

Annotated bibliography: Aspects of research in distance education

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Bibliography

Sadykova, G. (2014). Mediating knowledge through peer-to-peer interaction in a multicultural online learning environment: A case study of international students in the U.S.. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 15(3), 24-49.

The author, a researcher at Federal University, Russian Federation, uses a two-stage, mixed methods study to investigate the significance of peer-to-peer relationships on learning experiences for international online students. The study follows a sociocultural paradigm put forward by Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky and American scholars Ron Scollon and Suzanne Wang Scollon. The framework for sociocultural theory enabled research in this area to focus on learning experiences of specific students and to study the effect of social environment and culture on interactions between peers in a classroom. The current research focused on online classes and found that online peer-to-peer interaction with U.S. students is detrimental to the learning experiences of international students. Specifically, the study revealed that American peer counterparts were seen as invaluable mediators for international students who had little knowledge of American culture. The peer-to-peer pairing had a positive impact on international students' learning experiences. This study is important because many schools are targeting international students for their programs and therefore have a responsibility to ensure these students have a positive learning experience. The responsibility of learning experiences is no longer on the individual alone but shifts in large part, to the institution, the instructor and U.S. students. In essence, the study is important to distance education since it addresses learning experiences and promotes a sense of community for online students.

Tu, C.H., & McIssac, M. (2002). The relationship of social presence and interaction in online classes. *American Journal of Distance Education*, 16(3), 131-150. doi:

10.1207/S15389286AJDE1603 2

The authors, researchers at George Washington University and Arizona State University, test the hypothesis that social presence in computer-mediated communication can influence online interaction. The study used definitions from previous studies but ultimately redefines social presence as the degree of feeling, perception and reaction of being connected by computer-mediated communication. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to understand students' perception of social presence. Participants of the study included fifty-one students enrolled in graduate level courses. The research revealed that social presence is a vital element that influences online interaction however, social presence did not increase the frequency of participation. This study is important to distance education because for many people, educational settings promote a sense of community and social presence plays an important role in the community. To term it another way, when students enter traditional classrooms, they enter a community and there is an immediate social presence. Online education that fosters computer-mediated communication on the other hand, presents problems of social presence and if the community is not there, learning experiences can be affected. This study reveals the importance of being part of an educational community and the impact it has on online education.

Visser, J.A. (2000). Faculty work in developing and teaching web-based distance courses: A case study of time and effort. *American Journal of Distance Education*, 14(3), 21-32.

doi: 10.1080/08923640009527062

The author, an assistant professor at Western Michigan University, used an experiential case approach to investigate his hypothesis that faculty work effort and time commitment for delivering distance education courses, were higher compared to effort and time commitment for traditional taught courses. The researcher used himself in the study and although he had exposure to distance education, he had no previous experience in teaching a distance education class. Using a combination of Internet-based instruction and two-way interactive television in his twelve-week online elective course, the research supported his initial hypothesis. The researcher found that his average 36-contact-hour standard for courses were twice as high for his distance education courses. This study is important because a large number of research that has been done on distance education has focused on the learner and not so much on the faculty or the instructor. The research answers the question of time commitment and effort that is needed to prepare and deliver distance education courses. Since education deals in large part on faculty and students, it seems only natural to include a study that focuses on faculty and delivery of instruction. Research on faculty who are delivering distance education courses should be considered when evaluating distance education as a whole.