

Memoir Writing Instruction in an Asynchronous Format: A Design and Development Research Project

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Abstract: The overarching goal of this design and development research project was to design and develop an asynchronous online lesson in Memoir writing which provided learners with foundational skills required to successfully write an effective memoir. The course was designed in accordance with Bonk and Zhan's R2D2 model (2006) due to its student-centered nature and support of collaborative and reflective properties.

The universal methods and situational principles of the experiential approach to instruction best suited the course and its goals. Based on the task analysis, the course required not only the use of examples, but also constant and reflective involvement on the part of the students as they systematically traversed the course. Formative evaluation of the course was conducted through one-on-one observation and interviews, as well as a small group evaluation.

Keywords: memoir writing, writing asynchronously online, design and development

Introduction

Writing is considered one of the most important skills that students are expected to master for professional as well as academic success. In American society, the majority of employers now consider writing proficiency to be an essential skill that is becoming ever more critical as the information-based economy continues to expand. Managerial and professional careers have always required some amount of writing, but that requirement now extends to technical, clerical, and support positions as well; however, very few students have the level of writing proficiency that their future jobs demand (National Commission on Writing, 2004). The Common Core State Standards for K-12 Language Arts instruction, developed by the National Governors Association for Best Practices and adopted by forty four states as of this writing, places a large importance on writing skills acquisition. However, end-of-grade standardized state testing assesses learners through multiple-choice and short answer strategies, which does not provide for an authentic measurement of the development of writing skills.

The focus on standardized testing has led to decreased instructional time on writing skills in general, but more so for narrative writing. High school teachers simply do not have the time required to leave adequate feedback on lengthy student papers due to multiple overcrowded courses. Writing instruction has fallen by the wayside because schools are too caught up in boosting scores in skills that are tested on statewide exams. The result is that only 24% of high school seniors currently score proficient or better on writing exams, a monumental decline since 1990, when 52% scored proficient or better (BrainTrack, 2012). These facts are compounded with high rates of student absenteeism, student apathy towards writing instruction, and an overall deficiency in writing skills at the high school level which leads to an increasing number of students entering college and the workforce with below average writing ability.

Research conducted in higher education has determined that even the most advanced writing skills can be taught in online environments. Christine Edwards-Groves (2012) concluded, in her study, that an online

learning environment which promotes social interactions can result in improvements in the writing process itself, as well as in the final textual product. Online courses offered for credit recovery and homebound high school students have seen mostly positive results regardless of instructional approaches taken, as long as there is parental support (National Education Association, 2006). Due to the lack of time required to teach memoir writing skills and the fact that it is not an assessable component on standardized state tests, an asynchronous course on memoir writing could be beneficial for high school students. In this project we analyzed, designed, developed, implemented, and evaluated a memoir writing unit in an asynchronous online writing environment with a focus on collaborative and reflective strategies for a 10th grade English course.

Memoir Writing Instruction in an Online Environment

A gap exists in the research concerning asynchronous learning environments and the acquisition of memoir writing skills. The memoir, as a form of writing, is a first-person narrative piece of writing that tells the story of a significant moment in the writer's life. The moment can center on a person, event, or object that is important from a reflective standpoint. Instruction in crafting a memoir is significant because it contains many elements of a story such as setting, sensory details, and dialogue. Additionally, it allows for instructors to gauge student aptitude in idea development, organization, word choice, sentence fluency, and voice. In the asynchronous environment however, "how students learn to write in on-line classrooms, as in other classrooms, is wed to what students write to show that they are learning" (Speck, 2002, p. 16).

The explosion of social media and shared knowledge in the 21st century has resulted in the daily publishing of short snippets of people's lives (Piotrowski, 2015; Livingstone & Brake, 2010). Adolescents especially use technology for creative and collaborative communication. This usage is tied to socialization and the need to obtain feedback from others, including adults (Sweeney, 2010). Socially, students engage in creative writing at an increasing rate through various blogs, online journals, Facebook and Twitter. These digital technologies are fundamentally shifting learning by providing informal outlets for writing practice and development. A learning environment, such as an asynchronous online course that promotes interactions such as those previously mentioned, results in both improvement in the writing process and the textual evidence delivered (Edwards- Groves, 2012). However, online learning is not natural for beginning writers due to the high demands. This is especially true for learners who are weak readers and writers. Online learning assumes a sense of independence, self-confidence, and

time management that is an ongoing struggle for developing learners even in traditional classrooms (Stine, 2010). Consequently, writing is an integral component to learning. "One cannot be educated and yet unable to communicate one's ideas in written form. But, learning to write can occur only through a process of cultivation requiring intellectual discipline" (Paul & Elder, 2005, p. 40). This cultivation must be a shared responsibility. Though self-critique and reflection are important to the writing process, so is peer review and feedback, because self-critique and review is typically uncritical and is interspersed with prejudices, biases, and stereotypes (Paul & Elder, 2005).

Writing is often seen as a personal and isolated act (especially for the memoir), but the process itself is less isolating when learners participate in writing communities. For writers in an asynchronous environment, users can collaborate and broaden their experiences while taking responsibility for finding answers to their own learning needs (Sweeney, 2010). Sweeney (2010) concluded that when students share their writing online, the audience transforms from the teacher to a larger social community. This act in effect changes the dynamic of writing from something that is done for a grade to a social context where form, style, and awareness of an audience take on increased importance. Additionally, students become mentors to their peers through sharing (Sweeney, 2010).

Researchers found that students' prior knowledge, attitudes, and learning styles contributed to learner success in an online writing course (Mehlenbacher, Miller, Covington, & Larsen, 2000). They also noted that reflective learners performed significantly better than active sequential learners in asynchronous learning environments. The reflective learners take the time to pause and reflect whereas the sequential active learners keep progressing to the next section without taking the opportunity to reflect. In the same study, it was discovered that web-based learning environments may facilitate performance among female students, because female students feel less socially inhibited or excluded and tend to contribute more to the discussions of the instructional content and writing assignments, as well as experiences.

Writing instruction yields a student-centered classroom, where the instructor serves as a coach and the students actively engage each other. Effective writing instruction perpetuates the interaction between written communication and spoken and visual discourse, while emphasizing the community-building, social nature of communication (Mehlenbacher et al., 2000). In a constructivist based asynchronous learning environment, writing instruction can flourish, because, as one researcher noted, "the teaching of writing is founded on the assumption that students learn well by reading and

writing with each other, responding to each other's drafts, negotiating revisions, discussing ideas, sharing perspectives, and finding some level of trust as collaborators in their mutual development" (Anson, 1999, p. 269).

A systematic instructional design approach including analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation, was followed in this project. In the next section, we discuss the analysis section of the project.

Front End Analysis

Front-end analysis was completed, inclusive of a performance analysis, learner analysis, needs analysis, gap analysis, and technology analysis prior to any formidable development. These analyses were conducted with the assistance of the client over the course of a two-week period. Much of the data reviewed were previously administered by the client, school, or district.

The Client

The client was a 10th Grade English Course teacher, a thirteen year National Board Certified English teacher who holds a Master's degree in Secondary Education English and who has taught all sections and levels of high school English coursework with the exception of ninth grade coursework. The course was one semester long and is taught on a block schedule (90 minute duration). Specifically, tenth grade English coursework focuses on development of writing skills and focuses on writing in a wide variety of formats such as compare/contrast, analysis, argumentative, and storytelling. Grammar and punctuation skills are refined through writing. Students in tenth grade English begin to analyze literature pieces in depth where comprehension and critical thinking are emphasized.

Performance Analysis

The purpose of the performance analysis was to determine if the instructional problem could be solved through instruction (Rossett, 2009) in an asynchronous online environment. This County Schools adopted Common Core Standards K-12 in June of 2010. There are eleven standards that apply to the crafting of a memoir. However, there are a total of thirty two standards that apply to tenth grade English students, the bulk of which appear in state testing; narrative writing skills are not assessed in standardized state tests. With instructor focus being on assessable material, there is little time devoted to the development of narrative writing skills. Additionally, high rates of student absenteeism, student apathy toward writing development, and a lack in uniform delivery of narrative writing instruction result in a high percentage of rising eleventh graders performing at below acceptable levels in terms of narrative writing.

A review of the school's 2010, 2011, and 2012 end of grade writing scores, learner profiles, instructor surveys, and a previously administered writing profile

revealed that almost fifty percent of the client's tenth grade English have below average writing skills. They lack in many areas, but especially in elaboration, idea development, and grammar. Additionally, the data revealed that grades related to writing assignments suffer, with almost sixty five percent of the students receiving average scores or below. The client desired that one hundred percent of the students demonstrate average and above abilities with regards to writing. The data collected revealed that the above instructional problem could be solved through the delivery of a memoir writing related content via an asynchronous online environment that focused on learner collaboration and reflection.

Learner Analysis

A learner analysis was conducted with 48 tenth-grade English students. Data was collected through the distribution of a learner profile for writing, a previously administered writing profile, client interview, and teacher observations. While this group of students was representative of the target audience, their overall below-average writing abilities as a group are higher than students in most tenth grade English classrooms. Table 1 below provides the learner profile.

Needs Assessment

A needs assessment identifies deficiencies that are directly related to the instructional problem (Rossett, 2009; Lee & Owens, 2004). The needs assessment was conducted through client interview, learner profiles, teacher surveys, previously administered writing profile and teacher observations that resulted in both quantitative and qualitative data (see Tables 1 and 2). Table 2 below summarizes the needs assessment. Actual performance is juxtaposed against the optimal performance in an effort to understand the underlying gap(s). The identified gaps are then translated into needs that guide instructional strategy selection, objectives setting, and resource selection, and delivery method selection.

Technology Analysis

The high school has 4 computer labs, each containing 30 desktop computer stations. The computers are HP Compaq dc 5000 or 7600 models with 2 GB of RAM. These computers are all hardwired to the school's Novell network and run Windows XP Professional operating systems. XP as an operating system is still in use. All lab computers are connected to the lab specific printer and are connected through the network and run Sophos Anti-Virus/Malware protection. Furthermore, each lab computer is equipped with Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2007, Adobe Acrobat, Reader, and Shockwave Flash, Apple iTunes and QuickTime, as well as a multitude of course specific software such as Design Science, MimioStudio, and Inspiration. Teach-

Table 1. *Learner Profile*

Information Categories	Learner Characteristics	Data Sources
Age	100% of students age 17 or younger 3 are 17 years of age 13 are 16 years of age 28 are 15 years of age	Learner Profile for Writing
Gender	58% are Male 42% are Female	Learner Profile for Writing
Reading Levels	20% of students demonstrate above grade level reading ability 35% of students demonstrate grade level reading ability 45% of students demonstrate below grade level reading ability	Teacher observations Client Interview
Writing levels	21% of students demonstrate above average writing skills 29% of students demonstrate average writing skills 50% of students demonstrate below average writing skills	Learner Profile for Writing Client interview Previously administered writing profile Teacher observation
Entry Skills	All students can write a topic sentence 76% of students know techniques required for effective writing 72% can identify all parts of speech 76% do not know information that should be included in an introduction 68% do not know difference between revising and proofreading 46% have above average grammar skills 62% have average to above average vocabulary skills	Learner Profile for Writing Client Interview Teacher Surveys Previously administered writing profile

ers and students all have email addresses through Gmail specific to the County Schools. In addition to the computer labs, the school has 4 mobile labs that house 10-15 laptops (mix of Dell Netbooks and Lenovo Think-Pads), running the same operating system and software that the desktop models do. Students used one of the four computer labs to participate in the Moodle module and also accessed the module from their homes.

Goal Analysis

The results of the performance and needs analysis dictated an overall instructional goal that falls within the intellectual skills domain, specifically problem-solving. It was determined that learners lacked and required a strategic approach to solving a writing based problem due to a lack of skills, foundational knowledge, and apathy. The instructional goal was identified as, “Students will successfully employ the memoir narrative writing process to create a well-organized memoir that incorporates figurative language, elaboration, and correct grammar with average to above proficiency”. It was further determined that the overall instructional goal needed to be broken down into four sub-goals dur-

ing the task analysis phase (see Figure 1).

Task Analysis

Task Analysis defines the content required to solve the performance problem (Morrison, Ross, Kemp, & Kalman 2010). A task analysis was conducted and a task analysis flowchart was drawn. See Figure 1.

Design

Upon conclusion of the task analysis, we moved on to the design phase where the terminal objectives, assessment were designed. The four terminal objectives identified during task analysis were comprised of nine related sub skills. The course addressed all of the sub- skills identified within the context of attainment of the terminal objectives and the overall instructional goal. A course design framework was identified and used in the design process.

Terminal Objectives

Terminal objectives were identified from the task analysis. Table 3 below lists the terminal objectives and the learning domains.

Table 2. Needs Assessment

Actual Performance	Analysis of the data collected revealed that student writing skills across all writing formats are below average at best. Traditionally, half of all tenth grade English students demonstrate average to below average writing skills. Students lack the ability to fully develop ideas, elaborate using figurative language, exercise correct grammar usage in their writing, and organize their writing into a coherent narrative. Additionally, students traditionally fare worse with the memoir because it does not require a specific format or structure. Furthermore, due to the constraints of time, instructional time on memoir writing tends to be abrupt. Student writing skills also suffer from high rates of student absenteeism and poor efforts and attitudes towards writing.
Optimal Performance	It is desired that all students will demonstrate average and above writing skills by demonstrating the ability to fully develop their ideas, elaborate on those ideas using figurative language, exercise correct grammar, and organize their writing into a coherent narrative. Students will become familiar with the memoir and its lack of format and structure
Needs	Students need introduction to the memoir Students need foundational knowledge and practice in the use of figurative language Students need instruction and practice in elaboration in their writing Students need practice in the narrative writing process Students need review of and practice using correct grammar
Solution	An Asynchronous Online Environment was chosen to deliver instructional content for memoir writing that focuses on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing students to the memoir and its purpose • Providing students foundational knowledge and practice in the use of figurative language • Providing students instruction and practice for incorporating elaboration in their writing • Providing students instruction and guided practice in the narrative writing process • Reviewing standard rules of grammar • Providing students opportunities for student collaboration and communal, as well as individual reflection on memoir writing related tasks

Table 3. Terminal Objectives and Domains

Terminal Objectives	Domain	Category
1.0 Apply memoir writing process techniques	Intellectual	Procedures
2.0 Apply use of figurative language in writing	Intellectual	Procedures
3.0 Demonstrate incorporating use of elaboration in a written work	Intellectual	Procedures
4.0 Demonstrate proper grammar use in writing	Intellectual	Rules

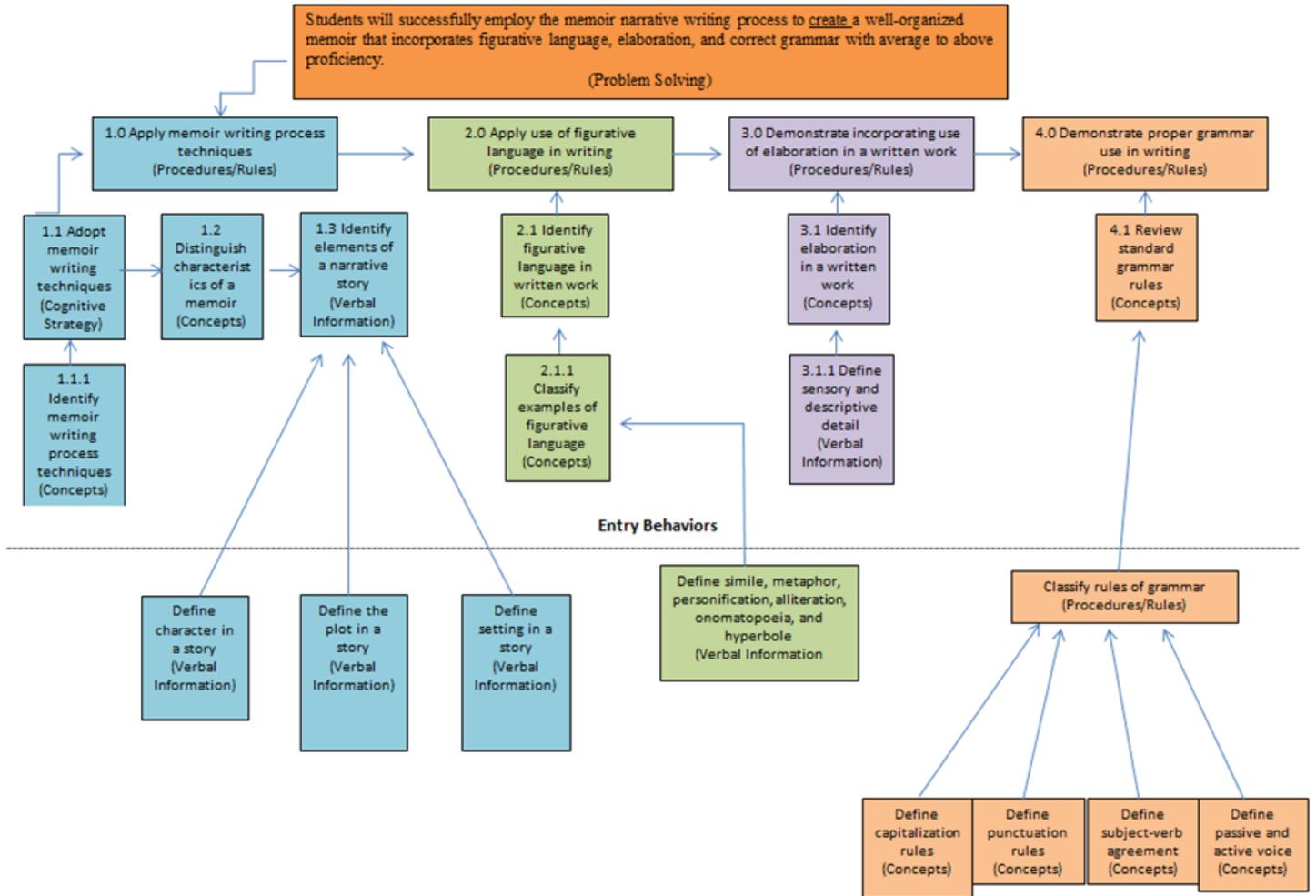


Figure 1. Task Analysis

Objectives and Assessments

Once the objectives were identified, aligned assessments were designed. Table 4 includes a sample of the Performance Objectives and Assessments.

Table 4. *Objectives and Assessment Sample Items*

Instructional Goal	Performance Objective	Assessment Item
<p>Students will successfully employ the memoir narrative writing process to <u>create</u> a well-organized memoir that incorporates figurative language, elaboration, and correct grammar with average to above proficiency. (Problem Solving)</p>	<p>When tasked to write a memoir, the learner will employ the memoir narrative writing process to <u>create</u> a well-organized memoir that incorporates figurative language, elaboration, and correct grammar with average to above proficiency. The solution should be supported by how the strategies are used in solving it. No instructional support will be provided</p>	<p>Directions: Choose one of the completed lines from the Memoirs from Life or A Memory Exercise and create a well-organized memoir that incorporates figurative language, elaboration, and correct grammar. (Note: This will be demonstrated with the final draft submission)</p>
<p>Terminal Objective 1</p>	<p>Performance Objective</p>	<p>Assessment Items</p>
<p>1.0 Apply memoir writing process techniques (Procedures/Rules)</p>	<p>When tasked to write a memoir, the learner will apply the memoir writing process techniques of Brainstorm, Draft, Review, Revise, Polish, and Publish with average and above proficiency</p>	<p>Brainstorm Directions: complete the following writing prompts to get you started thinking of a good topic for your memoir.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> One of the happiest times in my life was... <input type="checkbox"/> One of the saddest times in my life was... <input type="checkbox"/> I came to the important realization that... <input type="checkbox"/> I realized that I was no longer a child when... <input type="checkbox"/> The best birthday present I ever received was... <input type="checkbox"/> My favorite holiday is...because... <input type="checkbox"/> My favorite place is... <input type="checkbox"/> When I was little, I used to... <input type="checkbox"/> I was proud of myself for... <input type="checkbox"/> I was ashamed of myself for... <p>Draft Directions: Choosing from one of the completed lines from Memoirs from Life exercise (a truth in step 1) complete the steps outlined in A Memory Exercise. Post your paragraphs from steps 1 and 2 to the discussion forum Memory exercise. After you post read 2 of your peers post and a) identify which of their memories is real and which is made up b) identify which of the two memories was most compelling and why. Use what you have learned from this exercise and begin drafting your memoir</p> <p>Step 1: Write a detailed description of a real memory. Convince your reader that it really happened.</p> <p>Step 2: Write a detailed description of a constructed memory, something that never happened to you. Convince your reader that it really happened.</p> <p>Review Directions: Submit your completed memoir draft through TurnItIn account. TurnItIn will assign 2 of your peers drafts for you to review. Using the rubric as your guide, grade your peer's memoir. Be sure to Point out the lines you find to be striking or original and the sections that just</p>

Course Design Model

The application of the R2D2 model provided a framework for the development of a constructivist asynchronous environment that supported collaborative and reflective learning experiences. With regards to how the course was to be structured within the Moodle LMS, the R2D2 model was deemed appropriate (see Table 5) as it fit with the proposed design framework:

- Student-centered,
- Collaborative in nature,
- Framework for student pacing,
- Format, expectations, and instructions should be clear and concise,
- Foster skills necessary for success in the 21st century,
- Incorporate best practices for online learning, and
- Accounts for different learning styles (National Education Association, 2006)

Bonk and Zhang described their model as cyclical and consisting of four phases, and when employed correctly, “content delivered from this perspective should be more enriching for learners” (Bonk & Zhang, 2006, p. 249). They further explained that the model

does not specifically address the design and development process but instead places emphasis on types of tasks, resources, and activities that an instructor may want to include in an online course to address different learning styles and skill target areas. The model addresses the shift from teacher centered to learner centered learning, accounts for various student learning styles and experiences, and places heavy emphasis on reflection through writing and writing related activities. This framework allows educators to design courses with greater interactive, collaborative, and reflective properties in an effort to motivate learners and promote effective learning (Bonk & Zhang, 2006). Since the course was asynchronous and student centered, the model was employed to capitalize on the collaborative and reflective properties inherent within the course seen in discussion forums and peer reviews.

The Instructional Approach

The communicative affordances of asynchronous learning provide new ways to adopt a social constructivist approach to teaching and learning (Duffy & Jonassen, 2013; Jonassen, 1999). It is this type of environment where discussion, social interaction, collaboration, peer feedback, and group projects can be adopted as teaching and learning strategies to provide the learner with every opportunity for success (Keppell, Au, Ma, &

Table 5. R2D2 Model Applied

Application Phase	Description	Project Application
<i>Read</i>	Aimed at auditory and verbal learners, primarily relates to methods to help learners acquire knowledge through online readings, virtual explorations, and collaborative activities.	Reading excerpts of published memoirs, poetry memoirs, and student examples. Completing activities related to readings and partici-
<i>Reflect</i>	Aimed at reflective and observational learners and focuses on reflective activities such as online blogs, reflective writing tasks such as peer reviews and discussions, and self-monitoring of learning This stage deliberately emphasizes reflective processes through	Through discussion forums, self-reflection during writing process, and peer review activities
<i>Display</i>	Focuses on the visual learner, helping them understand content and to build their own knowledge base.	Viewing online videos related to memoir writing process and figurative language (Example: Johnny Cash Hurt video exemplifies imagery and metaphor). Student creation of a mind map for their memoir. Visual representations located on Scholastic site for memoir writing process
<i>Do</i>	Gives kinesthetic learners hands-on experiences; interpersonal learners’ opportunities for collaboration.	Discussion, peer reviews, and individual craftsmanship of a personal memoir



Figure 2. Experiential Universal Principles

Chan, 2006). Given the needs analysis, a constructivist-based solution was adopted. A central tenet of constructivism is that learning is an active process and that learning is best facilitated by focusing on authentic, real world tasks. Constructivist strategies emphasize that students construct new knowledge using existing knowledge bases. In addition, the teacher can improve learning, not by “teaching”, but by creating constructivist learning environments. Constructivist learning theory places emphasis on understanding concepts and developing abilities of inquiry, not on memorization of facts. The experiential approach is an ideal fit with the instructional goal in accordance with values placed on the learning experience itself, effectiveness, and engagement of the learner’s own experiences in attainment of the goals. If successful, the course would enable the targeted learners to be active negotiators of their own learning experience. See Figure 2 below that illustrates the Experiential Universal Principles of framing the experience, activating the experience and reflecting the experience.

While some have argued that the experiential approach can lead to learner misinterpretation, social constructivists propose that, “the learning process should occur within a community of learners who share consideration of the experience” (Gibson, 2009, p. 123). Through providing a significant degree of self-direction and a focus on authentic learning experiences, learners are presented with challenges encountered in real world tasks. Students can practice and discuss within the web-based course to further their insight on the topic while receiving the instruction through a course that gives them quite a bit of control over the outcome.

Critical Components of the Instructional Strategy

Utilizing the experiential approach to instruction, the needs of the learners were addressed in regards to the instructional goal and terminal objectives. Though students were unfamiliar with web-based instruction, they were familiar with the experiential approach, thus the instructional strategy was framed in a manner that

would take advantage of their experiences and learning capabilities. The memoir writing process is an involved one that requires the incorporation of several distinct skills. The course examined the four terminal objectives and nine supporting sub skills. The authors chose a building block approach within the context of framing, activating, and reflecting on the writing experience (See experiential approach’s universal principles in Figure 2), in an effort to empower the learner to learn each section as they progressed to the next and eventually achieve the instructional goal. Table 6 below describes how the universal principles were applied in this course.

Development

In the development phase, the instructional content was storyboarded and the course was created on a Moodle Learning Management System.

Storyboard Example

Figure 3 provides an example of a storyboard that was designed. Totally, there were 36 screens designed for this project.

The “Memoir Writing” course was envisioned as a standalone, asynchronous web-based course that would provide students with the foundational knowledge and requisite skills needed to successfully create an effective memoir. When students logged in, they arrived at a Welcome page with directions on how to get started (see Figure 3). Within the welcome section, students were provided links on how to navigate the course, where to go for help when needed, directions on how to personalize the course, and a link to the course syllabus, as well as a discussion forum rubric which outlined expected behaviors and grading criteria for discussion related activities.

The syllabus introduced the course purpose, outlined the objectives and described how students would be assessed. It also informed students of what they were expected to learn and demonstrate by course completion. The course was divided into seven sections, where

Table 6. Application of Universal Principles Within Course

Experiential Universal Principles	Components of Principle	Application of Component Within Course
<i>Framing the Experience</i>	Defining Instructional Objectives	Objectives listed and explained in course syllabus, as well as reiterated on welcome page of module.
	Communicating Criteria for Assessment	Course syllabus includes rubric for final draft of memoir and it is located in section 4 of module.
	Formally defining the Social Structure	A discussion rubric with specific behaviors expected is included in the syllabus and is the first post in the discussion forums.
<i>Activating the Experience</i>	Authentic Experience	The completed memoir, peer reviewed, and published selections in school literary magazine.
	Making Decisions for Authentic Outcomes	Students are given the freedom to choose events or topics they wish to use throughout course.
	Problem Orientation	All activities and materials focus on development of a memoir where relevance and value of corresponding tasks are relayed to students.
<i>Reflecting on the Experience</i>	Teacher Facilitation	Student-student interactions are encouraged throughout the course in forms of discussion and peer feedback, as well as reflective feedback on part of individual students
	Process	Through interaction with materials written by their peers and professional writers, students internalize those strategies and techniques so they can apply to own writing processes

Title: Memoir Moodle

Section: Welcome

Item #:3

File Name: Online Discussion Rubric.doc

Link: <http://mwilliamrobins.com/moodle/course/view.php?id=2>

External Links:

Notes: Below is a sample, actual rubric not yet created. All discussion forums are on a 20 pt scale and will be separate participation grades

Preview - Discussion Grading Form

Your original posting is worth 15 points and should be no less than 15 sentences. Responses to other classmates are worth up to a total of 5 points. Total 20 points.

Objective/Criteria	Performance Indicators				
	1	2	3	4	Meets Expectations
Reasoned and thoughtful original posting	(1 points)	(2 points)	(3 points)	(4 points)	(5 points)
Meets minimum length	(1 points)	(2 points)	(3 points)	(4 points)	(5 points)
Provides documentation	(0 points)	(2 points)	(3 points)	(4 points)	(5 points)
Responds to classmates	(0 points)	(2 points)	(3 points)	(4 points)	(5 points)

out of 20

Description: Shows what is expected in the discussions and how they will be assessed

Figure 3. Storyboard Exmple of the Online Discussion Rubric

each section adhered to the scaffolding nature required to attain the terminal objectives. Learners were required to navigate through the course in order, as each section (with exception of last-reflective in nature) focused on one terminal objective, as each skill taught in the individual sections require mastery in order to proceed to the next section. Within each section, some form of assessment was required to be completed by the students. Figure 4 below provides a screenshot of the Moodle welcome screen.

This was imperative, so that students could self- and peer-monitor their progress during the acquisition of memoir writing skills. Once a section was completed, students were encouraged to review past information as needed when drafting their memoir. Course completion required students to submit a final draft of their memoir after a round of peer and instructor feedback to see if they could effectively incorporate the skills taught in the course into their writing.

Evaluation

Formative evaluation was conducted through one-on-one and small group evaluations. The one-on-one evaluations took the forms of observations and post course interviews, which resulted in qualitative data aimed at improving the course. Small group evaluation was conducted through a review of graded assignments,

activity logs, and a post course survey. The results of both evaluations are found below.

One-on-One Evaluation

Given the time frame available to conduct the evaluation, three high-school aged students with whom the evaluator was familiar, were asked to take part in the evaluation. The evaluations were scheduled for 90-minute intervals on Sunday and Monday. The evaluator presented incentives for participation to ensure focus and effort during the evaluation, to which all participants agreed. The participants were chosen based on similar qualities they shared with the students identified during the learner analysis. Observations were conducted during navigation of the course. Interviews were conducted at course conclusion to ascertain attitudes, gather feedback, and ascertain if learning would have occurred.

Interview

At course conclusion, the participants were asked if the course was helpful and what suggested changes should be made. A summary of their responses is included in Figure 4. The results of the evaluations were generally positive. The participants' comments were mostly favorable with regards to the course content. Some issues were discovered with overall layout of course and navigation, as well as some related to con-

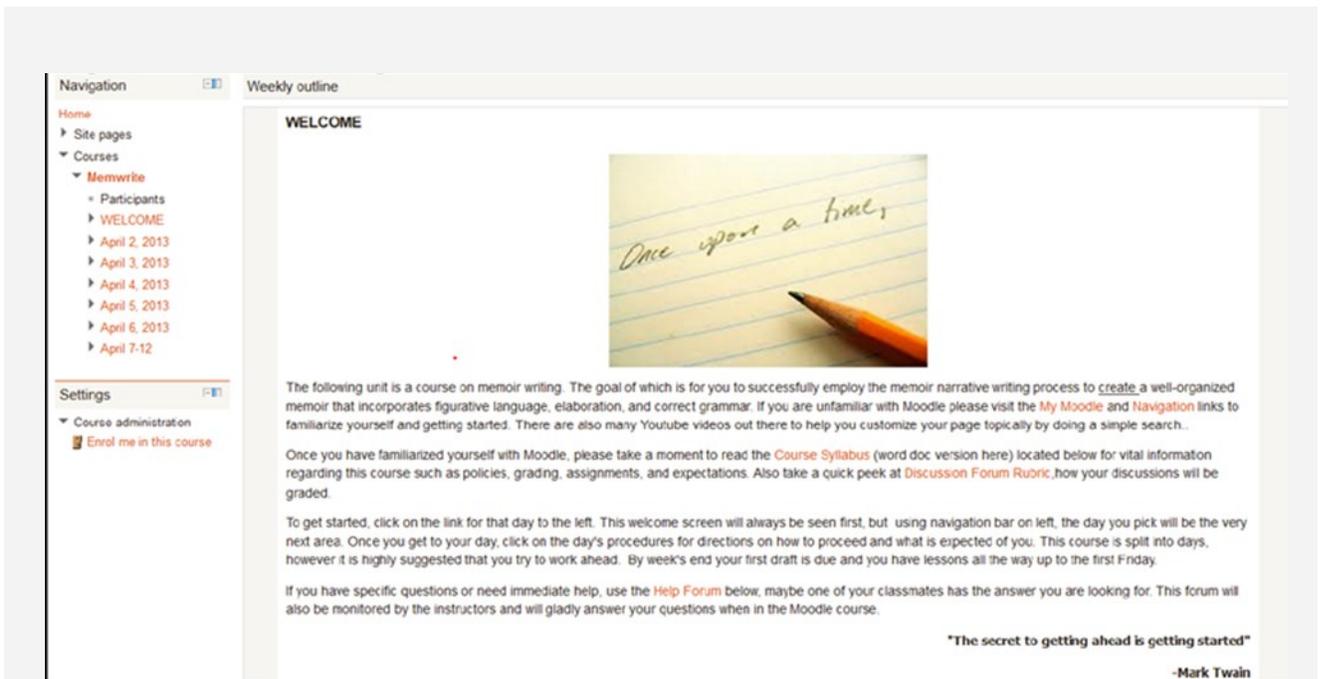


Figure 4. Moodle Welcome Page

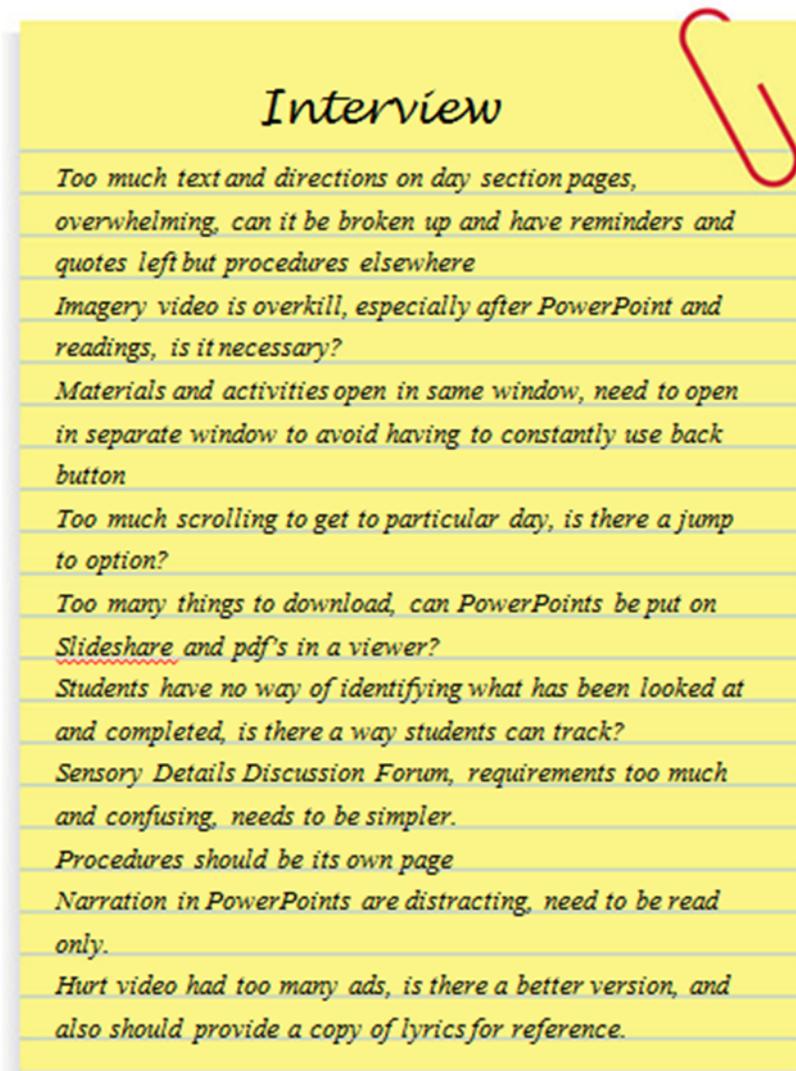


Figure 5. Summary of Notes from Interview

tent. Generally speaking, it was determined that the course, accompanying activities, and final assessment measures yielded positive learner attitudes and achievement. With some revisions, it appeared the course was feasible for use with the target audience. Figure 5 below includes quotes from the interview.

Observations

The focus of the observations of the participants was to compile a list of issues with the course. The course designer observed 3 participants of varying ability traverse the course individually during three separate occasions. At the conclusion of the one-on-one evaluation stage, all observation notes were compiled and items/areas requiring revision were noted (see Figure 6). Observing the three participants provided much needed insight into issues associated with the course. Additionally, through observation and subsequent interviews, decisions were made regarding overall viability of the course. Participants were given the freedom to

ask questions and make comments as they progressed through the course.

Several valid issues were raised through analysis of the observation and interview data collected. Only two issues concerning content were raised and these were minor. The issues fell into one of three categories: navigation, layout of course, and content.

Small Group Evaluation

Evaluation was conducted with learners that were targeted in the learner analysis. These learners were comprised of standard level English II students, aged 15-17 years old and embodied the characteristics outlined in the learner analysis. A total of 43 students across two classes took part in the evaluation. After introductions, explanations, and directions, students began diligently traversing the course. Many students were confused at first until directed by instructor to actually read and follow directions provided. Once this occurred, students began working through the course on their own, without assistance, as is the intention of an asynchronous

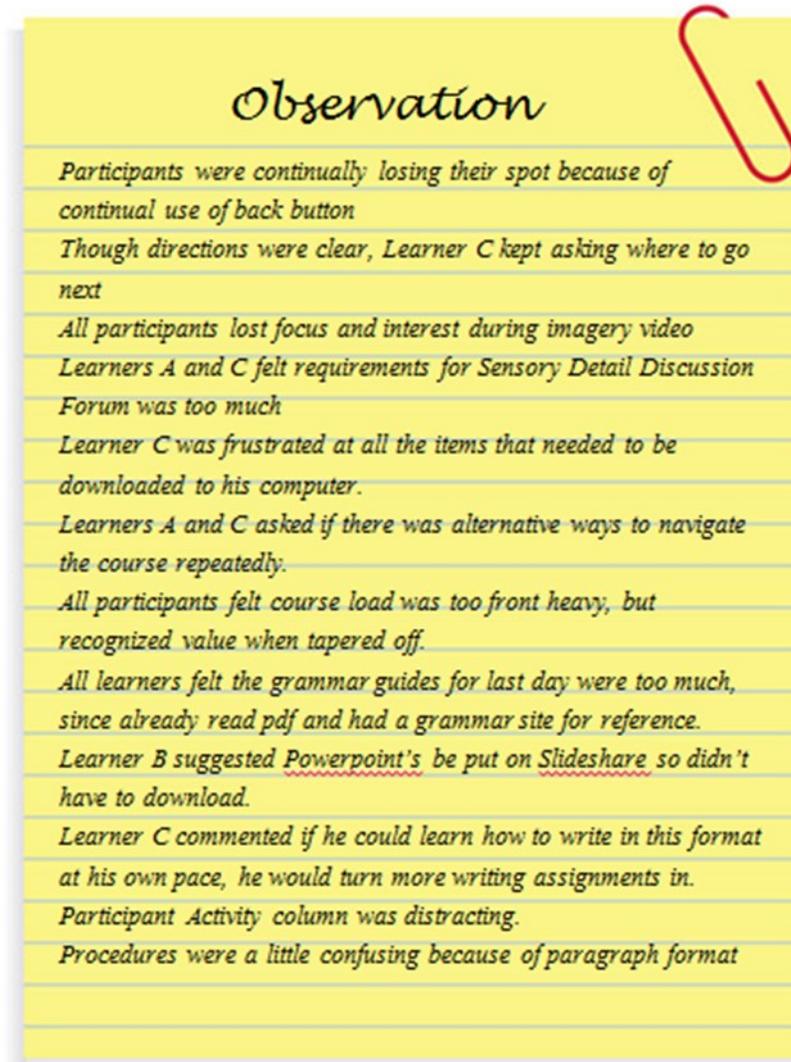


Figure 6. Summary of Notes from Observations

computer based course.

This evaluation was conducted over a two-week period during the spring semester of 2013 using the following evaluation instruments:

- Discussion Rubric: A discussion rubric was used to assess all discussion-based activities.
- Memoir Rubric: A memoir rubric was also used to provide feedback for both of the drafts of the memoir.
- Goat Supporting Activity Questionnaire: Supporting activities that were assessed were graded on a 20-point scale, with point values assigned for corresponding prompts.
- Student Attitude Survey: A survey was used to gather feedback concerning student attitudes and feelings towards the course at course completion.
- LMS Activity Completion Report: An activity

completion report provided by the Moodle LMS, was also used to ascertain how much of the course was completed by students.

Discussion activities were administered to measure the terminal objectives pertaining to the memoir writing process, figurative language and elaboration use in both a reflective and collaborative fashion. There were three separate discussion forums (Favorite Story Discussion, Showing Not Tell Exercise Discussion, A Memory Exercise Discussion) that were intended to measure retention and application of the instructional content presented prior to the assigned discussions. Discussions were graded on a fifteen-point scale. The three discussion grades were then combined and averaged to produce a final discussion participation grade.

Support activities were administered to measure all terminal objectives identified. The three activities (Goat Activity, LUTS Activity, and Hurt Activity) assigned were in support of the readings and videos and required students to apply what was learned through identification and definition of figurative language use, elaboration techniques, and instances of poor grammar. Activities were graded on a twenty-point scale. The three activity grades were then combined and averaged to produce a final activity grade.

Final Memoir Grades

The final memoir grades represent the achievement of the instructional goal. The memoir was graded on a fifty-point scale. The rubric contained five categories, with a 10 point maximum for each. Only 26% of students submitted a memoir draft. Of the fifteen students who viewed/completed at least 75% of the materials/activities, only seven submitted a final product. The remaining four were submitted by students who had viewed/completed less than 75% of the materials/activities and all but one of these students failed to achieve an average score, due to the fact that they completed less than 75% of the supporting activities and readings. The highest score earned was a 94% and the lowest a 70% with a final memoir mean of 82%.

Several issues, which were beyond the control of the designer and client, arose in regards to class time set aside for students to work in the course. The original week scheduled was delayed due to mandatory benchmark practice set by the administration two days prior to launch. During the rescheduled launch, two scheduled days were dropped due to mandatory CPR training of students and school wide network problems respectively

The data compiled from the activity completion report revealed only 12% of students viewed and completed all the materials and activities assigned in the course, however for those completing the activities, the results were primarily positive. Regardless of student participation level, the class average for completed activities scored between 77% and 84%. The combined discussion activities completed had a mean score of 86%, however when incomplete activities were taken into account, the mean dropped to 69%. These same results were applicable to the combined support activities, where those completing the activities had a mean of 87%. The huge disparity in averages can be explained in that these activities began being assigned on the day the school experienced network problems and because starting with the second of these activities, student participation going forward dropped by 58%.

Table 7. Grades for Coursework Completed

Percent of materials/activities viewed/completed by students	Avg. grade for activities
Students view/complete 100% of course materials/activities	95%
Students view/complete more than 75% but less than 100% of course materials/	88%
Students view/complete at least 50% but less than 75% of course materials/activities	81%
Students view/complete less than 50% of course materials/activities	77%

Table 8. Grades by Objective

	1.0 Apply memoir writing process techniques	2.0 Apply use of figurative language in writing	3.0 Demonstrate incorporating use of elaboration in a written work	4.0 Demonstrate proper grammar use in writing
Proficiency Percentage	88%	86%	85%	68%

Table 9. *Questionnaire Results*

Question	Mean
1. I would be comfortable writing a memoir with no instructional support in the future	4.7
2. The way the course was structured made navigation easy	4.4
3. The pace and sequence of events in the course was appropriate for me and my learning needs	3.9
4. The activities (forums, hurt video activity, etc.) strengthened my understanding of the information presented	4.14
5. The course objectives were clear and easily understood	4.6
6. I will be comfortable injecting figurative language and elaboration into future writing assignments	4.3
7. I fully grasp the memoir writing process and characteristics that make up a memoir.	4.4
8. I like working independently and at my own pace	4.1
9. I had enough time to complete all activities and assignments	3.6
10. I would have benefitted from more resources, such as videos and podcasts, in regards to comprehending the information presented	3.6

Questionnaire Results

In an effort to gauge student attitudes and feelings towards the course, students were asked to complete a brief survey upon course completion. The students were asked 10 questions using a 5-point Likert-type scale categorized from 1 for Strongly Disagree to 5 for Strongly Agree, where the mean was calculated for each prompt. The survey had a response rate of 33% of the students. Overall, students seemed to like how the course was structured and the material that was contained, with a majority feeling that they were fully prepared to write a memoir in the future given adequate time. The results can be seen in Table 9 below.

Discussion and Recommendations

The purpose of this project was to explore whether high school English students were capable of successfully completing an asynchronous computer-based course on memoir writing, which in turn would raise their levels of writing proficiency. Both the model and instructional approach chosen seemed to have a generally positive effect on learning. The data revealed that all instructional content within the course was sufficient and effective, as was the presentation of material for students who completed assigned tasks. The average and above scores received for assessable activities that were submitted indicated that students who put effort and time into the course and activities were effectively prepared to write a successful memoir, which was evidenced by submission of final products by those who completed at least 75% of the course materials.

The overall lack of effort by a large majority of students indicates an overall lack in self-discipline, a requirement for an asynchronous online course. Howev-

er, the results are indicative of comments made by the client during interviews that the students are “fully capable of completing the work with at least average proficiency, but most are too lazy to even try.” This statement during the front-end analysis was prophetic, since average competency was established by those attempted to complete at least 75% of the materials.

Although many positives can be taken from the course, it appears that standard level high school students are not prepared for a purely asynchronous course. A future project should explore the content and sequencing of this course using a blended approach, where students can receive procedural and supporting instruction from their classroom teacher. Additionally, with the removal of some of the inherent issues that plagued small group evaluation, achievement scores could have been higher with increased participation during the school day. Furthermore, this course could have benefitted from the inclusion of ARCS strategies (Keller, 1987), specifically in the confidence and satisfaction realms, to mitigate the lackadaisical approach by the majority of students.

Reflection

This project was completed as the capstone project in an instructional technology graduate program.

Analysis - Getting to know the client was very critical in this project. Though we were short of time it helped in conducting the various types of analysis. We were able to conduct performance analysis, learner analysis, needs analysis, gap analysis, technology analysis, goal analysis and task analysis. With the various analyses conducted, we were able to identify the instructional problem, the learners, the context, the con-

tent, and the technology that we could use to implement the solution.

Design – The task analysis helped to identify the terminal objectives, which then allowed us to align assessments for the objectives. We had used several instructional frameworks, including Bonk and Zhan's R2D2 model (2006), and Constructivist and Experiential strategies as part of this project; if we have to implement it again, we might just focus on one framework and a strategy that is aligned with the framework.

Development – The storyboarding process assisted us in the development phase. We used Microsoft word to storyboard and then we were able to take the storyboard and build the instructional content in the Moodle Learning Management System.

Implementation and Evaluation – For this project, we did not do a large-scale implementation. We conducted a formative evaluation, including both one-to-one and small-group evaluation. Keeping the students engaged and getting them to complete the activities was the biggest challenge. Only 26% of students submitted a memoir draft. Of the fifteen students who viewed/completed at least 75% of the materials/activities, only seven submitted a final product. Though students dropped out, the ones who completed the entire module had positive results.

Overall, using a systematic instructional design process was beneficial to the success of this project.

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