

EMPOWERING ACTIVE LEARNING: A SOCIAL ANNOTATION TOOL FOR IMPROVING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

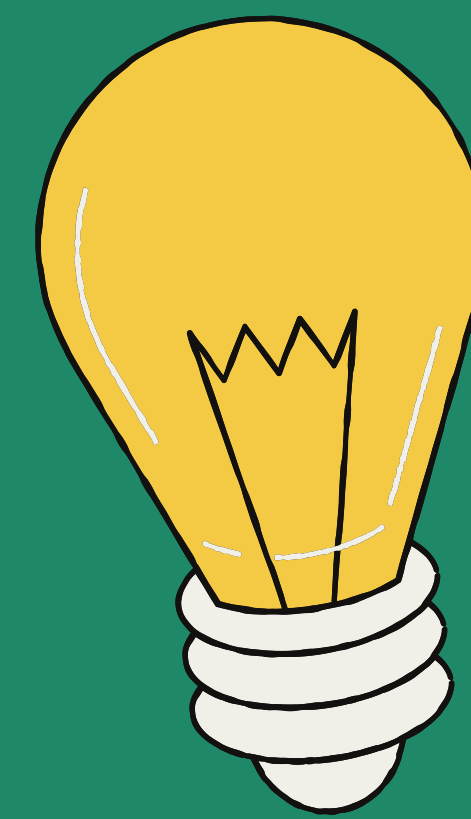


INTRODUCTION

Engaging students in pre-class activities is essential for their learning outcomes. This study demonstrates that using social annotation tools for reading and annotating positively influences students' motivation, interactions, and academic performance.

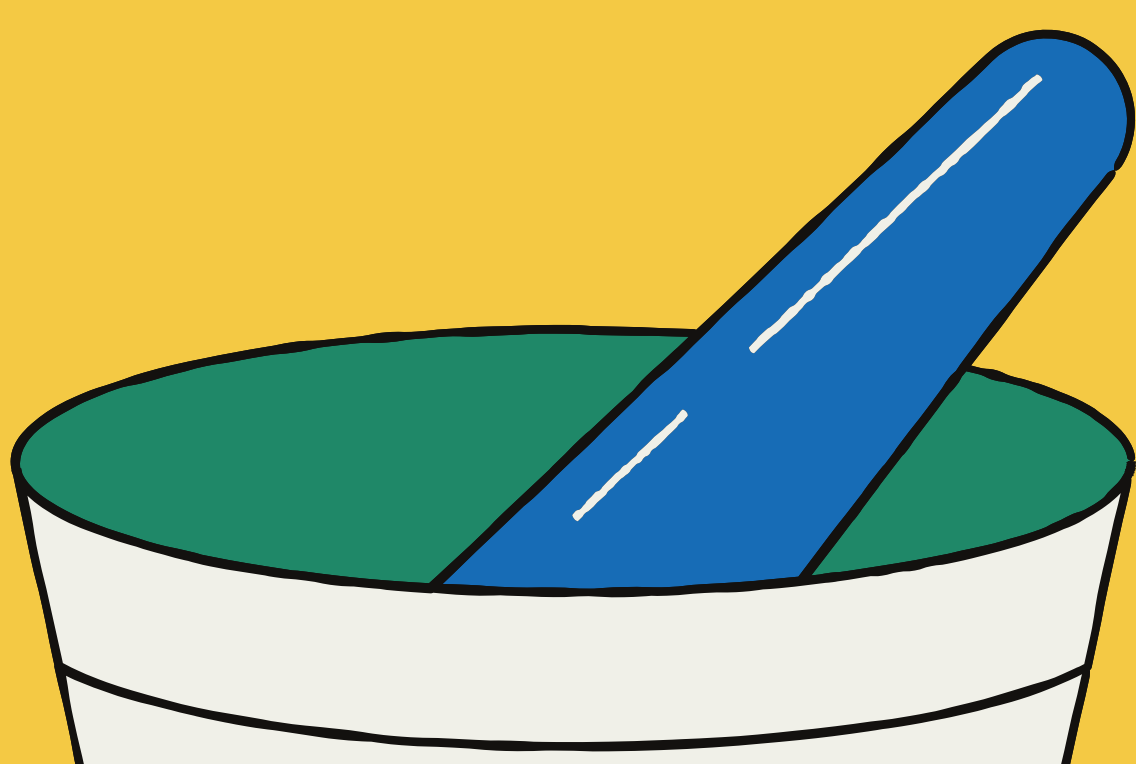
OBJECTIVE

This study aims to investigate the impact of students' pre-class engagement in social annotation (Perusall) on their learning outcomes and experiences with social annotation as a pre-class learning activity.



METHODOLOGY

The investigation was conducted in a postgraduate marketing unit. Over 12 weeks, students were required to study online lectures and submit annotations on lecture slides via the social annotation platform, Perusall. Through Perusall, students created personal annotations, responded to their peers' annotations, raised and answered questions, and exchanged perspectives and ideas. Subsequently, students attended weekly tutorials and submitted essay answers assessing their comprehension of key theories and concepts by applying them to real-world scenarios.



FINDINGS

The findings indicate that pre-class social annotations positively impact students' performance on post-class assessments. Notably, English as an Additional Language (EAL) students with low English proficiency achieve results in Perusall comparable to those with high English proficiency. Additionally, the study identifies key aspects of social annotation that students highly value, providing insights for future implementation.

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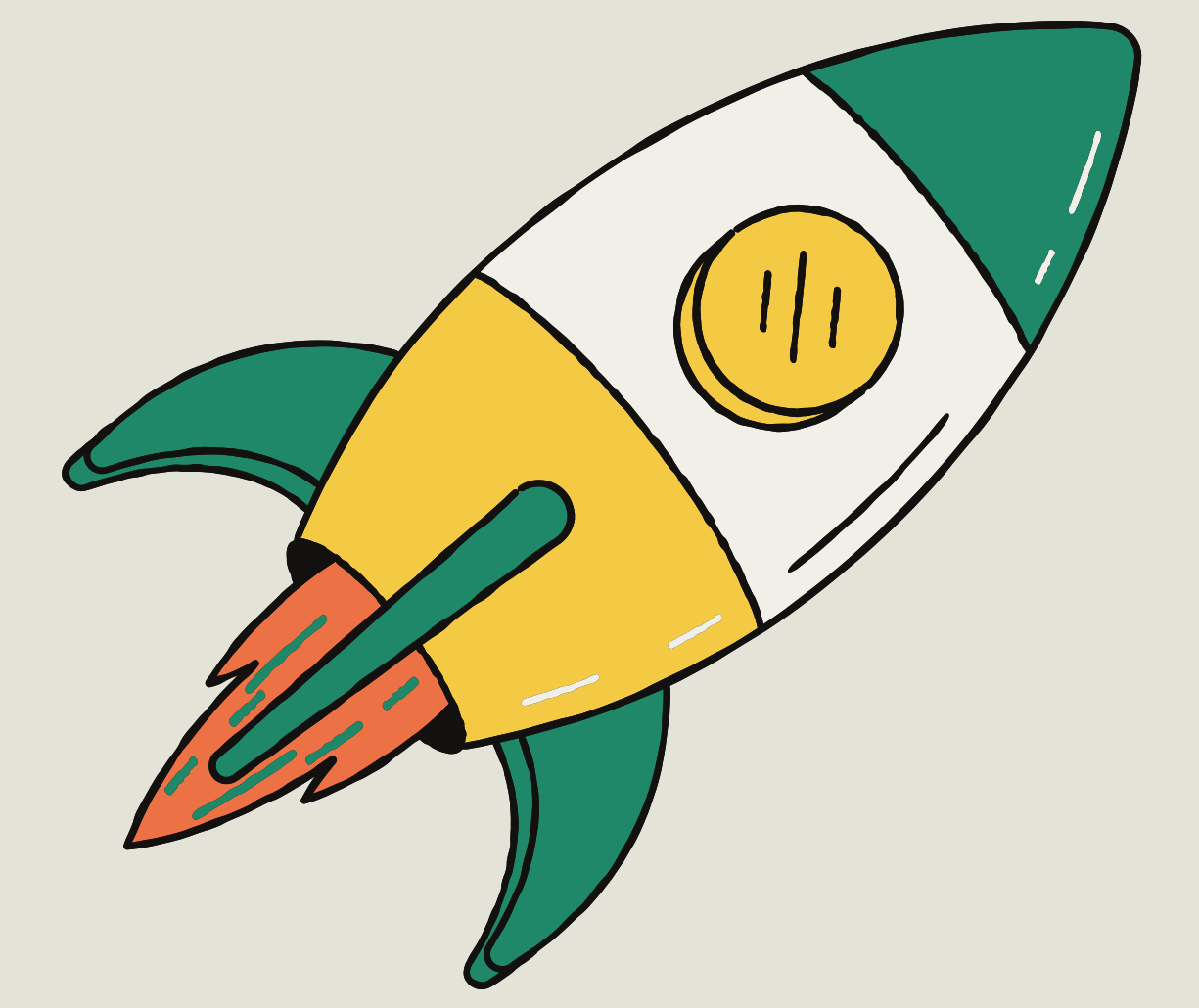
Cui, T., & Wang, J. (2024). Empowering active learning: A social annotation tool for improving student engagement. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 55, 712–730.

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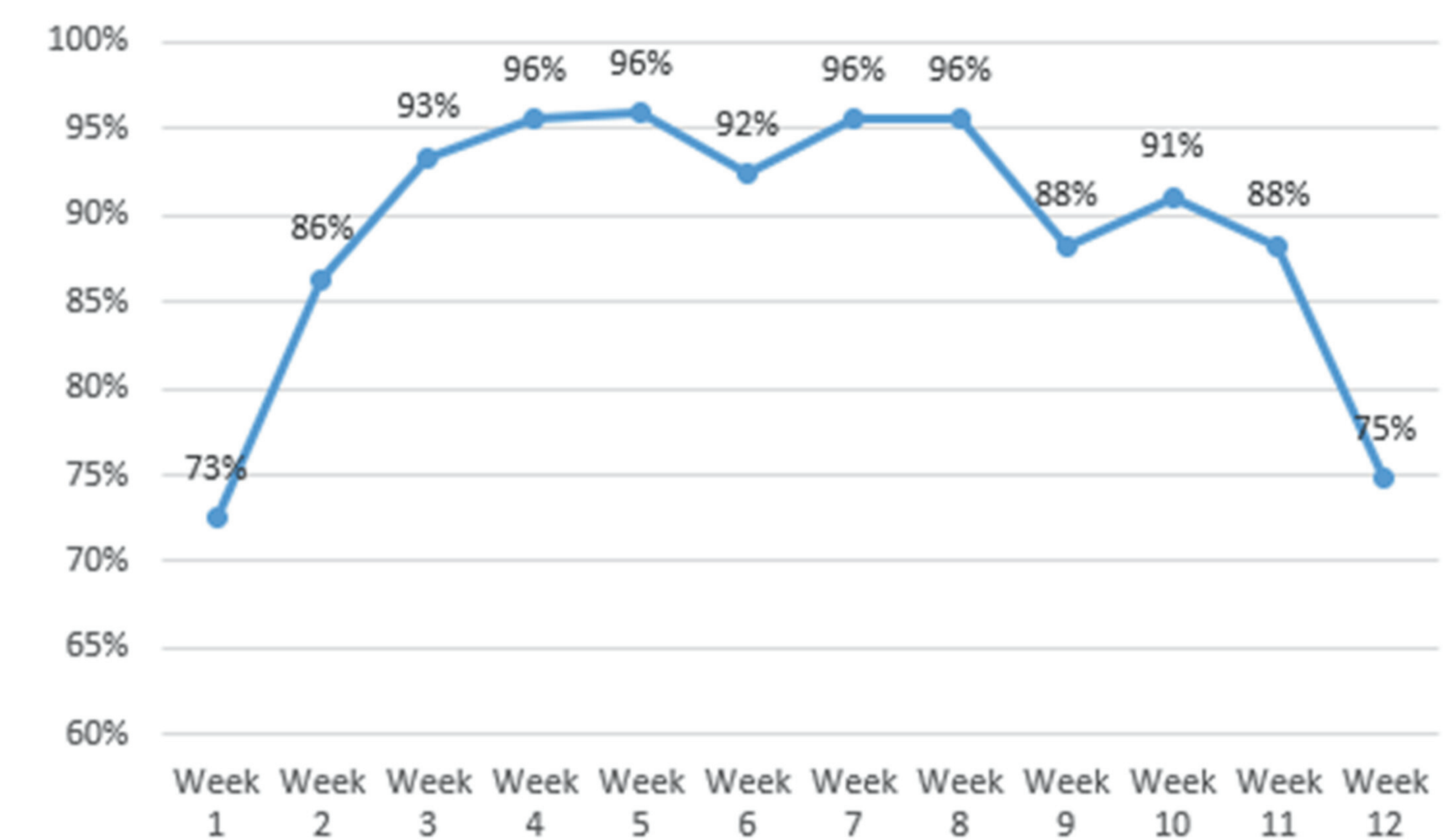
Funding, Conflict of Interest, and Ethics Statement

No funding was received in connection to this research. There are no conflicts of interest in this study. This research was approved by Monash University ethics committee (approval number 16702), prior to the commencement of the data collection.



DISCUSSION

This study provides practical suggestions for designing pre-class learning activities that enhance students' learning experiences and outcomes. The results show how inclusive and collaborative evaluations can improve EAL students' performance and engagement.



What students like

The thematic findings from the students' open-ended answers reveal what students value most in their Perusall activities: (1) cognitive benefits; (2) social interactions with other students; (3) receiving teaching staff's feedback; (4) user-friendly and flexible interface. Here are some quotes:

The best thing I like is to communicate with classmates and teachers on Perusall, because it makes me understand the lesson much better. Specifically, I can ask what I don't understand wherever I have problems, and classmates give me some help on Perusall.

You can share your views with students anytime, anywhere.

This led me to think more critically about the themes and concepts of the lessons. When I listen to the lecture, it triggers my thought process and I can share that on Perusall.

Students give various applications of the concepts and help each other to get better understanding of the materials.

Sometimes we miss out on important ideas when we are in a time restricted learning session. I feel Perusall has the potential to become a place where each student can engage with a topic to their capacity and time is not an obstacle for engagement.

Challenges

Students also reported facing challenges during their experience. They mentioned the quality of their peers' annotations, teachers' facilitation and technical difficulties.

Some of them just copy and paste definitions, and are not interested in engaging in relevant discussions. It would be good if our professors can correct or label the wrong/misleading annotations.

Sometimes I cannot select the knowledge points that I want to choose. It needs to be an app which can provide notification on phone to show what's happening.

LIMITATIONS

The course design and the small cohort size limit the generalizability of the findings. Also, the high value of grades (20%) assigned to the annotation activities might influence how students engage in the pre-class learning. Furthermore, this study did not evaluate the students' prior knowledge level, which may have influenced their learning performance in the course. In addition, there was no analysis of the types of annotations made by the students, which could provide further insights into their learning process.