

Everyday Life Information World Mapping of International Students: A Visual Narrative Inquiry Approach

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ABSTRACT

It is challenging to pursue a higher education degree using another language in a different cultural environment. For international master's students who are also novice researchers, it could be even more challenging. Research on international students typically focuses on their cultural adjustment, health issues, financial issues, and academic performance. Information behavior research on international students mostly examines issues regarding coursework. While it is important to investigate international students' academic information behavior, it is even more important to investigate their everyday life information behavior. One would be able to devote to their academic lives when they fulfill their everyday life information needs. Through investigating international students' everyday life information behavior, we can identify critical information sources and obstacles students encountered in information seeking, and help them easily "survive" as an international student.

Greyson's Information World Mapping (IWM) provides a visual-elicitation interview framework for us to examine individuals' information behavior from a holistic perspective. The current study conducted IWM interviews with 16 Taiwanese master's students studying at several universities in Japan. The interview guide was designed based on visual narrative inquiry approach, emphasizing temporality, sociality, and place. Students were asked to describe their study abroad experience and a typical day. Additional attention was paid to their interactions with people and other information sources. They were also asked to recall critical incidents when having difficulties in their everyday lives. Specific questions regarding information needs, as well as how and where various information activities happened (such as seeking, sharing, and organizing information) were then asked. After the major conversation ended, students were asked to draw their IWMs. A set of 10-color pens with a blank A4 paper were provided to the participant. Drawing upon Greyson's IWM, participants were asked to include items, sources, people, and places involved in their everyday life information activities. Afterward, they were asked to describe and explain their drawings.

Narrative analysis was conducted with holistic-content perspective as suggested by Lieblich et al. (1998). Each participant's life story was read based on their verbal narratives along with the IWMs. The global impression and main themes/foci were then identified through repetitively scrutinizing their stories. In the current study, we focused on how students' everyday life information stories were presented through their IWMs. Specifically, the major contextual problems, people, and places involved in various information activities.

Preliminary findings will be presented in this poster with two students' everyday life information stories representatively exhibiting fundamental, leisure, cultural, and career information needs. In general, local information and information from their home country played different but essential roles in students' IWMs. Other students' experiences were found to be critical for international students to fulfill their everyday life information needs. Students tended to gather information through various social media and people. However, the information needed may be scattered on different social media platforms. Further analysis regarding deeper contextual elements in students' IWMs can be identified and discussed to provide practical suggestions for different stakeholders.

KEYWORDS

Information behavior; information world mapping; information seeking; visual methods; international students.

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