how much time students put into studying for this course compared to other courses show that only nine per cent of students spent more time preparing for the accounting course than for other courses, twenty-five per cent claimed the time put into this course was similar to other courses, while the remaining sixty-six

per cent spent less time on preparing for this course as compared to other courses. Indeed, the mean was below average (2.32). Therefore, I can exclude the possibility that the increase in student' performance on the second exercise in 2018 as compared to 2017 was because students in 2018 were extremely hard-working. Hence, the second aim of the innovation, to improve student performance on the second mid-term assessment exercise was achieved.

Conclusion

The aim of this teaching innovation based on constructive alignment and active learning methods was to stimulate student engagement and to assist students in successfully passing assessments that are written during the semester. I used a series of active learning exercises to that end in an effort to both align classroom activities with the content of the second mid-term assessment exercise and bring the teaching method more into alignment with the creative character of students from the Faculty of Commerce. Results showed that while the innovation impacted student performance greatly and had some impact on their level of engagement, neither student' interest nor motivation was affected. This outcome of this study contradicts the literature that expect that it is increased interest, engagement and motivation that leads students to increase their knowledge retention and, as a result, perform better on exams. In this my finding is very similar to what Tkaczyk's chapter in this book uncovered about students in the Czech Republic (chapter 1).

It is likely that student' interest and motivation – or a perception of these two – could be improved if active learning exercises were introduced not only during three but all sessions. Given the improvement in student performance on the second assessment exercise, I do plan to incorporate active learning in every course session. However, it is important that these should be better structured. First, I should ascertain that the difficulty of the exercise and the allocated time are on par. Second, a session may include students working on exercises, several mini-lectures and a debriefing at the end as well. Such a structure would ensure that students understand the purpose of each activity, that it is sufficiently linked to the theory, and that they understand what they need to take away from the session.

Last but not least, when I evaluate the impact of incorporating active learning exercises into all seminar sessions, it will be possible for me to carry out a more thorough analysis. Firstly, I would have survey information to compare over a time-span of two years, which would allow me to be more confident about the nature and the extent of changes from one year to another and from a limited to a full restructuring of the seminars. Second, in the form of a pre-post study, students should complete surveys before and after the innovation – rather than evaluate their pre- and post-innovation attitudes at the same time. Third, it would be interesting to see whether redesigning the course would help not only those students studying at the Faculty of Commerce but also the more accounting savvy students in grasping the basics of accounting faster and better.

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CLUSTER 6. COMMENTARY
FOSTERING ACTIVE LEARNING FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Kate Thomson, The University of Sydney

A context primed for active learning

This cluster presents three cases of active learning strategies from Political Science, Intercultural Leadership and Communication and Accounting; each designed to increase student engagement during lectures and seminars. They share a similar main aim – to increase student activity, student-centredness and student control or autonomy within their classes. As a bonus, one of the chapters also used constructive alignment to improve the links between activities and assessment tasks. Active learning involves student participation, cooperation or collaboration, and often, authentic and inquiry-based tasks. There are a variety of strategies that can be used to facilitate active learning in higher education, see Silberman (1996) for examples. The activities used to generate active learning in these cases include small group discussion, debates, extracts from primary sources, voluntary quizzes, cut-up cards, group presentations and case studies.

Lessons for early career academics and other academics striving to improve their teaching practice

All authors designed an approach to teaching that was intended to facilitate student engagement, reduce their fear of participation during class, and improve student learning. Unfortunately for the authors, their intervention did not lead to all the outcomes they expected. The complexity of education contexts combined with student variables can make it difficult to predict and measure the impact of a change in approach or the introduction of a novel activity. This is especially true for early career academics experimenting with something for the first time, and often, is also true for more experienced academics endeavouring to improve their teaching practice.

Overall, the authors achieved their aims. They intended to change their approach to teaching to become more student-centred and through this, change their students' approach to learning (Trigwell et al. 1999). They designed and implemented activities that were uncommon in their courses and so were new to them and to their students. Each author noted that while the data they collected provided some support, it did not lend support to all their hypotheses. And yet we have much to admire; increase in student engagement (Karas), enhanced satisfaction and some evidence for greater information retention (Pechersky), and improved performance, and to a lesser extent, engagement (Srnišová).

The authors demonstrated a deep level of reflection on their practice based on a range of data sources; literature, student performance, student satisfaction surveys, peer observation, and their own observation and reflection. These sources represent Brookfield's (1995) four lenses for

critical reflection on teaching and ongoing consideration of these lenses is important for teacher development. Their planned changes include extra time for tasks, more practice, and additional scaffolding to guide students. Perhaps next time, with the additional support, the students' level of engagement will match their teachers' enthusiasm!

Reflections on these cases and educational development for early career academics in this context

I wonder if the authors could create an opportunity to communicate with students prior to intervention – to ask them about in-class participation and their expectations for the course. This may help them to discover why students do not engage with the content in a traditional lecture format and why an active learning intervention may not be effective. Students may be new to the idea of active learning and not see its value for their own learning, so while intended to increase engagement, it may have the opposite effect. As noted by the authors, it may be important to provide students with more practice being active learners, and also low stakes assessment tasks and/or opportunities to reflect on how they learn. All authors used an experimental or quasi-experimental design, and it may also be worth considering other approaches to interventions – for example, could students take a greater role in designing activities to further increase engagement?

I would argue that the ideas from the teacher development course have had a significant impact as evidenced by the quality of the design, implementation, and evaluation of the authors' teaching interventions. The authors' knowledge of and interest in the student learning experience has either come directly from the course or been reignited by the course, which is not an easy task. As educational developers and advocates of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning are aware, academics often struggle to understand and apply the ideas from these courses. Happily, this volume contributes to addressing this challenge by documenting local examples of practice applied across different disciplines to extend the existing literature.

Final thought

Reading these accounts of practice was delightful because of the authors' passion for teaching and student learning. I would encourage them to be patient with themselves because learning to teach takes time. Building a repertoire of strategies that work (and noting those that do not work) takes years of practice, and sometimes, despite our best intentions, students resist certain activities or plans do not work as expected. There is always a next time and another opportunity to encourage active learning.

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CHAPTER 15. PEER FEEDBACK TO FACILITATE INDEPENDENT LEARNING AMONG FIRST-YEAR SOCIOLOGY STUDENTS

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Coach: Vicky Davies, Staff and Educational Development Association
Keywords: first-year students, independent learning, peer feedback, sociology, writing skills

Introduction

The first year at university may be extremely challenging for students, especially due to the transition from a markedly different high school educational system (Yorke and Longden 2008: 23 and 29; Hassel and Ridout 2018) to a university system that stresses the importance of independent learning. This is not only because of a new curriculum but also because students in their new roles as independent learners become partners of teachers by sharing responsibility for the overall learning process (Cook-Sather and Abbot 2016; Mercer-Mapstone et al. 2018). They face a new expectation of working on tasks independently within their own areas of interest. This applies no less to those students who are enrolled in the introductory sociology seminar at Masaryk University. It was no different last semester when I gave my students a first glimpse of the intriguing world of social theories and introduced them to the fascinating realm that is academia. To facilitate the process of my students becoming independent learners who concomitantly develop their writing skills, an innovative teaching activity has been added to the course: the writing of peer feedback on weekly position papers. The rationale is twofold. First, the activity is a useful training exercise for students in taking an active self-governing role, which can positively affect students' academic success (Hassel and Ridout 2018: 12). Second, the writing of feedback develops key critical thinking and self-reflective skills that are also important for the improvement of students' own writing (Nicol et al. 2014: 120).

This chapter presents the evaluation of the impact of the innovation by exploring whether and, if so, to what extent the activity contributed to the development of students' academic writing skills and contributed to students becoming independent learners. It was found that exchanging feedback with peers contributes to the improvement of writing skills as well as the development of critical thinking, collaborative skills and partly to their confidence as independent learners. The analysis also revealed that some students struggle with feelings of self-doubt upon assessing others, which I see as a consequence of the process of acquiring their new roles of independent learners in higher education.

Peer feedback: from theory to practice

I introduced my teaching innovation at the Department of Sociology at Masaryk University in the fall of 2018. Here students are required to write academic texts as a part of almost every course

within the programme, but they lack systematic support in developing their writing skills and acquiring the habits of independent learners. The proseminar course Introduction to Sociology, in which the innovation took place, also requires students to complete weekly writing assignments. It is a compulsory seminar for first-year students with the objective of introducing basic sociological concepts and general academic skills. To pass the course, students are required to submit ten position papers during the semester and a final essay at the end of the semester. Usually students receive brief feedback from their teacher on their papers in the first weeks of the semester and are provided with a short commentary on their final essays.

To implement the innovation, I included a peer feedback activity in my seminar group of twenty-one students[1]. In order to ensure that students are seriously engaged in the activity, the submission of peer feedback was made mandatory. Since the course is graded as either pass or fail, the innovation was allowed by the course guarantor in my seminar group. Students were required to write at least one hundred words in their feedback, focusing on both 'feeding back' and 'feeding forward'. 'Feeding back' required them to evaluate the quality of the text. When 'feeding forward', they provided recommendations for future improvement.

The foundations for the peer feedback activity were implemented in two ways. In the first half of the semester I gave detailed weekly feedback on the content, structure, language and style of position papers to set a standard model of good practice. Second, in the first innovation-related session I provided students with detailed instructions for the activity and asked them to brainstorm on the characteristics of providing constructive feedback while collecting their ideas using a white board. Consequently, I distributed four examples of feedback among students and asked them to discuss which examples represent constructive feedback and why.

In the subsequent three weeks, students wrote feedback on each other's position papers within peer triads. Thus, in addition to writing a position paper by Friday midnight, each student submitted also feedback on the papers of the other two members of the triad by Sunday evening. This way students could read the feedback before Monday's seminar session. The triads remained unchanged over the three weeks of the innovation so that continuity and trust among students could be established.

The activity was complemented by a limited in-class component. We started each innovation-related seminar with a short f 5-10-minute discussion on potential problems or areas of confusion related to the peer feedback assignment. Since I read both their position papers and feedback, I was in a good position to assist them with these issues.

My expectations about the innovation were as follows: first, in line with the formative assessment, I expected the activity to serve as an 'assessment *for* learning': to facilitate the improvement of student' writing skills (hypothesis 1) since before reviewing the work of other students, students first need to master the material (Nicol et al. 2014: 120). Secondly, I expected the activi-

1 The course has four seminar groups with a maximum twenty-three students per group.

ty to be executed within the scope of 'assessment *as* learning' as students were supposed to learn to make informed judgements about the quality of the work of their peers (Nicol et al. 2014: 120). In practical terms, students were expected to become familiar with their roles as independent learners (hypothesis 2), that is, to grow in confidence and trust (hypothesis 2A) by taking control of their learning (Cook-Sather and Abbot 2016), developing their critical thinking and self-reflective skills (hypothesis 2B) and offering support to- and cooperating with peers (hypothesis 2C). These attributes of becoming independent learners can significantly contribute to the increased quality of academic texts.

Data and methods

I relied on triangulation when collecting and analysing the data, and used four different data sources that represent the three different perspectives on peer feedback from the point of view of the independent observer, the teacher and the student. The first step was to invite my colleague to observe how I would present the assignment and the related active learning exercises, brainstorming session and student discussions. A discussion of her observations would take place after the class.

The teacher's perspective on the development of the writing skills of the students was documented in my teaching diary. From the first week of the innovation to the submission of the final essay, I recorded and traced student progress in terms of academic writing skills. During this, students submitted four position papers and a final essay, which I marked on a five-point scale (1=worst, 5=best)[2]. Additionally, I compared the students' writings with the corresponding peer feedback to track progress both within the scope of student writing skills and the impact of peer feedback on further developing those writing skills.

The student perspective was measured by two research instruments: minute papers and a final questionnaire. The minute papers served as brief reports on the activity with the objective to follow progress from the students' perspective at three points in time. Thus, the same questions were repeated at different time intervals and the same questions were administered during each session after the conclusion of the peer feedback assignment. Students were asked to indicate their responses on a five-point Likert-scale (1=strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree) regarding the following statements: 1) Writing peer feedback was easy for me this week, 2) I felt confident in writing peer feedback this week, 3) The peer feedback I received this week was useful to me. After each question they were asked to elaborate on their choices. Additionally, there were two open-ended questions that asked them to describe what they learned from writing and receiving peer feedback during that week.

Students also filled in the final questionnaire once the activity was concluded. Its objective was to capture the perspective of the students on the effectiveness of the innovation after the com-

2 Marks were used only for the purpose of this evaluation and not presented to students.

pletion of the activity. Here too the effectiveness of the activity was represented via a five-point Likert-scale (1=least effective, 5=most effective) pertaining to the development of their 1) critical and (self)reflective skills, 2) communication skills, 3) academic writing skills, and 4) confidence as independent learners. Students were also asked to answer three open-ended questions about positive and problematic aspects of the activity and ways for future enhancement. Extra space was provided in the questionnaire for further comments.

Regarding the quantitative data obtained via the Likert-scale questions and with the aid of my diary, I used descriptive statistics to see if my expectations were met. As for the qualitative data, I analysed these by means of thematic analysis, which is a method with the purpose of identifying patterns or themes within the data allowing a rich description of the data set. I adopted the inductive approach and coded the data '*without* trying to fit it into any pre-existing coding frames' (Braun and Clarke 2006: 83). Following Braun and Clarke (2006), I first generated the initial codes by identifying segments of data that appeared significant. I then organized the codes into potential themes and reviewed and defined these themes. I identified three main thematic categories: positives (twenty-six sub-themes), challenges (twelve sub-themes), and recommendations for the future (ten sub-themes). In the following section I will discuss the most significant sub-themes within these three thematic categories.

Results of the evaluation

The independent observer's perspective

My colleague's feedback was very positive. She confirmed that the instructions for the innovative activity were communicated in a clear and intelligible manner, the learning objective was well formulated, and the group activity was well designed. In addition, she found the collective brainstorming activity on the characteristics of good feedback to be very effective.

The teacher's perspective

The data from the teaching diary confirmed the general improvement of student writing skills. The class's average score was 3.26 (out of five5) at the first point of measurement (n=21) and 4.05 at the last point of measurement (n=18). In the case of thirteen out of twenty-one students (62 per cent), I recorded at least a progression of one-point on the scale. Of these thirteen students, six improved significantly. That is, their score increased by more than one point. The remaining eight out of the twenty-one students showed no significant sign of progress. However, 75 per cent of these students entered the course with an already higher level of writing skills as compared to the aforementioned students who progressed. For these students the average score was constantly around 4.25 (n=6) while students who progressed scored 4.00 at the last point of measurement (n=13). Thus, they had much less room to further develop their writing skills. By contrast, the writing skills of the other two non-progressing students were not only under-

developed compared to their peers but failed to show any progress. They failed to even submit the final essay and thus failed the course. While I cannot be certain why these students decided not to finish the course, a likely factor is that the innovation did not help them to either become independent learners nor to develop their writing skills.

The students' perspective

Students' views on the innovation also confirmed the improvement of their writing skills (hypothesis 1). When, at the end of the semester, they were asked about the impact of the innovation on their writing skills, the average score was 3.71 on a five-point scale (table 1). Their responses to the open-ended questions of both the minute papers and the final questionnaire provided further evidence that they thought the exercise was beneficial. Within the theme of positives, the improvement of their writing skills was the most significant sub-theme with thirty-one quotations. Students reported that they felt that they improved their papers by having become aware of the argumentative power that lies in providing examples to illustrate their ideas: 'I've found a very good example in the paper of my peer, and it's inspired me to also provide actual and interesting examples to illustrate my thoughts'. This is a crucial skill in sociological writing because it reflects the acquisition and evidence of more complex cognitive processes such as 'application', 'analysis', or 'evaluation' (Armstrong 2018).

Being inspired by papers of peers was also frequently (twenty-nine times) mentioned by students. For example, one student felt that peer papers helped in gaining new perspectives: 'It was certainly an inspiration to try to look at sociological concepts from various angles'. Being able to look at an issue from a new perspective contributes to the development of analytical skills and is especially important for sociologists who must always consider the diversity of standpoints of social actors (University of Calgary 2019).

Table 1. Student evaluation of the effectiveness of peer feedback in the final questionnaire on a five-point scale (n=17)

	Critical thinking	**Writing skills**	**Communication skills**	**Confidence and independence**
Mean Score	3.94	3.71	3.41	3.24
Standard deviation	0.83	1.12	1.15	1.16

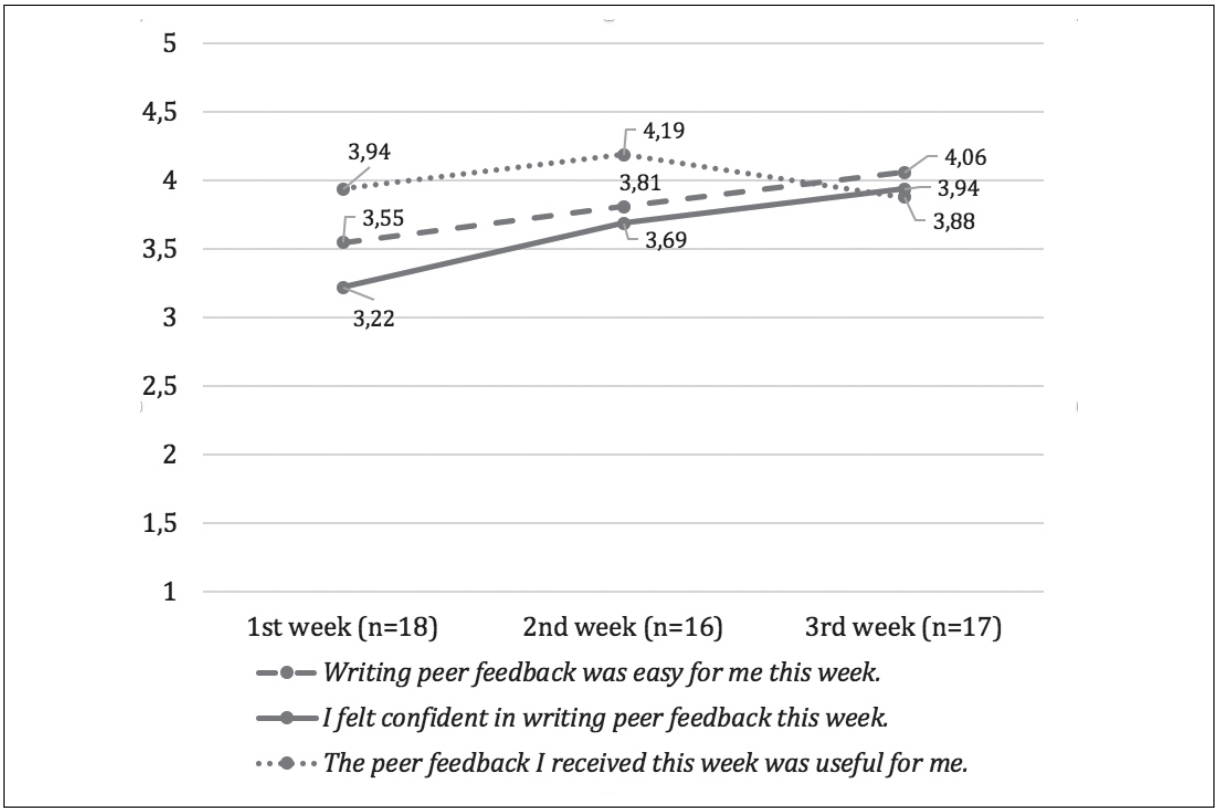
Critical and reflective skills are crucial to both good academic writing and becoming independent learners (hypothesis 2B). This sub-theme had fifteen quotations in the category of positives,

which shows that the innovation was most effective in this area as it received the highest mean ranking of 3.91 points on the five-point scale in the final questionnaire (table 1). Students described the improvement as 'We could compare writing skills of peers and learned to be critical while being supportive of others'.

The expectation of enhancing peer cooperation (hypothesis 2C) was also confirmed and contributed to the positives of the innovation. Remarks about peer support appeared fifteen times as represented by the following quotations: 'I think it was important to support each other and specifically focus on their improvement' or 'I liked the fact that the reviewers noticed what I tried to improve upon in my writing'. These quotations attest to the establishing of a collegial approach among peers but it was best expressed by a student who verbalized the following observation during class: 'At one point I understood we are all colleagues who respect each other'. Hence, at least some of the students experienced a shift of identity toward becoming partners with teachers and peers and sharing the responsibility *for* and control *of* the learning process.

However, the development of students' confidence in becoming independent learners is less straightforward (hypothesis 2A). In the final questionnaire students evaluated the impact of the innovation on their confidence as slightly above average (3.24 out of five see table 1), and in their minute papers they reported an overall increase – from 3.22 to 3.94 percentage points – in terms of their confidence over a timespan of three weeks (figure 1).

Figure 1. Student perspective on peer feedback based on weekly minute papers (five-point scale)



Concerning the difficulties associated with peer back, feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy about providing feedback became the most significant sub-theme of the category of challenges: students mentioned these twenty-four times in the questionnaire. As one student put it: 'I don't feel competent; the topic is not 100% clear to me (I am still in the process of learning) – that means I can't evaluate papers of others'. Besides a lack of proper understanding of the topic, I identified two other reasons for self-doubt to arise: feeling bad about criticizing others and having doubts about their own writing skills. In some cases, feelings of self-doubt about their own ability to provide peer feedback resulted in a lack of complete trust in peers' ability to write good feedback. Therefore, some recommended that the teacher should complement peer feedback. With five mentions, this was the most important sub-theme within the scope of future recommendations. To help them overcome their reservations about the exercise these comments suggest that it is important to explain to students before the activity commences that feedback is itself a way of learning rather than an expression of expertise.

Such a discussion, however, may not help on overcoming the related challenge of struggling with identifying weaknesses of seemingly perfect papers: 'It is difficult for me to find what can be improved, because there are, for sure, many mistakes in my own paper. It is easier to write purely positive feedback but that is not instructive enough'. Such an attitude may explain the decrease in the perceived usefulness of feedback in the third week of the activity (figure 1). As the quality of papers increased, it became harder for students to identify weaknesses and suggest improvements. Nevertheless, these troubles are understandable when taking into consideration that students are still in the process of acquiring the skill of critical thinking (Silva et al. 2016).

The last significant challenge for students emerged not from the content but from the context in which the exercises took place. On seventeen occasions they reported that making enough time available for the writing of the peer feedback was challenging. This may have been partly due to some inconveniently set deadlines, as students could only provide feedback over the weekend. When running the innovation again, I will consider setting either an earlier deadline for position papers or a later deadline for giving feedback.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed a teaching innovation aimed at developing independent learning and improving writing skills early on by introducing peer feedback to a writing-intensive introductory course in sociology. The innovation proved to be very effective in improving students' writing skills based on both teacher and student perspectives (hypothesis 1) whereas the development of independent learners was only partially confirmed (hypothesis 2). Student evaluations reflected their development in terms of critical thinking and reflective skills (hypothesis 2B) and peer cooperation (hypothesis 2C), but despite the recorded increase in confidence at the end of the course, students voiced self-doubt *during* the exercise (hypothesis 2A).

Struggles with self-doubt are most probably related to the shift of student identity in higher education (Mercer-Mapstone et al. 2018). The peer feedback activity enabled students to become familiar with their new roles because it bestowed them control over the assessment and granted them responsibility. However, some students had reservations about their own competence or called for more teacher guidance. These students recognized the shift toward a more student-centred learning approach, but could not fully identify with their new role yet. In this respect, providing teacher feedback as well would be counterproductive because it would undermine their progression toward independent learning. Thus, a transitory period from teacher to peer feedback may be beneficial. In addition to my comments on the quality of peer feedback in general, I would consider providing individualized commentary on the first peer feedback assignment in the future.

As the above results indicate, the process of becoming independent learners may be very challenging for some first-year students and feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy may impede effective learning. Therefore, teachers should be very attentive to student performance and identify those students who lag behind their peers in becoming independent learners because these students are prone to fail the course and may eventually even discontinue their university studies. Becoming an independent learner is essential in higher education and its development should be addressed from the commencement of any academic discipline.

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CHAPTER 16. USING AN ONLINE QUIZ AS A FORMATIVE TOOL IN LATIN MEDICAL TERMINOLOGY COURSES

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Coach: Roisín Curran, Staff and Educational Development Association
Keywords: formative assessment, learners' responsibility, medical terminology, online quiz, Socrative

Introduction

This paper reflects on the benefits, outcomes, and effectiveness of integrating online mini-quizzes as a formative tool in classes of Basic Medical Terminology taught to first year students of the English-language programme of general medicine at Masaryk University, Brno. It is a compulsory course where successful completion is a precondition to attend certain second year mandatory preclinical courses. As such, it is designed to be a first introduction into Latin anatomical nomenclature; the basic clinical and pharmacological terminology heavily rooted in Greek and Latin, as well as to the general framework of medical professional language. There are roughly fifteen students in each seminar group with fourteen sessions per semester, each taking one hundred minutes.

In the five years that I have taught this course, motivating students to engage in pre-class preparation and to take responsibility for their own academic progress has proven to be a great challenge. I have felt increasingly that I want to eliminate the two following scenarios: 1) students underestimate the importance of continuous pre-session preparations and fail the course despite resitting the exam once or twice which, consequently, prolongs their studies; 2) students pass the course only with great difficulties or spend excessive amounts of time on it during the exam period, while neglecting other foundational first year courses.

Currently, students are required to reach at least seventy per cent on the written final exam to pass the first part of the course in the autumn term. So far, student progress has only been measured by two progress tests in the sixth and ninth weeks of the semester, both of which give students a five per cent bonus in the final exam if they score above seventy per cent. Despite this reward component, the progress tests have not proven effective either in motivating students' pre-class preparation or enhancing successful completion of the final exam. As such, it was necessary to integrate a formative learning component into the classes.

The innovation and its conceptual background

Astin (1999: 519) argues that educational effectiveness is directly linked to raising student involvement while DeSouza and Fleming (2003) call attention to the importance of students' problem-solving skills, critical thinking, and attentiveness in class within this process. Specifically,

DeSouza and Fleming (2003) show that students taking computer-assisted quizzes performed significantly better in all their assessments than those taking traditional printed tests. Therefore, I selected an in-class innovation relying on an online quiz tool; Socrative (2018), to help improve my students' learning. Socrative is a platform that provides both students and teachers with immediate feedback and in its 'teacher paced' mode students may only move on to the next question after everyone submitted their answers to the current one. I used this software option because it allows for combining quizzes with formative assessment.

Shavelson's (2006: 6) concept of 'formal embedded-in-the curriculum formative assessment' calls for assessment that takes place regularly during classes to address problematic areas and clarify the goals of each unit of instruction. These kinds of assessments serve to create 'teachable moments' (Shavelson et al. 2008: 301) at critical junctures of the curriculum. Therefore, quizzes were used regularly in the autumn term: there were seven online mini-quizzes implemented over the 14 weeks – i.e. one in every second week – in all of my nine seminar groups. Furthermore, after each quiz question, I asked follow-up questions from students which aroused a discussion. It has also made students carefully consider and justify their choices before responding to quiz questions rather than clicking on an answer randomly.

As instructors we tend not to give students enough time and opportunity to facilitate intellectual exchange (Black et al. 2004; Row 1974). Therefore, quizzes were administered without a time limit, which proved beneficial in increasing waiting time after each quiz question, and thus, allowing a pause for thought and discussion. This was especially helpful to slow-thinkers and those students who would likely perform unsatisfactorily in the final exam. The only potential drawback of this approach was that the exercise could be very time-consuming. Quizzes did take up roughly a quarter of each session, which seemed a lot initially, but they soon became an integral part of the teaching and learning process, rather than a mere tool for the testing of knowledge. Students worked on the quizzes in pairs rather than individually because stimulating peer-to-peer communication was crucial for these intellectual exchanges. By explaining concepts to their peers and, generally helping each other, students could verbalize the thought process behind their choices and debate their different ideas.

The positive impact of the engagement of a productive formative tool in a test-dominated context has plausibly been argued by Black and Wiliam (1998), who claim that these tools, if concentrating on specific problems and providing an understanding of what is wrong and how to put it right, are very beneficial especially to low achievers. Hence, while the quizzes were administered anonymously to secure a non-threatening atmosphere in the classroom, I had immediate access to each student's answers on all quiz questions as well as to a summary of all responses to each question. These enabled me not only to assess each student's progress but also to identify and assist those students who were likely to struggle in the final exam.

In line with Shavelson's (2006: 4 f.) notion of the 'planned-for-interaction formative assessment',

I designed quiz questions in advance so as to 'maximize the acquisition of information needed to close the gap between students' current learning and the desired state. Thus, firstly, each quiz question or the pictures displayed alongside these introduced an interesting medical fact or illustrated the practical use of the terminology taught in the course. Second, students received instant feedback after each quiz question in the form of an explanation I created, which appeared automatically in Socrative when they answered incorrectly. Third, the open discussion following each question provided students with an expedient way of revealing their learning gaps before it was too late (i.e. after failing the final exam), opportunities to re-examine knowledge continuously, and better understand what is expected of them in the final exam.

The other equally significant motivation in integrating the innovation into my classroom practice was to increase students' awareness of the learning process and enhance their active participation in it. In order to further motivate students in this regard and to induce friendly competitiveness among them, I included a reward component: if students' average score in the online quizzes exceeded seventy, eighty or ninety per cent, they were granted an extra five, ten or fifteen per cent in the final exam, respectively.

All in all, my intention with the innovation was to combine the summative form of the online mini quizzes with a formative approach. Thus, the online quizzes served both as consolidation material to fix the knowledge of small units of instruction covered in the previous sessions, as well as a revision tool for the purely summative final exam. My expectation has been that, as their awareness of the learning process increases, 1) my students will become more responsible learners and 2) will perform better on the final exam.

Data and methods

The innovation's effectiveness was evaluated through both qualitative and quantitative methods. First, I collected qualitative data through an anonymous online student survey. This survey is a tool developed by the Language Centre, under whose auspices the course is taught and it is conducted always in class to ensure a sufficient response rate and to avoid the pitfalls of the general online survey administered throughout the whole university, which is traditionally completed only by a fraction of the students. The survey also has the benefit that it can be adjusted to suit the needs of particular courses so that I could add three open-ended questions that target students' opinions regarding the impact of the innovation: 1) How did the Socrative quizzes help your learning?; 2) What should be changed/added/done to make the quizzes better?; 3) Do you have any suggestions on other tools that you regard more efficient in motivating your pre-class preparation and gradual learning? If yes, please specify these.

Regarding the quantitative analysis, I used descriptive statistics to evaluate the innovation's actual effectiveness in enhancing student success in the final exam, and thus, passing the course. First, I compared the students' results in all types of summative assessments, i.e. both progress

tests and final exam, in the autumn terms 2017 (without the innovation) and 2018 (with the innovation) to find out what the innovation's impact has been on overall student success. Second, I compared the ratios of students passing the final exam at the first, second, and third attempts, as passing the final exam at an earlier attempt may also indicate student success. Lastly, I analysed the impact of the reward component on the overall results.

Results

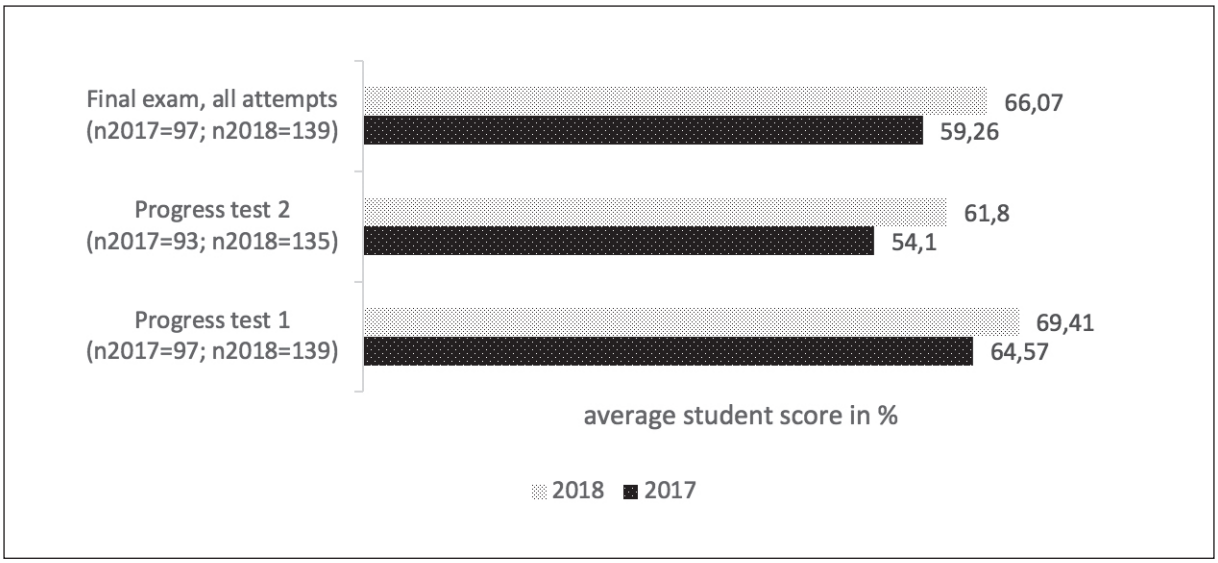
The first expectation regarding students becoming more responsible learners was primarily measured via qualitative analysis of the student feedback that was collected anonymously online. The survey was completed by 130 out of 139 students (93.5 per cent). The results show that roughly eighty-five per cent of students found the online in-class quizzes beneficial to their learning. In other words, they regarded the innovation to be a formative experience. Most frequently, students appreciated the instant feedback generated by the platform ('[online in-class quizzes are] a good practice to test what we've learnt. They are quick and we get the answer/feedback very quickly, so they are good for us to understand what we further need to revise'), the pair work component ('...working with a partner allowed me to discuss answers and questions which would help me better understand [the study material]'), and the facts that the discussions following the quiz questions encouraged critical thinking ('They helped me practice the things I learned in class and think critically about the concepts') and filled in the learning gaps ('It helped me to identify my weaknesses') in an entertaining and refreshing form ('[online in-class quizzes] make you interact more and actually think about the answers more than the rather more dull [traditional] exercises').

The only student reservations concerned the difficulty of the quizzes, i.e. some deemed these to be too challenging, and this was compounded by the fact that the system does not take into account spelling mistakes in open questions when generating the result. There was almost no feedback on the reward component, which suggests that students did not consider this to be a significant factor and valued the quizzes for such intrinsic reasons as personal accomplishment when competing with peers: 'it created a motivation to study for each one of the lessons, not only for the reduction of the credit test pass mark, but also just for the satisfaction of personal accomplishment. There was a competitive element to it too, which I enjoyed a lot'. Given that the extrinsic motivation of gaining extra points offered at the progress tests had already proven ineffective in encouraging continuous preparation, this is not entirely surprising. All in all, the qualitative analysis of student feedback has clearly shown that students were aware of the purpose of the online quizzes and appreciated various aspects of its positive impact on their learning.

When it comes to my expectation about student success in the final exam, the comparison of the rates of average student scores and ratios of students passing the course during the autumn terms of 2017 and 2018 provide evidence for the positive impact of the innovation as well. Stu-

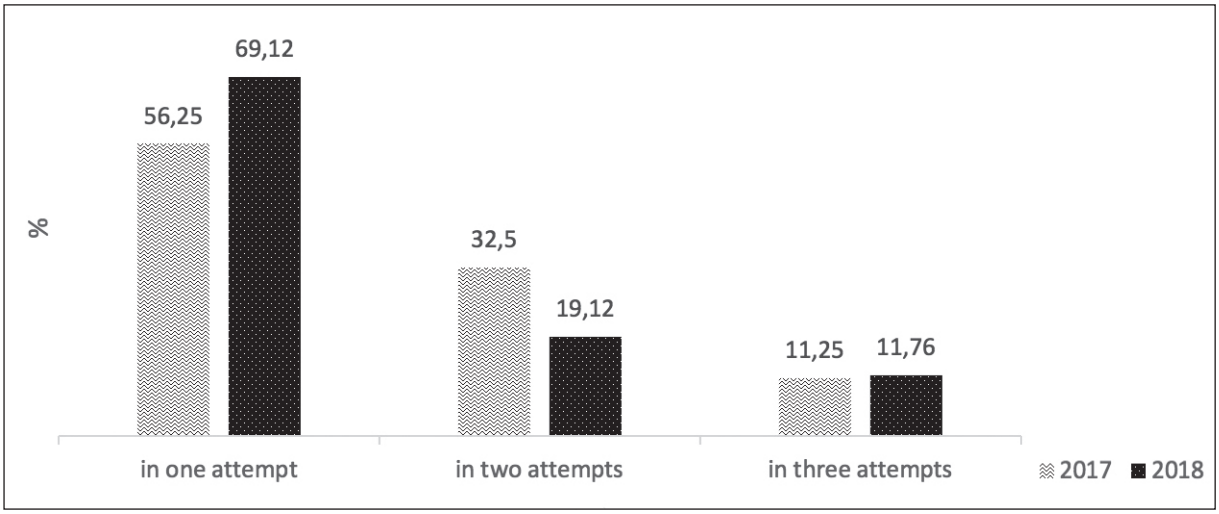
dent performance on the three major summative assessments – the two progress tests and the final exam – notably improved from 2017, when no formative tool was included, to 2018 when the innovation was integrated into the teaching and learning processes (figure 1). On average, students scored 6.45 per cent higher on these assignments in 2018 than in 2017. Although the dip in performance from the first to the second progress test remained, it was less pronounced in 2018 (10.47 per cent in 2017 and 7.61 per cent in 2018). Therefore, it seems that the integration of the online formative tool in the classroom helped spread the study load over the whole semester more evenly, which had a positive impact on student scores in all summative assessments.

Figure 1. Students' average scores in percentages for all types of summative assessments in 2017 and 2018 (the extra points are not taken into account)



A comparison of the percentage of students passing the course in 2017 and 2018 has shown that there is a sizeable increase in the number of students successfully passing the course due to performance on the final exam and, to a small degree, extra points earned during the semester. Over fifteen per cent more students passed the course in 2018 (97.84 per cent) compared to the previous year (82.42 per cent). When looking at the three attempts allowed for the final exam in both, there is an approximate thirteen per cent increase in the number of students passing the course at their first attempt in 2018 as compared to 2017. There is also a very similar drop in the number of students passing at the second attempt in 2018, which suggests that the innovation did not only have a great impact among those who otherwise would fail the course but also among those who before only passed at the second attempt. On the other hand, there is almost no difference between the two years in the ratios of students passing at the third attempt. Thus, this is a potential group of students that future iteration of the innovation could pay more attention to.

Figure 2. Percentages of students passing the course at one, two, and three attempts in 2017 (n=80) and 2018 (n=136), extra points are included



Lastly, the reward component, i.e. the extra points given for the final exam based on students' average scores in the online quizzes. I find this equally important to evaluate since it suggests whether students pass due to being motivated to prepare better for each class, or only because of the extra points given for the activity. Figure 3 shows how successful students were in the online quizzes, as a result of which they obtained extra points. The ratios of students who earned and did not earn extra points were almost identical (48.92 and 51.08 per cent, respectively), whereas only a very small portion of students (less than one per cent) were granted as many as fifteen points in the final exam.

Figure 3. Ratio of students granted extra points for Socrative in the final exam 2018

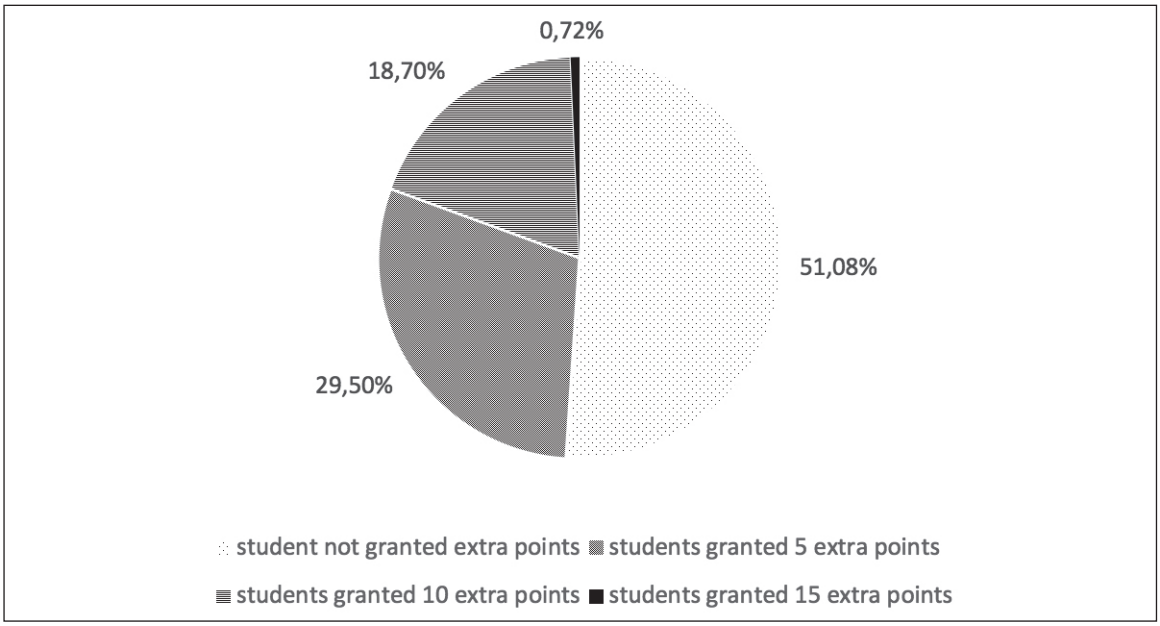
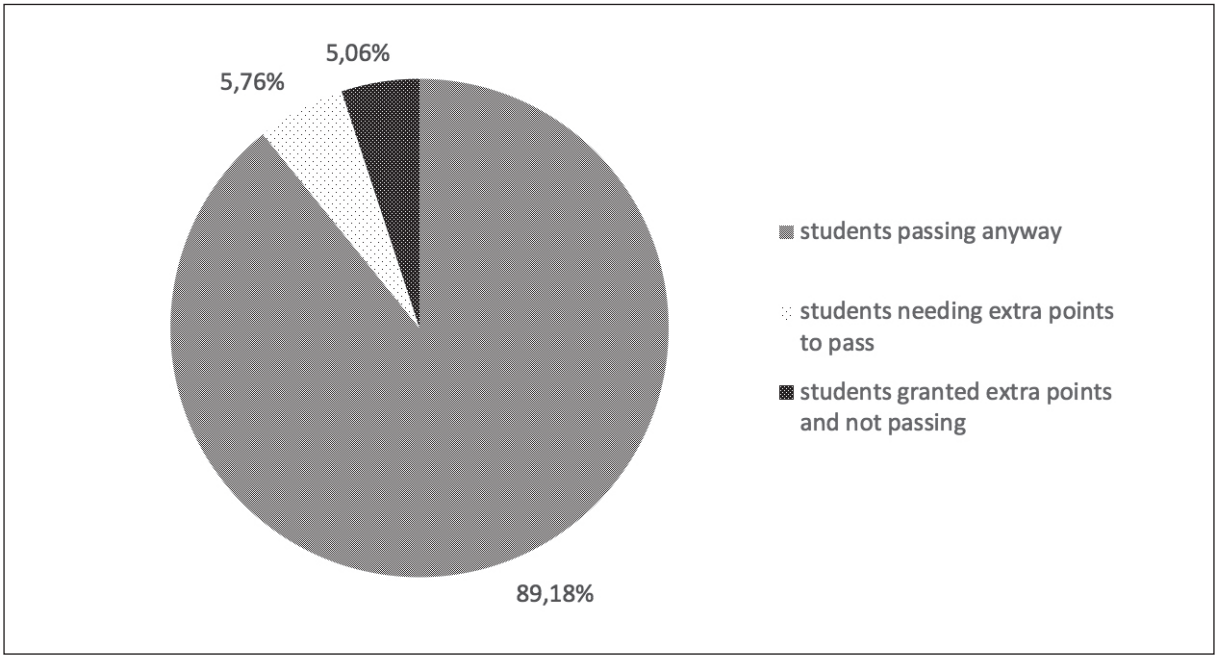


Figure 4 illustrates the low significance of the innovation's reward component in motivating and enhancing students' preparedness for the final exam. This is especially apparent in the high percentage of students (89.19 per cent) passing the final exam without actually needing the extra points given for their average scores in the online quizzes, which can be matched by the very low percentage of students (5.06 per cent) who were granted extra points, yet failed the final exam. Thus, the extra points were irrelevant for the former group as their performance shows that they benefitted from the innovation in other ways as well, whereas the latter group could not even capitalize on the reward component and potentially remained unaffected by the innovation in other ways as well. Therefore, the reward component proved meaningful to only a small portion of the class (5.7 per cent).

Figure 4. The significance of the Socrative reward component for the successful completion of the course in 2018



Conclusion

The aim of my innovation was to raise learners' responsibility, and was designed to improve students' scores in the final exam. Implementing a formative approach, I used a series of online quizzes which provided both me and my students with regular feedback on their learning gaps. Both the qualitative analysis of data from the student survey and the quantitative evaluation of student scores in 2017 and 2018 demonstrated that online in-class quizzes approached in a formative way are useful tools to increase the student' success rate in the end-of-term summative assessment and assist them in taking greater responsibility in the learning process. The innovation had a positive effect on two aspects of the learning process. First, it motivated students to

distribute the study load throughout the whole semester, which may have raised not only students' knowledge and understanding but also their confidence when taking the summative final exam. Second, it enhanced students' learning progress by raising their awareness of the expected course outcomes and revealing learning gaps before the final exam.

In addition, the analysis of the reward component originally intended to raise students' motivation has indicated that the innovation served its purpose even without it. In the future, I would, therefore, like to either reduce or completely leave out the extra points granted. Nevertheless, the extra point component was helpful in identifying roughly eleven per cent of the class, namely those who passed due to the reward component only and who failed despite earning extra points on the online quizzes, as needing further help. To understand individual students' performance and perhaps identify students who are struggling earlier I intend to administer at least some of the quizzes for each student individually with the possibility of consulting with classmates only after submitting the answers.

It also seems that for a small group of students – those who did well enough to gain the extra points but failed the final exam anyway – the extra points themselves and the ability to consult the material when answering quiz questions may have given false confidence. Therefore, I should emphasize to these students that it is important not only to prepare continuously but also to review the material before the final exam. The dip in performance from the first to the second test could be used a warning sign. I also plan on revising exam questions so that guessing would be discouraged. Perhaps an additional quiz without the possibility to consult notes would help as well.

All in all, the results of my survey have convinced me that it is not only possible but also valuable to implement online quizzes as a formative tool even in a summative-oriented study environment. I would, therefore, recommend all lecturers of subjects that require gradual student progress, which is typical for languages courses, to integrate these in some form into their classes, be it to enhance competitiveness among students or just to refresh students' knowledge during class.

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CHAPTER 17. 'I KNOW, WHAT SOCIAL WORK IS': BRINGING CONSTRUCTIVE ALIGNMENT TO A SOCIAL WORK COURSE

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Keywords: case work, constructive alignment, seminar groups, social work, writing skills

Introduction

Ambiguity in the mission of social workers due to a lack of institutionalization is not only typical for the discipline (Musil 2013), but also creates challenges regarding the way that social work is taught. First year students typically only have a very vague notion of what social work entails at the beginning of their studies, so the challenge is to adequately explain the core principles that define the nature of social work and how it is reflected in practice. Consequently, I have designed an innovation that supports students to gain skills which help them to conceptualise the nature of social work via the writing of essays and other written output. The innovation particularly focused on two kinds of skills: (1) the ability to apply the concepts of social work to actual client cases and (2) to use academic language when describing the handling of those cases.

The core of the innovation consisted of an exercise, a case study followed by a discussion, which took place during the seminar. In order to align the content of the course and the assessment more closely, this exercise was similar to the assignment of one of the essays students had to write to pass the course (Biggs 2003).

The evaluation of the innovation revealed that on the whole students considered the innovation useful because it helped them to get familiar with the nature of social work. When compared to the performance of students in the past, the statistical analysis of the scores that students received on the essay showed no significant improvement. However, the co-teacher of the course, who graded the essays, spoke of a notable improvement in terms of the quality of the essays, especially in terms of understanding what a social worker does.

The innovation

Introduction to Social Work is an obligatory course for freshmen in the Social Work B.A. study program at Masaryk University in Brno. Some students study social work as a single study program, some in combination with public policy, psychology, social anthropology or other disciplines. The course is taught in Czech as the participating students are either Czech or Slovak. There were thirty-one students enrolled in the course when the innovation took place.

The aim of this course is to introduce students to the field of social work, how theoretical concepts of the profession appear in the everyday practice of social workers when handling client cases and what the current condition of the institutionalization of social work is. These aims are

translated into the following learning outcomes as defined in the syllabus: (1) students should be able to interpret clients' living circumstances in terms of the interaction between people, their social environment, and their living situation; (2) to distinguish between questions on the client's living situation and questions on helping intervention, construing his or her own social worker's role in the context of a specific case, and (3) to distinguish between the modern and postmodern institutionalization of social work.

These outcomes were created historically mainly for administrative purposes, yet they well express the idea that students should not only have theoretical knowledge about the social work, but they should also be able to apply it.

The course is taught via both lectures and seminars and relies on individual work by students and feedback by the teacher in order to achieve the learning objectives. The course consists of weekly ninety-minute lectures and fifty-minute seminars.

Students are divided into two seminar groups. An experienced professor delivers the lectures, which mainly consist of frontal teaching, even though students are invited to ask questions and engage in discussions. As a lecturer responsible for the seminars my aim is to motivate students to read the compulsory literature, and to help them to apply and further deepen the theoretical knowledge that was gained from the lectures and the assigned reading materials. Individual student work includes the two structured essays to which my innovation is related and other shorter writing pieces for the seminar.

While completing exercises during and for the seminars is not a problem for the students, essays are considered difficult: students tend to score low on the essays and they often describe these as challenging in the end-of-semester course evaluation. Therefore, I decided to help students with the essays in my innovation. Specifically, I focused on the second essay because the result of the second essay is usually worse than that of the first one.

In the first essay, students are asked to address the question 'What difficulties does your client experience in terms of the mutual interaction with his/her surroundings?' and they are instructed to describe the situation of the client – real or imaginary – and make use of the language that can be found within the professional literature (namely Bartlett and Saunders 1976) on three standard pages. The second essay builds on the first: students have to demonstrate how, as a social worker who is part of a network of various helping professionals, they could contribute to addressing the problems of their client. They have two standard pages to describe the multidisciplinary network of professionals (consisting of at least a social worker and two other helping professionals), to formulate questions about the life situation of the client on behalf of the network participants and discuss how the contribution of social workers compares to those of the other helping professionals. Students receive written feedback on each essay and two lectures are devoted to the discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the essays. Students have the opportunity to revise and resubmit each essay once.

While developing the innovation, I relied on the notion of constructive alignment. Constructive alignment requires that 'the curriculum and its intended outcomes, the teaching methods used, the assessment tasks – are aligned to each other' (Biggs 2003: 1). The proper alignment covers the complete curriculum, including the design and coordination of all courses within the Social Work program. Since I cannot exert influence over these, I focused on aligning the course components: learning outcomes, teaching methods and graded assignments. The aim is to establish an environment where the student 'constructs meaning through relevant learning activities [...] and finds it difficult to escape without learning what he or she is intended to learn' (Biggs 2003: 2).

The learning outcomes and assignments of this introductory social work course had been aligned before the innovation, but the methods were out of sync because they did not sufficiently prepare students for coping with the essays. The lectures offered frontal teaching, which supports lower order thinking (Luther 2000), so they help students to obtain knowledge on what social work is, but not to apply it, which is an essential skill to succeed when writing the essays. Seminars, on the other hand, offer active ways of teaching students via group work with case studies or discussions, which stimulates problem solving and knowledge application (Murray and Lang 1997).

Before I introduced this innovation, students were assigned the tasks related to the second essay at several seminar sessions, but no exercise prepared them for the complexity of those tasks that are required in the second essay. For the innovation to be effective, I chose to build upon the constructivist paradigm, which sees learning as an instance of working with students' prior knowledge (Chin and Brown 2000) and intelligibility (Cakir 2008). This represents a challenge to my innovation, because students come to the course with very different skill sets and knowledge from high school. Understanding and using academic language is among these skills and I believe it strongly influences the success of students in the essays. I turned to the method of reflective learning to cope with the above challenges. Reflective learning resonates well with constructivist philosophy (Lai-Chong and Ka-Ming 1995) and can be defined as a cycle of action and reflection which repeats permanently (Ramsey 2006: 5). The goal of reflective learning is to deepen the knowledge that has been obtained (Moon 2004: 85), and repeating the phases of action and reflection which allows students and their teacher to assess their understanding of the task and their usage of academic language.

I innovated two sessions in both of my seminar groups. The main activity took place in the first of these, a week before the second essay was due. Students received the case of a young mother, who is deaf and has a tendency to self-harm, and whose two children are raised by their grandmother. The themes of disability, family, foster care and homelessness were present in the case. Students worked in groups and had to (1) identify different social workers and other helping professionals who can contribute to resolving the case; (2) define who the client/s of the different helping professionals is/are and (3) contemplate how working for the particular client changes

the perspective of the professionals involved. Then they had to choose one of the clients and all the helping professionals suitable for the client and think about the different perspectives of the latter, considering the fields of the particular helping professionals, the focus of interest of these helping professionals when working with the chosen client, and the kind of questions that should be posed to the client. A plenary discussion followed the group work, during which students summarized and compared their findings to obtain a complex view of the case. The discussion was structured in the same way as the group work. I used papers and markers to visualize those clusters of clients and 'their' helping professionals that students came up with during the group work. Both the group work and the discussion included the phases of action and reflection. During the group work, students took action by answering the questions for themselves and sharing their opinions with their peers. Reflection was prompted by the need to present a unified group opinion and thus students within each group justified their proposed approach and considered the pros and cons of each solution. During the plenary discussing action took place when each group described and justified their approach. Subsequently, students were asked to contemplate the merits of their own and the other groups' recommendations. I facilitated this reflection by playing the role of devil's advocate: I highlighted contradictions between group opinions encouraging students to discuss those that they initially overlooked and I also brought up alternative options where possible. I had even refrained from suggesting that either of the approaches was better – rather, I let students debate the options among themselves to come to a solution. I expected this innovation to help students to perform better on the essay both in terms of addressing the problem presented in the case therein and expressing their ideas using professional parlance.

The research design

I evaluated my innovation using several data sources to ascertain the validity and reliability of my results. I have conceptualized the evaluation as described in table 1 below and used the following data.

First, I used essay scores to get information about students' progress. Student essays are categorized as a 0, 10, 20 or 30-points essay. Specifically, I compared student results on the first and second essays in the innovated year with the results from the same course in 2017 and 2016. I used descriptive statistics and the analysis was conducted via variance tests (ANOVA).

Second, I relied on the evaluation of the professor who delivers the lectures of the course and grades the essays. I conducted a semi-structured interview with him starting with the following questions: (1) After reading the essays, what are the strengths of our students this year? (2) What are their weaknesses? When you compare the essays with those from the previous years, can you see any differences? I also asked follow-up questions along the lines of the skills that I deemed essential for students to acquire (see table 1). This approach enabled me to distinguish

the themes that the professor spoke about spontaneously from those from my prompts. I transcribed the data and analysed these using structural coding, where issues B1) a-e and B2) a and b are my structural unites.

Table 1. The Conceptualisation of the evaluation of the innovation

<table>
<tr><td>A – overall result as a quantitative criterion</td><td colspan="2">Result measured in points obtained in the second essay</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="7">B – abilities/skills necessary for reaching the high score in essay two as qualitative criterion</td><td rowspan="5">1) the ability to distinguish and describe the specific contributions of social workers in addressing the client's problem</td><td>a. knowledge of the definition of social work</td></tr>
<tr><td>b. the ability to understand the lived situation of a particular client and subsequently ask questions about it</td></tr>
<tr><td>c. the ability to ask questions about clients lived situation, that follow the definition of social worker</td></tr>
<tr><td>d. the ability to compare questions of different professionals</td></tr>
<tr><td>e. the ability to see differences in questions formulated by the social worker and the other professionals to describe the particular contribution of a social worker</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">2) the ability to use specific academic language while describing a social worker's contribution</td><td>a. understanding of the terminology</td></tr>
<tr><td>b. the ability to express ideas comprehensively</td></tr>
</table>

Third, I was interested in the students' perceptions. I used semi-structured discussions for getting feedback from students at the last seminar of each seminar group. Students were asked to complete sentences such as: 'The seminars taught me…' or 'I think what I've learned here has been/would be/will be useful'. I got students' agreement to record the lesson and analyse the recordings for academic purposes. I transcribed the data and analysed these using again structural coding relying on the same structural units as described above.

Results

The statistical analyses do not provide evidence that the innovation helped improve student performance on the second paper. Average student scores for the first draft of the essay were seven points higher in 2018 than 2017 but only with 0.217 higher than in 2016 (table 2). The result of the analysis of variance shows that differences are significant and most likely this result is driven by the comparison between 2018 and 2017. This increase may be due to the innovation but it is equally likely that in 2017 a relatively high number of students did not submit the first draft and received a '0' score[1]. The latter is a very likely possibility since point scores were very close in both 2018 and 2016 (table 2).

Table 2. Comparing mean student performances on the first and second versions of the second essay in the treatment group of 2018 and the control groups of 2017 and 2016.

	Treatment Group (2018)			Control Groups				Difference of Means	df	F-value
	N	Mean	SD	Year	N	Mean	SD			
First draft	30	12.00	6.644	2016	28	11.79	7.724	0.214	2, 77	7.611 **
				2017	22	5.00	6.726	7.000		
Second draft	30	21.00	6.618	2016	28	18.93	8.751	2.071	2, 77	2.169
				2017	22	16.36	8.477	4.636		

Test: ANOVA

* p≤.05; ** p≤.01 *** p≤.005

The result for the second draft of the essay shows an increase in the average point score compared to both 2016 and 2017 (2.071 and 4.636, respectively) but the differences are not statistically significant, suggesting again, that the innovation did not have the desired impact. The only undisputable outcome is that in 2018 no student scored zero points.

Contrary to this, the professor who graded the essays, noticed a difference compared to the previous years, specifically in relation to the second draft: 'I had hesitated, whether I should give them [students] 10 or 20 [points] previously, now I hesitated whether I should give them 20 or 30', he noted. There are a few potential explanations why this qualitative difference was not detectable during the quantitative analysis. It may be that this year the professor unconsciously raised the bar and was harsher than in the previous years. This is possible, because the assess-

1 I do not have the data to distinguish between how many students received 0 points because they wrote a low quality essay and how many because they did not submit their essay.

ment criteria for the essays are not defined explicitly. It may also be that the innovation helped students with some components of the essay but not with others; so that the overall results did not change. Finally, the point scale is not sensitive to subtle changes as it only has four values (0, 10, 20 or 30), therefore a qualitative change from 10 to 15 would most likely still receive a score of 10.

Some students also expressed that they believed that the case studies they participated in during the seminar 'helped to develop the skill of writing essays'. Specifically, they noted that the exercises helped them in identifying the exact contribution of the social worker in addressing a client's problems. Students connected this issue with an understanding of the requirements of the profession: 'I know, what social work is and what I do [as a social worker]' and related it to the relevant theoretical concepts, e.g. 'I remember mainly Bartlett', referring to Bartlett and Saunders (1976). One student described that she learned to work with expectations of different subjects, which is again an application of the approach expressed in the textbook.

Some students mentioned the relationship between social workers and other helping professionals, e.g. 'I can imagine what a multi-professional web is', while a few students connected the ability to apply the concepts from the discipline to a particular case with the notion of 'how to do social work'. This is especially notable because we did not discuss the methods of social work in the seminars. Students demonstrated the ability of how to approach a client (the ability to ask questions about clients' lived situation) and the skills necessary for case analysis (i.e. abilities to distinguish the question about a client's lived situation and intervention and to use the perspective of expectation). Indeed, the professor confirmed that students 'have correct ideas about questions about clients' lived situation, but it is difficult for them to formulate these autonomously'.

Using an academic language encapsulates the ability to understand that language and express ideas comprehensively through it. Rather than explicitly talking about academic language, students sensed an issue with language: 'The assignment [of essays] seemed to be clear, but then my results [on the essays] weren't as good as I expected' or 'it was difficult for me to understand the assignments we did at the seminars'. For me, these comments signal a lack of understanding surrounding the academic use of language which corresponds to a lack of ability to use language academically, as the professor also noted: 'They [students] are not used to express themselves in this specific genre'.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the outcomes of a teaching innovation that addressed students' difficulty in analysing social work cases. While quantitative data failed to reflect any significant improvement, qualitative data from both the students and the professor documented an improvement in terms of the contents of the essays, but not in the use of academic language. All in all, the

findings suggest that I should use a similar activity to prepare students for the first essay as well. In the future, I would like to improve both the innovation and the analysis of its impact. First, since it is clear that students struggle with understanding and using academic language, in the future more attention should be paid to helping them to decipher this language in the description of cases and the instructions for the exercises and to explaining that the professional language used in the exercise should also be used in the essays. Second, better measurement instruments could help to have a fuller and clearer picture of the impact of the innovation regarding both language and content. For example, students did not always pay attention to the open-ended questions during the semi-structured discussions, therefore using a feedback questionnaire could be useful as well as direct questions concerning the innovation. Finally, I would recommend a less rigid grading scale and a more transparent grading rubric – possibly along the lines of table 1 above – to discern nuances in student progress.

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CLUSTER 7. COMMENTARY
REFLECTION ON FEEDBACK AND REFLECTION AS FEEDBACK

Allan Goody, James Cook University, President of the International Consortium for Educational Development

These three chapters focus on feedback either from the teacher or through peer-to-peer feedback as a way of enhancing learning. Hattie (2009: 12) states that 'the most powerful single influence enhancing achievement is feedback'. The authors of these chapters recognise this and have designed their innovations to demonstrate that feedback in various forms is the basis for learning. The projects also highlight the need for feedback to be part of a more open and transparent process rather than solely as a private communication between teacher and student. The quality and quantity of feedback is often cited as the one aspect of teaching and learning of which students are most critical. Each of the authors in their own way is playing a part in remedying this problem. Critical reflection, either as an individual activity or as an open and inclusive activity, is expressly or implicitly a part of the innovations discussed in these chapters. All three focus on student learning by giving students time to reflect; reflection *as* feedback. By writing their chapter, the three authors are also reflecting on their innovations, the processes and the outcomes. Reflection *as* feedback is not just a student focused activity.

Rétiová's project to introduce peer feedback on writing was designed as a way of students gaining new knowledge and perspectives as well as important skills such as critical thinking. Students began to realise the importance of collaboration and support in the learning process and some students 'experienced a shift of identity toward becoming partners with teachers and peers'. This shift may begin to address the difficulties the author discovered in her research where students expressed self-doubt and inadequacy about providing feedback. Perhaps more important is the teacher's need to monitor the peer feedback to ensure students gain confidence in providing feedback and critiquing the work of others and that the feedback is appropriate and not misleading.

Two important messages come from Rétiová's project. The first is the need to provide examples of constructive feedback and model the process. This was done and the students discussed which of the examples represent constructive feedback and why before they were asked to provide feedback themselves. The second is to explain to students that feedback is itself a way of learning rather than an expression of expertise'.

Gachallová's project used online quizzes as formative assessment that provided immediate feedback but perhaps more importantly was a way of increasing 'students' awareness of the learning process and [to] enhance their active role in it'. The innovation attempted to address the ongoing problem of students not doing their reading and being prepared for class. The online quizzes then provided a discussion starter in the class after students attempted the quiz. As with

Rétiová's project, this innovation was designed to provide opportunity for reflection *as* feedback. The formative assessment tool and the feedback and discussion resulted in improved summative assessment scores as well as facilitating students taking greater responsibility for their learning. Jaklová-Střihavková's project also focused on reflection *as* feedback using action and reflection to deepen knowledge and for students to assess understanding. Reflection was promoted by requiring students to make a group presentation and the need to think about choices. Theory was applied in practice through the group work with students presenting 'a unified group opinion' and justification as a way of understanding terminology and abstract concepts. The similarities with the other two projects are evident in that written feedback is provided and time is devoted to group discussions of student work to learn from each other and the teacher. Feedback through open discussion allows diverse perspectives to be presented and students to learn how others approach problems and solutions while still requiring individual assessment tasks.

Evaluation of the three projects was conducted through multiple sources including student feedback, peers, self-reflection and student outcomes. Using multiple sources is important and this is reflected in the varying data collected by the authors. While some sources of evidence did not indicate positive outcomes, others did. Determining the success of teaching and learning interventions or innovations is difficult due to the variables involved, in particular that students come with individual characteristics and pre-existing skills and knowledge. Ahmad et al. (2018) present an approach to investigate impact in higher education. While their work focuses more at the program level, their approach does give pointers that are useful for individual teachers looking for ways of determining success in their innovations.

The lessons learned from these three projects are evident in the description and discussion in each chapter. One lesson that may not be so evident is that sometimes (maybe more often than we wish) innovations, with all the best intentions, do not work or achieve the desired results. That does not mean that the idea was not a good idea but that many factors weigh into the outcome such as context and the students. View it as a learning experience too; reflection *as* feedback.

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INSPIRING CHANGE IN TEACHING IN CENTRAL EUROPE AND ELSEWHERE

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Teacher development courses of the past have often resulted in situations where participants changed their perceptions of teaching but not their practice (Simon and Pleschová 2013). Participants of this development course, regardless of whether or not their work has been showcased in this book, not only shifted their perceptions but also effected some change in their practice. They had little choice about the latter as the course required them to teach and incorporate new teaching methods into their practice. Although this change may not be lasting, course participants have already passed the hurdle of gathering courage to try their hands at doing something different than what they did or observed in the past. As a result, many felt that they have become more confident even if their teaching has not gone exactly according to their session plans. The chapters in this book give a good representation of how far course participants have come in shifting their thinking and practice toward learning-centred teaching in primarily teaching-centred educational environments.

How daring the authors were in terms of their innovations was left to them but it was influenced by a variety of factors other than their habitus. Because we wanted them to gain actual teaching experience, we had set some of the limitations by requiring them to centre their innovations around classroom practice. Accordingly, a good number of the authors focused on areas that were concerned with student participation in class, engagement and the related impact on learning (e.g. Awuah; Fujdiak; Karas; Kováčová; Padrtová; Tkaczyk; Voca). But several authors have chosen to work in areas that one would not immediately associate with classroom activities like assessment (Gachallová), course design (Kašpárková) or research and writing competencies (Rapošová; Minin; Jaklová Střihavková) and combined these with pertinent classroom activities. Pleschová and McAlpine (2016) uncovered the importance of contextual factors on the content and approach of one's teaching in Central Europe and the chapters in this book reaffirmed their conclusion as well as showcased how to overcome such barriers. First, existing institutional practices meant that authors (e.g. Tkaczyk; Pechersky) whose departmental practice heavily relied on frontal lecturing, took a keen interest in establishing a more learner-centred classroom while, for example, Jaklová Střihavková was more concerned with aligning the already active learner-oriented classroom activities with the nature of the assessment exercise.

Second, whereas some teachers (Srnišová; Tkaczyk) worked in departments that had standardized teaching requirements allowing for little diversion in classroom practices others at the other end of the spectrum (e.g. Karas; Padrtová) could use classroom time according to their best judgement.

Third, the number of classes taught differed greatly from author to author: for example, Kováčová had only one class each in both Brno and Teheran that she could freely design, Pechersky taught

the same topic to three different groups of students, while Srnišová and Rétiová led all seminar sessions of a course, and Padrtová and Minin were responsible for various facets, ranging from designing and delivering to assessing their courses.

Fourth, class size not only substantially varied from four to one hundred thirty-nine students across the chapters, but those who were not the lead teacher of the course often learnt the exact number of registered students – not to mention those who actually showed up in the class – at the last minute. This required teachers not only to be adaptable in their teaching but also to deal with the outcome of lacking the amount or quality of data that their research design had required. It is to the authors' credit, and to the benefit of the reader, that these novice teachers have navigated the obstacles successfully and put forth interesting, meaningful and methodologically sound chapters.

Indeed, regarding methodology, authors did not only rely on data triangulation and mixed-methods research to assess the impact of their teaching innovations, but they also brought their disciplinary research perspectives, practices and methods to the scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL). One could argue that this makes this volume methodologically eclectic or even incoherent, but we see this as an advantage. While the variation in methods may widen the horizon of those primarily trained as educational or academic developers beyond their disciplinary practices, the novelty is not simply in applying the tools of one's own field to SOTL studies – after all, every discipline publishes such articles in their respective disciplinary journals as well as books. The value is in bringing together diverse research methodologies – as well as adding a varied topical and disciplinary focus – in the same volume, and thus offering the readers a chance to get a glimpse of the variation in approaching and analysing the outcomes of teaching and learning across several disciplines.

This book is, however, more than just novice teachers trying their wings in writing about their students' learning. It is also an opportunity to learn more about teaching and learning in Central Europe. In general, concepts and methods of teaching and learning in higher education travel well across regions reinforcing earlier findings. Yet, we cannot ignore findings that point out that active learning exercises are not always or immediately effectual. Where Pechersky uncovers that students are not necessarily more satisfied with the newly introduced learning-centred approach to learning, Tkaczyk shows a lack of improvement in student interest. Tkaczyk, Pechersky, and Kováčová all fail to find increased levels of student engagement, while both Kováčová and Karas reveal that more learning-centred education does not always translate into gains in student learning outcomes. These results suggest that learning-centred education has benefits for Central European university students, but the introduction of this approach to classroom practice should not ignore the teaching and learning context of the region.

Most students in Central Europe – those especially who come from public schools – have little to no experience in high-school other than frontal lecturing. When they are exposed to other

learning methods, they tend not to consider those to be learning opportunities but as an easy fun class devoid of serious learning. Often, they arrive to university lacking in critical thinking skills – or hide these well – being trained to acknowledge that the teacher knows best and when being asked for their opinions, few are willing to speak, not to mention contradict their teacher. They are even less used to bringing creativity and responsibility into the classroom. Without these skills, however, they will not be able to benefit from learning-centred approaches. This is not to say that some students do not excel in these areas but that teachers of higher education should be sensitive to easing their students into this new way of learning incrementally. Too drastic changes may undermine teachers' authority in the classroom (Norton et al. 2013) or have students lose the structure necessary for learning to take place as Peter Van Petegem points out in his commentary in this book. This also explains some of the less ambitious innovations of our authors: being from or spending substantial time in the region put them into a good position to understand that not only the content but also the manner of learning matter.

There is no reason why Central European students could not benefit from learning-centred methods and, parallel to this, become independent learners. The lexical knowledge that their lower-level studies are overburdened with could give them the advantage of combining knowledge and skills successfully, if at least their university education does not only focus on increasing their knowledge but also on developing such skills as public speaking, critical thinking and writing, problems-solving, working in teams and reflection. These skills are essential in making graduates succeed in the work place and in life, as both Kovačević and Rétiová point out.

An environment that disproportionally emphasizes perfection tends to discourage the acknowledgement of one's mistakes and the identifications of areas that need improvement. However, without these, reflection, which 'involves examining the manner in which one responds to a given Situation' and integrating 'the understanding gained into one's experience in order to enable betterchoices or actions in the future' (Rogers 2001: 41), is not possible for either student or teacher. A real value of this book is for the authors to show their peers how to scrutinize their own work in a formative way in order to become better teachers. It is the area where chapters have improved most from the early to the final drafts, which we hope, will encourage more university teachers, including those from the region, to engage in reflection on their teaching.

In their commentaries, Quinlan and Mårtensson both note that individual chapters do an excellent job in situating their innovations in their immediate SOTL contexts. It is, however, our expert commentators who show how the chapters connect to other issues of teaching and learning (McAlpine; Quinlan; Van Petegem; Goody; Thomson) or point out implications for the future of higher education institutions involved in the process (Mårtensson; Roxå). This is important because, as Roxå argues, nascent teacher development courses or novice teachers are unlikely to change the culture of their institutions at once, but they can become the catalyst for such a change. Therefore, it is important that their teaching is relevant to the specific challenges that

the region as a whole, the education system of specific countries, the institutions of higher education and their particular departments, and the student body face.

Awuah and Pechersky tap into two developments that are not only essential to understand the regional needs and the future direction of higher education, but are relevant to most of Europe and, to some extent, other regions of the world. Pechersky points out how classroom diversity, including not only differences in nationality, language, culture, and preparedness but also previous student learning experience, influences the effectiveness of learning methods. Thus, with increased student mobility in Europe and around the word, it is important to recognize how such an international student body consisting of diverse backgrounds could best benefit from the process of teaching and learning. Awuah points to the related idea of teaching and learning through the mediation of a foreign language, which can hinder student participation, engagement, understanding, and thus, learning. Internationalization of the student body requires the internationalization of the curriculum as well as that of teaching practices. Consequently, Central Europe, which is slowly transitioning from teaching- to learning-centred education and faces the challenge of internationalization of higher education at the same time, can be at the forefront of combining the two. In the future, the region can prominently contribute to SOTL through the knowledge acquired during this experience.

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This book contains studies of how participants of an educational development programme offered at the University of Economics in Bratislava and Masaryk University in Brno have integrated acquired knowledge and skills with their pedagogic practice. The chapters are written as case studies of good practice or problematic issues encountered in the participants' teaching. Drawing on relevant literature and scholarship, each chapter has as its basis the pedagogic concepts that informed the change that the participant introduced in their teaching. A range of data and evidence is considered in evaluating each intervention.

The chapters are grouped into seven clusters themed by the teaching challenges faced by the authors. A commentary by an external expert in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) accompanies each cluster to highlight theoretical and practical implications. The book is thus framed by a theory-to-practice link that is key to good educational development.

Pedagogic methods discussed in the book include:

- audio feedback to student work
- authentic assessment
- case study and case work
- classroom debate
- concept maps
- cut up cards
- flipped classroom
- interactive mini-lecture
- online formative quiz
- pair and group work in small and large classes
- peer feedback
- role play
- Skype interviews with experts

Disciplines in which chapter authors introduced their teaching innovations include:

- Accounting
- Business
- Languages
- Management
- Media studies
- Psychology
- Political science
- Social work

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