

# Online Graduate Students' Success via the Use of Video-based and Text-based Discussions

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## Abstract

Text-based discussions have been used in online discussions arguably since the inception of online education. However, in recent years, different platforms have been introduced to enable video-based discussion. This study aims to find if there are differences between the success rate of the students who use text-based discussions and video-based discussions. The result of this study will contribute to the value of each discussion format, and discuss possible recommendations to facilitate the effectiveness and engagement.

## Introduction

A major component of any online course is how one, often the instructor, creates a sense of community. Having discussions, has been one way to achieve this, which has led to online discussions becoming a key feature in asynchronous learning activities. The topic on online discussions has been explored in various ways; for example, Russo and Benson (2005) discuss the importance and relationship between online presence and cognitive learning outcomes. Their study focused on students and instructors' perceptions of how online presence affects learning. Other studies have shown that text-based discussions have been used widely for a long time as a method to show students' presence in an online environment. Video-based discussions also have been proved as a rich and powerful model to foster online learning (Yousef, Chatti, & Schroeder, 2014).

There are numerous theories that can be used to explore this topic. One such theoretical framework is Community of inquiry (CoI) proposed by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000) includes three independent elements: social presence, teaching presence, and cognitive presence in online learning. Cognitive presence plays an important role that allows any participant in a community to produce productive communication, especially in online education. Teaching presence emphasizes the role of instructors in designing, developing, and delivering online learning activities. Social presence supports cognitive presence by focusing on the role of participants in an online community. These three basic elements have been applied in research studies to create interactive and meaningful online learning environment.

A study by Clark, Strudler, and Grove (2015) investigates the differences in social presence and teaching presence when students communicate via video versus text-based discussions. This study captures the value of using video and suggest the combination multi-models in online discussions. According to Johnson and Lock (2019), online learning using text and video discussions will foster higher-order thinking in enhancing interaction and engagement.

It is clear that most of the previous studies focus on comparing text-based and video-based discussions in online learning (Clark, Strudler, & Grove, 2015; Swartzwelder, Murphy, & Murphy, 2018) or investigate the social presence or students engagement. There is not much information about the relationship between students' success and video-based and text-based discussions. According to Greogry (2016), a number of factors have been used to describe successful online learners, such as GPA, goal-oriented, organized, responsible, self-disciplined, and self-motivated.

Based on the above characteristics of successful online learners, this study will focus on investigating how text-based and video-based discussion relate to students' success in online learning. The study is guided by the following research question "Is there any difference between the success rate of the students who use text-based discussions and those who use video-based discussions?"

### Methods

This study focuses on finding graduate students' success in online discussion. For that purpose, the researchers chose the survey method, which provides descriptions of participants' trends, attitudes, or opinions of a group sample (Creswell & Creswell, 2014), to collect data for this study.

The researchers sent emails to recruit graduate students at Oklahoma State University, who have taken online courses. The purposes of choosing these participants were (1) all participants were involved directly in online discussion, and (2) they had experiences about text-based discussions and video-based discussions in online learning. These selections of participants served as important factors to provide the strongest data for this study.

After obtaining IRB approval, the researchers created an online survey, including both open-ended and closed-ended questions in Qualtrics. An anonymous link was then generated and distributed via emails. Participants (N=66) provided answers to the questionnaires.

### Findings

This section provided main findings from the data collection to answer the research question "Is there any difference between the success rate of the students who use text-based discussions and those who use video-based discussions?" The data showed that more than 80% of the participants had taken an online course in the last two years; thus, the participants were able to express their experiences of online discussions.

Table 1 illustrated the mode of discussions in online learning and graduate students' preference. As can be seen from the table, text based discussion was chosen as the most preferred mode for online discussions.

*Table 1. Participants' Preference of Discussion Mode*

No.	Online Discussion Options	Count	%
1	Text Based Discussions (i.e. discussion boards)	31	46.96
2	Video Based Discussions (e.g. FlipGrid)	13	19.70
3	I have no preference	11	16.67
4	It depends	11	16.67

Another question asked participants about their success in an online class based on Gregory's (2006) definition of students' success in online learning. All participants indicated that they were successful in an online class (Table 2). From this response, it can be confirmed that the success of graduate students in an online course was not affected by a specific discussion mode.

*Table 2. Participants' Success in an Online class*

	Answer	Count	%
Have you been successful in an online class?	Yes	66	100
	No	0	0

## Discussion

The results of this study indicated that graduate students were successful in an online course as well as in online discussions. It can be inferred from the finding that there is no major difference between students' success and modes of online discussions. Both text-based or video-based discussions can be a great platform for online discussions. The results also showed that most of the participants prefer using texts when participating in online discussion boards. These results were consistent with participants' cognitive presence in online learning as described by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000). Based on the results, online instructors should consider applying methodologies and implementing different discussion modes in online courses.

Because this study collected data from a small sample size,  $N = 66$ , and only focused on online graduate students, it is difficult to generate the results to different online learners, such as undergraduate students. Another limitation of this study was that the study analyzed data from graduate students' awareness of their success in an online course. Further research can collect data from a larger sample size to confirm the relationship between different modes of online discussions and learners' success. Additional data should be collected to examine students' perception of text based discussions and video based discussions. The role of instructors and students in online discussions should be considered in order to examine graduate students' success in online learning.

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