Final Paper / Final Thoughts

Susana Villanueva Eguia Lis

Texas Tech University

Author Note

 Susana Villanueva Eguia Lis, Department of Education, Texas Tech University.

 Susana Villanueva Eguia Lis, is now at Department of Foreign and Modern Languages and Literatures, Texas Tech University.

 Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Susana Villanueva, Department of Classical and Modern Languages and Literatures, Texas Tech University, 4202 16th apt 101, Lubbock, Texas, 79416/

Contact: susana.eguia@ttu.edu, susana.v.berry@gmail.com

Module 8 - Final Thoughts

Module 1 was a great opportunity to review what I had forgotten about web design and graphic design. Using Weebly I created my professional website plus a website for our EDIT 5370 class, following Dr. Louder’s website as an example. The end result was more impressive than I expected. The reading “The impact of technology and theory on instructional design” by Warren et al (2014) was the foundation and introduction to what would follow later in the course. The most important knowledge I obtained from module one was the creation of my personal website. I now have it on my Linkedin Profile and it has brought me some leads on potential customers/employers.

In Module Two we learned about the Definition of Distance Education, Historical Perspectives and Theories. The module started with my own definitions of Distance Education (DE), which later on had to be contrasted with a definition from the readings. I contrasted mine with the one given by Charles Wedemeyer as “Various forms of teaching-learning arrangements in which teachers and learners carry out their essential tasks and responsibilities apart from one another” (as cited in Diehl 2013, p 39). I realized that my definition assumed the existence of Learning Management Systems online, but the original definitions did not because they first started delivering Distance Education via regular mail for example. In this module I learned that we are living in the future that past intellectuals imagined. However it is important to remember that the quality of the program resides not in the technology used but in the quality of the teacher-student interaction as well as student-student interaction.

Module Three was about research findings and trends in Distance Education. An annotated bibliography was made using APA format and students discussed their findings as well as how this research can influence practice. My annotated bibliography was about how Text Based E-Learning activities can be and have been used to learn and teach foreign langauges. Cowie and Sakui  (2014) provide a synthesis of the pedagogical practices of e-learning experts into a four-part framework of approaches: out-of-class, blended language practice, blended Web 2.0 projects and online (273-286). They found that all this new tools can be used and bring positive outcomes in the Foreign Language Classroom (Cowie and Sakui, 2014, p. 273-286). After looking at different findings I realized that this is an effective strategy. From these readings I developed an interest in creating online Spanish or other foreign language courses. I believe there is a customer/job market for this type of programs and skills.

Asynchronous and Synchronous communication was part of Module Four. Research has found that a mixture of synchronous and asynchronous communication is ideal for students based on different learning styles and academic tasks (Mabrito, 2006, as cited in Yuzer 2014, p.392). During this module 4 our team tested Synchronous Communication using Skype and Google hangouts. We were able to do a video conference call on both communication tools. Voice and Video streaming was available on both and we had a good connection, which allowed us to see and hear each other in real time. Since I am interested in learning and teaching foreign languages, I personally think that these two video conferencing tools would be very useful to allow students to talk to people in foreign countries. On my personal website I added a poll and a discussion board where I had colleagues and classmates participate. The most important thing was to learn how to insert communication tools on my website. It was completely new. It was not part of the assignment but I tried it and it worked.

Module Five covered Instructional Design. Several models were studied such as Dick and Carey, ADDIE, Gagne’s Nine Events and others. Reigeluth (2014) argues that a key marker of the new paradigm of instructional theories is the creation of “learner-centered” environments, in which the learners take more responsibility for defining learning outcomes and choosing the road needed to achieve those outcomes (p.58). Later on Reigeluth continues to explain that one extreme is not always better than the others (Teacher Centered vs Learner Centered) but the best is to have a variety along the continuum between the two (p.59). I learned that it is important that the Learning Activities Foster Interaction between online students and instructor and among students. A new concept was introduced: Human Performance Technology (HPT) in the work place. I learned that it is not the same as Instructional Design although they share similarities. HPT is an intervention to improve performance in the work place and it may need the aid of Instructional Design to develop strategies to learn in the work place. Some times this learning is done through the individual sharing and accessing information online or via a management system. From this module I learned to compare and contrasts Instructional Design Models and I also learned how to apply them when creating an online course. At the end of the module I had created an elementary Spanish sample syllabus for High School Spanish. It included Modules, Lessons, and Assessments for Listening, Speaking, Writing and Reading in Spanish using synchronous and asynchronous tools.

Module 6 was about Student and Teacher Perspectives on Distance Education. From Kerr (2006) I learned that “Across the three studies, four characteristics emerged as most important for understanding and predicting online student success. They include reading and writing skills, independent learning, motivation, and computer literacy” (p.101). Based on this information I created an introduction with tips and suggestions (based on research findings) on how to be a successful online learner. Later on I applied more research findings in order to create an Online Course Syllabus for a Medical Spanish Course Online. It included Logistics and objectives, Instructional Activities, Assigned Readings and Assessments, Interaction among students using Synchronous and Asynchronous tools and Grading Policies.

Module Seven required students to read about the four subsystems of a Distance Education Program as described by Anthony Kaye’s (1981): Regulatory, Course, Student and Logistical Subsystems (as cited in Spector et al, 2014, p. 322).After reading them I used the information. I applied the new info to create a Sample Policy and Procedure Manual tailored to a specific scenario I created. I will be able to use this sample policy and procedure manual to create future manuals for other Distance or E-Learning Programs where I work or that I create in the future.

In conclusion I believe it will be highly likely that I will be using all the skills and information I learned in this course to develop successful online World Languages Courses in the future.

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