ETEC 622 Assignment 7
Team Yellow – Sean Moroney, Salynn Kam, Ross Uedoi


A study involving 80 second-year students at different locations was carried out to assess the value of asynchronous learning in instructional design. In a course on Instructional Design, the students were expected to use asynchronous discussion tools as part of the coursework. The students generally found the methods used to be effective in learning the subject. Making the transition from theoretical to practical knowledge was facilitated by using small groups that analyzed case studies. Some recommendations were that, when the group size became sufficiently large, a moderator of the discussion would be beneficial. Spending too much time on a single topic should be avoided. Assigning grades for online discussions should be avoided. It was also noted that some students chose not to participate in asynchronous discussions; these students, instead, preferred face-to-face meetings.


Asynchronous online discussion forums (AODFs) allow individuals to discuss issues or topics at any time and from any geographical location. Discussions provide the means for students to exchange ideas, explore dissonance of viewpoints, negotiate meanings, and construct knowledge with one another. A set of studies examined the use of the AODFs. In the first study, the relationship between the frequency of higher level knowledge construction occurrences and group size, as well as the duration of the online discussion, was examined. Data were collected through online observations of 40 discussion forums. There was a significant positive relationship between group size and the frequency of higher level knowledge construction occurrences. However, there was no correlation between the duration of the online discussion and the frequency of such occurrences. Of the 40 forums, 14 forums with higher incident rate of higher level knowledge construction occurrences were identified. Fourteen less frequent forums were then randomly chosen from the remaining forums. There were significant differences in the frequency of four student facilitation techniques employed between the more frequent group and the less frequent one. These four techniques include giving comments or opinions, showing appreciation, encouraging people to contribute, and summarizing. The results of this study suggest that using these four techniques more frequently may promote knowledge construction in asynchronous online discussions.
Online asynchronous discussions are an important method of inducing learning in a population of students. Previously, it was shown by these authors that assigning roles to the students as they worked in teams was more effective in producing higher levels of learning than was just working alone. In this study, groups of freshman students were grouped into teams with assigned roles; other groups were assigned a 4th-year student as a tutor for each discussion group. The roles assigned were moderator, summarizer, theoretician, and source searcher. In the cross-age tutoring, older and more advanced students tutor the younger or more inexperienced students. The results showed that tutor-supported groups reached significantly higher levels of social knowledge construction compared to role-supported groups, though these higher levels were only slightly higher. This is important for educational practice, since learning focuses no longer on one-to-many communication (one teacher teaching and guiding all students), but more on many-to-many communication or learning (all students teaching and coaching each other). Not only can roles be used as an instructional approach, but also peer tutoring, meaning that more experienced students can act as tutors for less experienced tutees. In this respect, the present study showed a promising effect of enhancing learning environments by going beyond classes and mixing people from different experience levels.


In this article, the author examined the two polar-opposite forms of e-learning: asynchronous methods and synchronous methods. Asynchronous methods employ flexible, time-independent means for students and teachers to communicate when it’s not possible to be online at the same time. These methods include such modes as email and discussion boards. Synchronous methods allow the users to be connected to each other simultaneously. Methods used here include such modes as chat and videoconferencing. Using these, the three important types of communication are supported; these include content-related communication, the planning of tasks, and social support. Content-related communication was, by far (at 90%), the dominant form in asynchronous e-learning; in synchronous communication, the percentage was about 60%. Because answers weren’t expected immediately in asynchronous communications, there was time for reflection on the issues under discussion. This meant that deeper issues could be considered and a more in-depth analysis could be produced. Contrariwise, with synchronous communication, the immediacy of the required response made it more appropriate for less complex issues.