

Social negotiation as the basis of effective communication in video conferencing

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Theme: Pedagogical Usage and Development of Video Technology

Literacy has long been one of the most significant key words and concepts in education. What it means in the twenty first century however, has evolved beyond traditional views of literacy as a singular process of understanding and articulating written or spoken communication. A more contemporary focus on literacies (plural) in primary and secondary education includes intercultural communication factors and the socially negotiated development of appropriacy and adaptation, in and across community groups. Higher education however, still focuses more strongly on top down patterns of appropriate discourse through which students need to adapt to the rather more fixed expectations of what is appropriate.

With the advent of computer and video technologies though, the world is witnessing rapidly evolving transitions in what is socially appropriate in communication. This change is also filtering into higher education more quickly than many institutions realise. Thus we see new challenges in higher education and a significant reluctance on behalf of institutions to engage in meaningful negotiation and debate on some of the more contentious issues of how we can engage students in meaningful tasks that will also provide “transferable skills” that are meant to be usable in other academic and professional communication settings.

This study focuses on pedagogical uses of video conferencing, which is particularly interesting in the context mentioned, as through it we can see communicators at a new and relatively uncharted social interface. Through the use of transnational video conferences teachers and participants are finding that people go through a significant process of adaptation in considering how they need to communicate to create effective patterns of communication that can be, if not measured, perhaps considered as being dynamic in determining how both students and teachers perceive social development of community groups.

The presentation will introduce a theoretical social cycle of adaptation to video conferencing. The discussion of issues described above will be illustrated with examples from student work, clips from video conferences and student discussion and feedback. These examples have been chosen to provide strong evidence for a greater role for negotiation between teachers and students in higher education—and even more importantly they will demonstrate why it is important for teachers to sometimes take a back seat and let the students take over. In allowing greater autonomy through video conferences, the presentation will conclude by looking at how this focus on social negotiation can be used to encourage critical thinking and problem solving as a bridge from academic to professional life.

URL: <http://users.aber.ac.uk/jpm>

Keywords: video conferencing, literacies, social negotiation, appropriate discourse, higher education