

# EXIT-M (Extending Interactions with Text and Other Media)

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**Abstract:** This paper is an exploration of the notion of EXIT-M (Extending Interactions with Text and Other Media) extrapolated from the work of Lewis and Wray (1997) on reading for meaning making, extended to include multiple media experiences in students' learning at university. It encourages colleagues in online and other media rich environments to avoid 'dumping' resources and to traverse the continuum between surface and deeper learning.

**Key words :** Deeper learning, engagement, multi-media

## INTRODUCTION

"EXIT-M focuses on conversion of students' often surface engagement with highly text-orientated media (as commonly placed within VLEs) to more sophisticated interactions with multimedia, organised to promote and encourage conversion of surface to deeper learning [1].

This paper is an exploration of the notion of EXIT-M (Extending Interactions with Text and Other Media) [2]. The approach has been extrapolated from work of on reading for meaning making [3], to include multiple media experiences that are currently entering students' world of learning at university.

The language of T.S. Elliot's expression in *The Dry Salvages*, though perhaps alluding to complexities of human happiness, provides a cue from which we may address a thorny issue in learning and teaching using media in online environments and offers permission to articulate the wisdom of good teachers of the past in the form of a model for the present.

"We had the experience but missed the meaning, and approach to the meaning restores the experience in a different form....."

Except for interactive, game-like, multimedia environments where interaction is the modus operandi, text and other audio-visual media are recurrently rendered somewhat inert unless enlivened by thoughtful pedagogic design, mediating, connections with learners which involve transactions with media linked to making meaning. Such media frequently include recorded voice, images, video, music, art, artifacts/products/images, text, web pages, articles, book chapters, visiting speaker/expert 'talking heads', government or legal documents, a clinical or other skill demonstration ..... etc. These are increasingly are situated within VLES or in closely linked juxtaposition to social networking environments. 'Web 2.0' environments, some argue, have architectures more akin to more meaningful

(social) engagement with the medium. Success depends on social networking around the medium happening in a way that is desirable and learning-related and can be, to a greater or lesser degree, planned for.

The intention of this paper is to influence a prevailing debate in relation to the placement (dumping) of text and other media in cyberspace environments, typically virtual learning environments (VLEs) and other web page structures with which learners are to 'engage'. Engagement elicits thoughts of how it may be encouraged to be other than a surface, perfunctory activity or one which simply involves moving information from its source to another location without detailed, deeper cognitive processing. Without such, it is proposed that deeper learning experiences [4, 5 and 6] may be more difficult to influence and achieve. In short, it raises the question as to what may we do better with media placed in cyberspace for learners to encourage learning that is more effective, that may be less susceptible to forgetting and that may be, through metacognitive, processing and discursive activities, be enhanced for capture as part of a learners' knowledge and schema repertoire? This is indeed in accord with Wenger's view on the need for robust theorizing and learning design

"Learning cannot be designed; it can only be designed-for; this is - facilitated or frustrated." [7]

## CONCERN AND DEBATE

The concern and debates around conflict in instructional design about the 'dumping of teaching materials' phenomenon still persists in 2013. Surface learning in internet environments has been a concern of mine since teaching in schools and the advent of the internet. It looms large in the following quotation from Heppel [8].

"A lot of these e-learning courses say 'Just got to get the content right. Bang it up in the website. Have a bit of a debate on the page underneath and that's good enough'".

Whilst there may historically have been some strength in the argument that academic staff may make their first foray into a web environment like a VLE by dumping PowerPoint presentations and lecture notes, and that this may be an acceptable first movement into the use of technology to enhance learning, I suggest that it is now becoming somewhat hackneyed and uncharacteristic of high expectations and ethical considerations of the effectiveness of opportunities presented to modern learners.

## **ENCOUNTERING THE EXIT-M (EXTENDING INTERACTION WITH TEXT) CONCEPT: A ‘TRUE APOCRYPHAL STORY’**

I observed a teacher in a primary/elementary school teaching about Roman Centurions – the men who led a hundred men. PCs and internet access and a colour printer were a new arrival and gift from the Local Education Authority to an experimental classroom in Knowsley near Liverpool in the UK. After a very brief introduction, comprising little more than the segue above, the children apparently intuitively embarked on their cyber-search with enthusiasm. After an hour, momentum had diminished and I asked the children to tell me what they had learned about Centurions. Two dominant voices appeared in the group.

“It’s all in there” (meaning it is all in the internet) and,

“It’s all in there” (meaning it was in the pile of copious print-outs of text and pictures they had downloaded).

The teacher and I reflected upon the experience. Her brilliance (which reflected her previous engagement with training in the First Steps approaches to Reading [9] and her knowledge of the EXIT concept [3] led her to articulate the lack of deep engagement of the learners in what had been a relatively surface set of interactions. This was need of extension if learning was to be deeper, more accessible to memory and reporting and less susceptible to forgetting.

She reconvened the group the next day and explained the notion of a ‘job specification’ for the school caretaker and the children suitably engaged in identifying all aspects of this role with the teacher. She then asked them to revisit the printed materials and compile a similar job description for a Centurion, with the aspects of the role in an order of priority, with a record of how they had prioritised each item. She then asked groups to show and tell and explain what they had done and how they had made their decisions. I then, on visiting the school some time later asked the same question as to what they had learned about Centurions. The results, as you may predict, were far more profound and they were knowledgeable and eloquent about the subject indicating that much deeper learning had resulted. I had encountered the phenomenon of EXIT, extending interactions with text in action and began to ponder, much later, as to its relevance to teaching in my university classrooms and online.

### **REFLECTION AND EMERGENCE OF THE NEXT STAGE: EXIT-M (EXTENDING INTERACTIONS WITH TEXT AND OTHER MEDIA**

Since that encounter, EXIT-M has been described and deployed as an intellectual frame to encourage colleagues in online and other media rich environments to go beyond ‘dumping’ resources in cyberspace with naïve notions that students will engage with them in deep end meaningful ways as a function of serendipity. We are all aware of the history of ubiquitous PowerPoint presentations, audio and video files, lecture notes and web links that populate many VLEs and other online environments, which have placed there without sufficient epistemological and pedagogic consideration. This EXIT-M approach has been reported in relation to the activity of the SOLSTICE Centre for Excellence in Teaching and

Learning in The UK [1] and exemplified in the literature by structured learning opportunities linked to Pod Casts to deepen learning [2].

### **TEACHING WELL WITH TECHNOLOGY**

I suggest a grand challenge to teaching well with technology is to extend interaction with media artifacts. This position has a theoretical and practice focus aimed at enhancing opportunities for learning by impacting on:

- schema formation,
- schema re-formation/re-organisation and elicitation of ideas
- memory, and
- internal scaffolding as a product of metacognition and learning through dialogue.

### **TRANSLATION FROM SCHOOL CLASSROOM APPROACHES TO UNIVERSITY AND ONLINE ENVIRONMENTS**

Lewis and Wray [3] contributed traction and trajectory in classroom practices in UK schools by revitalizing a number of approaches, from which I propose we can learn a lot for application in university face to face classrooms and online. These include aspects of DARTS (Directed Activities Related to Texts) [10]. DARTs are activities that encourage learners to engage with text in active ways that assist memorising and extraction of meaning in motivating and fun ways.

Green [11] referred to the potential efficacy of DARTs beyond schools (here deemed related to aspects of the EXIT-M Model) in aiding the transition of students into study in university from school and the deployment of a scholarly pedagogic repertoire.

“The use of techniques such as ..... familiar ‘ways in’ to texts, or the use of exploratory and structuring techniques such as DARTs [10] may also help them (students) make the paradigm shift to university.”

Many of the approaches outlined in EXIT are derived from collation of concepts and approaches to reading for deeper meaning into the 10 item, non-linear, EXIT model related to ‘mental activities’. In brackets, I have added a short translation so as to allude to media in its broadest sense, over and above text forms. The items are:

1. Elicitation of previous knowledge (‘Starting where learners are at’)
2. Establishing purposes (Creating or influencing reasons to engage)
3. Locating information
4. Adopting an appropriate strategy (Providing ways to engage with a medium)
5. Interacting with text (Engaging and processing the experience of a medium)
6. Monitoring understanding (Reflecting, ‘self-talk’ and discussing experiences and interpretations)
7. Making a record (Capturing and interpreting aspects of the experience)

8. Evaluating information (Reasoning and justifying the ‘record’)
9. Assisting memory (By repeat processing of information and ideas and insertion into dialogue)
10. Communicating information (Through discussion of extracts from the experience of a medium)

(Adapted from Lewis and Wray [3])

I have distilled the items above, with some license, into the 4 phase questions below, leaving out item 3 (as the media proxy for text is, in my analysis deemed to be located in an accessible place in cyberspace). The authors stress the non-linearity of the model in that they offer it in numerical stages merely as a matter of convenience. My extrapolation to the 4 ‘phase questions’ below does suggest more linearity in my representation and this is related to intention to impact upon progression in concept development as learning continues through a sequence of events, namely a ‘learning trajectory’ based on deeper processing and communication.

#### *A learning trajectory informed by 4 key ‘phase’ questions*

1. How can we give learners a reason and a way to pay attention to a medium (attention and engagement; transactions)? (cf EXIT Model Items 1,2,4)
2. How can we give learners ways of interacting with a medium (transactions and deeper processing beyond the ephemera of the experience)? (cf EXIT Model Items 4,5,6)
3. How can we get learners to replay their individual processing of the medium (metacognitive, translational and reflective dimensions, stretching ephemera)? (cf EXIT Model Items 6,7,8,9)
4. How can we engage learners in sharing their experience and processing of the medium (social construction and negotiation of meaning and evaluation of the experience to impact on learning that lasts)? (cf EXIT Model Items 7,8,9,10)

The sections below focus on elaboration of the 4 key ‘phase’ questions above and practical translation of these questions in relation to a range of scenarios related to media including text, still and moving images, audio in cyberspace contexts and social networking environments.

#### *Elaboration of a learning trajectory informed by the 4 key ‘phase’ questions*

1. How can we give learners a reason and a way to pay attention to a medium (attention and engagement)?

Enhanced perception can be influenced by providing a variety of sensory media exposures (such as multimedia clips in YouTube etc.) and may impact upon greater match with learning preferences and motivations to encourage an individual to pay attention to the medium in the first place. Improving learners’ attention to the medium by focusing on purposeful introduction/invitation, on learners’ contexts and interests as propellants towards interacting with the medium during selection and design of media, are key precursors to deeper engagement and processing. Relating to and elicitation of previous knowledge is an important dynamic in this phase,

and can impact upon motivation by creating a motivational ‘need’, see [12] to engage and seek solutions to problems.

Let us illustrate this principle with an example from practice. Cancer nurse trainees in early professional development listening to audio files/podcasts of patients in conversation about their disease with experienced practitioners. Students are asked to capture personal responses whilst listening in the form of a running record as a prelude to peer discussion theoretical inputs on affective domains, self- management and communication skills. This commonly elicits affective responses, and high levels of motivation to engage, precipitates greater commitment in class and deeper learning in the practice training and development setting. The students are motivated by the authenticity of the medicine and its juxtaposition with teaching.

2. How can we give learners ways of interacting with a medium (deeper processing beyond the ephemera of the experience)?

This element includes planning for learners to make transactions with the medium i.e. mediation via task and activity, which encourage conscious, active processing of information during interaction with the medium by giving learner’s something to do and capture during the experience. This encourages processing, deeper engagement and sense-making, which impacts upon existing schema and elicitation of affective, creative and aesthetic responses.

Practice Examples include students relating to and with the medium as follows:

On interaction with the medium students are directed to undertake tasks such as the ones below (usually as a prelude to discussion in the group/subgroup/pairs):

For any text or audio/visual medium

- Precise the 5 main ideas and say why you selected them
  - Summarise the 6 most important facts and say why you selected them
  - Raise 3 questions, 3 observations and any concerns
  - Design 10 questions that would help a someone to gain from interacting with this medium e.g. a journal article
  - What are the key implications of this (experience from the medium) for practice/future action
  - Record three things that resonate with you
- With text,
- As a group, interact with a word document using the ‘comments’ tool. Produce a final version with questions/challenges at points in the text that will show your understandings and help others to engage with it
  - Read a word document (seeded with tutor’s questions/challenges inserted via the comments tool). Discuss the responses in groups.

3. How can we get learners to replay their individual processing of the medium (metacognitive, translational and reflective dimensions, stretching ephemera)?

Deepened engagement and learning is proposed by furthering interaction with the medium, through translation tasks such as changing an audio-visual form to a text or diagrammatic form, writing a precise, or constructing a related ‘elevator conversation.’ The scope in design of such extended interaction is huge for creative teachers. The

artifacts from activity examples in 2 above also serve as the ‘report’ which captures the experience which can then be further analysed and made sense of in discussion forums, social networking sites like Twitter, in Web Logs etc. (see 4 below). Deeper processing should prevail, going beyond shifting information from one place to another and involving conversion of the experience of the media in some way. This deepens personal engagement and also provides an artifact for sharing in dialogue with others who may have engaged similarly but the differences and debate surrounding their ‘process to product journey’ can indeed further enrich individual and mutual learning.

“It is not enough to concentrate on the content of the learning material. As much attention must be focused on building up a community of active learners who support each other via email conversations, debates and brainstorming” [8].

4. How can we engage learners in sharing their experience and processing of the medium (social construction and negotiation of meaning and evaluation of the experience to impact on learning that lasts)?

The processes in 2 (interactions) and artifacts from 3 above can then act as a feed into further extension of interaction and deeper processing through discussion e.g. involving use of online, synchronous and asynchronous discussion, voice technologies within a VLE, Twitter, Web-logging, Skype or Sight Speed communal calls and engagement in other social networking environments. Through further activities directions to engage with the types of outcomes from phase 3, focused on metacognitive dialogues and reflection, the ‘final’ stage in this model ensues.

## CONCLUSION

Design for engagement so as to impact upon deeper learning from media is conceptualised here in the EXIT-M model. The model may serve to describe what many good designers and teachers do already and may perhaps stimulate others to do things better and to do better things with text and audio visual media objects online, if they are to achieve any true status as ‘learning objects’. EXIT-M provides, at least in part, a frame for notions of ‘pedagogic meta-tagging’ of artifacts, so they may be used in creative and productive ways when adopted for reuse.

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