Embracing Emotional Presence in Online and Face-to-Face Learning

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Session Outcomes:

- Learn about emotional presence and place it within the context of the community of inquiry framework
- Explore the opportunities technology presents for developing emotional presence in online, blended, and face-to-face courses
- Critically examine the place of technology in facilitating emotional presence through immersion in the experiences of others

Session Overview:

Welcome and Demonstration
Your Turn
Emotional Presence, Community of Inquiry, and Affordances of Technology
Further Applications
Your Turn
Session Wrap-Up

Thank you!
Additional Resources: bit.ly/EmbraceEmotions

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Othello by William Shakespeare
From Act III, scene iii

OTHELLO
Ha! ha! false to me?

IAGO
Why, how now, general! no more of that.

OTHELLO
Avaunt! be gone! thou hast set me on the rack:
I swear 'tis better to be much abused
Than but to know't a little.

IAGO
How now, my lord!

OTHELLO
What sense had I of her stol'n hours of lust?
I saw't not, thought it not, it harm'd not me:
I slept the next night well, was free and merry;
I found not Cassio's kisses on her lips:
He that is robb'd, not wanting what is stol'n,
Let him not know't, and he's not robb'd at all.

IAGO
I am sorry to hear this.

OTHELLO
I had been happy, if the general camp,
Pioners and all, had tasted her sweet body,
So I had nothing known. O, now, for ever
Farewell the tranquil mind! farewell content!
Farewell the plumed troop, and the big wars,
That make ambition virtue! O, farewell!
Farewell the neighing steed, and the shrill trump,
The spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife,
The royal banner, and all quality,
Pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war!
And, O you mortal engines, whose rude throats
The immortal Jove's dead clamours counterfeit,
Farewell! Othello's occupation's gone!

IAGO
Is't possible, my lord?

OTHELLO
Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore,
Be sure of it; give me the ocular proof:
Or by the worth of man's eternal soul,
Thou hadst been better have been born a dog
Than answer my waked wrath!

IAGO
Is't come to this?

OTHELLO
Make me to see't; or, at the least, so prove it,
That the probation bear no hinge nor loop
To hang a doubt on; or woe upon thy life!

IAGO
My noble lord,—

OTHELLO
If thou dost slander her and torture me,
Never pray more; abandon all remorse;
On horror's head horrors accumulate;
Do deeds to make heaven weep, all earth amazed;
For nothing canst thou to damnation add
Greater than that.

IAGO
O grace! O heaven forgive me!
Are you a man? have you a soul or sense?
God be wi' you; take mine office. O wretched fool.
That livest to make thine honesty a vice!
O monstrous world! Take note, take note, O world,
To be direct and honest is not safe.
I thank you for this profit; and from hence
I'll love no friend, sith love breeds such offence.
"Digging" by Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

Under my window, a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:
My father, digging. I look down

Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills
Where he was digging.

The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft
Against the inside knee was levered firmly.
He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep
To scatter new potatoes that we picked,
Loving their cool hardness in our hands.

By God, the old man could handle a spade.
Just like his old man.

My grandfather cut more turf in a day
Than any other man on Toner’s bog.
Once I carried him milk in a bottle
Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened up
To drink it, then fell to right away
Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods
Over his shoulder, going down and down
For the good turf. Digging.

The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I’ve no spade to follow men like them.

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I’ll dig with it.
Dr. John Doherty, Instructional Design Manager

Hello everyone.

You’ve just heard Seamus Heaney’s reading of one of his earliest poems, Digging. I use this poem in a lot of my courses, particularly in a first year seminar. It is one of two core “readings” that we use on our first day. Before I used this audio version I had a challenge in getting my students to talk about the meaning that’s in this poem. But when I had them listen instead they connected to the emotion in Heaney’s voice.

Did you catch pride in his voice when he was talking about his father?

“By god the old man could hold a spade.”

Here, Heaney is a young man who has just come home from university. He is beginning his own career as a poet, yet he is a son and grandson of Irish farmers. Here is is sitting at his window writing he is wondering if he should be out in the fields with his father, planting potatoes. And that helps him remember a time he took milk to his grandfather who was digging peat for the home fires.

Did you hear the regret in his voice, where he seems to feel he is not a match for them? My students did, and they made the connection to what the poet was saying through their own, similar feelings as first years.

“But I’ve no spade to follow men like them.”

It introduces us to the central idea that runs through all of Heaney’s writings: As he says “If you have the words, there’s always a chance that you’ll find the way.” And it is these words we will come back to time and again throughout our course and the emotional connection made in this poem makes those new texts that much more accessible.

Dr. Steve Burrell, Chief Information Officer

Our ability to see technology as a personal matter provides the foundation that IT services is really about creating and supporting rich, personal experiences. We’re not just implementing technology for technology’s sake. And we should never underestimate the impact that technology services can have on individuals. It’s important to realize that even the most simple IT service can mean the difference between student success, and, sadly, failure. I’ve often reminded technicians to remember that they are not just repairing a broken keyboard, fixing a software program or assisting a student with resetting their password for the 50th time. But they’re really enabling that student to engage in a learning experience that contributes to their success, to improving their lives, and that of their families. And that in no small way, we are contributing to the strengthening of our communities and our great democracy, by ensuring that students have a positive and rich personal experience with technology.
Kristin Ziska, Instructional Technologist

I am extremely lucky in the fact that my courses are already pre-loaded with a lot of emotional presence. They are high interest courses where we explore big ideas like the human experience and social justice through fun things like Doctor Who and video games. This doesn’t mean that I don’t design for emotional presence as well. I have a few tricks I use to help students engage emotionally with the content, with each other, and with me.

Like most online courses, we have discussions each week. Students have the option to post and reply in text or as a video. One of them discussion topic is something a bit more fun, where they explore their conceptions of a topic before we dive into it. I’ll ask something that seems somewhat silly like “If you could choose one of the following superpowers, what would you choose and what is the first thing you would do with it?” to help them explore the ideas of power and ethics. They get excited to see other people’s choices and share their own, which really helps alleviate the feeling of alienation that happen the first several weeks of an online class.

I also have an optional board where they can ask questions, seek help from each other, and share things they have found both for the class and for their larger college careers. Even confessional posts as simple as “I’m really nervous about this class” are welcomed and often very well received.

Students also complete weekly reflections. They have a range of topics or ideas to choose from but the choice is ultimately theirs. They have opportunities to explore how their other passions connect to the readings, what they noticed or discovered in connection to the topic, current events, or “train thinking” where they explore the way the topics tie to others that they learned in another class, read about somewhere else, and so on. Even their reflections have the option to be “turned in” via video clip, audio clip, or text.

To connect with them, I respond personally to each of their reflections. It helps me get to know them better and helps them feel better connected to me as an instructor. If a student completes their reflection as a video or audio stream, I complete my feedback in the same way. Sometimes generating emotional presence is as easy as giving them something to be excited about and a voice to connect with a name.

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