Working With Your Site Neighbor: Creating Interactive Television (ITV) Integration

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This session introduces participants to ways of integrating Interactive Television (ITV) sites using a classbuilding activity, a teambuilding activity, a content assignment, and uses of WebCT. This session should benefit individuals planning to teach, or who are currently teaching ITV classes.

Site integration may possibly increase the effectiveness of Interactive Television (ITV) classes. *Random House Webster’s College Dictionary* defines integration as “an act or instance of incorporating or combining into a whole.” *The American Century Dictionary* defines interactive as “(of a computer or other electronic device) allowing a two-way flow of information between it and a user.” While ample research exists describing the pros and cons of site interaction as it relates to ITV instruction (Mottet, Omatseye, Poole, Price, Tiene), very little information exists about site integration. Site integration as it applies to ITV classes occurs when activities unite the two sites as if they are one classroom. Although it is not possible to have continuous site integration when conducting ITV classes, integration can and should occur frequently. This presentation demonstrates three examples of classroom integration and discusses the uses of WebCT for site integration.

**Setting**

The instructor has taught or facilitated five ITV classes between Tarleton State University-Central Texas, a system center, located in Killeen, Texas and Tarleton State University, the main campus, located in Stephenville, Texas, a distance of approximately 110 miles.

The ITV (interactive Television) system at TSU is set up with audio, video, and analog inputs. These inputs receive signals that are converted to a digital signal and compressed within a CODEC (compression decompression). The signal is then sent to a fiber modem which transmits the information. The ITV classroom has two cameras, four televisions, a VCR, and an elmo (data camera).

The ITV course, Professional Development II, is the second course offered in a sequence of four courses leading to the completion of Tarleton’s teacher certification program. PD II teaches students how to reach the diverse learners in every classroom by exposing them to several methods of instruction. Students learn brain-based learning (Jensen), Multiple Intelligences (Armstrong), and cooperative learning (Kagan) as instructional techniques that enable instructors to reach diverse learners.

Howard Gardner developed the theory of Multiple Intelligences in 1983 (Gardner). Multiple Intelligences (MI) Theory postulates that intelligence is not fixed, and we have the tools to develop the intellectual capacity of our students. Intelligence is not unitary and there are many ways to be smart. There are eight intelligences: verbal/linguistic, bodily/kinesthetic, logical/mathematical, naturalist, visual/spatial, interpersonal, musical/rhythmic, and intrapersonal. Every person possesses each of the intelligences (Gardner).

These instructional techniques are excellent for implementing the kinds of active learning that promote site interaction. Active learning allows the student to remember the learning because the
student has been involved in the process (Fielstein and Phelps); i.e., learning becomes active mental work because students construct their own knowledge (Crotty).

Site Integration

The key question becomes, “Do teachers become more effective when appropriate site integrations occur?” This presenter feels the answer is yes. Site integration allows for a higher level of effective teaching because it brings the physically separated classes closer together. Some of the ways to achieve site integration in an ITV classroom follow:

Site Visits by the Instructor

Results of research show “teacher immediacy” contributes to student satisfaction and learning in ITV classes (Gunawardena). The teacher contributes to this immediacy, thereby, enhancing site integration by conducting/facilitating classes at the alternative site every other instructional period. By teaching from the other site, the instructor gives the off-site students the same advantage possessed by the on-site students. The results of open-ended responses indicate the students most often feel the teacher is the key factor hindering or contributing to effective performance (Dillon, Gunawardena, and Parker). The students who believe the instructor contributes to performance note site visits by the instructor improved performance. Research shows off-site students rate the instructor lower than on-site students (Bower, Kamata, and Ritchie).

Lecture or Direct Instruction

Lecture by the instructor is a site integration activity. A problem with this delivery occurs because adult brains can sustain focus during lecture for about an average of only 20 minutes at a time. If lecture takes place for relatively short periods, the site integration can be effective. However, because human brains need social stimulation (Jensen), lecture needs to be brief (no more than 20 minutes for the average adult), followed by activities that allow students to process the new information, preferably active learning activities. What our brains really need is an enriched environment, that is, an environment that provides us with challenge and feedback (Jensen).

Class Building Activities

Class building activities, when performed by students at both sites at the same time, can create site integration. Research shows that classbuilding activities create a positive climate in the class, help students become acquainted with each other, develop a positive class identity, help students experience mutual support and synergy, and value individual differences among students (Kagan). It is important that students from each site get to know each other. When students at each site know each other, site integration more easily occurs.

Team Building Activities

One way of getting away from straight lecture is to place the students at each site in cooperative groups or teams. Team names and team cheers create solidarity. Team building activities, when performed by students at both sites at the same time, can add to effective site integration. “Team building creates enthusiasm, trust, and mutual support which, in the long run, lead to more efficient academic work” (Kagan). Content related teambuilding activities are useful in ITV classrooms as they can enhance site integration.

Use of WebCT

Use of WebCT is another way to create site integration by using “Chat” to form temporary site-to-site groups (Two students from each site). Students can do getting acquainted activities that promote site integration, or work with course content. Activities using whiteboard, the synchronous drawing tool, enables students from different sites to work on projects together.

Demonstrations of Site Integration
The central focus of this presentation demonstrates site integration in ITV classes. First, dividing the room in half simulates the two ITV sites. The division excludes the ITV equipment and the possible problems that might occur with its use. Conference participants will simulate these activities.

**The Name Game**

It is important to begin each ITV class by enabling the students at each site to become acquainted with each other and the students at the other site. The “Name Game” is an effective class building activity for this purpose.

This game begins with the students from each site forming a half circle in front of the ITV cameras. The instructor tells the students this is not a memory game, and if someone does not remember a name, they are to receive help from other students.

One site begins first. Let us assume the first student’s name is John. John begins by saying his first name and relating an activity, he enjoys. He accompanies this with a kinesthetic movement demonstrating what activity he likes. For example he says, “My name is John, and I like to play tennis.” He then swings his arm simulating a forehand tennis shot. Before the second student, we will call her Doris, takes her turn, she must introduce John, repeat what he said he likes to do and imitates his movement. For example, Doris says, “This is John, and he likes to play tennis.” As she says, “He likes to play tennis,” she swings her arm simulating the tennis forehand. Then Doris proclaims, “My name is Doris, and I like to play volleyball.” As she says this, she makes the motion of serving the volleyball. The third student, Ted, must repeat the process for John and Doris before saying his name and what he likes to do and so on until the last student at the second site must repeat the process for all students at each site.

The repetition, combined with the movement, facilitates the students’ learning at both sites (Jensen). Site integration arises as the activity lets students learn the name of students at the other site. When classmates get to know each other, the culture of the ITV classroom changes for the better.

**Guess- the- Fib**

The facilitator places students in teams of four. Each team tries to fool the others at both sites. Students in each team create two rather unbelievable facts and one believable fib. Each team presents their statements to the other teams as true statements. The team members then come to a consensus as to which statement is a fib. At a given signal, a representative of each team holds up one, two, or three fingers, signifying which statement they think is false. The game continues until all teams have read their three statements (Kagan).

Site integration is evident as the game progresses since all teams at each site are participating at the same time. The activity also enables students to learn more about their classmates.

**Multiple Intelligences**

One of the objectives of the PD II course is to teach fledgling educators how to use of Multiple Intelligences to reach every student in their classrooms. Instructors need to identify their own Multiple Intelligences strengths, weaknesses, and those of their students. Classmates at both sites take *The Multiple Intelligences Indicator for Adults* (Silver, Strong and Perini), which identifies their strong and weak intelligences. When participants complete the indicator, learners from both sites combine into two human bar graphs; first a graph showing their strong intelligences and then another graph showing their weak intelligences. Traditionally, our educational system has emphasized verbal/linguistic and logical mathematical activities. Surprisingly, most groups who take the survey show strengths in intelligences other than verbal/linguistic and logical/mathematical. In fact, many students show weaknesses in them. These results demonstrate that teachers using MIs in their classroom make their content more readily accessible to the greater proportion of their students.

The simulation takes place concurrently at both sites, thus integrating them during the activity. Participants are able to view a human bar graph by combining the students between the two sites.
Conclusion

When site integration occurs in the ITV classroom, learning can be more meaningful and long lasting; specifically, if the learning is “active” learning. Site integration is especially effective when it involves classbuilding or teambuilding activities, and used for course content activities.

This presentation and demonstration on (ITV) site integration leads us to ask some questions. Is site integration, when it involves ITV sites, different from interaction in interactive television? If differences do exist, do they merit further research? Is it necessary to attempt site integration while teaching interactive television classes? It is likely, as interactive technology evolves, methods of integrating different sites will become more prevalent.


