

Glossary

AI: Artificial intelligence: A wide variety of computational methods that resemble thought processes in living organisms.

AJAX: Asynchronous JavaScript and XML: The main technological approach underlying Web 2, enabling Web applications to perform and behave like more traditional desktop applications.

Asynchronous discussion: Discussion that occurs discontinuously over a (typically) prolonged period

Aware-ware: Software that provides an indication of the presence of others, often used to provide a form of social navigation.

Behaviourism: A way of viewing education and learning as a set of stimuli and measurable responses, exhibiting the desired behaviour. A popular and effective approach to some forms of training, but much maligned as a form of education in higher learning.

Blog (or Weblog): Online journal or diary. Usually provides some means of annotation or comment. Often uses a system known as Trackbacks, a kind of two-way link between a posting on one blog and a posting on another. Typically may be subscribed

to and or combined with other blog postings using an RSS reader or aggregator.

Blogosphere: The space inhabited by the blogging community, a universe of sites which are parcellated, yet linked together by small isthmuses of connections.

Blogroll: List of links in one blog to others that are linked or related.

CMS: Course management system: An LMS with a focus on institutional higher learning.

Collaborative filter: Also known as a recommender system. A piece of software that makes use of the opinions of others to recommend resources. Automated collaborative filters are a sub-variety that match similar patterns of preference in different users to achieve a closer match to needs.

Complicity: Complex behaviour arising from simple rules (e.g., the weather or the formation of traffic jams).

Constructivism: A group of theories that are based on the principle that knowledge is not simply transferred but actively constructed and thus depends upon previous knowledge, context, intention, and so on. Social constructivism suggests that this is an inherently social process and is best accomplished in dialogue with others.

ELF: E-learning framework: A service-based framework based on the widely Web services technologies, allowing the construction of very rich and varied LMS systems using multiple technologies.

Evolution: The process of natural selection, whereby reproduction with variation combined with competition for a limited resource, results in ever increasing complexity and suitability to the environment.

Exaption: In evolutionary terms, a side effect of other changes that may become an adaptation if the conditions are suitable.

Flash: A proprietary format owned by Macromedia for displaying interactive multimedia content on a Web page.

Google bombing: An example of how social software can be manipulated. Involves intentional clubbing together of many sites to push a particular site to the top of a Google search, using a given search term. Often used for political ends.

History-rich: A form of social navigation that reveals the history of the browsing of others (usually through some form of annotation).

IEEE-LOM: A standard for learning objects.

IM: Instant messenger, a class of application that remains resident on your computer at all times, so that you can instantly contact and be contacted by others. Normally text-based, but some provide audio and video chat as well.

IMS: Used to stand for instructional metadata standard but now just stands for IMS.

Instructivism: A (frequently pejorative) term used to describe approaches to teaching that are teacher-led and deal with knowledge transmission rather than knowledge construction

IRC: Internet relay chat, a real-time text communication protocol that involves visiting an IRC server to meet and interact with others.

IRC: Internet relay chat, a venerable protocol used for asynchronous text chat over the Internet.

Java™: A programming language owned and created by Sun that allows programs to be run on many different computer platforms, including Windows®, Macintosh®, and Linux® operating systems, as well as mobile phones and servers. Object-oriented, complex but powerful.

LMS: Learning management system: A VLE that includes management functionality.

Mashup: A term derived from the music industry, used here to describe intentional combinations of two or more Internet-based systems using technologies such as Web services and RSS. A common feature of Web 2.0 applications.

MLE: Managed learning environment: The UK's preferred name for an LMS.

MOO: MUD – object-oriented: A more sophisticated form of MUD that allows participants to create the text-based environment themselves, including objects that may possess (sometimes) very rich behaviours, making them perhaps the most sophisticated integrated learning environments available today. Widely used in education before the advent of the Web; they are highly evolved systems. Nowadays, often used with a Web interface to make them a little friendlier, they are nonetheless complex environments, which usually take some time to learn to use.

MUD: Multi-user dungeon: A form of text-based virtual reality originally designed for mainframe computers in the early 1970s, typically enabling both synchronous and asynchronous communication, and employing a spatial metaphor for moving around the environment.

OKI: Open Knowledge Initiative: A project started by MIT that defines a standard LMS architecture, allowing disparate LMS systems and their components to work together. Mainly Java-based, but can be used with PHP as a result of the Harmoni project.

Parcellation: A central feature of evolutionary and other self-organising systems—separation of one part of an environment from its surroundings.

PLE: Personal learning environment: Typically an amalgam or mashup of tools and applications.

Podcast: Audio, usually provided using MP3 technology, presented via an RSS feed.

RDF: Resource description framework: The XML-based standard underpinning the Semantic Web.

RLO: Reusable learning object

RSS: Various can stand for really simple syndication, RDF site summary or rich site summary. A means of exchanging lists of information widely used by numerous forms of social software, including blogs and CoFIND.

SCORM: Shareable content object reuse model: A standard primarily used to enable content to be transferred between one LMS and another.

Semantic Web: An initiative intended to describe resources in a manner that allows machines to make intelligent decisions about how they relate to each other and how they may be used.

Sematectonic: A form of stigmergy in which the sign and the change to the environment are the same thing.

Simplexity: Simple behaviour resulting from complex interactions (e.g., the regular rhythm of the heartbeat).

Social navigation: Making use of the behaviour of others within a networked environment to influence the behaviour of others, through changes in the interface. Inherently stigmergic (see Stigmergy).

Social software: Software that treats the group as a first class object within the system.

Stigmergy: A process of communication through signs left in the environment. In sematectonic stigmergy, the signs and changes to the environment are the same thing, while in sign-based stigmergy the signs left in the environment are separate from the behaviour they engender.

Synchronous discussion: Discussion that occurs in real-time (or thereabouts).

Threaded discussion forum: A discussion where messages are posted to a central server and displayed according to replies and responses.

Transactional control: The control exercised or capable of being exercised by an individual in a learning transaction at the point at which a learning trajectory changes direction.

Transactional distance: Michael G. Moore's theory that sees distance in an educational transaction as a pedagogic, not a physical phenomenon. Concerns three

dimensions that may be used to describe any educational transaction: dialogue and structure (control and sequencing by the teacher) which are inversely related, and learner autonomy, which is not.

VLE: Virtual learning environment: An environment intended to support learning, typically combining tools for communication, presentation, assessment, and so on.

VoIP: Voice over IP: Use of the Internet to provide telephony.

VR: Virtual reality: An attempt to represent a user within a three dimensional environment that mimics reality.

Wear-ware: Software that changes simply as a result of being used. Often used in social navigation.

Web 2.0: A popular term which means little, but is generally used to describe the richly interactive environments enabled by approaches such as AJAX.

Web services: An assortment of XML-based standards that allow compliant applications to exchange messages and to interoperate.

WebMeeting: A real-time interaction with others through Web-based systems that typically provide video, audio, slide presentation, text chat, real-time polling and other classroom- or meeting-like features.

Wiki (Wiki Wiki Web) Web: Pages that anyone and everyone can edit freely, quickly and easily (from “Wiki Wiki,” Hawaiian for “quickly”).

XML: Extensible Markup Language, a very flexible language for defining other languages, used for very many other standards such as Web services, RDF, IEEE-LOM, and RSS.

ZPD: Zone of proximal development: Vygotskian concept, loosely speaking the current scope for learning something new beyond which it gets too confusing or difficult.