
Discourse strategies for ensuring involvement in electronic lectures

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Abstract: Research on online education seems to focus on participatory and learner-controlled activities rather than teacher-initiated activities such as e-lectures. In this paper, the discourse strategies used in a classroom lecture and an e-lecture were examined. It was found that there are interesting variations in the strategies used in e-lectures to simulate a sense of classroom community.

Keywords: classroom lectures; e-lectures; discourse strategies; involvement strategies; online education; online medium.

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1 Introduction

The proliferation of personal computers along with access to the internet has precipitated far-reaching changes in education. The impact of this new medium on education has not been realised fully yet as we have much to learn about its inherent capabilities and the new 'learning ecology' created through e-learning. According to Garrison and Anderson (2003), e-learning will have a tremendous impact not only on the education systems but also on individual teachers and learners. Being a new medium, the expectation is that it will not simply replicate traditional practices of education but will introduce new ways of teaching and learning that are unique to this new learning ecology. In order to assess the strengths and weaknesses of e-learning, a lot of research has emerged in the area of asynchronous, collaborative learning but it still needs to be covered from several other perspectives to achieve a holistic picture of its value. This paper aims to explore one particular area of e-learning, that of online lectures in comparison to conventional classroom lectures. The focus is on identifying the strategies used in e-lectures that make it different from traditional classroom lectures and on suggesting ways of enhancing e-lectures for maximum impact on learners.

2 Theoretical background

Current research on online learning has revealed that it operates within a different type of paradigm. Coomey and Stephenson (2001) suggest that online learning falls within four paradigms: specified tasks, learner managed, open-ended (strategic) and teacher-controlled. In this context, e-lectures clearly seem to be teacher determined and task specific, particularly because they are tightly controlled by the teacher in terms of deadlines, timing, interaction and content.

In using the internet, the lecturer has to adapt his lecture to the new online learning environment, taking into account his cyber audience. The lecturer should not only be concerned about transmitting knowledge on a particular topic via the internet or on trying to fit his/her materials into a particular software programme but should also focus his/her energy on making the learning process more effective, given the potential of e-learning. As the emphasis of this paper is on e-lectures, the analysis and discussion will focus on tapping the potential of e-lectures in terms of discourse strategies that have the optimal impact on e-learners. This will be achieved by comparing an e-lecture with a classroom lecture with specific emphasis on interactivity.

Although traditional lecturing is considered as a one-way communication, good lecturers have used various techniques to create interactivity in this mode. Good lectures are indispensable in that they provide a consolidated view of the field of knowledge, and can motivate the students. The lecturer's eye contact with the students, voice and body language can facilitate a unique blend of interaction. At the basis of this research there is an assumption that the good features of conventional lecturing can be transferred to the new modes of online teaching.

As Alexander and Baud (2001) rightly point out, much of what is passed off as e-lecturing is little more than a combination of text, audio and video. Harasim *et al.* (1995) describe e-lectures as a way of providing explanations of crucial concepts that students can later apply to a problem or discussion. Besides this, video-streaming and integrating technologies play an important role in enhancing the value of an e-lecture.

In our research we used a 'live' lecture that exploits the benefits of the lecturer's voice, body language, eye-contact; and integrated it with presentation slides. This mode of e-lecturing also has hyperlinks to various parts of the lecture, which provide the students with more navigation choices. The following section presents more details on the methodology of the study.

3 Methodology

To investigate and compare the discourse strategies used in the two different communication modes, a classroom lecture and an e-lecture were used as data. Both lectures were part of a communication skills course in a computer engineering degree programme. To avoid the personality variable, the lectures selected were given by the same lecturer to the same group of students.

For the purpose of analysis, the focus was on the audio track of the e-lectures so the visuals and slides were not taken into consideration. Although non-verbal communication is an important part of academic communication, this research focused on discourse analysis, more specifically, on the use of discourse strategies in lectures. The specific aim was to compare the discourse strategies used in the two lecture modes and to examine how they fulfil the communication functions of lectures in an academic setting.

In accordance with Tannen (1989), the term 'strategies' will be used in preference over 'features' in this paper. This is mainly because it conveys the meaning of coherence and systematic planning and in fact, it has been used frequently in linguistic research to convey the use of language in a systematic way. The other aspect of relevance in this study is the issue of 'involvement' as the main concern is with those strategies that engage the students and draw them into the lectures. Tannen (1989) refers to these strategies as 'involvement strategies' because they 'reflect and simultaneously create interpersonal involvement' (Tannen, 1989). Through her research, she has shown how these linguistic strategies that reflect and create interpersonal involvement in literary discourse are pervasive in conversational discourse. In this paper, an attempt will be made to see whether some of these involvement strategies extend to other spoken genres like lectures and whether there are differences in the way they are realised in the classroom and e-lecture. On the basis of this comparison, discourse strategies will be recommended for use in e-lectures to make the e-lecture an engaging and effective experience for students.

4 Discourse strategies

The comparison of the e-lecture and classroom lecture revealed interesting differences between the two modes of lectures in terms of discourse strategies that promote involvement. A comparison of the discourse strategies used by the same lecturer while conducting a classroom lecture and an e-lecture is presented in this section of the paper. The strategies presented below include: framing discourse, asking questions, giving instructions, providing examples, making pronominal references, repeating information, initiating repairs, inserting asides and using enhancement strategies. These strategies are discussed below from the perspective of both classroom lectures and e-lectures along with supporting examples.

4.1 Framing discourse

In a technology-driven, learner-centred environment, a teacher often plays the role of a manager. Even in seemingly teacher-directed environments, interaction can be managed using discourse strategies for information management. In any lecture, information management strategies primarily serve the purposes of introducing and closing a topic as well as focusing students' attention on a topic. These functions would apply to larger units of discourse such as the opening and closing of lectures as well as to smaller units of discourse within the lecture when the lecturer introduces new ideas.

It is a known fact in discourse studies that even the simplest of utterance has a structure of Opening^Body^Closing and speakers usually signal to the listener the boundaries of the opening section, the main business and the closing section. According to Sinclair and Brazil (1982), teachers use boundary markers or 'frames' regularly to enclose 'transactions' or different sections of their talk in order to give their students important clues about the structure of the discourse. In the present data, there are many examples of how the lecturer manages information in the classroom and e-lecture by breaking it up into distinct parts and signalling the boundaries of the different parts to the students by the use of 'discourse markers' (Schiffrin, 1987; Jucker and Smith, 1998; Rouchota, 1998).

Comparing e-lectures with classroom lectures in terms of framing revealed that there are similarities as well as differences. Both types of lectures have an external frame with an Introduction, Body and Conclusion. However, the difference is that the e-lecture has a tight structure with a formal Opening and Closing whereas the classroom lecture is loosely structured with the use of informal markers that we tend to use in conversations. The openings of both lectures are presented below:

- *E-lecture*

- *Opening:* (Greeting) Hi! (Introducing the topic) We many times forget that communication is a behaviour, like all other behaviour we can improve our communication, we can get rid of bad habits and we can improve our good habits.

(Purpose of lecture) *In this lecture*, we're going to see how the knowledge of a science called transactional analysis can help us to avoid these behavioural problems and to understand those behaviours, we should first understand behavioural patterns which we experience in terms of transactions.

- *Classroom lecture*

- *Opening:* *Well, let's begin* – our lecture today is non-verbal communication. (Aside) You can see Chapter 9 in your ECS book if you have it or otherwise you can consult it later.

While the introduction in the e-lecture is focused on the topic of the lecture, in the classroom lecture the topic is mentioned in passing and is immediately followed by an aside, directing students to refer to their textbooks. In fact, the opening in the e-lecture is elaborate as the lecturer begins with the general topic, illustrates it by means of an example and then specifies the purpose of the lecture.

As for the conclusion, the e-lecture has a formal closure that summarises the main points covered in the lecture whereas the classroom lecture has a brief and 'sharp' close.

- *Classroom lecture*
 - *Conclusion:* All these are related to vocal communication...and it would be a good idea to remember how the term 'vocal communication' is different from 'verbal' communication. *That's all for now, I'll see you next week.*

The abrupt closure in the classroom lecture is deliberate. According to the lecturer, he does not let the students know that he is ending the lecture until the very last minute because if he were to signal a proper closure, the students (550 in all) would start winding up, zipping their bags, closing their books, and making a lot of noise in the process.

Comparing the two lectures in terms of closing of topics, it was evident that there was no distinction in terms of length as both types of lectures chose shorter closures. However, it was found that more formal phrases such as 'to summarise' and 'to conclude' were used in the e-lectures, while the simple signal 'so' was overused in the classroom lecture. 'Now' was also frequently used in the classroom lecture as a strategy to focus the learner attention on topics and ideas. On the other hand, the e-lecture tended to use longer and formal phrases such as '*Let us now look at another example*' and '*Here is another utterance that shows the same trait*'.

Commenting and providing a perspective are also an important part of information management. It is common for lecturers to provide a reference, quotation, statistics, and then agree, disagree, emphasise or contradict that information. Such comments provide an important learning opportunity to the students. In the classroom lecture, there are many examples of counter-propositions such as the comment made by the lecturer after providing some statistics related to the importance of non-verbal communication: '*I don't really think that kind of statistics is true... it's true that sometimes non-verbal communication is more powerful, but...*'.

However in the e-lecture, the lecturer seems to only quote or refer to instances that support his perspective. He makes abundant use of 'in fact', 'of course', and 'I think' to draw the students' attention to these perspectives (e.g., *In fact, some sociologists and psychologists call each kind of communication a 'transaction'*). As for counter-propositions, the lecturer seems to exercise some restraint. This strategy seems to support the overall attempt of the lecturer to keep the discourse compact, and he seems to abandon some potentially enriching strategies such as providing counter-propositions in favour of trite organisation.

Whether initiating, closing or commenting on topics, information strategies play an important role in guiding the students through the entire lecture.

4.2 Asking questions

The most commonly used strategy in lectures is that of asking questions. Although there are many examples of questions in the classroom lecture as well as the e-lecture, they vary in their form and function. The questions in the classroom lecture are realised in the form of open-ended, closed-ended and tag questions. However, in e-lectures due to the absence of a real audience, the questions posed to the cyber audience are mainly rhetorical questions. Below are examples from both lectures:

- *Classroom lecture*
 - *Tag question:* So again it is vocal, is not it? Because he's using voice
Yes–No question: But is it verbal?
- *E-lecture*

But is this an ideal state? Of course not!

What kind of ego state is this? Yes, a parent's!

While in the classroom lectures, the lecturer pauses to elicit responses from his students, in the e-lecture the rhetorical questions are meant to evoke mental responses to the content that has been delivered by the lecturer. Though both types of questions are interactive in nature, the degree of interaction is more concrete in classroom lectures as the students can respond immediately, either verbally or non-verbally to the questions posed whereas this is not possible in the e-lecture. The response to rhetorical questions in e-lectures is not overt and explicit but is internal and implicit. In the e-lecture analysed in this study, there are many such examples of rhetorical questions.

Given the audience constraints of e-lectures, in many instances the lecturer still manages to use an interactive strategy of asking a rhetorical question, predicting the audience's response and then providing feedback through comments. The Question^Response^Feedback sequence from the e-lecture is clearly represented in the example below:

- *E-lecture*

L: What kind of ego state is that?

Yes, you guessed it right!

It's actually 'child' (i.e., a child's ego state).

By predicting and verbalising the audience's possible response, the lecturer cleverly simulates interaction as it would be in a classroom set-up. In fact, even in the classroom lecture, the lecturer resorts to this strategy of guessing responses when students fail to contribute answers to the questions that have been posed by him.

4.3 Giving instructions

The third common strategy, though not as frequent as questions, is that of giving instructions to the students. Getting students to follow instructions during the course of a lecture forces them to actively concentrate and focus on the content of the lecture. Apart from a focusing device, instructions can be extended to enacting and role-playing certain concepts to demonstrate the meaning of the lecture. It is possible in e-lectures to direct students' attention to information and visuals on the presentation slides as well as to control their thoughts by instructing them to imagine certain scenarios. In fact in many instances, change of slides in the e-lecture is accompanied by an instruction focusing the listener's attention to the slide being discussed.

- *E-lecture*

Now look at this picture of a very cute child.

Now look at his particular piece of communication, actually it's a transaction (Lecturer reads bubble on slide).

However, it may not be possible to extend this strategy further by instructing students to imitate a physical activity or enact a scene as can be successfully accomplished in the classroom lecture. This is because the lecturer can take the students through the demonstration steps and guide them along in a classroom but this may not be possible in an e-lecture where the lecturer does not have as much control on his cyber audience. In addition, he does not have the advantage of either close proximity or immediate feedback during an e-lecture and thus has to rely on his students to follow instructions faithfully. In other words, the onus is upon the students to decide whether they want to be actively involved in the learning process or remain in the sidelines, learning through passive listening rather than active enactment of steps.

4.4 Providing examples

In classroom lectures as well as e-lectures, the lecturer has a tendency to substantiate his points by means of examples. These examples are usually introduced by means of discourse markers such as 'like', 'for instance', 'for example'.

The difference between the classroom lecture and e-lecture in the use of examples is mainly in the frequency and the level of formality with which the discourse markers are used. When it comes to frequency, the lecturer tends to tag one example after another to illustrate a particular point in the classroom lecture whereas in the e-lecture, he shows more restraint by using only one or two concrete example to illustrate a point. For instance, in the e-lecture the lecturer introduces different types of transactions (parallel, crossed and ulterior transactions) sequentially, illustrating each with a single example.

In both lectures, the lecturer uses the discourse marker 'for example' to introduce dialogues that represent a thought, a state of mind or an inner monologue rather than something that has actually been uttered. Tannen (1989) points out that these constructed dialogues 'create scenes peopled by characters in relation to each other, scenes which hearers... recreate upon hearing, resulting in both understanding and involvement'. Examples of constructed dialogues from the two lectures are given as follows:

- *Classroom lecture*

Now *for example*, the student can approach the lecturer and the student can say, 'Excuse me Sir, can I see you today at 3.30?'

- *E-lecture*

Take a very simple exchange, *for example*, I'm walking through a corridor and I see a student and the student says 'Good Morning' and I reply by saying 'Good Morning! How are you?' – and it's a transaction, it's give-and-take. In this case, it was goodwill that was exchanged.

Sometimes the conditional 'If' or the phrase 'Let's imagine' are also used in the classroom lecture and e-lecture to introduce a hypothetical dialogue or scenario. Although the markers used to introduce these hypothetical worlds are similar in the two lectures, the difference lies in the type of examples they introduce. Whereas the classroom lecture has 'here-and-now' examples and contextualised examples related to current topics of interest in Singapore, those in the e-lecture are far removed from the immediate context as they are mainly from an imaginary work place.

- *Classroom lecture*

And that's why in Singapore there was a lot of discussion about public display of affection, ... they call it PDA – public display of affection. ...And there was discussion in the newspaper whether the young people, ... should they hold each other's hand in public. And some said, 'Yes, of course it does not really matter', but some people said, 'No, no, our Asian culture is different and we should not do these things in public'.

- *E-lecture*

Let's imagine that two colleagues are talking and one colleague says, 'I think it is my turn to do the report'. And let's imagine the reply comes from an adult, 'Yes, that seems fair'.

It is clear from the examples above that the time setting and place setting are narrower in the classroom lecture in comparison to that in the e-lecture.

4.5 *Making pronominal references*

The pronouns included in a speaker's presentation clearly indicate his attitude towards his audience. The choice of pronouns in a lecture can indicate whether the speaker has a personal or impersonal attitude towards his audience and whether he wants to include or exclude them from the learning circle. Therefore, the use of first and second person pronouns like 'I', 'we', 'us' (including 'let's') and 'you' signal to the audience that the lecturer values them as part of the learning process and is trying to negotiate meaning with them at every stage of his discourse.

Both the classroom lecture and e-lecture are interactive in that the lecturer mainly uses the inclusive pronouns 'I', 'we', 'us' and 'you'. However, in some instances, third person references / pronouns are used in the e-lecture to deliver the information in an impersonal and objective manner as in the example below:

- *E-lecture*

Both of these people might have a hidden meaning. For example, the initiator might be in a parent ego state and the respondent might be in a child ego state. So when the first person says, 'I think it's my turn to write the report', she probably means, 'You can't even write a report, let me do it.'

This has the effect of distancing the student from the lecturer as a separate and independent entity who does not directly share in the meaning-making process. In addition, passive structures are also used sometimes in the e-lecture (e.g., there are three states of mind or there are three types of transactions) with the same effect of distancing.

Therefore, as far as possible, e-lecturers should try to avoid the use of passive voice and third person pronouns and embrace the use of active voice and personal pronouns to bridge the gap between themselves and their listeners.

4.6 Repeating information

Repetition of information is a strategy that is common in oral speech to reinforce points and to ensure that relevant ideas have not been lost in the process of real time communication. Lecturers tend to use this strategy in their classrooms to a great extent and particularly when they receive feedback from their students' facial expressions and body language that the meaning has not been clearly understood. There are many such examples of repetition of words, phrases and whole sentences as well as that of similar ideas by means of synonyms in the classroom lecture. Although this strategy is also used in the e-lecture, the lecturer only does so at crucial parts in the lecture as when concluding an important point. This is because he does not have the benefit of reading the facial expressions of his students when delivering an e-lecture and also due to the nature of the medium, which allows students to navigate back and forth via the hyperlinks and to skip or review different parts of the lecture according to their information needs.

- E-lecture

Lecturer quotes an imaginary boss to illustrate an adult ego state: 'According to data, people who wear safety glasses are less likely to cause accidents'.

- *Lecturer's comments on boss's statement*

This is based on research. This is based on facts. This is based on data, logic. Data, logic, rationality last a bit longer and therefore you tell this to Fred, then Fred will possibly change his behaviour permanently.

The repetitions are therefore more systematic (i.e., using the same grammatical structure) and planned in the delivery of e-lectures and tend to be used only for reinforcement of important points. In contrast, the repetitions in classroom lectures can happen at any time depending upon the feedback that the lecturer receives from his students during the course of his lecture. In addition, the repetitions in the speech of the classroom lecturer are akin to the kinds of repetitions found in natural conversations that have a number of redundancies due to processing constraints of speakers or listeners. Whether repetitions are due to production, comprehension, connection or interaction, Tannen (1989) maintains that "the congruence of these functions of discourse provides a fourth over-arching function in the establishment of coherence and interpersonal involvement." So whether repetitions are in different forms or due to different reasons, they seem to serve the overriding function of providing coherence and involvement in lectures.

Repetition is a strategy that is not only limited to words, phrases and sentences but it is rampant in larger units of text. Tannen (1989) acknowledges that organisation of discourse has recognisable patterns and that the repetition of discourse sequences across time is evident in the growing body of research in conversational analysis. In the lectures analysed in this study, the two lectures seems to have recurrent Topic^Support^Comment and Question^Response^Feedback (refer to the section on 'Asking questions' for an example of this pattern) kind of patterns. Although, this three-part sequence of

Topic[^]Exemplification[^]Comment recurs in the e-lecture as well, sometimes the middle part is realised differently. The e-lecture sometimes has academic text patterns such as definition and classification in place of exemplification:

- *E-lecture*
 - *Opening*: Now let's actually try to understand what these two terms mean which I'm going to use in this lecture.
 - *Definition*: One term is transaction, which I just now explained, and we can define it as a unit of social interaction. (Followed by two examples)
 - *Close*: So each unit of social interaction has its own meaning and it has two parties that either agree or disagree with certain aspects or problems or issues.

The two patterns of Topic[^]Exemplification[^]Comment and Question[^]Response[^]Feedback are recursively used in the classroom and e-lecture, making it easy for the students to predict how a new topic will be introduced, developed and then concluded during the course of the lecture. The predictability of discourse sequencing creates a feeling of familiarity, reinforcing the belief that repetition is at the heart of how discourse is created.

4.7 Initiating repairs

Repairs are strategies used by the lecturer to correct himself/herself during the course of the lecture. The research data clearly shows a distinction in the way the repairs are handled in the classroom lecture and e-lecture. First, the repairs are more formal in the e-lectures. After the occurrence of an error, there is usually a deliberate pause and a formal phrase such as 'rather' or 'to put it in other words' is used to initiate the repairs.

The classroom lecture has many examples of repairs of a slightly different kind. In these classroom repairs, the lecturer is apparently trying to correct an error, however, the result is more than the correction, and the learner learns something in the process of this repair (e.g. *A student who is listening to a lecture, may look disinterested...sorry...uninterested*). In this case, the lecturer has used the word 'disinterested' which he later corrects by using the word 'uninterested'. For the learners, this repair is an enriching experience, since their attention is drawn to the distinction between the two words. There is a good learning opportunity here, since the subtle difference in the two terms is highlighted in the specific context of use.

Thus the function of 'flagging' is unknowingly achieved by the repairs in the classroom lecture but such 'rich' repairs are characteristically absent in the e-lecture.

4.8 Inserting asides

Another useful classroom management strategy to engage the attention of students is that of inserting 'asides' into the lecture that are not directly related to the topic of the lecture. 'Asides' perform an important function in lectures by creating a sense of two-way conversation or dialogue. Although too many asides are likely to result in a lack of focus on the main points, some asides make the lectures lively and interesting.

Our data reveals that the asides in classroom lectures are more frequent and longer, while the asides in the e-lectures are shorter and parenthetical. In the e-lecture, for instance, when the lecturer is referring to the icons chosen by him to represent various

ego-states (the subject of the lecture), he includes an aside on one of the icons (e.g. *although this is not a very good picture, it is the best one I could get...*). After the short aside, the lecturer immediately comes back to his main point and continues describing the icons.

Such parenthetical asides as well as longer asides abound in the classroom lecture. For instance, while talking about non-verbal communication, the lecturer digresses in the classroom lecture by talking about the Singapore culture. While these lengthy digressions are more common in the classroom lecture, the lecturer seems to be more conscious about limiting his comments in the e-lecture to the topic of the discourse. Given the time constraints of e-lectures, it is in fact important to restrict the length and frequency of asides to maintain coherence and audience interest in the lecture.

4.9 Using enhancement strategies

As for enhancement, it is concerned with the various communication elements usually found in a classroom. Apart from the lecturer's voice and body language, slides, textbooks, handouts contribute in achieving the desired learning outcome. Discourse strategies that are used to integrate these elements are called enhancement strategies. It was interesting to note in this connection that the classroom lecture has more dramatisation and voice-variation for constructed dialogues compared to the e-lecture. In the e-lecture, the lecturer has merely included utterances (examples from real-world speech) in the slides but, these utterances are produced 'live' in the classroom lecture. According to Tannen (1989), the use of constructed dialogue exemplifies the simultaneous operation of sound and sense in a language, resulting both in understanding and involvement. The involving effect of animated dialogue is clearly reflected in the spontaneous dramatisations of the classroom lecture and to a certain extent in the e-lecture when the lecturer reads out the utterances presented on the slides.

In addition to the elements discussed so far, the e-lecture environment contains an important element that is missing in the classroom lecture. In the e-lecture, there is a window with a set of hyperlinks that link to different slides, and, in essence, to different parts of the lecture. The student thus has freedom to navigate back and forth according to his/her informational needs. Since the hyperlinks are clearly labelled, there is less need for direct enhancement by the lecturer. In this respect, the e-lecture environment is less directed by the lecturer and more by the semiotic aspects of the e-lecture screen.

This analysis of interactive discourse strategies has revealed that it is possible to promote student involvement in e-lectures in spite of the fact that it is a different medium from that of classroom lectures with a real audience. Though some of these strategies are slightly different from those in the classroom lecture due to the constraints of the medium, it is in fact possible to extend classroom strategies into e-lectures with some modifications to ensure a successful e-lecture experience.

The above examples of strategies demonstrate that in both modes of lecturing (online and classroom) the lecturer seems to be aiming at a joint construction of a representation (see Jucker and Smith, 1998). The lecturer tries to mark information already known to the students, that is, mark statements whose implications are critical to a point being made. Moreover, there are also invitations made to the students to respond to an argument. Although it is sometimes assumed that negotiation of meaning is less successfully achieved in an online learning environment, the research data seem to reject

this assumption. The data suggest that negotiation of meaning can be successfully achieved in an online lecture, if the lecturer uses carefully planned discourse strategies.

5 Conclusion and recommendation

The discourse strategies discussed in this paper combine to communicate meaning and persuade the audience by creating involvement. In other words, all these strategies are involvement strategies that contribute to the point of the discourse, shaping and signalling it in such a manner that the listener is drawn into the discourse. The strategies along with the markers function as metamessages that promote understanding of the text as well as rapport with the lecturer and the information being delivered. This feeling of connectedness between the participants is essential as it gives students an insight into the content of the discourse as well as makes them believe that they share the same conventions and inhabit the same world of discourse as the lecturer.

The present research is a preliminary study with focus on a classroom and e-lecture. However, with more research of this kind, it might be possible to develop a list of discourse strategies that create interaction and negotiate meaning in the online learning environment. We would like to specifically recommend the following ten strategies to any lecturer who wishes to build interaction in his/her e-lecture:

- framing of the lecture and units within the lecture by means of discourse markers to give students clues about the unfolding of the lecture
- asking rhetorical questions to engage the students into thinking about relevant issues while maintaining the traditional Question^Response^Feedback sequence to simulate student responses
- giving instructions to draw students' attention to the slides/visuals at the point of discussion
- providing concrete examples that are discretely related to the main point being explained
- presenting hypothetical situations and scenarios (e.g. 'if' and 'Let's imagine') to achieve transfer of learning
- using pronouns 'we', 'you' and 'us' for inclusion of students into the meaning-making process
- repeating words, phrases, sentences or entire chunks of discourse to aid production, comprehension, connection and interaction
- including formal and 'rich' repairs to provide additional learning opportunity to students within the context of the lecture
- inserting short asides at relevant points to keep learner's attention focused
- including constructed dialogue in the speech and animated voice of others to recreate scenes peopled by others for better understanding and involvement.

Although the online learning environment is just another physical environment, it uses technology at a slightly higher and more complex level than a traditional classroom

lecture. The environment in itself may not improve or limit learning but it is crucial to know how it affects learning. We hope that this paper sheds some light on how a familiar set of discourse strategies positively affects the interaction in an e-lecture. Just as in traditional lecture environments, the goal in e-lectures is to achieve coherence and involvement through the use of familiar discourse strategies. Given that it is the familiarity of the strategies that makes the discourse and its meaning seem coherent, it is hoped that the strategies recommended in this paper will enable lecturers to make their e-lectures meaningful, coherent and above all, interactive.

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