Videoblogging in Education:
The new wave of interactive educational television

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Abstract: The use of user-generated digital video posted on blogs, also known as videoblogs, is increasing with the advent of new hardware and software that allows people of various backgrounds and occupations to create their own professional videos. This is a new medium used often by students in secondary and higher education as evident in online sites such as YouTube and MySpace for personal reasons and presently by some instructors who use such video to instruct. Yet, the use of videoblogs is new overall to the educational community and little research is available on its use and effectiveness in the classroom and in an online environment. This paper will examine how videoblogging is used in educational institutions across grade levels, standard practices of educational videoblogs, how videoblogging ensures communication and interactivity within as well as outside of the classroom, how videoblogging influences students from diverse backgrounds in regards to multiculturalism, social class, and differentiated learning styles, and the sensitive issues educators and students need to address when using videoblogs, such as privacy and online classroom management.

The growth of online video and blogs on the World Wide Web has exploded exponentially within the past decade. Blogs are now the new media of this generation, in direct competition with newspapers, magazines, and news programs (Lloyd et al., 2006). User-generated video sharing has grown in popularity as well, revolutionizing the way many see entertainment. Many net-users have decided to combine these two media into what is now known as videoblogging, also known as vblogs or vodcasts (Greenblatt, 2007). In addition, quite a few videobloggers in the field of education have parlayed this hobby into creating multimedia content for the classes they teach (Haugstrup, 2006).

However, because the technologies are still relatively new, the effectiveness of videoblogging within the realm of education remains an area for further research. Although studies on instructors' uses of streaming video lectures in an online environment are prevalent within many academic publications, studies on videoblogging in education are very limited.

The purpose of this paper is to explore different uses of online educational videoblogging and its effectiveness by reviewing the following questions:

How is videoblogging used in educational institutions across grade levels? What standard practices are seen in the creation and publication of educational videoblogs? How does videoblogging ensure communication and interactivity within as well as outside of the classroom? How does videoblogging influence students from diverse backgrounds in regards to multiculturalism, social class, and differentiated learning styles? Finally, what sensitive issues do educators and students need to address when using videoblogs, such as privacy and online classroom management?

In addition, at the end of the paper, the author provides recommendations for further study of this topic.

Videoblogging Background and Definitions

"A videoblog, or vlog, is a Web log (blog) that uses video rather than text or audio as its primary media source" ("7 things you should know about videoblogging", 2005). Videobloggers record footage of their chosen subject on to a video recording device such as a digital camcorder, cell phone camera, or web camera. They import their footage into their personal computer using video-editing software, such as iMovie or Windows Movie Maker. With the video-editing software, videobloggers can edit their footage by shortening or erasing clips, adding music and still pictures, incorporating transitions, or employing special effects.

After that, videobloggers compress their edited footage into a web-friendly format, such as a QuickTime, Windows Media, or Flash file, and upload it to a video storage site. Video storage sites include Ourmedia.org, Blip.tv, and YouTube. Finally, after uploading the video, videobloggers link their video to their blog on the web in order to share their creation with others as well as receive feedback from them. Such blogs include Wordpress, Blogger, and LiveJournal.

In addition to posting their videos in a blog, videobloggers may also choose to podcast their videos. "Podcasting is the method of distributing multimedia files, such as audio or video programs, over the Internet using syndication feeds, for playback on mobile devices and personal computers" ("Dms glossary", 2007). Videobloggers have the option of forwarding their videos to their viewers' computers by including a syndication feed in their blog, also known as RSS or "really simple syndication." Therefore, those who have an RSS reader or aggregator in their web browser or on their computer, such as FireAnt or iTunes, have ability to have the RSS reader or aggregator automatically download the video onto their computer.

Currently, the rise in videoblogging is due to the development of affordable digital recording hardware such as digital cameras, camcorders, and cell phones, and digital video editing software such as iMovie, Windows Movie Maker, and Final Cut Pro ("7 things you should know about videoblogging", 2005). With the advent of digital hardware and digital video editing programs, people without any experience in video production now have the ability to produce their own digital videos and multimedia. Presently, educators are using such software to produce their own digital videos and

distributing them via the Internet, compact disc, or DVD to their students as a tool for instruction.

Literature Review

Although videoblogging is a relatively new phenomenon on the World Wide Web, blogging as well as digital video online have existed separately on the Internet for over a decade (Zuiker, 2004), but not until 2005 did the web experience a large spike in videoblogs (Green, 2005). Since then, videobloggers from different backgrounds have shared and exchanged their thoughts and perspectives through videos on the web, including educators.

A recent survey indicated that both males and females participate in videoblogging. These videobloggers range in age from 13-74 years old. In addition, they are located in various places around the world including North America, Latin America, Europe, Australia, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa (Haugstrup, 2006).

Another study suggested that those within the videoblogging community are similar to those in the blogging community in that videobloggers are highly interactive and social in nature. The researcher also stated that this type of interaction is most likely due to "the rich nature of the communication afforded by the video medium allows for a more personal, intimate, and empathetic interaction" (Warmbrodt, 2007). In addition, the study's results indicate that the inexpensive equipment and web platforms used in videoblogging enable videobloggers to post videos on the web with ease. In other words, the use of video itself and its current ease of use online enable videobloggers to add a more visual dimension to the way they communicate.

While little research is available on videoblogging in education per se, a few researchers have previously reviewed the use of streaming synchronous video, also known as live video, and asynchronous video, also known as recorded video, in higher education. These technologies have been mostly used to present recorded lectures on the web. One such study compared two online undergraduate courses at the University of Montevallo (Cofield, 2001). One of the classes used online video for instruction while the other class had only text and image-based materials for instruction. The process the researcher used to evaluate the effectiveness of each course was comparing both classes' grades, distributing an attitudinal survey to both classes, and interviewing 5 students from each class.

Overall, the researcher discovered that the classes did not differ in grades, but the students' attitudes about the course itself changed based on whether or not video was included in the online course. Videos provided more motivation to the online students who had the videos in their course, since through the videos they felt as if the professor was with them in course, than those students who did not have online video in their course. The study suggests that using digital videos for online instruction is a way for instructors to add a personal presence to their classes, which may help with building an online community for their courses.

Another similar study compared two identical classes taught by a professor at the University of Hawai'i – West Oahu. One of the classes was a regular face-to-face class, while the other class was an online class that used asynchronous streaming videos of the professor's lectures. The study revealed the same results as the one mentioned previously in regards to the grades. Grades from both classes were very similar. Furthermore, the study discovered that students in the face-to-face course and the online course reported similar levels of satisfaction with the course, therefore implying that online courses using streaming video are as effective as regular face-to-face courses (Sawa, 2006).

Furthermore, a study from University College compared the attitudes of higher education students who used both asynchronous and synchronous video streams of lectures in their online courses. Surprisingly, the majority of the students in the study preferred the asynchronous video instead of the synchronous video. Many stated that convenience of the video as well as their busy schedule played a factor in their preference. In addition, LeBlanc states how the University used the information from this study to improve their streaming video courses (LeBlanc, 2004). Therefore, the study suggests that using online video in courses helps instructors adapt to their students' different needs and schedules.

Although the studies mentioned above suggest that the use of video in online courses does not affect students' grades, they state that the students' attitudes about the class are affected. Similarities among the different studies above reveal that online video plays an important part in creating a human-presence in an otherwise isolated online class. In addition, the University College study reveals that students prefer asynchronous video over synchronous video, which is the same setup as videoblogging. Videobloggers mostly use asynchronous video.

Implications for Practice

Surprisingly, videobloggers in the field of education from different grade levels, subject areas, and locations exist all over the World Wide Web. Each of these videobloggers uses blogs as tools to communicate with their students, their students' parents, and other educators. In addition, they usually receive feedback on their posts, which creates another level of interactivity for their classes. Furthermore, these videobloggers have developed creative ways to address the issues of teacher-parent communication, multiculturalism, social class, differentiated learning styles, and online classroom management.

The following five examples are classes whose instructors have incorporated videoblogging into their curriculum as described in various interviews and academic journals. Both Bre Pettis and Jonny Goldstein are prominent educators and videobloggers who presented at the Vloggercon 2006 conference in San Francisco, California ("Vloggercon", 2006). Several articles have featured Eric Langhorst's podcasts (Lim, 2006; Noble 2008) as well as Dr. Michael Wesch's posts on YouTube (Hall, 2007; Young, 2007). Furthermore, Nathan Miller's videoblog was winner of the 2008 Best Japan Video Podcast award (Savage, 2008).

A Seattle Elementary Class

Bre Pettis (2007) is a former elementary school teacher in Seattle who used videoblogs last year to create projects with his students as well as share with their parents the different activities they were participating in at school. His videoblog at http://room132.com often features videos of himself explaining to the students' parents about the topics and themes of the current week's activities. Pettis also shows footage of the students participating in these projects, filming them from the nose down in order to maintain their privacy. In addition to showing the parents the various activities the students were participating in, Pettis creates other videoblog posts where he films his students' commentary about different topics they are interested in. One videoblog post in particular called "In the Future" had Pettis' students stating their predictions about what they think will happen in the future. Two other teachers later commented on the post and also shared links to similar videos of projects they did with their students, therefore, allowing an exchange of ideas and information between teachers as well as teachers and students.

Missouri Eighth Grade History Class

Eric Langhorst (2007) had his own set of audio podcasts in 2005 that he asks his students to listen to, called StudyCasts, which are audio files averaging 15-20 minutes long. He posts each of his StudyCasts on a blog to which students may write comments. This, in turn, creates a means by which two-way interactive communication exists between students as well as students and instructor about specific subjects on the blog. Langhorst also chose for the name of his blog Virtual Book Club to provide a more community-like atmosphere online.

Furthermore, Langhorst made sure that students had alternative ways to listen to his StudyCasts by burning them onto CDs, in case they did not have the Internet or a computer at home. This made sure that all students had access to the StudyCasts. Also, along the vein of accessibility, podcasts and videoblogs are another way to help students who have differentiated learning styles.

In regards to the issues of privacy and identity, especially those who are minors, Langhorst, makes sure that his students use "pen names" in order to conceal their identity. In addition, Langhorst sets his blog up where he has to approve the students' comments submitted to the blog before it is posted on the blog itself.

A Japanese middle school ESL class

Nathan Miller is a secondary education English instructor from the United States who is currently instructing Japanese Sophomore students in Kurume, Japan. Miller uses his own videoblog posts at http://bicycle-sidewalk.com/ as well as video from other videobloggers from the United States to instruct students in the English language. Miller presents the posts in the school's media room to his students in order to familiarize them on what native English speakers sound like as well as introduce them their different activities and customs. Furthermore, he provides videos on his videoblog demonstrating

how he teaches his classes. His 199th post in particular generated a total of twelve comments that provided encouragement to Miller about the teaching strategy he used in his classroom. In this post, Miller showed a video from a videoblog called Jet Set, about a group of American Otaku who visit an anime convention in Los Angeles. Otaku are known in pop culture as nerds or geeks who are interested in Japanese animation. Before showing the video to the class, Miller subtitled the video in English with Final Cut Pro to help his students understand the content of the conversation taking place. He knew his students are able to read English well, so subtitling the video in English was not a problem. After watching the video twice, Miller asked his students to write their thoughts on the video, first in English and then in Japanese.

Surprisingly, what Miller found out after facilitating the assignment was that many of the students, before watching the video, did not know that teens in America were interested in Japanese animation. In addition, the students were surprised that many American teens also cosplay; in other words, dress up in costumes as characters from popular Japanese animation. Furthermore, many of the Otaku in Miller's classroom were shocked that the American teens would shout and scream after hearing some of their favorite lines recited by the American voice-over actors from their favorite anime series' at the convention. They stated that "real" otaku would not scream and shout (Meeder, 2006).

A New York After School Program

Jonny Goldstein is a videoblogger, among the many other occupations he has. Last year, he managed the technology education arm of the BX21 afterschoool program, which taught 100 Bronx teens to videoblog. The BX21 program, which stands for Bronx 21st Century, had students "plan, shoot, and edit video using off the shelf point and shoot cameras. Students created dramas, documentaries, and news features and posted them online," after submitting comprehensive release forms (Goldstein, 2006). Many students within the program had not even held a camera in their entire lives, nor have a computer at home (Lorrigio, 2006). In addition, Jonny created instructional videos that helped the students along with the videoblogging process. The overall purpose of the program was to empower "kids to be part of a movement more cutting edge than most of the world" (Lorrigio, 2006). At the end of the semester, students showcased their work at the Sony Wonder Technology Lab on Madison Avenue. Films produced by the students ranged from horror flicks to hip-hop videos.

Kansas State University Cultural Anthropology Class

Michael Wesch is an assistant professor at Kansas State University whose current interest is in social networking and other Web 2.0 technologies. During one semester, he wanted his class of nine undergraduate students to "conduct an ethnography of the online community," specifically of those who video blog (Young, 2007). Therefore, he asked them to create video blogs themselves. What Wesch discovered was that many of the students who posted the video blogs presented questions to other videobloggers about their experiences in videoblogging. In return, these videobloggers posted video responses to the questions, providing valuable insights to people's motivations to communicate with

others on the Web. Therefore, the activity that Wesch asked his students to participate inadvertently created an online community that opened up very insightful dialogue.

Best Practices in Educational Videoblogging

Although instructors and academics have yet to formalize a list of best practices in regards to teaching with videoblogging, instructors who are considering using videoblogging in their curriculum can use other educators' videoblogs, such as the ones previously mentioned, as examples of how they should model their own videoblogs. The main areas that educators should focus on when incorporating videoblogging into curriculum is the length of the videos in the videoblog, students' access to the videoblogs, the students' differentiated learning styles, the privacy and protection of their students, and the incorporation of diverse perspectives into the content of the videos.

Creation, Publication, and Access

First of all, if instructors ask their students to view a video online that they have created, they need to make sure that the video is within the 5-7 minutes range ("Video use in online courses", 2005). The average attention span for most people when watching digital video, whether online or on a portable media player such as an iPod, is at maximum 15 minutes long (Dent, 2002). For example one of Bre Pettis' most notable post on his videoblog called "In the Future" is only 2 minutes long. Whereas, Nathan Miller's 199th post on his videoblog is around 4 minutes long. On average, most videos on videoblogs are around 5 minutes or less. Therefore, most instructors should keep their videos short.

Besides the length of the video, instructors need to pay attention to the issue of accessibility. In other words, they need to make sure that the video is available in a variety of formats. For instance, some students in the classroom may not have access to computers. Therefore, the instructor might choose to burn the videos on to a DVD for students to watch at home or provide them information on how they can access a computer at their school or local library. For example, Langhorst (2007) burned his StudyCasts onto CDs for his students that did not have a computer and Internet access at home, but were able to use a CD player.

In addition, some classrooms may have students who are non-native English speakers. In many of the classes Nathan Miller teaches, he uses video editing software to place English subtitles in the videos he shows in class in order for his Japanese middle school students to have a better grasp on what was said in the video (Meeder, 2006). Furthermore, Jonny Goldstein took the issue of enabling access to videoblogging equipment by leading the BX21 project where students from different socio-economic backgrounds were provided video and video-editing equipment to create videoblogs on their own.

Differentiated Learning Styles

Videoblogs are an additional way for textual and visual learners to learn ("7 things you should know about videoblogging", 2005). Textual learners will enjoy the use of the

comment feature in videoblogs to discuss and comment or critique the video presented on the videoblog. Visual learners will appreciate the fact that the instructor is presenting the information in another way besides in-class lecture or textbook. In addition, videoblogging adheres to Media Richness Theory (2004) which inferes that "people want to overcome equivocality and uncertainty in organizations and a variety of media commonly used in organizations work better for certain tasks than others." In other words, videoblogs can help students who are struggling in class by catching them up to the recommended levels of learning and performance required for the class.

Multicultural Education

Another factor that educators should consider when incorporating videoblogs is opening up the idea of incorporating diverse perspectives in the videos' content. Again, Goldstein allowed students to create videos about subjects of their choice, which is included hip-hop videos, a major part of African-American and Youth culture. Miller showed students videoblogs from the United States to his students, introducing them to another culture, and allowing them to compare and contrast what they saw in the video to Japanese culture. Instructors should consider videoblogging as a way to introduce their students to other cultures as well as share their own with others from their own community and around the world.

Identity and Privacy

Another tip that videobloggers recommend to educators who may want to consider adding videoblogging into their curriculum is provide a way to make the videoblog interactive. For example, Langhorst created a blog named Virtual Book Club where students can listen to his StudyCasts and comment on them or discuss their content through text-based communication. By naming his videoblog, Virtual Book Club, he helped his students obtain an identity of belonging, thereby enabling them to participate in active learning. In other words, "the child must see and make connections between this new identity and other identities he or she has already formed. Certainly the child will be at a disadvantage if he or she has already formed one or more identities that do not fit with, are opposed to, or are threatened by the identity recruited in the …classroom.... Without such an identity commitment, no deep learning can occur. The students will not invest the time, effort, and personally committed engagement that active, critical learning requires. In fact, they resist learning in school in the name of another identity that they see such learning as putting at risk" (Gee, 2003). The identity that Langhorst created was that of a "club." Instructors should think about creative ways of framing their videoblogs to allow students to feel a sense of inclusion and a way to identify with the videoblog.

In addition to setting up a videoblog that students are allowed to write on, Langhorst makes sure that each of his students create screen names, instead of identifying themselves through their real names. He also enables comment moderation on his videoblog, allowing himself to view the students' comments before it is actually posted on the videoblog. This strategy helps with classroom managment online. Similarly, when Bre Pettis films his students for his videoblog, he films them from the nose down without showing their eyes, enabling the students to provide their voice and perspectives to the

videoblog, but keeping their identity private at the same time. Also, his students are able to write on their class videoblog, but they have to use pen names instead of their real names.

Michael Wesch states that he provides his students the option of not posting videoblogs to the Internet for their class assignment. In other words, if the students feel uncomfortable publishing videos of themselves, Wesch states that he does not force them to.

Conclusion

In conclusion, videoblogging is relatively new, but has great potential as a tool used in instruction. It adds the visual element as well as the personal element to user-created content which allows for student-led learning. In addition, it provides an avenue for collaboration, not only between students, but among students, teachers, parents, and others in different fields of interest. Videoblogging is also a way to introduce different perspectives on different topics into the classroom visually. Many instructors from different grade levels, subject areas, and locations are including this technology in to their curriculum. It is this researcher's opinion that future studies on the topic of videoblogging, such as its effectiveness in the classroom and the creation of best practices for this technology, will reveal that videoblogging is an effective tool to bring in the classroom and can provide deeper, more enriched learning among students and teachers alike.

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