

Translation, Transformation, and “Taking it Back”: Moving between Face-to-Face and Online Writing in the Disciplines

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Faculty teaching face-to-face (F2F) may dread transitioning to online instruction. While scholars have addressed this trepidation for writing faculty (see Warnock; Hewett and Ehmann), this hesitancy can be compounded for faculty across the disciplines who seek to transform both content and writing assignments from the physical to the digital classroom. Online course management systems (CMS) can hinder this task because these systems employ teacher-centered rather than participatory models (Palmquist 406). In addition, developing online courses requires that faculty modify their current pedagogy, often while continuing to juggle their face-to-face courses. Even for seasoned faculty, preparing and delivering an online course can be time-consuming, taking three times as long as a F2F course (Palloff and Pratt 74). In “Online Teaching and Classroom Change: The Trans-classroom Teacher in the Age of the Internet,” Susan Lowes calls teachers who are transitioning from F2F to online instruction “trans-classroom teachers,” likening them to immigrants “leav[ing] the familiarity of the face-to-face classroom for the uncharted terrain of the online environment, whose constraints and affordances often lead to very different practices.” The immigrant metaphor is apt, as instructors transitioning to digital culture must adapt to new problems, behaviors, languages, attitudes, and identities.

Before coming together for a faculty professional development workshop in Summer 2011, each of the authors—faculty members at Eastern Oregon University from English and Writing, Education, and Religious Studies—had faced the challenges of “immigration” alone in our separate disciplines. As we shared our processes of moving our F2F courses online, we found ourselves describing three distinct stages. First, we attempted to “translate” successful F2F strategies into the online environment. In this translation stage, we replicated the F2F activities, assessments, and assignments with little thought about the effect on pedagogy of the change in modality. After initial failed attempts at direct translation, we “transformed” our practice, adjusting our pedagogy to make it more applicable for online delivery. When the CCC released the 2013 “Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for Online Writing Instruction (OWI),” we discovered that practices we had arrived at organically through trial and error, alone in our disciplines,

were reflected in the experiences of expert online writing instructors across the country.

Even more importantly, perhaps, our conversations about online instruction surfaced a third stage in our pedagogical processes: based on online student success, we found ourselves modifying our F2F practices, “taking back” to the F2F classroom improved activities, scaffolding, and feedback. Thus, transformation of online writing instruction does not represent the conclusion of a neat, linear progression. Instead, regardless of discipline, online delivery can become an integral component of recursive pedagogical practice, in essence, acting as a distancing strategy for thinking through F2F content delivery.

Online Writing Across the Curriculum

Enrollment in online courses has grown steadily in the past ten years. The Babson Group indicates that 32% of college students are enrolled in at least one online course, and online courses were a “critical component” of the long-term strategy at 69% of all higher education institutions in the U.S. (Allen and Seaman 4). However, the implementation of online writing classes often precedes substantive research into sound online writing instruction practices, particularly writing across the curriculum (WAC) online. Research into writing instruction in fully-online classrooms has primarily focused on composition or writing studies classrooms (see the CCCO OWI Bibliography).¹

Research into WAC work in regard to computer-mediated instruction focuses most often on F2F, networked classrooms or hybrid courses. Donna Reiss, Dickie Self, and Art Young’s collection *Electronic Communication Across the Curriculum* (1998) includes guides to implementing computer-mediated instruction across the curriculum, but the only chapter in the book dedicated to online education describes a course that works primarily through email in an era before Facebook, YouTube, or the rise of Google (Chadwick and Dorbolo). More recent work addressing online WAC has focused on assessing online writing (Dean), and even that work has focused on hybrid rather than fully-online courses. A special edition of *Across the Disciplines* titled “Writing Technologies and Writing Across the Curriculum” presumes that online resources and websites primarily serve on-campus or hybrid classes. The most recent survey of WAC programs (2010) gives only brief mention to “electronic technologies” in WAC programs. Chris Thaiss and Tara Porter write, “we can state that the great majority of our respondents did not see the growth of electronic technology per se closely connected to their idea of WAC” (557). In this survey research, “technology” is equated with the implementation of course-management systems and other digital tools in the service of F2F learning. Perhaps the most complete collection to date regarding online WAC is Neff and Whithaus’ *Writing*

Across Distances and Disciplines, which acknowledges “many writing and writing-intensive courses delivered from a distance have not reached their potential” (2). In spite of increasing numbers of students taking online classes and higher education’s emphasis on increasing online programs, the literature in WAC has not substantially focused on the affordances and constraints of online writing instruction across the curriculum.

While research in computer-mediated or networked classrooms can inform online instruction, effective online classrooms face one challenge not found in either computer-mediated or hybrid classrooms. As Ken Gilliam and Shannon Wooten state:

The best parts of composition pedagogy are precisely what’s missing in most online learning situations. Indeed, the very characteristics of online learning that make it most attractive in university recruitment campaigns—the convenience of learning outside of real time, the ability to work from home or on the go—are the very things that disembodied learners, separating them physically and temporally from their professors and classmates. (para. 4)

Online separation from a classroom and disciplinary community may impede the writing process, as students struggle to hone the purpose of their writing with a disembodied audience, to trust their disembodied peers and instructor with authentic communication, and to provide and implement feedback that occurs only in writing, without connection to the spoken words, laughter, and body language that might provide additional guidance and support.

In 2007, the Conference on College Composition and Communication Executive Committee responded to the need for research addressing the teaching of writing in fully online environments by charging the Committee for Best Practices in Online Writing Instruction to develop a position statement, which became the “Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for Online Writing Instruction” (CCCC OWI; CCCC “Establishing”) and represents a starting point for further research into online WAC.

The CCCC OWI Position Statement acknowledges the need for online instruction not only to “translate” but also to “transform” instructional strategies: “Appropriate onsite composition theories, pedagogies, and strategies should be migrated and adapted to the online instructional environment” (Principle 4). F2F techniques based in effective composition theory cannot simply be redeployed for use in the online environment; they must be adapted to suit the modality. For example, Effective Practice 3.5 recommends that “When there is no face-to-face explanatory opportunity and text is the primary means of teaching the writing, [instructors should provide] example strategies for intervening in a clearly written, problem-centered manner” so that online students can better imagine the necessary

techniques F2F students acquire through classroom demonstration. Moreover, the modality may present exciting opportunities for alternative methods to deliver some of the best parts of composition pedagogy. For example, Practice 4.2 states, “Teachers [. . .] should employ the interactive potential of digital communications to enable and enact knowledge construction.” Because asynchronous online instruction often results in a document trail of interactions in discussion-board posts, wikis, and other forms of shared interaction, the potential exists for students not only to enact knowledge construction but also to study, use, and value that interaction. Thus, while research on computer-mediated and hybrid WAC classes might inform our work, research into effective pedagogy in fully-online WAC courses, guided by the CCCC OWI Position Statement, will be vital as twenty-first century classrooms continue to move into cyberspace. While the Position Statement arises from research in and practitioners from the field of writing studies, these principles can guide online writing instruction across disciplines, as our pedagogical transformations indicate.

Online Writing-in-the-Disciplines at Eastern Oregon University

Our transformative practice, as well as our participation in summer institute training in August 2011, centers on our university mission to “connect the rural regions of Oregon to a wider world” (Eastern Oregon University, “Mission and Values Statement”). Eastern Oregon University (EOU) is a small, liberal-arts university located in La Grande, Oregon. As of winter quarter 2014, EOU enrolled 3,731 students (FTE=2,471), with just under half of those students fully online (FTE=1,186). In addition to on-campus courses at our main campus in La Grande and online courses, EOU has sixteen regional centers throughout the state of Oregon. These regional centers serve an additional 657 students (FTE=231) in over 45 Oregon counties (EOU, “Institutional Research”). Because Oregon is largely rural, distance education courses, initially correspondence courses and later online and on-site courses have been a substantial component of EOU for over thirty years. EOU currently offers ten fully online four-year bachelor’s degrees as well as eighteen fully online minors.

To promote strong writing skill in this geographically dispersed population, EOU has instituted the University Writing Requirement (UWR). The UWR “requires that students receive attention to writing throughout their studies and that students demonstrate their mastery of discipline-specific writing” (EOU, “University Writing Requirement”). To this end, students are required to take the first-year composition course (WR 121: Expository Writing), one lower-level UWR course, and two upper division UWR courses as specified by their major. UWR course outcomes include a minimum number of written words (both in draft and polished form), attention to discipline-specific conventions, multiple drafts, integration of sources relevant to

their discipline and cited appropriately, and attention to peer review and feedback from the instructor at multiple stages of the drafting process.

In spite of EOU's long history with online education and significant focus on writing across the curriculum, faculty professional development in technology for writing purposes has been limited. EOU supports a robust National Writing Project site, but university faculty wanted additional training in instructional technologies. In Summer 2011, a group of faculty came together for the first Summer Institute for Instructional Technology (SIIT), a two-week workshop that investigated best practices in online teaching and learning co-coordinated by Heidi Skurat Harris and Steve Clements. Sixteen participants from across the university participated in the inaugural institute, which centered on California State University-Chico's Rubric for Online Instruction's six components of effective online instruction (see <http://www.csuchico.edu/celt/roi/> for more information about the rubric).

As three of these participants—Nancy Knowles (English and Writing), Tawnya Lubbes (Education), and Jacob Harris (Religious Studies)—shared their techniques for effective online instruction, they discovered that effective writing instruction posed some particular challenges in their online classes: promoting student engagement and interaction, helping students navigate the overwhelming amount of reading and writing in the online classroom, and scaffolding and sequencing course activities to help online students complete longer writing assignments effectively.

Although we taught in different content areas at Eastern Oregon University, we also found striking similarities in our transitions between the F2F and online environments. First, we needed to facilitate online learning more intentionally than F2F learning; interacting with students, “being present” in the class, was key to success. This finding is consistent with CCCC OWI Position Statement Effective Practice 3.10, which argues, “Teachers should moderate online class discussions to develop a collaborative OWC and to ensure participation of all students, the free and productive exchange of ideas, and a constant habit of written expression with a genuine audience.” Second, multimedia and interactive resources frequently and somewhat counter-intuitively led to better writing. This discovery is consistent with the CCCC OWI Position Statement Effective Practice 3.2, that argues for blending “different and redundant modalities.” We discovered that writing *more effectively*, not *more frequently*, achieved University Writing Requirement outcomes. Third, in the online medium, we needed to replace classroom dialogue with shorter written assignments, scaffold larger assignments more clearly, and sequence activities more effectively. This discovery is consistent with CCCC OWI Position Statement Effective Practice 4.1: “When migrating from onsite modalities to the online environment, teachers should break their assignments, exercises, and activities into smaller units to increase opportunities for interaction between teacher and student and among students using

both asynchronous and synchronous modalities.” In turn, success with these transformations of our writing pedagogy encouraged us to revisit the effectiveness of our F2F classroom practices and use the distance provided by the online modality to realize that F2F students also benefit from the strategies developed for the online environment.

Translation: Moving Writing Instruction Online

The three instructors who participated in the SIIT 2011, Nancy Knowles (English and Writing), Tawnya Lubbes (Education), and Jacob Harris (Religious Studies) all were tasked with moving writing instruction in their disciplines (practiced not in computer-mediated classrooms or even necessarily in classrooms with robust wireless access) to online modalities. In doing so, they faced challenges in helping students access course content and materials and using those materials effectively. According to Elizabeth Barkley, Professor of Music at Foothill College and author of *Student Engagement Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty*, only 4% of learners prefer reading as a means of processing information compared to 18% discussion, 27% hands-on learning, and 31% teaching others (139). These figures indicate that access as a component of course delivery is not just a matter of difficulty for those outside the institution, those with hardware limitations, or those with disabilities (Porter 215-16); access is a vital component of the online experience for students attempting to join academic conversations, “those [not] already in the know,” (Taylor 133), as the print or text-based modes of interaction may render some conversations inaccessible for particular students.

Nancy: Reading and Writing as a Barrier to Reading and Writing Online

When Nancy Knowles, Professor of English and Writing, began teaching literature and technical writing online in 2003, her primary strategy to teach reading and writing was through reading and writing. She simply translated process-writing strategies into the online environment. The online environment revealed limitations of the process approach: at the time, online students had almost no other option for interaction with teachers and peers aside from reading and writing, modes that often failed to replicate the valuable interpersonal collaboration common to the F2F classroom.

Transitioning between F2F and online instruction highlighted problems associated with unexamined emphasis on written text as a means to teach writing and content. Although writing-immersed pedagogy benefits students by encouraging development of literacy skills (Courage 170; Warnock xi), written text may not always be the best access point for students to engage with literate tasks, particularly in an online environment often dominated by written text and particularly for first-year

and struggling students for whom reading and writing represent significant challenges. Struggling students manifested a host of problematic behaviors, the most serious of which was simple absence from the online environment. Bombarded with a text-based welcome page, a written syllabus, a dense print textbook or poetry anthology, a bewildering set of folders filled with written lectures and assignment instructions, a discussion board filled with other students apparently capably and confidently posting writing, and later a set of text-based instructor emails asking whether they needed assistance, the path of least resistance was to avoid interaction. Struggling students who attempted to engage did their best to deliver on expectations, producing “safe” posts either vague enough to try to hide confusion or mimicking or outright copying the seemingly successful posts of other students. If they survived the instructor (written) encouragement to improve, they produced mechanical kinds of writing that indicated an ongoing perception of coursework as busywork, not as access to personally enlightening material or professionally beneficial skills. In the online section of WR 320: Technical Writing in Summer 2006, for example, the class average was 67%, which indicates the course could have better served struggling students.

Jacob: Too Much Writing Online

Similar to Nancy’s text-based approach to enter into reading and writing, Jacob Harris, Instructor in Religious Studies, discovered that F2F discussion did not translate directly into written discussion in his introduction to religion and more advanced religious studies courses. When Jacob first started teaching online in 2006, his experience teaching in the F2F classroom involved his work as a graduate teaching assistant, where senior faculty mentors encouraged long faculty lectures supplemented by shorter discussion groups. When he translated this method to online classes, he found himself telling students to “read the textbook” to replace the lectures and then assigning two discussion questions or prompts each week with two required classmate responses for each question. This method closely replicated the “lecture and discuss” methods from his large F2F religious studies courses.

In addition to replicating this lecture-and-discuss pedagogy, Jacob assumed that students would improve their writing in the discussion forums and in longer written assignments by writing more frequently. However, Jacob found that students, who might have willingly referenced print sources in a F2F classroom, struggled to synthesize such sources in their discussion board posts. Students spent so much time writing weekly discussion posts (the equivalent of two full essays per week) and responding to classmates that they were completing the bare minimum to get by, the quality was rushed and superficial, and they failed to truly engage in discussions with each other. Moreover, because of the massive amount of student writing, Jacob found

himself struggling to engage with students on discussion boards to model discussion and highlight relevant course concepts. Writing on discussion boards, in addition to content-writing (such as the twice per term New Religious Experience essays) and readings from the textbook and supplemental readings, meant an overwhelming reading and writing load for students and himself. As a result, his attrition rates hovered around 50% and additional students simply “disappeared” from the class even while still enrolled.

Tawnya: Need for Scaffolding Online

Tawnya Lubbes, Assistant Professor of Education, was asked in 2009 to teach a special online section of her Language and Cognition course for a small group of students. This was her first experience with teaching the writing process online. Without realizing the need to transform her F2F course for online delivery, she included PowerPoint presentations to replicate F2F instruction time and discussion boards to replicate in-class discussion. All other course assignments remained as presented F2F, which included weekly reading response guides, drafts of writing assignments, and written reflections. The overarching activity in the course was an in-depth case study of a bilingual informant, including a “thick description” (see Geertz) and an analysis of theoretically salient issues in terms of language acquisition. This activity demanded synthesis, application and evaluative cognitive thinking skills. Students also needed background in the foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism, linguistic analysis, and common miscues of second language learning, and they needed to write analytically using scholarly tone and APA formatting.

To complete this activity in the F2F course, Tawnya placed students into literature and peer editing groups. Students read and revised their writing through a multi-step process, submitting their writing in segments and receiving ample feedback to build toward their final drafts. Tawnya provided F2F students examples of previous studies and guided them through the writing process (again reinforcing the need for recursive feedback indicated in OWI Effective Practice 4.1).

Online, Tawnya simply translated elements of the course without transforming them, without scaffolding the information and writing process for the students. She provided PowerPoint presentations without narratives or opportunities for interaction. Discussion questions related to the readings required limited student dialogue. Tawnya encouraged students to complete peer editing or use the Writing Center, but neither activity was required. Because Tawnya did not have time to gather permission from former students to scan and post copies online, examples of the case study were not provided. While she presented a variety of online resources in the CMS, students received little direction for using the resources. While Tawnya identified weekly deadlines, she allowed multiple drafts, even if significantly late. This leniency

meant that, rather than moving forward, students spent time rewriting previous work and falling further behind. All in all, the online class produced lower quality case studies than the F2F class. In the F2F class the course average was an 82%, while the online course students averaged 76%. In particular, the online students failed to build upon the background knowledge gained through course readings by connecting the sections of the case study with the chapters from the course text.

While navigating their online writing courses, all three experienced F2F instructors struggled with communicating writing assignments, modeling academic discourse, and giving students the guidance that they needed to complete complex projects and integrate source materials. In the online environment, as Gilliam and Wooten note, students lacked access to the structures that made classroom learning powerful and effective: visual and aural cues, the presence of a reflective practitioner who could informally assess success from moment to moment and adjust delivery to meet student needs, and the physical reality of a community of learners whose presence modeled strategies, provided emotional support, and encouraged questions and deeper thought. Online environments replacing the dynamic of F2F classrooms with inert and overwhelming materials proved to struggling students that college-level work was beyond their capacities.

Transformation: From Transmission to Engagement

As the instructors faced their failures in their online courses, they each sought to overhaul their online classes in order to more effectively meet the needs of diverse learners who were “separated physically and temporally from their classmates,” (Gilliam and Wooten) while struggling to synthesize and integrate new, affectively and cognitively challenging content into their writing.

Nancy: Going Native

In 2009, Nancy began to “go native” (Taylor 139)—that is, to adapt instructional strategies to the students served. To use Porter’s words, online access “means starting the writing [or course development] process from audience and working backward to made object [or online course]” (216; see also Savenye, Olina, and Niemczyk). In moving between F2F and online instruction, Nancy discovered multimedia and multi-modal projects as “appropriate strategies” not only “adapted to the online instructional environment,” per Practice 4 (CCCC OWI), but also helping in enhancing access to literate learning in all classes.

To serve online students needing access to literate discourse, Nancy broadened the strategies by which she invited student response. At first, she envisioned the daunting task of meeting student needs by knowing them well enough to match their preferences to particular assignments and worried over the fact that learners

should also be encouraged to stretch beyond their preferences. But soon, she realized that, as Enujoo Oh and Doohun Lim, researchers in instructional technology at the University of Tennessee, conclude, attempting to match learners to particular assignments was less important than simply providing a variety of access points. Rather than completing one assignment in lockstep with peers, students benefit by options whereby they can self-select the best means to demonstrate skills and knowledge. Nancy's online students responded well to photographing art, clustering, and mapping; using video to capture performances (such as one memorable Bollywood dance routine); and using blogs for interactive public dialogue to stimulate engagement. Creative writing also enhanced emotional and aesthetic engagement with academic writing. Blending media and genres acknowledges that "writing is Technicolor, oral, and thoroughly integrated with visual and audio displays," representing a "secondary literacy" (Diogenes and Lunsford 142), a literacy particularly appropriate to students already learning in an online environment. Using both text and non-text methods of reaching out to students, allowing students to interact visually and aurally through multimedia, opened avenues to writing. Reading and writing operated not as the sole means of communication but as a natural progression from other activities. As a result, the atmosphere and quality of work in Nancy's online courses changed. Students spent time on the discussion board laughing and commiserating over one another's posts, building a classroom community for all participants, not just those confident with text-based forms of communication. Writing produced in these courses became more engaged, more a combination of academic skill and personal interests and therefore more valuable to the students themselves, which ramped up the quality. As an index of the change, the course average for online students enrolled in ENGL 221: Sophomore Seminar in Winter 2013 surpassed that of the on-campus section (85% to 72%).

Jacob: Fewer, Better Written Assignments

To transform his online courses and to help students integrate affectively and cognitively difficult source material in discussion board posts and writing assignments, Jacob scaled back the number of required discussion board postings from two posts every week to one post every two weeks. In a 2007 study, Wang and Woo found that online students have more time to "think, clarify, and respond" to their classmates and can rely more heavily on using sources and other materials to support themselves than they can in F2F discussions (281), but because of the more time-consuming nature of the written discussion, the online discussion time-frame needed to be much longer (284). Thus, online discussions can help students improve their synthesis and research skills but only when students are not overwhelmed with a multitude of text- or print-based reading and writing activities. The "less is more" philosophy

also applies to instructor texts where concision aids in avoiding confusion (Ragain and White 406).

In alternating activity weeks, Jacob supplemented text-based sources with videos and audio recordings in which adherents of a variety of religions discussed their experiences in those religious traditions, which aligns with CCCC OWI Effective Practice 3.2 “Text-based instruction should be supplemented with oral and/or video instruction in keeping with the need for presenting instruction in different and redundant modalities.” In discussion boards, students synthesized concepts from the textbook with the experiences of those who practiced the religions they were studying and theories posed by religious studies scholars. Just as Nancy incorporated audio, video, and kinesthetic activities as a way of differentiating instruction to make literate conversations accessible, Jacob incorporated these tools as an entrance to difficult scholarly discussions about the secular, academic study of religion.

Besides requiring fewer posts, Jacob clarified the requirements for discussion boards and encouraged students to include their own experiences as well as synthesizing sources. George Collison, Bonnie Elbaum, Sarah Haavind, and Robert Tinker, authors of *Facilitating Online Learning: Effective Strategies for Moderators*, reinforce these practices, suggesting that a healthy online discussion has clearly defined expectations and reminders of those expectations in the directions for each board (78-80). They further advise that discussion boards encourage deep dialogue where participants think critically about content (140). After the changes to the discussion board criteria, students in Jacob’s religious studies classes spent more time in deep dialogue with their classmates. And, just as Warnock recommends (79), this deep dialogue constituted a significant portion (30%) of the course grade. In addition to dialogue in discussion boards, students interacted with each other to complete group projects in all of his online classes, further integrating course concepts and personal experiences while interacting with each other.

During his discussions with students, Jacob also transformed the focus of his feedback from end-of-discussion summative assessments to formative assessment. Instead of waiting until the end of the week to identify an excellent comment or post, fewer discussion boards meant that Jacob had more time to participate during class discussion, pointing out excellent student input in the flow of discussion. This practice conforms to OWI Effective Practice 3.5 regarding instructors’ role in guiding improvement: “When there is no face-to-face explanatory opportunity and text is the primary means of teaching the writing, example strategies for intervening in a clearly written, problem-centered manner include ... modeling by writing at the level that is being required of the student and providing doable tasks with instructions” (CCCC OWI).

In addition to including discussion board rubrics, samples of both adequate and insufficient posts, and discussion of the problems with insufficient posts, Jacob supported student success by modeling the discourse he asked of students. He followed his own rules, incorporating outside sources, passages of the textbook, and authentic leading questions. As a result of this guidance, Jacob's students not only synthesized sources more clearly in discussion board posts, but they also transferred those writing skills to longer written texts, such as the New Religious Experience assignment where students analyze an unfamiliar religious ritual. In addition, student attrition rates dropped to around 30% and those students enrolled in the course were more likely to complete more of the assignments and successfully complete the class.

Tawnya: Scaffolding Online Student Work

Transitioning between F2F and online instruction not only emphasized the need for Tawnya to improve student interaction and incorporate multimedia elements to support print-based materials but also revealed the need to scaffold and sequence course assignments so that online students could complete tasks without synchronous or real-time direction from faculty. OWI Effective Practice 4.1 identifies the need for **instructors** to “break their assignments, exercises, and activities into smaller units to increase opportunities for interaction between teacher and student and among students using both asynchronous and synchronous modalities” (CCCC OWI). In addition to online scaffolding, Tawnya incorporated peer review in online classes. Miky Ronan and Dorothy Langley, authors of “Scaffolding Complex Tasks by Open Online Submission: Emerging Patterns and Profiles,” incorporate student review and commentary in their “open online submission,” where students submit parts of writing at various stages for other students and faculty to review. This process not only assists students in understanding the task but also permits instructors to identify communication problems and intervene (58). Because peer review requires risk-taking in sharing documents, it has the potential to build trust necessary to form a learning community comprised of multiple and valued perspectives in the manner that F2F courses do.

After evaluating the pitfalls of simply translating the course from F2F to online, Tawnya modified the course to integrate all four of the scaffolding strategies that Michael Hannafin, Susan Land and Kevin Oliver's “Open Learning Environments: Foundations, Methods, and Models” identifies: 1) procedural scaffolds to help give and clarify directions, 2) conceptual scaffolds that guide learners into working through multiple concepts, 3) metacognitive scaffolds that prompt students to look at the subject from multiple perspectives, and 4) strategic scaffolds, including alternative approaches to planning and application processes.

Procedural scaffolds included the reorganization of the course structure. Outside resources appeared in units that corresponded with each section of the case study. The revised course also scheduled regular due dates in order to keep the students on track. In creating conceptual scaffolds, she realigned textbook chapters to match the specific sections of the case study as students completed them. Metacognitive and strategic scaffolds included collaborative learning groups and the requirement that students submit reviews of work and summaries of the students' editing group progress. Some of this peer interaction occurred within the Blackboard™ CMS in order to allow Tawnya to facilitate and monitor the progress, providing the instructor intervention and support that Carla Garnam and Robert Kaleta, published in *Teaching with Technology Today*, deem necessary to help students manage their time and expectations. In addition, she designed discussion board prompts to ask higher-order questions (see Collison et al. and Warnock) and to assist students in developing inquiry methods to gather information for their case studies. Tawnya also modified PowerPoint™ presentations to include instructor notes and summaries. In presenting the case study assignment, she worked from whole to part and part to whole, providing the big picture of the case study (including individual case studies completed by previous students) and then breaking that picture down into units that integrated all four scaffolding strategies.

As a result of her efforts, students in the second online version of the course produced some of the best quality case studies Tawnya had ever seen, all while meeting the course objectives. Students in this course moved from the previous 76% average to an 89% average in the transformed course section. Positive written and verbal feedback from the students confirmed success. One student stated: "I learned a lot of new stuff and it was good to finally be able to use everything we have learned. I am so glad we had sections of our case study due throughout the term." Another student advised: "the breaking down of the final paper into sections was particularly helpful for successfully completing the course." Further, Tawnya was able to share her course redesign with her colleagues who taught the same course in online and hybrid formats.

By transforming their instruction to better support online learners, Nancy, Jacob, and Tawnya achieved noticeable improvements in students' academic performance. The application of multi-media and multimodal projects and a broadening of strategies and access points in their courses allowed for learners to meet their course objectives without the struggle in communicating via one-dimensional procedural writing. Scaffolding, clear guiding directions, increased frequency of interactions, and instructional design that was less text-driven and more focused on visuals, including video and audio recordings, greatly contributed to the successes the instructors observed in their courses. The three also recognized that specific grading

criteria with frequent feedback mechanisms assisted the students in understanding and meeting the course requirements. Through these strategies, online students became more engaged with course materials and activities and more successful in demonstrating acquired knowledge and skills.

Taking It Back: Energizing the Face-to-Face Classroom with Online Strategies

While the CCCC OWI Position Statement addresses the need to transform pedagogy when moving from the F2F to the online environment, it doesn't address the impact of online instruction on F2F instruction. As increasing numbers of recursive practitioners teach in both modalities, they may find the online teaching experience informing their F2F practice. Once Nancy, Jacob, and Tawnya saw student improvement in their online courses, they began to take back lessons from those courses to their F2F classes.

Nancy and Jacob: More Productive Use of Multimedia and F2F Class Time

Expanding Nancy's repertoire of online delivery methods has reinforced the necessity of access in the F2F setting. In online teaching, "seat time" is replaced by time engaged in meaningful course activities. This experience helped Nancy re-envision her use of F2F class time as devoted to productive hands-on work. In writing classes, rather than attempting to cover one element of writing everyone in the class needs to practice (which is not possible), Nancy usually spends the beginning of the week in interactive activities and devotes the end of the week to writing time, coaching, and response to drafts—freeing students to work individually or in small groups on the aspect of writing that most needs their attention. Nancy also finds technology playing an increased role in her F2F classroom, as Blackboard becomes a repository for drafts and a place for peer review.

Jacob's F2F practice now benefits from his online use of multimedia and discussion strategies. Students in his F2F Introduction to Religion course, for example, create their own religion as a final synthesis activity, giving F2F presentations and also compiling supplementary online resources. Modeling academic discourse and discussion has become the focus of Jacob's classes. Unlike the lecture courses Jacob delivered as a graduate student, he now asks students to give mini-presentations on course material, complete daily "check-in" writing, and he provides guidance and feedback in active discussion with the students. CCCC OWI Effective Practice 3.10, which states that "Teachers should moderate online class discussions to develop a collaborative OWC and to ensure participation of all students, the free and productive exchange of ideas, and a constant habit of written expression with a genuine audience" not only transformed his online pedagogy but his F2F pedagogy as well,

helping him to overcome the restrictive “lecture and discuss” methods of his graduate training.

Jacob’s and Nancy’s transitions between F2F and online instruction also demonstrate that multimedia and active learning facilitate writing. Both classrooms provide students new means of synthesizing difficult course content through hands-on and collaborative activities. Writing resulted from these practices more organically, becoming a part of the course as a result of, and in some cases in response to, the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic experiences students encountered in their classes.

In addition, both Nancy and Jacob addressed the affective element of transitioning from personal to scholarly writing. For Nancy, multimedia and active learning helped students overcome anxieties associated with writing by connecting with topics, developing a deep reservoir of ideas, and even producing outstanding personal writing before turning to academic writing, armed with the interest, ideas, and sentences. In Jacob’s religion courses, he struggled with ardent believers’ affective responses to the secular academic study of religion, encountering perspectives through a non-faith-based lens as they studied as “critics not caretakers” (McCutcheon). The use of multimedia in both F2F and online classes allowed students to witness adherents of various faiths discuss their beliefs and helped students stimulate various parts of the brain, enhancing the creation of new neural networks to process difficult scholarly criticism (Costa and Nuhfer) and moving from defenses of their own faith practices into open consideration of the practices of other faiths, moving them effectively toward higher affective domain competencies.

Tawnya: Improved F2F Scaffolding

Because of the success of the revised online course, Tawnya integrated the new strategies of scaffolding into the F2F classroom. She provided an overview of the case study at the beginning of the course and then broke the instruction and course readings down into units. Each unit then corresponded to a section of the paper that the students would write and revise, thus providing the necessary references and support for each section. Additionally, Tawnya redesigned the peer editing groups to employ a writer’s workshop format where each individual was responsible for a component of the editing process each week (see Armstrong and Paulson). During the peer review process, she also required regular progress reports. Tawnya, like Nancy and Jacob, used the online platform as a place to store unit resources, rubrics and other course documents for the F2F classroom. Finally, the Blackboard Grade Center™ was integrated into the F2F class in order to track progress. These modifications of the F2F class improved student writing quality and consistency in meeting course outcomes. Most importantly, just as Armstrong and Paulson predicted,

Tawnya found the course easier to deliver, and students provided positive feedback about the learning process.

As increasing numbers of faculty members across disciplines—like Nancy, Jacob, and Tawnya—teach in both the F2F and online environments, we can expect increased reflections on the intersections between teaching modalities. It seems obvious that the online classroom would translate strategies from the F2F classroom into the online environment because the F2F classroom came first. In addition, as the CCCC OWI Position Statement and this research indicate, faculty members must not only translate but transform those strategies to meet the needs of online learners. Perhaps even more interesting is the swirling occurring not only among students enrolling in courses employing a variety of modalities but also among faculty members teaching a wide range of technology-enhanced courses, from traditional F2F courses with a CMS repository of materials to courses housed fully online in the CMS environment. As faculty members swirl, their professional development will should naturally take lessons learned in the online modality back to the F2F classroom, and those lessons may in turn transform the F2F classroom. Based on the experiences of Nancy, Jacob, and Tawnya, the movement from online to F2F modalities suggests particular benefits to swirling: because the online environment distances faculty members from the culture of their F2F classrooms, teaching online can help them better perceive the quality of F2F delivery. In addition, online instruction demands more explicit scaffolding simply because instructors are not physically present to ad-lib instruction. Thus, online instruction becomes a “sandbox” for imagining explicit media, scaffolding, and use of class time that might also enhance F2F instruction.

Translation, Transformation, Taking It Back: Concluding Thoughts

With the rise in popularity of online courses, many universities are increasing their online or hybrid offerings to “keep up with the continuing population growth and demands for lifelong learning” (Bleed qtd. in Young A34). Increased demand for online courses obligates faculty to transform their F2F strategies for the electronic environment so that all students can access learning, but increased online teaching loads also provide a unique opportunity as part of reflective practice to take newly re-imagined strategies back to the F2F classroom. Our individual experiences, combined with insights from the CCCC OWI Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for Online Writing Instruction, provide a starting point for faculty seeking to undergo similar transformational practices and for further research into the effectiveness of these particular practices in relation to WAC anywhere on the F2F-online spectrum. Key conclusions include the following principles.

Students need the opportunity to learn from a variety of media (*Effective Practice 3.2*).

Because communication in online courses still relies mainly on writing, as Nancy's and Jacob's experiences indicate, online students need fewer, better written assignments, combined with multimedia texts and the chance to demonstrate learning through multimedia options. Similarly, when we take this learning from the online "sandbox" back to the F2F classroom, we must recognize that while F2F students have more opportunities for interpersonal interaction in the classroom, they, too, benefit from multimedia pathways to writing and opportunities to "write" using multimedia tools. Additional research on the effectiveness of using multi-modal elements should be conducted to understand the specific relationships between multi-modal instruction and increased writing competencies across the curriculum.

Students need models and scaffolding (*Effective Practice 3.5 and 4.1*).

Because online students lack F2F opportunities to hear instructors discuss writing assignments and answer questions about them and because putting questions into writing requires more student effort, online students need models and explanatory activities—such as those outlined in *Effective Practice 3.5*, including instructions and questions, and those provided by Michael Hannafin, Susan Land and Kevin Oliver—to better comprehend assignments and difficult concepts. For example, when Tawnya needed students to incorporate an understanding of bilingualism, linguistic analysis, and second language miscues into their case studies, including sequenced examples and scaffolding, instruction helped students work through complex content-area synthesis and produce better writing. When Jacob needed to help his students move beyond lower-order affective reactions and more complex interactions with religious studies theory, he modeled the discourse he expected his students to achieve. As *Effective Practice 4.1* indicates, scaffolding and modeling not only build student understanding but also enhance interactions among teacher and students. As students receive more frequent peer and instructor feedback on smaller assignments, they experience less isolation and more engagement. While F2F students receive ongoing feedback from their peers and instructor through classroom interaction, they also find models and scaffolding activities beneficial. In this way, using online instruction as a "sandbox" can assist reflective practitioners in developing more precise supports to make learning accessible for all students. Additional research in this area could include examining the relationship between various types of scaffolding and modeling practices and students' abilities to enter academic discourse communities.

Students need faculty presence and disciplinary community (*Effective Practice* 3.10 and 4.2).

In the process of better serving online students, Nancy, Jacob, and Tawnya became more active on the discussion board. Tawnya and Jacob, in particular, found themselves using discussion boards for more in-depth student engagement as well as to demonstrate student mastery of course concepts. As *Effective Practice* 3.10 observes, instructor collaboration with students in discussion boards “ensure[s] participation of all students, the free and productive exchange of ideas, and a constant habit of written expression with a genuine audience.” Providing interactive spaces for students helped to mitigate some of the isolation issues online students experience in being distant both spatially and temporally from each other and from the instructor. Even in the F2F environment, students need to experience faculty members as present, as collaborators in a discourse community that includes students. After all, the heart of successful WAC efforts is helping students develop new knowledge bases constructively. Using the online “sandbox” to explore course dialogue as disciplinary community-building encourages F2F faculty members to transform “seat time,” as all three faculty members did, into opportunities for the active practice of knowledge construction, building the discourse communities necessary to support students in navigating the unfamiliar terrain of new texts, research methods and theories in our disciplines. While a number of studies across the disciplines have examined effective practices in using discussion boards, among other collaborative strategies, more work needs to be done with the relationship between faculty interaction and student engagement in these online spaces, and in building disciplinary discourse communities through classroom dialogue.

The remarkable consistency across the teaching practice of the faculty authors involved in this project, who have a total of thirty years of combined online teaching experience, reflects the need for all faculty to pause and consider the moves they make while immigrating from the “home country” of the F2F classroom into foreign territory of online education and also when returning home, equipped with new perspectives. And as we transform our courses, we transform ourselves as teachers, and ultimately, as lifelong learners.

Notes

1. Some research from outside the field of rhetoric and composition has also been conducted and upholds the need for engagement in WAC courses, indicating that engaged students who participated in discussion boards and received feedback from the instructor were more likely to be successful in classes (Defazio, Jones, Tennant, and Hook).

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