

Understanding Students' Perceptions of Writing and Reflection: Impact of International Experiences

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Introduction

- Millennials' writing skills are lacking.
- Students who perceive themselves as accomplished writers write at a deeper level than those who do not (Lingwall & Kuehn, 2013).
- Writing can be used to promote reflective thinking, which encourages deep learning rather than surface learning (Epler & Drape, 2013).
- Benefits of international experiences include professional growth, increased global awareness, and increased concept of self (Harder & Lamm, 2012).
- International experiences provide opportunities to write and reflect.

Purpose and Objectives

- Compare the reflective writing perceptions of students who have participated in international experiences and those who have not participated in international experiences.
 - Describe the impact international experiences have on students' perceptions of their ability to engage in reflective writing.
 - Compare students' perceptions of their ability to engage in reflective writing.

Method

- Quantitative
- 95 students surveyed
- Students were contacted using Dillman's Tailored Design method
- Students were recruited via email

Instrument

- Lingwall and Kuehn (2013) media writing self-perception questionnaire
- Five constructs
 - Elaborative/Surface
 - Reflective/Revisionist
 - Self-Efficacy
 - Writing Apprehension
 - Social Media/Professional
- 50 questions

Demographics

- Agriculture Leadership, Education, and Communications students at Texas A&M University
 - Gender
 - Male 22%
 - Female 78%
 - Age
 - ≤ 21 years old or younger 72.8%
 - ≥ 22 years old or older 27.2%
 - Ethnicity
 - White 85%
 - Major
 - Agricultural Communications and Journalism 39.4%
 - Agricultural Science 16.0%
 - Agricultural Leadership and Development 27.7%
 - University Studies Agricultural Leaderships 12.8%
 - Agriculture Leadership, Education, and Communications 4.3%
 - Places lived
 - Outside of the US 3
 - Had not lived outside of the US 37
 - Missing data 55

Findings

Elaborative/Surface

- How much students think about writing process
 - Less than or equal to 5 = task only
 - 6 – 17 = limited time thinking about writing
 - 18 – 31 = “deep” writing
- Scores in this study ranged from -9 – 27
- **International Experience: 7.43**
- **No International Experience: 7.36**
- No statistical significance

Reflective/Revisionist

- How much planning and revision goes into writing
 - Less than or equal to negative 1 = single draft
 - 0 – 12 = occasional revisions
 - 13 – 25 = “deep” writing
- Scores in this study ranged from -19 – 20
- **International Experience: 1.80**
- **No International Experience: 2.80**
- No statistical significance

Self-Efficacy

- Writer's confidence in their writing skills
 - Less than or equal to 11 = low confidence
 - 12 – 24 = fairly competent
 - 25 – 39 = confident
- Scores in this study ranged from 5 – 39
- **International Experience: 29.30**
- **No International Experience: 27.03**
- No statistical significance

Writing Apprehension

- Level of worry and anxiety students face when writing
 - Scores can range from -13 – 31
 - The higher the score, the higher the level of anxiety
- Scores in this study ranged from -13 – 25
- **International Experience: 4.40**
- **No International Experience: 6.66**
- No statistical significance

Social Media/Professional

- The amount students believe the writing used in texting and social media is of the same quality used in schools and careers.
 - ≤ 7 = social media writing is different from professional writing
 - 8 – 17 = some social media writing is good
 - 18 – 28 = informal writing in social media is perceived as good
- Scores in this study ranged from -4 – 21
- **International Experience: 6.67**
- **No International Experience: 7.54**
- No statistical significance

Total MWSP

- Indicates an overall score of students' perception of writing
 - ≤ 10 = not happy with their writing skills
 - 10 – 44 = moderate enjoyment in writing
 - 45 – 112 = positive perception of writing
- Scores in this study ranged from -49 – 88
- **International Experience: 28.467**
- **No International Experience: 23**
- No statistical significance

Conclusions/Recommendations

- No significant difference found between the two groups.
- Possibility that students who self-select to participate in an international experience or the experience itself could have a positive impact on writing perception.
- Need to add more students to the students, which we plan to do in the 2017 – 2018 school year.
- Conduct a pre and post assessment of the experience

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