

Understanding Designers Designing for Understanding (Book Review)

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Understanding Designers Designing for Understanding

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Understanding Designers Designing for Understanding is a book that provides great insight into collaborative learning. The tango metaphor weaves through the theoretical and practical works and provides an integrating thread for the entire book. This book sets out to examine collaborative learning in ad hoc design teams which use video-based technologies as the communication channel. The pursuit of such goal is carried out in three main phases: an exploratory study, a development phase of a supporting tool, and a quasi-experimental study. The three phases will be introduced in a bit more detail in the following paragraphs.

An initial hypothesized framework on collaborative learning, which consists of Conceptual Learning, Expression of Affect, Feedback and Questioning, was proposed by the author as a tool to explain collaboration to learn, and formation of shared understanding in learning groups. The initial framework, which emphasized on the Conceptual Learning and Expression of Affect, resulted in suboptimal question-answer and reflective behaviour during the exploratory study.

The suboptimal behaviour of question-answer led to reflection on and then revision of the initial framework. The revised framework brings Questioning and Feedback to the central position of the framework based on the assumption that having more question-answer behaviours would yield more reflective activities which in turn based on the assumption that reflection could lead to better result of collaborative learning. A question-answer supporting tool called Q-tool is thereby created.

Using the Q-tool, a quasi-experiment was carried out to test whether a technology-supported (using Q-tool) environment could boost the questioning behaviour and higher reflective thinking. Even though the final result showed no significant difference of shared understanding between groups using Q-tool and groups not using it, *Understanding Designers Designing for Understanding* offers insight into learning and understanding in video-mediated teams and provides an starting point that could eventually lead to better understanding of the process of collaborative learning and development of shared understanding.