

**LEHMAN COLLEGE'S ANIMATED INFORMATION LITERACY ADVOCATE
IMLS GRANT NUMBER LG-46-13-0253-13**

**Transcript of Focus Group #3: Real-Time Interactive Lesson
Facilitated by Jennifer Poggiali, with Michael Ferraro
October 3, 2014**

Poggiali: So we're just going to start with a big, open question. What did you notice about the educational experience you just had?

Female 2: I think it was a bit too impersonal.

Poggiali: Ok. Could you elaborate on that?

Female 2: Oh, it's just the fact that you're not there to teach us and it's a screen, even though it's your voice, it's just—I would, like, if it was in a classroom or it was in a lecture, I would probably walk out, because I would feel like I don't have to stay there.

Poggiali: Cause there's no real person to hold you accountable or something?

Female 2: Yeah.

Poggiali: Yeah. I'm seeing a few nods. Did you feel—oh, yeah?

Female 1: Oh, I wanted to say that, like, I don't feel that way at all. Like, I felt more comfortable. Like, that's more of my element—iPad in my lap, looking at a screen—and that I feel comfortable. Like if I was in a class, I know that I have to stay here to learn, and it was a good lesson. I wouldn't have, like, walked out or anything.

Poggiali: Alright. Yeah?

Male 6: So I think I feel pretty confident because when you use animated stuff you feel like "oh, something good is gonna happen." Like you have an iPad and you have a television—what can you expect, you know? So, when you make classes like this, you feel pretty much with energy and you can't wait to be in class.

Female 8: I felt like, I agree that it was a bit impersonal and I didn't feel so engaged because I'm so used to having an actual person there teaching me, like that one-on-one interaction, so I felt like for me, in my opinion, I thought this was more geared towards a younger generation, like younger kids because I feel like they would be more engaged, but I'm so used to having, like, an actual teacher look at me and having an actual interaction with the teacher.

Poggiali: So how did you guys feel about the interactivity? I mean how did you feel about the interactivity that was there in this experience?

Female 1: Do you mean the questions that you were asking us?

Poggiali: Yeah.

Female 1: I felt like it was normal. Like, I didn't feel weird talking to someone like through a microphone. It felt pretty natural.

Poggiali: It felt natural. Ok. What would you guys think if this were less of a classroom experience and more like an online module? So, if there weren't a real person responding in a real way to what you're saying, but if there was sort of like a question, multiple choice answer—you give an answer, she gives you feedback, that kind of thing? What would you think about that experience? Like for an online learning thing?

Female 1: I don't think that would work for me, like if I had to do it at home or outside of a classroom setting, I wouldn't. I wouldn't be able to sit there and do it by myself. I need like a classroom of people and I need to be in a classroom setting for this to work.

Poggiali: Interesting. Ok, and you agree?

Male 6: I mean, it depends, because sometimes you just want to be alone and sometimes you just want to be with a class, you know? Well, it depends also on the topic. So, sometimes some topics are hard, and you're gonna be like, "Ahh?," so—yup.

Poggiali: Would anybody...

Female 2: Um...

Poggiali: Oh, yeah, go ahead.

Female 2: I actually would like it if it was, like, for studying. I would actually enjoy it better, cause I don't like studying with people. Yeah, and to have something that's [laughs] to have something that's artificial and giving me feedback is actually pretty helpful, because I—like for Bio class, it's really hard for me to study because I have to have everything quiet, but I would like someone to be there that's not gonna actually bother me or give... [laughter] ...like, or be a distraction.

Poggiali: So the fact that she could actually, like, answer or ask you questions, give you feedback on them, but not...

Female 2: ...but not in a personal way, where it could distract me and I start talking about something else.

Poggiali: Oh that's really interesting.

Female 2: Yeah.

Poggiali: And you're also talking about the idea of having it be, sort of like a supplement to a regular lecture class, like something that maybe you could go home and use while you're studying or something. What do you guys think about that idea?

Female 1: As a supplement I would use it, but as learning it firsthand for the first time, I wouldn't be able to do it on my own.

Poggiali: Interesting. Ok. I think I heard you maybe say "yeah"? Did I hear you say "yeah"?

Female 7: Yeah.

Poggiali: Do you want to elaborate at all on that?

Female 7: I mean, I agree with it, so I think that I would use it to do, like, studying, like, elaborate on whatever I learnt that day in the class. So, yeah.

Ferraro: So like, you'd look at it as somebody going over your notes with you.

Female 2: Exactly.

Ferraro: Sort of like that.

Poggiali: Oh, that's interesting. And...

Ferraro: And what about—we're in a fairly small group with her. What about on a big stage? Where it's more of a production?

Poggiali: You know what, can I actually—can I pause that question...

Ferraro: Ok, yeah...

Poggiali: ...cause I wanted to hear—you had something...

Ferraro: Oh, alright.

Poggiali: ...you wanted to say, right?

Female 8: Oh, I just wanted to say, like, I felt like, as a supplement it would be like more of a tutoring session, kind of. Like, you know how a tutor is right there with you?

Poggiali: Um-hm.

Female 8: Except it won't—it wouldn't be that awkward, like, cause you would be looking at a screen, but it would still be personal, so I would agree that it would be better as a supplement.

Poggiali: That's interesting, and you're like—well, did you have something to say, too?

Female 3: Just to answer his [Ferraro's] question. I think it'll be easier to doze off if we were in a bigger, um, atmosphere, and it will be harder for us to answer back, since people may want to talk at the same time. If it's a smaller group, you can pick and choose. If it's a bigger group, everyone will want to talk at the same time and then you wouldn't know who's speaking. A lot of complications.

Poggiali: Yeah, and I wonder—well, I shouldn't reflect on this...

Ferraro: Have any of you done any massively online classes, where there's like hundreds of people...

Female 2: No, I've heard of experiences...

Female 1: I did...

Ferraro: Did you do one?

Female 1: For like, [my job], they have you watch these videos about, like, child molesters. It's like twelve hours, about like how you—cause to be an instructor [there] you have to watch those videos. It was really boring. Like, I opened them all on different tabs and just let them play...

[laughter]

Ferraro: If you had a character that was an animated character and it wasn't—they weren't just droning on, they used a little bit of graphics to help illustrate stuff—do you think that would be an improvement, or it would wind up feeling about the same?

Female 1: I think I would feel about the same, unless they had asked me questions that I had to respond, then of course I would have to watch the whole video.

Ferraro: Ok. So the format wouldn't really affect your—it's the fact that it's twelve hours of...

Female 1: Yeah...

Ferraro: ...you know, somebody talking at you and it's dreadfully boring.

Female 1: Yeah.

Ferraro: Ok.

[laughter]

Male 6: That's why it's animated.

Poggiali: What's that?

Male 6: That's why it's animated. So you can feel kind of, like, happy about it.

[laughter]

Poggiali: Well, let's talk about the animation actually, a little bit. How did you guys feel about experiencing this lesson with animation, rather than just having it be mediated by something. Did the animation add to it, detract from it? Was there any response there you had to it?

Female 7: In the survey, it said if I felt like a kid because it was animation. I put I disagree, because, like, when I was a little girl I would always see animation, so it actually makes me feel comfortable. Like, I like it. So, yeah.

Poggiali: Ok. Do you want to say something?

Male 6: It doesn't matter how old are you, I think animation's just—makes you think, makes you see things easier, you know? So, that's what my—my opinion.

Poggiali: Are there any opinions in conflict with that? [silence] Ok, let's see. We've actually covered a lot of these questions right now. [pause] Oh, maybe we can ask a little bit about subject matter. It's interesting because someone mentioned their biology class...

Female 2: Me.

Poggiali: ...I think you did, right? Yeah, your biology class. If there were, say, an opportunity to have a character like this be a tutor to you, are there subjects that you think would be interesting to see that with, or are there—yeah?

Female 3: I think math would be a good one.

Female 2: Really?

Female 3: Yeah.

Female 2: I disagree.

[laughter]

Poggiali: Alright, we'll start with the agreement and then we'll move to the disagreement.

Female 3: Math, like, science. Anything complicated to certain people. For me it's math. Maybe I want to ask the definition of derivatives, so somebody could help me with that.

Poggiali: Ok, alright. Yeah?

Female 9: Yup. Also, like, anything factual, cause you wanna make sure that you heard it right the first time, so you wanna, like, make it repeat so it stays in your head.

Poggiali: Ok.

Female 8: I agree with [the previous two speakers] that the first thing that popped up was math for me, too, because for some reason I like to see the steps to, let's say, answering a problem. And it's more visual that way, rather than—I don't know. And if I don't understand like a certain step I can always ask the animation to pause and explain this or that.

Poggiali: Oh, yeah—or go back and do that again or something? Interesting.

Ferraro: So, the interactive aspect is one of the things that seems to be what appeals most. If it was a person versus a cartoon would it make a difference? [inaudible murmuring] In other words, if you're asking questions to what looks like a real human, would you feel the same way in terms of the kinds of questions you ask, and stopping and starting? You think it would be the same whether it's a cartoon or a person?

Female 2: Yeah.

Ferraro: Because it's the interaction that you're really most interested in...

Female 1: Do you mean like the animation is a cartoon or...

Ferraro: Well this is a—just think of—I'm sorry, I should use the word animation and not cartoon. So imagine this same interactivity—your ability to ask questions and stop—but instead of having a animation on the screen, it's actually a person.

Female 1: I don't think it matters. I feel comfortable asking questions on the screen because it is a screen and not an actual person.

Ferraro: Ok. Right, so alright.

Poggiali: Anybody else have an opinion on that? [silence] You were in disagreement, about the...

Female 2: Oh, about the...

Poggiali: ...math issue, right?

Female 2: ...about this...

Poggiali: Or?

Female 2: I think, like, for me, for math I need someone who can teach me, not a computer. Cause I try to search up, like, examples of problems online and it never works out for me. And I need someone actually being there and giving me problems from their head not from, like, something generated in a computer.

Poggiali: Ok.

Ferraro: But if somebody could go through the steps with you...

Female 2: Yeah...

Ferraro: ...that would be helpful.

Female 2: Yeah.

Ferraro: Yeah, ok.

Female 2: But it was some—it would take a subject like science. [She] said that with something factual then it makes sense because you have to go over it. Cause sometimes teachers don't—the way that they say things we might not understand them right away. Like in the textbook, I read something and I do not understand exactly what is being said. It's just stating something that has something to do—it just doesn't connect.

Poggiali: And then the hope is that you go into class and the professor says it in a way that connects...

Female 2: But they don't.

Poggiali: But they might not either. Ok.

Female 2: Yeah.

Poggiali: Ok.

Female 2: That's all.

Poggiali: I think I have one or two more questions. Do you have any other questions?

Ferraro: No, this is all very interesting, so, yeah...

Poggiali: It is very interesting...

Ferraro: ...very useful.

Poggiali: Yeah.

Male 6: I mean...

Poggiali: Yeah?

Male 6: What about if the animated person can answer, like, a really strong question? Because when you interact with a person, that person really understands your question, so what would happen in that case?

Unidentified Female: If it was a difficult question?

Male 6: Yeah, if it was a difficult question and the animated can answer it.

Poggiali: I mean, what would happen in that case?

Male 6: Yeah, so it's better for you to—sometimes it's better for you to interact with a one-on-one, you know? Not with just a computer. Yeah.

Poggiali: Yeah, I think that maybe in this—if we were going to use this technology for something that you might do at home that's interactive, it would probably either have to be something where, you know, like a lesson like this. Like I described earlier, where maybe she poses a question and then you have to select an option, and if you select the correct option then she responds to you in the affirmative and if you select the incorrect option then she tries to explain why that was the incorrect option. So that would be, like, one way that we could do it,

but just through this discussion, what's emerging is that there might be an interesting opportunity for her to be used as a supplement to lectures, where maybe she's there programmed to respond to your homework assignments or programmed to kind of help you work through whatever was taught that day in class, you know? So I think there's a couple of ways to do it, but you're right, she can't at this point, unless somebody's in the—you know—in the closet in your, you know. [laughter]

Ferraro: Well, there is—there are ways that we could set up interactive dialogues with people set in their own places. So, the voice would be in one place and you would be all over in your individual...

Poggiali: That's true...

Ferraro: ...homes, like a Skype session, if you will.

Poggiali: That's true, it could be a Skype...

Ferraro: Or a Hangout, like a Google Hangout.

Female 4: That would be a great thing.

Poggiali: That would be a great thing?

Ferraro: That would be a great thing, yeah.

Poggiali: But with the animated character or just, like, in general?

Female 2: Yeah, with the animated character.

Ferraro: Yeah, alright.

Poggiali: Oh, with the animated? Ok, so let's talk about that for a second, then. [laughter] So, like, if there could be a live—if you were, you know—if there could be a live thing at home, and you're Skyped in on it, you said that sounded like a great idea...

Female 4: Yeah, I think it's great. I mean, I don't know—the idea of Skyping with animation I think is very interesting, cause you'd be able to ask them questions, and not be actually talking to a person.

Poggiali: Um-hm.

Female 4: I don't know.

Ferraro: Do you think the animation give you—makes you feel a little bit more comfortable asking questions, so you're not really talking to somebody who...

Unidentified Female: Yeah.

Female 4: Yeah.

Ferraro: ...you might think is gonna be judging you...

Female 2: Yeah.

[Multiple "yeahs"]

Ferraro: Ok, so that's where the advantage to it comes. Ok.

Poggiali: That's interesting.

Female 2: It removes the anxiety of talking to a stranger.

Ferraro: Yeah.

Unknown Female: It's just like texting.

Female 2: Yeah.

Ferraro: It feels anonymous in that way—or at least, not anonymous, but at least it's not...

Female 7: It's comforting.

Ferraro: It's comfortable, yeah.

Female 2: Yeah.

Poggiali: So even if you knew that there was a person...

Female 2: ...there...

Poggiali: ...voicing that character...

Female 7: Yeah, but you can't see them, so... [laughs—multiple overlapping comments]

Unidentified Female: ...and they can't see you.

[Multiple yeahs]

Ferraro: I see.

Poggiali: Oh, and they can't see you.

Unidentified Female: Well, they could hear you maybe.

Ferraro: Yeah, they'd have to be able to hear you in order to answer your questions. And in fact we could do it just as an audio connection, which may be more comfortable for everybody. But if we had Google—yeah, so that might be a way of supporting that level of independence and freedom from judgment or awkwardness but at the same time allow you the interactive quality.

Poggiali: I'm seeing a lot of nods. Is there anybody that's in disagreement? [silence] Oh. Oh, that's really interesting.

Ferraro: Yeah.

Poggiali: Ok. I think my last question is, is there something that we should have asked you that we didn't ask? Or is there something you want to say about what happened here today?

Ferraro: Ok.

Poggiali: Wait, wait, wait, give them another minute... [laughter]

Ferraro: I see the wheels are turning, but...

Poggiali: ...that's a hard question...

Ferraro: Ok...

Poggiali: ...you gotta think about it for a minute! [pause] Yeah?

Female 8: Personally, I felt like the animation was a bit stiff. Like, she didn't really move around much, so I don't know. I felt like she could loosen up a bit, you know, instead of like standing in one place all the time. I don't know, that was a just my opinion.

Poggiali: Ok. Alright, cool.

Ferraro: That's a true comment.

Poggiali: That is a good comment.

Unidentified Female: Like, the survey said that, like, "oh, does she not have enough facial expressions?" and I put strongly agree...

[multiple yeahs, me too, etc]

Unidentified Female: ...that your voice was a lot more animated than her face was, so it didn't really match up.

Poggiali: Ok.

Ferraro: Ok.

Poggiali: Alright, and I heard a lot of yeses to that.

Female 4: Yeah, I agree. I mean, I detected a little bit of a pattern, like her moving sideways and her head [motions her head like character]...

Poggiali: Ok.

Ferraro: It felt repetitive?

Female 4: Yeah.

Female 2: Yeah.

Poggiali: And did that take you out of the experience a little bit, or how did you feel about that? Yeah?

Female 4: Um, it was ok. Yeah.

Ferraro: You noticed it and then sort of moved on, or you found it kind of getting in the way?

Female 4: Uh, yeah, it was kind of distracting a little bit...

Ferraro: Ok

Female 4: ...I just kept seeing her moving the same way and I just kinda lost focus and just paid attention on the article and that's it. I was just hearing her instead of looking at her.

Poggiali: Ohhhh, ok. I actually could—I mean I could see you guys and I could see that a lot of you were looking at your iPads more than you were looking at... [multiple "Yeahs"] ...the screen. Yeah. And why was—I mean partially cause I was directing you to look at you iPad, but were there other reasons why you were doing that?

Male 6: I mean, it depends. If you're gonna change from one page to another one, the animation's supposed to move so we can be like "Oh, ok so it's moving, that means it's going on," but and then when we're gonna talk about that topic, the animation has to stay still because if it moves then we gonna lose our focus...

Poggiali: Lose focus a little bit...

Male 6: Yeah.

Poggiali: Ok. So, was that—maybe that timing was a little off for you or something? We weren't quite...

Male 6: Yeah, kinda.

Poggiali: Yeah.

Male 6: Um-hm.

Poggiali: Ok. Any other thoughts about that? Yeah?

Female 5: I would just say, like, you should consider doing this but other subjects that are considered boring. Like I can't tell you how many times I fell asleep in my critical reasoning class cause all he does is like go on and on.

[laughter]

Ferraro: So you like that idea of using this in classes that are, you know, not holding your attention? This might be a way of keeping your attention a little bit?

Female 5: Yeah, especially with the iPad. Like, I can't fall asleep, like, on an iPad...

Ferraro: Doing stuff, yeah.

Female 5: Yeah.

[laughter]

Female 5: Um, so.

Ferraro: Alright, that's good.

Poggiali: Ok.

Female 5: Yeah.

Poggiali: Any other things we should have on record?

Male 6: I mean, with time you're gonna improve the animation, so.

Poggiali: Um-hm. Do you have little comments about how it might be improved, cause we are gonna work a little bit more on it...

Ferraro: Yup.

Male 6: I mean, use your creativity.

[laughter]

Poggiali: Ok!

Ferraro: Yeah.

Male 6: Yeah.

Poggiali: [gestures to Ferraro] That's his creativity.

Ferraro: But I the sense is that she was doing the same thing and it felt a little repetitive...

Male 6: Yeah...

Ferraro: ...and once you saw it a couple of times you didn't need to see it again.

Female 4: Yeah.

[laughter]

Male 6: It should be like Dora. You know...

[laughter, a few "no's"]

Female 2: You know what I was thinking...

Poggiali: Yeah?

Female 2: ...it would be nice if she were like sitting down and she was doing the same thing as us.

Poggiali: That would be nice! Yeah! I like that.

Ferraro: That's true.

Female 1: I was gonna say that if you do this study again you should try and get a more classroom-like setting...

Poggiali: Hmm.

Female 2: Yeah...

Female 1: ...and see. Cause I think that would be a lot different.

Ferraro: Ok...

Poggiali: Oh, that's interesting...

Ferraro: ...that's another good observation.

Poggiali: That is a good—and I saw a nod up there from [you], I think?

Female 9: Yeah.

Poggiali: Did I see you nodding? Yeah.

Female 9: It's like how, [she] say. Like, the bigger the classroom is the harder it is to focus on it. So, like, if you get a bigger classroom and see how people are actually paying attention, then it's a better result than a small group.

Poggiali: Yeah, cause the intimacy of this setting and the fact that there were only, like, nine of you maybe affected your attention level. If there were more people, would you guys have maybe even pull out your phone a little bit and do something...

[laughter—some "yeahs"]

Poggiali: Yeah?

Male 6: It depends.

Poggiali: Alright, that's actually a really good point. We should try it again with a bigger group.

Male 6: Yeah.

Poggiali: Anybody else have anything else to say? [silence] Yeah? Ok, you guys have been super helpful.

[END]