Academic Dishonesty: Cheating and Plagiarism
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Discussion # 11

The video I chose from Educational Impact’s Online Academy is “Academic Dishonesty: Cheating and Plagiarism.” The reason I chose this video lesson is because as a teacher of English composition and public speaking, I have encountered students who plagiarized segments and entire texts from other sources without giving credit to the author. I was curious to see whether or not the methods I use to orient my students on the subject and handle this problem were compatible with the methods presented in the video.

The module consists of 12 sections related to Cheating and Plagiarism. The full duration of all video sections is approximately 55 minutes. During all 12 sections, there are two men, Gary Clabaugh and Edward Rozycki, seated at a round table. Three camera angles were provided: one long shot of the two men, one medium close-up of Gary Clabaugh, and one medium close-up of Edward Rozycki. Although there were 12 sections to the video, the beginning of each section was a continuation of the video and audio of the previous section.

The video opened with the two men seated at a white, round table. The man on the left, Edward Rozycki, was dressed in a dark suit, while Gary Clabaugh, on the right, wore a long sleeved white shirt and dark tie. The background in the long shot shows a white wall, with three unclear framed pictures. The predominant color of the scene is the white from the table where the two men sat, and the white wall in the background. This excess of white tended to be overwhelming, and considerably darkened each man’s face. With the long shots of the camera, facial features were hard to distinguish. This excess of white in the long shots of the video composition could be corrected by draping a dark colored tablecloth over the table, thus reducing the amount of white in the video.

Neither man orally identified himself in the introduction, which disconnected the viewer from identifying more closely with the presenters. A simple oral introduction stating each person’s name, and brief credentials would have been sufficient to allow a closer connection between the viewer and the presenter. Although I could have accessed each speaker’s biography, I chose not to before viewing the video. All I knew were the names of the men: Gary Clabaugh and Edward Rozycki, and could not tell who was who.

One assumed that both persons seated at the table would provide equal amounts of dialogue. However, the video was managed and controlled primarily by the man on the right, Gary Clabaugh. The man on the left, Edward Rozycki, spoke much less, only providing feedback, and brief comments related to Clabaugh’s discourse.

Another interesting feature of the video production was the presence of a “fuzzy” area in the center of the table. During the course of dialogue in section 4, Cheating Techniques Part 1, of the presentation, a can of Diet Coke was used as an example for cheating techniques that are common in the classroom. Moving the Diet Coke from one part of the desk to another exemplified the use of non-verbal cues for providing answers to peers in the classroom. When Clabaugh extended his arm to the center of what appeared to be a clear area of the table, his hand “disappeared” momentarily, and reappeared with a Diet Coke. Obviously, after filming the video, this area of the table was erased probably so as not to advertise the Diet Coke logo. Yet, each time, during the entire 12 sections, that Clabaugh extended his arm into the “fuzzy” area of
the table, part of his body disappeared. This video trick of the “disappearing” can, arm, and hand were on the whole disturbing.

One short animated scene was presented in Section 5, Cheating Techniques Part 2, to demonstrate how students include “crib notes” on the back side of the “Snapple” bottle label. This added animated video lasted about 14 seconds and showed how students would cover up the bottle with their hand in order to avoid getting caught cheating. Including the animation added variety to the presentation although its duration could have been shorter and equally effective.

The quality of the sound was generally good although it was not always in sync with the video. This was probably due to the streaming effect, although while viewing other modules in Educational Impact, this lack of synchronization was not as apparent. There was one point in section 7, Strategies to Prevent Cheating, where a loud swishing sound was heard over the audio of Rozycki. This sound lasted about 4 seconds and also diverted the attention. I’m sure that this sound could have been reduced significantly using audio editing software.

Gary Clabaugh, the principle presenter was amenable, spoke with vocal variety, and appeared comfortable. His part of the presentation was interesting and appealing. He smiled often, used complementary body language, and exhibited positive identification with the audience. On the other hand, Edward Rozycki rarely looked at the camera, had considerably less vocal variety, appeared dull, devoid of pleasant facial features, and appeared more uneasy with the presentation. He was generally an “eye sore” in the presentation. The presence of Gary Clabaugh alone would have been more effective and alluring.

Finally, I chose to complete the module and answer the “Assessment Review.” The assessment consisted of 20 multiple choice statements that (one would think) would be related to the presentation. However, this was totally wrong! Topic areas that were never covered in the presentation were given in the assessment. For example, using “transforms” was never brought up in the presentation yet asked in two questions. Other terms such as “deletion and synonym substitution,” “unwarranted embellishment,” “Active Voice-Passive Voice transform,” “de-emphasizing coverage,” “using ONLY’s,” etc. were terms not presented in the dialogue, but asked in the assessment.

In addition, some of the statements included in the assessment were confusing and not well prepared. The wording was difficult to understand, and the options to choose from were also puzzling. The assessment, on the whole, was a total disappointment, and in my opinion requires a complete modification so that it directly correlates with the context of the presentation.

All together, this video is useful for teachers in all curricula from middle school through college. The suggestions provided were useful, applicable, and definitely contribute to reducing cheating and plagiarism in the classroom. In spite of the “disappearing” body parts, out-of-sync audio and video, swishing sounds, poorly prepared assessment, and one unappealing presenter, the video accomplished its objective of demonstrating techniques for combating cheating and plagiarism.