

Master thesis synopsis: Patricia Tomaszek, 2008.

**Teaching Digital Literature within
a “Research and Teaching Partnership”
in a Transatlantic Blended Learning Environment**

My major investigation in my master’s thesis was based on a class held at the University of Siegen in 2007: “Digital Literature and Arts II.” In this course I served as academic assistant and developed a teaching model that is now applicable in Blended Learning Environments. While in my bachelor thesis I was interested in the design of online learning environments, my main focus in the completion of the master’s was on the student’s course performance: My objective was to find methods to analyze the students learning activity. Therefore, I analyzed the teaching and learning interaction based on theories I derived from studies on Computer Supported Collaborative Work (CSCW) and Computer Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL).

In developing the teaching model, I defined the face-to-face and online-learning environment as “reflective” and “mediative” spaces. In this context, the web-based discussion board was understood as a “space for reflection” in which competencies could be developed within discussions in small cooperating groups that worked, communicated, and discussed their research online. This definition was based on the assumption that in a discussion forum critical thought is practiced and that thereby meta-cognition produces knowledge in the reflective process of writing. In the mediational space (in face-to-face sessions), activity- and transfer-oriented knowledge is acquired that can be implemented or applied on the basis of a research oriented development of competence.

On the outset of my study was the analysis of the message content in the computer supported collaborative communication system that I examined in depth on the basis of a coding scheme by Anna Veldhuis-Diermanse. This scheme was used to observe cognitive, metacognitive, and affective learning activities performed by students in the discussion board.

The result of my study revealed that using an asynchronous discussion board in courses on electronic literature and art may be a good starting point to promote discussion among students and to turn them into researchers and critics of digital literature:

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A content analysis of the posts revealed that 53 percent of the discussions were related to a cognitive learning activity, 24 percent was meta-cognitive and 23 percent were within an affective activity.

Upon examining electronic literature as a rather new teaching field where genres are hybridized and not yet developed and very much in flux, I wanted to discuss a teaching practice that supports highly reflective periods.

My conclusion was that blended learning environments within a teaching partnership can facilitate learning to broaden classrooms across the world and bring together students with diverse backgrounds to study and to discuss electronic literature.