

Misconceptions of Pair Programming

Students may experience challenges in completing computer programming assignments by themselves especially when they are responsible to learn a new programming language on their own. For example, students are allowed to enrol in a Java Web Programming course with any object-oriented programming (OOP) language such as C#, as a pre-requisite. To alleviate some of these challenges, we can group the students into pair programming teams, asking them to work on their team assignments at a common place (can be online!) with a common time. Instead of having both students work side-by-side (a driver role and an observer/navigator role) -- from start to end, some teams tend to split the work and combine their individual results as their team solution. In this scenario, we can help students unlearn and let students realize the real value of pair programming.

Martin Fowler provided a list of misconceptions of pair programming:

<https://www.martinfowler.com/bliki/PairProgrammingMisconceptions.html>. However, I suggest to use the airline pilots (Captain/Pilot-in-command and First Officer) as an analogy to a pair programming team. Both pilots are flying the plane from point A to point B and they are in the plane together (side-by-side), each one with a special role. If and when a challenge arise, the Pilot-in-command seeks input from the First Officer and makes the final decision. However, both have the responsibility to bring the plane to its destination safely.