Chapter 6
Video-Based Discussion:
Promoting Presence Through Interactions in Online Higher Education Courses

Leila Mahmoudi
University of Houston, USA

Susie Gronseth
University of Houston, USA

ABSTRACT

Video-based discussion is an emerging technology that can be used in online higher education courses as part of introduction, debate, personal exploration, and reflection activities. The video format bridges the distance gap in course conversations and offers benefits of providing contextual details, emotion, and individual personality while also enabling asynchronous flexibility. This chapter provides an overview of research in this area and describes an exploratory case study in which video-based discussion was used as part of an online graduate course. Data gathered included video postings and follow-up survey responses. Design guidelines and strategy recommendations are offered for planning and implementing video-based discussion activities in online higher education courses.

INTRODUCTION

Online learning technologies can be used to expand educational offerings and facilitate global educational connections. An essential component of online learning is discussion, as performance tends to improve with active engagement in online course discussions (Cheng et al., 2011; Dalelio, 2013; Goggins & Xing, 2016; Thomas,

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-6292-4.ch006

2013). These conversations can take place in real-time (referred to as synchronous) or at different times (referred to as asynchronous) (Farquhar, 2013; Winiecki, 2003). Asynchronous discussion platforms provide opportunities for greater interaction and active engagement between students and faculty through text, audio, shared files, and video (Devers et al., 2016).

Video-based discussion is a worthwhile technology to consider as part of a ubiquitous inclusive instructional strategy. Video-based discussion employs the asynchronous format that aids with meeting varying student schedules; however, participating in the discussions requires self-discipline from the students to set aside ample time for composing, viewing, and responding to discussion posts. Planning video-based discussion activities also involves complexities unique to this medium. For instance, students may experience technical issues and motivational and digital citizenship challenges that can affect the amount of engagement they have in a discussion (Hew, Cheung, & Ng, 2010; Rovai, 2007).

This chapter explores current research and practice in video-based discussion and describes lessons learned through an exploratory case study on the application of the video-based discussion platform, Flipgrid, as part of online course experiences. It discusses advantages of the video-based discussion technology for enhancing students' active engagement, supporting varied learning preferences, and fostering greater human interaction in digital learning environments. Recommendations are offered for structuring educationally stimulating course discussions and strategies. Design guidelines for planning and activities for implementing this emerging, interactive technology as part of online and hybrid learning experiences will be shared.

BACKGROUND

Interactions between instructors and learners are challenged by a transactional distance that spans more than just a physical separation, but involves educational and psychological distances as well (Gavan, 2015; Moore, 1993). Dialog, a core factor of transactional distance, is central to learner success and significantly influences learner intention to return for an e-learning experience (Goel, Zhang, & Templeton, 2012). Planning and forethought is necessary to design and facilitate meaningful and worthwhile online course discussions. The autonomous nature of learning that occurs in online courses can be a benefit as well as a challenge for students.

Difficulties with establishing pedagogical presence in online courses are critical issues to explore, and adequately addressing them can contribute to greater learner engagement and meaningful learning. Though many current Learning Management Systems (LMSs) offer a variety of tools for course organization and interactions, the potential of these systems is often not realized when course delivery and engagement is