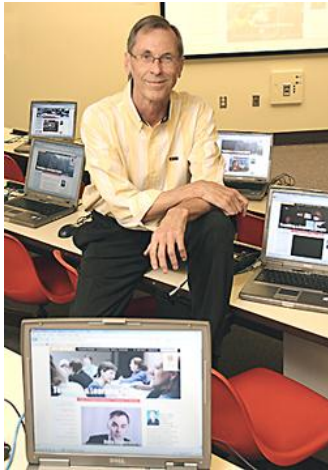


Garrison & Shale- Transactional Learning



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<http://www.ucalgary.ca/news/utoday/october9-09/garrison>

In the first issue of *The American Journal of Distance Education* in 1987, D.R. Garrison and D. Shale took it upon themselves to analyze and argue the comprehensive definition of distance education as defined by Keegan. They believed the definition by Keegan was too bound to the practices of the past, and did not require or allow enough teacher-student interaction ([Keegan](#)). They believed that communication between teacher and student was "necessary" so they created "the essential criteria" for characterizing distance education ([Garrison and Shale, 1990](#)). This was called: The Theory of Transactional Learning.

The Theory of Transactional Learning by Garrison and Shale (1990) was developed after the Industrial Model of Education. Prior to this new theory, the main objective of distance education was to produce high quality materials to teach the masses in a variety of locations ([Gunawardena and Mc Isaac](#)). Transactional Learning shifted the focus from the distance between student and teacher to emphasize the importance of two-way communication between the student and the teacher. Transactional Learning was intended to replace the concept of self-study ([Garrison](#)) to one with active learning by completing authentic tasks ([Kobe](#)). Whereas the Industrial Model emphasized geography, Transactional Learning shifted the educational issue to communication ([Gunawardena and Mc Isaac](#)).

In terms of distance learning design, Transactional Learning requires the teacher and student to have access to communication technology which they can use to sustain communication anytime and anywhere ([Gunawardena and Mc Isaac](#)). When

designing a course, it would be imperative to use technological tools such as email, Skype or Blackboard Collaborate to insure that there could be continuous and authentic discussion between the learner and the instructor. The goal of two-way communication of Transactional Learning is to reduce the isolation of the online learner by being in an ongoing discussion with the instructor.

Following the arrival of the Theory of Transactional Learning, there have been significant changes in how distance education is conducted. There is a plethora of observable change that has occurred with the use of technology support two-way communication and for it to occur noncontiguously. We see this practiced today in our own classes. At OLTD we span across two separate provinces but the feeling of a brick and mortar classroom has been created through these technological advances. We are connected without actually being in the same place thus are non-contiguous. The technology has also allowed for students interaction with group work. This allows us to collaborate and learn from each other rather than only learning from our professor. Garrison and Shale also pushed for two-way communication among the teacher and student to facilitate and support the educational processes ([Garrison and Shale, 1990](#)). This task was difficult to do in the past with paper correspondence but is widely used now that we have the platforms to support it such as telephone, fax, email, internet, Blackboard Collaborate, and many others.

Thanks to the contributions of Garrison and Shale, newer students and teachers in online learning can find comfort in the availability of two-way communication and even comfort in seeing a caring professor looking back at them. The connection and the personal touches that happens daily in the face to face setting of the brick and mortar are missed as we type and click on the computer but the two-way communication is a key to successful teaching practice, regardless of the geographical location of the learner.

<http://www.ijede.ca/index.php/jde/article/viewFile/538/724>

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<http://www.slideshare.net/paulmaharg/kobe-session-1-transactional-learning-theory-practice>

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