PART III: EFFECTIVE INTERACTIONS IN ONLINE COURSES

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Online Pedagogy Workshop Series

Online Pedagogy Workshop Series
- Part I - Strategies for successful online teaching (May 8, 2015)
  - This session provided strategies for successful online teaching, which included planning process, course design, organization, time management, expectations for online students, a sense of community, communication channels, etc.
- Part II - Using multimedia for the engaging and dynamic learning environment (Oct. 14, 2015)
  - This session will demonstrate best practices of using multimedia to make online courses more engaging and dynamic. Selected multimedia software (e.g., Jing, iSpring, Adobe Connect Pro, etc.) and concrete examples of their usage in the online learning context will be introduced.
- Part III - Today! Effective interactions in online courses (Nov. 18, 2015)
  - This session will cover effective ways to manage online discussion, one-on-one student advising, student assignments, and group projects in online courses.

Interaction in Online learning

"Interaction is a key variable in learning and satisfaction with distance education courses" (Wanstreet, 2006).

"For students studying in an online environment, social interaction with peers and educators can often be an exercise in frustration" (McInerney & Roberts, 2004).

Continued...

- Learner – Human Interactions
  - Learner – Instructor: Communications between learner and instructor before, after and during instruction.
  - Learner – Learner: Communication of learners with other people who are not part of learning environment in order to acquire, interpret and apply information.
  - Learner – Other: Communication of learners with other people who are not part of learning environment.

- Learner – Non-Human Interactions
  - Learner – Content: Accessing audio, video, text and graphic representations
  - Learner – Tool: Using telecommunication tools such as email, discussion forum and chat
  - Learner – Environment: Visiting locations or working with resources outside computer environment.

Hirumi’s (2006) three levels of planned e-learning interactions
### Categories of Students’ Messages (Fung, 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Ideas or questions directly on or related to the course content and its applications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building relations</td>
<td>Statements which introduce oneself or convey greetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Asking for support or providing support to others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td>Acknowledgment of information or answers to questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Concerned with administrative or technical issues.</td>
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**Illustrative examples**
- Academic: "What do you understand by the term 'complexity theory' and do you agree with Polanyi’s point of view?"
- Building relations: "Hello, my name is XY; we can form a study group.
- Support: "I have just started to read the course...; hope to be familiar with other students in next session.
- Appreciation: "Thank you for the background information on climate. Your help is very much appreciated.
- Others: "Where can I find the article?"

### Interaction Patterns (Fung, 2004)

- **Isolated**: One message posted by one participant elicits no responses.
- **Single response**: One message elicits only one response.
- **Cyclical interaction**: A dialogue set up between initiator and one respondent.
- **Chained interaction**: One message elicits a series of responses from a chain.
- **Branching interaction**: One message elicits two or more response messages at the same time.
- **Complex interaction**: One message elicits multiple responses forming complex patterns.

**Main factors discouraging students from participating in online discussion were:**
- Time availability.
- Their preference to spend time on reading, rather than on online discussion.
- The mutual effects on each other's involvement.
- Lack of interesting questions from others.
- Lack of active participation from others (Fung, 2004).

### Feeling of “Isolation”

- An important criterion for student satisfaction with the web-based online course; Oftentimes based on the physical separation between student and instructor (Daugherty & Funke, 1998).
- "Support for distance learners should not be overlooked when planning distance programs (as) ... want to be part of a larger (learning) ... community" (Galusha, 1997).
- Participants who expressed extreme frustration with isolation and technical programs also:
  - Were extroverts.
  - Were visual learners.
  - Lived near campus.
  - Had some serious technical problems, and/or
  - Were inexperienced computer users... (Cereijo, Young & Wilhelm, 2001, p. 37).

### Three Protocols to Aid Online Social Interaction (McInerney & Roberts, 2004)

- **The use of synchronous communication**: The implementation and operation of synchronous communication via the use of software tools is likely to enhance social interaction within the online course.
- **The introduction of a forming stage**: The forming stage is a warm up period, designed to assist the formation of a “sense of community”.
- **The adherence to effective communication guidelines**: Clear instructions and communications from the educator to the students are needed. Instructions regarding both course requirements and communication protocols should be placed on the course website. They then need to be reiterated at the beginning of term in a message sent to all students emphasizing their importance.

### Combination of online sessions and classroom meetings

- **Classroom meeting vs. online session**
  - Blended (6–7 online sessions + 7-8 classroom meetings)
  - Online & Weekend Learning (8 online sessions – 4 classroom meetings)
- **Maximize the benefits of each of the different formats**
  - Online sessions
    - Readings and lectures that require self-reflections
    - Guest lecturing from remote locations
  - Classroom meetings
    - Forming groups for team project
    - Hands-on exercise
    - Lectures that need further explanations (e.g., technical concepts) or involves active discussion
    - Guest lecturing or panel discussion by local professionals – good for students’ networking

### What I’ve Learned from My Online Teaching is…

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Communicating with students (1)
- Face-to-face meetings
  - for course activities
  - for one-on-one advising/personal questions (before, during, after the class)
  - for group assignment
  - out of classroom in-person meeting
- Course materials should be unambiguous and well-organized.
  - Course syllabus, assignment descriptions, weekly activities, lecture slides, etc.

Communicating with students (2)
- Online discussion
- Announcements
- Grade book - points and comments
- Comments on paper
- E-mails/ phone meetings

Communicating with students (3)
- Online discussion
- Announcements
- Grade book - points and comments
- Comments on paper
- E-mails/ phone meetings

Managing online discussion (1)
- Create an interesting discussion question
- Provide clear expectations
- Divide discussion groups if the class size is too large.

Managing online discussion (2)
- Use “Subscribe” function
- Q&A
- Water Cooler

Student-Student Interaction
- Online discussion
- Group project
- In-class activities
- Before- or after-class conversation
Managing group projects in online courses

- Have students form a group in their first classroom meeting to discuss communication channels (email, cell phone, wiki, Google hangout, etc.), availability and plan for the project
- Progress report
- Peer-evaluation in the end of the project
- Provide support technology (e.g., BB wikis, etc.)
- Allow them to discuss group project in the end of each classroom meeting (about 15 mins). It provides them opportunities to communicate with their group members and the instructor in person, and helps them move along.
- Flexibility in assignment requirements

Student-Other Interaction

- Guest lecture (via classroom or synchronous online session)
- Panel discussion
- Students' course activities outside of classroom (e.g., visit an organization, interviews with professionals)
- Provide a letter of request on behalf of a student or a group of students

Questions and Discussion