

Developing Confidence of Visual Literacy through Using MIRO during Online Learning

Authors : Rachel S. E. Lim, Winnie L. C. Tan

Abstract : Visual literacy is about making meaning through the interaction of images, words, and sounds. Graphic communication students typically develop visual literacy through critique and production of studio-based projects for their portfolios. However, the abrupt switch to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has made it necessary to consider new strategies of visualization and planning to scaffold teaching and learning. This study, therefore, investigated how MIRO, a cloud-based visual collaboration platform, could be used to develop the visual literacy confidence of 30 diploma in graphic communication students attending a graphic design course at a Singapore arts institution. Due to COVID-19, the course was taught fully online throughout a 16-week semester. Guided by Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, the two lecturers developed students' engagement with visual literacy concepts through different activities that facilitated concrete experiences, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Throughout the semester, students create, collaborate, and centralize communication in MIRO with infinite canvas, smart frameworks, a robust set of widgets (i.e., sticky notes, freeform pen, shapes, arrows, smart drawing, emoticons, etc.), and powerful platform capabilities that enable asynchronous and synchronous feedback and interaction. Students then drew upon these multimodal experiences to brainstorm, research, and develop their motion design project. A survey was used to examine students' perceptions of engagement (E), confidence (C), learning strategies (LS). Using multiple regression, it was found that the use of MIRO helped students develop confidence (C) with visual literacy, which predicted performance score (PS) that was measured against their application of visual literacy to the creation of their motion design project. While students' learning strategies (LS) with MIRO did not directly predict confidence (C) or performance score (PS), it fostered positive perceptions of engagement (E) which in turn predicted confidence (C). Content analysis of students' open-ended survey responses about their learning strategies (LS) showed that MIRO provides organization and structure in documenting learning progress, in tandem with establishing standards and expectations as a preparatory ground for generating feedback. With the clarity and sequence of the mentioned conditions set in place, these prerequisites then lead to the next level of personal action for self-reflection, self-directed learning, and time management. The study results show that the affordances of MIRO can develop visual literacy and make up for the potential pitfalls of student isolation, communication, and engagement during online learning. The context of how MIRO could be used by lecturers to orientate students for learning in visual literacy and studio-based projects for future development are discussed.

Keywords : design education, graphic communication, online learning, visual literacy

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