

Courtney E. Craig
Yellow Pace

Clark, Ruth C.; Mayer, Richard E. (2011-07-13). e-Learning and the Science of Instruction: Proven Guidelines for Consumers and Designers of Multimedia Learning (Essential Knowledge Resource) (p. Chapter 14 of e-Learning and the Science of Instruction compares the benefits and limitations between learner and program control.)

Note: I chose this chapter for my last reading summary as I highly respect both the authors and their publications. I have combined many of the concepts discussed and supported within the text into my own teaching practice over the past few years.

Instead of advocating for or against learner control, the authors provide guidelines on when learner control is best deployed. To best understand the amount of learner control in an online course (or any course), the authors pose the question of “do learners make good instructional decisions?” Ultimately, the authors provide supporting evidence that students (can at times) lack self-assessment knowledge or understanding with reference to concepts such as calibration accuracy and course student evaluations.

In one of my first classes in graduate school, the professor made a point in both the syllabus and course introduction that “knowing what you know and knowing what you don’t know” are essential professional skills. The authors further define calibration as “the correlation between your confidence estimate and your actual performance.” While the instructor in a F2F class will have greater control over pacing and content sequencing, there can be a shift in responsibility to the student for the reading and the pace of working through the course material. I have recognized the challenges of calibration in my F2F classes as students may or may not believe they fully understand the course material. The test or final is not the ideal time to find out that someone does not understand the subject or topic. Therefore, I have implemented greater use of formative assessment through classroom response, small active learning activities, and quizzes as a means to promote self-assessment skills in the students.

When designing my online course, I wanted to build self-assessment into the modules. I decided to use weekly discussions and reflection blogs as a means to promote self-assessment for the student through both social and metacognitive considerations. I believe that online discussions with peers provides some indication of understanding as related to peers while reflection blogs provide the students to internalize and create meaning based on the course material. The challenge as stated in the book, is that learners can vary on the amount of “control over their instructional options but often don’t make good judgments about their instructional needs” (Clark, 2011).

The authors provide five learner control principles of; give experienced learners control, make important instructional events the default, consider adaptive control, give pacing control and offer navigational support in a hypermedia environment (Clark, 2011). I designed my online class as an advanced version of my F2F class. Therefore, I believe I have an understanding of the prior knowledge of the student. What I do not know is the level of metacognitive skills. With this consideration, I included a learner survey in the beginning of the course and reflection blog assignment throughout the course. Since the class is designed for an undergraduate with minimal experience with online classes, I required many instructional events such as practice. Time will tell if that needs to be changed or modified.

I use iPads in my F2F classroom in an interactive and adaptive method of course instruction. Through classroom response and just-in-time delivery of supplementary course material, I can attest to the time commitment with dynamic methods of assessment. In the online setting, I would consider including a rapid diagnostic test (as discussed in the chapter) for my section on system errors. Since my online class will be synchronous, pacing control will focus on the use of multimedia and providing control with animated instruction. Finally, offering navigational support through hyperlinks must be balanced between using enough to support instruction as compared to excessive use. The authors provide evidence that extensive use can adversely impact learning if intended for novice learners.

This chapter like the previous in the book is well researched and presented. Ultimately, having read other chapters of the book a number of times, I agree with the authors that multimedia construction and course development comes down to understanding the prior knowledge of the student and consideration of cognitive load.

Response to Yellow Pace:

Yellow,

You made some good points throughout your post. One of the points that stood out was, “ I believe that online discussions with peers provides some indication of understanding as related to peers while reflection blogs provide the students to internalize and create meaning based on the course material”(Scott 2016). I know in the past and especially as an undergrad, discussion posts were paramount in my success in the class. There were times when i didn't understand the question or what the instructors expected of my classmates. However, because I was able to read my colleges responses, I was able to see examples of the work that helped me to complete my own part of the assignments. In my opinion, online discussions are important, and for that reason I sometimes feel that taking online classes is easier because when you don't understand something because you are better able to take your time in doing research to understand the content of the course.

When it comes to self assessment, I am an advocate for project-based work because it requires one to research, and think of how to apply what has been learned to real world issues. However, I do understand and know that depending on the subject, this form of assessment isn't always the best and may not show the instructor what the student knows or has learned. Pop quizzes are a great impromptu test of knowledge. For me when I was tested, I studied primarily what I needed to know to pass the test. However, when it came to project-based assignments I have found that I have been able to retain and utilize much more information from the class.

In closing, I truly feel that an individual's learning depends on that specific individual and what type of student he or she is. If the individual knows that he or she is a student who needs to be in the classroom, then taking an online course wouldn't be conducive to his or her success as a student. I feel a lot of pressure is already put on the instructor to provide pertinent learning materials and activities, but at the same time, I also feel that students should be encouraged to inventory their own preferences and skills when it comes to making choices about their learning methods.

Clark, Ruth C.; Mayer, Richard E. (2011-07-13). e-Learning and the Science of Instruction: Proven Guidelines for Consumers and Designers of Multimedia Learning (Essential Knowledge Resource) (p. Chapter 13

Throughout my academic career I have individually worked on school projects, as well as collaboratively with my colleagues. I have to admit that most of the time when I saw that there was group work involved I inwardly cringed because I don't care for certain elements of group work such as the need to work around other people's' schedules and the fact that I have to depend on my colleagues to provide high quality work just as they have to depend on me.. As a migraine sufferer, I sometimes struggle with group work because a migraine can occur at any time and disrupt my plans. I worry that Most my colleagues probably feel that they couldn't depend on me and/or that I was not contributing enough if I were to get a migraine in the middle of a group assignment. I also struggle with group work because the schedule for meeting and completing assignments can be very inflexible.. One of the reasons why I like online learning is that it gives me the flexibility with my time and this is not the case when it comes to group work. However, I believe that group work is sometimes necessary, depending on the course objectives.

As an undergrad I majored in interdisciplinary studies, which is a process of combining two or more academic disciplines or field of study. The objectives for my capstone course were to take everything that I had learned throughout my program and work together with a group of other interdisciplinary students to create and submit a project that showed perspectives from various disciplines. In a course such as that one, group work is imperative because it helps students to learn how to work with each other to solve an issue or at least come to a common ground. Prior to delving into the project, I took the initiative to send an email to my group members introducing myself, and asking about their strengths and weaknesses so as to help determine our best method for approaching the work. Once everyone responded, we each had a discipline to research and were individually responsible for various tasks such as checking APA formatting and submitting the weekly assignments. Group work is necessary to prepare learners for what they will encounter in the field.

I agree that if there is group work/assignments, it should be clearly and closely tied to the course objective(s). I have seen the positive side of group work for learning to work with others, appropriately dividing up work, along with peer-to-peer learning/instruction. But, I have also seen where group work was assigned to make a project more manageable. The problem with assigning projects in this manner is that members at one extreme may not be learning or applying the course material appropriately to the other extreme of simply passing along difficult or less desirable parts to other group members.

Occasionally I ran into group assignments that were not particularly successful, but not all of them end up that way. When it comes to online group sessions, I think instructors should be sure to consider what their students' home lives might be like. For example, in one of my groups we had a stay at home mom, and one who worked part time. They were able to work on assignments during the day, whereas the rest of us would work on them late at night. Other issues that come into play are time differences due to living in different locations, in addition to concerns about if everyone is going to equally contribute to the project. Mayer states that when an individual is working in a group, and part of his or her grade depends being active in the group, that he or she will be inclined to contribute towards the assignment. However, if the grade is based solely on the final project and not on individual contributions,, then some people will sit back and let others do the work, because if their classmates get an A, that means they will get one as well (2011). I have to disagree with Mayer's statement, because I feel that if the natural characteristic of an individual is to help others and also contribute then that is what the individual will do without being

asked. Therefore individuals who tend to be more dependent on others rather than providing contributions will negatively the overall project.

The authors in this chapter introduce the concept of collaborative learning as providing the potential for improving individual learning. A challenge with shifting to the greater use of collaborative learning or group work such as a project based learning curriculum is formative assessment. In EDTECH 542, we learned the value of creating and implementing these assessment tools. I found formative assessment so useful that I implemented its use on a greater scale in my F2F courses. There is a significant element of contributions from the group that factor into the grade, but I believe that the instructor also participates through providing encouragement, direction/redirection, and sometime mediation.

In closing, my personal opinion is that whether in a traditional classroom or an online environment, the success of group work depends on the individuals within the group. If the group is compiled of individuals who do not contribute then the project will reflect as such, but if the group consists of those who want to be successful, then the project will be a success. Hence, my experience with my first group project. After reading this article, I am still on the fence when it comes to group work and feel that it depends on the individuals, and not the content of the project.