

community

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Interaction of Visual Arts Learning in a Virtual Community

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Abstract

In cyberlearning, interaction becomes one of the features that determine learning success. This study underlines the interaction of visual arts learning in the virtual community. Virtual community facilitates non-formal art learning in cyberspace as they have comprehensive capacity related to the strategy of organizing cyber-based learning. This study involved 24 informants consisting of founders, members, and learning instructors of a virtual community in Indonesia, using virtual ethnography as a research method. This study found three patterns of learning interactions in the virtual community, that are the interaction of learning participants with learning content; learning participant interaction with the instructor; and interaction between learning participants. Through these three interaction patterns, a cyber-based art learning model can be formulated in a virtual community.

Keywords :

Visual arts, virtual community, cyberlearning, arts education

1. Introduction

In cyberlearning, interaction becomes one of the features that determine to learn success (Swan et al., 2000). In line with what was stated by Harasim (1990) that asynchronous discussion in cyberlearning allows participants to appreciate the contribution of other learning participants while encouraging participants to make their contributions. Participants learn to think more thoroughly about comments, suggestions, or questions before they publish them in an online discussion forum. Cyberlearning experts stated that these conditions create a culture of reflection in learning (Poole, 2000).

In visual arts learning, the learning process of new knowledge and skills is closely related to the demands of the industry. Millennials, in general, are born as flexible, adaptive, and independent learners. They do not always place themselves in a formal academic institution to gain knowledge but prefer a community that can accommodate their interests in obtaining information that supports their skills and knowledge (Nugrahani, et al, 2018).

The need to increase the visual arts knowledge and skills of millennials through non-formal learning initiated by the virtual community has increased significantly. In Indonesia, various virtual communities with specific positioning offer a new learning environment that takes place in a virtual space. Virtual learning spaces certainly provide a learning experience that is different from conventional learning. This study focuses on the pattern of learning interactions that take place in a virtual community in Indonesia that specifically produce visual artworks. The discovery of learning interaction patterns in the virtual community is expected to provide insight into how non-formal learning activities in virtual space can be run effectively.

2. Virtual Community

The presence of a social world facilitated by internet technology that produces a virtual interaction creates what is called a virtual community (Piliang, 2017). The virtual community is defined as an association of individuals or business partners who interact in the same shared interests, and their interactions are partly supported and mediated by technology and guided by several protocols or norms (Porter, 2006). Porter said that there is no typology of a virtual community that is single which is then widely supported. This claim is in line with what was stated by Komito, (1998) that the term community means many things to many people, and it will not be easy to find a definition of community that will be widely accepted.

The age of information technology is considered appropriate in accommodating constructivist education perspectives which assert that individuals will reach their maximum potential better when they are actively involved in exploring, exploring, and sharing information that is owned by others in a community (Ackermann, 2001). This notion is one of the factors that causes learners in the millennial era to feel more comfortable to be in a virtual community.

The virtual community uses network technology, especially the internet, to build collaboration across geographical boundaries and time zones (Johnson, 2001). In a virtual environment, everyone can play an active role in the learning process because everyone has the opportunity to become learners and instructors in turn. Also, the virtual community connects creators, curators, and viewers. They share ideas and can get instant feedback. The existence of virtual communities is directly related to social media which mediates the continuity of interaction and communication between community members. Most virtual communities are formed and initiated from personal accounts on social media.

3. Methods

This study is a qualitative research designed using a cultural approach. Operationally, this research focuses on regularity. As stated by Rohidi (2012), research aimed at finding or finding regularity includes identification, categorization of elements, and observing patterns. This study involved 24 informants consisting of founders, members, and learning instructors of the Hijabographic community, a pioneer virtual community in Indonesia, using virtual ethnography as a research method. This virtual community was founded in 2013 and has been a productive virtual community in producing visual art through learning activities, and collaborative artworks carried out by its members. Data collection was carried out in three ways, that are 1) observation of learning activities that took place in the virtual community, 2) in-depth interviews involving 24 informants, and 3) tracking of learning documents used in the virtual community.

4. Learning Interactions in Virtual Community

Based on the results of observations and in-depth interviews conducted during the research process, it can be seen that the Hijabographic Community creates a dynamic learning environment by utilizing all the features provided by Instagram so that the learning activities

organized encourage experimentation, collaborative work and active participation of members to share ideas and thought.

In the Hijabographic community, social presence and solidarity between members are one of the essential foundations in creating a virtual learning space. Social presence includes the participation of members and followers of the Hijabographic community in various activities held online and offline. Their participation is not only seen in activities related to learning in the form of workshops or discussions, but also in social activities such as charity initiated by the Hijabographic community. This is in line with what was revealed by Rourke et al. (2001) in his research that the social presence and strong interaction between members need to be developed and continuously pursued comprehensively to create a solid online learning community.

The form of intimate relationships in the Hijabographic online learning community cannot indeed be demonstrated through social communication measured from the expression of emotions, feelings, and moods as explained in the theory of social presence described by Garrison (2017). Computer-mediated communication expressions in the Hijabographic community are carried out in several ways, including the use of emoticons, giving likes, and also expressing appreciation in the comments column. The use of symbolic representation that takes place in online communication, as stated by Kuehn (1993) facilitates expressions that can also build intimacy between members even though communication takes place in a virtual space. As part of the network society, members and followers of the Hijabographic community are aware that one form of appreciation and participation in the community is to leave a digital footprint on every post published by Hijabographic on Instagram.

Learning interactions in the Hijabographic community are summarized in three types of interactions. Adapting from the type of learning interaction proposed by Zacharis (2009) which consists of the interaction of learning participants with content; learning participant interaction with the instructor; and interaction between learning participants.

4.1 Interaction of Learning Participants with the Learning Content

The interaction of learning participants with learning content in the Hijabographic community is closely related to the availability of alternative technology-based learning media such as electronic modules, video tutorials, and podcasts. Various learning media are available and published through Instagram Hijabographic accounts and learning tutors' accounts. To make learning content useful as a learning media, participants should have the skills to extract

information provided by tutors from the Hijabographic community and conduct more exploration through art creation activities independently. Extracting information, in this case, is the ability to be able to understand the techniques and media used by the instructor and then follow the steps that have been taught by the instructor or try to find their way of producing works with the same techniques and media.

Instagram allows users to share content that is not only visual-based but also audio visual-based. This appliance makes it easy for the Hijabographic community to be able to provide multimedia-based learning media that can be accessed by members and followers on Instagram. In addition to simple visual static-based tutorials, the Hijabographic community collaborates with tutors to provide multimedia-based learning media that is realized in the form of video timelapse process of making illustration works.

4.2 Interaction Between Learning Participants and Instructors / Tutors

In the Hijabographic community, the interaction between learning participants and instructors is facilitated through the use of social media, such as online chat either through the comments column on Instagram, Direct Message (DM), and the "Ask Me Questions" feature. Some learning participants who have more intense interaction with instructors can continue discussions through instant messaging services such as WhatsApp.

In the learning process, the interaction between learning participants and instructors is generated through two types of activities; online and offline activities. In online activities, instructors usually initiate to open online discussion forums with community members or followers on Instagram regarding certain techniques and media used in producing visual art.



Figure 1. Interaction between learning participants and learning instructors in Hijabgraphic community

Besides online activities, it can be observed that most learning interactions between participants and instructors are the result of workshops held offline. When members or followers of the Hijabographic community attend workshops with certain themes or content, they will automatically connect with instructors and other learning participants via Instagram. This interaction will usually continue even though the workshop activities have ended.

The familiar and informal style of communication becomes one of the factors that close the gap between the learning participants and the instructor. Although instructors are professionals in the visual arts industry who are quite famous in social media, as instructors, they show a very humble character, not hesitate to appreciate the artworks of participants.

4.3 Interaction of Learning Participants

As is the interaction between learning participants and instructors, the interaction between learning participants in the Hijabographic community is initiated through online or offline activities. The friendship that is established through offline learning activities such as the *Hijabo* Class is one of the tools that can build continuity of interaction between participants, which continues with Instagram mediation. Non-formal chat among participants which is a means for conducting discussions and brainstorming is a form of instructional component that is widely used by the Hijabographic community to increase the participation of members and followers on Instagram.

Interaction between learning participants also has a big impact on building solidarity and loyalty to the Hijabographic community. Based on the results of online interviews conducted by researchers with ten members of the Hijabographic community who are actively involved in various activities held online and offline, it is known that one aspect that strengthens the interaction between learning participants in the Hijabographic community is the existence of emotional bonds that are established through friendship. As stated by Wegener & Leimeister (2012) and Porter (2006) that the sustainability and success of virtual communities in carrying out learning activities are highly dependent on the strength of participants' motivation to achieve common goals that can help build social bonds between learning participants.

Interaction via social media conducted by learning participants in the Hijabographic community increases their ability to be more expressive and at the same time also increases their ability in terms of appreciation. Learning participants seemed more motivated to appreciate the results of visual arts among learning participants, giving input, or sharing new

techniques in work. Interaction between participants who are bound by the same goals and interests has led the Hijabographic community to become one of the most productive virtual communities in creating various collaborative visual arts.

5. Conclusion

Virtual space is a new learning place, easily accessible and open, not constrained by time and geographical constraints. Through this research, it is known that the use of technology with a digital platform becomes a means of supporting the continuity of visual art learning in the virtual community, which offers a pattern of learning interaction and socio-cultural values that are completely different from conventional learning patterns. Instagram, as a media has provided opportunities for learning participants to find a virtual learning space that is comfortable and under their psychological and behavioristic aspects as part of a networked society. The way they upgrade their skills and improve their knowledge in terms of visual arts is very flexible and adaptive. The Instagram account owned by the Hijabographic community provides two resources needed for online learning, there are creators and artworks, which can help learning participants synthesize the information they need to improve their knowledge and skills in creating visual arts through discussion that occurs during interaction in a virtual environment.

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