

Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning

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Abstract : *Interaction plays an important role in the success of distance learning. As most distance learning environments mainly utilize asynchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC) systems, interaction research that focuses on Synchronous system is largely ignored. This study scrutinized the patterns of learner- learner interaction in a distance learning environment. Students interactions in Synchronous and Asynchronous CMC system are compared. The results of the research suggest that constructivist based instructional activities, such as student – moderated discussion and small – group cooperative learning, are conducive to interaction. Overall, a high percentage of social- emotional interactions occurred in the Synchronous mode than in the Asynchronous mode. Students spent more time in task –oriented interaction in asynchronous discussions than they didn't get in the Synchronous mode. In moderating online seminars, student moderators who followed the guidelines of student –centered discussions were able to encourage full participation in an online seminar. Recommendations for the design of instructional activities and interactive interfaces were also made in order to improve distance learning environments. The present study investigates the advantages and disadvantages of both the systems which can help out to determine that which one is better for future and assessment via two different modes of computer – mediated communication: asynchronous and synchronous. Asynchronous and synchronous computer – mediated communication have different discourse features which may be exploited for different pedagogical purposes. In the hand of experienced teachers, both modes of CMC can be used as novel tools to enhance the language acquisition process by encouraging interaction among participants, collaborative text construction, and the formulation of electronic communities of learners. The purpose of this paper is to examine collaborative experiences of students in an online business. This study focused on examining the amount, patterns and focus of interactions as well as assessing student's attitude toward communicating in the two different environments.*

INTRODUCTION

Technological revolutions and the expanding use of computers are rapidly changing the nature and scope of pedagogy in all fields of knowledge. In 21st century computers have become indispensable tools for enhancing content and language teaching. As a result of these technological innovations, a new type of learning environment is emerging, which represents a shift from a teacher – centered to a student- centered theory of learning. Students participation in the learning process and a shift away from a highly structured, teacher controlled environment characterizes recent pedagogical practices. Educational technology is defined by the Association for Educational Communications and Technology as “the study and ethical practice of facilitating learning and improving performance by creating using and managing appropriate technological processes and resources.”¹

Educational Technology refers to the use of both physical hardware and educational theoretics. It encompasses several domains, including learning theory, computer based training, online learning and where mobile technologies are used, m-learning.²

ASYNCHRONOUS AND SYNCHRONOUS LEARNING

A study of asynchronous and synchronous e-learning methods discovered that each supports different purposes. For e- learning initiatives to succeed, organizations and educational institutions adopt two types of systems, synchronous or asynchronous.

SYNCHRONOUS LEARNING

Synchronous e- learning commonly supported by media such as videoconferencing and chat, has the potential to support e- learners in the development of learning communities. Learners and teachers experience synchronous e- learning as more social and avoid frustration by asking and answering questions in real time.³ Synchronous sessions help e-learners feel like participants rather than isolation. Isolation can be overcome by more continued contact, particularly synchronously, and by becoming aware of themselves as members of a

community rather than as isolated individuals communicating with the computer.⁴ Synchronous learning occurs in real-time, with all participants interacting at the same time, while asynchronous learning is self-paced and allows participants to engage in the exchange of ideas information without the dependency of other participant's involvement at the same time. Synchronous Learning refers to the exchange of ideas and information with one or more participants during the same period. Examples are face-to-face discussion, online real-time live teacher instruction and feedback, Skype conversations and chat rooms or virtual classrooms where everyone is online and working collaboratively at the same time. Since students are working collaboratively, synchronized learning helps students create and open mind because they have to listen and learn from their peers. Synchronized learning fosters online awareness and improves many student's writing skills.⁵

ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING

Asynchronous Learning may use technologies such as e-mail, blogs discussion boards, as well as web-supported text books⁶ hypertext documents, audio-⁷ video courses and social net working using web 2.0. At the professional educational level, training may include virtual operating rooms. Asynchronous learning is beneficial for students who have health problems or who have child care responsibilities. They have the opportunity to complete their work in a low stress environment and within a more flexible time frame.⁸ In asynchronous online courses, students proceed at their own pace. If they need to listen a lecture a second time, or think about a question for a while, they may do so without fearing that they will hold back the rest of the class. Through online courses, students can earn their diplomas more quickly or repeat failed courses without the embarrassment of being in a class with younger students. Students have access to an incredible variety of enrichment courses in online learning, and can participate in college courses, internship, sports or work.

ASSESSMENT IN E- LEARNING SYSTEM

Assessing learning in web – based learning is often by assessments that can be easily scored by a computer such as multiple choice questions, drag-and-drop, radio button simulation or other interactive means. Assessments are easily scored and recorded via online software, providing immediate end – user feedback and completion status. Users are often able to print completion records in the form of certificates. Educational

assessment with technology may be either formative assessment or summative assessment. Technology has helped some teachers make their formative assessment better, particularly through the use of classroom response systems.⁹ To understand student opinions synchronously and asynchronously e- learning, telephonic interviews are conducted. The facility of online seminars are given in e- learning education. Different types of groups are made for discussions. The key arguments are supported by theories and assessment is given on the basis of communication, assignments, performance of seminars and interviews in e- learning education.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF E-LEARNING SYSTEM

Synchronous Learning has changed everything in the corporate online training environment. Especially in the corporate world, where effective team work among distributed workforce is considered of especially high value, synchronous learning can help e- Learning professionals develop significantly engaging online training courses.

ADVANTAGES OF SYNCHRONOUS LEARNING

1. It is cost effective : The chance to provide the knowledge from the best experts without paying the accommodation and travel expenses that traditional corporate training involves.
2. It is Convenient : In it we can get an opportunity to participate in online discussions from any location in internet connection. As physical barriers of distance are eliminated.
3. Provides Immediate Feedback : Real-time interaction means instant feedback. Rapid feedback has an incredibly important role in e- learning; it enhances knowledge retention by keeping your audience active in the learning process.
4. It is highly Motivating : A Synchronous learning environment enhances learning by increasing corporate audience's motivation level as real-time interactions.
5. Fosters a Sense of Community : Social interaction and collaboration is the essence of Synchronous learning. Organizing a series of online group activities encourages team works and cooperation, as online discussion allow your audience.

DISADVANTAGES OF SYNCHRONOUS LEARNING

1. It is strictly technology- based : Lack of technical knowledge, poor computer skills, an inability to handle the various technologies involved in synchronous learning may tremendously frustrate and discourage online learners, so dropout rates might be expected.
2. Demands a high speed internet connection : It is true that synchronous learning requires a good bandwidth, and this could be an issue when online training for distributed workforce is involved. Trying to synchronous several different areas in the world via collaborative learning technologies can be challenging, but different bandwidth capabilities may create serious problems.
3. Local time barriers : Synchronous learning eliminates barriers of distance, but about barriers of time? Different time zone can create communication challenges as a synchronous learning course requires from both employees and trainers to be online at the same time. Distributed workforce has conflicting the work schedules, and sometimes not even technology is able to facilitate real- time interactions.
4. Requires careful planning :Speaking of conflicting schedules, a consequence of the above disadvantage comes the challenging planning process that synchronous learning requires. Coordination of schedules is absolutely necessary, sometimes not possible. To ensure participation to an asynchronous learning course you need to careful plan meetings; however, different time zones can lead to very limited time frames.
5. It is challenging for employees with poor social skills : A synchronous learning experience demands active participation and collaboration, and some members of your workforce might not be as social. In a synchronous learning environment the “quitter” employees may find it challenging to participate in online discussion or online group activities.

Advantages of Asynchronous Learning:- Asynchronous learning respects factors affecting regular attendance to online training courses and ensures that they are accessed and completed at different times for each employee, improving learning outcomes.

1. Offers employees complete control over their learning : In this method everyone is allowed to decide how, when and where to learn. Furthermore not only distance but also time barrier are eliminated and as employ trainer interaction takes place according to personal schedules.
2. Respectful to one’s own learning : Asynchronous learning gives employees time to reflect or joining online discussion. Asynchronous learning solution can benefit even employees with poor learning skills by offering them the ability to take their time to complete responses and develop their critical thinking skills.
3. Convenient : Asynchronous learning is the ideal learning solution as it does not require employees to be online at a specific day or time. Employees can communicate with their online facilitator or virtual classmates at their own convenience and instantly have access to information, online training for assignments and other online resources.
4. Less Social obstacles : An Asynchronous learning approach helps introverted learners eliminate social anxiety, as learning in isolation makes them feel safer and more comfortable.
5. Interactive regardless of location an time barriers : Asynchronous learning system allow employees not only to learn at their own pace, but also to interact with their peers and online facilitators no matter which the time zone they live in. Discussion boards, blogs and emails are always available to ensure that online interaction is effective and conversation takes place over distance and place.

DISADVANTAGES OF ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING

1. Lacks instant feedback : Feedback in eLearning is essential, it helps both employees and trainers address issues and misunderstanding related to the online training course material. In an Asynchronous Learning system instant feedback is impossible, as the online training course is not live and employees may waste valuable time waiting for their questions to be answered by their trainers.
2. Lacks personal interaction : Personal interaction among participants is eliminated in the Asynchronous learning system. Learning in isolation may work for some, but it certainly does not work for most people who need personal interaction. So the people can lead to

failure to achieve the learning goals and outcomes of the online training.

3. No live collaboration and real time activities : Asynchronous learning does not offer the ability for real time discussions to increase motivation and engagement. Overall communication can be difficult due to the isolation and disconnected.
4. Can cause lack of motivation :Lack of live interaction can disengage and demotivate employees, who may need encouragement and stimulation in order to log in, read the material and complete the online training course. In fact, procrastination is more likely to occur in an Asynchronous learning environment.
5. Requires self- discipline : Asynchronous learning asks from participants to be focused,goal oriented and with great time management skills. Success in an asynchronous learning environment requires of employees to be both strongly committed and disciplined, which can be a huge disadvantage for those who are not exactly highly motivated.

CONCLUSION

Many organizations and educational institutes are interested in using and developing both Asynchronous and Synchronous e- learning .After studying both the systems I observe that Asynchronous is a better system of e- learning because it is a system designed to support “anytime” and “anywhere” interaction among students and instructors.In this modern era on one is free so Asynchronous e- learning gives you a flexibility. In fact, many people take online courses because of their Asynchronous e- learning. In asynchronous e-learning a discussion board is selected scheduled over a week for online interviews and discussions. In asynchronously communications the receiver has more time to comprehend the messages since the sender does not expect an immediate answer. So I think that asynchronous e- learning increases the ability to process information.Moreover , Asynchronous e- learning is a cognitive participation describe the dimensions of learning. It is a reflective type of participation for discussions on complex issues when synchronous meetings cannot be scheduled because of family, work, and other commitments. The students expected to reflect individually on course work.

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