

Unconventional Internet Genres and their Impact on Second Language Undergraduate Students' Writing Process

Paul Stapleton
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Orientation **Sources**

- Conventional sources of academic information:
 - Library books
 - Journals
 - Government documents
 - Magazines and newspapers?

Sources

- New internet sources (conventional and unconventional)
 - E-books
 - Journals
 - Government
 - Organizations?
 - Public service?
 - Commercial?
 - Personal?
 - Encyclopedias?

ROAT

- Rigor
- Objectivity
- Authority
- Transparency

- Helms-Park, R., & Stapleton, P. (2006). [How the views of faculty can inform undergraduate Web-based research: Implications for academic writing.](#) *Computers and Composition*, 23 (4) 444-461.

The reality

- In L2 undergraduate writing classes, students arrive at a wide variety of unconventional sources in the course of their searching.

Research question

- Are these new sources having an effect on the thinking/writing process of L2 undergraduate writers?
- If so, what are some examples where new sources have had an influence?
- What strategies need to be taken to address the issue?

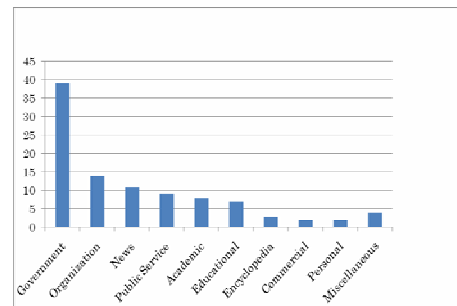
Study design I

- Participants
- 70 undergrad students (mostly Chinese) in an EAP course
- Assignment
 - 5-page paper on choice of:
 - Racial profiling
 - Non-recognition of overseas work qualifications of immigrants
 - Is multiculturalism living up to its ideals?

Study design II

- Analysis
 - Isolate the web-references
 - Determine those that would be called “non-conventional”
 - Categorize according to web-genre
 - Categorize by ideological stance
 - Compare stance in site with student’s claim
 - Follow up with student logs and interviews

Results Web genres cited (by percent) (n=280)



Key example **Racial profiling** (student #2)

- On the one hand...
 - http://www.usdoj.gov/opa/pr/2003/June/racial_profiling_fact_sheet.pdf
 - Government
- But on the other hand...
 - <http://www.counterpunch.org/bates08202004.html>
 - Alternative newspaper
 - <http://www.stateaction.org/issues/issue.cfm/issue/RacialProfiling.xml>
 - Think tank
 - <http://www.kairosCanada.org/e/refugees/safeCountry/index.asp#2>
 - Religious organization
- Log of student #2 revealed no awareness that these sites had ideological leanings. Rather the leanings were adopted (or used as evidence).
- Of 28 unconventional interest groups, 26 were found to have left-leaning tendencies.

Key example **Multiculturalism**

(student #38)

- http://www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/progs/multi/inclusive_e.cfm
- Logs and interviews revealed that such government sites were treated as having the same authority and rigor as conventional academic sites.
- http://www.kenanmalik.com/essays/against_mc.html
- Blogs are a growing entity that blur the lines between acceptability and otherwise.

Key example **Immigration** (student #64)

- <http://www.canadaimmigrationnews.com/canadaimmigrationnews/viewnews.aspx?newsId=3057>
- Law office in disguise

Pedagogical Implications

- Raise awareness of ROAT
- Teach strategies in digital literacy.
- Show examples of sites with ideological agendas and how they violate ROAT

Future directions

(having said all that...)

- Recognition that information sourcing is rapidly changing
- Some unconventional sources “do” pass the ROAT test.
 - E.g., blogs from leading figures
 - “wisdom of crowds” – *Wikipedia*
 - “collective intelligence” - *Wikinomics*
- This liquid nature of information retrieval means:
 - educators must keep an open mind towards unconventional sources
 - Redefine what constitutes a reliable source

Web 2.0

- <http://www.oreillynet.com/pub/a/oreilly/tim/news/2005/09/30/what-is-web-20.html>
- 370 citations in Google Scholar

One example of a new type of source

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gmP4nk0EOE>
- 5 million plus views

Wesch's point

- Wesch explains that although Web 1.0 linked information, Web 2.0 links people, and in doing so he poignantly forces us to rethink authorship, identity and even ourselves.

My point

- While such a message is interesting in itself, the point related to this talk here is that this video, *presented in a non-text format without the authority of an established institution or publisher behind it*, arguably passes the test for academic citation.

This paper...

- Radia, P., & Stapleton, P. (2008). [Unconventional Internet genres and their impact on second language undergraduate students' writing process.](#) *The Internet and Higher Education*, 11 (1), 9-17.
- More papers on this topic available at <http://paulstapleton.info>
- Or contact me
paulstapleton@gmail.com