History of TalkTech Projects

Spring and Fall 2007 - Prelude

Mark Frydenberg introduces a collaborative project with students at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga, Australia. http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=1324302.1324317

Facilitating cross-cultural learning through collaborative Skypecasting.

Abstract:

The authors were involved in an international project in which first year (freshman) students studying comparable IT courses at two universities, one in the United States and the other in Australia, formed virtual teams and engaged in collaborative learning and content creation via the Internet. Each team was tasked with jointly producing a short "Skypecast" (an audio podcast recorded over Skype), in which team members from each institution participated in conversations on topics related to technology and culture. The students had to overcome issues related to cross-cultural communication, as well as other challenges that arose from working with people whom they were unable to meet face-to-face, across disparate time zones. This paper presents an analysis of the views and experiences of the students from both institutions, elicited through surveys and focus group interviewing. The findings suggest that in addition to developing their technology skills and enhancing their understanding of the course material, the exercise provided the students with exposure to diverse perspectives from their peers on the topics studied. It also fostered the development of generic skills in research, interpersonal communication, and teamwork essential to the 21st Century knowledge worker. In the absence of the need to produce tangible objects of shared activity (Skypecasts) and without the explicit articulation of common goals within each team, the students may not have used the available technology to engage in the processes of collaborative dialog and problem solving that were evident in their reflective self-reports. In addition to its successes, the problems encountered and lessons learned from the experience are discussed, before outlining the authors' future plans. It is hoped that the paper will be of value to other educators wishing to undertake similar efforts, and make a contribution to the development of best practice in the area of Internet-mediated, cross-institutional collaborative learning.

Fall 2008: Talk Tech 2008:
- Used GoogleSites for collaboration https://sites.google.com/site/talktech08/
- Students discussed social issues as they relate to technology developments:

- how do you use multimedia technologies and for what?
- the use of WWW resources in your education
- what are the mobile phone applications of the future and why?
- how do you analyze websites with rich user experiences which you like for visualization and/or accesibility, usability?
- how are mobile phones integrated in your student life?
- how has web 2.0 and the use of the WWW influenced the elections in your country?
- what are the five most important web sites you should know about?
- are you concerned about privacy in the age of facebook and social networking?
- what do you need to know to be web 2.0 literate?
- how do bloggers influence mainstream society?
- what blogs do you read? what podcasts do you listen to or watch?
- how has the internet changed the way people communicate?
- how might businesses make use of web 2.0 technologies
- how does technology influence your culture?

Tools used: skype, mebeam.com, timeanddate.com, googlesites

- "Romanian Challenges (and successes)
    o Wrap it up by the end of the week
    o Journey is more important than destination
    o Monday: short survey
    o If they have not contacted you yet ten go ahead yourself and create the media required. Also mention the fact that they could not be contacted in you final presentation.
- mebeam.com
- – free videochat/web conferencing tool
- – create a room with any name of your choosing
- – anyone can chat with you through your room name
- – the hyperlink to your chatroom will be mebeam.com/(room name)
- – up to 12 people can chat at once
- Use a unique name because there is no passwords. i.e "hi" is probably not your best bet.
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- Romanian project
- – Video chat with a student from Romania
- – About 40 of us and 20 of them so two American students to every Romanian student
- – discuss about culture and how the web changes communication
- – real world experience because you have to interact with people of different backgrounds
- – 7 hour time difference so you have to schedule it accordingly
- – Chat with the Romanian student through mebeam.com or skype
- – information found at http://sites.google.com/site/talktech08/
- – Goals: to use information technology that may have cultural or society influence;
-       to create a context in which students had to work effectively with international students
- – Questions to ask: How to use multimedia technologies and for what?
- Talk at least twice.

Student Comments:
- I think the difficult thing about IT is that it contains elements that are difficult to grade. It would be easy enough to grade "name two elements of mashups" or "name three ways to communicate via the Internet." Some elements of the class such as how different people choose to communicate on the Internet how to use social networking platforms cannot be graded. There is no correct answer. To find the answer for yourself one must experience and experiment themselves.

That is why in our class we had projects with Romanians and were asked to use Twitter, so we can learn for ourselves how we can deal with these new elements of Web 2.0 and how we can incorporate them into our lives.

- With the example with the collaborative project with Romanian students, a huge roadblock for my team was that the Romanian students were not contributing and were not communicating effectively with us. Collaboration was a significant part of the project, and the team was doomed without it.

- . The experience that I had gained as a result of the Romanian Project is a another positive point in the class. Although we had difficulties communicating because of the different Time Zones, I had learnt how to solve problems and work successfully as a team with people I have never met before in my life through the usage of Skype, email, IM, and Google Docs.

- The Romanian project was an interesting idea to teach business students a few things about the business world. When I get a job doing something related to business, conferences with people across the world will be vital. The technical aspects are not important. Skype is easy to use. Emailing and instant messaging are simple. The hard parts were scheduling a meeting and conversing with our Romanian counterparts. Actually, talking with them was not especially hard. My cross-world group members spoke very good English and were very easy-going. However, scheduling a meeting was difficult due to our different schedules and, of course, the time difference. Either we would have to wake up very early to discuss our project, or they would have to sacrifice their social life one night to work on it. They volunteered, and no conflict ensued. I assume that it will not be as easy in the business world to balance schedules, but now I have experience. Now, I know it is not impossible to make international conferences work.

- For example, through the Romanian project we used software's like Skype to communicate, Jing and Camtasia to make videos, Google Docs to send out surveys and Slide Share to present our PowerPoint.

- To be honest I think my experience in the class lost a lot when trying to do the project with the Romanian team. Not being able to really communicate effectively and having to take on most of the work communicating with the Romanians lead to alot of stress for our team on top of which we were then docked on the project, overall just something that brought down my personal opinion of the class.
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Fall 2009

- Write-up published here http://www.vicadis.net/set/files/pedagogical_settings.pdf

Paper rejected:

Web 2.0 Technologies for Incubating Virtual Mobilities (submitted to EC-TEL 2012) – maybe can reuse