Using Ning Social Network Environment for a Blended Graduate Level Course: Ecology, Pedagogy and Design

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Goals

- Demonstrate how a course can be dynamically designed to foster a distributed cognitive system/community in which both students and the instructor develop expertise reciprocally;

- Further explain how to wisely utilize publicly available social networks to facilitate learning and augment community building; and

- Share practical tips on how to organize a blended learning course that can cultivate optimal learning experiences in online, offline and face-to-face environments.
SLS680P: Tasks, Activities, and Learning Environments

- Graduate students from SLS, LLL and College of Education
Implicit Goals for the Course

- From production to languaging
- From meaning making to values-realizing
- From cognition in the lab and classroom to cognition in the wild
- From feedback to feedforward
- From individual innate process to common results
Questions for all of us to think about

- What is language?
- What is it for?
- What is the problem or what are the problems?
- What can we do?
Why Ning?

* Threaded discussion forum
* Tweet
* Blog
* Photos/Video
Other Social Media/CMS

- Mightybell (free)
- Canvas (free, using for SLS750: Social Media, Agency and Languaging)
- Jomsocial (charge)
- Joomla (charge)
First-order dynamics as languaging: Eco-DIALOGICAL Model

(Gibson, 1979; Hodges, 2007, 2009; Linell, 2009; Reed, 1996; van Lier, 2004; Zheng, 2012)
Mobility

- Ecological psychology suggests language is part of processes whereby groups of people regulate and coordinate their actions and interactions (Reed, 1996).
- The key to the regulation and coordination lies in the locomotive movements by which agents take exploratory, performatory actions and interactions.
- The concept of learning environment simulates this mobility that abducts human agents to co-act to perceive, act, feel, make meanings and realize values as they encounter affordances.
Dialogicality

* Sense-making and meanings
* Mind arises in responsive understanding
* Perspectivity and voicedness are evoked by the silent third-party

* (Bahktin, 1991; Linell, 2009)
In distributed cognition terms, the external cultural structures are constantly produced and exploited by human beings, the heavy interaction between artifacts and agents enable cognitive performances to occur that single individual cannot achieve (Hutchins, 1995).
When meaning-making and values-realizing activities are taken into whole body embodied and embedded interaction, multiple modes of semiotic resources are appropriated by the distributed cognitive system.
Design

✱ 1.5 hour in class time
✱ 1.5 hour asynchronous time
✱ Allow class and online time community building
✱ Allow time for students to develop their project alone and with each other
✱ Provide opportunities for students to tinker
✱ Allow shared values to emerge that not necessarily reflect their individual agency, but collective care.
✱ Help student be aware of and develop their cognitive and physical space
Pedagogy

* From production to Languaging
* From Input to Affordances
* From meaning-making to values-realizing
* From Motivation to Caring
* From cognition in the lab to cognition in the wild
* From Tasks to Open-Ended Learning Environments
* From feedback to feedfoward
* From competence to development of expertise in action
* From innate process to common results
* From individual cognition to collectivized interactivity

A Distributed Ecology

A distributed cognitive system promotes and attracts agents’ co-participation and collective action. In order to move on, learners “have to” know each other’s cognitive space and physical space. From varied degrees of fiddling and tinkering that are afforded by collective action on objects that are imbued with cultural meaning potentials, participants gradually build their shared values that not necessarily reflect their individual agency, but collective care.

A complex system encourages Way-finding that promotes caring. It exceeds the necessity for pragmatics in order to manage and maintain a conversation or just fulfill the course goal, rather caring emanates coaction that give rise to shared goals and collective care.

The collective care cannot be transmitted, it has to be “worked on” by realizing shared values: painstaking problems identification, solving, as well as rejoicing insightful moments.

In these open-ended environments, there is space for community building during which learners are cared for by co-participants, the instructor, and the environments (affordances).
Class Members
In memory of Leo Van Lier