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Navigating Educational Mistakes in Learning: Cultural Perspectives of Emirati Students and Expatriate Instructors in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the cultural perceptions of mistakes in learning within higher education classrooms in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) among Emirati students and expatriate instructors. This study revealed an interplay of cultural norms, teaching practices, and mistaken culture in learning. While instructors emphasized the importance of embracing mistakes as tools for reflection and growth, many students associated mistakes with embarrassment and fear of judgment, reflecting broader cultural attitudes. Contrasting views on the roles and relationships between students and instructors were highlighted, with

expatriate educators adopting facilitative teaching approaches and students often perceiving instructors as authoritative figures. The findings underscore the need for culturally responsive teaching strategies to foster a positive mistake culture and bridge the gap between pedagogical practices and student expectations. The implications provide valuable insights for international educators and policymakers striving to create inclusive and effective learning environments in culturally diverse contexts.

Keywords: United Arab Emirates, educational mistakes, mistake culture, higher education, cross-cultural education

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INTRODUCTION

From a constructivist perspective, "learning is an active process" where "learners construct meaning" through "interactions with their environment" and others (Singh et al., 2021). Errors are viewed as integral to the learning journey, serving as indicators of underlying misconceptions in learning processes (Käfer et al., 2018). Individuals often demonstrate reluctance to make errors, particularly in high-stakes situations such as tests, due to potential negative consequences, even though errors have been shown in research to be significant to the progression of learning (Tulis et al., 2017). However, Pan et al. (2020) suggest that errors offer valuable learning opportunities that are frequently overlooked. These opportunities can open new pathways for inquiry (DeBrincat, 2015), contribute to the prevention of future errors (Schroder et al., 2017; Lunde, 2021), and equip students with essential skills for real-world scenarios (Lunde, 2021).

When learners make errors, they are prompted to reevaluate their understanding and engage in deeper cognitive processing to rectify errors (Pan et al., 2020). The process of making errors fosters critical thinking skills and promotes a deeper understanding of concepts (Hattie, 2012; Grunspan et al., 2016). Additionally, encountering and correcting errors enhances metacognitive abilities, enabling learners to manage and adjust their learning activities more effectively (Denton et al., 2020). Moreover, errors provide valuable feedback to both learners and educators about areas of weakness and areas requiring further instruction (Van der Kleij et al., 2015). By recognizing errors and holes in

comprehension, educators can adjust learning activities to accommodate individual student needs, thus promoting more effective learning outcomes (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Recognizing mistakes as essential elements of the academic journey can enhance critical skills and learning outcomes. By redefining mistakes as valuable opportunities for growth, educators can empower students to address challenges with greater confidence and resilience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Positive and Negative Mistake Culture

Käfer et al. (2018) suggested that making mistakes in the classroom is a personal and social experience. Mistake culture was first introduced by Oser and colleagues (Oser et al., 1999). Mistake culture within educational settings pertains to both instructors and students; thus, the term mistake culture can also encompass errors committed by both parties, encompassing specific actions and attitudes related to mistakes that are encouraged by instructors and adopted by students (Käfer et al., 2018). The terms "positive" and "negative" are often used to characterize the culture of mistakes in a classroom (Metcalfe, 2017; Käfer et al., 2018). In classrooms that cultivate a positive mistake culture, students are encouraged to think about their misunderstandings and use these insights to enrich their learning (Käfer et al., 2018). Various types of mistakes can be more beneficial for both young and older learners than direct instruction (Cyr & Anderson, 2014).

In contrast, a negative mistake culture prevails in classrooms where students are hesitant to make mistakes in public due to the fear of the instructor or peers judging them poorly (Eriksson et al., 2020; Henry et al., 2019; Liu, 2011; Pan et al., 2020; Samuels, 2018). Such circumstances may cause the benefits of learning through mistakes to not be fulfilled since mistakes are viewed as potentially damaging to self-related beliefs instead of learning opportunities (Metcalfe, 2017; Käfer et al., 2018, Kerimbayev et al., 2023). The perceptions of mistakes by instructors and how students perceive mistakes may be culturally specific and vary across countries (Eriksson et al., 2020).

However, attitudes toward positive and negative mistaken cultures may vary among different segments of society and across generations. The value of embracing mistakes as opportunities for learning and growth is increasing with globalization and experiences with diverse perspectives. Educational institutions and organizations in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which comprises six countries, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, are increasingly emphasizing resilience, critical thinking, and innovation as significant components of learning, which can contribute to a more positive mistake culture over time (ADEC, 2009; ADEC, 2014; ADEC, 2015; Al-Fadala, 2015; Anderson et al., 2010; Brewer et al., 2007; Deus, 2013; and Tayan, 2017). Initiatives aimed at fostering encouraging and engaging learning opportunities that promote experimentation, reflection, and continuous improvement can contribute to developing a more constructive approach to mistakes within the

GCC educational context (ADEC, 2009; ADEC, 2014; ADEC, 2015; Al-Fadala, 2015; Anderson et al., 2010; Brewer et al., 2007; Deus, 2013; and Tayan, 2017).

Student and Instructor Classroom Relationships in UAE Higher Education

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), a prosperous Middle Eastern nation, has committed to developing a high-quality educational system (Ashour & Fatima, 2016; Silvera et al., 2022). As Elmendorf et al. (2016) and Lucas & Rogers (2016) noted, colleges and universities must prioritize instructor care for their students' well-being. This is particularly important in the post-COVID-19 era, when educational institutions faced unprecedented challenges. These measures are necessary to maintain high educational standards that students can use to guide their learning (Holles, 2021).

Two significant factors in moderating the relationships between student-instructor interactions and classroom engagement are students' intellectual self-challenge and their intellectual sense of belonging (Kim & Lundberg, 2016). Furthermore, fostering connections between instructors and students was identified as a subtheme in a study by Baik et al. (2019) on how institutions can promote student mental wellness.

A study conducted by Afari et al. (2013) across three universities in the UAE revealed that instructors who foster positive relationships with their students can enhance students' comprehension of the material. The findings also indicate that students are more inclined to seek assistance when facing challenges with their coursework if they perceive their instructors as approachable and invest in their academic progress. Concerns have been expressed by Emirati students regarding perceived insufficient expertise among faculty in higher education institutions across the UAE (Ashour & Fatima, 2016).

The current study is a subsection of a larger research project conducted by Eppard et al. (2021) and Singh et al. (2021), which investigated how Emirati students and non-UAE faculty personnel in public higher education institutions perceived and characterized learning and teaching within the UAE context. Researchers have also examined how Emirati students distinguish successful teaching strategies with the aim of supporting their educational needs. The interview data from both the students and the instructors were from a larger study. However, interview data from the larger project were reviewed, with relevant data for this study extracted and analyzed. While there may be some overlap in participants' responses with those reported by Eppard et al. (2021) and Singh et al. (2021), the interpretation and coding of these responses yielded unique categories specific to the present analysis.

Understanding how mistakes are perceived in educational contexts is essential for fostering effective learning environments, particularly in culturally diverse settings such as the UAE. In the GCC region, social and cultural norms often influence students' attitudes toward mistake-making, where mistakes are frequently associated with shame or failure (Henry et al., 2019). This perception can limit students' willingness to engage in risk-taking or active participation in learning activities (Eriksson et al., 2020). Conversely, research grounded in

Western pedagogical traditions emphasizes the role of mistakes as opportunities for cognitive development, self-regulation, and the cultivation of resilience (Pan et al., 2020). The present study addresses these contrasting perspectives by exploring the beliefs of Emirati students and expatriate instructors in UAE higher education institutions regarding mistakes in the learning process. As UAE universities continue to adopt international educational standards, there is a growing need for culturally responsive teaching practices that bridge these differing viewpoints (Samuels, 2018). This research contributes to the understanding of the mistake culture in higher education, offering insights that can inform policies and teaching strategies aimed at creating inclusive, supportive learning environments in the GCC. Such approaches are essential for promoting critical thinking and lifelong learning skills in a globalized academic landscape.

The present study aimed to examine Emirati students' and expatriate instructors' perspectives on the role and perception of educational mistakes within the UAE context. Research questions:

RQ1: How are mistakes viewed in the learning process by Emirati students and expatriate instructors in the classroom?

RQ2: In what way do Emirati students and expatriate instructors view classroom relationships?

METHOD

The research employed qualitative data collection methods, utilizing an exploratory case study approach guided by a constructivist perspective as outlined by Creswell (2014). Research data were collected from a public university in the UAE, with a student population predominantly consisting of female Emiratis. The instructors are composed primarily of expatriates who hold degrees from institutions outside the UAE. The institution employed 574 expatriate instructors and 71 UAE Emiratis in instructional and administrative roles (QS Quacquarelli Symonds, 2023). Although the native tongue for most Emirati students is Arabic, all the courses, except Islamic and Arabic studies, are taught in English.

Data Collection

Instructors

The instructors included ten non-Emirati participants who lived in the UAE for fewer than ten years and taught a range of subjects, including life skills, education, art history, media studies, and computer science. According to Thirlwall, Kuzemski, Boghestani, Brunton, and Brownie (2021), expats living in the UAE rarely understand Emirati cultural and societal norms, as robust interactions are rare. Therefore, the amount of time that the instructors lived and worked in the country is of little consequence.

Among the ten instructors, eight were female, and two were male. All instructors obtained their degrees from academes across the United States or the United Kingdom (Eppard et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2021). Pseudonyms were utilized to protect the identities of the instructor participants.

Students

The students included ten female Emirati participants who agreed to take part in the study and were enrolled in the public university for less than one year. The student participants were UAE national females between the ages of 18 and 23 and had attended PreK-12 public, private, and/or international schools. Arabic was the first language of all the student participants (Eppar et al., 2201; Singh et al., 2021). Pseudonyms were utilized to protect the identities of the study participants. They were recruited through a first-year class that all freshmen are required to take. The interviewed students volunteered to be part of the study.

Data Extracted from Larger Study

All instructor information, including background, teaching experience, and evidence of work in higher education, was drawn from a larger study (Eppard et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2021). Similarly, student information regarding background, prior experience with Western-trained instructors, and supporting evidence was obtained from this larger study (Eppard et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2021). While some interview data from both instructors and students were utilized in the larger study, the data were not specifically analyzed in relation to student mistakes in the learning process.

Semistructured interview questions

All the participants voluntarily took part in semistructured interviews. Students agreed to participate exclusively in pairs, aligning with cultural norms previously documented in the literature (Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2005). To respect cultural norms, the student semistructured interviews were conducted by two researchers: one researcher posed the questions, while the other took detailed notes on the participants' responses. The instructors were interviewed individually. Each interview was conducted once, but follow-up questions were agreed upon if further clarity was needed.

The semistructured interview questions were obtained from a larger study (Eppard et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2021) and were constructed on the basis of paradigms derived from the literature (Yin, 2018). The student and instructor semistructured interviews both contained twelve questions. Among the twelve student semistructured interview questions, the following questions were extracted from the larger study: 4. How do you view mistakes in the classroom? How do you feel when you make a mistake in the classroom? 5. What do you define as learning, and how do you know when learning has happened? 6. What are the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom? 7. What are the roles of students in the classroom?

Among the twelve instructor semistructured interview questions, the following were extracted from the broader study: 4. How do you view mistakes in the classroom? How do you respond when a student makes a mistake in the classroom? 5. What do you define as learning, and how do you know when

learning has happened? 6. What are the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom? 7. What are the roles of students in the classroom?

Data analysis

All semistructured interviews were transcribed by one of the researchers, while the other researcher asked questions. To analyze the semistructured interviews, a systematic coding and categorization process was employed to uncover key themes and patterns within the data (Creswell, 2014). Initially, semistructured interview transcripts were reviewed and coded to highlight significant statements and ideas. The codes were subsequently organized into larger themes that encompassed underlying concepts emerging from the data (Yin 2018). The analysis allowed for an in-depth exploration of participant perspectives, providing rich qualitative insights. Constant comparison was used throughout the process to refine themes and ensure consistency, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding of Emirati student and expatriate instructor perspectives on educational mistakes.

The principal researcher of the study has a PhD in education and was trained extensively in interviewing techniques as well as having conducted multiple interviews for previous studies. In addition, the study was conducted in accordance with and approved by the Institutional Review Board of Zayed University. All participants, both students and instructors, were provided with a consent form to sign and date. The forms were completed by individual participants. The completed consent forms are securely stored by the Principal Investigator, as outlined in Eppard et al. (2021).

RESULTS

Instructors and students were questioned about their views on mistakes during the learning process and their understanding of the roles and interactions among students, instructors, and student peers. The results will first report on Finding 1: the student and instructor view mistakes in the learning process, followed by Findings 2, 3, and 4, which discuss the roles of instructor to student, student to instructor, and student to student, respectively.

Finding 1: Students' and instructors' views on mistakes in the learning process

Instructors reported that some students demonstrated an unwillingness to engage in class activities and answer questions, likely from fear of making mistakes and potentially facing social repercussions. The findings underscore the importance of understanding and accounting for cultural factors in educational practices and the necessity for culturally responsive teaching strategies to promote effective learning outcomes. Dr. Abigail highlighted the need to model using mistakes as a reflective teaching tool utilized by the instructor:

> "Mistakes – as learning opportunities. This has traveled with me since preschool. My expectation is that students will make mistakes because if they know this info already why I am even here. Sometimes consistent mistakes have to do with how I am teaching it, so I use it as an opportunity to reflect on my own teaching."

In her statement, the educator underscored the need to use appropriate means of addressing mistakes with students:

> "If it's a language mistake, I repeat with corrections embedded. If it is a concept, I ask students to restate. Ask others, I do not put the spotlight on that student. I do not want to intimidate, as students are already timid. I might take that mistake and put it into another context. I decide if it is beneficial to highlight information."

The results revealed that students held varying perspectives regarding the role of mistakes in the learning process. Some participants viewed mistakes as opportunities for growth and improvement, whereas others perceived them as sources of embarrassment and shame. For example, Asma said, "You have to make mistakes to learn. I prefer to make a mistake at the start. It's better." Zamzam said, "I do not want to participate after I've made a mistake. It's my fault. I feel that people laugh at me." Despite having limited exposure to Western-educated instructors, Asma's comments align with the characteristics of Western pedagogical practices toward mistakes in the classroom learning process.

Students hesitate to engage in classroom activities because of their fear of making mistakes in the learning process, as observed by the instructors. Furthermore, cultural considerations emphasize the importance of employing flexible teaching approaches. Dr. Abigail stressed the value of using mistakes as tools for reflective teaching and adopting constructive approaches to mistake culture. However, the students demonstrated varying perspectives on mistakes, viewing them either as opportunities for learning or as causes of embarrassment.

Finding 2: Role of instructor and student relationships

Many of the instructors expressed a preference for assuming the role of facilitator as opposed to being a central source of information. They aspire to be a guide on the side, providing students with the necessary tools to help them construct their knowledge. Dr. Melanie said:

> "I see myself as a facilitator who gives them tools. They have info at their fingertips, and I'm giving tools that they can use to do autonomous learning. Students explain what they need to you."

Dr. Jodi reinforced Dr. Melanie's comments: "I have a role as well. I'm not a delivery woman. Holding a rope above teaching and learning. If you pull it too

tight – snap. If too loose—not happening but having to both be pulling. Have to walk hand-in-hand."

Instructors view the relationship between themselves and their students as equity, emphasizing the noteworthiness of student participation in learning activities. Dr. Jodi stated the following: "I treat them as colleagues about to go off in the field. I assign credit for professionalism."

Contrary to the instructors' perception of an equitable relationship, the students regarded instructors as the foremost source of knowledge and the ultimate decision-makers in the classroom, similar to a parental figure. The students also believed that instructors should embody the qualities of role models and deliverers of knowledge and be helpful, supportive, and kind. Salama stated that the instructor's role is to "teach, pass on knowledge that is the only role." Mai concurred: "They should be kind. That's what makes students want to be in a classroom." Rana took the role of the instructor further, equating it with a central role in society: "They are people who have devoted themselves to teach others. To provide information to others so that others can use this information to help others. Like a messenger." Zamzam articulated a similar viewpoint: "To give us information in detail, to help us with weaknesses in class, what we do not understand. When instructors share their stories, it makes class fun. We gain experience from them. They are our role models."

The instructors in the study favored the role of facilitators, providing tools for autonomous learning rather than being the primary source of information. They emphasized equitable relationships with students, fostering engagement and participation. However, the students perceived the instructors as authoritative figures and role models, expecting knowledge delivery and support.

Finding 3: The role of the student and instructor relationship

According to the students, their primary obligation in learning is to listen to the instructor and demonstrate respect. Khulood stated that students should "not disrespect instructors, focus on material." Maitha agreed by saying that students should "respect instructors' opinions." In contrast, the instructor wanted the students to show that they were engaged and take responsibility for their learning. They did not specify how they wanted to be treated by students, only how they wanted students to be responsible for their learning journeys. Dr. Anne summarized this in the following quote: "One thing I struggle with here more than in the US is guide on the side as opposed to sage on the stage." Instead of acting as the center of knowledge transfer in the classroom, she stated that she preferred to play the role of a guide. Dr. Jodi also highlighted the importance of student engagement in the classroom: "To be engaged. If we cannot get out of the starting gate. Students have to be intrinsically motivated and engaged to take responsibility for learning." Dr. David viewed his role as that of a quasistudent: "My students also teach me. It is a give-and-take relationship. Their role is to observe as much as I can give them by asking questions." All instructors conveyed similar perspectives and emphasized the significance of active student participation within the educational context.

Students viewed instructors as the primary source of knowledge and indicated the importance of showing respect toward instructors. This implies a passive learning approach on the part of students. Conversely, instructors stress student engagement and self-responsibility for learning. Instructors preferred guiding students rather than being the disseminators of knowledge. Active student involvement was encouraged by all the instructors.

Finding 4: The role of student and student relationships

The value of student collaboration was the topic on which both students and instructors appeared to agree. Dr. Madeline: "Student to student. This is where 90% of the learning takes place. Very prevalent here." Instructors encourage student collaboration, which students prefer. ZamZam, who came from an educational background with limited exposure to Western-trained instructors, said the following: "Respect, not make mean comments about being ugly, fat, high or low status. Being friendly, helpful, comfortable with each other." Instructors also agreed with this notion. Dr. Madaline stated that she thinks that students should "respect each other, help each other. I have seen students give each other judgmental looks; that's a problem." Dr. Julie said that the role of peers is "to support and encourage each other." Ms. Leah stated the following:

> "They cannot succeed without each other, and we don't do enough to facilitate this. When I was in ..., the instructor passed around a sheet for everyone's contact details. She built a community to be successful together. If you are absent, ask someone else, not me. These are the skills they need to be successful."

Dr. Nadia also concurred: "I let them help each other. There is so much difference in abilities. If one knows, I let them explain."

Other instructors agreed that student collaboration was important, but they also supported the view that it was essential because they observed that students perceived English language constraints. Students realized their obligation to help one another overcome language-related challenges. This position emphasizes the need for a diverse approach to learning, where collaborative approaches are used alongside the integration of support systems for language proficiency to meet the demands of students with various linguistic backgrounds. Salama said, "Maybe I do not understand what she says or her accent [the instructor]. While the students and instructors agreed on the importance of student collaboration, they may approach student collaboration from two different angles. For example, Western-educated instructors may view student collaboration as a strategy that allows each student to bring their skills to the collective and as a method to show how individuals can contribute to student collaboration. The students may view student collaboration more holistically with the final product as the focus to highlight the worth of the collective.

Both the students and the instructors emphasized the importance of student collaboration. Instructors encouraged respect and support among peers, recognizing collaboration as vital for success. The students acknowledged their role in assisting with language-related challenges. While both groups valued collaboration, they approached it from different perspectives, highlighting the importance of diverse learning approaches.

DISCUSSION

Students and instructors were asked about their perspectives on mistakes in the learning process in the classroom, as well as their perceptions of the roles and relationships among students, instructors, and student peers. This section will discuss student and instructor perceptions of mistakes, followed by an exploration of the various roles assumed by students and instructors.

RQ1: How are mistakes viewed in the learning process by Emirati students and expatriate instructors in the classroom?

The results of the present study highlight the role of mistakes in the learning process, as viewed by instructors and students. Instructors reported that students exhibited reluctance to participate in class activities and answer questions, largely originating from a fear of making mistakes and potential social repercussions. This reluctance underscores the importance of understanding and accommodating cultural factors in educational practices to facilitate effective learning outcomes (Gay, 2000). Although some students fell into the negative mistake culture of embarrassment and shame, others resonated with a more positive mistake culture revolving around opportunities for growth and improvement (Kafer et al., 2018). Students falling into the category of negative mistake culture described a reluctance to participate and a fear of making mistakes due to being timid and the possibility of social repercussions, such as being judged negatively (Kafer et al., 2018; Metcalfe, 2017; Newsome & Cooper, 2016).

Dr. Abigail emphasized the importance of viewing mistakes as learning opportunities rather than failures, a perspective deeply ingrained in Western pedagogical practices (Dweck, 2007). Instructors can promote an encouraging classroom atmosphere for students to feel supported in taking chances and exploring novel ideas by modeling the acceptance of mistakes as a natural part of the learning process (Hattie, 2012). Dr. Abigail's approach to addressing mistakes with students, such as providing corrective feedback without singling out individuals, aligns with research suggesting that constructive mistake culture can enhance student learning and motivation (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

The study also revealed differing perspectives among students regarding the role of mistakes in the learning process. While some students view mistakes as opportunities for growth and improvement, others associate them with embarrassment and shame (Henry et al., 2019). Cultural factors and educational experiences may have influenced the variability in attitudes toward mistakes (Dweck, 2007). For example, the importance of resilience and determination in

the face of challenges was emphasized by Asma's positive outlook on mistakes (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). In contrast, Zamzam's reluctance to participate after making a mistake reflects the impact of cultural norms and social pressures on individual behavior (Gay, 2000).

Overall, the findings underscore the need for educators to adopt culturally responsive teaching strategies that acknowledge and address students' diverse perspectives on mistakes (Gay, 2000; Johnson, 2005, 2017). Educators have the power to inspire students to possess the autonomy of their learning and cultivate an academic growth mindset for success by fostering a classroom culture that embraces mistakes as valuable learning opportunities (Blackwell et al., 2007). Furthermore, educators are also able to encourage a sense of belonging that enhances student engagement and motivation by cultivating an engaging learning environment whereby all students feel appreciated and supported (Li and Singh, 2022).

RQ2: In what way do Emirati students and expatriate instructors view classroom relationships?

Students' and Instructors' Perceptions About the Role of the Instructor

The dynamics of instructor–student interactions within the educational context are reflected in the findings of this study. Notably, a disparity existed between the perceptions of instructors and students concerning the responsibilities of instructors in the classroom. Instructors favored adopting the role of facilitator, empowering students to construct their knowledge autonomously and fostering critical thinking and self-directed learning skills. This disposition reflects the shift toward student-centered pedagogy, prioritizing student autonomy and active learning (Kerimbayev et al., 2023). Conversely, students prefer to view instructors as authoritative figures and primary providers of knowledge, such as parental figures (Ma, 2018). They emphasized the importance of instructors embodying qualities of kindness, supportiveness, and role modeling—a perspective that is consistent with student-centered approaches (Gholam, 2019). Baik et al. (2019) reported that positive relationships between students and instructors are important for Emirati students.

The inconsistency in perspectives between instructors and students conveys the rationale for aligning educational practices with evolving pedagogical paradigms. While educators advocate for student autonomy and active learning, students may still adhere to conventional views of instructor authority and disseminate knowledge (Kukulska-Hulme, 2010). Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of fostering mutual respect and understanding within the instructor–student relationship. Instructors prioritize student engagement and responsibility for their learning journeys, aiming to encourage a collaborative learning environment where students are intrinsically motivated and actively participate in the learning process (Gholam, 2019).

Students' and Instructors' Perceptions About the Role of the Student

Differing perspectives between students and instructors regarding student roles and responsibilities within the educational setting are highlighted in the findings of the present study. Students viewed instructors as the primary source of knowledge and indicated the importance of showing respect toward educators. This implies a passive learning approach on the part of students. Students predominantly viewed instructors as central figures responsible for providing knowledge. This perception reflects the traditional view of instructors as authoritative figures (Gholam, 2019). Additionally, students emphasized the importance of demonstrating respect toward instructors, indicating a cultural norm of respect for authority figures (Kukulska-Hulme, 2010).

In contrast, instructors expressed a desire for students to demonstrate engagement and take ownership of their learning journeys. Instructors prefer a facilitative role, encouraging students to actively contribute to the learning process rather than the traditional role of instructors as disseminators of knowledge (Blumberg, 2009). Dr. Anne's struggle with transitioning from the "sage on the stage" to the "guide on the side" reflects the challenge of implementing student-centered pedagogies in contexts where traditional instructor-centered approaches prevail (Blumberg, 2009). Furthermore, the importance of student engagement and involvement throughout the learning process was accentuated by the instructors. The necessity for students to be intrinsically driven and engaged in taking responsibility for learning was highlighted by Dr. Jodi, while Dr. David viewed his role as one of mutual learning, where students also contribute to the educational experience (Vermunt & Verloop, 1999).

The findings demonstrate the importance of aligning student and instructor expectations within the educational context. While students may perceive instructors as the primary source of knowledge and emphasize respect for them (Ma, 2018), instructors advocate for active student involvement and self-responsibility for learning. Bridging this gap requires a collaborative approach in which both students and instructors combine skillsets to create a supportive and engaging learning environment (Vermunt & Verloop, 1999). Instructors can inspire students to become self-directed learners and active contributors to their educational journey by increasing active student involvement and fostering an ethos of reciprocated respect and engagement (Garrett, 2008).

Students' and Instructors' Perceptions of the Role of Student Collaboration

The importance of student collaboration emerged as a consensus among both students and instructors, indicating its critical role in the educational process. Instructors underscored the value of collaborative learning, with Dr. Madeline asserting that a significant portion of learning occurs through student collaboration. Similarly, the students expressed a preference for collaboration, emphasizing the need for respect, kindness, and support among peers. Furthermore, instructors emphasize the role of student collaboration in addressing

language-related challenges, recognizing the diverse linguistic backgrounds of students (Yu, 2011). Dr. Nadia highlighted the importance of allowing students to help each other, particularly in overcoming differences in abilities and language proficiency. This approach reflects an engaging environment in which students support one another in achieving common learning goals (UNESCO, 2017).

However, while both the students and the instructors agreed on the importance of student collaboration, they approached it from different perspectives. The Western-educated instructors viewed collaboration as a means for each student to contribute their skills to the collective group, fostering a sense of autonomy and skill development. In contrast, the students perceived collaboration more holistically, focusing on collective success and the shared learning experience. This disagreement highlights the need for instructors to adopt a flexible approach to student collaboration, accommodating the varied expectations of students. By embracing diverse approaches to student collaboration, instructors can create educational spaces to accommodate the requirements of all students (Samuels, 2018). Additionally, fostering a culture of respect and support among peers can enhance student engagement and academic achievement (Allen et al., 2018; Kobayashi & Viswat, 2015).

Student collaboration is a vital component of successfully promoting engaging learning environments. Instructors and students recognize the importance of collaboration in fostering academic success and addressing language-related challenges. However, the varying perspectives on collaboration highlight the necessity for educators to implement adaptable methodologies that accommodate the diverse requirements and expectations of students. By promoting respect, support, and inclusivity among peers, educators can cultivate collaborative learning environments that empower students to achieve their full potential.

Implications for Higher Education Institutions in the UAE

Educators must recognize and embrace the cultural differences that influence students' perspectives, fostering an engaging learning environment that respects diverse cultural viewpoints. This involves encouraging collaborative learning, valuing individual expression, and supporting personal development. By adopting these approaches, institutions can empower students from various cultural backgrounds to excel academically and promote a comprehensive understanding of themselves. Our research indicates that Emirati students perceive mistakes that reveal a negative mistake culture. Therefore, faculty new to the UAE may require professional development to sensitize them to students' attitudes toward mistakes in the classroom. Furthermore, equipping these faculty with strategies that promote a positive mistake culture is essential.

Limitations and Future Research

The current research study faced several limitations. The study was confined to a single higher education institution with campuses in two different cities. The

sample of 10 students was exclusively female. Male students were not represented. A subsequent qualitative research study could be conducted on the basis of the findings of this study but implement class observations. A future research study could further investigate the same topic by employing quantitative methodology to examine larger student and instructor populations. Additionally, another study could implement various workshops or treatments to educate both students and instructors on effective strategies for fostering a positive mistake culture.

CONCLUSION

For educators to acknowledge the impact of cultural diversity on student attitudes, prioritizing the creation of an engaging learning environment that values various cultural viewpoints is imperative. Allowing educators to advocate for collaborative learning and appreciate the inherent value of individual expression and personal development is essential. Universities can effectively empower students from diverse cultural backgrounds by providing tools and skills to thrive academically while fostering a holistic sense of self-awareness and belonging.

Data availability statement: For those interested in accessing our data, including the completed semistructured interview responses from higher education students and instructors, please get in touch with the corresponding author.

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In the preparation of this manuscript, we utilized artificial intelligence (AI) tools for content creation with the following capacity:

X None
☐ Some sections, with minimal or no editing
☐ Some sections, with extensive editing
☐ Entire work, with minimal or no editing
☐ Entire work, with extensive editing

This study did not incorporate content generated by artificial intelligence (AI) tools. The final content has been thoroughly reviewed and edited to ensure accuracy, relevance, and adherence to academic standards.

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