



Task-Based Teaching in a Technology-Rich Environment

Mat(hias) Schulze

Germanic and Slavic Studies
Waterloo Centre for German Studies
<http://www.wcgs.ca/~mschulze>

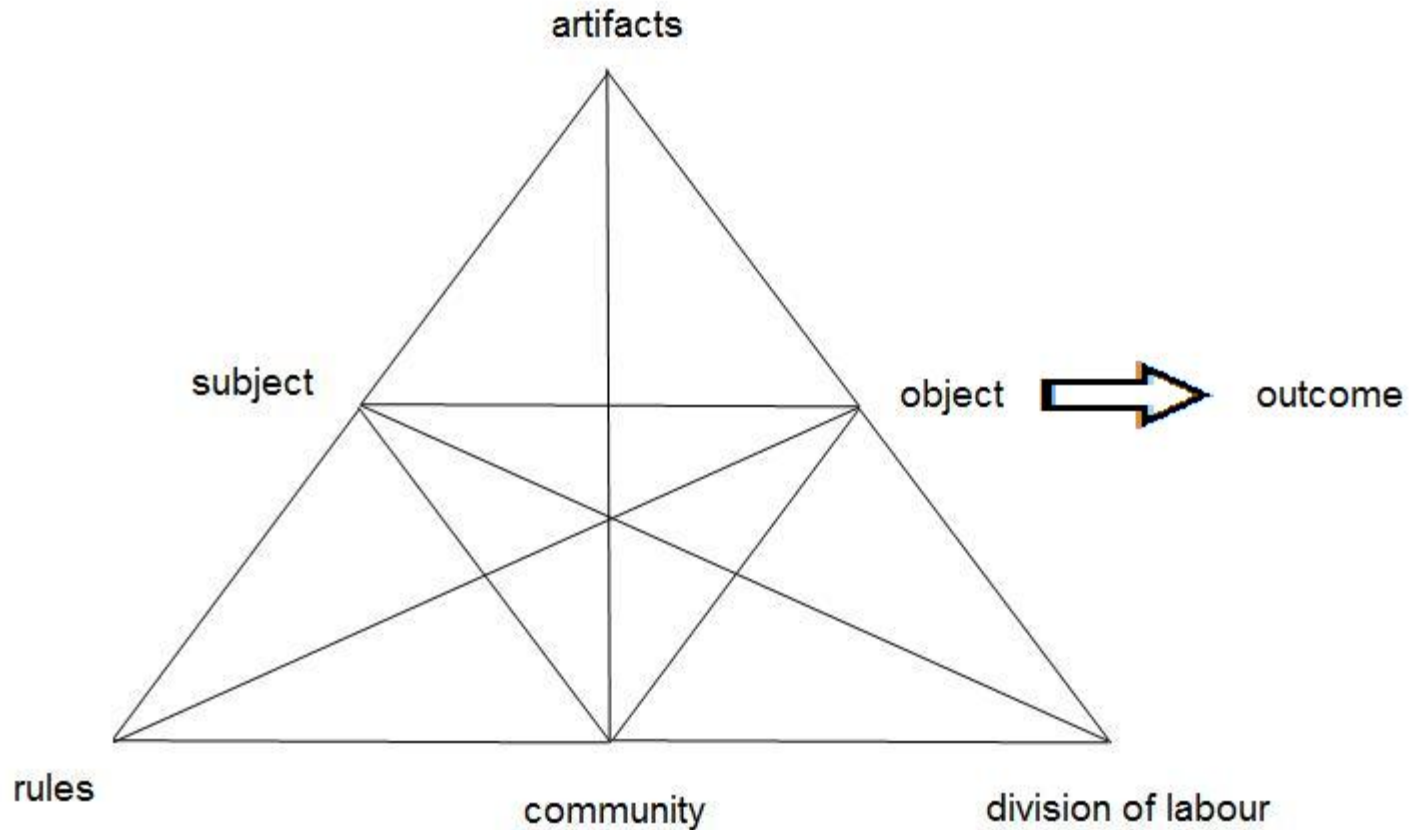
Questions:

1. How do students perceive the use of modern technologies such as tablet PCs and a VLE in the context of their language study at university?
2. Is there an interrelation of the students' perception of the technologies and the general learning design and group work in particular?

Task-Based Language Teaching

- task = “goal-oriented communicative activity with a specific outcome, where the emphasis is on exchanging meanings, not producing specific language forms” (Willis 1996, p. 36)
- “Task-Based Language Teaching ... constitutes a coherent, theoretically motivated approach to all six components of the design, implementation, and evaluation of a genuinely task-based teaching program: (a) needs and means analysis, (b) syllabus design, (c) material design, (d) methodology and pedagogy, (e) testing, and (f) evaluation” (Doughty & Long, 2003, p. 50).

Activity Theory



Learning Design

- GER 203 Written Communication
- 3 4-week projects
- project outcomes: grammar card, text, in-class test
- students work in groups of 4-5
- UW-ACE: CMC, quizzes; FlexLab

Group membership

- based on ranking in diagnostic test, groups are heterogeneous (in-group) and homogeneous (between groups)

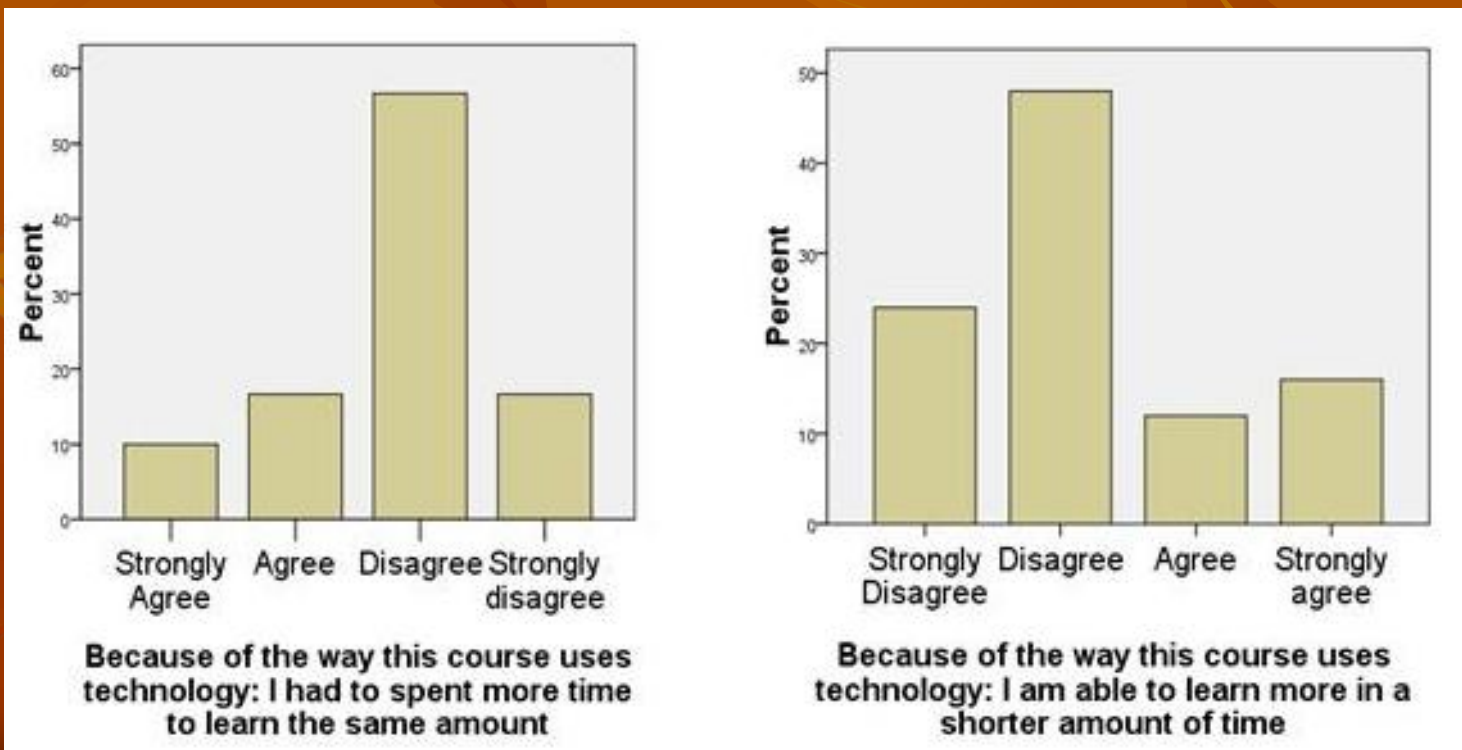
group	rank number of individual group members					sum	stdev	avg
I	1	7	11	15	16	50	6.16	10
II	4	5	9	14	18	50	5.96	10
III	3	6	10	12	19	50	6.12	10
IV	2	8	13	17		40	6.48	10

Questionnaires

- Biodata, learner bio, Likert-scale items
- unsorted items
- cluster analysis
 - Helpfulness of tablets (HOT)
 - Disadvantaged by technology (DIS)
 - Like learning in groups (GROUP)
 - Like learning on my own (SELF)

Results

- n=30
- 60.7% of the students reported to have enjoyed studying for the course because of using the tablets and 55.1% felt that the course was more interesting because of them



Cluster analysis

Cluster (Ward Method)	I preferred self-study to group work (out of 4)	Helpfulness of tablets (out of 4)	N of participants	% of all participants
SELF/-HOT	3.46	1.98	13	43.3%
GROUP/+HOT	1.62	3.20	8	26.7%
SELF/+HOT	3.33	3.33	9	30.0%

Selected results

- differences in perception of saving time
- participants, who preferred group-work and perceived tablet computers as very effective, reported to enjoy the course much more (3.75 out of 4) than those who preferred self-study and disliked the computers (2.31 out of 4), and slightly more than cluster SELF/+HOT (3.25).

- Finally, a linear regression equation was computed to establish if there was a correlation between the students' preference for self-study or group-work and their overall perception of the helpfulness of the tablet computers. In the equation, the statement *I preferred self-study to group work* was used as an independent variable and HOT functioned as the dependent variable. The results revealed that there was a statistically significant correlation between the two items ($p < 0.013$, $F = 7.04$) and that a change in 1 point on the Likert-scale in the self-study/group-work statement would result in a reduction of 0.448 in HOT ($\beta = -0.448$). In fact, **as much as 20.1% of variance in the overall perception of helpfulness of tablets could be attributed to the students' response to the self-study or group-work statement.**

Conclusion

- majority accepted the use of computers – not really an issue
- perception of (graded) group-work influenced their perception of the course as a whole and its electronic ‘components’

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Thank you.

I am very grateful to our group of collaborators on the Watpal project, in particular to Nikolai Penner, who did a substantial part of the cluster analysis presented here.