



Project 1

Doctoral Dissertation Research – Social Interaction in Online Learning

Context

This research was conducted from August 2001 through May 2002 at Indiana University Bloomington. The dissertation report was prepared as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Ph.D. degree.

Conditions

This original research project was completed under the advisement of my dissertation committee:
Professor Charles M. Reigeluth, chair
Professor Robert L. Appelman, IST member
Professor Curtis J. Bonk, CEP member
Professor Jonathan A. Plucker, CEP member

Scope

I conceptualized and developed an original qualitative research methodology for this study. I gathered data from multiple sources over a six month period, and wrote the final report in Spring 2002. The dissertation defense was conducted in May 2002.

Role

I fulfilled all functional roles for this project, with the able assistance of my research committee, especially Dr. Reigeluth.

Included Excerpt

In this portfolio, I have included the title page, dissertation abstract, outline, and a summary of the situationalities framework, representing a significant part of the study findings.

SOCIAL INTERACTION IN ONLINE LEARNING: A SITUATIONALITIES
FRAMEWORK FOR CHOOSING INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS.

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Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School
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Abstract

Online learning has emerged as one of the most important new areas for research and development in the field of instructional technology. Using fundamental learning theory developed in distance education and traditional classroom instruction situations, online learning educators (including instructional designers) are using both new, technology-enhanced instructional methods and more traditional forms of instructional methods to incorporate social interaction in their online learning environments. Prescriptive design guidance should include a discussion of the specific situationalities (learning goals, values, conditions, and outcomes) that lead to the choice of one or more instructional methods in preference to other methods. Most existing design guidance for online learning environments does not address the conditions (an important part of the situationalities) that affect the selection of instructional methods, especially for methods that engage learning participants in social interaction. Using a case survey of many descriptive case studies, interviews with selected authors, and surveys of case authors, this study develops a “situationalities framework” that describes the situationalities – learning goals, values, conditions and effectiveness outcomes – that designers should consider when designing online learning environments. Preliminary prescriptive design guidelines developed from this framework demonstrate the usefulness of the framework for the further development of online instructional theory.

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Figure 3. Situationalities Framework (summative)

Phase I: Values and Goals

To do: Evaluate fundamental values about learning and develop learning goals based on these values.
Resources: Table 3. Values and Goals Appendices F. and G.

Phase II: Goals and Methods

To do: Choose preferable instructional methods based upon the learning goals. Multiple methods may be preferable.
Resources: Table 4. Goals and Methods Appendices G. and H.

Phase III: Methods and Conditions

To do: Consider instructional conditions that influence the effectiveness of chosen methods. Revise methods as needed.
Resources: Table 5. Methods and Conditions Appendices H. and I.

