

WRITING *PROCESSFOLIOS* ON A PRE- SESSIONAL: A MEANS OF FACILITATING AGENCY?

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IMPACTS OF TRADITIONAL PRE-SESSIONAL WRITING ASSESSMENT

On agency of students and teachers

- teacher dependency
- teachers teaching to a narrow construct of writing defined by criterion outcomes
- surface/strategic approach: “playing the examination game” (Miller and Partlett, 1974)

On students’ ability to conceptualise themselves as developing writers

- writing as a performance
- writing as a product

FROM CONSTRAINING TO ENABLING

Challenges to the traditional portfolio on a gate-keeping pre-sessional

Time- how can students produce several pieces when 20+ hours a week over a month?

Marking burden- increased teacher time; increased standardisation if summative

Criteria- different criteria for different genres/pieces?

More hoop-jumping and over-assessment if summative

Little to no effect if only formative

Processfolio

Students depict their journey to produce ONE assignment through a collection of artefacts

Justify choice of artefacts in an introduction

Everything done for essay in class goes in folio- no extra work (except compiling)

Same criteria for product, separate criteria for folio

Constructive alignment (Biggs and Tang, 2011) all work towards essay formative; dialogic feedback, peer and self-evaluation employed

Checks and balances re plagiarism without eroding trust and excessive admin

HOWEVER.....?

“replacing a potentially robust sense of self with **a publically judged self**” (Breen and Mann, 1997)

“students see their own learning process as **entirely their own responsibility rather than seeing it as a product of the society in which they are learning**. They explore themselves but not the world that conditions them” (Torrance, 2015)

“assumes that motivation can be facilitated by good learning strategies rather than a **raising of awareness of the enabling and constraining nature of assessment practices** and possibilities for collaborative action” (Toohey and Norton, 2003).

“a public display of reflection” – Denise (EAP teacher)

“I’m afraid that I can’t tell the whole truth about myself because I have to submit my self-evaluation. Maybe I will hide some secrets!” – Kai (student)

MHEADNDIENNG

STUDENTS ARE NOT UNAWARE OF THE SUBTEXT OF MESSAGES SENT BY ASSESSMENT (THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM), EVEN WHEN THESE ASSESSMENTS PURPORT TO FACILITATE EMPOWERMENT AND ENGAGEMENT WITH LEARNING (SAMBELL AND MCDOWELL, 2006)

WHAT NOW FOR THE *PROCESSFOLIO*?

University A part of summative assessment on a pre-sessional

- ☐ Remains high-stakes

- ☐ Mixed feedback

University B joint CAS/unconditional offer – teachers can choose to use it as assessment

- ☐ Positive feedback but only enthusiastic teachers so far

ASSESSMENT TO MITIGATE THE IMPACTS OF ASSESSMENT ...!!!



BY

- ❖ Making the process inherent to the project by running it as a parallel to the product (**not** graded separately)
- ❖ **Formative** feedback not summative grading
- ❖ Students can **choose** to engage with it as they wish – see the benefit or don't
- ❖ Understanding of constraints of assessment **as a structure**
- ❖ Teachers have **control** over how they wanted to run the project with their class

REFLEXIVE RECOGNITION OF ASSESSMENT AS A SITE OF STRUGGLE

“Why can’t I pretend I love everything, just choose one topic – that way you don’t put your emotion into it and it’s like a machine and it might be easier? But I think that’s a waste of time. I think the pain is part of the experience” – Oliver (student)

“This is a way that presents I have developed myself. Personally I think essay writing is not only the process of develop (sic) my writing ability, but also another way for myself to reform my own character. To help me to be a more positive person, optimistic person. Essay changed me a lot”- Julia (student)

“I mean, students can just feel like they’re just writing in the air and they don’t know.. “what do people want from me? Judge me, rank me I just want to see my grade “. You can give then feedback with little comments but most of the time students just look at their grade. ..What does A+ mean? What does B+ mean? It’s all actually quite meaningless” - Sara (teacher)



IT DIDN'T DO ANY HARM- DENISE
(EAP TEACHER)

CHALLENGES

- ❖ It requires a critical pedagogy and some risk
- ❖ It requires teacher critical-consciousness of the constraints of assessment on our own working conditions
- ❖ It requires trust and collaboration between EAP departments and the university to reduce the power and influence of SELT style gate-keeping

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