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Students' Metaphors for Defining Their Learning Experience with Audio-Visible versus Invisible Authors. Results from a Case Study in a Social Science Discipline

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ABSTRACT

This article summarizes an instructional experience designed and conducted at the University of Lugano – Communication Sciences – (Switzerland) within a Political Theory's freshmen course, which involved disciplines like: philosophy, political science and epistemology. We offered students two types of authors to be learned: one through a multimedia video interview in combination with written texts of these authors, defined as the audio-visible authors, and one type of author offered only through a text-based format (the invisible author). We gathered quantitative data (students' performance on their written exam compositions, their grades; the number of written words they wrote; and the number of times students mentioned the two types of authors in their written compositions). We also collected qualitative data (through semi-structured interviews and thinking aloud protocols), analyzing the metaphors students used to define the reading and learning experience with the audio-visible and the invisible authors. Results show that students perform better when the author to be studied is offered with more media instructional supports, they tend to establish a social relationship with the author, and the quality of their critical thinking and the level of interest in a new subject both increase. The article is divided in three parts: we will first give some definitions of what a metaphor is; second, we will describe our case study and the results of the data analysis; third, we will discuss the results.

KEYWORDS

Multimedia Learning, Metaphors and Learning, Audio-Visible Author, Invisible Author, New Media and Learning, Digital Learning

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