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Mansi Batra
Iowa State University

Sara B. Marcketti
Iowa State University, sbb@iastate.edu

Ashley Ratute
Iowa State University

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Abstract

The purpose of this exploratory study was to better understand students' perceptions of the classroom environment and their intentions to recommend the course for textiles and clothing classes, such as the history of dress, that rely heavily on multimedia usage.

Multimedia in the Textiles and Clothing Classroom: Student Perceptions and Intentions To Recommend the Course

Mansi Batra, Sara B. Marcketti, and Ashley Ratute
Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa

Keywords: multimedia, student perceptions, technology, pedagogy

A major paradigm shift in human communications is occurring similar to the one that took place between the end of manuscript era and the dawning of the print age (Henry, 2002). The shift is being ushered in by the digital convergence of traditional communication technologies and media. From a pedagogical perspective, technology is a powerful tool for customizing instruction to the needs of individual students (Boorady, & Hawley, 2008). When competently used, technology can improve the delivery of content to large and diverse groups of students (Anonymous, 2008). From a demographic standpoint, the percentage of individuals for whom using technology is an assumed rather than a novel activity continues to grow (Fogg, 2008). Propelled by media coverage and rapid technology adoption in the consumer market, the idea that students prefer to learn with the aid of technology has become integral to the popular consciousness (Anonymous, 2007). The purpose of this exploratory study was to better understand student's perceptions of the classroom environment and their intentions to recommend the course for textiles and clothing classes, such as, the history of dress, that rely heavily on multimedia usage. Multimedia in this study encompassed PowerPoint, You Tube videos, VHS videos and DVDs, music, Elmo document camera projectors, and physical examples or live demonstrations of course content. Conceptualization, assessment, and study of perceptions of psychological aspects of school classroom environments have firmly established the classroom as an active field of research (Fisher & Fraser, 1983). The classroom environment has been recognized as an important factor in academic performance, personal development, relationships among students and teachers, and students' mood, attitudes, and behaviors (Fraser, 1987; Waxman, 1991). We utilized a modified, short form of the Classroom Environment Scale that measured involvement, task orientation, and innovation to better understand student's perception of courses with multimedia components (Trickett & Moos, 2002). Involvement measured the extent to which students were attentive and interested in class activities and participated in discussions. Task Orientation emphasized completion of planned activities. Innovation measured how much students contributed to planning classroom activities, and the extent to which the teacher used new techniques and encouraged creative thinking (Trickett & Moos, 2002). The internal reliabilities of the aforementioned constructs of these scales were acceptable and ranged from .71 to .85. We also included questions on a likert-type scale (from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) that asked students to rate their perception of the instructor, their intention to recommend the course, and statements about the use, effectiveness, and their enjoyment of multimedia in the classroom.

In this study, 180 students in three courses in an apparel program at a large Midwestern University consisted of the sample population for data collection. A larger proportion of the sample (92.8) included female students who were enrolled in the apparel major (95.1%). Approximately 77.5% of participants were Caucasian, with the remaining students belonging to African American, Asian American, and Hispanic American ethnic groups. The distribution of participants among the upper- and lower-classifications was spread between sophomores (13.6%), juniors (46.6%), seniors (37.02 %) and graduate students (2.78%).

Student's perception of the instructor were significantly, positively correlated to involvement ($r = 0.82$, $p < .01$), task orientation ($r = 0.74$, $p < .01$,), and the use of innovation ($r = 0.79$, $p < .01$). Additionally,

students' intention to recommend the course was significantly, positively correlated with their involvement in course activities ($r = 0.63$, $p < .01$), task orientation ($r = 0.73$, $p < .01$), and the use of innovation in the classroom ($r = 0.57$, $p < .01$). Overall, the sample of students in this study were found to have relatively better perception of the degree of innovativeness in classes that incorporated media and technology ($r = 0.87$, $p<.01$) Among the participants, the positive perception level of the class room environment was highest with the use of You Tube videos. Nearly 80% of the student's stated that their learning ability increased with the usage of You Tube videos and physical demonstrations. A linear regression was conducted ($r^2 =0.42$) which indicated that 42% of the variance in the student's intention to recommend the course was explained by the usage of You Tube videos and its effect on student's perception of the class room environment. On the survey instrument, students were provided the space to make additional comments. Representative statements included the following: *"I really love the types of media we use. I've never had a class where the professor uses so many different videos/clips, etc. It really helps and keeps me interested"* and *"I really enjoyed the class content because it incorporated the students."*

Results of this study are useful in establishing a baseline understanding of the use of multimedia in the textiles and clothing classroom, student's perceptions of the instructor, and intentions to recommend the course. These results are helpful for textiles and clothing instructors who are considering the effectiveness of implementing multimedia in their classrooms.

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