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Basel

Research Project

Chat and F2F meetings in teamwork: a comparison of interaction dynamics across two different modes

Project funded by own resources

Project title Chat and F2F meetings in teamwork: a comparison of interaction dynamics across two different modes

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Organisation / Research unit

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Instant messaging as an equalizer in the life of an intercultural MBA team

Technological advances have provided more and more means of communication that work teams can use to accomplish their tasks. Even in teams mostly operating face-to-face, alternate modes of communication accompany the more traditional work forms, including email or whatsapp, but also specially developed work tools such as team-based messaging system Slack, which in 2019 had over 10 million daily users.

The body of research on team interactions in contemporary digital modes, while growing, remains relatively scant in comparison with studies of face-to-face meetings (Darics, 2016). In particular, longitudinal research is lacking that addresses crucial questions including: What is the role of digital communication in face-to-face teams? Are certain topics or interactions only present in one mode of communication and not in another? How is the interaction organised and is there a different share in participation in the different modes? What different interactional features appear in the two different modes?

These questions are addressed through exploring the communications of a team of six culturally and functionally diverse MBA students, who completed a series of projects for real world clients over nine months. Alongside frequent face-to-face meetings, the team used a variety of technological tools to facilitate their interactions, with Whatsapp as the most frequently used tool to facilitate remote interactions.

The dataset consists of the recorded team meetings and the Whatsapp chat the team used across the nine months. Interactions in the two different modes are compared in the talk with a specific focus on the different functions the two modes seem to fulfil. Participation in the different modes is also discussed and important implications are drawn, including as to the role of less proficient and marginalised speakers.

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