

Maximizing Interactivity through Breakout Rooms Using Web Conferencing



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Background

- AGED 8010 “Systems for Technology Transfer” graduate class
- Synchronously delivered via Adobe Connect
- 7 students at remote locations (mostly extension agents); 19 students at Clemson
- Breakout rooms in Adobe Connect used to foster interactivity
 - Used “small group discussion and report out”



How It Works

- Each week
 - Students were provided a set of questions based on chapter readings – turn in before class
 - Specific set of questions were assigned for each breakout room
 - Learning Communities: Students assigned to breakout rooms based on background/interest
 - Animal Science, Plant Science, Agritourism, Agricultural Mech.

Presentation Objectives

- Discuss student reflections of benefits/challenges of breakout groups
- Identify factors for improvement

Theoretical Linkage

- Transactional Distance
 - “a psychological and communication space to be crossed, a space of potential misunderstanding between the inputs of instructor and those of the learner.”

Moore, 1991

Interaction in Distance Education

- Michael G. Moore, 1989
 - Learner—Instructor
 - Learner—Learner
 - Learner—Content
- Hillman, Willis, and Gunawardena, 1994
 - Learner—Interface

Learner-Instructor Interaction

- Provides motivation, feedback, and dialogue between teacher and student



Moore, 1989

Learner-Learner Interaction

- Exchange of information, ideas, & dialogue that
 - Occurs between students about the course
 - Is delivered in a structured or non-structured manner



Moore, 1989

Learning Community

Building a “Learning Community”

“Learner-learner interaction is part of engaging learners in distance education (Hillman et al., 1994). Teachers should find ways for learners to communicate despite the distances (CDCE, n.d.). Introductions are one method. You can also use team-building activities in the learning modules. These can include group activities, team projects, or the use of discussion boards. **Creating familiarity between learners helps them feel part of a “learning community”** (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools [SACS], n.d.).”



Moore & Harder, 2013

Learner-Content Interaction

- Students obtain intellectual information from material



Moore, 1989

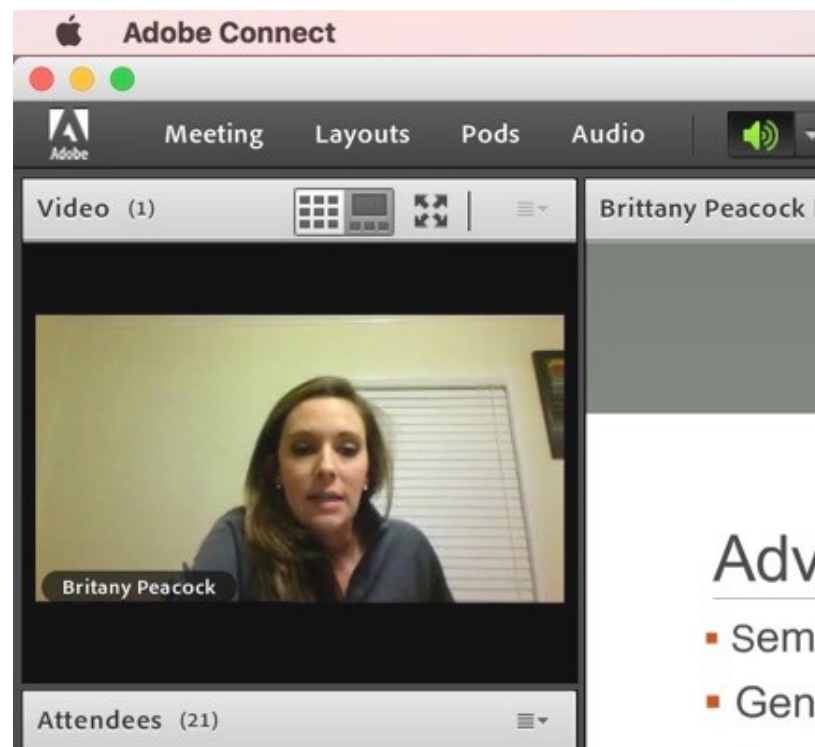
Learner-Interface Interaction

- Interaction between the student and the delivery technology
- Minimize complexity of online tools
 - In-class exercises, orientation sessions, technology courses
- Interface should appear intuitive & user-friendly

Hillman, Willis, and Gunawardena (1994)

Student Perceptions: Brittany Peacock

- Brittany is an “online” student that was in the Animal Science Learning Community
- She is an Area Forage and Livestock Agent with Clemson Extension



Student Perceptions: Brittany Peacock

- Learner-Learner Interaction
 - Did the “Learning Community” foster interactivity/learning?

“Working in a team that all have a interest in animal science allows for easier conversation and learning. Travis (colleague & classmate) and I both being Livestock and Forages agents we seem to be on the same page, and can relate concepts back to one another very easy. I believe when the group has the same mindset learning the course martial is made easier.

Student Perceptions: Brittany Peacock

- Learner—Content Interaction

“Having the ability to talk with the other students in the Breakout Room enhanced the level of comprehension and thinking regarding the content of the course.”

“Hearing fellow students’ diverse views & discussions on course topics resulted in a greater understanding of the material.”

Student Perceptions: Brittany Peacock

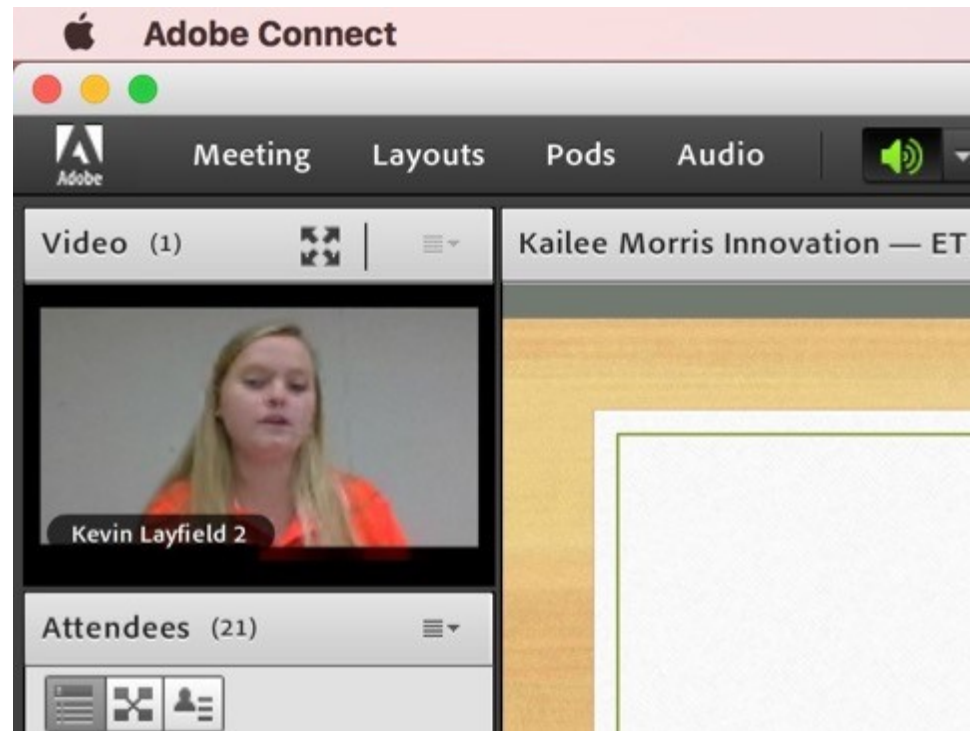
- Learner—Interface Interaction
 - Did any technical issues impact interaction?

“At times, slow or bad Internet speeds were a limiting factor affecting the performance of the breakout rooms.”

“Once the students realized what type of connection they needed and how to reduce bandwidth from each computer, this was no longer an issue.”

Student Perceptions: Kailee Morris

- On-site student
- On same team as Brittany Peacock, Animal Science Learning Community



Student Perceptions: Kailee Morris

- Greatest **benefit** of using Breakout Room?



“Appreciated being able to discuss technical issues within the learning community that everyone understood.”

“Enjoyed hearing the perspectives of classmates that are on the job.”

Student Perceptions: Kailee Morris

- Greatest **challenges** of using Breakout Room?



“The greatest challenge was when we tried to communicate with off-site classmates in the learning community via audio. We had another group on the other side of class so we could not hear. We had to start typing in the Chat box to communicate.”

Lessons Learned

- Announce specific time allowed for Learning Community (LC) activities
 - Time-on-task will improve
- Require “scribe” to develop a PowerPoint for Learning Community reports each week
 - Grade the PowerPoint quality — assign to LC

Lessons Learned

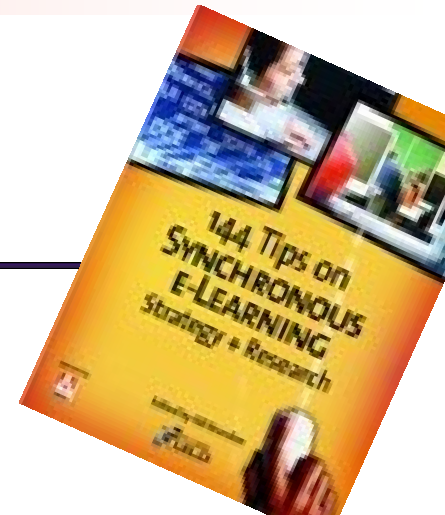
- Require student Bio & picture first week
- Provide orientation on breakout room use
- Considering not all students are online...
 - Secure extra classroom if multiple LCs
 - OR -
 - Require each student to use earbuds with microphones to reduce external noise

Recommendations for Future

- Experiential Learning Course — Fall 2017
- Expand use of Breakout rooms to include:
 - Case Studies
 - Think-Pair-Share
 - Round Robins
 - Debates

Future Plans

- Plans include a review of the “144 Tips on Synchronous E-Learning”



“Respect the Learners’ Time: This may seem obvious, but be sure the activity you have planned for a synchronous session has a purpose, and cannot be delivered as a free-standing (asynchronous) video. Do not deliver lectures using synchronous sessions — be sure that these sessions take advantage of being LIVE with the learners. Do activities, have question and answer sessions, provide the learner the opportunity to contribute. Save the lectures for delivery in the online materials for watching at the learner’s convenience. And — end the synchronous session ON TIME.”

Theresa Murphrey, Faculty, Texas A&M University

<http://tinyurl.com/y8bwjjjj>

Research on Future Course

- Measure perceptions of students regarding student-student interaction – synchronous course
 - Moore, Warner, and Jones's study (2016) — JAE
- Assess differences in transactional distance (TD) between on and off-campus students
 - Synchronous course
 - Determine factors that impact TD

Thank You!!!

Questions?

References Cited

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