

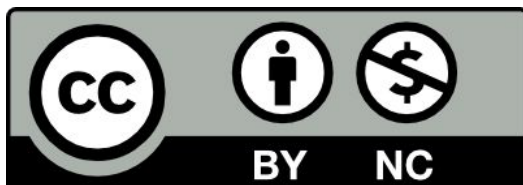


Improving Rural Interpreter Skills

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Module 9: Facilitation in Focus



Module content developed in part by [UNC-IRIS Project](#) & [UNC-Project CLIMB](#)
[ASL lectures](#) by: Shana Gibbs & Erin Sanders Sigmon



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Overview & Objectives

Overview: This module builds on the discussion techniques learned in previous modules to allow you to identify strategies for facilitating a COL in face-to-face, synchronous, and online, asynchronous settings.

Learning Outcomes and Objectives

Upon Completion of this module participants will be able to:

1. Discuss the role of dialogue and reflective practice in a COL.
2. Identify strategies for facilitating a COL in face-to-face, synchronous, and online, asynchronous settings.
3. Examine prior experiences as members of a COL.

Discussion: Your Experience with a Community of Learners



NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Original post directions:

For some of you, this program may be your first experience with asynchronous, online learning. For this discussion, respond to the four questions below:

1. What thoughts did you have about engaging in this type of community of learning *before* you got started?
2. What has your experience been like?
3. What do you find to be the most beneficial features of the online, asynchronous learning environment?
4. What do you find to be the most beneficial features of a live, synchronous learning environment that you have experienced in the past?

Response post directions:

Respond to your colleagues by asking clarifying questions, seeking additional information, or expressing an idea that encourages critical thinking and moves the conversation forward.



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Core Tasks of the Online Facilitator

Four Core Tasks

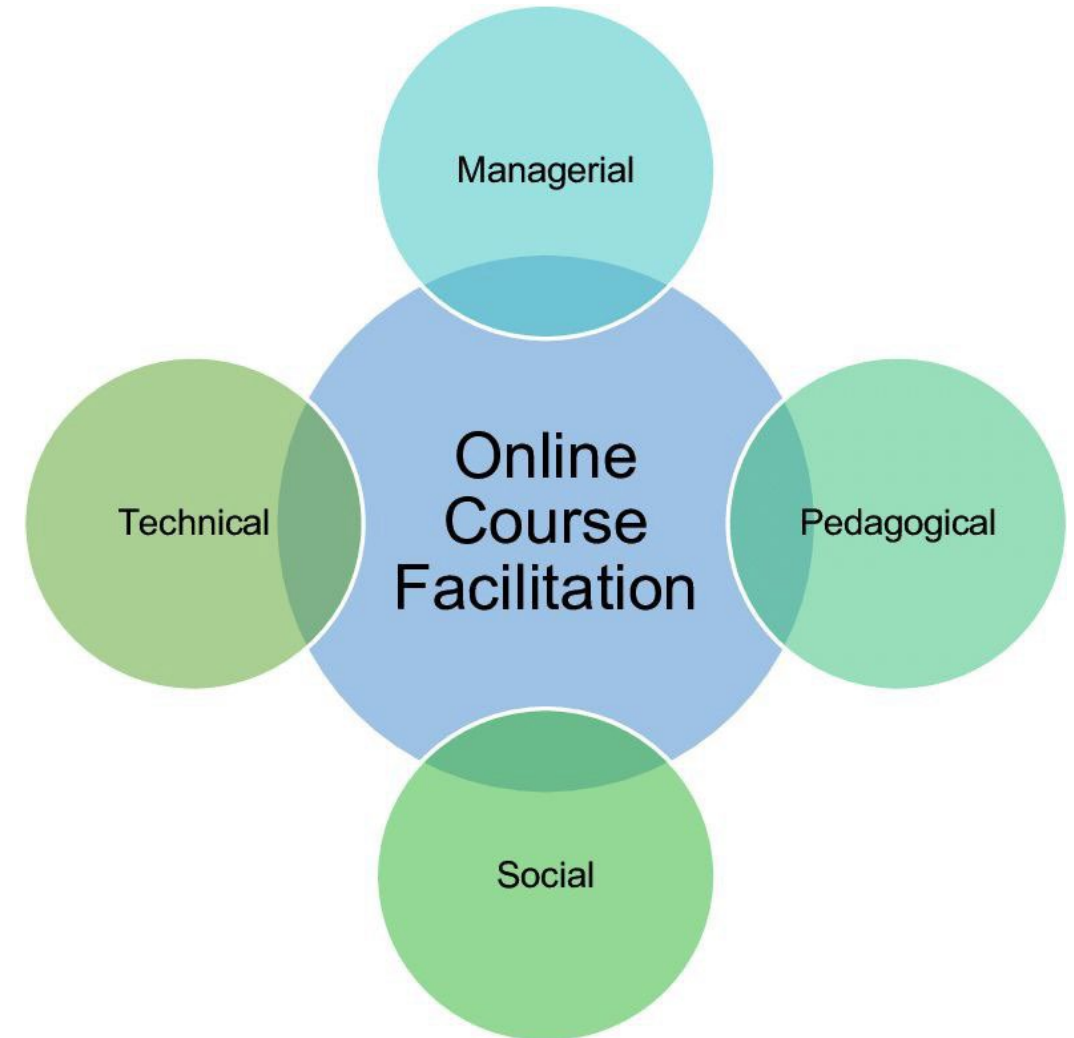
The online discussion facilitator is charged with "the responsibility of keeping discussions on track, contributing special knowledge and insights, weaving together various discussion threads and course components, and maintaining group harmony" (Rohfeld & Hiemstra, 1995, p. 91).

These tasks can be broken down into these four areas:

1. Pedagogical
2. Social
3. Managerial
4. Technical

These tasks are discussed in-depth on the following pages. They were taken and modified from Berge's 1995 publication:

[Facilitating Computer Conferencing: Recommendations From the Field.](#)





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Core Task #1: Pedagogical

Some of the most important roles of online discussion facilitators revolve around their duties as educational facilitators. The facilitator uses questions and probes for participant responses that focus discussions on critical concepts, principles, and skills.

Examples of Pedagogical Tasks

- **Encourage Participation:** The use of various learning options can stimulate participant involvement and interaction--small group discussion and one-on-one message exchanges recognizing participant messages are some of the activities to use when encouraging participation.
- **Maintain a Non-authoritarian Style:** It is usually better to avoid the "authority figure" role when facilitating online, especially with adults.
- **Don't Expect Too Much:** Online instructors need to be content if two or three well-articulated, major points are communicated in a particular thread of discussion.
- **Promote Private Conversations as well as Those in the General Discussions:** Design opportunities for private conversations among two or more people who you suspect have similar interests in the content.
- **Find Unifying Threads:** Facilitators can weave several strands of conversation into a summarization that may prompt people to pursue the topic further.
- **Present Conflicting Opinions:** Facilitators can draw attention to opposing perspectives, different directions, or conflicting opinions that could lead to debates and peer critiques.
- **Request Responses:** The facilitator may ask certain participants for comments on a topic or question, then give them time to respond, for instance "by tomorrow."



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Core Task #2: Social Tasks

Creating a friendly, social environment in which learning is promoted is also essential for successful facilitation. This suggests promoting human relationships, developing group cohesiveness, maintaining the group as a unit, and helping participants to work together in a mutual cause. All of those are critical to the success of any online learning activities.

Examples of Social Tasks

- **Guard Against Fear in Your Discussions:** Fear of public ridicule often stifles participation in online discussions. Be gently accepting of participants' comments and deal with exceptions directly with the participant.
- **Watch the Use of Humor or Sarcasm:** It may be wise not to use humor or sarcasm due to different cultural backgrounds that may be represented in the community of learning. It is especially difficult to construe intent and tone from on-screen text-based communications, unless you know the person very well.
- **Use Introductions & Non-Course Discussions:** The facilitator should encourage the participants to introduce themselves and discuss what is going on in their lives outside of this program, to help build a sense of community.
- **Praise and Model the Discussant Behavior You Seek:** Reinforcing and modeling good discussant behaviors, such as by saying, "Thank You" to students who respond effectively online, can be helpful to encourage courtesy and interaction.
- **Do Not Ignore Bad Discussant Behavior:** Request change (privately & publicly) in poor discussant behaviors and refer to the "netiquette" statement from the orientation. Private and public communication will be approached differently but we encourage transparency.
- **Expect That Flames May Occur:** Participants may breach etiquette and respond with harsh or vulgar language. If this problem occurs, the facilitator needs to react and remind people (privately & publicly) about online etiquette. Private and public communication will be approached differently, but we encourage transparency.



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Core Task #3: Managerial, Part I

This role involves sharing the agenda for the online course: the objectives of the discussion, the timetable, procedural rules, and decision-making norms. Managing the interactions with strong leadership and direction is considered necessary for successful online facilitation.

Examples of Managerial Tasks

- **Be Responsive:** Respond to contributions. One way of doing this is by posting a personal message to the contributor by addressing them by name or by referring or quoting the author's comments in your own post to the discussion board. In some discussions, it may be better to respond to several at once by weaving them together. Experience with your content and the participants will guide you. Test different approaches to see what works most effectively.
- **Be Patient:** Although you should be responsive, sometimes you must be prepared to wait several days for comments and responses. Do not rush in to fill every silence with facilitator contributions.
- **Be Mindful of the Proportion of the Facilitator's Contribution to the Discussion:** As a rule, facilitators should generally contribute to one-quarter of the online discussions.
- **Request Comments on Metacommunications:** Request metacommunications by inviting participants to tell how they feel about the course within the discussion board.
- **Procedural Leadership:** If community members express frustration about a task or procedure, do not ignore it. Work with leadership to change what is not working. Do not allow the discussion to be taken over by a discussion of failed procedure rather than content or more useful discussion.



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Core Task #3: Managerial, Part II

More Examples of Managerial Tasks

- **Use Private Email for Prompting as is Appropriate for Discussion:** Using private messages, the facilitator can urge participants to join in the discussion, initiate debates, and solicit suggestions. Check in regularly with participants to ensure their engagement.
- **Be Clear:** Succinctly and clearly state the discussion topic and the expectations for participants within the discussion. Clarify the topic and expectations throughout the discussion postings.
- **Handle Tangents Appropriately:** Some discussions will veer into another topic or tangent. These discussions may have a lot of energy or interest. If appropriate, move the discussion to the parking lot and guide the participants back to the original topic.
- **Vary Participants' Amount of Contribution:** If there is a participant who is very active, you may ask that person (privately) to wait a few responses before contributing. Similarly, ask less outspoken individuals to participate more actively. Everyone's experience and perspective should be sought out and valued.
- **End the Sessions:** Do your best to keep everyone on schedule. Doing this will allow you to provide a summary of each discussion so that they do not drag on after they have served their purpose.



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Core Task #4: Technical

The facilitator must make participants comfortable with Canvas, GoReact, and any other platforms being used. The ultimate technical goal for the facilitator is to make the technology transparent. When this is done, the participant may concentrate on the task at hand. Our goal is for technology to never be a barrier to participation.

Examples of Technical Tasks

- **Use Technical Support:** The university's technical support team will be invaluable to our participants. In addition to that team, participants can rely on each other for technical support by reaching out individually or posting on a discussion board if they are having an issue.
- **Provide Feedback:** Provide swift feedback, especially on technical problems.



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Discussion: Core Tasks



NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Original post directions:

Up to this point, you have had the opportunity to see interactions among your COL colleagues, the facilitator, and yourself. Review the discussions that have occurred in your COL before creating a response post that addresses the following prompts below.

1. How have the four core tasks been applied in your COL? Try to find a specific example of each.
2. Was the application of the core task effective? In other words, did it lead to the intended outcome?
3. Which tasks applied in your COL, by your facilitator, would you like to carry forward as a future facilitator?

Response post directions:

Respond to the post of one of your colleagues by asking clarifying questions, seeking additional information, or expressing an idea that encourages critical thinking and moves the conversation forward.



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The Art of Asking Questions

If learning is dialogic then your goal as a facilitator is to keep the dialogue going. This happens by asking questions. In doing so you are:

- showing others that you are curious, want to know more, and want to understand,
- respecting the other person and group members, and
- fostering a deeper understanding or appreciation of what is being communicated.

When to ask questions:

- When clarification is needed
- When misunderstanding occurs
- When discussion wanes or stalls
- When conflict cannot be resolved
- When you want to foster deeper thinking

How to ask questions:

- With curiosity: Be genuine in your desire to grasp what is being said.
- With authenticity: Be genuine in your intent.
- Being mindful of impact: Monitor your intent and potential impact.



The Four Question Types, Part I

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There are four types of questions that achieve different goals. Choosing the right type of question can achieve the desired intent. Review [The Art of Asking Questions](#) and the subsequent slides to gain a better understanding of these question types.

VIEW OF THE PROBLEM

Wide

Adjoining

Elevating

Narrow

Clarifying

Funneling

Affirm what we know

Discover something new

INTENT OF THE QUESTION



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The Four Question Types, Part II

Clarifying Questions

Goal: To uncover the intent behind what is said.

- “You said this took place at a meeting with a social worker, is that correct? Can you clarify whether it was the first time the participants had met?”
- “You used the term ‘clear’—can you explain what you mean by that term?”

Adjoining Questions

Goal: To help learners explore related aspects of the problem that are ignored in the conversation.

- “How would this concept apply to your work?”
- “How do these insights apply in our work as interpreters?”
- “If it was working the way you think it should be working, what would it look like, or what would be happening?”



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The Four Types of Questions, Part III

Funneling Questions

Goal: To help participants dive deeper. We ask them to understand how an answer was derived, to challenge assumptions, and to understand the root causes of problems.

- “How did we arrive at our observations about this scenario? What assumptions might be influencing our perspective?”
- “Why might we be struggling with identifying alternative controls in this scenario? What do we want our controls to achieve and for who?”

Elevating Questions

Goal: To raise broader issues and highlight the bigger picture. They help you zoom out.

- “Taking a step back, what are the larger issues?”
- “Are we addressing the right question?”
- “If we were to look at this from the balcony level, what patterns are surfacing?”



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Putting it All Together

Discussion Techniques & Question Types

Do you remember the ten discussion techniques from *Module 7: Mentoring in Focus*? These can be used in conjunction with the four question types.

Discussion Techniques

1. Questioning
2. Silence
3. Reframing
4. Observation
5. Referring Back
6. Narrowing
7. Expansion
8. Clarification
9. Gesturing
10. Body Language

Question Types

1. Adjoining
2. Clarifying
3. Elevating
4. Funneling



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Taking a Closer Look

Facilitating Synchronous & Asynchronous Discussions

The type of questions and discussion techniques mentioned in this module can be used during any discussion, regardless of whether the discussion is face-to-face or by video, synchronous, or asynchronous. Let's explore the use of these discussion techniques in both synchronous and asynchronous formats.

- On the following page, you will see examples of these questions and discussion techniques in a live (synchronous) discussion session. This approach may be familiar to you because you have experience engaging in discussions about your work and decision-making with colleagues.
- Next, you will see examples of these techniques in an asynchronous format by looking at examples from an online course discussion board.

You will have an opportunity to analyze each of the two discussions mentioned above with your COL peers.

Discussion: Analysis of a Synchronous Discussion, Part I



NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Original post directions:

Review any 10-minute increment of a [conversation](#) between two colleagues, Marva Johnson (on the left) and Amy Williamson (on the right). Analyze the types of questions you see being asked by Amy, and make note of the timestamp the question was asked. Question types: adjoining, clarifying, elevating, and funneling.

Post an original posting sharing:

1. each type of question you see,
2. describe why you think the type of question was used,
3. your thoughts on did the response meet that goal, and
4. and what evidence did you see that the goals were either met or not met?

For example: At 42:48, Marva talks about her experience interpreting jury instructions, which she found to be very challenging. In response to this, at 43:10, Amy asks an *adjoining* question with the goal of exploring a related factor that had not been addressed (the provision of materials provided to prepare for interpreting the jury instructions). Marva replies to this, then at 43:55, Amy asks a *clarifying* question and asks if the explanation she just provided was what she meant by not wanting to over prepare. Marva responds and ends this part of the discussion by saying she wonders if it is an area she can improve. This appears to be evidence that Amy's questioning led her to the identification of an area she could improve upon.

Discussion: Analysis of a Synchronous Discussion, Part II



NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Response post directions:

Using the discussion board, respond directly to the post of one of your colleagues. You can do this by asking clarifying questions, seeking additional information, or expressing an idea that encourages critical thinking and moves the conversation forward.

Discussion: Analysis of Asynchronous Discussions, Part I



NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Read the excerpts (embedded in Canvas) from the discussion board of an online course that provided a sampling of the content from the UNC-Project CLIMB curriculum. [Project CLIMB](#) was a bilingual interpreter training program focused on cultivating legal interpreters from minority backgrounds.

The discussion you are reviewing is about the benefits/challenges of developing a bilingual (ASL/English) curriculum online. The course participants (A-F) are interpreters and interpreter educators who have been asked to identify the benefits/challenges of developing a bilingual curriculum where they work and how they might overcome the challenges mentioned to create a curriculum that is fully accessible.

Pay attention to how the facilitator (Schawn Hardesty) uses questioning and other prompts to keep the discussion going. When looking at the discussion below, **keep your focus on the facilitator.**

Notice how they post, when they post, why you think they chose to respond, and the types of questions they are asking. Please *do not focus* on the content of the participants' postings.

Discussion: Analysis of Asynchronous Discussions, Part II



NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Original post directions:

Share what you notice about the facilitator's engagement. These can be the types of questions (below), one of the four core tasks (below), or their style of engagement overall. Be sure to give specific examples in your response.

Types of Questions:

1. Clarifying questions
2. Adjoining questions
3. Elevating questions
4. Funneling questions

Four Core Tasks:

1. Pedagogical
2. Social
3. Managerial
4. Technical

Discussion: Analysis of Asynchronous Discussions, Part III



NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Response post directions:

After reviewing your colleagues' responses, is there any evidence of an additional way of looking at the same example? Do you have any more questions about any specific evidence?



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Post-Test

NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this post-test

1. True or False? The four core tasks of the online facilitator are 1) Pedagogical, 2) Procedural 3) Managerial and 4) Technical.
2. True or False? The four question types are 1) Adjoining, 2) Critiquing, 3) Elevating, and 4) Funneling.

Correct responses: 1.False., 2. False.





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