

# Investigating the emergence of strategy in VR based reflective tasks.

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8 **Abstract**

9 Virtual Reality (VR), as part of the wider Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) space, presents  
10 novel opportunities for enhancing inquiry-based learning in education. VR provides an immersive 3D  
11 space for the reflective process of individuals to emerge unhindered in the form of spatial patterns.  
12 Abstract reflective tasks like mind mapping are central to inquiry-based learning and scaffolding  
13 strategies. Mind mapping has been proven to be an effective pedagogical tool by reducing cognitive  
14 load and allowing students to make associations between information objects that aids recall. This  
15 paper investigates the emergence of users' strategies towards constructing mind maps in VR through  
16 an exploratory user study (n=24). Our results show that users approach the task of mind mapping  
17 through two distinct strategies - *sequential* and *grouping*. We characterize and classify these  
18 previously unreported strategies both qualitatively and quantitatively. We discuss the implications of  
19 these strategies on the design of future VR mind mapping tools in both single user and collaborative  
20 contexts, and from an application designer and educators' perspective. Allowing these strategies to  
21 emerge unhindered, such as through shared and private workspaces and other recommendations, will  
22 ensure students remain active learners rather than being passive. We recommend that future  
23 implementations of VR mediated collaborative mind maps include design considerations that support  
24 both strategies.

25 **1 Introduction**

26 VR has the potential to significantly impact education and specifically students' engagement in the  
27 learning process (O'Connor and Domingo, 2017). This engagement is in part facilitated by VR being  
28 able to offer pseudo-physical interactions (Moehring and Froehlich, 2005) with objects and allowing  
29 users to interact with and manipulate objects within a 3D space. Advances in VR technology have  
30 made low-cost VR headsets more accessible. Low-cost VR devices such as the Oculus Go, open-  
31 sourced Google Cardboard and Meta Quest 2 are untethered and consequently more manageable in a  
32 traditional classroom environment. These devices have the potential to be a core element for delivery  
33 of teaching and learning by educational institutions. These devices can support TEL (Cox *et al.*,  
34 2004) and flipped learning (Burden *et al.*, 2015) strategies, which allows students to learn core  
35 concepts outside of the classroom.

36 We chose the reflective task of mind mapping, specifically spider-diagrams, as a prime candidate for  
37 a topic agnostic VR-based application. The spatial information organization aspects of the mind map  
38 are suitable for VR-based interactive manipulation. Prior research shows that traditional 2D mind

39 mapping supports effective learning (Abi-El-Mona and Adb-El-Khalick, 2008) leading to improved  
40 educational outcomes. The open question for VR-based mind mapping, given the additional spatial  
41 dimension available for use, is how the environment can better support the users engaged in  
42 reflective learning. By identifying and understanding individual behaviors associated with the  
43 information organization process, we can refine the role of VR in supporting this process. The  
44 individual behaviors, resulting from the users' information organization strategy, can better inform  
45 the design of applications about the affordances necessary in a collaborative environment.

46 Recognizing individual strategy is a key element to managing conflict, a prime criterion in  
47 collaborative spaces (Olaniran, 2008). CSCW (computer-supported co-operative work) research has  
48 shown that territoriality emerges during collaborative working in groups (Avery *et al.*, 2018).  
49 Additional research (Tang *et al.*, 2006) has identified the need to support users in their specific way  
50 of working during a collaborative activity. When collaborative mind mapping is carried out on  
51 tabletops, the collaborative exercise results in specific patterns of communication and strategies for  
52 managing conflict (Jamil *et al.*, 2017). These arise due to the need to control shared pieces of  
53 information (e.g., images, keywords, relationships) and their relative positions.

54 Our research question is thus twofold. Firstly, we wish to identify behaviors or strategies that emerge  
55 when participants construct a mind map through a VR mediated application. Secondly, if unique  
56 behaviors or strategies emerge, what are their implications when considering collaborative mind  
57 mapping in VR? We answer these questions by conducting an exploratory study to identify and  
58 quantify the presence of individual behaviors or strategies in a learning setting using VR-mediated  
59 mind mapping.

## 60 **2 Background**

61 The motivation for this paper is to understand how students' learning behaviors and strategies emerge  
62 in a VR-based mind mapping environment. As an emerging application space, there are very few VR  
63 mind mapping applications that support interactive reflection and information organization.  
64 Currently, we could only identify two commercial products (VR-AR-Corp, 2018; Coding Leap LLC,  
65 2019). While these products can help with the qualitative aspects of the study, they do not support the  
66 instrumentation necessary for the quantitative aspects. We used an alternative proof-of-concept VR  
67 mind mapping tool called VERITAS (Sims, 2019) as it allows data collection of user interactions in  
68 real-time and via log files. The useability of this tool is validated in a previous study (Sims and  
69 Karnik, 2021) and our study aims to build on this previous work to contribute to the understanding of  
70 mind mapping in VR as a whole.

### 71 **2.1 Technology-enhanced inquiry-based learning**

72 Inquiry-based learning, a form of active learning (Pedaste *et al.*, 2015), is a pedagogical approach  
73 that can be applied across domains and topics. Inquiry-based learning aims to trigger the advanced  
74 cognitive processes of application and analysis. Inquiry-based learning is key to stimulating students'  
75 desire to learn (Kirschner, Sweller and Clark, 2006) through interest (Wade *et al.*, 1993) or active  
76 engagement in a cognitive activity (Schraw and Lehman, 2014) such as mind mapping due to  
77 situational interest (Linnenbrink-Garcia *et al.*, 2010). Scaffolding is one of the key strategies of  
78 effective inquiry based learning (Sandoval and Reiser, 2004). Scaffolded inquiry-based learning  
79 allows learners to discover information semi-independently of the teacher and/or classroom.

### 80 **2.2 Mind mapping in pedagogy**

81 Recalling and managing disparate elements of information are recognized as learning tasks with a  
82 high cognitive load (Tergan, 2005). Mind maps can alleviate this cognitive load by allowing the  
83 learner to interact with a graphical representation of ideas and their relationships (Davies, 2011). The  
84 learners can engage in reflective tasks that otherwise might be too complex for them to manage given  
85 their current abilities. Specifically, learners can offset difficulties commonly ascribed to natural  
86 limitations of working memory and its capacity (Ying *et al.*, 2014). It also develops students intrinsic  
87 motivation by enabling them to understand complex topics and relationships, improving their sense  
88 of competency (Mento, Martinelli and Jones, 1999). Mind mapping is well established as an effective  
89 pedagogical tool (Ying *et al.*, 2014). Mind maps are implemented as an abstraction of the knowledge  
90 from the environment where it is applied. Cognitively, mind maps are closer to how the human mind  
91 organizes the information than how the information is applied. A study by Abi-El-Mona and Adb-El-  
92 Khalick (2008) found significantly higher conceptual understanding in students who utilized mind  
93 maps to explore scientific topics. In addition, research has shown that students engaged in mind  
94 mapping tasks are active participants with the teachers being facilitators (Buran and Filyukov, 2015),  
95 which aligns well with the aforementioned inquiry-based learning paradigm.

### 96 **2.3 VR-based mind mapping**

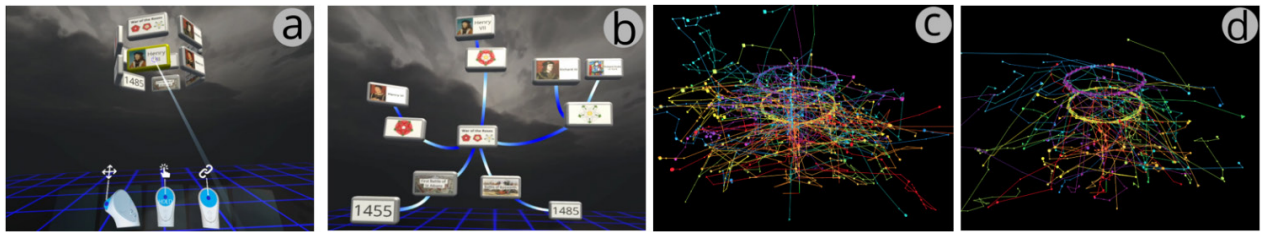
97 VR-based educational applications are not new. They are commonly used to simulate real-world  
98 tasks, like clinical protocols (Ruthenbeck and Reynolds, 2015), using specialized environments. In  
99 engineering, research has demonstrated how Building Information Modelling and evacuation  
100 planning can be facilitated by VR ((Hilfert and König, 2016)) and VR applications like Construct3D  
101 (Kaufmann H. Schmalstieg D. Wagner M., 2000) allow students to experiment with their own ideas.  
102 These domain-specific applications have their benefits, but they are not generalizable to other subject  
103 areas without significant modifications. Mind mapping is an excellent candidate as it is subject  
104 agnostic. It also adapts easily to the VR-medium as it is an information organization activity and VR  
105 provides an interactive 3D environment for spatial organization of virtual content. The use of virtual  
106 3D collaboration spaces is known to help with spatial organization of information (Bochenek and  
107 Ragusa, 2004). Other reasearch (Arvanitis *et al.*, 2009) has shown that virtual environments can  
108 assist students in visualizing abstract concepts and complex visual relationships mediated through  
109 other related immersive technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR). However, VR-based mind  
110 mapping is less understood as an activity itself since very few commercial examples (VR-AR-Corp,  
111 2018; Coding Leap LLC, 2019) are available. VERITAS application

## 112 **3 Implementation**

### 113 **3.1 VR Platform Requirements**

114 We selected the Oculus Go as the test hardware. The Oculus Go is a 3DoF (Degrees of Freedom),  
115 untethered and affordable unit. Within the intervening time between this study being conducted and  
116 presented, additional lower end devices such as the Meta Quest and Pico Neo have become available  
117 and the Oculus Go has since been sunsetted (Oculus, 2020) although it remains usable as a legacy  
118 device.

### 119 **3.2 System Overview**



**Figure 1 Mind mapping using VERITAS. (A) Initial 'carousel' of interactive tiles, (B) completed "War of Roses" mind map with animated links showing directional relationships, (C) visualization of tile movements by users using the grouping strategy showing increased tile movements, (D) contrasting difference in visualization of tile movements by users using the sequential strategy. Note how grouping visualization is denser than the sequential one.**

120 A full system description, design justification and implementation walk through is available in the  
 121 VERITAS user study (Sims and Karnik, 2021).

## 122 4 Experiment

### 123 4.1 Methodology

124 We approach the research question of investigating the presence of strategies through a controlled  
 125 exploratory study. The study is intentionally performed in a single-user setting. The aim is to control  
 126 the unmitigated effects of conflict within the collaborative activity and study the individual strategy  
 127 in isolation. Our hypothesis is that if individual strategies exist, we should be able to identify and  
 128 classify these by observing individual users as they perform the mind mapping task in VR. To such  
 129 effect, we collect data for analysis through quantitative and qualitative means. As a spatial  
 130 positioning task, the mind map provides quantitative metrics like task completion time, interaction  
 131 error rates and spatio-temporal information related to individual elements of mind map. Video  
 132 recordings of the activities are further used to generate qualitative metrics such as completeness of  
 133 the resulting mind maps and mind map patterns. Thematic coding was conducted to identify  
 134 differences and similarities between participants so that behaviors could be classified and  
 135 categorized.

### 136 4.2 Task

137 The task was a mind mapping exercise using a topic provided to the participant as a one-page  
 138 document. Three topics were selected by sampling unrelated subject areas – the animal kingdom,  
 139 web technologies and historical events. We setup the mind mapping exercise in VERITAS for each  
 140 of these topics. Participants were instructed to organize and connect tiles containing text and pictures  
 141 (see Fig. 1B). Text included keywords and numerical values like dates. Pictures represented physical  
 142 entities (i.e., animals, people or objects) and illustrative entities (i.e., maps, actions or symbols).

### 143 4.3 Apparatus

144 We used an Oculus Go VR headset for the study. The default factory settings were retained for the  
 145 purpose of the study, including brightness and volume. The headset has a fixed interpupillary  
 146 distance (IPD) of 63.5mm accommodating users between 61.5 to 65.5mm IPD. The headset stored  
 147 runtime application logs and videos.

## 148 **4.4 Participants**

149 Participants were recruited from Lancaster University through an open call via mailing lists and  
150 student forums. The experiment was conducted after acquiring the requisite ethical approvals from  
151 the FST Research Ethics Committee<sup>1</sup> with each participant being required to provide informed  
152 consent.

153 Twenty-four participants consisting of twenty males and four females participated in the study.  
154 While this does present a gender imbalance, it is simply an artifact of the open call for participation  
155 and the study commencing on a ‘first come – first served basis’.

## 156 **4.5 Procedure**

157 The experiment was run as one continuous session of 30 minutes. First, each participant completed a  
158 short demographics questionnaire (age, gender, VR familiarity). Each participant was assigned a pre-  
159 selected topic to balance participation for each topic. The participants received a short introduction  
160 session to familiarize themselves with the controller and the apparatus and completed a short tutorial  
161 inbuilt to VERITAS. Once comfortable, the participants read through the provided information sheet  
162 that covered details of the topic. The participants were instructed to build a mind map using the  
163 provided tiles and based on the text they had just read. Due to the open-ended nature of this activity,  
164 the participants were told to stop once they were happy with the mind map they had produced. Once  
165 they finished, they completed the questionnaires and provided feedback on their experience.

## 166 **4.6 Measures**

### 167 **4.6.1 Video Coding**

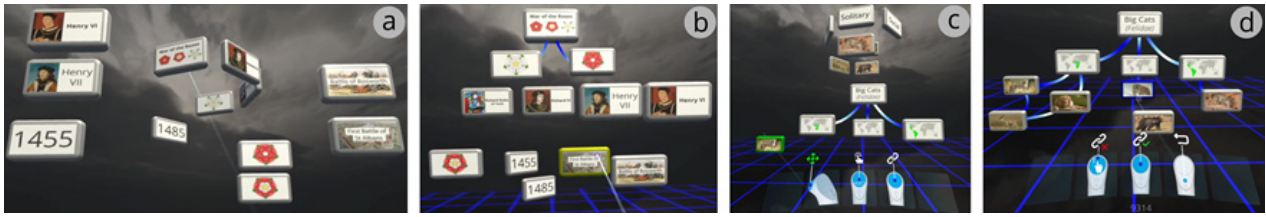
168 The video feed of the VR space was captured to obtain a participant view of what was visible on the  
169 headset. Video coding analysis of these videos was carried out by two independent coders. The  
170 coders looked for patterns that indicated a preferred strategy of organization of information in the  
171 mind map. The video coding analysis of the task revealed a between-subjects factor. All relevant  
172 measures were then analyzed as a between-subjects design.

### 173 **4.6.2 Task Metrics**

174 VERITAS logs each controller input along with the relevance to the state-model of the interaction  
175 workflow. If the controller input was invalid for the current state, it was logged as an error. The  
176 position and size of all tiles are logged at a periodic interval. These logs allowed us to extract useful  
177 data like task completion time, error rates and position tracking for tiles.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/sci-tech/research/ethics/>



**Figure 2** Two distinct patterns of building the mind map. (A) User ordering tiles first before, (B) creating links when all tiles are roughly in position. (C) User dragging tiles from the carousel one at a time and (D) immediately linking the last two tiles.

### 178 4.6.3 Questionnaires

179 Participants completed a standardized User Experience Questionnaire (UEQ) (Laugwitz, Held and  
180 Schrepp, 2008) designed to measure user experience of interactive products, a standard Simulator  
181 Sickness Questionnaire (SSQ) and were given an opportunity to provide open-ended feedback.

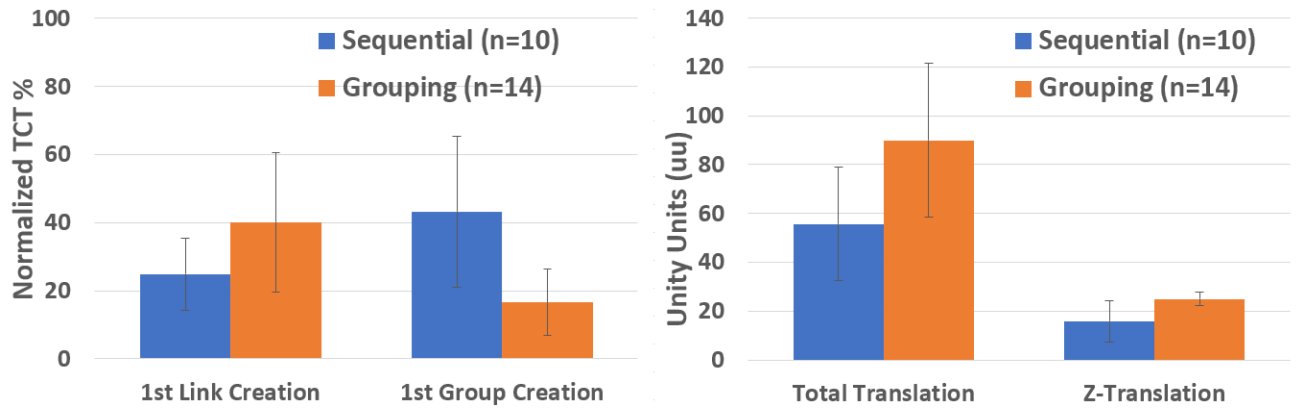
## 182 5 Results

183 The quantitative analysis of the collected data was performed using SPSS 26.

### 184 5.1 Cohort Identification

185 We performed a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) of the twenty-four task videos. The  
186 objective was to identify distinguishing features which could be interpreted as differing mind  
187 mapping strategies. Two coders looked at the way the participants interacted with the tiles and how  
188 they approached the mind map creation activity. This helped identify two distinct behavior patterns.  
189 The first approach was named *grouping*. A *grouping* participant dragged tiles out of the carousel and  
190 organized them into small, related groups until the carousel was empty (Fig. 2A and 2B). They then  
191 rearranged the tiles spatially before creating the links (relationships) between the tiles (Fig. 2B). The  
192 second approach was named *sequential*. A *sequential* participant dragged a pair of tiles from the  
193 carousel and immediately created a link between them, before dragging another tile from the carousel  
194 that was related to the first two tiles and created a fresh link (Fig. 2C). This cycle was repeated tile by  
195 tile until the mind map was complete and the carousel empty (Fig. 2D). These observations were  
196 made independently during the video coding step by the coders and there was no disagreement about  
197 the code (*sequential* or *grouping*) assigned to each participant creating two distinct cohorts. The  
198 styles were distinct and no blended style was observed.

199 To characterize the cohorts quantitatively, the coders recorded the timestamp when a clear gestalt  
200 grouping of three or more similar tiles (e.g., cats, computer languages or battles) emerged in the  
201 video. Next, we extracted the timestamp from the system logs to identify the point where the  
202 participants created their first link. These event timestamps for link and group creation were  
203 normalized using the individual task completion time ( $100 \times \text{event\_ts} / \text{activity time}$ ), allowing us to  
204 compare the relative position of the event (link/group) within the overall activity. The timestamps  
205 were tested using the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) test with a consistency, two-way random  
206 effects model. A high degree of reliability was found between the two coders' measurements. The  
207 average measures ICC was .967 with a 95% confidence interval from [.924, .986],  $F_{(23,23)}=30.42$ ,  
208  $p < .001$ .



**Figure 3 Cohort comparison for 1st Link and Group Creation (A) and tile movement (B).**

209 Next, we used one-way ANOVA, with between-subjects factor as “cohort” for analysis of the two  
 210 events - first link-creation time and first group-creation time. We found a statistically significant  
 211 difference between the two cohorts for both first group creation ( $F_{(1,23)}=15.99$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and first link  
 212 creation ( $F_{(1,23)}=4.59$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), thus quantitatively validating our visual observation that the two  
 213 cohorts had different strategies for building the mind map. The *grouping* cohort created the first  
 214 group significantly earlier ( $\mu_{GG}=16.61\%$ ) as compared to the *sequential* cohort ( $\mu_{SG}=43.25\%$ ) in  
 215 the activity timeline. Conversely, the *sequential* cohort created their first link significantly earlier  
 216 ( $\mu_{SL}=24.90\%$ ) compared to the *grouping* cohort ( $\mu_{GL}=40.10\%$ ). Thus, the factor of cohort informed  
 217 our further analysis of the task metrics. We explored the possibility that the topics selected for the  
 218 mind map activity could present as an experimental confound. We ran the above tests with the topic  
 219 as a factor and found no statistically significant difference to suggest that the topic was a factor.

## 220 5.2 Cohort Based analysis

### 221 5.2.1 Quantitative Metrics

222 Having established the two mind mapping strategies, we analyzed the quantitative metrics with the  
 223 additional between-subjects factor "Cohort" with two values, "*Grouping*" and "*Sequential*". For all  
 224 the following tests, we used one-way ANOVA, with between-subjects factor as cohort.

225 We did not find a statistically significant difference between the two cohorts for mean task  
 226 completion times ( $F_{(1,23)}=2.38$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). We analyzed the spatial volume usage using three different  
 227 metrics. We computed a bounding box volume for the entire activity per user using the maxima of  
 228 positions of all the tiles along each axis in Unity units ( $uu^3$ ). There was no statistically significant  
 229 difference between the *sequential* cohort and the *grouping* cohort means as determined by one-way  
 230 ANOVA ( $F_{(1,23)}=2.461$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) for bounding volume. Both groups made similar use of the volume  
 231 which extends beyond the default starting viewport volume. This matched our observations during  
 232 the video coding analysis step. Next, we looked at how much tile movement was performed by the  
 233 user. We computed two values per user: a) the total distance travelled by all tiles; b) the distance  
 234 travelled along the z-axis only (depth). Here, we found statistically significant differences for total  
 235 distance ( $F_{(1,23)}=8.39$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and also for z-axis traversal ( $F_{(1,23)}=5.16$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). In both cases, the  
 236 *grouping* cohort moved the tiles more ( $\mu_{GD}=89.8uu$ ,  $\mu_{GZ}=25uu$ ) than the *sequential* cohort  
 237 ( $\mu_{SD}=55.7uu$ ,  $\mu_{SZ}=15.8uu$ ). These results are tabulated in Table 1 and displayed in Fig. 3. Using the  
 238 logged tile position data, we created a 3D visualization to illustrate tile movements (Fig. 1C and 1D  
 239 shows a composite of five participants in each cohort respectively). The plot displays the movement  
 240 of every tile for each user. The time ( $t$ ) spent by a tile at each location is represented by a shape

Table 1 Quantitative Metrics

Metric	$\mu$ Sequential	$\mu$ Grouping	Significance
First Link	24.90%	40.10%	p<0.05
First Group	43.25%	16.61%	p<0.05
Mean TCT	337s	442s	NS
Bounding volume	66uu <sup>3</sup>	95uu <sup>3</sup>	NS
Total Translation	55.7uu	89.8uu	p<0.05
Z-Translation	15.8uu	25uu	p<0.05
Interaction Errors	11.4	13.9	NS

241 enclosed in a sphere of diameter =  $\log_{10}t$ . The visualizations match the tile related quantitative  
 242 metrics and qualitative observations.

243 **5.2.2 Qualitative Observations**

244 We observed that completed mind maps followed one of three styles – radial, tree or star (Fig. 4).  
 245 These styles were spread across both cohorts (*grouping* and *sequential*), with radial being the most  
 246 common style with twelve occurrences, seven for tree and five for star. These styles are consistent  
 247 with completed mind maps seen in other traditional mind mapping activities.

248 **5.3 Questionnaires**

249 **5.3.1 UEQ**

250 We wanted to see if the strategy in creating the mind maps (i.e. *sequential* or *grouping*) influenced  
 251 user experience, building on previous studies (Sims and Karnik, 2021). We used one-way ANOVA,  
 252 with between-subjects factor as cohort. We found a significant difference for the attractiveness  
 253 ( $F_{(1,23)}=12.58, p<0.05$ ) and stimulation ( $F_{(1,23)}=6.81, p<0.05$ ) metrics between the two cohorts. For  
 254 attractiveness, the *sequential* cohort rated the application significantly higher ( $\mu_{SA}=2.08$ ) than the  
 255 *grouping* cohort ( $\mu_{GA}=0.96$ ). For stimulation, the *sequential* cohort rated the application  
 256 significantly higher ( $\mu_{SS}=2.00$ ) than the *grouping* cohort ( $\mu_{GS}=1.32$ ). These results are displayed in  
 257 Fig. 5.

258 **5.3.2 SSQ**

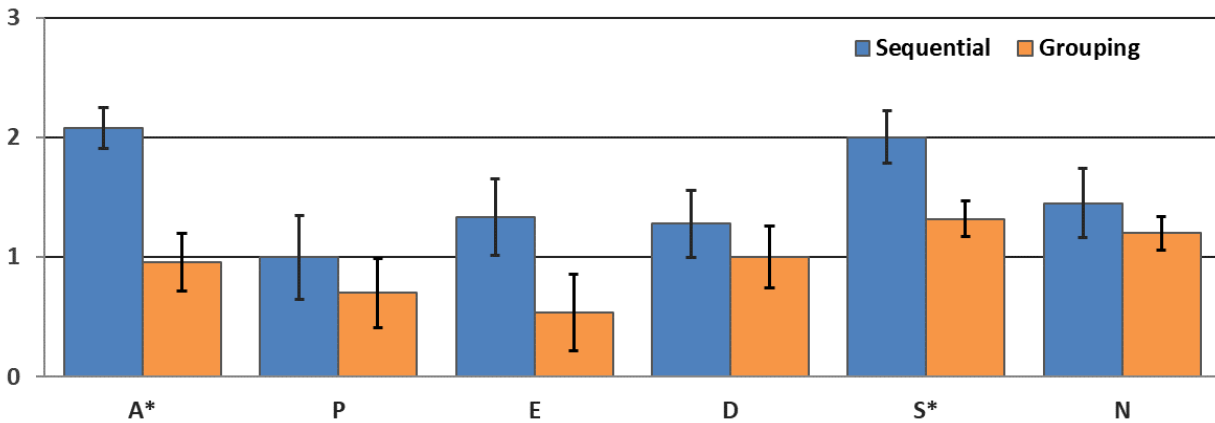
259 The SSQ responses did not highlight any significantly elevated (moderate or severe on the SSQ)  
 260 discomfort or any type of nausea.



Figure 4 Hierarchical organization styles used by participants, (A) Radial, (B) Tree and (C) star.

261





**Figure 5 UEQ Metrics: A = Attractiveness, P = Perspicuity, E = Efficiency, D = Dependability, S = Stimulation, N = Novelty. UEQ scale range is [-3, 3] but is truncated due to absence of negative values. For A and S, significant difference was found between the two cohorts.**

## 262 6 Discussion

263 In this experiment, we wanted to see if interesting mind mapping strategies would emerge when  
264 mediated through VR. We found promising outcomes and discuss their implications in general next.

### 265 6.1 Mind mapping Strategies

#### 266 6.1.1 Identification

267 Through the analysis of the task, we identified the emergence of two previously unreported distinct  
268 strategies for organizing the mind map: “*grouping*” and “*sequential*”. This answers the first part of  
269 our research question, ‘what behaviors or strategies emerge when participants construct a mind map  
270 through a VR mediated application’. These strategies showed clear visual differences in how the task  
271 was executed by participants. The *grouping* cohort created groups of related tiles first and re-  
272 organized these groups before creating their first links. The cohort worked linearly, extracting tile  
273 pairs from the carousel, and then defining the relationships immediately. Quantitatively, we  
274 identified significant differences in first link event (*Sequential* ↑), first group creation event  
275 (*Grouping* ↑) and translation distances (*Grouping* ↑). Surprisingly, this did not increase the TCT  
276 (NS), the bounding volume (NS) or even errors (NS) for the *grouping* cohort. Qualitatively, the mind  
277 maps created by both cohorts were complete, of similar quality and utilized the full spectrum of  
278 available interactions. We also found significant difference in UEQ ratings for the attractiveness and  
279 stimulation metrics (*Sequential* ↑).

#### 280 6.1.2 Explanation

281 We propose that the emergence of the two distinctly different styles of engaging with mind maps is a  
282 result of differing use of epistemic versus pragmatic actions (Kirsh, 1994). The *grouping* cohort  
283 performs grouping of tiles as an epistemic action. The *grouping* cohort sampled and built parts of the  
284 mind map, with frequent revisions and rebuilds, to explore how things fit better. In contrast, the  
285 *sequential* cohort used a cumulatively locked down approach. Kirsh et al. (Kirsh, 1994) originally  
286 identified that the main goal of epistemic actions is towards optimizing input. In our case, task  
287 completion times did not differ significantly. Thus, we propose that the observed epistemic actions

288 focused on supporting pedagogical synthesis of the mind map, i.e., supporting the primary goal of  
289 recalling the topic's content while building the mind map.

290 The variance between the average scores for two UEQ metrics (attractiveness and stimulation)  
291 between the two cohorts is an interesting observation. The *grouping* cohort scored the attractiveness  
292 and stimulation positively but lower than the *sequential* cohort. There is no obvious correlation to  
293 any of the other relevant metrics. The only indication comes from the free form feedback collected in  
294 the previous VERITAS usability study (Sims and Karnik, 2021). In querying the results from that  
295 study, user comments indicate a significant number would have liked to have been able to move  
296 groups of tiles at once. While the significance of these comments was not apparent in this previous  
297 study, the emergence of the two strategies in this current study provides context for these comments.  
298 It suggests that not allowing or enabling users to construct the mind map in a way that is most  
299 efficient for them leads to a significantly reduced user experience. These scores highlight the need to  
300 understand individual strategies for task execution in order to provide all the required affordances.  
301 Otherwise, the users adapt as best as possible, but the overall attractiveness of the application is  
302 lowered.

### 303 6.1.3 Generalization

304 An interesting area for future work would be to see if these strategies emerge in other mind mapping  
305 activities. The difference in the two strategies could create conflict when individuals from both  
306 cohorts work together in a collaborative mind mapping activity. The conflict resolution would require  
307 conversation related to spatial positioning of the mind map elements. We see evidence of such  
308 conversation being reported by Jamil et al. (Jamil *et al.*, 2017). Future work can definitively confirm  
309 the hypothesis that the strategies are inherent to individuals and independent of the medium.

## 310 6.2 Design Implications

311 To answer the second part of our research question, 'if unique behaviors or strategies emerge, what  
312 are their implications when considering collaborative mind mapping in VR', we need to consider  
313 previous CSCW research, educational perspectives and application design.

### 314 6.2.1 Paragogy and Collaboration

315 The current scope of VERITAS, as a single-user mind mapping application, was essential to allow  
316 individual strategies to emerge. However, mind mapping is commonly carried out as a collaborative  
317 activity among peers. Peer-based collaborative learning or paragogy is commonly associated with  
318 inquiry-based learning and thus mind maps. Designers of collaborative mind mapping applications  
319 need to carefully consider our observations in their design. The naïve approach of offering a shared  
320 environment with different view-points is no longer a viable option. While the awareness of the  
321 actions of the collaborator is required, a whole new design approach is needed to display the mind  
322 map to the users.

323 The two mind mapping strategies, (*grouping* and *sequential*) that we identified, reveal challenges.  
324 When VERITAS is implemented in a collaborative environment, the two strategies may work well  
325 together, with users naturally mediating control to allow for their distinct strategy to continue  
326 unhindered. However, it is equally possible a user employing the *grouping* strategy may face  
327 disruption in reflection due to a competing user applying the *sequential* strategy or vice-versa. Unlike  
328 digital tabletops or paper-pen exercises that consist of a shared space and single perspective, VR  
329 headsets can operate independently of each other while supporting '*one-world, multiple*

330 *perspectives*', but the designer needs to look beyond merely supporting separate personal and shared  
331 workspaces.

332 The variety of mind maps built by the participants provide an insight into the information  
333 organization process. While the space mediates the organization of information, the correspondence  
334 of spatial coordinates to individual tiles is loose. This can be leveraged by a design wherein the tile  
335 positions in each user's view are loosely coupled to their positions in another user's views (i.e., if a  
336 user moves a tile to a new location, this change doesn't need to be reflected exactly in another user's  
337 view or the movement is replicated on a 'diminished' proxy). Interesting design choices need to be  
338 made when the collaborative discussion focuses on such a tile or when the relative spatial position of  
339 the tile becomes relevant to the structure of the mind map. An ideal implementation would allow  
340 both strategies to flourish on their own without hindering the reflective pedagogy it is meant to foster.  
341 One possible outcome can be visually dissimilar but pedagogically similar mind maps. The  
342 implementation would also account for the hardware-imposed constraints of VR headsets that restrict  
343 the natural communication through face-to-face interactions and make contention issues harder to  
344 manage. The designer can leveraging existing work to virtualize face to face interactions through  
345 avatars (Piumsomboon *et al.*, 2018) to facilitate non-verbal communication and introduce elements  
346 that increase situational awareness (Benford *et al.*, 1994).

347 In addition to these finding being useful for designers of collaborative VR mind mapping  
348 applications, they are also useful for educators. Now that these behaviors are known and identified,  
349 educators can ensure any application they procure or utilize encompasses and facilitates these  
350 behaviors. Interactions that occur naturally ensures active learners do not become passive learners  
351 through frustration and disengagement. Learning activities can also be tailored to ensure such  
352 behaviors are catered for.

## 353 7 Conclusion

354 In this paper, we investigated how VR based mind mapping can support emergence of individual  
355 mind mapping strategies. Using a proof-of-concept VR mind mapping application, VERITAS, we  
356 identified the emergence of two distinct mind mapping strategies, *grouping* and *sequential*, through  
357 our user study. Our findings of the mapping-strategies have implications for future research into VR-  
358 based mind mapping in educational settings, especially for collaboration-based pedagogy.

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