

Title of Paper: Perceptions of learning and perceptions of being taught: adult learner reactions to an interactive website.

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Session Type: Individual Research Paper

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Number of words: Abstract 350

Key words: interactive website, incidental learning, tacit learning, prior knowledge, pedagogy.

Abstract submitted as Individual Research Paper for Networked Learning 2002 Conference.

“Perceptions of learning and perceptions of being taught: adult learner reactions to an interactive website.”

This illustrative case study examines the reactions of a group of adult learners to an interactive website. Through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews answers have been sought to the roles of recognised prior knowledge and tacit knowledge in overt and incidental learning within this medium. In these terms, the website juxtaposes elements of structured pedagogic strategy and independent learning, making it distinct from both the written or the spoken word.

Previous experience of the medium and the technology appears have very little influence on the perceptions of teaching and learning. However, the extent of the learners' pre-knowledge of the subject matter addressed within the site may be important to their perception of the learning environment, which in turn influences their perceptions of what they regard as relevant knowledge and their awareness of knowledge acquisition. The issue of the perception of revisiting areas of the site as 'cheating' also suggests that learners' reactions to the interactive web-site is based on how they translate what they are doing in terms of other media of learning. This, along with the contrast between the learners' and the tutor's perceptions of the learning which took place are also explored and discussed with reference to the recent literature.

Interaction with most educational websites will result in the emplacement of tacit knowledge, which, whether or not deliberately employed as a stratagem, needs to be recognised by the authors of such sites as well as by learners. In this way the richness and distinctiveness of the medium is more fully utilised by both. Recognition of the tacit learning and prior knowledge of the learner is central to confidence-building in adult student. This study additionally suggests that there is a need to make explicit what may be learned from a site either at the outset, or if part of the pedagogic design, at the end of the experience. Where this is not the case, that knowledge which has been acquired in the tacit form may remain in that form beyond the completion of the learning experience.

Conference Theme: e-learning, e-tutoring, the e-university.