10 Filmmaking by students or rethinking thinking

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1.   Introduction

As proPIC partners in Kiel, the area of expertise we brought into the project was filmmaking in teacher training as an innovative learning approach. In 2013, the so-called Viducation project[3] was launched at the Institute of Romance Studies at the University of Kiel[4] (CAU) as a reaction to the new Bachelor of Arts and Masters of Arts degree programmes in order to improve students' learning skills and core competences by creating subject-related videos. Filmmaking by students is already widely used in primary and secondary schools (Reid, Burn, & Parker, 2002), while teacher education is still hardly prepared for it (as shown for German teacher education training, Müller, 2012). The aim of this article is to present a learning approach that enables students to expand their subject knowledge in a sustainable, value-based, and personality-building way on the basis of constructivist learning theories by means of filmmaking. The framework of proPIC offered an opportunity to use this learning approach with incoming students during the study week in a workshop and to encourage all participants to produce a film themselves as a creative output. In this context, data could be collected through designing the iBook and the workshop as well as surveys and student artefacts. In the following sections, we explain the theoretical background of the learning approach 'Filmmaking by Students' and sum up

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3. https://viducation.net/

4. https://www.romanistik.uni-kiel.de/de?set_language=de

empirical evidence of filmmaking in learning. Subsequently, we present the methodical procedure and its results in relation to this approach in the proPIC project.

2.   Theoretical background

Filmmaking by students, a learning approach based on constructivist learning theories, means a context-based creation of videos for learning purposes. Kritt (2018) points out that constructivist education was developed on the basis of Dewey's pragmatic philosophy, Piaget's theory of cognitive development, and Vygotsky's cultural history approach (Kritt, 2018). Considering that learners actively construct their knowledge through individual transformation and changes in understanding (Mathieson, 2015), filmmaking is the "most appropriate technology and medium for learning and embedding new subject knowledge and understanding, and for reflecting on and reinforcing and extending that knowledge" (Reid et al., 2002, p. 18). Through the process of filmmaking – pre-production, production, and post-production – students present academic content and transform acquired concepts and principles of a particular discipline in the form of a film using storytelling and the 'language' of film (Monaco, 2009). In addition to acquiring knowledge, students train various competences, more precisely media, professional, and social and self-competence. The learning process of filmmaking is in sum the approach to address 21st century skills (Ken, 2010), as students critically question specific problems of a particular discipline and produce a creative film to communicate their understanding of the world.

3.   Empirical evidence of filmmaking in learning

There is empirical evidence that filmmaking enables students to improve their learning skills and core competencies and to acquire lasting knowledge. Research focuses heavily on the use of filmmaking by students in primary and secondary schools. In 2002, the evaluation report on the BECTA Digital Video

Pilot Project (Reid et al., 2002), which involved 50 schools from across the UK, provided detailed insight into the process of learning through filmmaking and its learning outcomes. Key findings relate to increased student motivation and the development of skills such as problem solving, negotiation, reasoning, argumentation, and risk taking. Greene and Crespi (2012) investigated the use of student-created videos in higher education and found that "students appreciated the opportunity to be autonomous and to exercise personal creativity and having educational activities that are experiential, active, and entertaining" (Greene & Crespi, 2012, p. 281). Ludewig (2001) concludes that by introducing filmmaking into language teaching in higher education in terms of an intercultural perspective, students "gradually build a knowledge and understanding of other's values, attitudes and beliefs, in a very concrete and dynamic way" (p. 4).

The Viducation project at CAU strives for comprehensive competence-oriented knowledge transfer by integrating digital forms of teaching and learning and, in particular, by aligning the cultural studies components of specialised education with the subjective experiences of the learners (Hoinkes, 2020). In the form of project-based learning, students of Romance languages produce problem-oriented short films on subject-relevant topics in small groups (Hoinkes, 2020). These empirical results demonstrate that filmmaking as a learning approach contributes to continuous professional development (see Oesterle & Schwab, 2022, Chapter 2 this volume).

4.   Method

4.1.   Procedure

Within the framework of proPIC, we offered participating students the opportunity to study film production for learning purposes. We implemented two approaches. All participants had the opportunity to voluntarily work on the iBook on video production (Clausen & Murillo-Wilstermann, 2019) and on this basis to create a film as a creative output of their research project. In addition,

the incoming students took part in a workshop on video production during the study week at CAU and produced short films during this time. We are guided by the question of how students judge the learning approach of filmmaking for their own and future teaching practice.

4.2. Participants

In theory, every proPIC participant has been invited to make a video. In this article, we consider home students who made a film on the basis of the iBook and incoming students of the study week who attended the workshop on video production. In total, three home students out of 20 produced a film as creative output, two from the second cohort and one from the third cohort. Regarding incoming students, in the first cohort, four students attended the workshop and produced one joint film; in the second cohort, 11 students produced three films in small groups of three or four.

4.3. Data collection

This article is based on qualitative data. Participants' statements on filmmaking are taken from surveys conducted during the first study week by the project coordinators via SurveyMonkey, by us as project partners via Padlet, as well as from the e-portfolios of students who made a film.

5. Results and discussion

In the following, we present how the involved students of proPIC view the learning approach of filmmaking. For the sake of clarity, we will proceed chronologically and separated by groups (incoming and home students).

In the first cohort, which started in the summer semester 2018, we offered the four incoming students a two-day workshop on video production during the study week in Kiel. The students were first introduced to the production process and different aspects of the techniques and 'language' of film (e.g.

camera angles, camera shots, camera movements). We discussed the use of filmmaking in the language classroom, with students reflecting on their own experiences during their school life. After a first input, the students were asked to generate an idea and a storyboard for a film in which they reflect on their experiences and learning outcomes of their participation in proPIC. The students wanted to produce a film together and decided to make a documentary film[5] in which they gave an insight into their activities (e.g. school visit, social event) and analysed their learning outcomes through interviews. On the second workshop day, the last day of the study week, the students were asked to edit and present their film to the proPIC partners at CAU. The students did not complete the film in the given time. The finished film was therefore linked to the proPIC website at a later date.

Although the whole production was very time-consuming, the students said that they enjoyed working in the transnational group. In particular, the creation of a common storyboard had a positive effect on the cooperation in the group: "[t]o start with I had a good time creating the story board with everyone. It was fun coming up with ideas together, we worked perfectly well as a team and I had the feeling everyone was participating and bringing in their ideas" (participant from the first cohort via Padlet). This supports the assumption that filmmaking promotes social competences.

In general, some find the filmmaking learning approach useful for teachers and future teaching:

> "[t]eachers must know about technology and use it properly to find out what it can offer them in the classroom in order to improve the learning/ teaching style. So that this workshop inspired me about the resources I could get from it in my future classes and have some ideas for my research project" (participant from the first cohort via Padlet).

However, another student stated:

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5. https://youtu.be/A5LmB4LGI0Q

> "[f]or my own professional development I wouldn't use video production in the way we used it because it is very time-consuming" (participant of first cohort via SurveyMonkey).

In the second cohort, we focused on smaller productions in a fixed time frame as a reaction to the feedback from students in the first cohort regarding time exposure. After a more interactive workshop[6] using digital tools such as Socrative[7], which served to summarise the content of the interactive tutorial on video production (Clausen & Murillo-Wilstermann, 2019), incoming students were asked to produce a maximum three-minute film[8] on the use of video in language teaching.

The students were pressed for time but later reported that they had benefited from working in transnational groups:

> "[w]e had no [sic] much time, but we had a lot of fun. […] It's been really interesting to make this video, we were four girls from different countries. We all have the same opinion about that selfproduced [sic] videos is [sic] a didactic potential, but we needed our time to agree on how to put it on a image [sic]" (participant from the second cohort via e-portfolio).

The focus on the didactic use of filmmaking inspired the students, they said, to develop skills and think about their future teaching:

> "I would like to offer as many options [formats and occasions] as possible to my students so they will never feel that they are not good enough, because they always have a choice that suits them. […] I wanna use that information when I am planning my teaching for different students, some of them may need my face in the video

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6. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IZVXM8IvvD3J7jYBZSsLLIpSIf3HatxB/view?usp=sharing

7. https://www.socrative.com/

8. https://youtu.be/bNBrb6Q6ZaI

(talking head) to see how I move my mouth while I pronounce the words, while others need to understand words, and using animations, like Cutout animations, is more benefitting" (participant from the second cohort via e-portfolio).

The home students were asked to work through the interactive tutorial on filmmaking (Clausen & Murillo-Wilstermann, 2019) in order to be well prepared for the production of a video as the creative output of the research project. But only in the second cohort did two students take the opportunity to present their research projects in the form of a video. The first student produced a stop-motion video[9] with PLAYMOBIL figures to explain the results of her survey on information and communications technology tools in language learning. As the participant was modelling a Spanish classroom, the participant decided to speak Spanish but present the research project in English. During the final conference in June 2020, the student presented the video, for which the participant received very positive feedback from the audience. The participant mentioned how time-consuming video productions are:

"I realised after finishing it how much we should appreciate a good movie that we see because it was a lot of work" (participant from the second cohort via e-portfolio).

Another participant produced an animated explainer video[10] on digital methods in language teaching. The participant did not make any specific comments on the film production in the e-portfolio but commented generally on the research project which is why we do not analyse these comments in this paper.

Also, in the third cohort, one student decided to present the research project in the form of a video[11]. The participant used the format of a talk show so that the actors could portray both the researcher and the test subjects. Given the

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9. https://youtu.be/F43MUj9GEtw

10. https://youtu.be/I-kDfeNTC2Y9

11. https://propicalessa.wixsite.com/website/research-project?wix-vod-video-id=c551f0059bd64ba799b12bdd45239bba&wix-vod-comp-id=comp-k9gkmti6

limitations imposed by the spread of the coronavirus, the participant stuck to the idea but replaced the real actors with fruits and vegetables, which had been humanised by painting faces on them. The student eventually commented that she had enjoyed producing the film precisely because it was a creative way to present the research results:

> "[c]oncerning my creative product, I can conclude that it was lot of fun for me to illustrate the results of my project in a creative way and I think, one can see that in the product. To improve my video, I should have paid more attention to the language" (participant from the third cohort via e-portfolio).

6.   Conclusion

The self-production of films enables students to visualise their personal approach to learning content, to arrange acquired knowledge in a video through storytelling, and to collaborate with different people in the learning process. Specifically, the positive experiences during the study weeks prove the effect of collaborative filmmaking in terms of social and intercultural competence. The participating students had to discuss their ideas in transnational groups and put themselves in the shoes of others, especially while preparing a storyboard. In addition, the students were able to further their professional development as they developed media competence in relation to the didactic use of videos in language teaching and reflected on their future role as teachers. By using a foreign language in the videos, the foreign language education students promoted their own language skills and their self-competence. Presenting a research-relevant problem or one's own research project by creating a video is an innovative approach that helps to further develop essential core areas of university teaching such as digitalisation, project work, and collaborative learning. The participants predominantly evaluate the learning approach of filmmaking as positive for teaching. But the time required has been criticised several times. The Viducation project in Kiel, which has been successful for many years (as evidenced by the continuous project duration since 2013), and

the positive experiences of proPIC based on the students' feedback, provide great encouragement for the use of filmmaking by students in foreign language teacher education at universities worldwide.

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