

Chapter 14

Tracing Online Lecturer Orchestration of Multiple Roles and Scaffolds Over Time

Bronwen Cowie

University of Waikato, New Zealand

Elaine Khoo

University of Waikato, New Zealand

ABSTRACT

The chapter focuses on how time and the temporal aspects of the affordances and constraints of the online environment can be leveraged as a resource in online learning community development. It provides an analytical case study account of the experiences of a lecturer and his students in a fully online research methods Masters level graduate course in a tertiary institution in New Zealand. Although very experienced in teaching the course in face-to-face contexts, the lecturer was a novice with regards to teaching online. Over the period of the course, the lecturer came to realise how the structure or strict linearity of interactions over time, as they are experienced in face-to-face settings, can be disrupted in online settings. The chapter illustrates how the lecturer used time as a resource through the orchestration of multiple roles (pedagogical, managerial, social, and technological) and the introduction and fading of scaffolds focused on nurturing a learning community integral to fostering student learning. Course curriculum and assessment redesign coupled with the lecturer's orchestration of roles supported students to take more responsibility for their own and the group's learning as part of deepening their understanding of education research methods.

INTRODUCTION

Online learning has gained increasing recognition worldwide as an alternative to conventional forms of education. The development of classes as learning communities is commonly advocated as a productive way to support learning in online environments (Aceto, Dondi, & Marzotto, 2010). This development however relies on students coming to a sense of shared responsibility for and expertise in collabora-

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tive knowledge building. This in turn, relies on teachers re-imagining their practice and course design. Teacher recognition of the need to adapt pedagogy supports the notion that the teacher or lecturer's role in any teaching-learning environment be it in a face-to-face or online setting is of key importance (Forret, Khoo, & Cowie, 2005). In this chapter, we focus on time and the temporal aspects of the affordances and constraints of the online environment. Specifically, we illustrate how time, once its social and subjective dimension is recognised, can be leveraged as a resource in online learning community development. We provide an analytical account of the experiences of a lecturer and his students in a fully online Research Methods Masters level graduate course in a tertiary institution in New Zealand. Although very experienced in teaching the course in face-to-face contexts, the lecturer (Adrian) was a novice with regards to teaching online. The study involved Adrian's first time of being responsible for an online course. Over the period of the course, the lecturer came to realise how he could take advantage of the affordances and ameliorate the temporal constraints on interaction, that are part of campus-based courses, within an online setting. Online learning environments afford different configurations and conceptions of lecturer roles and scaffolding actions through the different ways time, space and temporality can be leveraged in support of learning.

We begin the chapter with an overview of the theoretical framework- a sociocultural view of learning - which underpins our research. Part of this theorising incorporates the notion of online learning community development as a productive way forward in online pedagogy. Details of our case study illustrating how the novice online lecturer gained increasing understanding of productive teaching practices by leveraging temporal issues in the online teaching context are provided next. This was accomplished through the orchestration of multiple roles to scaffold student learning as part of developing a class learning community. The chapter concludes with the implications of the findings for educators and researchers.

Lecturer Roles and Responsibilities in an Online Learning Community

Sociocultural views of learning, particularly the notion of communities of practice/learning are currently being employed as a means of fostering, describing and explaining the development of productive online learning environments. These views of learning construe it as a social activity that is situated in a broader community's valued social, institutional and cultural context (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). They also acknowledge the historical and temporal dimension of learning and development. This perspective of learning implies that learning is heavily shaped by, and evidenced through shifts in roles and relationships as learners develop expertise and take increasing responsibility for their own and the community's learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Members of a community participate in the community's valued activities by simultaneously performing several roles, each of which imply a different sort of responsibility, a different set of role relations, and different interactive involvements (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). A learning community is concerned with teaching and learning processes and outcomes; participation in a learning community leads to an increase in learner expertise and in learner responsibility and autonomy in learning. According to Rogoff (1994) the characteristics of an effective face-to-face learning community include the need for all members of the community, from novice to expert, to play active roles and take joint responsibility in the teaching-learning process.

Schwier (2007) contends that online communities do not just happen but take time to develop. The lecturer thus plays a pivotal role in developing and engaging students into a learning community by nurturing the conditions under which they can thrive (Brook & Oliver, 2003; Brown, 2001; Palloff & Pratt,

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