

Cognitive and Metacognitive Space in the Task Design at Postgraduate Taught Level

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Abstract : Postgraduate taught (PGT) students' learning strategies align with what the learning task constitutes and the environment that the task creates. Cognitively, they can discover new perspectives, challenge general assumptions, establish clear connections, and synthesise information. Metacognitively, their engagement is conducive to the development of planning, monitoring, and evaluating strategies. Given that there has been a lack of longitudinal insights into international PGT students' experiences of the cognitive and metacognitive space created in the tasks, this paper presentation aims to fill the gaps by longitudinally exploring (1) the fundamentals of task designs to create cognitive and metacognitive space and (2) the opportunities and challenges of multicultural group discussions as a pedagogical approach for the implementation of cognitive and metacognitive space in the learning tasks. Data were collected from the two rounds of semi-structured interviews with 11 international PGT students in two programmes at a UK university -at the end of semester one and at the end of semester two. The findings show that the task designs, to create cognitive and metacognitive space, need to include four interconnected factors: clarity, relevance, motivation, and practicality. In addition, international PGT students perceived that they practised and developed their cognitive and metacognitive abilities while getting immersed in multicultural group discussions. The findings, from the learners' point of view, make some pedagogy-related suggestions to the task designs at the master's level, particularly how to engage students in learning during their transition into higher education in a different cultural setting.

Keywords : cognitive space, master students, metacognitive space, task design

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