

Learning through Online Discussion

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Learning outcomes

When you have successfully completed this session you will be able to:

- Explain what is meant by Learning through Discussion
- Explore principles for successful learning through online discussion

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Background:

- Teaching and Learning
- Distance Learning
- e Learning
- Academic Professional Development



Activity 1

- In pairs
- Why use discussion for learning?
 - What are the benefits?
 - What are the problems?
- Feedback discussion in discussion with whole group

Knowledge and learning

- What is knowledge?
 - Reasoned consensus
 - Tentative
 - Survives “public” scrutiny
- Learn through discussion and debate
 - Subject claims to scrutiny of peers
 - Negotiate meaning
- Collaborative construction of knowledge

15 benefits of discussion

(Brookfield and Preskill)

1. Helps students explore diverse perspectives
2. Increases awareness/tolerance for ambiguity or complexity
3. Helps students recognise and investigate their assumptions
4. Encourages attentive and respectful listening
5. Develops new appreciation for continuing differences
6. Increases intellectual agility
7. Helps students become connected to a topic
8. Shows respect for students' voices and experiences.
9. Helps students learn processes & habits for democratic discourse
10. Affirms students as co-creators of knowledge
11. Develops capacity for clear communication of ideas and meaning
12. Develops habits of collaborative learning
13. Increases breadth and makes students more empathetic
14. Helps students develop skills of synthesis and integration
15. Leads to transformation

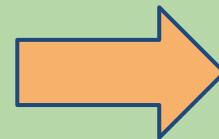
Online communication

- People embrace online communication
- Email, social networks (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- But...
- Course based communication not so easy to achieve
 - Students often reluctant to engage
 - Fear?
 - Too busy?
 - Don't see value?



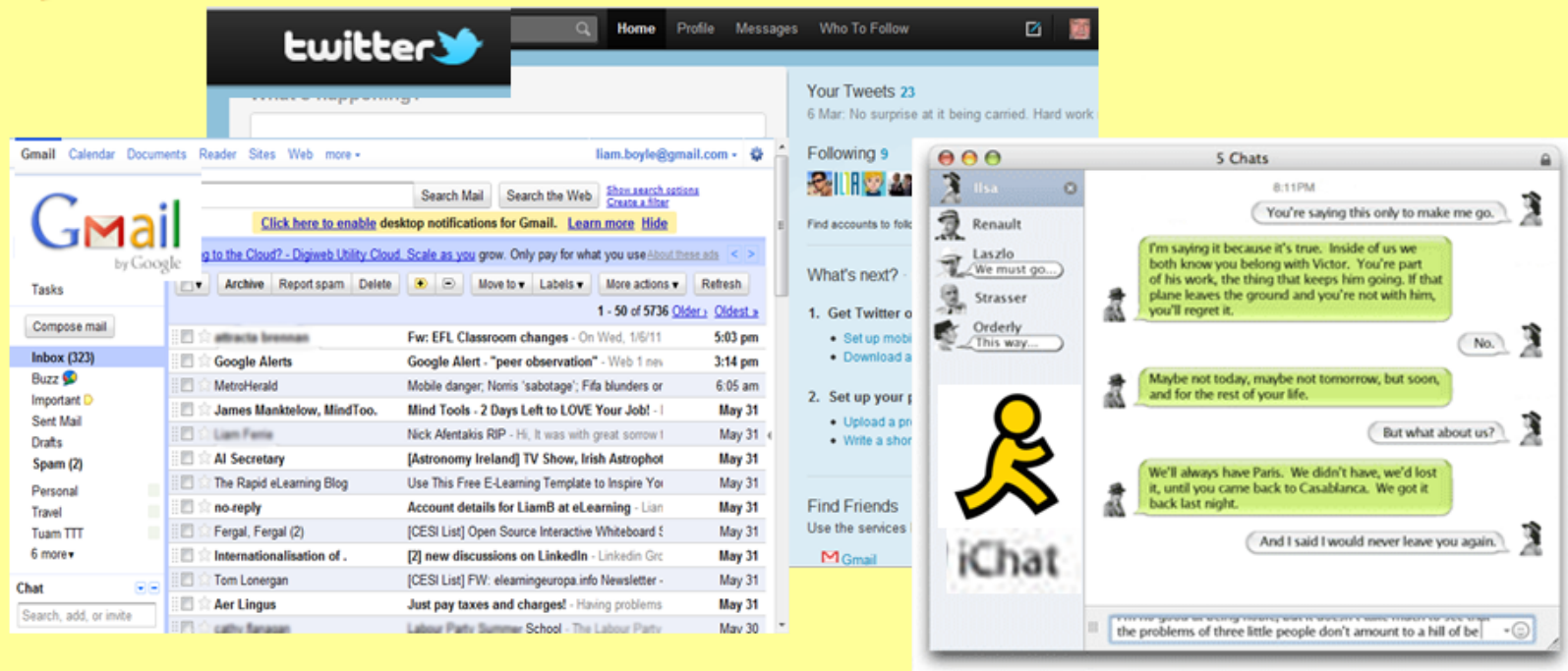
Activity 2 Online discussion

- Groups
- Discuss how you have tried to use online discussion in any course
- How did you use it?
- Did the learners engage?
- Did they learn?
- What demands did it make on you as a teacher?
- How would you rate it as a learning method?
- Feedback to whole group



Asynchronous

Synchronous



Asynchronous and Synchronous communication

Chat (IM) and Forums (Bulletin boards)

Chat

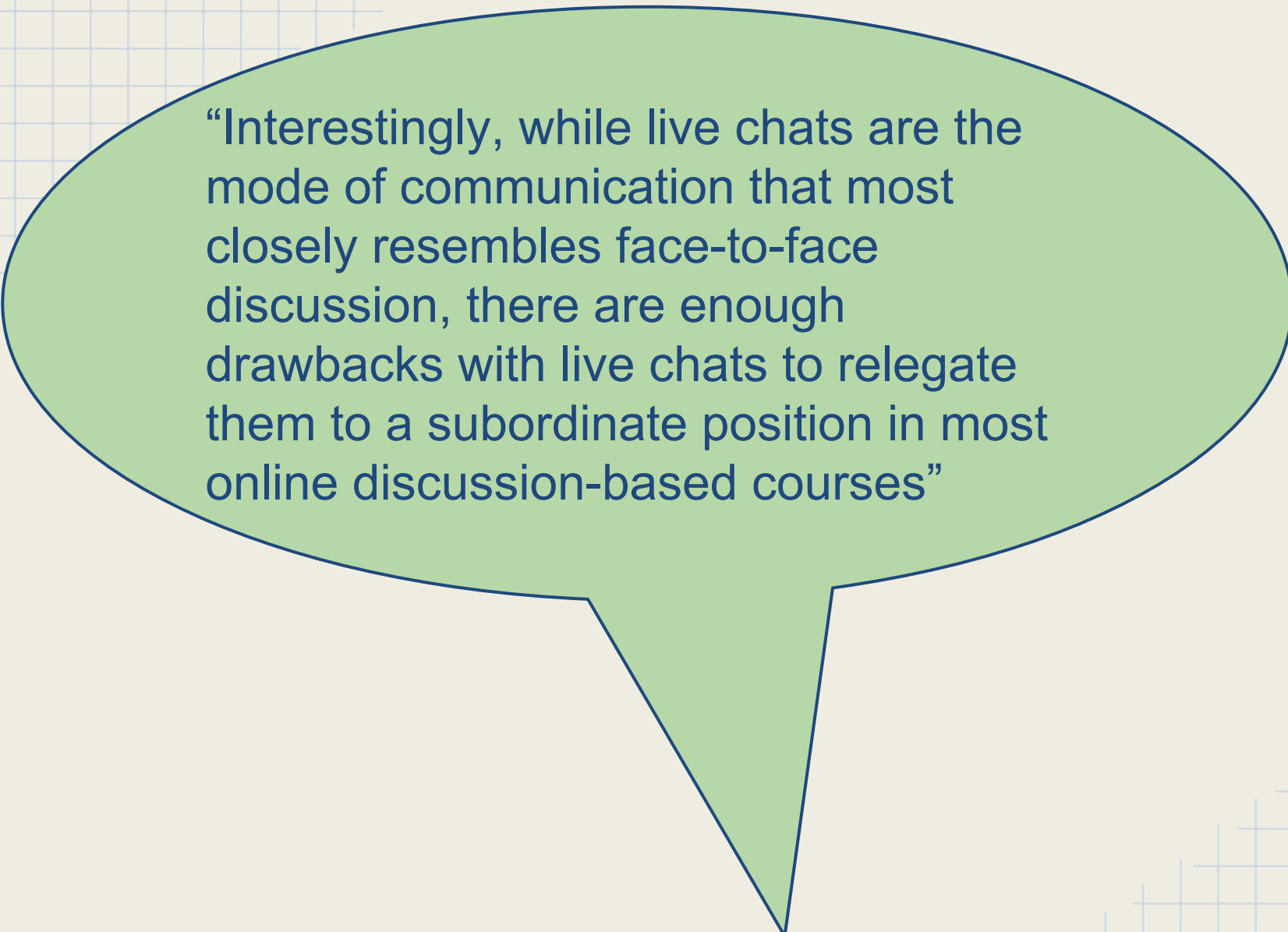
Synchronous

- Immediate
- Engaging
- Requires good keyboard skills to participate
- Little time for reflection
- Typically, not all contribute

Forums

Asynchronous

- Participants can take time to read, reflect and respond
- Everybody can contribute
- Available afterwards



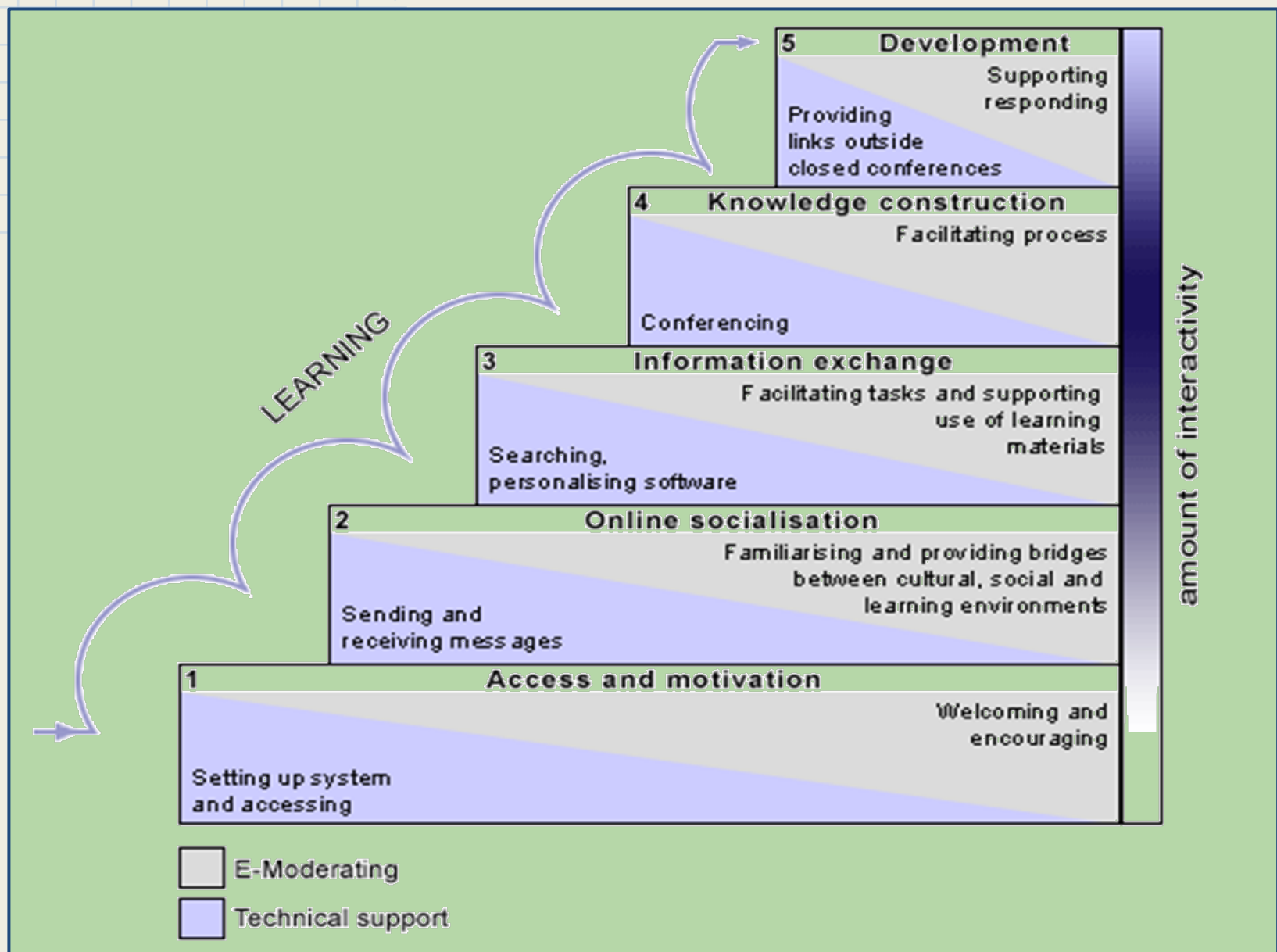
“Interestingly, while live chats are the mode of communication that most closely resembles face-to-face discussion, there are enough drawbacks with live chats to relegate them to a subordinate position in most online discussion-based courses”

(Brookfield and Preskill)

Online forums

1. Bond with others - Class group
2. Share ideas
3. Check ideas against others/ Contest ideas
4. Think and respond (because asynchronous)
5. Contributions available to all
6. Everyone can contribute But ...
time restrictions, no one
7. Peer learning - answering
8. Collective construction

- Fear of exposure
- Free riders
- "Others steal my ideas"



Salmon 5-step model of e-moderation

Forums: Community building

- Social dialogue
- Especially important at start
- Get to know one another
 - Introductions
 - Some information about self
- Helps bonding
- Build trust and respect

Information exchange

Task 1: In the Discussion forum for the Organisational Change and Renewal assignment, add a reply on why you think it is important for Operations Managers to understand Lewin's Planned Change model. (Approximately 300 words)

Initiate, respond, critique

- **Task 4:** For this task, we would like to encourage online discussion of the nature of systemic intelligence and its value for an organisation. Write a brief note (~200 words) discussing one example of a problem caused by a lack of systemic intelligence, or a problem solved by systemic intelligence.
- In addition to your initial note, you should also add later notes in which you comment on at least two postings by other students.

Construct an artefact

- **Task 5:**
- For this task, you are asked to share with your fellow learners the task of producing an annotated web directory on the topic of Organisational Change.
- Locate at least five web resources – articles or web sites – which contain useful supplementary information in relation to the material covered in this section.
- Indicate the web address and write a brief note (100 words, approx) on each resource indicating what it contains and why it should be valuable for students of this programme.

Construct an artefact

- Collaborative building of a text resource
 - Each student allocated to a group
 - Different topic/question allocated to each group
 - “Within your group, you are asked to collectively produce a document (2,000 word approx) on the allotted topic”
 - Use forum to discuss process
 - Use google document (wiki) to construct report

Discussion tasks

- Simple
 - Pose question
 - Require response from each
- Use Q&A forum?
 - Student cannot see responses of others until after they have posted their own
- Critique
 - Pose question
 - Require/invite contributions from all
 - Including constructive comment on each other's contributions

Discussion tasks

- Free flowing discussion
 - Questions come from tutor or students
 - No specific mandate on number of responses
 - Works well with a highly motivated group of learners who are familiar with online discussion
 - Can be difficult to achieve
 - Key is moderation

All Things in Moderation!

Load on Teacher/Moderator



Minimal moderation

- Set up forums and tasks
- Delete libellous contributions or those which tend to harass or humiliate other participants

Fuller moderation

- Respond to each contribution
- Probe and encourage participants



Thank you

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