Using Video Tools in the Online Classroom

Academic technology has grown tremendously in the past 15 years, and much of its accomplishments have been directed at overcoming instructional barriers in virtual learning. Perhaps the most crucial barriers that recent literature in online learning emphasize are social, administrative, and motivational barriers. Social barriers range from encouraging student engagement to creating a community within the online classroom. Administrative barriers involve course design, accessibility, and communicating course materials. Motivational barriers prevent students from engaging with the class and keeping up with course materials.

In the wake of COVID-19, many instructors have faced these barriers for the first time. At Pellissippi State Community College, 76 percent of Spanish classes migrated to an online learning environment. I was assigned two fast-track Spanish courses, extremely intensive classes that are completed in just four weeks. By integrating videos into my course design, I was able to help my students overcome the instructional barriers and succeed.

Video-Note

Video-note, a built-in media recording tool that allows online instructors to personalize the learning experience with short, video-based comments or instructions, is included in the Brightspace Learning Management System. Video-note allowed me to communicate continuously and effectively with online students in a manner similar to an in-person discussion, which helped to minimize the social barriers students may have encountered when interacting with me. Videos also helped control administrative barriers in online courses, particularly at the beginning of the academic session when I needed to clearly communicate and delineate class expectations. When handling the motivational barriers commonly encountered in virtual learning courses, video resources proved extraordinary tools that promoted interaction and discussions among students.

By using video-note, instructors can achieve the following goals:

1. Effectively direct students to content modules and individual subjects or topics on your course page.
2. Successfully walk students through all assignments scheduled in each module or submodule of the class.
3. Provide students with bi-weekly announcements that direct or redirect them to class participation on discussion boards and oral assignments.
4. Encourage students to contact the instructor via email messages or through Zoom.

Things to Consider

Online educators must understand the basic components of educational psychology that are critical in developing and using videos in virtual instruction. Experts on Learning Environment Modeling Language (LEML) suggest that effective videos should serve as simple building blocks in the learning process. For instance, informational videos aimed at covering an individual concept allow students to remember content and build from one concept to another. Effective learning videos should have segment links that include visual cues that promote learning and recalling in viewers and should contain only relevant information that improves students' retention and comprehension. Instructors can use additional means of reinforcement in videos, such as course texts, additional concepts, or definitions written on a whiteboard that can be seen in the video. Specialists on LEML have also suggested adding recall practicing to involve students in the media tool, such as asking questions at the end of a video to assess student comprehension. As Benjamin Franklin once said, "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn."

Conclusion

The switch to online modalities requires instructors to reassess common educational approaches that are indispensable in the physical and online classroom. Instructors should take advantage of the video tools available in their LMS to integrate course content, discussions, and assignments with an effective structural support that heads off confusion and frustration.

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