

BLENDED LEARNING IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Sammendrag

Målet med denne studien er å undersøke effekten av *blended learning*, eller blandet læring, i engelsk litteraturundervisning. Blandet læring uttrykker i denne studien en kombinasjon av tradisjonell klasseromsundervisning og digitale metoder. Studien viser hvordan digitale metoder i samspill med mer tradisjonell undervisning kan fremme læring hvis de rette forhold er tilstede. Med rette forhold menes her en pedagogisk integrering av IKT i den sosiale praksis for læring både i og utenfor det fysiske klasserommet.

Undersøkelsen er kvalitativ med elementer av 'mixed methods' design. Studien er basert på klasseromsforskning over en periode på et til to år. De viktigste funn er gjort gjennom spørreundersøkelser og gjennom semistrukturerte intervju med seks elever i programfaget engelskspråklig litteratur og kultur. Et funn er også relatert til engelskfaget i vg1. Begge engelskfagene tilhører studieforberedende utdanningsprogram.

Funnene er i hovedsak delt inn i fire grupper etter forskningsspørsmålene og deres tema. Funnene omhandler blandet læring som en generell metode, en sammenligning av digitale og tradisjonelle metoder vedrørende læringseffekt, kommunikasjon og endring av denne gjennom digitale artefakter og til slutt lærerrollen i et blandet klasserom. Funnene er vurdert i lys av sosiokulturell læringsteori med primær vekt på Vygotsky's læringsteori (Vygotsky, 1978) om den nærmeste utviklingssonen.

Funnene viser at det i hovedsak er mye å hente på å øke integreringen av pedagogisk bruk av IKT i engelsk litteraturundervisning. De fleste funn viser at bruk av IKT i undervisningen var en god hjelp for læring. Elevene opplevde nye perspektiver og økt kreativitet i tillegg til at de fikk en større læringsfrihet. Bruken av nettbaserte diskusjonsgrupper og digitale presentasjonsprogrammer var med å øke motivasjonen og elevenes læringsutbytte. Funnene her viser blant annet at flere elever følte en større frihet og bidro mer i nettbaserte gruppediskusjoner enn i tilsvarende diskusjoner i klasserommet. Funnene viser også at konstruksjonen av digitale veggtafler blant elevene var med å øke innlæringen av relevant vokabular og assosiasjoner knyttet til bestemte emner. Negative funn er i hovedsak knyttet til digital lesing og opplevelse av kunst. Her viser funnene at skjermene i stor grad forstyrrer dybdelesing av litteratur. Elevene syntes det var vanskelig å konsentrere seg og ga uttrykk for at de følte seg mer emosjonelt distansert fra både handling og personer i litteraturen gjennom digital lesing.

Funnene indikerer i hovedsak at en innføring av blandet læring, gjennom økt pedagogisk integrering og bruk av IKT i faget engelskspråklig litteratur og kultur, vil fremme læring. Funnene indikerer også at en aktiv, tilstedeværende og kunnskapsrik lærer er avgjørende for en vellykket integrering av IKT i en blandet læringsmodell.

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Come to the edge,‘ he said.
They said, ‘We are afraid.’
‘Come to the edge,‘ he said.
They came.
He pushed them...and they flew.

Guillaume Apollinaire, French poet (1880-1918)

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1. Introduction

The present study investigates blended learning used in a course of English Literature and Culture in upper secondary school. It raises the question how the use of blended learning may promote and encourage learning in a course of English literature and culture. The study also compares traditional face-to-face classroom communication with communication mediated by digital artefacts.

Blended learning is a particular approach to language pedagogy in which a student partly learns through online delivery of instruction and content. In blended learning the student will have some control over time, place, path and/or pace. Their time spent learning and studying can partly be online, outside the classroom and at a time decided by the participants. This means that the classroom as an arena for learning may be expanded through the use of digital learning platforms and digital communication tools. Blended learning also points to the time spent at school when the lessons constitute a blend of digital learning and face-to-face learning.

The use of artefacts in the digital world may improve learning and encourage students in their learning of English and English literature. In addition to a traditional classroom delivery online teaching and learning will open up for more flexibility and may encourage the learners to seek more information on their own and continue their learning process. The teachers may facilitate this process.

In order to engage the students more in their own learning it is necessary to create an educational setting that allows the students to combine online experiences with real-world resources and activities. In a world where many aspects of our lives seem to become increasingly based on computers, the field of education will also move towards a more digital practice (Hanson-Smith, 2001). Some educators mention a shift. They believe that online education represents a new paradigm in learning (Garrison & Kanuka, H. 2004).

To motivate students to learn more – a digital start may increase their interest and open their eyes for the subject. The virtual reality and the students' experience may be more used by the educators. Many of the students are well trained in digital comprehension. Digital artefacts as computers, tablets and smartphones are possessed by a majority of learners. Therefore, there

seems to be a significant potential in a pedagogical use of digital artefacts in the educational sector.

Technologies seem to influence our use and understanding and how we are socialized through taking part in communicative activities. This study will include aspects of the students' attitudes towards the use of blended learning. Many EFL teachers in an increasingly digital world do not seem to fully have grasped the many digital opportunities in their teaching practice. Educators need to appropriate relevant technology from a social and relational perspective (Lund, 2003).

1.1 Motivation

Being an English teacher in upper secondary school for a number of years has given insight into various forms of teaching. Communicative language learning and project work are two out of many pedagogical approaches that have marked the agenda for me as a teacher. It has also been an experience in new and to a certain extent changing competence aims within English as a Foreign Language.

Until 2006, there were four basic skills integrated in the English curricula. These basic skills were reading, writing, talking, and listening. In 2006 two new skills were implemented in the national framework. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training added two new skills, numeracy and digital skills, into the curricula of all subjects.

The Norwegian ministry of education has in its programme for English in the upper secondary education mentioned the digital arena (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2013a). 'Being able to use digital tools in English involves the authentic use of English, and paves the way for additional forms of communication and learning arenas. In many contexts, English-language skills are a prerequisite for being able to exploit new tools for extracting information for use in specialist contexts. Source criticism, copyright and personal protection are all key concerns in the digital arena.'

Digital skills are according to the national framework (a framework for teachers to use and implement in their teaching, Appendix A), the skills to be able to use digital tools, media and resources efficiently, to solve practical tasks, to find information and design digital products.

It is also about being able to interpret digital information appropriately and critically. Furthermore it says that using digital skills is a natural part of learning both in and across subjects, and that this use will provide possibilities for acquiring and applying new learning strategies.

However, these aims focus mostly on the practical and technological aspects of learning to use various digital tools. The part that I want to explore is the didactic and pedagogical part and how both digital forms of communication and learning arenas in the digital world may help benefit students in their learning.

Another motivating factor has been a frustration concerning all the expensive digital artefacts and the seemingly low pedagogical use by many teachers and students. Digital confusion and loss of track in an increasingly digital world has sometimes blinded the eyes of an experienced teacher and caused an educational bewilderment. However this frustration has also enabled me to continue my investigation in blended learning. It has also increased my motivation to try and fail in testing new digital methods in class.

It has been important to go beyond the strictly technical issues and explore how the digital world can be brought closer to the classroom and enhance learning in a blended working atmosphere. An important source of inspiration has also been to see how the digital life world of the students can be brought closer to the educational world. After more than twenty years as a teacher trying to make use of digital technologies I have developed an increasing interest in investigating how digital artefacts actually affect the processes of teaching and learning.

1.2 An Explanation of Blended Learning and Its Potential in Education

In this study blended learning refers to the mix of digital learning and face-to-face learning. Face-to-face learning is also being categorized as traditional learning.

A blended learning course may offer new insight in communication and learning and expands the limits of the traditional classroom.

The concept Blended learning has no clear definition. Most educators and writers consider it a blend of face-to face learning and online learning or rather a combination of a physical and a virtual learning environment. In an American report from Allen, Seaman and Garrett (2007, quoted in Stacey and Gerbic 2009, p.2) they use the term *hybrid learning* in courses where 30 to 70 % of the content is delivered online. Blended learning seems to be an emerging trend in higher education and has caught my interest as one method to increase and encourage students in their learning process.

Teachers have always engaged in different forms of blending and added new information and knowledge to what students already know through various learning activities and through a combination of theory and practice. The term blended learning has however emerged in the last decade along with the rapid invention in computer technology and refer, as mentioned in my introduction, to the various blends of face-to face and online learning.

Traditionally a face-to-face environment is synchronous and based on human interaction whereas online and distant learning tend to be more asynchronous and rely more on independent learning. Today the potential in information communications technology (ICT) opens up for a stronger integration of these two types of learning environments. Graham (2006) identifies space, time, fidelity and humanness as four key dimensions to be blended in this integration. In the time and fidelity dimensions, communication technologies make synchronous interaction possible. This interaction occurs in real time close to the same level of fidelity as in the face-to-face communication. The human dimension is illustrated in the increasing facilitation of human interaction on digital devices. A successful integration requires an understanding of the special characteristics of the most desirable aspects in both online and face-to-face instruction and an appropriate mixing of these two learning environments (Garrison and Kanuka, 2004).

Teachers are usually most experienced in face-to-face teaching and learning and have a specific insight in how their students may optimize their learning. If teachers are equally trained in the digitally pedagogical teaching and learning they will be able to choose and combine the more traditional way of learning with digital learning and choose the best from each educational field.

The use of blended learning may therefore open up for a transformative process to benefit the learners in achieving a more meaningful learning experience. What is obvious is that technology gives both teachers and learners more flexibility and less dependence on fixed classroom hours and school attendance. The emphasis on contrasting synchronicity and asynchronicity and communication through text and human presence may of course be regarded as just another form of variation in learning.

However this new flexibility in a learning environment with a potentially continuous improvement opens up not only for more variation but also for more engaged and committed learners in a learning atmosphere that links the life world of the students to the education institutions.

Through a blended learning atmosphere it may be easier to engage learners in reflection and discourse created through social, cognitive and teaching presences. A blended atmosphere increases the students' learning through more social and collaborative activities (Ramsey, 2003). The zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) are activated through this type of working atmosphere. This may help more students to engage themselves on various levels of learning and promote their interest in learning.

To focus on new ideas and intervention is an important part of blended learning. An introduction of blended learning is dependent on autonomous teachers who are able to choose to introduce their students to a new technological mix of methods. The teachers must be motivated and prepared to add online learning to face-to-face learning, something that also requires sufficient pedagogical and technological insight and support. A pedagogically driven model will justify the different blended elements through the course outcomes and the need of the students. To use technology in EFL classrooms should be motivated by pedagogical reasons to add further value to the teaching and improve learning for the students. 'A blended-learning course is potentially greater than the sum of its parts, and positive learning outcomes are most apparent when clear roles are assigned to the teacher and to the technology' (Sharma & Barrett, 2007:7).

When carefully chosen and done well, blended learning can exploit the best of both worlds. 'A blended approach sees the roles of teachers and technology as complimentary' (Sharma & Barrett, 2007:14). One key feature of using technology in learning is that it allows language

practice and study away from the confines of the classroom. This may help students to become independent learners. The teacher and the technology perform different roles. In language learning, there are several things which require human interaction such as knowing the learners' needs, choosing the topics, interpreting etc.

1.3 Criticism of Blended Learning

Blended learning has been criticized and considered a 'compromise' position. If the teacher does not have a principled approach there may of course be confusion and little relation between the topic and the online components.

There may be a tension between the understanding of the different parts of blended learning and viewing it as a whole system.(Bluic et al, 2007, quoted in Stacey and Gerbic 2009, p.10). It seems likely to assume that many educators will just view new digitally pedagogical methods as a means of variation to mix in with more traditional methods of teaching and learning. By just considering blended learning an implementation of digital variation, it may be difficult to discover its pedagogical potential and its ability to transform the communication and learning process.

Learning partly online and partly in a face-to-face environment may help students to do tasks and move through the curriculum at their own pace, but it also requires them to take more responsibility for their own learning, something which may be difficult for some learners.

Teachers' conceptions and approaches to both design and teaching using blended learning environments is still a developing issue. More research is also needed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' perceptions and problems that these teachers face when integrating pedagogy and content knowledge into blended learning environments, the strategies they employ to address these problems, and how they use the blended learning tools to overcome these challenges (Caravias, 2014). According to my experience, many teachers need to become more digitally trained and should be more encouraged and supported in their teaching practice.

It is important to discover what type of pedagogical and technology changes that are being made to blended learning courses. Being able to identify design problems, and finding

solutions to design and development issues are also important to discover to what extent pedagogical frameworks are helping teachers to integrate pedagogy and content knowledge into blended learning environments.

The theoretical background, the discussion of blended learning and the application to practice will be further looked into in the following chapters.

1.4 Research Statement and Research Questions

This study raises the question how the use of blended learning may promote and encourage learning in a course of English literature and culture. The study also compares traditional face-to-face classroom communication with communication mediated by digital artefacts.

To my knowledge there is little research on working with English literature in a blended classroom. What I have read or studied about blended learning has mostly been related to blended learning in general or to distant learning, including e-learning (Ramsey, 2003., Alan, Seaman & Garrett, 2007., Lund, 2006., Rosenbaum, 2012)

The use of blended learning raises several questions. These questions pay attention to some closer aspects of digital learning compared to face-to-face learning in a blended working atmosphere. The analyses and discussion in this study will be centred on the following research questions and results from these findings.

1. How digital methods may benefit students in a blended classroom
2. How the use of digital methods seems to influence the learning outcome compared to the use of non-digital methods
3. How digital communication in the classroom may change and affect teaching and learning
4. The role of the teacher in a blended classroom

The questions for surveys and interviews (section 3.2.1, section 3.2.2, section 4.5.1-4.5.6) have focused on the different language and cultural competence aims, the basic digital skills and how the students encountered different tasks to be carried out online or face-to-face. The questions relate to the various digital and blended methods tried out and put into the four main research questions.

Questions for this thesis were made partly based on the teacher's experience and interest for blended learning research. The questions used in surveys and semi-structured interviews with a smaller group of students, were mainly based on the experience of the 25 students in the English literary course (A-level students). One topic, digital bulletin boards, was also related to another English class, 30 students in their first year at upper secondary school. This was, as already mentioned, to acquire a broader aspect on this particular method.

1.5 Related Research

Blended learning is a quite new topic within educational research and many of the articles have been recently published. In the USA, a meta-analysis (*Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning*, 2010) from the Department of Education concluded that the results of blended learning in education had higher scores than that of only online learning or face-to-face learning. Ludvigsen, Lund, Rasmussen and Saljo published in 2011 *Learning Across Sites*, which has some related articles about blended learning. There are books to be found about the more practical implementations of blended learning in especially the primary and lower secondary schools like *Blended Learning* by Sharma & Barrett (2007).

There is, however, more research to be found on digital literacy and its implications for the educational sector. I have among others read and studied articles and books by Ola Erstad (2010) and Andreas Lund (2003, 2006).

It has not been possible to find any specifically related research about the implementation of blended learning in the teaching of English (EFL) in a course of English literature and culture.

1.6 Blended Learning and Classroom Research

The aim behind the blended learning programme in this study was to give both teacher and students some challenges. These challenges were meant to promote motivation and pave the

ground for more learning. The aim was that by touching the material at different levels of learning, the students would be confronted and encouraged to advance in development and if possible extend their zones of proximal development (Vygotsky 1978). Different levels of learning meant here that students had their own individual starting point and knowledge before taking part in the different learning activities.

In this study blended learning is discussed based on the attitudes and experiences of the teacher and 25 students in the English Literature and Culture course (section 3.2.2.1), which is a course in their final year of upper secondary school/A-level. Also the results of using chat-forums in literature the previous year (with many of the same students) will be linked to this course and further developed and commented.

The blended learning programme consisted of different relationships: Student-to-Student, Student-to-Teacher, Student-to-Community (Class), Student-to-Material (and Student-to-Technology).

The model used in my action research allowed the students both to study and learn in the classroom and outside independent of time and place. Online platforms delivered much of the instructions, but the teacher gave lectures in class and provided support and instructions to the students both inside and outside class. Outside class most of these instructions and support were given online. On certain tasks and topics the students were asked to work remotely and not in class. A major task outside class was the online synchronous discussion groups in literature.

The different online activities were planned through the collaboration of teacher and students. Some of the digital tasks and activities also developed and were improved along the school year as both teacher and students became more trained and seemed to master the specific and required digital skills. It was therefore important to participate in digital forums in an educational frame. Both online discussion groups and the creation of digital bulletin boards and posters were implemented by the teacher and furthermore encouraged by both teacher and students to be practiced throughout the whole school year.

A minor survey (section 3.2.2.2) was carried out as a side project in an EFL class, a compulsory course in the first year of upper secondary school. This was done to achieve more results in the use of electronic bulletin boards.

The use of chat-forums or online discussions (section 3.2.2.1) have been implemented, both as a supplement to the dialogue in class, but also to observe the differences between digital and face-to-face discussions. These online discussions have been practised several times throughout the school year. The students have been asked to explain the differences between online discussions and discussions in class. Also they have been asked to comment upon the advantages and disadvantages in both, and to comment on the eventual differences in language use. The discussions have all been linked to literary topics (section 4.5.3).

The images from literary texts and visual arts opened up for the students' artistic skills. Creating digital presentations through the program such as Prezi helped them to be more creative and express their full understanding of literary works as Hamlet. Visualization could of course have been carried out on paper but new technology has given us far more opportunities and may help a lot more students to become creative. Creativity and engagement will in most cases lead to better learning and help develop the students' full potential. However this did not mean real-world material to be less important. When my students experienced the original painting of *The Ambassadors* in the National Gallery in London it seemed to have a much stronger impact mentally, emotionally and physically than when viewing it on power-point in class one week earlier. It was the blend of both classroom activities (digital and traditional) and real world experience that made them more fully grasp the world and art from the Renaissance.

Furthermore the use of digital bulletin boards (Computing an optional background pattern or picture on a computer screen) has been tried out. Students have been asked to comment on the pros and cons using these programmes, and have been encouraged to share their opinion about the comparison between a digital presentation programme and the blackboard (section 4.4.1, section 4.4.2)

As this course in English literature also has studying visual art as one of the competence aims, electronic bulletin boards may help the students to visualize and combine elements from both literature and art.

Questions about digital reading have also been an important aspect to investigate. The students have been questioned about their experiences here and if they felt it different to read digitally compared to reading from a book (section 4.5.2).

One of the students in the English class of literature spent two months abroad and received some of her learning in literature through connecting digitally to both teacher and her class. She would be defined in this period as a distant learner (section 4.5.6). During these two months she received teaching material online and participated in some of the lessons through the programme Skype.

Blended learning raises several questions. The four research questions (section 1.4) will relate to specific aspects of blended learning. How can digital methods benefit students in their learning and when is the use of digital artefacts a positive learning experience? Has the use of digital artefacts only advantages or do we see any disadvantages or limitations when studying English literature and Art? How may this change in communication – how students relate to each other and to the teacher through the use of digital tools – affect both teaching and learning in general? Does the use of digital tools influence the students' abilities of reflection and critical skills in English literature? The role of the teacher in a blended classroom will also be elaborated.

It was interesting to study how the use of digital tools and its learning outcome varied when working in groups or on an individual basis compared to when working in a non-digital atmosphere (section 4.3.4). One may question if and how the language production will be influenced through the use of digital tools. These and the above questions have been directly or indirectly included and elaborated on in my research on both digital and blended tasks in the classroom.

1.6.1 A Pilot Study

During the fall of 2012 online discussion groups were tested out by seventeen students, in a class of International English in their second year of upper secondary school. This study was carried out during the first year of the master's programme. This qualitative study was carried out to see if online discussions in class would engage more students to participate and motivate the production of language and language learning. It was also done to study how the

use of online discussion in addition to a traditional face-to-face instruction would influence and possibly improve both learning and communicative competence. This study was a preliminary study to prepare the research in this thesis.

1.6.2 The Teacher's Role

The role of the teacher has been both interactive and observational dependent on the artefact and the planned lesson study. In a blended learning environment an important part is the dialogue and collaboration between student and teacher, but also the student collaboration. In some digital tasks the teacher has been an active participant. In other digitally related tasks the teacher had more the role of an observer.

As their EFL teacher I both observed and took part in many of the online discussions and initiated some of the electronic bulletin boards. In class my role as teacher was both to be a participant and an observer.

1.6.3 Approval and Guidelines

To collaborate with participants is a central idea in action research and may lead to ethical dilemmas. It is therefore important to acknowledge the dual role of the teacher and the researcher and the sensitivity it takes to engage in this form of research. The study has been carried out within accepted guidelines and has been approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD). Documents concerning this study have been submitted and approved. The participants have been informed and have signed an agreement to participate. They had the possibility to opt out of the study at any time without having to explain why and/or be penalized for it.

1.7 An Outline of the Thesis

This thesis consists of six main chapters. In the first chapter my study is introduced and the research questions are presented within the frame of blended learning didactics and the national framework for basic skills and competence aims.

The second chapter provides the theoretical background for this study, mainly within the frames of a sociocultural approach.

Chapter three contains the methods and the research design of this study. It also presents the different methods and procedures used in surveys and interviews.

In chapter four the main results and finding are presented according to the different research categories.

The fifth chapter consists of both analysis and discussion in relation to the results and findings. The discussion concerning the findings in this study also includes some analysis related to the theory presented in chapter two.

The final chapter six contains a conclusion of this study's main findings and results and mentions briefly suggestions for further research.

1.8 Definitions and Descriptions

Some definitions that are central for this study are explained below. Descriptions of some of the digital artefacts/programmes are also included.

BL: blended learning

CMC: Computer Mediated Communication, a communication that takes place through, or is facilitated by, computers

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

Padlet: An online bulletin board, a tool to create content like images and videos

Prezi: An online story and presentation tool

SCT: Sociocultural Theory

ICT: Information and communication technology

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

In this study blended learning is viewed as the combination of face-to-face and digital learning. Blended learning extends learning to go beyond the classroom and provides opportunities for reflection, interaction and further engagement with the learning material. In a blended working atmosphere students learn through digital communication and dialogue with both students and teachers, they also learn from using programs on their computers.

The research questions in this study will be attempted linked to theories of learning, mainly to the constructivist view. The research questions are divided into four main categories: How digital methods may benefit students in a blended classroom, how the use of digital methods seems to influence the learning outcome compared to the use of non-digital methods, how digital communication may affect teaching and learning, and the role of the teacher in a blended classroom.

To use software and integrate technology into education may improve learning. Computers assist students in many ways and facilitate the access to information. Computer assisted work is also easier to share since this can be done digitally on different learning platforms or through the use of social media. According to the teachings of Vygotsky (1978), construction of knowledge is based on students' learning environment and collaboration.

Teachers must know the principles of learning and how students learn. Development of teaching material and methods need to be based on learning theories. Blended learning may use ideas and principles from different theories. A focus on the main learning theories will therefore be briefly presented and commented.

The main focus will be on constructivist and sociocultural approaches linked to the Vygotskian theories of learning. This is because many of the activities to promote learning within the context of a blended learning classroom are based on action and interaction and fit well in with a communicative approach in language learning. To develop a higher personal thinking, meaning and knowledge, to be able to learn through the collaboration with other more capable peers, are also considered the most important factors for learning in this study.

Mediated action and computer-mediated communication will also be outlined and exemplified. Blended learning will finally be commented and considered a boundary object that mediates learning in and across different social worlds (Lund 2006).

2.2 Different Schools of Learning

Different schools of learning provide different approaches even if they may overlap in some ideas and principles.

The behaviorist school of thought influenced by Thorndike (1913), Pavlov (1927), and Skinner (1974), describes learning as a change in observable behavior. The learner starts off as a clean slate and behavior is shaped through external stimuli in the environment (Skinner, 1974). Early computer assisted language learning programs bear traits of a behaviorist approach through their focus on drilling, response and feedback (Ally, 2204). This is typical for language drills and grammar exercises where the programs both correct and value the scores. The total score can be related to what behaviorists claim to be observable behavior and also a measurement for learning. When the learners are provided with feedback they can check their progress and take corrective actions if required. These language drills may be a part of language learning in a blended classroom, but are in this study not considered important for language learning.

That not all learning is observable, lead to a shift towards more cognitive theories. Cognitivism focuses on the inner mental activities such as thinking, memory, knowing, and problem-solving and that learning is more defined as a change in a learner's mental construction. Reflection is an important part in this learning. In 1959 the cognitive scientist Noam Chomsky attracted attention for his review of B.F.Skinner's book 1957 book *Verbal Behaviour* in the journal *Language* (1959) in which he argued that Skinner ignored the role of human creativity in linguistics. According to Lehrer (1993, p. 200), one of the principle advantages of computer-assisted tools over text-based tools is that computers have the ability to provide many layers of data simultaneously. A multi media environment allows students to explore a single phenomenon while taking note of important features of the phenomenon put into relief by the use of text, graphics, animations, sound, and video. The use of sound, animation, designer tools, electronic bulletin boards have all been tried out in this study.

When students were engaged in making digital posters and bulletin boards they used multimedia information and instruction. They applied information and used cognitive strategies to create the various digital presentations.

The philosopher and psychologist Jean Piaget (1973) theorized that there are four stages of cognitive development and believed that cognitive development is cumulative; that is, understanding a new experience grows out of a previous learning experience.

The Constructive School of Learning sees learners as active rather than passive and considers the learner to be the center of learning. Constructivists believe that learners should be allowed to construct meaning. This is done through observing, processing, interpreting and finally personalizing information into their own knowledge. According to this theory all learning should create challenging activities that link new and old information to acquire meaningful knowledge. This theory seems to be integrated in much of the computer assisted learning today. It relates also to some of the results in my study where students after having observed tuition from the teacher about a certain subject, gradually participated in e.g. online discussions. They also made their own personal contributions on the subject matter and showed an increasing comprehension and insight along with the process.

Behaviorism, Cognitive Psychology and Constructivism, all three schools can according to Ertmer and Newby (1993) be used as a taxonomy for learning within computer assisted education or blended learning. The behaviorist strategy may be closely related to teach facts (what), the cognitive strategy to teach process and principles (how), and constructive strategies may help develop a higher personal thinking and meaning and a situated contextual meaning (why), (Ertmer and Newby :1993).

2.2.1 Blended Learning and Constructive Theories

This study in blended learning is mainly focused on the learning process and how the students have adapted to a more digital learning environment. The role of the teacher has been both that of a facilitator and as a primary source of knowledge. The presence of an active teacher is still been considered important. To support the learner, to focus on the task and have an active dialogue with the learner constitutes an important educational framework (section 2.3.1). This process is often referred to as Scaffolding (Bruner, 1977). Although there are clear elements of cognitive strategies in this research where learning is described as a mental process, the

focus has been closer to the constructivist theories where learning is considered an active process of constructing meaning. Social learning theories help us to understand how people learn in social contexts and how teachers may construct active learning communities. The potential of the students and their approach to blended learning has therefore made it natural to use the sociocultural theory of learning by Vygotsky.

Although the term “sociocultural “ is closely linked to Vygotsky, certain ideas about the sociocultural approach are not purely Vygotskian ones (Wertsch, 1994: 203). According to Wertsch, Vygotsky tended to reduce cultural differences to differences in evolutionary status whereas in Wertsch’s thinking these differences are more cross-historical and/or cross-cultural. At the most general level a sociocultural approach concerns the ways in which human action, including mental action is linked to historical, institutional and cultural settings in which it occur (Wertsch 1994). The blended classroom reflects in many ways both the institutional and cultural setting of contemporary society. It reflects the increasingly digital focus and to some extent also the belief that cognitive activities through the use of digital artefacts may develop learning. In other words, blended learning reflects the increased reliance and use of digital artefacts in society at large.

2.2.2 The Sociocultural Theory of Learning

The sociocultural theory of learning is rooted in a constructivist view where the type of learner is considered self-directed, creative, and innovative. Sociocultural approaches to learning and development were first systematized and applied by L. S. Vygotsky and his collaborators in Russia in the nineteen-twenties and thirties. According to Vygotsky (1978), learning will always occur and not be separated from a social context. Second language acquisition (SLA) research that is influenced by sociocultural theory (SCT) is a relatively new trend. Linguists interested in language acquisition have begun to situate their investigations within SCT and to consider the theoretical implications of the influence of SCT in language learning research (see, e.g. Lantolf, 2000, Lantolf.J & Thorne, 2007). Environmental factors like institutional resources and peer interactions seem to mediate the learners’ development of strategies (Gao, 2010). In this study these strategies can be exemplified when a majority of students learned new vocabulary through their construction of digital bulletin boards. This was as a collaborative activity in class made possible through a specific program.

To increase creativity and innovation is important in SCT. An analysis, which includes prior

experience, is considered important to create new knowledge. Another crucial assumption regarding the nature of the learner concerns the level and source of motivation for learning. Motivation to learn may depend on the learner's confidence in his or her potential for learning. These feelings of competence and belief in a potential to solve new problems, links up with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1935) where learners are challenged within close proximity to, yet slightly above, their current level of development. By experiencing the successful completion of challenging tasks, learners gain confidence and motivation to embark on more complex challenges.

Some students will find more confidence and motivation in digitally mediated tasks and may therefore be more challenged in their learning. In order to complement a communicative approach in teaching languages, digital artefacts can be used to bring realistic experiences to the blended learning classroom. Communicating through online groups, using digital platforms and communication through Skype have all been experienced by the students in this study.

Vygotsky (1978) also highlighted the convergence of the social and active roles in learning. He said that the greatest moment in our mind's development occurs when speech and action converge. Speech and action are often intermingled in a digital world of learning where the borderlines between them may be difficult to discover. One example is chat rooms where the participants often tend to use an informal language, close to oral speech, and where certain abbreviations, slang or symbols are used.

2.2.3 The Social Constructivist View

The social constructivist view based on the sociocultural theory by Vygotsky claims that knowledge is not something static that can be transferred but is constructed by each individual in relation to previous knowledge. Knowledge is here developed through action and interaction (Vygotsky 1978). Social constructivism stresses the social dimension of cognition and the role that language production plays in promoting learning. The social-constructivist perspective assumes that learners construct knowledge through social interaction and that the nature of these interactions affects collaboration and learning.

The social constructive view coincides very well with the view in communicative language learning since a communicative approach is based on constructivist theory and approach (Richards, Jack.C.,2006) In a constructivist perspective, learning occurs and is constructed

through collaboration. This process provides the students with the opportunities to test their ideas and opinions and improve their understanding. Interaction is like a vehicle of learning between learners and the social context and this interaction is important to create language learning and meaning. The interaction between learners and digital artefacts may also create learning on a more individual level if the computer program can be used to function as a more capable peer. In computer assisted language drills the specific programs may have this function. Also in quiz related exercises the software has incorporated scores that may value the knowledge-based answers.

According to the social constructivist approach the teacher takes on the role as a facilitator. This means that the teacher will help the learner to get his or her own understanding of the content. For communicative purposes the teacher may find e.g. digital tasks that encourage authentic communication. In a traditional teacher/student setting the learner plays a more passive role. The digital learning field may encourage and open up for students to have a more active role. It also opens up for a more continuous dialogue between teacher and student.

2.3 The Zone of Proximal Development

Vygotsky claims that learning should be matched in some manner with the child's development level (Mind and Society 1978:85) and that there are two development levels. The first level is described as the actual development level and the second is accounted for as the potential development. The distance between these two is called the zone of proximal development. Through dialogue and interaction productive change may be possible. This demonstrates an interactive view of how we learn. The zone of proximal development 'is the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' (Vygotsky 1978: 86). It shows the range of abilities that a student can perform with assistance, but has difficulties in performing on her or his own.

Consequently, teachers can create a learning environment that maximizes the learners' ability to interact with each other through discussion, collaboration, and feedback. Much of this interaction can today take place on the computer. In a digital setting the teacher may have

more the role of a facilitator to help and motivate and organize learning, but is still being a more capable peer than the student. It is therefore important that the teacher has a resource of knowledge.

Since Vygotsky also claimed that culture is the primary determining factor for knowledge construction we may question if this cultural lens is different when the interactions with others is virtual and not in the real world. This study tries to compare learning outcomes when using digital and non-digital methods. Findings concerning digital reading of literature clearly illustrate this difference.

Vygotsky continues beyond deciding the development levels. 'We cannot limit ourselves merely to determining development levels if we wish to discover the actual relations of the developmental process to learning capabilities' (Vygotsky 1978: 85). The thoughts and research by Vygotsky are still relevant in educational research. In a blended learning environment some computer programmes may sometimes be claimed to be 'more capable peers'. Computer assisted learning is learning through the use of pedagogical software and through the use of certain pedagogical websites. There are many educationally related tasks in schools that learners can choose to solve with the assistance of a computer. However completing certain tasks, digitally or not digitally, will of course not always lead to further mental development. There may be different reasons to why learning does not take place. These reasons may be found both on a personal and an institutional level like lack of motivation, the absence of qualified tutors and sociocultural problems. However, given an optimal situation for learning, Vygotsky says that what a child can do with assistance today, she will be able to do by herself tomorrow (Vygotsky 1978: 87). The zone of proximal development characterizes mental development prospectively (Vygotsky 1978: 87). If this relates to computer assisted learning, the specific computer programs for learning and the educational use of the computers must have prospective and particular values clearly designed to develop or help the progress of development, to make learning occur.

Children can imitate a variety of actions that go well beyond the limits of their own capability (Vygotsky 1978: 88). Imitation has been and is still used in some educational software. One example can be language tasks where learners first are asked to read through an instruction, then to imitate or copy the correct examples shown, and then use them in similar tasks. Feedback is given automatically through e.g. points or scores. Low scores means for the

learners to repeat the task until they reach the highest level (complete the task successfully) and reach the highest scores. Using these types of educational grammar programs seems to be closer to the behaviourist school through its focus on drilling, response and feedback. To achieve real development, educational computer programmes and their use must be oriented towards development levels that have not yet been reached. If not, they are ineffective as to overall development according to the theory of Vygotsky. “Good learning” is what which is in advances of development (Vygotsky 1978: 89).

An essential feature of learning is that it creates the zone of proximal development and this learning awakens a variety of internal development processes. These processes are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers (Vygotsky 1978: 90). When these processes are internalized they will become a part of an independent developmental achievement. So from Vygotsky’s point of view learning is not development itself. However, when properly organized, learning will result in mental development.

School learning ought to stimulate developmental processes. It is therefore of essential concern that that the use of computers and computer programmes in learning manage to create potential zones of proximal development. If not successful in doing so, external knowledge will not become internalized according to the theory of Vygotsky. He also states that there is not any one formula to solve the problem of the significance of each particular subject concerning mental development (Vygotsky 1978: 91). According to the findings in this study, some of the digital methods, especially the use of multimedia tools and programs stimulated engagement and learning among most students, whereas other activities like digital reading of literature seemed to reduce the emotional aspect and take away some of the abilities to go in depth and to reflect.

2.3.1 Scaffolding

Vygotsky never used the term scaffolding, but the notion of scaffolding is closely linked to his sociocultural theory and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

The term scaffold, as applied to learning situations, comes from Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976:p 90). They define it as a process ‘that enables a child or novice to solve a task or achieve a goal that would be beyond his unassisted efforts’. They described scaffolding as the support given to a younger learner by an older, more experienced adult.

Cognitive growth involves an interaction between basic human capabilities and 'culturally invented technologies that serve as amplifiers of these capabilities' (Bruner 1977). Culturally invented technologies will include computers and other artefacts. Bruner also seems to agree with Vygotsky that language serves to mediate between environmental stimuli and the individual's response.

An important aspect in scaffolding is that the teacher provides appropriate support when communicating with the learner. A teacher without resources and knowledge will not be able to have the role of a successful facilitator and thus not help to improve learning among the students. It is therefore of utmost importance that the teacher can organize and provide good learning situation (Bruner 1977).

Active dialogues and interactions between the teacher and the learner are important parts in this setting. An active learner will be able to decide the direction of the interaction. Software and a digital framework may help this communication and scaffolding process to support learning and to create more independent learners. One of the results found in this study strongly indicates the importance of an active teacher to help the learners to become more active. In the synchronous online discussions groups on literary topics the teacher continuously questioned and gave feedback to the students and their replies and comments. A majority of students found this to be important for their own learning achievements.

2.4 Mediated Action

Mediated action is defined as a social action taken with or through a mediational means or a cultural artefact. Mediation can be described as 'the role played by 'significant people', the people who a learner admires, who select and modify the learning material for the learner helping him/her to move to the next zone of proximal development' (Brown 2006). Lantolf (2000) divided mediation into three groups: mediation by others, mediation by self through inner speech, and mediation by artefacts. The artefacts could be pen and pencil, specific tasks and digital artefacts like computer programmes.

Vygotsky's analysis of mediation is the key to understand how human mental functioning is tied to historical, institutional settings (Wertsch 1994). According to this theory, all social

actions are mediated by mediational means or cultural artefacts. Mediated action refers to the dialectic relationship between action and cultural artefacts/mediational means, which is what makes action possible. The shift in emphasis from mediation and mediational means to mediated *action* is motivated partly by recognizing how humans play active roles in using and transforming cultural tools and their associated meaning system (Wertsch 1994). Mediated action therefore seems to be useful in sociocultural research. The use of cultural tools will have certain degrees of uniqueness and flexibility. This relates to e.g. learning a foreign language face-to-face or learning through a computer programme, these two methods will not be identical in their use. According to this theory (Wertsch 1994), language will usually mediate social actions. It is therefore likely, in today's historical setting with an increasingly digital communication, that some educational software designed for language learning will also mediate social action. This is referred to as Computer Mediated Communication.

2.5 Computer Mediated Communication and Collaborative Learning

Vygotsky's methods of analysis concerning human thought and language can be employed in the study of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). There are differences between regular, spontaneous chatting in open forums and academic discussion in closed groups. There also seems to be a somewhat blurred division between speech and writing in various online communications. Internet users have the possibility to re-use the knowledge they have acquired in various encounters online and carry with them meaning from different links.

There are significant differences in knowledge about what actually takes place when you participate in a CMC exchange among Internet users. This could be related to the child and the adult in Vygotsky's theory. A more experienced Internet user will know which kind of language to use depending on the online group and context. He will also have the knowledge of how chat programmes and other communication programmes function. This knowledge may have been learnt from other more experienced Internet users and by testing out the relevant software. As CMC is a relatively new form of communication with a new instrument it may be hard to say whether a user has reached adulthood or not. An increasing number of people however will be described as 'computer-literate' adults.

A sociocultural approach may serve as a useful framework for understanding collaborative learning in the language classroom. It is therefore also an important framework in evaluating

the potential of online learning and education in a blended working atmosphere. The interaction takes place within a broad social and cultural context. In Vygotsky's view, human learning and development occur through a purposeful action mediated by various tools (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1979) in which language is the most purposeful tool. Digital media is of course not commented by Vygotsky, however it seems reasonable to assume that digital media will be among these cultural tools today. Vygotsky (1962) stressed that collaborative learning is essential through assisting each student in advancing through her/his own zone of proximal development. This assistance is today often given through comments and feedback online by a teacher or by a more expert student. This type of CMC learning was an important part of my research when students were participating in online discussion group assisted by the teacher.

Incorporating the views of Bakhtin (1986) the unique speech experience of each individual is shaped through constant interaction. A more focused interaction will then lead to a higher form of learning. The dialogic mode of a text may encourage students to attempt different interpretations. When the students increase their understanding, are able to read various texts from different angles and develop reflection, the dialogical process will serve as a cognitive amplifier to capture new insights. This means that the process will strengthen and expand their learning. For Bakhtin both language and thought are dialogical, e.g. what we say always exists in response to what has been said before and in anticipation of future responses. Wells and Chang-Wells (1992) point out that in a collaborative community of practice, learners will develop their thinking through talk rather than through modelling. This text-mediational view links the concepts of expression, interaction, reflection, problem-solving, critical thinking and literacy with the various uses of talk, text, inquiry and collaboration in the classroom (Warschauer 1997).

There are different aspects of CMC learning that show some of the potentials and distinguish it from other communication media. According to Warschauer (*The Modern Language Journal*, 1997) there are five specific features: (a) text-based and computer-mediated interaction, (b) many-to-many communication, (c) time- and place-independence, (d) long distant exchanges, and (e) hypermedia links.

The historical divide between speech and writing has in many ways been overcome in CMC. More and more human interaction takes place in texts sent and received on computers and

smart phones. These texts are easily stored, edited and rewritten. There are similarities to be found in 'free writing' to be shared with peers. This can be exemplified through digital programs where students groups have a shared ownership of specific texts that everybody in the group can rewrite or edit. Writing shared on paper is obviously harder to edit and rewrite. Since CMC is carried out this process rapidly, it seems to increase the power and possibilities of text-based communication. It also creates opportunities for reflection in the midst of an interaction. The online discussion groups in this study resembled an aspect of CMC.

Online-learning also allows many-to-many communication. It creates the possibility to construct knowledge together by linking reflection and interaction. The time and place independence of CMC extends the potential of online communication and may help students to collaborate in pairs or groups whenever they want.

CMC makes long distance exchanges easier and faster. This also includes the possibilities to increase cross-cultural communication between e.g. students in different countries and may also illustrate student learning through interaction with a more capable peer (Vygotsky 1978). In this study CMC made it possible for the distant learner to participate in class while staying in a foreign country. To communicate across borders may also help the process of internationalization, promote more understanding between cultures and be formative in students' development and Bildung. Online collaborative changes give opportunities for developing language skills, but also for the development of other skills to be used in an increasingly globalized world.

The unique speech experience of an individual is characterized by a "process of assimilation-more or less creative-of others' words (and not the words of a language)" (Bakhtin 1986, p 89). According to this view, increased and more focused interaction leads to higher forms of learning. For Bakhtin, this interaction is most beneficial when it is most heterogeneous, that is when it crosses cultural boundaries (Warschauer 1997). This could be related to differences of both time and place of communications, e.g. the difference in face-to-face communication compared to online communication when teaching EFL. Differences among participants and their goals of interactions may also play an important part.

One important feature that characterizes CMC is its many distributional links worldwide, not only in text documents but also in multimedia documents and programmes. There is e.g. educational software to be used by learning institutions in many countries where students and teachers can “meet” and collaborate online to develop common projects or just to discuss various themes linked to their branch of study. The use of social media like Facebook and Twitter also opens up for collaboration and exchanges worldwide, both in and outside the academic sector, although social media is not primarily considered to be an educational network.

To construct knowledge together is also certainly the most important characterization of CMC. Vygotsky says that ‘Writing should be meaningful for children,...an intrinsic need should be aroused in them, and...writing should be incorporated into a task that is necessary and relevant for life’ (Vygotsky, 1978, *Mind in Society*, p 118). In my research this was clearly the case when students confirmed in their interviews that they often felt the need to both share and publish comments in the assigned online discussion groups. For many students, this was easier to do online than face-to-face.

2.6 Blended Learning and Boundary Objects

Didactics may be considered a boundary object that mediates learning in and across different social worlds (Lund 2006). Blended learning pedagogy makes it possible to make the boundary between e.g. face-to-face/classroom learning and digital /online learning more continuous and noticeable. A sociocultural perspective on learning could encourage the need to develop our concept of EFL didactics so that it supports teachers working across multiple contexts.

In my research the students were asked to alternate between the two types of learning. The tasks were related, one example was literary discussion groups both in class and online. The results and outcomes varied according to category and blend. The students had both similar and different learning experiences.

The challenge of diversity and mobility in learning has by many scholars, been addressed with the notion of boundaries (Lund 2006, Akkermann and Bakker 2011). Boundary theory specifically proposes that there are socio-cultural discontinuities between different

environments, which when crossed (or spanned, or blurred), require individuals to reformulate their thinking (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011: 152). The concepts of boundary crossing and boundary objects are used, especially within the field of blended learning. Studies by Akkerman & Bakker 2011 emphasize that boundaries carry learning potential. It is however difficult to measure in which way they work and how effective they are. During this study I have tried to focus closer on some of these aspects and boundary crossing by combining and testing out digital and non-digital methods. Results from this tentative boundary crossing are shown through findings based on surveys and interviews.

Blended learning can enhance learning at the boundary between the classroom and the online world. The student may take a step forward in their learning process when their virtual world is connected to the real world. This potential step forward seems to be related to the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky 1978) in the sense that a boundary object, here blended learning didactics, may have the space of a carrying learning potential.

Blended learning seems to, given the optimal blend, take in processes of both online and face-to-face instructions. This combination may require a more complex way of thinking concerning the outcomes of students' learning, evaluation and also assessment. (Laumakis, M., Graham, C. and Dzubjan, C., 2009: 77) The blend selected should both be able to meet the need of the students and at the same time challenge the student to move forward in learning.

2.7 Blended Learning in a Sociocultural Perspective

There is a change in perspective from individual language acquisition through participating in speech communities. Consequently there is also a shift in the unit of analysis from the individual speaker to the speech community. It is the result of people interacting with each other, with their contexts, and with available artefacts in order to build and be socialized into language communities, construct knowledge and create meaning (Lund 2006:186). Online environments offer new resources and new opportunities for communication.

The students carry with them the system they use at home, their private practice online. Activities that constitute learning and teaching EFL, will depend on constantly shifting relations between agents, contexts and artefacts (Lund 2006: 186). Learning is a motion shaped by different types of practices and stabilised by the stances that are taken by the actor

and tools and artefacts (Nespor, 1987:131). In my action research the students participated in synchronous online discussions where time and space were built into the concept and where the learners were connected through a digital programme. When participants in online discussions interact they use their knowledge and their historically situated practices. A more capable peer or a teacher may bring their expertise into these online groups and attempt to disrupt and thus forwarding the discussions. Their prior knowledge may help students gain new knowledge and make the discussions more future and goal oriented. Through breakdowns and contradictions learning may be expanded on both collective and individual level. Expansive learning is therefore connected to change in relation to emerging boundary objects. (Ludvigsen, S., Rasmussen, I., Kränge, I., Moen, A., Middleton, D. 2011:109).

Garrison and Kanuka (2004) argue that the best use of blended learning effectively integrates all student experiences to achieve instructional goals, rather than supplementing old models of instruction with new technologies. Based on my experience and research old instructional methods may function along with new technology if the two are properly blended by an autonomous and professional tutor who has the knowledge of both worlds and is able to understand and act according to the students' needs. Knowledge construction occurs within Vygotsky's social context that involves 'student-student and expert-student collaboration on real world problems or tasks that build on each person's language, skills, and experience shaped by each individual's culture' (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 102) As a teacher you should then encourage the students to work together and choose meaningful and challenging tasks. The tasks could be carried out both face-to-face and online given the ultimate blend to promote learning. The teacher plays the important role of facilitator and creates the environment where directed and guided interactions can occur and can also play this role on the computer. The social communities on the computer must then also be given expert knowledge through a teacher and further on be encouraged to collaborative work, the sharing of results and the performance of a final project or product.

In a sociocultural perspective the focus is on the relationship between the learner(s) and the world as it is represented by and acted upon through language and dialogue (Bakhtin, 1979; Rommetveit, R. 1996). Cognition is seen as originating in social interaction and not in an isolated or decontextualized mind. The general and social transformation that takes place through the digital technologies and especially the development within the specific field of ICT creates new conditions for learning and communication. Therefore it seems reasonable

that a sociocultural theory of learning is a vital tool for understanding change and innovation in education and in blended learning.

3 Method and Research Design

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will present and discuss the research methods used in the present study.

The purpose of this research is to explore the relationship between the use of computers and the use of a more traditional educational model in the teaching of English and English Literature. The focus is on how the two methods used together create a blended learning atmosphere. By a traditional educational model I mean teaching and learning face to face, communicating face-to-face, writing by hand and reading from books. Methods used are mainly online discussion groups and electronic bulletin boards through the use of digital presentation and multimedia tools and digital communication programmes.

This study raises the question on how and if the pedagogical use of digital methods combined with face-to-face teaching promotes and encourages learners and learning in a course of English and English Literature and Culture. The aim of the research is to find out which blend may be considered appropriate to engage and improve learning among the students. Consequently, digital methods have been applied to replace some of the more traditional ways of teaching.

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods have been used.

3.1.1 Research Topics and Related Questions

The topics for research belong to four main categories: Online discussions groups, digital bulletin boards, digital reading and distant learning. The following questions made the foundation for a survey in the class of English Literature and Culture and the questions were later elaborated in semi-structured interviews.

1. Online discussions

How do you in general experience online discussions compared to classroom discussions? Try to describe the differences. Would you prefer only online discussions? Why/why not?

Do you see any advantages and/or disadvantages when using online discussions on literary topics? Can you think of a literary topic that would be best to discuss face-to-face? Explain

why/why not. Do you use the same language (choice of vocabulary) when discussing literature online as opposed to face-to-face? Try to explain any differences.

2. Digital Bulletin Boards

What are your experiences from creating electronic bulletin boards (Prezi, Padlet etc)?

Try to explain if and how creating a prezi, alone or with others may add some new aspects to literary texts or art? Explain how creating a padlet, alone or with others may open up for a broader or an additional understanding of e.g. a painting or a poem.

Try to describe the differences in studying a painting on screen compared to studying it in real life (gallery-originals).

3. Digital reading

Do you find any difference in reading on the screen compared to reading in a book? What if you were to read Hamlet online? Try to explain any differences.

The following questions were used in an interview with the distant learner, the student who had spent two months abroad.

4. The Use of Skype and Distant Learning

How did you experience to be 'present' in class through a computer?

How would you describe the online collaboration with the teacher and other students?

Based on your experience, try to mention some pros and cons about distant learning.

3.2 Research Strategy

To investigate models of blended learning several research techniques were combined.

However the research design is overall qualitative. Most of the data collected, interviews and observations, are qualitative. The surveys have a more quantitative aspect to obtain more measureable data on certain variables (Creswell 2012:14). Mixed methods is a design that builds on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell 2012:534). To a certain extent the research design therefore includes a mixed methods approach (Creswell 2012:543). This combination is done to add more dimensions and present a more trustworthy result (Dörnyei, Z. 2007). The use of surveys may show general tendencies and help select interviewees whereas in a semi-structured interview each respondent can be fully explored and more detailed views can be given. A questionnaire cannot show this complexity. This

research may further be categorized as action research (Creswell 2012:592) since the aim is to gather information in a particular educational setting to see if it will improve learning. It is also about implementing a new practice to study its results. This study has been given the consent by the NSD (The Data Protection Official for Research for all Norwegian universities and colleges).

3.2.1 Mixed Methods and Qualitative Design

A mixed methods design is based on the social constructionist theory. It seeks to understand multiple perspectives on a single issue, here blended learning. When using a mixed methods design it is essential to determine and decide on which quantitative results to be followed up in later interviews.

As a mixed method this is an example of an explanatory sequential design, also called a two-phase model, since there are two phases with one form of data collection following the other (Creswell 2012:542). First the quantitative data are collected and then the qualitative data are collected. The quantitative data are surveys and interviews and observations. The design first obtains quantitative results and then helps elaborate the findings in a more in-depth, qualitative perspective. Not only do the qualitative data help explain or elaborate on the quantitative results, but they are also used to extend the general picture and give additional and important information. The interviews are therefore of strong importance and this phase will be given most attention in the analysis and thus the research design must be said to be predominantly qualitative.

Using a mixed methods study has several advantages. It reflects the participants' point of view by giving them a voice. At the same time it ensures that the findings are based on the participants' experiences. To understand possible contradictions between quantitative results and qualitative findings, mixed methods may also be useful. This design has been flexible and adaptable to use in my research and has provided a more complete understanding of blended learning.

3.2.2 Selection of Participants

The main target group (A) was a class of 25 students in a class of English literature and culture in their final year of upper secondary school. The students were 18 and 19 years old and had all chosen this English course as part of their study program. Some of these students

also participated in a previous study, a pilot study the year before in an International English course. This was my first attempt to use online discussion groups in class.

Related to the experience in online discussion groups, the students were encouraged to answer a questionnaire, but it was not made obligatory. This survey made the basis for the later in depth interviews with six students. In the survey the participants could choose to be anonymous but were encouraged not to since the results from the survey would make it easier to select different students for follow-up interviews.

As a minor project, a class of 30 students (B) in their first year of upper secondary school was observed and given an anonymous questionnaire after we had used a specific digital presentation programme called Padlet. This was done to increase the numbers of results, but also to enable a comparison of the use of this program with the use in the A group. The B students had English as a compulsory subject.

Except from the pilot study, the classroom research was carried out during the school year 2013-2014.

3.3 Data Collection

The data collection has been based on testing and observing blended learning both in and outside the classroom. This is mainly done through surveys and interviews. The quantitative data in the surveys can be further analysed and may add useful information about trends in a larger group. Although surveys can show some major trends and may be analysed they do not go in depth and/or explain e.g. the students' behaviour and motivation. The qualitative data in this research, both the semi structured interviews and observation, provide the actual words spoken and offer many different perspectives. Altogether these data illustrate a more complex picture of the whole situation and will be given a major focus in a closer analysis in order to obtain more insight and knowledge in the use of blended learning. Online discussion groups, electronic bulletin boards and similar programmes were tested out through different tasks and several lesson practises. These tasks and lessons were related to the competence aims in the English Literature and Culture class and included elaborating on and analysing novels, interpreting artistic expressions, reflecting on poetry and others.

Two digital methods of learning were tried out to see if they would increase engagement, motivation and finally learning. Further research on online discussion groups in literature was carried out in the A-group. The students had all read different novels and were placed in synchronous online groups lead by the teacher to discuss these books.

The online discussions were synchronous and outside class. Each discussion was given a certain time period, usually 40 minutes. Which time to start the discussions was decided separately by each group in a democratic agreement with their teacher. Some groups therefore made appointments on Saturday or Sundays, times that the students found favourable. All these discussions were an important part of the course and a compulsory curricular activity. The teacher was both a tutor and a participant in all the different groups.

In both classes part of the testing was particularly aimed at creating digital bulletin boards and its use was compared to using the blackboard. In both groups I made observation during classes and had an anonymous and more limited survey concerning the specific use of the digital presentation programme called Padlet .

Concerning the use of the programme Padlet students were asked to share their comments about curricular topics and texts in class by placing keywords, comments or smaller illustrations on a Padlet. All students were able to watch the process and the creation of the Padlet. The teacher used a projector to enlarge the screen, and the electronic bulletin board therefore functioned as an electronic blackboard that everybody could see.

3.3.1 Observation

Observation has been used throughout most of the research in class. The observation has focused on specific language and cultural tasks carried out both in the classroom and online. One example here is discussion groups and how they differed in their outcomes. Observation also raised the awareness of the teacher`s role and increased the understanding of some of the students` experiences. The dual role of the teacher and a researcher also demanded sensitivity and acknowledgement to ensure an open observation (Creswell 2012:588). The observation role was both a participant and

nonparticipant role. In the online synchronous discussions the teacher both participated and observed. Some observations were recorded as field notes and helped to give a broader perspective on the students' experiences and opened up for both description and reflection (Creswell 2012:227). The observation of the learning process had a general impact on my teaching. It also helped in designing questions in the questionnaires and surveys to get a closer understanding of why the students behaved the way they did. In the main target group the surveys have furthermore resulted in in-depths interviews with six students.

3.3.2 Surveys

In the A-group I had both an anonymous and an open survey. Some questions had the yes/no/don't know options for answers. Others had three statements where the student had to choose one alternative. The A group was initially asked about the difference in face to face and digital learning and many of the following questions were related to their learning experience. Some questions scaled the answers from one till five. The questions focused on digital methods and blended learning in a broader aspect.

The interview survey had 15 questions with mainly closed response options and some room for additional and personal comments. The questions were all about the use of computers when reading and studying English literature. Part of the survey was meant to collect data on both the advantages and disadvantages of using these methods. The students were asked to comment upon differences and challenges and furthermore how and if the blend of digital methods with face-to-face methods would increase their motivation and learning

A minor survey was carried out in the B-group as a side project. The main reason for doing this was that it would increase the quantity of results concerning the use of digital presentation programmes and that it would also give a possibility for an eventual comparison between the two groups in their use of these programmes. In this group, the questions were mainly concentrated on their specific experience in using the program Padlet. The students were encouraged to comment statements about their use of Padlet and furthermore to compare it to the use of a traditional blackboard in class. The students were given five

statements/closed questions and response options. Two of the questions had open-ended sections where the participants were asked to further explain their choices. This survey was anonymous and presented an overview of the various opinions.

The web-based program Google Docs made it less difficult to make surveys since this program already had different options and a graphical design quite easy to understand and take into use. A web-based survey enabled me to gather the data quickly. To ensure the students would answer, time was given during classes. This way the response rate was approximately 90 %. Both surveys were in Norwegian in order to not cause any misunderstanding and to increase the participation.

For closer details of surveys, see appendix B.

3.3.2.1 Survey A group

1. What is the best way to work and learn? The intention here was to see if the students preferred digital or non-digital methods.
2. Do you believe it is different to read literary works today compared to 50 years ago?
3. How much of the literature do you read digitally?
4. Do you think something can be lost in digital learning?
5. Comment on the statement that 'the emotional aspects of literature are lost in a digital frame'.
6. Choose which alternatives you feel are most significant when it comes to digital learning in this course of English Literature and Culture.
7. Do you agree that computers offer better possibilities in making good presentations?
8. How do you experience constructing a Prezi or a similar digital presentation?
- 9,10. Comment briefly on your digital presentations (London and Hamlet)
11. How do you prefer to communicate?
12. How did you experience the online literary discussions?
13. How do you experience classroom discussions?
14. How important are the teacher's presence and engagement in digital discussions?

15. How important is the teacher's presence and engagement in classroom discussions?
16. Feel free to give any additional comments about the above topics.

3.3.2.2 Survey B group

1. Do you like to use Padlet?
2. Try to explain why/why not.
3. What is the main difference in using Padlet compared to using the blackboard?
4. Comment on the statement 'I learn more by using Padlet'.
5. Comment on the statement 'Padlet is a good opportunity to learn and use new words'.
6. How do you experience to use the blackboard?
7. To create pictures and collage, which is the best alternative of Padlet and blackboard?
8. Any further comments about the mentioned topics?

3.3.2.3 Challenges in Formulating Questions

Making the questions was challenging in different ways. To use the instrument Google Docs helped to construct the practical design but not the type of questions. A solution was to make mostly closed and only a few open-ended questions. This would give me the information needed and would be easier to categorize later. The questions were slightly personal because to some extent they measured the attitudes the participants had concerning the use of digital tools both at home and at school. Although personal the questions were not considered sensitive or private since they were directly linked to their literature studies in English.

3.3.3 Interviews

Six students participated for interviews. The interviews were semi structured which meant that some interview questions were fully decided but others were more open and offered more possibilities for follow-up questions. This was done to give both structure and flexibility to the interview (Kvale, Brinkman 2009). The students were asked to explain the results of the

surveys further. In addition they were asked more open questions related to the research topic. Observation and field notes were also used as a background for these interviews.

3.3.3.1 Procedure for Interviews

The surveys were followed up in semi-structured interviews with six students where both the teacher and the student had the possibility to go more in depth around digital practices and blended learning. All the interviews were video recorded. The interviews lasted for about 7-14 minutes. The interviews formed a main part of the data collection of my qualitative study. An interview guide (Kvale, Brinkman 2009) was used. This guide proceeded through seven stages for interviewing: thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying, and reporting.

All interviews have been transcribed.. The first, thematizing, was an introduction of the theme and clarified the main reason for the interview. The second and third stage obtained the intended knowledge through a semi-structured design and the interviews were carefully conducted. Some of the questions opened up for comments on digital methods in general and the difference between paper and screen related to e.g. reading and also to studying art. Continuing the interviews the informants were asked to share their experience in using the online discussion groups. One student was asked to comment on her distant learning experience. Finally the interviewees were invited to explain their opinions on blended learning. When the interviews had been carried out they were transcribed, this being referred to as the fourth stage. The interviews have furthermore been analyzed and both the validity and reliability have been checked. The findings and results are commented in chapter four. For transcripts, see appendix C.

3.3.3.2 Criteria for Participation In Interviews

The students were asked to volunteer for interviews. To achieve a certain balance in gender, two males and four females were asked to participate as two thirds of the class consisted of female students. Two of the students were specifically observed and further asked to join since one of them had received distant learning/on-line teaching due to a two months stay abroad and the other student was a digitally experienced student who represented a more divergent view. The four remaining interviewees were randomly selected. The interviews have been essential in collecting the data needed for the research and further analysis. They were all willing to be interviewed as they had given their names in the survey. Considering

their academic level they represented various grades but none had the lowest grades (1 and 2). Two students had been preselected. Two interviewees had been in my class the previous year and shared an experience in online discussion groups, a pilot project in my study. The students were all 18 or 19 years and had given their written consent.

3.3.3.3 Criteria and Challenges in Interviews

According to Kvale and Brinkman (2009) some criteria are vital to succeed in a qualitative interview. When planning and performing the interviews I tried to bear these criteria in mind. To achieve relevant, spontaneous and specific answers is of course one of the main aims in an interview. This sometimes proves hard to get when e.g. some of the participants did not seem to understand all questions. The questions were then followed up and clarified to attain relevant aspects of the answers and comments. When interviewing I also had to think about body language and appearance to show respect and interest.

The interviewees differed in their way of producing rich and spontaneous answers. Some were much more talkative than others and hard to stop whereas others had to have several follow-up questions or more explanatory comments. Some of the most talkative students gave more relevant information. However, it was important not to invade their private space and focus on the subject. The students' digital world often consists much of their private life and it may be hard for some to distinguish between school and privacy in a digital world of learning.

During the interviews I tried to verify and make sure the answers were being interpreted in a relevant way. The video recordings made it possible to continue and add new aspects in the process of interpretation also after the actual interviews were done. When listening, watching and transcribing the interviews there were however several flaws to be found. One was that some of the questionings took up too much time and the time for answers should have been longer. Partly to blame was the interruptions made by the interviewer. These were easy to locate afterwards but not through the actual interviews. When reading the interviews I believe the transcripts are quite easy to understand, they do in many ways communicate their own stories and do not require further explanation and description.

My intention was all the way to see if introducing digital methods would add some new aspects of learning to the more traditional classroom teaching. It was also about observing and finding out more about changes in communication when working online.

3.4 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity can be seen as two different measurement instruments that illustrate the level of trustworthiness and credibility of a research. Reliability refers to how consistent the results are. Validity means whether a study investigates what it is intended to investigate.

In this study data have been collected primarily according to qualitative research questions. The seven stages in an interview investigation (Kvale, 1996) have been used. The questions have been thematized and designed based on reflections and focus for the knowledge sought. Furthermore the quality criteria for an interview (Kvale, 1996) were used when planning and conducting the interviews.

Ensuring reliability in a qualitative research may not be linked to universal truths as in a more quantitative approach according to Kvale 20011. However the goal may be to find generalizations and this thesis attempts to point at certain results that may be generalized according to the data collection and the further data treatment.

3.5 Security

Storing data on a third party's database system raises questions about security. Google assures users that it keeps all data safe and private unless the user chooses to share files with others. However all users must have a Google account to access Google Docs, and since all accounts require passwords, one stage in Google's security plan relies on password protection. Technological problems did not occur.

3.6 Ethics

As mentioned in the introduction this study has been given the consent by the NSD (The Data Protection Official for Research for all Norwegian universities and colleges etc.). Relevant information about the research was given to the participants prior to the project. Participation was voluntary and required written consent. Guidelines from the NSD have been followed concerning both video recordings and transcripts. Transcripts and results have all been anonymized. Concerning the surveys on Google Docks, the data are safe and private according to safety regulations of the company. The surveys were all voluntary. All data used in this research are included in the appendices.

4 Data and Findings

This chapter starts by presenting the main findings obtained from the research in blended learning. The results show how two groups of students perceive digital methods and the use of ICT in the EFL classroom.

The results from the two surveys are first presented. The findings from the interview are presented in a separate section. These findings are closely linked to the first survey, but also bring in other aspects and are therefore commented on separately.

The findings from the initial questionnaires and surveys are based on the results from two different groups. The A group, consisting of 25 students in a course of English Literature and Culture, in their A-level year, represents the main research group. This group was given a more detailed survey. Six of these students were chosen to participate in-depth interviews about their blended learning experience. Results from the survey in the B group are considered secondary data used to focus on one specific digital method, electronic bulletin boards. This was done in order to get results from a broader range of students, and to be able to increase the findings on this particular method. The B group consisted of 30 students in a compulsory course in English, their first year at upper secondary school.

Compare Dee and Ali

Wangero

dominance
they both assert their superiority over their family members, often causing tensions!

Both want to make their mother/father proud

Takes another direction, in a different path from their...
Want's to explore life their own way

Do you wanna build a snowman

THEY BOTH HAVE THE DESIRE TO ACHIEVE SOME

Dee vs. Ali

- Independent
- going against their family
- argue with parent
- Changing identity
 - religion
 - name

is this all

Friend
Dee had some

Both are loved by their parents

Seeking happiness, and find their identity.

S
Seems angry, a bit se

Zoom Image

its Dexter

Proud of background?

Asamamalakim
They both get a good education and is looked up to, but appreciate what their family does for them

They both feel ashamed of something that makes them 'Western'. Dee has a problem with her name, and changes it to Wangero. Ali ends his Western education, and turns to his father's old faith.

Neither appreciate their

Figure 1: Part of a Padlet made by students in the A group to compare characters in a short story

The main questions were related to how much the students read on screens, how they used digital tools in learning in general, how they used online bulletin boards and other digital tools in presentations, how they experienced online discussion groups, what they thought was a good blend of mixing face-to-face learning with digital learning and finally about the role and presence of the teacher. Distant learning online was also experienced and explained by one student.

4.1 Surveys and Interviews

The research topic was categorized into four groups for the surveys: Online discussions groups, digital bulletin boards, digital reading and distant learning. The questions made the foundation for a survey in the class of English Literature and Culture and were later elaborated in semi-structured interviews.

In the B group, a compulsory English class of 30 students in the first year of upper secondary school, the survey was less detailed and only contained one topic. This survey was meant to shed additional light on the use of electronic bulletin boards in class, specifically a program called Padlet.

For the specific questions used in the surveys, see section 3.3.2 (Survey A) and section 3.3.2.2 (Survey B).

4.2 General Findings

Most students consider blended learning as a means to increase learning.

Given the right blending of face-to-face teaching and digital methods a clear majority of the students seemed to favour the use of blended learning. This was clearly indicated through both surveys and interviews. In the surveys most students expressed positive opinions concerning the use of online bulletin boards and related this to the possibility of being more creative. Also increased collaboration and engagement were mentioned as some of the major results in the students' responses, especially in the online discussions. Major findings from

this research show that several of the participants contributed more and found some of the digital methods useful to help increase their creativity and learning. Digital tools should therefore not only be considered as a means of variation but as tools that may promote learning.

The interviews confirmed the main results from the surveys. The responses were overall positive concerning blended learning in general. However reading on screens compared to on paper seemed to make most of the students tired. This was also linked to the more emotional aspect of reading. One student maintained his opinion that digital reading was his preferred option. Most students had good experiences from using online discussion groups. In many cases this was due to the fact that more students participated and contributed.

The one student who had received distant learning conveyed her experience to being mostly positive although speaking and communicating through a computer was, according to her, said to reduce some of her possibilities for participation and learning. This depended also on the technical limitations and reduced possibilities of the computer itself. She also mentioned the awkwardness and artificial situation she felt when having to communicate openly in class through the screen of a computer.

4.3 Results and Findings Based on the Survey in the A Group

This group consisted of 25 students in their A-level year. They had all chosen the English course of Literature and Culture as one of their main subjects and most of them were engaged readers. From this class 22 students answered the survey. When questioned about the best way to learn only one student answered to work digitally, four students preferred paper and face-to-face. The rest, a majority of 81 %, preferred blended learning dependent on the task given. All the students gave their consent to the statement that it is different to read literature today compared to 50 years back. Due to their increasing digital daily life and habits this may express that reading books is hard to fit in.

When asked about the possibility of losing something in a totally digital learning environment a majority of 76% said yes. This seems to indicate that traditional teaching and learning face-to-face still holds an important position and is valued by many students.

4.3.1 Literature and Reading on Screens

When asked about how much (literature) they actually read on screens the pie chart below shows that a majority did little digital reading . Only three students read more than 50 percent of the literature on screens. This further confirms that digital reading of literature is not a choice by most students.

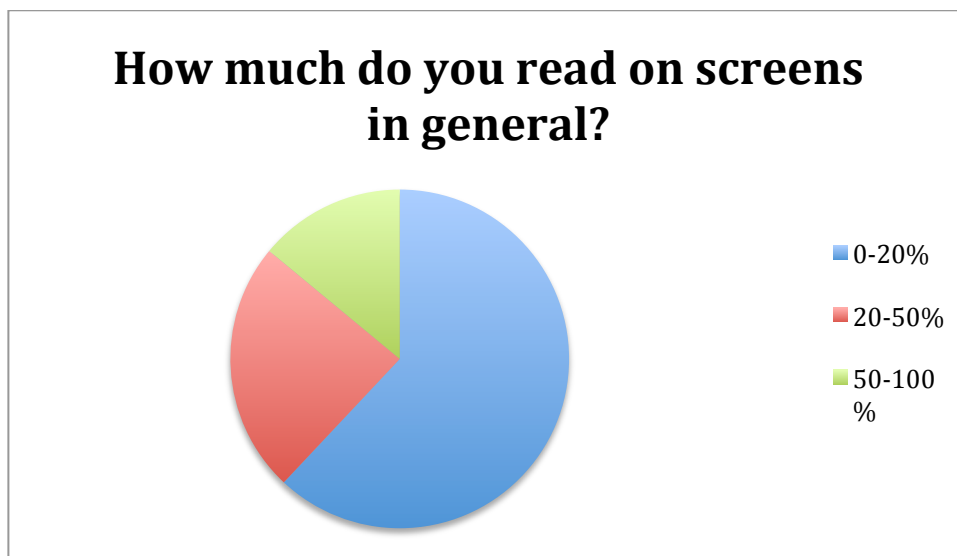


Figure 2: Students' selection of digital reading

The survey then asked for free comments concerning the statement that the more emotional aspects of literature are reduced in a digital setting. The overall responses seemed to agree with this statement. Some said it was easier to concentrate when reading on paper without actually being able to explain why, however many commented that reading on screens made them more tired. Some reasoned that it was hard to focus on screens and that it could cause headaches, therefore longer texts were actually best read on paper. One commented that books on paper made them more easily drawn into literature and could be better related to personal experiences. Most participants however gave several reasons for why using a screen would be likely to reduce the emotional aspect of reading. Becoming engaged and getting more closely involved with e.g. the characters was found easier through reading a book. To actually hold and feel the paper was also mentioned as a part of the emotional aspect. One student said that to turn a page felt different than scrolling down a screen. Reading on screens was also said to make the reading more anonymous by 'just staring into a screen'. Maybe this

indicates the virtual world as being less real and more distant and more difficult to become emotionally and personally involved in? Turning a page with your hand probably also makes a novel feel more real and more perceived by your senses. This can of course be further related to the degree of personal involvement with literature. These comments were further elaborated on in the interviews and are discussed and analyzed in chapter five.

Four students did not agree and uttered that text was text no matter digital or on paper. One answered that using digital artifacts when reading literature was just another way of learning and did not make the literature less interesting. This opinion could perhaps be described as more fact-based since these students seemed to interpret a literary text as just printed letters on paper or as digital letters on a screen.

4.3.2 Digital Tools in Learning

The students selected three answer alternatives out of three positive and three negative options about the use of digital tools in lessons and learning. More than half, 70 %, said that it gave them more freedom to learn. The same number of students found the use of digital tools to take up less space and to generally be a good thing combined with more traditional teaching. Between 40 and 50 % had ticked off the alternatives that the screen made them often tired and tempted to do other things, but also that digital tools were more adjustable to the needs of each student. Seeing these results the positive feedback is slightly higher than the negative except for the first option when two thirds of the students found that digital methods gave them more freedom and different ways to learn. Examining these responses one might assume that the role of the teacher is of significant importance to let the students enjoy the various tasks and the flexibility offered in digital methods. Knowing that the students often get tempted to do other things demands of course engaging and meaningful digital tasks but also some control by the teacher.

4.3.3 Presentations and Digital Tools

When asked about oral presentations, 90 % of the students found the use of computer and programs to be a good help. They were further asked to comment on how. More than two thirds of the students said it gave them new angles and perspectives and that it made them more creative. Less than 10 % answered 'others' or that the use of digital pictures was not important in making presentations. On third of the group found the use of digital presentation

tools to be difficult, technically speaking. Based on these results it is reasonable to assume that digital opportunities give room for more creativity provided the users have the technical knowledge and insight in how to use different programs.

4.3.3.1 The Use of Online Bulletin Boards

The students were shown an example of a presentation with pictures and texts that they had collaborated to make after their excursion to London the previous autumn. The program Padlet was used to create this presentation in class. The program was easy to learn and many students described this program to be more like an album for fun, having little academic quality and more a 'show-and-tell' presentation with little structure. A few students found it to be a good summary and overview where the pictures were considered as informative. The use of Padlet will be further commented in the secondary survey B in which the two year younger students seemed to be of a much more positive opinion.

4.2.3.2 The Use of Prezi –a Presentation and Storytelling Tool for Presenting Ideas on a virtual Canvas

A Prezi about Hamlet was made as a part of the students' homework. Only half of the students contributed in this. However they all answered the questionnaire afterwards. Six students were neutral in their opinions about this work and three were negative. Two thirds shared positive comments where they found this to be more interesting and better organized than a Padlet. They also found it to be a good way to learn about Hamlet, something that obviously engaged them to contribute more. This product employs a zooming user interface that allows users to zoom in and out of their presentation media, and allows users to display and navigate through various bits of information. Creating a Prezi therefore demands more of the students than a Padlet due to more possibilities of being creative and making different choices. That creating a Prezi was more technically demanding could of course also be a hindrance and an explanation to the low participation level.

4.3.4 Communication – Online Discussions

In a question about how the students preferred to communicate, about one quarter said written or oral whereas the rest (57%) said both written and oral. This question was meant as an introduction to the next theme- the online discussions. (section 3.3). Although the discussions seemed to function and literary elements were elaborated, it was quite time consuming for the teacher and many extra hours had to be spent outside class in front of the computer. Figure

two and three show how the students experienced discussions online versus discussions in class.

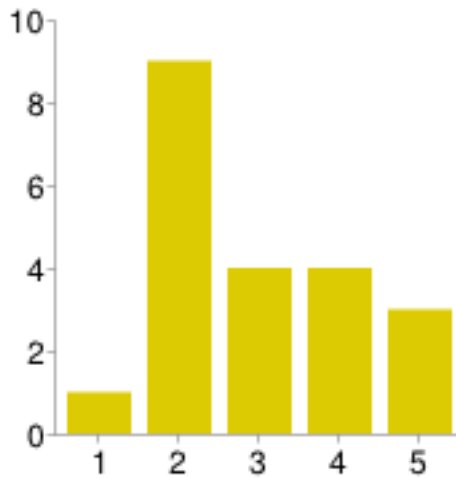


Figure 3: How students experience the online discussions

1 =learn a lot 5= learn very little

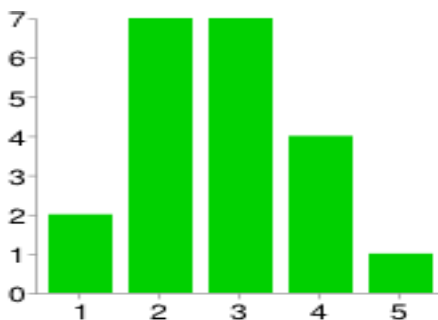


Figure 4: How students experience discussions in class

1 =learn a lot 5= learn very little

There is no significant difference in the two above results. Most students seem to have a positive experience in both types of discussions. This is obtained from the results that two thirds of the students preferred one, two or three on the listed scale. However, there seems to be a slight tendency that online discussions are favoured since ten students have chosen one or two, whereas only eight students have chosen on and two concerning class discussions.

The language used in the online discussions, although written, has a style characterized by

both written and oral speech. This computer-mediated communication and its level of formality was here linked to literary topics and novels they had studied. According to the students this would of course inspire them to become more academic in their language. This was also something they underlined in the in-depth interviews (section 4.5.3). Linking online discussions to the educational world is therefore assumed to influence the language used. A closed literary discussion group will tend to be more academic than an open chat forum. Both results showed that the importance of a present teacher were valued by all students. The conversations and the use of language were clearly influenced by the teacher being both an active leader and a participant in the group. See section 4.6 for more comments on teacher presence.

4.3.5 General Comments

This final question to give general comments was made voluntary and not all students gave their opinions. One student commented that he/she learned less pronunciation and how to talk English if too much time was spent on digital tasks. Some said that variation was the most important and that a blend of digital and traditional teaching was preferred. All in all it seems that having alternatives to traditional classroom methods makes more students learn due to their possible choices on how to learn. However it is important here to focus on digital methods and how a digital world may open up for not just alternative ways of learning, but also for a new and possible way to increase learning.

The students were also asked to give their names if they wanted to be further interviewed. Eleven students signed up for possible interviews. Results from these interviews are found in section 4.4.

4.4 Results and Findings Based on the Secondary Survey in the B Group

More than two thirds of the students found that the use of the online bulletin board Padlet made them become more active in their learning process.

This minor survey was completed by 23 out of 30 students in English, a compulsory subject in their first year of upper secondary school. The participation was anonymous.

Using the programme Padlet was meant as help for students to increase their vocabulary and engage them to share associations over a certain topic. The following copy of a screenshot

shows one example. Here the students had studied indigenous people and had watched a film about three aboriginal sisters in Australia.

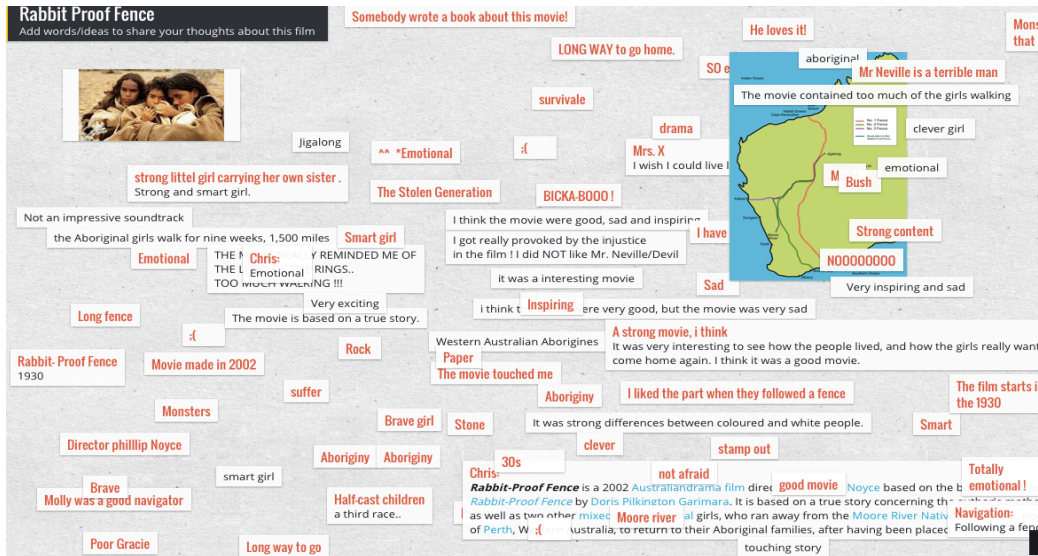


Figure 5: Part of Padlet on the issue of Aboriginal people

Most students seemed to participate in creating Padlets like this and made serious contributions. These contributions were given anonymously so the participants therefore didn't need to worry about displaying eventual spelling mistakes or incorrect language. The teacher would control, correct and erase improper contributions. When the students got used to creating bulletin boards, the irrelevant posts and remarks seemed to vanish or were at least reduced. The students were questioned about their use of Padlet.

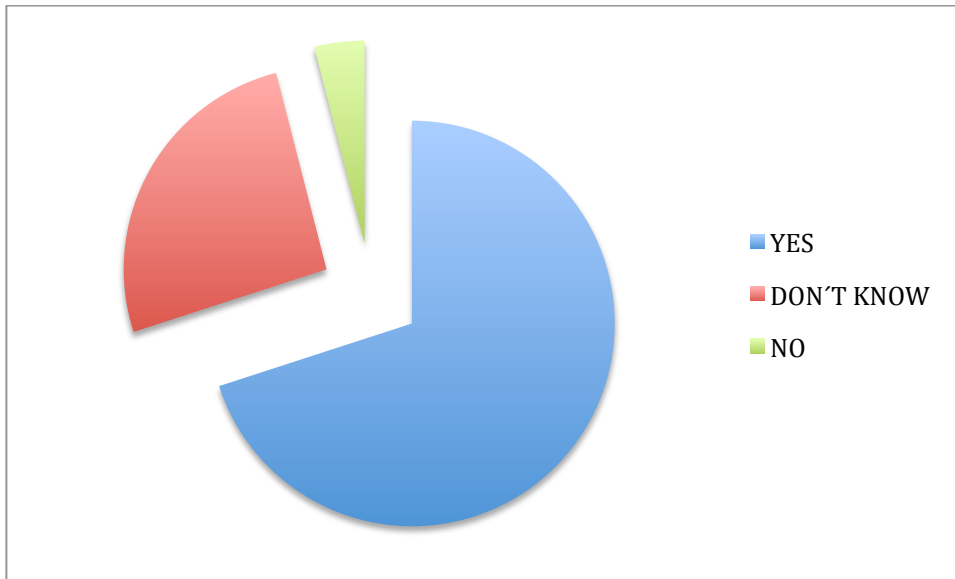


Figure 6: Do you like to use Padlet?

When asked to explain why they liked to use this program, several commented that it was interesting, easy and a good way to learn. Many also responded that it gave them a better overview of the facts and that they got to see others' contributions, something which helped them enlarge the whole picture about specific topics and gave a broader perspective. The students also commented that it helped them to learn new vocabulary in addition to being a variation of how to learn.

Since the contribution to a Padlet is anonymous, it was considered less embarrassing to write notices and more students were able to 'speak' in class. One commented that she liked using Padlet because it gave everybody an opportunity to be involved without having to leave their desk and being exposed to the whole class in front to the blackboard. This seemed to help the more shy students to participate and encouraged everyone to take part without being afraid of committing spelling mistakes in front of the class. Another student said she liked that people were willing to say more than they would have said aloud in class. Similar comments were given from several students.

The teacher was all along an active editor and in addition to sorting out unserious notices she could also correct spelling mistakes without having to confront the particular student. After each session many students took screen shots, which they saved and filed on their computers. According to the students this was something they found helped them to remember the topics,

both in theme and in vocabulary. These screenshots (copies) were then used during rehearsal for exercises and tests. Under exams and tests where the students were allowed to use additional notes and texts, these screenshots were also used.

A few students were in doubt about the use of Padlet. Some found it boring and said they did not learn so much from it although they admitted it was easier to contribute in class this way. Here one of the most common remarks was that too many of their fellow students did not take it seriously.

The one comment that was all negative underlined that their classmates did not take it seriously and that he/she therefore learned very little from this.

The following diagram sums up some of the main opinions in the students' comments. The students were asked to tick off three options.

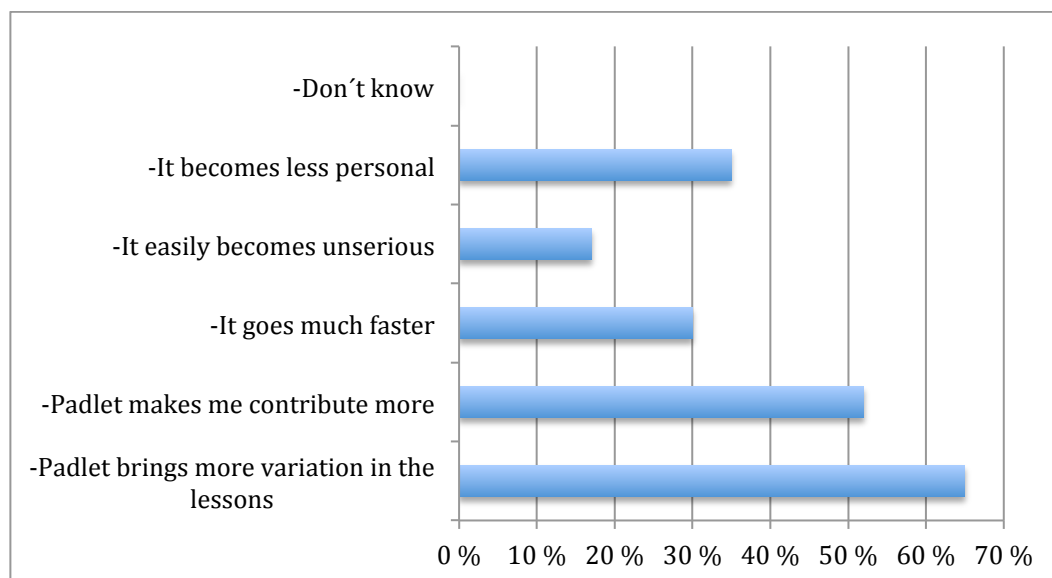


Figure 7: What is the most significant difference in using Padlet compared to a traditional blackboard?

That many students found the Padlet less personal is probably due to the fact that their contributions were all anonymous and that no students had to expose him or herself in front of class. The pace in using an electronic bulletin board is obviously higher than actually writing

by hand on a blackboard. The speed in itself may of course have increased the number of contributions.

4.4.1 Learning Vocabulary Using Padlet

Most students found this program to be a good way of learning new vocabulary. Both writing and reading words, expressions and sentences on the electronic bulletin board seemed to motivate the students more than learning vocabulary the more traditional way in class. They claimed to be more focused on the screen and were waiting for the next contribution to pop up. As previously mentioned they saved their screenshots and the majority found this a good way to learn and use new words.

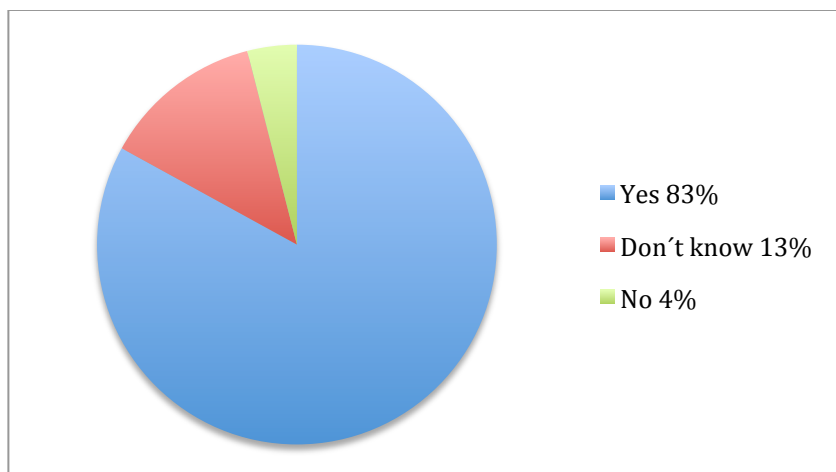


Figure 8: Padlet is a good way to learn and use new words

4.4.2 Comparing the use of Padlet and Blackboard

Two statements in the last part of the survey asked students to choose one alternative out of a list of options in their use of the blackboard compared to their use of Padlet. In the response options the term *more responsible* means that the students in the context of the classroom are being confronted with the rest of the class when they walk up to the blackboard in front of the room. They are being held personally responsible for what they write, this concerns both content and in language.

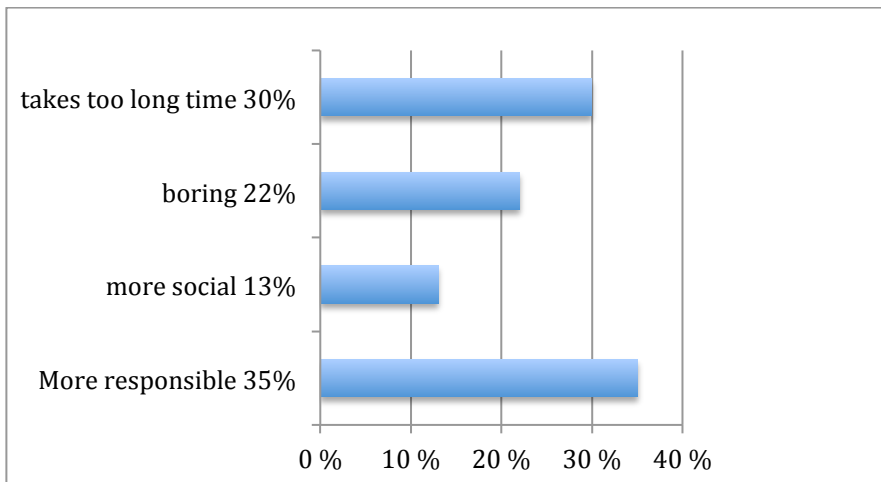


Figure 9: How the students experience the use of a traditional blackboard compared to the use of Padlet

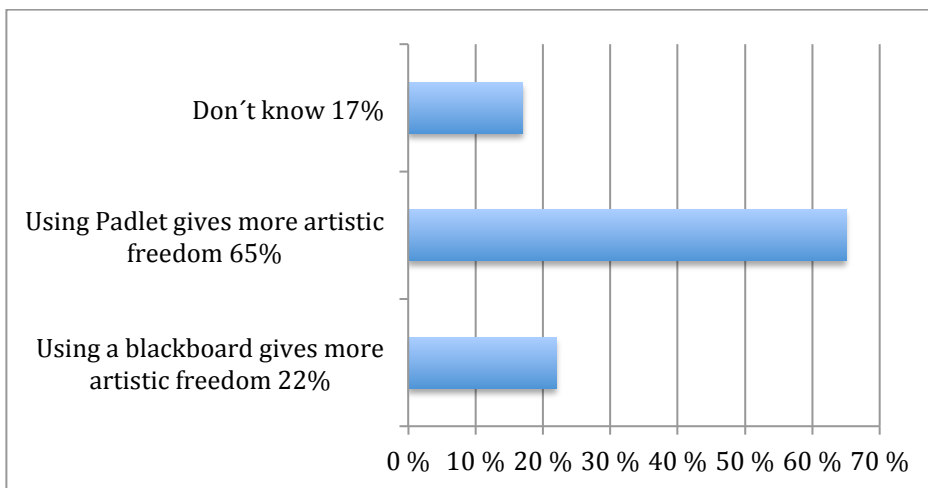


Figure 10: How the students perceive the artistic freedom in Padlet and a blackboard

This question was related to a project in class where the students were asked to express more visually the setting of a specific short story (*The last Leaf* by O. Henry 1907). This was done to show their associations and interpretations of this story. Some students then chose to make drawings on the blackboard while others used digital pictures to create a Padlet. For some students it clearly seemed to be an advantage to express their ideas and imagination on the given topic by making a picture or an illustration on the blackboard using pieces of colour chalk. They were fully engaged and seemed to be enjoying their artistic work. Others seemed to be more enthusiastic over their digital contributions, a digital poster made as a patchwork of different pictures and ideas.



Figure 11: Using the blackboard to illustrate the setting

The students were asked to write their free comments about their experience in using both blackboard and Multimedia tools. These comments were similar to those mentioned in the introduction and mostly positive. Some students however, although being in favour of digital tools were sure that the use of a traditional blackboard still had its mission and should not be let out as an option. More than one third said they found the use of blackboard to be more responsible, that they had to think through and present personally their contributions.



Figure 12: A digital collage of Washington Square Park

Although a clear majority favoured multimedia programs to create artistic posters, one fifth of the students thought that the blackboard would give them more artistic freedom than using a digital programme. This project is further commented and discussed in chapter five.

4.5 Results and Findings Based on In-Depth Interviews

All students were positive to using digital methods as one way to increase their learning. What was the right blend seemed to be both dependent on the task given and to some extent differing individual preferences.

The six interviews of A-level students were semi structured. Most of the questions were related to their answer in the survey, something that opened up for further comments.

The interview guide consisted of six or seven main parts. The first part was a general introduction of theme and clarified the main reason for the interview. The topics were as follows:

1. Introduction of theme
2. Digital methods in general
3. Digital reading compared to reading on papers
4. Online discussions
5. Creating digital presentations and electronic bulletin boards
6. Blended learning
7. Distant online learning

The students are referred to as A, B, C, D, E and F. Student B was an experienced and trained digital student. F was the student who received distant learning throughout her two months stay abroad. The students A and F had been in my English class also the previous year and had more experience in online discussions..

4.5.1 Digital Methods in General

All in all, the answers varied a bit, however all students were positive to some use of computers and digital methods. The satisfaction was linked to certain digital tasks like for some, online discussion groups, and depended on which tasks they had been most involved in. All students found that a blend of digital and face-to-face activities would give them more options in order to be engaged in the subjects and in the particular English course.

Student B mentioned digital efficiency as a possibility to save time. This student was the one who preferred digital methods on the whole and was positive to increase the digital level. Student C represented more the opposite view and claimed that she preferred mostly classroom teaching. This, she said, was mainly due to the diversion of the computer.

That the use of computers could tempt the students to use social media like Facebook and set their focus on other non-related curricular activities was mentioned by four of the students. Although student D said that she felt people were more active digitally than in class, she felt that the temptation to enlist in non-educational activities was more strongly present in digital tasks than in non-digital tasks. That the screen easily caught their attention and tempted them to focus on social media or other out of class activities is known by most teachers and are often considered a challenge (Blikstad-Balas, 2012).

4.5.2 Digital Reading Compared to Reading on Paper

The screen affects the way students read. Similar statements were given by five of six students in the interviews. The comments here were related to their answers on the survey, see 4.3.1 Literature and reading on screens. The digital reading experience is further discussed and analysed in chapter five.

'I read slower on the screen because of the light, get more tired. I prefer literature with a book in my hand and I feel closer to the characters. I feel more anonymous when I read on the computers' (Student A (2014)). This view was given support by student E. He seemed to enjoy reading a book turning the pages. Student C commented that although she read, news online like many others, she thought reading literature digitally would take away some of the emotional experience. Student F admitted that it was harder to read on screen because of the lighting and setting and that it caused headaches and also mentioned the diversion of going into all the funny stuff available on the computers. Screen being the cause of headaches due to an optical interface and different lighting was considered a real problem for most students except for one. The temptations to engage in non-curricular tasks like Facebook or other social media were mentioned as negative factors when reading digitally. These interruptions also seemed to distress the students and made it harder for them to continue reading. The majority also said they still would be reading books in the future.

Answers suggested it less social to read on a laptop or on a smartphone. That screens make people feel more distant and more alone in their own digital world seems to indicate a different reading experience. That a digital reading experience somehow appears to be less emotional is, as already mentioned, further analysed and discussed in chapter five.

The divergent case was represented through student B. As mentioned, this student was an experienced digital user and well acquainted with digital tools and software. Many teachers find students with strong digital interests to be occupied with everything else but doing school related tasks on their computers or reading literature. However this student was quite engaged and enthusiastic about literature and represented an above average grade. He said: ' I only read on a kindle or laptop, I don't read books as physical books. I have put it up having white text on black background so it is easier to read and way nicer for the eyes. I am very much used to watching on screen for a long time because I play all those games – for hours. I never get headaches '.

This case clearly shows that although being out of reach for most readers some persons seem to acquire good digital reading skills when being more digitally trained and accustomed to using digital artefacts. This students had for many years practised and got accustomed to living in a more digital world than what seemed to be the case for the other students.

4.5.3 Online Discussions

Everyone can be heard and it is easier to contribute. This was the most significant statement shared by most interviewees.

The online discussions were mostly discussions about different novels that all students had read and prepared for. These discussions seemed to make the students 'talk' more and lowered the level of participation. Student F said: ' People talk more online and you easily get more opinions, people actually say more what they think '. Another comment given by student A was: ' We can discuss with those persons who are not that social or are not that brave and everyone can also be heard '. This is an interesting comment as it shows the possibility and opens up for increased student participation.

That these discussions were structured and organized by the teacher was also of importance (Fig 4). One student (F) expressed this: 'It is important that the online discussions are synchronous and that the teacher is present, if not it would be more like just writing a text.'

Data material from the discussions also seemed to broaden the students' knowledge about the novels. This was clearly expressed by student A: 'When we discussed *The Picture of Dorian Gray* it was quite interesting and it helped me gain some new points of view on the book. It also helped me to have the discussion printed when I was writing the text later on and was planning for the presentation.' Printouts from the discussions and the gathering of information were obviously a positive feature used as an advantage for most students.

Due to the teacher presence the students seemed to strive to use a more formal language in their discussions than they would normally have done in more private chat like conversations. Student D: 'My language is more academic when the teacher is present in the discussions.' Student B said: 'My language would have become more informal, more like I was speaking if I had been chatting.' However it was also underlined by student A that '... you don't have that auto correct to tell you if you write a word the wrong way so people just write.' This proves that to a certain extent the students felt free to participate despite the fact that some spelling mistakes occurred in their comments.

All students were in favour of both classroom and online discussions. Both student C,D and F commented this: 'I like both online and face to face discussions.' 'It is interesting to see/read other reflections, but I think it would be better to discuss face to face in the classroom.' One student (A) mentioned that an online discussion could be a bit unserious for some people. This was however not the experience shared by the rest of the participants or by the teacher.

Considering the more emotional aspects of literature student F commented that she also liked to talk in person and that some more personal issues were best dealt with face to face. This comment was also shared of student C. She would have preferred to discuss face to face if her co-students had participated more in the literary talks.

Being the most digitally experienced student, B complained about the technology used and would have liked the online discussions to become more like in chatting with immediate

popup messages. However when confronted with the unwanted pauses he admitted that the time waiting for responses gave him time to reflect upon both his own and the other students' comments.

4.5.4. Digital Presentations of Art versus Real Life Objects

Being students in English Literature and Culture the students also had to engage themselves in art and artistic expressions from different time periods. This meant e.g. presentations of different paintings, sculptures and other art forms. When visiting art museums and seeing some of the masterpieces students were asked to reflect upon the difference in seeing a real painting in the museum compared to seeing a photo of it on their computers. 'Lighting and dimensions and that you can actually touch it make a sculpture or painting different from a digital picture'. These were the words of student B, who although being strongly in favour of digital artefacts, would not let the digital world dominate in this field. Student A said: 'When you actually see a real painting in front of you that has taken years to develop, it is more impressing and feels more real especially if there are other people around to admire the same painting.' This student seem to also underline the social presence of other people as a factor for increasing her own involvement with the piece of art. Another student (C) mentioned that she could do more stuff and become more creative using digital opportunities, but stated that seeing the objects first hand in an art gallery was much more fun. Once again the emotional aspect was mentioned as student E said: 'It gets more emotional to see Niagara Falls with your own eyes than seeing it on Google.' These comments continued through student F who commented that colours and dimensions made the paintings come more alive when being watched in real life. She mentioned that also the brush strokes could be seen and felt. It is interesting how some of these comments seem to be related to some of the students' comments about the emotional aspect when reading literature.

4.5.5 Digital Presentations in Class

Most students favoured the digital opportunities due to having more options, many possibilities and that they were both faster and easier to make. Student E said she gained more initiative when she could use colourful and vibrant programmes/tools like a Prezi or a Padlet. Student F said: 'Digital boards usually work out well as long as people are not too unserious. At least everybody takes a part. I also like that pictures come on the screen, they help me to memorize, also when important text fragments are put on the board.' This was also made

clear by two of the students who underlined that it was easier to talk in front of class when using a PowerPoint. Using electronic slides seemed to function as a kind of safety during presentations.

However through learning in general most students seemed to value the combination of the blackboard and the screen. As expressed through student A: 'I prefer some writing on the blackboard even if I use technology a lot. Writing on a blackboard gives me more time to note down.'

4.5.6. Distant Learning Online

F was a student who spent more than one month abroad during the school year. During this period the student attended several lessons through the use of Skype both in class and with the teacher.

She found it to be very embarrassing to be in class inside a computer. The experience felt strange and appeared to her as a bit weird since her location was in another country. However she said that her embarrassment calmed down and both her and the class found her digital appearance gradually less unusual and different. Since she was a talkative student it was probably easier for her than many other students to communicate through a computer. According to this student it may even have felt safer from the computer. She was able to participate in class surprisingly much. Beforehand she had thought that this would not work.

The technology reduced some possibilities of seeing and hearing everything that was being said, but mostly she managed to follow the class.' The collaboration and communication worked out quite well and I didn't feel I had missed so much of class when I came back. I also felt less isolated and more a part of the class while away.' (Student F, 2014)

4.6 Teacher Presence

The teacher being both an active observer and a participant in some of the digital tasks clearly seemed to influence the students. In both the surveys and in the interviews the teacher's role was commented by the students, mostly they favoured the teacher's presence. All in all the students seemed to value and depend on an active teacher, both as an instructor and as a participant.

When the students were questioned about the importance of a present teacher in online discussions and in class discussions the result varied. Both results showed that the importance of a present teacher was something all students appreciated and needed. Concerning class discussions, almost everybody considered teacher presence very important (two highest scores). In online discussions the similar scores were only 62%. This may to a certain extent reflect an attitude where students seem to think that digital learning requires less teacher presence.

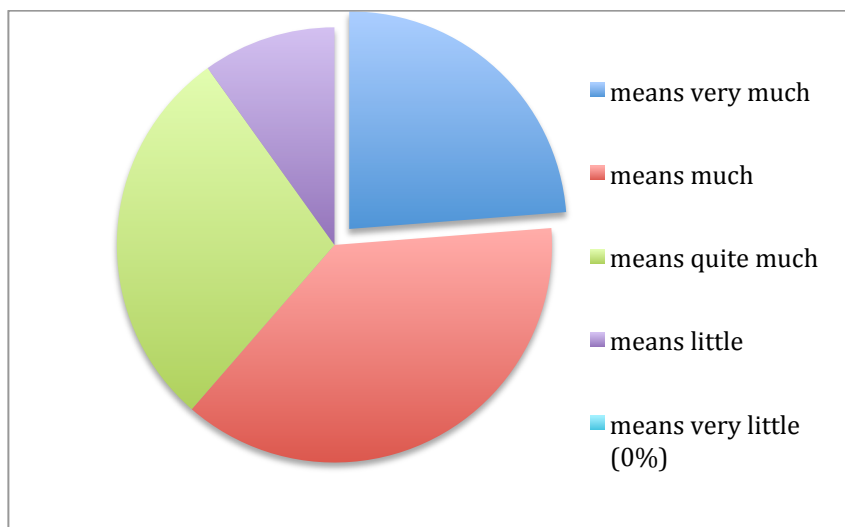


Figure 13: The importance of teacher presence in online discussions

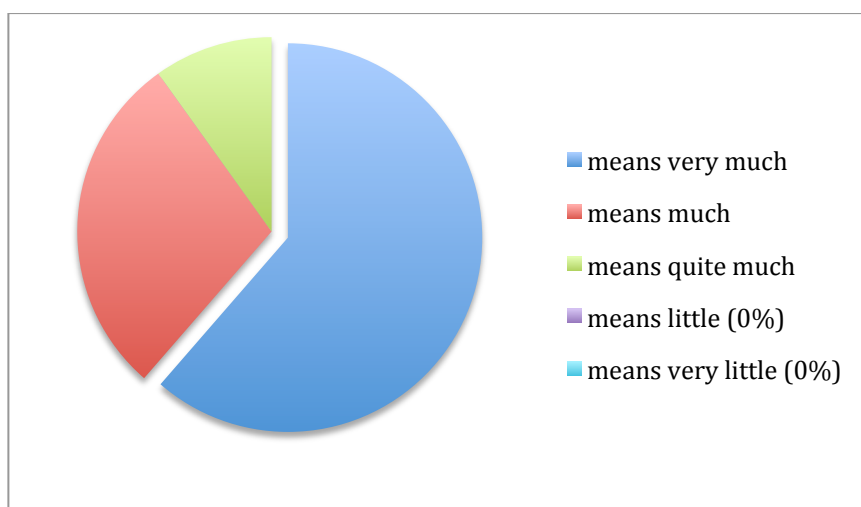


Figure 14: The importance of teacher presence in classroom discussions

Although being less important in virtual discussions, the teacher presence was still considered valuable by almost two third of the students. In order to make more students contribute this suggests an active teacher online as well as in class. This presence is further discussed and commented in chapter five.

In the use of electronic bulletin boards the teacher was needed both to set up the board, but also to control and correct the irrelevant comments and improper contributions. Many students commented that without the teacher these bulletin boards would easily become the targets of jokes, irregular comments and in would in worst cases become a poster for bullying.

The anonymity of Padlet obviously has its advantages to make the students contribute more. However given this anonymity, it also seemed to be a temptation for some students to hide behind it and expose negative comments on both subjects and other students.

4.7 Summary of Findings

This study shows that digital artefacts offer many opportunities for learning. Using digital methods in general does not necessarily seem to increase the students' learning. Digital methods may however be considered important factors in motivation and engagement. They may also challenge and develop learning in some fields as mentioned in the results. Also to collaborate and to activate more students, several digital programmes and technical possibilities seem to be of significant value.

Student B represents in many ways what some would call a digital native. His reactions and comments, his use of the computer and other digital artefact differed in many aspects from that of the other students. This digitally experienced student might give an idea of future learners in a more digitally educational world, an issue that is being further discussed in chapter five.

Traditional methods and face-to-face learning are still considered valuable and should not be let out or dominated by digital artefacts only. It seems to be the right blend, probably chosen by an autonomous teacher who knows both his students and the possible methods well, that

has the best effect to help increase the possibilities for learning. Blended learning as a positive contributor in the educational field is all about finding the *right* blend.

5. Analyses and Discussion

This thesis raises the question about how the use of blended learning may promote and encourage learners and learning in a course of English literature and culture.

This thesis has focused on students' different experiences and learning outcomes in a blended classroom. Results from different pedagogical and digital methods, both in and outside the classroom, have been tested and tried out.

5.1 Research Questions

The use of blended learning raises several questions. Some of these questions have been further researched in this thesis. These questions pay attention to some closer aspects of digital learning compared to face-to-face learning in a blended working atmosphere. The analyses and discussion will be centred on the following research questions and results from the findings.

1. How digital methods may benefit students in a blended classroom
2. How the use of digital methods seems to influence the learning outcome compared to the use of non-digital methods
3. How digital communication in the classroom may change and affect teaching and learning
4. The role of the teacher in a blended classroom

5.2 A Summary of the Findings

A clear majority of the students seemed to favour the use of blended learning. This was the main result from both surveys and interviews. All students claimed that traditional face-to-face learning was still important for their learning outcomes. Findings indicate that digital methods, although well functioning, are not equivalent and can not exchange non-digital methods in all fields of learning. Findings also indicate that an active teacher presence is important in a blended working classroom.

5.2.1 How Digital Methods May Benefit Students in their Learning

When asked about oral presentations, 90 % of the students found the use of computer and programs to be a good help for their learning. More than two thirds of the students said it gave them new angles and perspectives and that it made them more creative. Based on these results it is reasonable to assume that digital opportunities give room for more creativity provided the users have the technical knowledge and insight in how to use different programs.

More than half, 70 %, said that digital opportunities gave them more freedom to learn. The same number of students found the use of digital tools to take up less space and to generally be a good thing combined with more traditional teaching.

Most students also found digital bulletin boards interesting, easy and a good way to learn. Many responded that it gave them a better overview of the facts and that they got to see others' contributions, something that helped them enlarge the whole picture about specific topics and gave a broader perspective. The students also commented that it helped them to learn new vocabulary in addition to being a variation of how to learn.

Concerning distant learning the student who had experienced this underlined that the collaboration and communication worked out quite well and she didn't feel she had missed so much of class when she came back. She also commented that due to this digitally distant learning possibility she had felt less isolated and more a part of the class while she was away.

One of the students being interviewed represented a divergent view. This student generally wanted more digital learning and felt more at home in the digital world than the majority of students.

5.2.2 A Comparison of Digital and Non-Digital Learning Outcomes

When asked about the possibility of losing something in a totally digital learning environment a majority of 76% said yes. This seems to indicate that traditional teaching and learning face-to-face still holds an important position and is valued by many students.

Some said that variation was the most important and that a blend of digital and traditional teaching was preferred. One example was when asked to comment on making posters. Most

students seemed to value the combination of the blackboard and the screen. As expressed through student A: 'I prefer some writing on the blackboard even if I use technology a lot. Writing on a blackboard gives me more time to note down.'

All in all it seems that having alternatives to traditional classroom methods makes more students learn due to their possible choices on how to learn. However it is important here to focus on digital methods and how a digital world may open up for not just alternative ways of learning, but also for a new and possible way to increase learning.

5.2.2.1 Digital Bulletin Boards and Digital Presentations

The findings clearly indicate that most students liked to use digital bulletin boards, both as a method to increase their vocabulary and as an opportunity to arouse interest and motivation. Creating digital posters was also very democratic in the sense that everybody's contributions were seen and shared anonymously. Digital presentation programmes opened up for new angles and perspectives when studying literature.

5.2.2.2 Literature and Reading on Screens

Only three students read more than 50 percent of the literature on screens. This further confirms that digital reading of literature is not a choice by most students.

Between 40 and 50 % had ticked off the alternatives that the screen made them often tired and tempted to do other things, but also that digital tools were more adjustable to the needs of each student.

The screen affects the way students read. Similar statements were given by five of six students in the interviews. The comments here were also related to their answers on the survey (4.3.1 Literature and Reading on Screens).

Screens being the cause of headaches due to an optical interface and different lighting, was considered a real problem for most students except for one. The temptations to engage in non-curricular tasks like Facebook or other social media were mentioned as negative factors when reading digitally. That screens make people feel more distant and more alone in their own digital world seems to indicate a different reading experience. A digital reading experience somehow appears to be less emotional.

5.2.2.3 Real World Objects and Digital Artefacts

Students commented that the digital would not dominate the real world and that using their senses to see and touch art gave a much stronger impression than just watching works of art through a computer screen. It is interesting how some of these comments seem to be related to some of the students' comments about the emotional aspect when reading literature.

5.2.3 How Online Communication May Change and Affect Teaching and Learning

The online discussions were discussions about different novels that all students had read and prepared for. These discussions seemed to make the students 'talk' more and lowered the level of participation. Everyone can be heard and it is easier to contribute. This was the most significant statement shared by most interviewees. Considering the more emotional aspects of literature one student commented that she also liked to talk in person and that some more personal issues were best dealt with face to face.

The one student who had received distant learning conveyed her experience to being mostly positive although speaking and communicating through a computer was, according to her, said to reduce some of her possibilities for participation and learning.

The digitally trained students found the online discussions to be too slow. He wanted to have more immediate feedback and comments similar to that of an informal chat-room.

5.2.4 The Teacher's Role in a Blended Classroom

The teacher being both an active observer and a participant in some of the digital tasks clearly seemed to influence the students. In both the surveys and in the interviews the teacher's role was commented by the students, mostly they favoured the teacher's presence. All in all the students seemed to value and depend on an active teacher, both as an instructor and as a participant.

5.3 Analyses and Discussion of Results

The blended learning format is first commented and discussed. The results and findings are then discussed and linked to theories. Finally some reflections on this study are presented.

5.3.1 Introduction

Students were generally positive about the blended working format. It gave them possibilities to deal with part of the learning content anytime outside the classroom and gave them more flexibility to organize the various tasks. Digital methods were also appreciated in the classroom, not just for the sake of variation but because new digital opportunities enabled them to study and learn in a different way.

5.3.2 How Students may Benefit from Blended Learning

There are many different ways to teach in a blended classroom. Some courses have a more online focus than others and may be more suitable for distant learning. Others have the classroom and more traditional lecturing blended in. Blended learning is in both examples defined as an education program in which a student partly learns through online delivery of instruction and content, with some element of student control over time and place.

In a sociocultural learning perspective blended learning may enhance learning and offer new possibilities to learn. The collaborative dimension and the support and guiding by more capable peers (Vygotsky 1978) seem to influence the learning outcome. Through online collaboration both teachers and more capable students have the possibility to assist and encourage students in order to expand learning. Also the shift between an individual and a collaborative focus seems important. The barriers for students to seek guidance or help seem to be lowered when having digital possibilities. Findings in this thesis indicate that many students felt it easier to ask or discuss with the teacher online than face-to-face. This is further commented in section 5.3.4.1 At its most general level the blended classroom reflects the increasingly digital society. Human and mental action are linked to the historical and cultural settings (Wertsch 1994). The educational sector therefore also mirrors the belief that the use of digital artefacts will develop learning. In this respect blended learning represents an increased reliance on the use of digital artefacts.

When the life world of the students is closer connected to the educational world, students are encouraged to cross boundaries. Boundary theory proposes that there are discontinuities between different environments. These socio-cultural discontinuities require the students to reformulate their thinking (Akkermann and Bakker, 2011). Crossing and blurring the boundaries between schools and the life-world of the students may create new learning opportunities. This can be related not just to using more online activities, but also to include more digital methods and programmes in the classroom. When using a blended learning

pedagogy it will be possible to make the boundary between the classroom and the life world of the students more salient and continuous.

Based on the findings and results in this thesis a blended learning environment might lead to higher aspirations and create more engagement for the different curricular topics. In a meta-analysis and review of online studies by the U.S. Department of Education (2010) instruction combining online and face-to-face instruction had a larger advantage relative to purely face-to-face instruction than did purely online instruction. It is, however, important to underline that this meta-analysis did not reflect differences in content, pedagogy and learning time.

In order to maximize the learning potential of crossing boundaries there is a need for more blended learning programmes in the educational sector. Specifically there is also a need for more examples concerning design and frames within each school or educational institution. Easier access and facilitation of both digital artefacts and their use seems necessary. Educational authorities and school administrations should aim at qualifying and encouraging educators to take an active part in blended learning programme.

This study shows that it was important to create an educational setting that allowed the students to engage in various type of learning activities. By combining real world resources, activities and online experiences the students seem to have gained more insight in the curricular topics in their English course.

5.3.2.1 Distant Learning

One of the students spent two months abroad. During this time she kept contact with the teacher and her class through the digital platform itslearning and through the digital video program Skype. When she attended the lessons through Skype, the computer was placed at the front of the classroom and moved back and forth between the attention of the teacher and her fellow students. This made her able to take part in the lessons and she could speak in class.

The students' embarrassment caused by this arrangement caused a certain astonishment. At first she felt it strange and, according to herself, a bit unreal. To be able to connect her life world in a far away country with her class and lessons in Norway seemed strange and

unnatural at first. Also the other students felt it a bit awkward and she was almost considered as an alien who was not real, like an avatar behind the interface of the screen.

Gradually both the class and the student got used to it and she became a more natural part of the group. Communicating through video programs on the computer certainly seemed to create a certain distance and awkwardness at first. However this student was able to participate in class surprisingly much. Her participation in the lessons through Skype made it possible to have a synchronous communication online.

A video programme and its use in class seemed to function as a mediational means to increase the learning potential. This cultural tool made it possible for her to blend in with the class. In the interview she also claimed that through this opportunity she felt she had not missed so much of class while being in another country.

This interaction took place within a specific social and cultural context. In Vygotsky's view, human learning and development occur through a purposeful action mediated by various tools (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1979) in which language is the most purposeful tool. That language was mediated through the use of a digital program enabled the student to increase her possibilities to communicate and for learning to occur.

An important aspect in scaffolding (Bruner 1977) is that the teacher provides appropriate support. Active dialogues and interactions between the teacher and the learner are therefore essential. The dialogues and communication between the student and the teacher and between the student and the class were provided for by the teacher through planning and carrying out this specific form of distant and digital communication.

Based on this experience it seems relevant to acknowledge the many opportunities that exist within the technical and digital development today, especially within the field of blended learning. This student was already a part of the class before she left and was already socially included. The blend between digital presence and real presence was therefore easier to adapt to. This blend functioned well and was confirmed as being a positive factor by the student. She also commented that she had felt less isolated and more a part of the class while away when taking part in this blended program.

5.3.3 A Comparison of Digital and Non-Digital Learning Outcomes

Learning ought to stimulate developmental processes. In a blended working classroom the use of computers and computer programmes ought to create potential zones of proximal development for the students. If not successful in doing so, external knowledge will not become internalized (Vygotsky 1978:91). The findings in this study suggest that the use of multimedia tools, electronic bulletin boards and online discussion groups may create potential development for learning (sections 5.3.3.1, 5.3.4.1). Some educational software designed for language learning seem to mediate social action. A computer-mediated communication can be seen as a dialectic relationship between action (the role and use of the language) and the artefact (the computer program). According to sociocultural theory (Wertsch 1994), language will mediate social action.

Bruner (1977) also seems to agree with Vygotsky that language serves to mediate between environmental stimuli and the individual's response. Therefore it is likely to assume that an important aspect in scaffolding (Bruner 1977) is that the teacher provides appropriate support when evaluating the learner. Active dialogues and interactions between the teacher and the learner are therefore essential. One example is that the teacher supported and commented the students' literary contributions in the online discussions. Students also claimed that without this support they would have contributed less to these literary online conversations.

According to the findings in this study, traditional teaching still holds an important position although students seem to appreciate digital learning. This needs to be seen in a perspective of learning outcomes. Although students value variation in itself, they are more likely to favour any option or method if the learning outcome is good. Which tasks or programmes teachers choose is therefore important. Presumably methods that promote further learning will be preferred. To look more into the findings when using specific digital programmes is therefore important.

Student B represented in this research what some would call a digital native. His reactions and comments, his use of the computer and other digital artefact differed in many aspects from that of the other students. This digitally experienced student might give an idea of future learners in a more digitally educational world. More research on digitally trained students will

be necessary to discover an eventually changing learning potential in this apparently increasing group.

5.3.3.1 Digital Bulletin Boards and Presentation Programmes

According to the findings in the B group where the program Padlet had been used during the school year, more than two thirds of the students answered in their survey that using digital bulletin boards encouraged them to participate more. Since this program was much used, not only to present, but also to associate and learn new vocabulary, the students used it quite frequently. However it was the teacher who had the ownership and initiated when to use it in class. By having the ownership the teacher was also able to control and eventually erase irregular contributions. Except for a somewhat unserious start where some students placed a lot of foolish comments, it gradually developed into something that most of the students appreciated. This indicates, that after an introductory phase with strict teacher control, most students learned to appreciate this method and realized that they actually could learn new vocabulary from it.

The reasons why many students liked to use these bulletin boards were many. The findings in based on the survey suggested that these digital bulletin boards made students contribute more in addition to bringing more variation in the lessons. However the anonymity of a Padlet seemed in itself to be a positive and perhaps an exciting factor. Compared to using the blackboard when students had to exhibit themselves in front of class, creating a Padlet was somewhat easier and did not arouse personal attention. Correcting spelling mistakes was also something the teacher could do without holding students personally responsible.

When the task was to share associations within a chosen topic, like on the topic multiculturalism (figure 15), the students could freely come up with ideas in both words and pictures without fearing they were wrong. They did not need to create the illustrations themselves but could find and use pictures or expressions made by others. It was also exciting in the sense that their ideas were anonymously presented in class on a large screen in front of the class. Everyone could both publish and be a part of, literally speaking, a larger picture. For the majority of students who favoured creating Padlets this obviously engaged them in their learning process. It created a potential for learning and development (Vygotsky, 1978). This may be one of the reasons why, according to the results, Padlet made them contribute more. They appeared to be motivated and focused on making contributions. Considering time spent,

it was also much quicker to create a common bulletin board digitally than to ask the same students move back and forth to a blackboard.

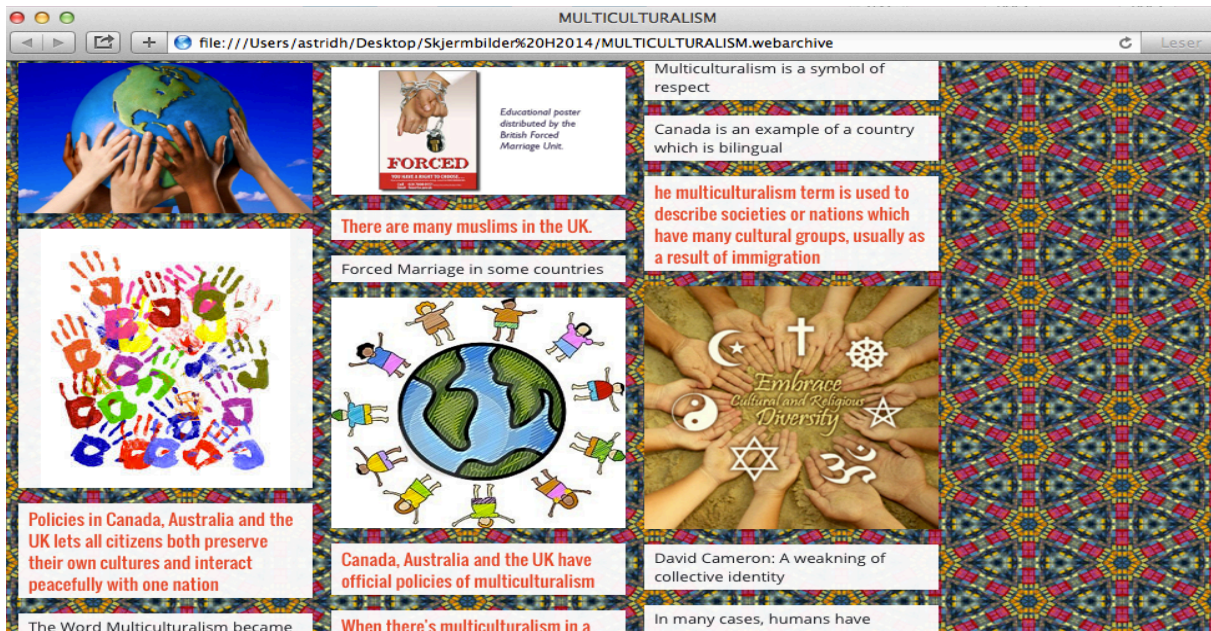


Figure 15: Part of a digital poster made to illustrate the topic Multiculturalism

Many students also found the use of bulletin boards a good way to learn new vocabulary. Before the teacher closed down a Padlet, some chose to take screen shots, which later could be used in writing longer texts or on tests. These students obviously experienced this as a good way to increase their own vocabulary. Learning vocabulary through the use of digital boards offered new possibilities and underlined the positive findings and results in a blended classroom.

A few negative findings indicated that creating posters on electronic bulletin boards was boring. Some students seemed to sabotage and enjoy posting irregular comments. The programme did then not live up to possible expectations of an increased learning outcome. The majority of the students did not accept this sabotage, and along with the teacher being able to erase and correct contributions, the irregular comments seemed to gradually vanish.

Through using multimedia presentation programs, like Prezi, students were able to create slides or video cuts. Prezi was easy to learn and enabled the students to use various artistic

digital tools in order to make presentations. Through this work, which most of the students seemed to like, they had to think and elaborate in a new way. The topic was Hamlet. By creating these slides they had to angle Hamlet from different viewpoints, something many found challenging. Facing challenges and at the same time receiving help from a more experienced peer or teacher, seemed to enable possibilities for new learning to occur.



Figure 16: The front page of the Prezi about Hamlet

From this Prezi (figure 16) we can see that students used illustrations, wrote poems and free comments to express their sentiments of Hamlet's indecisiveness. To frame it all in a slide show like this made the topic more visual and showed Hamlet from a different perspective.

It seems that if digital programmes are easy to use, students have a good opportunity to become more creative by using multimedia tools. Students may discover a potential artistic value that can add new aspects to their thinking of literary topics. Compared to real drawing and painting, which is both time consuming and difficult to engage many students in, these programmes allow many users to become amateur artists.

In the sociocultural theory of learning (Vygotsky 1978) integrating art or artistic expressions into education will foster children's use of symbols to communicate and express their ideas and feelings. These possible gains will affect verbalization and their communicative skills (Althouse, Johnsen and Mitchell: *The Colours of Learning*, 2003).

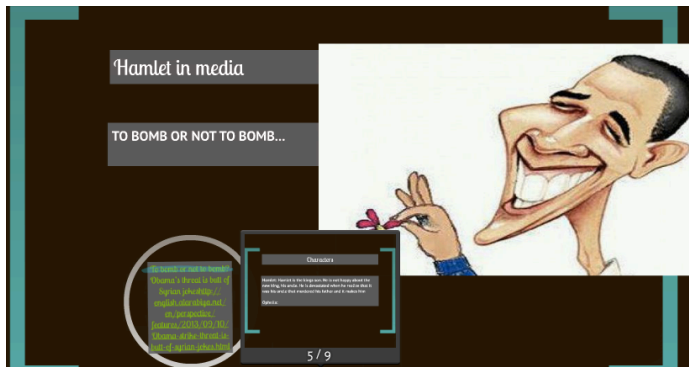


Figure 17: Page four of Prezi, comparing Obama and Hamlet

As illustrated in figure 14, students have here associated president Obama with Hamlet due to Obama's indecisiveness about war. A comparison like this underlines the students' involvement and their learning potential. Many students also appreciated a task like this when having learnt and understood how to use a multimedia programme. Some were able to surprise both themselves and their teacher when it came to their finished products.

To make a slide show can be both an individual or collective task. However to gain ideas and cooperate with others were clearly some of the benefits according to the students. When ideas were shared the enthusiasm among the students seemed to encourage them to keep working. Some were also more experienced peers and could demonstrate and show others some of the new technical possibilities (Vygotsky, 1978).

To teach, encourage, participate, observe and evaluate the whole process of making these presentations, it is essential for the teacher to know multimedia tools and their potential. It therefore demands that teachers have knowledge, courage and will to embark on new journeys.

5.3.3.2 Literature and Reading on Screens

Digital reading has become more common. E-books and smart books have been introduced into the educational sector. Still, many students seem to prefer reading on paper, especially when it comes to longer texts. No matter how many digital tools you use, you still have to

take time to read Shakespeare. The question is whether the time spent on paper secures a deeper reading and a stronger emotional bond to the text compared to reading on tablets.

The findings in this thesis indicate a rather negative attitude towards reading literature on screens. In both surveys and interviews a clear majority of the students preferred books on paper. If we look beyond the fact that reading on computers often tempt students to engage in other digital activities like Facebook, there seem to be other important reasons for why student tend to chose paper.

All the students being interviewed, except for one, claimed that the interface, the surface of the screen, easily caused headaches. They also mentioned the lighting and that reading longer texts digitally often felt tiring. This tiredness made them lose interest and was mentioned as a reason for the lack of concentration that usually followed. It was also confirmed as a reason for the escape into other digital or non-digital activities. Technically speaking, it needs to be commented that reading on a tablet, a writing pad that accepts input directly onto an LCD screen, seems to improve the digital reading. Students who used tablets had this experience, however they still seemed to prefer paper when it came to literature.

The emotional aspect was an influence mentioned by the majority to be a decisive factor in choosing paper for reading literature. This was a rather surprising or unexpected result. Reading newspaper headings, blogs and shorter online texts was a common reading experience for all. These non-fictional texts represent a totally different reading experience and the aim of this reading is to get an overview or be quickly informed. Digital reading like this indicates less engagement and is more superficial. That students are used to a more skimming type of digital reading, may influence their behaviour and reading pattern and may cause hardships and distractions when attempting to read literature in the same way. One of the students expressed this very well when she claimed that the digital reading of literature made her brain come less alive with imagery and emotions than compared to when reading on paper.

Digital reading also seemed to create a sense of loneliness. Results showed that the students found it less social to read on a computer or on a smartphone. They said screens made them feel more distant and expressed a sense of loneliness when reading digitally. The same feeling

of loneliness did not seem to occur when reading on paper. Based on these findings, it appears that paper itself has a less distant and a more social and emotional aspect. Screens obviously gave the students a more isolated and anonymous feeling and this influenced the emotional aspect. Sharing ideas and impressions would be thought to be easier in a digitized world where 'everyone' is enabled to respond and give comments through their computers or smartphones. However, the deeper reading of longer literary texts seems to be emotionally attached to paper.

The feeling and smell of paper were also factors being mentioned to explain students' choice of paper. According to the students' comments this had to do with the more organic nature of paper. However, this experience may also be related to happy childhood memories of bedtime reading. That our senses and nearby environment affect our reading experiences is also an evidence to explain this. To open up for the world of literature, to get closer to the characters was an explanation given by several of the students to explain their preference for paper.

Whether an involvement in digitally dominated forms of reading will change the capacity to think deeply and reflect, is a question to be raised. It is however difficult to receive an answer to this question since we probably are in a transition period when it comes to digital content and digital reading. Due to the students' response it seems that digital reading changes our ability to reflect and get emotionally attached to literary texts. Going beyond texts to analyse and think new thoughts is the product of years of formation. Being able to read in a new and more digitized way may take years to develop. We can read in multiple ways and absorb different things from reading. However what we absorb will be influenced by both the content of our reading and the medium we use. Reading on a computer compared to reading from books may therefore create significant differences in reflection and learning outcome.

In this research, one student, being close to the term digitally native, represented to a certain extent a different voice. He claimed to have no difficulties in reading literature on his computer or smartphone and was also a student who was able to share relevant reflections on what he read, although his somewhat remote digital world seemed to distance him from the rest of the class. This student was digitally trained after years of participating in computer games and read his books and novels on a tablet. Reversing black and white, he read white texts on a black screen as he found this to be less tiring for his eyes. His case may show a type of student that will increase in numbers. To develop digital literacy skill may demand a new

type of reading strategy (Auer: 2014). In order to expand the learning outcomes from digital reading, students ought to be trained and master new types of reading skills. However it seems to be uncertain whether digital reading skills will be able to include deeper thinking and the emotional aspect of literature.

When relating the emotional loss in digital reading of literature to the social cultural theory of learning, it proves difficult to discover any specific development or learning gains. The zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) does not seem to be challenged or expanded. Based on the main results in this thesis, digital reading of literature appears to reduce the possibilities of social and emotional involvement. It does not seem to give the students the expertise or insight that will provide an actual development.

5.3.3.3 Real World Objects and Digital Artefacts

When the students were asked to express visually the setting of a specific short story, read and analysed in class, they had the option to make a digital poster or to use colour chalk and decorate the blackboard. The results varied. A clear majority favoured the digital option and found it to be much easier. When constructing the poster they did not have to make anything themselves except for finding digital pictures to use and putting them together using various multimedia tools.

To question the artistic value in creating a digital poster like this is relevant concerning development and potential learning gains. A parallel might be drawn to the electronica music genre (digitally produced music) and if the artists here actually create anything themselves except for re-mixing and putting together what other musicians have actually made earlier. However the process in itself (5.3.3.1) might be a potential to learn if it is found challenging and inspiring for the students (Erstad, 2013).

Art and artistic expressions from the history of art was an important part of the curriculum in the course of English literature and Culture. Students were supposed to examine paintings, sculptures and other art forms. Mostly they studied art in digital pictures or from the textbook during classes, but they also visited art museums. When confronted with paintings and sculptures from the real world, their comments seem to have a close relation with their comments about the emotional aspects in literature.

The lightings, the dimensions and the fact of a painting to be the real original seemed to strongly influence the students. They claimed it to be more emotional to actually be able to touch a sculpture or a painting, to actually feel the brushstrokes as one of the student commented. They obviously became more engaged in learning about art when seeing it for real than watching it on a screen. However they also added that screens were better than books when it came to the light and colouring effect.

The social presence in an art gallery was also commented. Students seemed to value other people around to admire the same painting or sculpture. It was as if being a member of a group made them closer and more enthusiastic than sitting alone in front of their own personal computer. This effect in itself may of course be closer to that of collaborative learning than to the difference between digital and non-digital worlds. However using more of our senses is a known effect to expand our development and learning (Althouse, Johnsen and Mitchell, 2003). Vygotsky (1978) both underlined the importance of the social organization of learning, facilitated by guidance from more competent others. Also he underlined the aesthetic experience as one mean to improve learning.

Even the experienced digital student who often seemed to oppose the other students stated that the digital world would never overcome the real world in an art competition. However by the use of three dimensional printers and improved optical interfaces we may get very close.

5.3.4 Digital Communication and Its Effect on Teaching and Learning

Digital communication or computer-mediated communication (CMC) has become a natural part of our society and its use seems to be increasing. CMC has also become a part of the educational sector through learning platforms, mails and online groups. Its potential to bring about social, organizational and linguistic change is being debated (Herring: 2013). CMC has changed from the exchange of textual messages between individuals, typing on the keyboards and reading the screens of networked computers to any digitally mediated communication. Blogs, Wikis, social network and the use of mobile phones have blurred the boundary between real and virtual discourses. CMC is important in distant education. Digital media have also become multimodal, something that brings a new aspect into this form of communication. Technology also gives every student a voice and allows more introvert students to participate. They may participate through a channel in which they feel more comfortable. Considering this aspect CMC can be addressed to as being more democratic.

Using CMC in the educational sector opens up for new dimensions in teaching and learning. Used in a blended classroom, CMC may add new aspects and possibilities in communication between student and teacher, between student and student, and between student and artefact (pedagogical software). Teachers need to learn and use these new digital possibilities to discover and see the potential learning outcomes. To benefit from new technology it is not enough to own and administrate a computer. The top-down implementation of new technologies seems to generally foster resistance among the staff (M. Johannesen et al./ Computers & Education: 2012). To implement new methods and find the appropriate pedagogical software, teachers and students must be willing to both test and fail in different communicative approaches and the use of new software. Testing and failing when attempting to use new digital methods in class was without doubt an important experience in this study.

5.3.4.1 Online Discussion Groups

The online discussion groups seemed to motivate and encourage most students. It seemed to increase communication on the literary topics.

Some of the topics had already been dealt with in class through lectures and related tasks. Discussions in class about various novels and short stories mostly seemed to engage the same students. These students were usually the more talkative and outgoing students who had courage and confidence to express their views in class. Both as a digital experiment and a tentative method to engage more students in literary discussions, online discussions groups were planned and carried out. Since these online groups were made compulsory all students had to participate. However the contributions depended on their engagement and will to be an active part of the group.

Due to these digital opportunities the teacher was able to build a learning environment without being in the same room as the students. Synchronous groups where teacher and students had agreed to meet online seemed to have a good learning potential. To make discussions function online it seemed to be important for everyone in the group to be present at the same time. Asynchronous online groups did not arouse the same interest, and engagement. According to the students it felt boring and to a point meaningless to wait for other participants' replies and comments when they were eager to discuss and share

comments. The sense of fellowship and commitment may be a lacking factor in asynchronous online groups.

The more shy students in class took on different roles in these online groups. More comments and reflections were shared and the students seemed to develop a stronger sense of commitment for the discussion and the group. In class some of the same students were more invisible and found it difficult to engage in group or class discussions. When online they seemed to have lost some of their shyness or unwillingness to participate. These students obviously seemed to move on in development and increase their learning outcome.

According to the theory by Vygotsky defined as the proximal zone of development (Vygotsky 1978), it is through dialogue and interaction that productive change may be possible. This shows an interactive view of learning. 'The level of potential development will be determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' (Vygotsky, 1978). It shows the range of abilities that a student can perform with assistance, but has difficulties in performing on her or his own. These online discussion groups where teachers are able to create a learning environment that maximizes the learners' ability to interact with each other through discussion, collaboration, and feedback may be for some students a good opportunity and a potential for further development.

Compared to discussions in class, online discussion seemed to have an advantage in more time for reflection. Although four or five students in a synchronous online group were all present at the same time, they did not have to come up with immediate comments or replies to their fellow students. These synchronous online groups seemed to allow each student some time for reflection before writing their comments. Having more time to plan their writing and pay attention to the form seemed to increase the formality of the comments and the replies. This time factor in itself seemed to stimulate a more meaningful communication and collaboration in the groups. It seems that students can exchange knowledge, something that may arise further development. Another important factor was also the possibility to get printouts of these discussions and use them as resources for later work on the same topics. As previously commented (Section 2.2.2) speech and action are often intermingled in a digital world of learning where the borderlines between them may be difficult to discover. When speech and action converge it may lead to good moments for learning (Vygotsky, 1978).

New online genres seem to have emerged in academic genres and discourse and have affected the established and traditional communication (Péres-Sabater, 2012). A factor that therefore has to be considered is the academic level of language use in online groups. When testing out discussion groups in a previous pilot project many students were insecure about which language to use, and if the online discussion was like a chat. In the life world of the students both the use of social media and various chat programmes are considered very colloquial and informal. When using these types of programmes the students use slang and abbreviations and often a language different from the educational world. If teachers start to use online discussion groups as part of an academic course it may therefore create some confusion and bewilderment in the beginning. The students need to learn to behave and talk more academically and realize that what they refer to as chat-programmes also can be used to promote learning in an educational world. However there are also positive features to be found in the more informal digital communication. That the language here is more relational and engaged in response to previous and future comments may be a positive factor in itself to encourage and increase the use of English as a foreign language.

5.3.5 The Role of the Teacher in a Blended Classroom

The teacher was present in all the above mentioned literary discussion groups and this was something the students were fully aware of and appreciated. Both through surveys and interviews the teacher presence was underlined as being important for the online groups. Presence by the teacher seemed to raise or ensure a certain academic level in the discussions and also seemed to increase the students' effort and participation. Based on the findings in this thesis it seems vital for the teachers to be well prepared and organised to secure learning outcomes in online discussion groups. It also seems important that teachers are active contributors and are able to educate the students while being participants in these groups.

According to the findings a teacher needs to do more than just facilitating tasks for the students. In an increasingly digitally educational world the teacher may come up with a different role. The teacher presence is clearly needed.

According to the research in this thesis students found it important to have a teacher who was not just a facilitator, but also an active leader. The teacher's role was commented in both

surveys and interviews. Students found the presence of a teacher to be useful and necessary in both digital and non-digital tasks, although in digitally related tasks the idea of an active teacher was slightly reduced. This could be due to various factors. One reason may be that the digital world is by many students still considered to be a more private world, and digital activities like chatting and other virtual communication belong to the life world of the students and not to the educational world. This again may express the idea that digital activities are not as important as non-digital activities when it comes to school and learning.

Although the school has been digitized for one or two decades, many teachers have not implemented pedagogically digital tasks in their teaching. Most of the digitalization has been to give students access to computers and writing programs. To develop a pedagogical learning environment in a blended classroom teachers need to confront their students and challenge them in new ways. In a sociocultural theory (Vygotsky 1978, Wertsch 1994) this means to see the potential of each student and motivate him/her to participate in digitally mediated tasks. The digital tasks have to be carefully planned by the teacher and contain possibilities for challenges and development. If students are given digital tasks just because they are digital it may not necessarily lead to better or more learning. Teachers have to be active participants and motivators. This includes also the digital arena.

In a social constructivist approach the teacher takes on the role as a facilitator. The teacher will then help the learner to get his or her own understanding of the content. For communicative purposes the teacher may find digital tasks that encourage authentic communication. Teachers need to acknowledge new digital possibilities and that the digital learning field also opens up for students to have a more active role. This may demand a more continuous dialogue between teacher and student.

5.3.5.1 Balancing Autonomy and Obligation

Teaching is of course not indivisible from learning. A good teacher should know what he/she expects the students to learn. If the focus is to pass an exam the teaching will differ from the general teaching of English literature where the abstraction of meaning, critical reflections and personal change are some of the main learning aims. In Westbury (2000) the German tradition of didactics is founded on the main concept that the teacher should be autonomous within the demands of the curriculum. 'Didaktik is centred on the forms of reasoning about teaching appropriate for an autonomous professional teacher who has complete freedom

within the framework of the Lehrplan to develop his or her own approaches to teaching' (Westbury 2000:17)

To use the social cultural theory and being a teacher facilitator for the learners will be challenged by the many demands and obligations by prescribed governmental policies and a focus on exams. To be an expert, a good teacher and a facilitator in English literature it is necessary to have autonomy. A number of conflicting obligations often force teachers to balance between autonomy and obligation. When it comes to the use of computers it may very well reflect a professional and autonomous choice. However, the use of computers and software in the classroom are often considered a pedagogical burden and a forced technical tool. Therefore there are many challenges ahead in motivating professional educators to choose digital methods out of pedagogical reasoning and their own autonomous choice. The teacher should ask themselves about which ways that may lead to fruitful encounters between the learner and the content, and if a digital method may lead to this achievement. This again depends fully on the teachers' ability to engage and create interest and understand the life world of their students.

5.4 Conclusions

When teaching English in a blended classroom driven by pedagogy and supported by technology, one must assume that new technology has the capabilities to improve both teaching and learning in addition to the improvement of digital skills. The implementation of technology has its clear advantages. The technology also offers learners the control over what they receive and may in addition give an almost endless exposure to the target language through web-based activities along with the possibilities to redo and reread comments. The repetitive nature of these discussions, in which writers quote and comment on each other's messages, assists learners in understanding linguistic cues (Hansen-Smith, 2001: 109).

Teachers and learners may hold both positive and negative attitudes towards new technology. Also in this study there were a few students who do not like being forced to participate in web-based communication and would rather attend classes. Some students did not necessarily make contributions in chat forums. However, when required by the teacher most students participated in synchronous online discussion groups. The teacher also created variety by using a 'new' tool in the EFL classroom. Studies to date seem to point to text chat providing

opportunities for negotiating meaning. These opportunities are also considered a key to language acquisition by many linguists (Dudeny & Hockly, 2007: 74). Using web-based activities may also open up for more independent learners.

Online discussions may well offer students a chance to develop their language abilities. One of the main benefits is the fact that some learners who are normally shy in a face-to-face class may actually become less shy and express themselves in a different way through a medium. The use of chat rooms and online discussions may also have a socially cohesive effect and thus open up for more students daring to discuss in open class outside the virtual world. The social interaction takes place in a virtual setting and seems to have a good effect on the development of the students' language. The zone of proximal development (Vygotsky 1978) seems to be extended in this computer-mediated communication practice because the social interaction that took place using a boundary object like chat have the possibility to mediate learning.

Curricular topics such as multiculturalism and cross-cultural understanding might also be better learnt and understood when more students participate in discussions and have to make themselves understood by others. It is important that teachers take responsibility and regulate online discussions to be a natural part of curricular activities and do not embrace uncritically new and emerging practices due to new technological inventions. Web-based communication is one of many fields where teachers are required to use their ability to both teach and be expert practitioners.

The deep reading of literature seems to be disturbed by digital reading. Students in this study mentioned the lack of an emotional aspect and a feeling of being more left alone when reading on computers or tablets. Being able to concentrate over a longer period of time seems to be more difficult than when reading on paper. Whether these aspects are due to the lack of digital training or have a more physiological aspect will be important to find out in further research.

English totally dominates the many online contexts that emerge and has a unique position. There is still a written standard of English serving global communities, but other sub-cultural features of English will be more visible. English as a global language may develop into a more multicultural English. This process will be intensified by the use of communication

technology. To become a good language learner today and to become proficient in English it is increasingly necessary to be able to participate in more than one world.

The educational sector has been dominated by curricula and textbooks whereas the out-of-school contexts have been more mediated by the new technical and social opportunities. Students participate and move between different contexts: the school as a cultural-historical institution, the circle of friends (common interests) and the emergent practices in online environments. We cross these boundaries every day and make connections between them. The Englishes used in these two zones seem to be different as out-of school contexts demand different types of communicative competence. The teacher's role may therefore be to make connections between these two worlds of Englishes and try to make the students benefit from their communicative online experiences in EFL and their practice of an academic language. The online contexts do not exist separately from offline contexts. They are both mutually constitutive of learning and teaching in technology-rich environments (Lund, 2006:193).

6 Final words

In this study blended learning has been examined in a sociocultural perspective, related to the zones of proximal development. It shows that students increase their learning and knowledge by taking part in digital activities where they over time relate and collaborate. In this blended classroom language and digital artefacts seem to function as structural resources.

This study has helped me to gain more insight into how learners by using digital methods may increase their motivation and abilities to learn English and English literature in a blended classroom. It has given me more knowledge about which methods and activities to use for a successful integration and has also shown possible limits when it comes to digital reading of literature.

Given the right blend of methods students may be engaged to seek new information, take part in online speech communities and contribute to electronic bulletin boards. By using a more blended learning environment, students may become more engaged and achieve more knowledge than by only being participants in a traditional classroom setting.

Teaching has historically served the institutional context of schools and curricula. Today both teaching and learning take increasingly place in and across multiple contexts. Out-of-school contexts are rich in non-standardized variants that may be regarded as innovative and functional outside the classroom but may be seen as challenging in a curricular context. For teachers it becomes increasingly important to understand such practises so that they can guide learners across contexts, including the school standard that historically has proved to be the gateway to the English-speaking community.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Basic Skills

English literature and culture

Language and language learning

The main subject area deals with knowledge about the English language and the choosing and assessment of different strategies for promoting personal language learning. It includes the knowledge of fundamental characteristics of English usage, as well as the relationship between language, culture and society, and the use of linguistic tools and stylistic devices in literary texts. An evaluation of one's own language learning in terms of a set of goals is also included in the main subject area.

Communication

The main subject area deals with the communication of meaning by means of language. It is about the development of written and oral language skills, and about building a well-developed, nuanced vocabulary so that one can communicate about social issues. Communication also involves precise and coherent expression in a number of oral and written genres, including composite texts. The adaptation of usage to different social and cultural situations is included in the main subject area.

Culture, society and literature

The main subject area deals with key issues related to literature and culture in the English-speaking world, and includes literary texts and other artistic means of expression, such as visual art, theatre, music and architecture from various time periods and different parts of the world. It is about the relationship between text, culture and society. In addition, the main subject area covers historical processes that have led to the spread of the English language and Anglo-American culture, as well as current issues in international culture and the world of news.

Basic skills

Basic skills are integrated in the competence aims where they contribute to the development of and are an integral part of the subject competence. In the English programme subject, basic skills are understood as follows:

Being able to express oneself orally and in writing in English involves the use of language in a nuanced, precise manner with a view to developing one's English language skills. These skills are an important tool in the quest to understand and use English in ever more varied and demanding contexts that span special fields and cultures. It involves broad textual skills, which in turn involves communicating by means of dissimilar written and oral genres and stylistic registers. Oral skills involve the ability to understand spoken texts of varying length and complexity. Furthermore, it involves understanding different varieties of English, and being able to converse in English in language that is appropriate to the situation.

Being able to read in English involves understanding, exploring and pondering demanding texts, thereby gaining insight across cultures and special fields. This is an integral part of practical language skills. It also involves the ability to choose a reading strategy suited to the intended purpose.

Numeracy in English involves supplementing one's arithmetical skills in one's native language with the necessary expressions in English. The ability to utilize information from graphs, tables and statistics is important in the understanding of English texts and for being able to communicate about specialist subjects.

Being able to use digital tools in English involves the authentic use of English, and paves the way for additional forms of communication and learning arenas. In many contexts, English-language skills are a prerequisite for being able to exploit new tools for extracting information for use in specialist contexts. Source criticism, copyright and personal protection are all key concerns in the digital arena.

B Group-Padlet

Tidsmerke	Likte du å bruke Padlet ?	Prøv å forklare hvorfor du likte/ikke likte å bruke Padlet.	Hva er den største forskjellen på å bruke Padlet framfor vanlig tavle ?	Jeg lærer mer av å bruke Padlet	Padlet er en fin mulighet til å lære/bruke nye ord	Bruk av vanlig tavle (skrive ord/ideer) oppleves som ...	Lage bilder , umforme selv, som feks fra "The Last Leaf"	Kommentarer/erfaringer fra bruk av Padlet/tavle ?	Lage bilder , umforme selv, som feks fra "The Last Leaf"
16.06.2014 kl. 10.24.10	Ja	Det var gøy	Padlet gir mer variasjon i undervisningen, Padlet gjør at jeg bidrar mer, Det blir mindre personlig	Ja	Ja	Kjedelig	Padlet gir større kunstnerisk frihet	Nei, det er bare gøy	
16.06.2014 kl. 10.24.26	Ja	Likte padlet fordi det ga en god oversikt over temaet vi hadde om	Padlet gir mer variasjon i undervisningen, Det går mye raskere , Det blir mindre personlig	Ja	Ja	Kjedelig	Vet ikke	Jeg synes padlet var greit, for det gjorde det mulig for meg å ta et skjermbilde av det vi holdt på med slik at det var mulig for meg og ha en bedre oversikt.	
16.06.2014 kl. 10.24.33	Ja	Mer aktiv time	Padlet gir mer variasjon i undervisningen, Det gir flere muligheter, Det blir mindre personlig	Ja	Ja	Kjedelig	Padlet gir større kunstnerisk frihet		
16.06.2014 kl. 10.24.33	Vet ikke		Padlet gir mer variasjon i undervisningen, Padlet gjør at jeg bidrar mer	Vet ikke	Ja	Tar for lang tid	Padlet gir større kunstnerisk frihet		
16.06.2014 kl. 10.24.55	Ja	det var gøy	Padlet gjør at jeg bidrar mer	Ja	Ja	Tar for lang tid	Vet ikke		
16.06.2014 kl. 10.24.47	Ja	Man lærte av andre elever	Padlet gir mer variasjon i undervisningen	Vet ikke	Vet ikke	Kjedelig	Padlet gir større kunstnerisk frihet		
16.06.2014 kl. 10.24.52	Vet ikke		Padlet gir mer variasjon i undervisningen	Vet ikke	Ja	Mer sosialt og samlende	Tavle gir større kunstnerisk frihet		
16.06.2014 kl. 10.25.03	Ja	Heheh vet ikk	Det går mye raskere . Det gir flere muligheter, Det blir mindre personlig	Ja	Ja	Tar for lang tid	Padlet gir større kunstnerisk frihet		
16.06.2014 kl. 10.25.16	Ja	det var lettere å lære med den	Padlet gir mer variasjon i undervisningen, Padlet gjør at jeg bidrar mer, Det går mye raskere	Ja	Ja	Tar for lang tid	Padlet gir større kunstnerisk frihet		
16.06.2014 kl. 10.25.23	Ja	Det var interessant	Padlet gir mer variasjon i undervisningen, Det gir flere muligheter	Ja	Ja	Tar for lang tid	Padlet gir større kunstnerisk frihet	Det var lærerik	
16.06.2014 kl. 10.25.41	Ja	Bra oversikt av fakta, kreative innslag uansett om du er normal muntlig aktiv eller ikke.	Padlet gir mer variasjon i undervisningen, Padlet gjør at jeg bidrar mer, Det gir flere muligheter	Vet ikke	Ja	Mer ansvarsfullt	Padlet gir større kunstnerisk frihet	Bra er fornøyd med den.	
16.06.2014 kl. 10.26.00	Vet ikke	Jeg syns det var helt greit, men jeg følte ikke jeg lærte så mye av det.	Det blir fort useriøst	Nei	Vet ikke	Mer sosialt og samlende	Tavle gir større kunstnerisk frihet	Noen ganger har det vært veldig greit og bruke padlet, men jeg ville ikke valgt og bruke det daglig.	
16.06.2014 kl. 10.26.12	Ja		Padlet gjør at jeg bidrar mer, Det går mye raskere . Det blir mindre personlig	Vet ikke	Vet ikke	Mer ansvarsfullt	Tavle gir større kunstnerisk frihet		
16.06.2014 kl. 10.26.24	Ja	den er oversiktlig og man får se andre sine perspektiver. Samtidig som den er anonym, så det er ikke flaut å skrive feil.	Padlet gir mer variasjon i undervisningen, Padlet gjør at jeg bidrar mer, Det gir flere muligheter	Ja	Ja	Tar for lang tid	Padlet gir større kunstnerisk frihet	kan fort bli useriøst, men gir større broddegrad på hva man kan lage. F.eks tabeller, bilder, osv.	
16.06.2014 kl. 10.26.25	Ja	jeg syntes det var trivelig at folk var villige til å si mer som de eventuelt ikke ville ha sagt høyt i klassen	Padlet gjør at jeg bidrar mer	Ja	Ja	Mer ansvarsfullt	Padlet gir større kunstnerisk frihet	jeg liker padlet.	
16.06.2014 kl. 10.26.36	Ja	Lettere å være "muntlig" aktiv i timen, og folk som ikke er så muntlig til vanlig kan få si noe her også. Alle fikk notatene til alle, og det var til hjelp til aving til prøver.	Padlet gir mer variasjon i undervisningen, Padlet gjør at jeg bidrar mer	Vet ikke	Ja	Mer ansvarsfullt	Tavle gir større kunstnerisk frihet	Jeg liker padlet, og håper det kan bli mer vanlig i flere lag. Men vi må ikke slutte å bruke tavlen også! :)	
16.06.2014 kl. 10.27.03	Ja	Det var svært lærerik og enkelt å forstå og bruke	Padlet gir mer variasjon i undervisningen, Padlet gjør at jeg bidrar mer, Det gir flere muligheter	Ja	Ja	Kjedelig	Padlet gir større kunstnerisk frihet	Padlet er supert og anbefales til alle!	
16.06.2014 kl. 10.27.18	Vet ikke	Det var ganske greit å bruke sånn til å få informasjon. Det var enklere å få forskjellig informasjon, men det var så mange som tullet seg. Om folk i klassen ikke hadde tullet seg sånn med hva de skrev, så hadde det vært mye bedre.	Padlet gjør at jeg bidrar mer, Det blir fort useriøst, Det blir mindre personlig	Vet ikke	Ja	Mer ansvarsfullt	Vet ikke		
16.06.2014 kl. 10.27.24	Nei	Folk i klassen tok det ikke seriøst. Lærte veldig lite av dette.	Det blir fort useriøst, Det blir mindre personlig	Nei	Nei	Mer sosialt og samlende	Padlet gir større kunstnerisk frihet		
16.06.2014 kl. 10.28.00	Vet ikke	Jeg syns jeg fikk sagt det jeg ville uten å være redd for å si feil, men samtidig lærte jeg ikke så mye av det.	Padlet gir mer variasjon i undervisningen, Padlet gjør at jeg bidrar mer, Det blir fort useriøst	Nei	Ja	Mer ansvarsfullt	Padlet gir større kunstnerisk frihet		
16.06.2014 kl. 10.28.15	Ja	Det var gøy med variasjoner i timen, men det vil bli mindre gøy dersom vi begynner å bruke det veldig ofte. Jeg likte også at alle kunne bidra uten å være redde for hva andre ville tenke.	Padlet gir mer variasjon i undervisningen, Det går mye raskere . Det blir mindre personlig	Vet ikke	Ja	Mer ansvarsfullt	Vet ikke	Noe negativt er at vi ikke får så systematisk og sammenhengene fakta om et tema. Dette gjør at jeg ikke helt kan finne ut hva det er snakk om ved bare å bruke padlet.	
16.06.2014 kl. 10.29.38	Ja	Jeg likte å bruke padlet fordi det gav alle en mulighet til å være med uten å måtte reise seg for å skrive på tavlen.	Padlet gir mer variasjon i undervisningen, Det går mye raskere . Det gir flere muligheter	Ja	Ja	Tar for lang tid	Padlet gir større kunstnerisk frihet		
17.06.2014 kl. 20.36.58	Vet ikke	Var litt kjedelig	Det går mye raskere . Det gir fl	Vet ikke	Ja	Mer ansvarsfullt	Tavle gir større kunstnerisk frihet		

Appendix C: Transcripts of Interviews

T= teacher

Students: A, B, C, D, E and F

Student A

T-Ok A.? Generally speaking, how do you experience using digital methods contra more face-to-face or traditional classroom teaching ?

A-I bet classroom teaching because I think using the internet is very..can be distracting.

T-Ok, do you think of anything in spesific or ?

A-Well when you got the internet you can go into websites you want to like typical facebook or sth. I think is more tempting ...than be doing the things you should be doing.

T-Ok, so you don't read much on the computer, do you ?

A-ehm. I do read., you know, like the newspapers. Not much more than that.

T-Ok, if it is difficult to work on the computer..is it because you get tempted or is it because you like/prefer writing by hand or..?

A- It is better for me to write on the computer, so that is a good thing about the computer, but the internet can be tempting to do..yes.

T-yeah, but to make an illustration, or like we did today like padlets or make a presentation on a prezi, it could be difficult – but you can become more creative ?

A-Yeah exactly..

T-Could you explain that ?

A-Well when you draw...I have never used prezi before, but I can see that you can do new stuff and no more power points, so I think you can become more creative by using prezi. It seems like a good tool to use.

T-Ok, so you think that it will influence your learning in general becoming more creative ?

A- Yeah, more creative, I guess , yes I think that is a good thing. It will affect your learning, (def..?).

T- Ok, we will move on to those online discussions we had, you seemed to like those online discussions.

A-Yes, that is right.

T-You didn't participate last year, did you ? You were not in my group last year...ok.

A-No.

T-Ok, what did you find good about the online discussion ?

A- That you can see other reflections on...like eg. When we read a book, you can see how people describe their characters, how they experience the book. Then it was interesting. Because then if you have to write about the book you can use what other people have read or written down..yeah.

T-Was it easier to voice one's opinion in an online discussion than in class ? What do you think?

A- ehm, when you got it on the internet, you got it written, yes..

T-Ok, so would it be easier for some people then, for some students or did you experience it yourself that instead of just talking in a group in class, it would be easier to share opinions by writing online in discussion groups ?

A-Well I think it would be better that we are in the classroom that we discuss face to face, and we can write things down.

T-Ok, so you prefer being face to face ?

A-Yeah, I think that is better, especially (T-for you ?) if you are in the classroom, at home of course it is better to use the internet.

T- Could you think any other student maybe experience the opposite if they are very shy in class or ...?

A- Yeah, of course I do. I think some people don't use their voice in the classroom.

T-Ok,... yes...by reading literature online, now you don't seem to do that very much, but by doing so, do you think we lose any of the emotional aspects in literature or is it the same as reading on paper ? Would it create more distance or is it the same do you think ?

T- I think that by (creating ?) reading some of the literature on computers would take away some of the experiences you get by reading a book .

T-Could you try to explain that ?

A-Well, I think it is more cosy like if you sit down by the fire at winter time, that is the time when I am going to read anyway. You read a book, and you know, it is very cosy, but when you read on your computer it becomes – it is not very social. I think like..it seems smarter to read from a book you know than from a computer..something different,yes.

T-Ok, what do you see/describe as the main difference between like watching a painting eg, studying a painting on the screen, as we did, or when we visited the National Gallery seeing it in real life, what was the main difference ?

A-Well, you got the real deal to you at the gallery, but you just got like a digital picture of it on your computer, it was much more fun going to England and seeing these things first hand than just reading about them in a book. So it is better to be there so..

T-Ok, would it be...is it a difference between the painting in a book or on the screen then ? What is the best ?
 A-Of course, it is the real deal, the painting is certainly better ...I did not get the question ?
 T-Oh, no between a screen and a book, those two options ? Which do you see as the best ?
 A-well I think I prefer the computer then..
 T-Yes... why ?
 A-Because many times it is better quality on the computer..
 T-The light ?
 A-Yes, of course
 T-Ok, ehm.. ok,... Would you prefer only digital learning if you....or only traditional learning if you choose, or do you think it is the best to have a blended one or?
 A-I think it is good to have a blended one .
 T-Why is that so?
 A-Ehm, for everyone's sake, some people like using the computers, some people like writing by hand and using books (T-ok) ..so I think...and I like using both. I think it varies, you know , you just have to use time on both things as a mixture. I think that is good.
 T-Ok, is it any thing else you would like to say generally or..?
 A-No.
 T-Ok, thank you M. for the interview.

Student B

T-Generally speaking could you say sth about you know using digital methods in class as opposed to more face to face or traditional teaching...?
 B-It is more efficient, I think It is hard to define but..
 T-Try to go a bit more in depth..
 B-yes,..
 T-you can just stop the record if you need

 B-Using digital devices for teaching for personal notations – is a way faster, I can type down everything you say instead of writing from the blackboard – which is way more informative for reading notes later
 T-You prefer then the use of power point compared to the use of blackboard – you prefer power point all the time ?
 B-Yeah.T-Ok
 B-but..I realize it... goes way more effort into powerpoint(?) than into blackboard teaching
 T-not necessarily, but some of the students become more drowsy or sleepy...using pp all the time but not you..?
 B-no, I am used to screens
 T-You are very much used to screen that may explain
 B-Yes..
 T-Ok, How much do you read on screen ? When reading books
 B- I only read book on my pad , so I don't read books as physical books, I only read book on a kindrel or a lap
 T-Ok, only on a kin ?
 B- Yes ,I am/have put it up having white text on black background, so it is way easier to read and way nicer to read for the eyes
 T- Didn't you bring books to read in the park in London..?(repeats)
 B-No, I brought my phone..yes that is my books..
 T-Ok.... So you have always been ...or for how long have you been a digital reader like...?
 B- this phone I got a year ago, so before that I read books – physical copies of books , of course, but when I got this phone I haven't read a book since..
 T-Interesting, so you don't get sleepy or...?
 B-No,no...
 T-Ok, so you don't miss the books on the paper , like the smell and ...?
 B-No, I had trouble to books getting wet and tearing pages but, I mean so it's easier with an item (?)
 T-Ok, so you would recommend students of your own type to have kinds(kindrels?) and i-pads and ?
 B-Yes, if they are used to it. One of my friends is no used to it, he scarcely – he gets headaches from reading on screen..
 T-You never get headaches then ..?
 B-No, never
 T-Ok, so you reckon that different personalities maybe explains it..?

B-Yes, probably , I play all those games so I am very much used to watch on screens...for a long time
T-So you can play games for hours and hours ..?
B-Yes
T-Ok, that is interesting, so you are a bit different then most I have talked to, ok !?
B-yes ☺
T- so do you prefer online discussions or how did you experience online discussions ?
B-I would rather have that be more like a chat instead of the way we perform
T-Ok-
B- It's more interactive that way – it' more what I am used to
T-..Yes, it is more like you re used to, but in an academic discussion..
B-yeah, I would rather have it to immediately pop up – instead of having to reload the page or waiting to wait unnecessary
T-(lauhgs) Ok,interesting
B- So have rather like a session for ten minutes instead of having an hour to type your comments
T- So you can't value the time waiting ..to reflect...? I mean it gives you time to reflect ..
B- Well , yes it does, but it also .. yes that is true..
T-You are a fast thinker ?
B- Yes I would say so, my thoughts are really my opinions..
T-Ok, so-you don't reckon/see the value in like having breaks or silence...?
B-Well, yes breaks , but what we did on ITSL was more like writing forms with replies and things, but I would rather have it be sth.more like messages, more like appearing instantly, it means a lot to me..
T-Ok, in your online discussions did you use a different kind of language than in eeh..
B-Yes I do,yes. I use more formal language.
T-Was that because the teacher was present or .?
B-That was because I was formatting my opinions and more about doing lines instead of saying it.
T-Ok, if you were chatting would your language become more informal ?
B- Yes ,that is true..
T-Because of the length of the sentences and you know..contractions and...?
B- Yes, I understand. Good point.
T- So, Compared to writing, I mean..
B-yeah, that would make a difference – for some reason, for some people at least..
T- So it seems you are very much used to screens so I hope you find it interesting to give your opinions
T-Yes,..Digital wallpapers that we actually made today and the phrases are different than a power point presentation, what do you say about these as a one of the activities ?
B-As you saw..they are a bit, they are an easy target for fun
T-Yeah,Ok, but you know, still they are mostly serious --?
B-yeah, it is an interesting way of doing it instead of having people send in their comments to you personally instead of just having blank space, everybody got to see
T- So what is the positive things about it as a class ?
B- hmm, as a class it is more interactive, of course, it is easier to – well, it is anonymous which helps I think to let people say their real opinions knowing that nobody knows it's them, I'd say.. makes it easier for them to say what they truly mean.
T-Ok, R.. I think I have...well let us take this..if you have a painting, you may have in a book, you may have it on a screen or you have it in the national gallery. Would you try to describe the differences ?
B-Lightning is the main difference..
T-The light ?
B-Yes,the light, but I am also colour blind so it is hard for me to describe..
T-Ok, but seeing a statue then in the book or on the screen or in real?
B- Yeah, a statue... the 3d disappears once you get it on a page on screen.
T-If you hade to see it with 3d glasses on..? Would you then see as different experience in a park in London or ?
B-It would be different but it would be less real...a real statue you could really see the work of it than seeing it as a copy of it on the screen..
T-But you could get quite close on the screen ?
B-Yes, of course, butwhen you see it in the museum or in the park , you know that you can touch it ,you know that it is real.
T-there is a difference ?
B-Yes, there is a difference .
T-Do you have any specific comments in general about, you know..
B- Not really, just...it is fine..(laughs)

T-it's fine, ok. ...eeh then finally just about the learning platform ITSL, I reckon the discussions could have been different – the technology improved, I see that.

B-Yeah

T-But using the platform in general, do you use it or is it a necessary evil or ?

B-It's a... it could have been way better, in my opinion, but I use it, it is easy enough to get information out of it from teachers, but not all teachers use it, some teachers just say their homework at the end of class, instead of posting it on ITSL, but some other teachers do... so it makes it sort of confusing, so how it be a uniform system for all teachers would make it a lot better. Yeah, just that.

T-Ok, thank you so much. You don't have any additional comments ?

B-No, not really.

Student C

T-Ok H, would you like to start by saying sth. in general about using digital methods in class compared to more traditional classroom teaching ?

C-ehm, I liked what we did today with the...

T-Padlets or the wallpaper ?

C-Yes, that..it was fun to put pictures and comments and ..It's ..like everybody isn't that active in class..always...so I feel like people are more active when we are doing it..digitally.

T-Ok..so it is easier to involve more people ?

C-Yeah, it seems like..

T-Good.

C-At least today it worked very well.

T-At least today,ok. Aah, did you contribute to making that prezi by the way, that is different from the power point presentation...? Do you get help from powerpoint or prezi when you make visual presentations in class ?

C-Well, I have never used the prezi..(T-Ok), but I like to use the powerpoint thing when I do presentations..

T-Why?

C- Oh, I do not know, it's like...sometimes it is easier with the keywords to like talk, you don't need the manuscript...I don't know...It's like you can have pictures and you can kind of...I don't know..I just have always been using that.

T-Ok,ok..How much when you read, how much ...do you read on the screen or in books, what do you prefer ?

C-When I am reading ? (T-yes)..I like to read in books..

T-You read in books, ok..so you don't read very much on screen then ? Texts or ? (H-No, I do not really...) Why is that so ?

C- I get easily more tired...(T-By reading on screen ?),yes ..like the screen makes my eyes more tired and...I don't enjoy it this much, I guess.

T-Ok,..So you will see that in the future as well ? ...or maybe change your habits or?..

C-I do not think so, I think I will prefer books-yes.

T-Mm.., If you had texts on the screen ...do you think it is very easy to get tempted to do other things when you have internet on in class eg and have your screen /your computers open ..?

C-Like when we are taking notes and stuff ? (T-yes.) Well, I usually just take notes.

(T-Ok, so you manage to keep focus)

C...I mean it is more tempting because we have the computer..., but it is not ...I don't do it.

T-You are very disciplined ?

C-Ok, yes

T-Ok, When you make those presentations or padlets or prezis or power points and then using pictures and paintings...do you become more creative ? Do you feel that you are a creative person or ?

C- ehm..? (T Does it help you to be a more creative person or ?) Yeah, I would say so.

T-Ok, how does that influence literature do you think ...being creative ?

C-Well in different ways...I don't know..

T-Well, does it have anything to do with the more emotional aspect of literature or..?

C-Maybe, yeah..I do not know..

T- Ok, how do you like/prefer to communicate...(T-sorry(coughs))online or face to face ?

C-Ehm, it doesnt really matter to me, I mean I like both.

T-To discuss..I mean we had these online discussions, how did you experience it ?

C-ehm, I guess, it is more organized kind of when we are doing it online..it is easier to kind of collect the information.(smiles) It's fun to do it in class as well..it's kind of ...because it helps to talk..and not just listen all the time..so it helps to do it in class as well..then, yeah, I like it more online..just because..I do not know..

T-Ok, would it..Is it different, the online discussion we had with the teacher present...was it different if the teacher was not present or ...? (H-yeah...I think..) How would that change the discussion do you think?

C-Well ,it doesn't stay as ..what do you call it, like people are getting really up...

T-What about the vocabulary and the language used.

C- I do not think it would affect the language really. But then..It helps to...I guess my ovation (?) is better when the teacher is included in the conversation.

T-Ok, so is your language different in a discussion online compared to eg when you chat/chatting ?

C-I guess it depends on the subject..but usually..I don't know..if it is the same subject,then no.Butt hen...

T-So you don't think the language used is more academic when in an organized group ?

C-Yeah, not like a regular ...bit ??

T-What do you see as the main difference between watching a painting ..studying a painting on screen or in real life ?

C-ehm..well I think in real life it would be the best..but I don't really know what the difference is...(T-Ok, give it a guess or what ?) ☺ I just haven't done it (This student did not visit the national gallery with the class) I mean, I haven't done the same one..so I don't really know.

T-Ok,...compare between the book the.. and the screen then, what gives you the most ?...if you have it in your book on screen?

C- Hmm...I don't know, there is no...

T-where do you have the most colours and lights ?

C-Well, if the colours were better on the screen ,then I would prefer that..(T-It depends on the quality then?) Yes, if it is the same I would not mind either.

T-Ok... Yes... ..I don't think I have any more questions ..or if you have some comments you may share them with me now..eeh, is working face to face contra working digital... or if it is the distant learning that is the best or the mixture is the best or..?

C-I prefer mixing.. (T-Methods?) Both.. because I mean to both hear and talk it...to kind of improve your pronunciation (T-yes) But...Then reading..digitally, it is easier to focus on different things..you can focus on your vocabulary, because that is kind of heard when you are talking, because you don't always have the words in your head..if you know what I mean..(T-yeah I know what you mean) so I guess I like both.

T-Ok...Is it sth. you would have liked to do more ...you know anything spesific?

C-No, not really.. (T-or less..?) no..

T-Ok, that was just an additional question...well if you don't have any more questions or any comments I mean..(H-No..)I just say thank you for the interview H. ☺

Student D

T-Ok..let's start P with the...generally speaking about the digital methods in learning or in education – do you have any, you know, specific opinion or generally speaking...about digital methods ?

D- eeh, digital ? (T-methods..) I 'd say it gives us a broader spectrum of, you know, how to learn English..in general..but if we use our own computers we do get tempted, I have to be honest..But still you can do so much more on the internet, eg. Prezi or padlets..? (T_yeah, wallpapers..) It gives us more, you know..it helps us to learn in a faster way I'd say – it is a lot faster, but I do like the traditional ways too..on the blackboard.

T-So you wouldn't like it all to become digital then ?

D-No,no...I would be too...I don't know..

T-Would it be or too hard to grasp, I mean would it be too boring or would it be just one sided or ..?

D- If we were to use digital methods , it had to be really creative..a lot of different factors, I don't know...different methods..

T-Ok, so to work more face to face, you see like that method – I mean working in class face to face....

D-Yeah, I think, you know, I always like to see a different perspective, what the other person thinks about one thing, so I don't get too biased and not too opinionated, I think that what it is..

T-Is it different when the person is sitting next to you / face to face or when he is online ?

D-I think it is different..it's more personal..

T-do you mean when he is in the room or (P-yeah, face to face..)

T-When you discuss online compared to discuss in class, you were quite negative towards the discussion in class, weren't you ?

D-Yeah.. (T-it doesn't give you much, why?) The explanation in class... we only had one discussion, you know, one big discussion...right, it was really good but if we look at you know, the whole class as a whole class, I think there were not that many contributors so...

T-But the novels you read – we had just limited discussion groups..

D-Those were good..

T- You were at time when the others were there, it was important wasn't it, to be on the same time discussing?
D-Yeah..

T- Ok...you said that being more creative, do you think that's being more creative you use like technical things like digital wallpaper or prezi or other things – that it helped you to learn more you said...(P-mm.) How is that? Can you try to explain why...?

D-I don't know..I am more of a right brain person..and then creative stuff ...colourful...vibrant stuff..I think it makes me more engaged in the subject, I gain more initiation, I'd say..more motivation

T-Visually (P-yes, visually), so it's important for you. Visual teaching or let us say learning.

T- ehh, then if you see a painting, on screen, and then you see it in real life as in the national gallery in London, what would you say is the main difference by this experience?

D- If I had to compare the experience, it's like seeing Niagara Falls on google.com and seeing Niagara Falls with your own eyes...(T-Ok ☺)I don't know...it's a huge impact, it gets more... (T-emotional?) a little bit more emotional.

T-You read quite a lot on screen, don't you? Between 20 and 50%? Is that all you read privately or is it just educationally?

D-Educationally, I Suppose. (T-ok)

T-So you ..choose both methods. Would you say it's the same to read online/on screen as it is to read a book or?

D-Of course, it's always good to read a book, you know..turning the pages..I like it, but ...sometimes, when you travel, it's a little better if you have on computer so you don't have to carry ten books with you.

T-Ok, so it's practical?(P-Practical, yes)

T-Ok, so you don't think there is any difference in the emotional aspect in literature when you read on a screen instead of having a book? You don't react differently or?

D-hmmm..if it worked for educational purpose ,I would say a real book is better, because you always get tempted I'd say to do...(T-Because of the outside factors?) yes.

T-Ok,...ehh..yes..I think that was more or less all that I wanted to ask you about P,... Do you have any general comments? About this blended learning or..this mixture of digital and face to face learning? Would you rather prefer face to face only or?

D-I'd like a good balance – a good mix of both.. (T-ok)..if it gets too unbalanced, the lessons may be too dry... ☺ (T-yes, I understand) ..cause, you know, we all have that one teacher who only teaches using the blackboard or always uses the power point – so I think a good mix is always good.

T- But if you have the screen on during all lesson, I mean the computer on, you say you get tired...?

D-I don't know..? Like physically I do get tired because of the light, but what I think..it keeps my focus, I don't know – I lose the focus when I have the computer open – if I watch the blackboard and I take notes..

T-Good P., do you have anything you'd like to say .. something on your heart? ☺

D-Nothing I can think of...not in this moment.

T.ok... the learning platform ITSL, do you use that often Or?

D- I use it only because I have to use it... (T-Ok), but I used it a lot when we had a lot of projects, but now..we can use other social media, other social medias –social network systems so..

T-Ok, P. thank you for the interview!

(Observation from the teacher during class :This student took, as one of the very few in class, notes by hand when the teacher used the blackboard.)

Student E

T-Ok– first I'd just like to have a few general comments about using digital methods combined to traditional teaching and vice versa – and then if you have any general thoughts.

S-Yeah, I think it can be used pretty well, you can find much more sources on the internet. It's easier to find stuff, to look it up on the internet and you could also compare things easier. But at the same time it can quickly become a diversion – like suddenly there are ...oh like I forgot to check my facebook or I need to check sth. else or I need to check my mails ...so they do that instead in the middle of the class (T-hmm)...eeh..but I think it can be used very well – you can use movies, you can use presentations and yeah – you can use... you get more availability to things you do more – like teaching – I don't know what to call it... more options (T-ok).

T-More options, ok. If you start with eg. the reading online – you read between 20 and 50% on screen you say(S-yes, about..) What do you think is like left out when you read on the screen compared to reading in a book? You know, if it is a difference, what is the difference?

E- Well, when we read on screen you read slower(T-ok?) so it takes a longer time. At least that is what they say (You feel you read slower or?) No, but they say generally that it takes 20% more time to read on screen because of the lighting. And also you get tired, more tired if you are tired..

T-Well, this may vary from person to person..(S-Yeah, but it..)how do you experience it?

E- I think it varies...also how much awake I am myself...and generally, but..I read a lot on screen like newspapers, read stories online so I am used to it – and it’s good to read, you know, you can...yes you can find different stories online, as I said..

T-Ok, but literature ?

E-Yeah, I prefer to read literature in the books because that’s how I have grown up with it...there you have a book in your hands, and you feel closer to the characters..., at least I feel closer to the characters when I have a book in my hands. When you can sit there and read and turn the pages instead of sitting there with a computer. I feel more anonymous when I read on the computers as opposed to...I don’t know why but...(T-Interesting...) it’s just I feel closer to the characters and the story in general – to read it in a book...and it’s also a bit easier to keep hold on how far you have got- where you are in the book, when you can like earmark the page or just put a bookmark in instead of having to save the page online or sth.

T-Ok, so the emotional aspect – that’s what you are mentioning, it’s sth. different when you read a page ..?

E-It can be, (T-Can be ?) with the computer but me generally, I prefer to read it in a book form.

T-Do you think you will do that also in the future ? When you think on literature ?

E-I think so, I think it will come more technology as it already is, but I think people would still like to read it in a book form still- (T-You would still..?) Yes, I would still.

T-Ok, we will move on to the online discussions which you experienced quite good I assume (...survey)...and you also had it last year ,so...well (S-yeah.) How would you experience the language in the online discussions...how did you experience it in general...language wise and.. you know.

E-Well, in the online discussions, you don’t have that auto correct to tell you if you write a word the wrong way (T-Ok..) So people just write and they are not sure - should they just write the words how they think the words are going to be...and then it’s wrong and you get a completely different word. It hasn’t happened often, but it can happen. What I think is interesting is that we can discuss with those persons who are not that social or are not that “brave” if you could call it that – to raise their hand and just talk in class and everyone can also be heard ad..at least I have had a good experience with this, at least when we had a ...when we discussed The Picture of Dorian Gray. That was quite interesting and it helped me gain some new points of view on the book. And it also helped me when I was writing the text later on and yeah...when I was planning for the presentation (T-mm.) But it can be a bit unserious so...(T-Ok..) At least in the second grade (2IEN). There were some people that were not that serious as all.

T-So it helped you to write, would it be different if we had had these discussions only orally in class then ?

E-I don’t think so, but at the same time it helped me remember because I could get back to...because we had actually written it down – our arguments and our comments on each others’ arguments ...we had actually written it down so we could go back and look at what we ourselves had written and what other people had written and commented on it. Instead of just having to remember – oh I think she said that..about that... so it’s a bit easier.

T-Good, eeh, how did you experience the more visual activities – the ones where we used the prezi and today, the padlets and...how did you experience using those ?

E- I have good experience. I know a lot about technology, at least I think I do...(T-yes..) ..I use technology a lot..

(T-Technologically wise, it’s easy for you then ?) Yes I’d say that. (T-So what did you learn from it..?) Yes, it

can help me learn, but at the same time it can get a little unserious as shown today eg. When people...when some people aren’t as serious as the rest. It affects the class and it can mess it up like they end up just like

picturing around the things or...(T-like Ali coffee ☺) yes ☺ and I think there were someone who made a beard

around...when it was supposed to be Dee (The short story Everyday Use)...I don’t know...(T-ok.. I didn’t

see..but if you take away those unserious comments that kind of destroy...what did you learn from it, as a class ?

What is different from just writing at the blackboard or just..you know as in ordinary class...when you got it on screen like this ? What is the main difference ?

E- I would say I do prefer a little bit of writing on the blackboard...(T-yes?) ..because then I can sit there and I

can write it down like on ordinary paper or in my macbook,(T-But what about the time ?)but it’s interesting...

(T---) Yees , as you say it doesn’t take as much time when you do it online as when you write it at the back

(?)because then everybody had to raise their hands and come with their comments..and you can of course find the pictures and post it online and make it up and you can’t do that on the blackboard. It is harder to do that with just a simple blackboard...

T-So, did you take a picture of the screen today ?

E-Yeah, I did.

T-Ok, so you can use it ? (S-Yes.)

T-Ok, so what is different between seeing a painting on screen or in real life –in the gallery ?

E-Ehm..It had a different atmosphere, when you see it on screen that is one thing but..when you see it in real life it is more like.. if I can compare it to Phantom of the Opera...(T-yes ?) we went to in the fall, I haven’t seen it in theatres before ...and it was amazing and I was just so awestruck and I really loved it and just felt like I was part of the story even though I just sat in the audience and still felt like I was there. When I watched the movie afterwards I admit I was actually disappointed, at first, because I had been so amazed in the start where it went

from a run down theatre to become an...operational theatre, where they had all the curtains like..suddenly everybody flew up to the roof again and they raised the chandelier with the music and it was all just around it,. You just had this incredibly awesome and special atmosphere. I just loved that and it is kind of the same thing with paintings I think. When you actually see the painting in front of you – like the actual real life work, that someone has used years to develop, it is very different from just seeing it on screen. Like you can admire it, (T- or in the book ?) yes, but it's not the same. It feels more real when you actually see the real painting and also when you have people around you that are also admiring it at the same time, or a guide is telling you about it or the painter, him or herself is actually talking about the painting. So that is a different experience, just to me, but like it can be different for other people (...) yes.

T-Ok, so would you, if possible, would you prefer eg. A class where you could have ,like receive distant learning or use more digital methods or would you say it is valuable for yourself to be in the atmosphere of a class, a group like we are today ?

E- I would say, a bit of both really because that is kind of what we are doing with the discussions and in class. But I really valued the time we have in class, when we kind of sit together - two or three or more, and talk face to face, actually. You can also see it on their faces, you can also see how they, themselves lit up when they talked about a thing that they liked. And when they have presentations also, how they present it and what they are feeling about it. You can see it on them. So it's quite different from just sitting behind a screen. But at the same time a screen can be used very much to your advantage too .(T- For shy students?) Yeah, that too. So it's easier for them to work on the computers and have a bit long distance learning compared to in classes.

T-Ok. (S-yes ☺) That is good S. Finally I just ask you if you have any things to say or share about this subject, you know, blended learning..?

E- Eeh, I would say I would still advise people to keep books... ☺ ☺ ..(laughs) I was just thinking, we have these news where they are going to use tablets for teaching and learning..(T-yes?) It is not the same, you don't get the same experience ... and it is so much easier to become distracted. .when you are on padlet at least. (T-Ok) When you have a book in front of you it's easier to like follow the stories..and such. Yes. I would at least advise them to keep books. You can balance it, but still keep some of the old ways because, yes..we have it from long ago..with different generations and it has developed , but at the same time we have sth. that they have many years ago, so yeah..keep some of the old school and the new school – you could say it like that.

T-Ok – yes thank you S., it has been most useful to listen to the comments you have shared with me, so thank you very much !

Student F (the one who experienced distant learning)

T- Let's start with the – generally speaking digital methods, you know , what do you think about working on the computer compared to working without the computer ?

F-It depends on what we're doing. If we are writing, I always like writing on the computer the most because it goes much faster. And..sth. information comes quick on the computer if you know what to search for..and usually it's good like I almost say (?...) But reading is always best in a book , always best ! Cause we tried having history books on the computers this year and it just didn't work. Everybody ended up buying the book in the bookstore themselves, history in the third grade, because we can't read and study for tests if you don't have it right in front of you, so..it's kind of the combination of the two ways that work for me.

T- Ok, do you think, can you think of any reason why it is so hard to read and study from the screen or to have a book on the screen?

F- It's because...the number one the diversion of going into all the funny stuff that you usually do on the computer while you are reading. And the other thing is that it's harder to read on the screen cause..they don't have the same kind of lighting and setting like as the book, so it kind of hurts your eyes at the same time. That's why you get a headache if you write too long on the computer like for hours. That's why they make reading on kindrels – the different screens, they do this ---from underneath so it won't be like a screen but like a normal book not to hurt people's heads ☺ not to give them headaches.

T-Ok, let's us move to online discussions. You tried that out last year in class and this year at home, but on a fixed time. How would you in general describe the online discussions compared to the class discussions ? ...(?)

F-Ok, our class, since we are using that one, usually works well in discussions online, cause some classes like to talk a lot and..in person...but some people, they don't usually say so much in class – they talk more online, they feel like they can kind of come out and say what they want, and that is good because then you get more people involved in a discussion. And I think they actually both work, as they are to be read fast, to getting your comments before someone's else's comments on you and stuff. But I think both is good.

T-Both are good ?

F-Yeah, both, I like to speak in person – a lot- but if you are only speaking to two or three it's funnier to speak online because then you get more opinions and people actually say what they are thinking instead of just watching or observing the discussions like they feel the more comfortable with.

T-But, it has to be like everybody is present at the same time when you are on the computers(Synchronous) ? It wouldn't be the same thing if you had just one comment and then you had to wait for one hour to get another comment...?

F-No, it has to be at the same time. Yes, or else it wouldn't be a discussion, it would be more like writing a text with someone else ..

T-Yes, ok. So you can't think of any topic that would best to discuss face to face or...? (S- maybe personal..) or is it easier to discuss online ?

F-Online, people talk a lot about personal things like, you know, that we know from every day life – at least teenagers on texts and in facebook, but in discussion wise (T-Literary discussions ?) Yeah , we have had a couple of short stories that tend to go into serious territory like murder or suicide or things like that. For me, I think it is fine to talk about it in person cause I wouldn't have that much experience, cause it is not really close to me , but to some people – there is always sth. that relates to someone so that might be a reason they don't talk so much about it, but turn to their online discussions instead.

T-So it would be easier for some to comment online ?

F-Yeah, if it's uncomfortable for some t-for a couple of people , you should just do it online because then everybody can just join in and then you are taking care of those students ...that need to. Was that it ?

T- Yes, that is ok. Do you use the same language /choice of vocabulary when you discuss online as opposed to face to face ? What do you think ? Do you understand ?(J-yeah) Would it be different if the teacher was not present – at the online discussions?

F-Not really, cause we know you are going to read it afterwards anyway (☺) so then we just write as if you were there .

T-Ok, but what if I were not there at all ?

F-If you were no there at all, we would like be talking more like we were on face book, and we'd discuss like“ Oh, Emily (from a Rose for Emily by Faulkner)is strange and she is really weird and we would rather use the more complicated (words?) when you are there.

T- Ok, so the choice of vocabulary would be different ?

F- yeah, but you're the teacher, so it's always different. You try to sound like – you try to sound -express all the complicated words you know.

T- Like more educational ?

F- Yes, because you want a good grade. But you don't magically appear those words , you still have them, it just it comes more naturally if you are in that setting than it is when talking to your friends, cause then they would just look strange at you if you started using words like that, complicated like, yeah. Do you know what I mean ? (T-yeah)

T- Ok, you signed up on that prezi and making visual wallpapers (padlets). That was what we did today actually.

F-Yeah, I liked those. (T-ok, you liked those...you gave it a three and a five...)

T-How did you experience the online discussions ? Yes, you like those.. The digital wallpapers then ? (J-Do you want me to tell you ?)

T-What are your experience like ..from today creating those padlets ?

F-I think they usually work good, but today people were real kind of unserious cause it's harder to concentrate because of the exams ..(T-yeah), but I think it's fun that they are at least doing sth. instead of just playing on their mobile phones. On these wallpaper things at least everybody gives sth, and give sth. (T-take part ?) Yes, cause it was funny you know, it was kind of harmless today. It was not just like we didn't learn anything because the character didn't stop, I just thought it was nice that people bothered..

T-Ok, so it may provide a little bit more understanding of the topic then for some people when they see these comments from everyone?

F-Yeah, I think it helps to see (T-Visualize?), yeah and I like that the pictures come and I kind of see them in my head, and then- some things people write, I don't always write that interesting stuff usually just to read right... things that you learn from the text, but at least that you remember those more important parts, that are parts you put out on the board, it works.

T-Good –well , let's move on to skype, hw did you experience to be in class throughout a computer ?

F-Embarrassing ☺

T-Yes ? That was very strange actually. As a teacher I didn't expect it to be embarrassing, but try to explain why.

F-Just for me, cause it was weird ☺ ..I was just in a different country, a different setting and I was just gonna join in on classes so when you ask me the first time I thought oh no this is going to be ,oh, embarrassing, but it turned out fine, you know, people didn't they found it was more funny than really weird so they didn't think I was that

awkward either so. I don't know, you know how it's with teenagers – you always want to be accepted and everything, but it worked out all fine.

T-It seemed the class accepted you..

F-Yes they thought it was funny, so then I thought it was fun too.

T-But it was easier for you perhaps to talk than many others because you are a talker from beforehand.

F-Yeah, I could have said nothing, because sometimes it was hard to interrupt if you were on the other side, but I thought it was fun – yeah, I thought it was fun. I usually speak a lot in class anyway so why stop when you are on the screen, than it is even safer, so... I was in (...) so I wasn't in danger of getting detention or anything so..

T-How would you describe the online collaboration between you and the teacher and the other students when you were online – on Skype ?

F-What do you mean ?

T-The collaboration in class, did you feel that you could participate in class ?

F-Yeah, surprisingly much. I actually thought on it beforehand that this won't work, but it worked. I did get to see the videos and hear what they were talking about and heard the people's comments. The only thing was that in the way back, I had to strain my ears a little bit to it worked, yeah. And it was like being there except for the things around me that could be distracting, you know, like birds and stuff, and I didn't think of my parents when I sat down. They (the birds) usually come you know, they escape from the cages and then they just fly around and is round a while and they disturb skype...

T-But this was a visual content, in addition to the collaboration on of course ITSL; communication between teachers and students and... This was an additional attempt to visualize, to include you in class. Could you try to mention just a few pros and cons about this way and distant learning, thinking specifically on Skype. I mean, on ITSL we already had that thing, writing back and forth, it functions, doesn't it ? J-yeah, it works.

F-ITSL could always work easier, but it still works. But the Skype thing, I don't like the fact that, I don't know if it counts but the sound and quality was good enough to kind of take in everything..that was happening. And I like the fact that it is easier to, it was still easy to talk and comment on things when you were on Skype even if you weren't there so that's good and yeah..and I don't know, it was kind of the same as being in class except for the cons or the things bad...that you can get distracted about..and then my mum came in ☺, so those things aren't that easy so you have to make sure you sit on a place that is isolated so you can fit in better..

T-Technology has to work even better ?

F-No, technology was just fine, but you have to make sure you place yourself in a peaceful setting so it's easier to concentrate.

T-Ok.

F-But the Skype thing worked fine..., didn't you think it worked or ?

T-Yes I did.

F- I didn't feel like I missed anything much when I came back.

T-It was a method that you perhaps could recommend to others that go abroad for a longer period of time to be more included ? Not just the communication teacher –student, but to include them in real class ?

F-Yeah, and that's good cause I get isolated. I mean, I was there for months and I didn't have any classes so it was nice to, we just should the timing..

...

J-No, we have to make sure that the time is good, but we managed it this time.

T-Ok ,the time. I think that was about all. Just one final question, nothing to do with distant learning... Try to describe the differences in studying a painting on screen compared to studying it in real life, eg. The Ambassadors as we saw it in London.

F-I am not sure which one..

T-But just anything you see on screen and then you see it in real life, what is the difference ?

F-I think..., you know, we went to that museum and saw all the paintings and I found the one I really liked and it is different to watch it in real life than it is on paper to make us kind of see, because the brush or winds it kind of pops out, cause on a page it never does because it is ... ?... (T-Dimensions ?) Yeah, dimensions are different and that is the main thing to me cause the pictures always come more alive if you see them in real life, it makes sense. But people don't really tell the difference much, but I think the telling, the colours and the dimensions, you know like sth. that is really thick and it kind of shows like the waves are thicker or sth. It's hard to describe.

T-No, you did fine.

F-To me, yeah, it is a big difference

T-Ok, anything else you would like to say about digital learning or distant learning or anything specific...?

F-Eeh, I think the world becomes more and more digital every day, and it is positive and negative, but I think it works in schools so far as long as they don't take away our books and papers, and I think the ban (T-the blend ? Yeah) that we get is good. You have a balance in things, sometimes you put down the computer, sometimes we have them up. And I like that. If you were supposed to sit with the computers the whole day, the whole time it just would be hard to work at school. F- Ok and thank you...!

