PENCIL AND PAPER, KEYBOARD AND SCREEN: EXPLORING BLENDED LEARNING IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM

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Writing Course

• Goal: Examine ways selfies alter the way we see ourselves, present ourselves, and curate our identity on: Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, Vine, Pinterest, Yik Yak, Tinder, Hinge, (F)Instagram, and Tumblr

• A variety of traditional and non-traditional literature

• 2 times a week for 70 min each

• Both classes had 15 students, all first-years
Assessment goals

• To understand distinctions in writing improvement between students who wrote by hand in a notebook and those who wrote in a blog.
Research Process

Step 1: Both sections wrote a paragraph defining “selfie” at the beginning of the semester.

Step 2: Both sections wrote a paragraph defining “selfie” at the end of the semester.

Step 3: Both classes hand wrote definitions.

Step 4: Both classes had a 10 minute time limit, in class, to write a paragraph.
Analysis Process

- Word count difference between pre and post entries
- Comprehensibility improvement
- Topic development improvement
- Writing structure improvement
- Grammar errors
- Word cloud comparisons
Word Count Results

• Notebook class:
  |Mean change in word count| = 70.42 words
  Standard deviation = 52.13 words

• Blog class:
  |Mean change in word count| = 38.2 words
  Standard deviation = 33.52 words
Comprehensibility Improvement Results

• Notebook class:
  Mean comprehensibility change= 0.5
  Standard deviation= 0.65
• Blog class:
  Mean comprehensibility change= 0.13
  Standard deviation=0.91
Topic Development Results

- Notebook class:
  Mean topic improvement = 1.43
  Standard deviation = 0.76
- Blog class:
  Mean topic improvement = 1.53
  Standard deviation = 0.74
• The class that wrote in blogs had a higher topic improvement

• The mean topic improvements in both classes were similar and thus not significant ($p=0.69$)

• Students who wrote online tended to echo each other’s thoughts and to mention identical literary references

• Students who wrote in notebooks had a greater variety of individual topics.
Assessment Rubric Results

**Sentence Structure**

The differences in pre and post evaluations between the sections were not significant (p=0.36, p=0.86 respectively)

**Word choice**

The differences between sections in pre and post evaluations were not significant (p= 0.83, p=1.0 respectively)

**Transitions**

The differences in pre and post evaluations were not significant between sections (p= 0.81, p= 0.6 respectively)
Results

• **Grammar errors**
  - No correlation between grammar errors in the first entry to grammar errors in the second writing sample.
  - Students did not make the same mistakes in their pre and post written definitions of selfies.

• **Word Cloud Analysis**
  - No great differences in word choices for either group.
Recommendations and Remaining Questions

• Balance online activities with “paper/pencil” writing practice
• Help students understand goals and benefits of using blended learning
• Develop different skills from writing by hand vs blogging
• How to examine different ideas produced by writing publicly and privately?
• How can the impact of blended learning on student learning in writing courses be assessed quantitatively?