

Blended Learning in Qualitative Data Analysis Improving Student Knowledge and Skills -- Final report --

A CLI Fellowship supported project by dr. Delia Dumitrica and dr. Jason Pridmore with assistance from Paulina Jarmula (rMA, Sociology of Culture, Media and the Arts)

The rationale

The process of qualitative data analysis and interpretation entails epistemological sensitivities and methodological skill that can be challenging for undergraduate students. As coordinators of the year 2 mandatory undergraduate course CM2006: Qualitative Research Methods in Media and Communication, dr. Delia Dumitrica and dr. Jason Pridmore noticed that resources for the knowledge and skills development of qualitative *data analysis* were not satisfactory. Given the short period of time devoted to analysis, we turned to blended education as a possible enhancer of student knowledge and skill for qualitative analysis.

The project

This project sought to develop and assess the integration of the blended-education modules in CM2006. Six digital modules were integrated with the lecture and the tutorial. The modules covered the following methods of qualitative data analysis:

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| Rhetorical analysis | Semiotic analysis | Narrative analysis | Constructivist Grounded Theory | Thematic analysis | Discourse analysis |
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Each module combined in-house readings with expert videos and hands-on analysis, which were uploaded in the CM2006 Canvas course environment. Students were required to complete the modules prior to the lecture in the assigned week, and completion was part of the participation grade. Modules were completed in weeks 6, 7 and 8 of the course and remained accessible online.

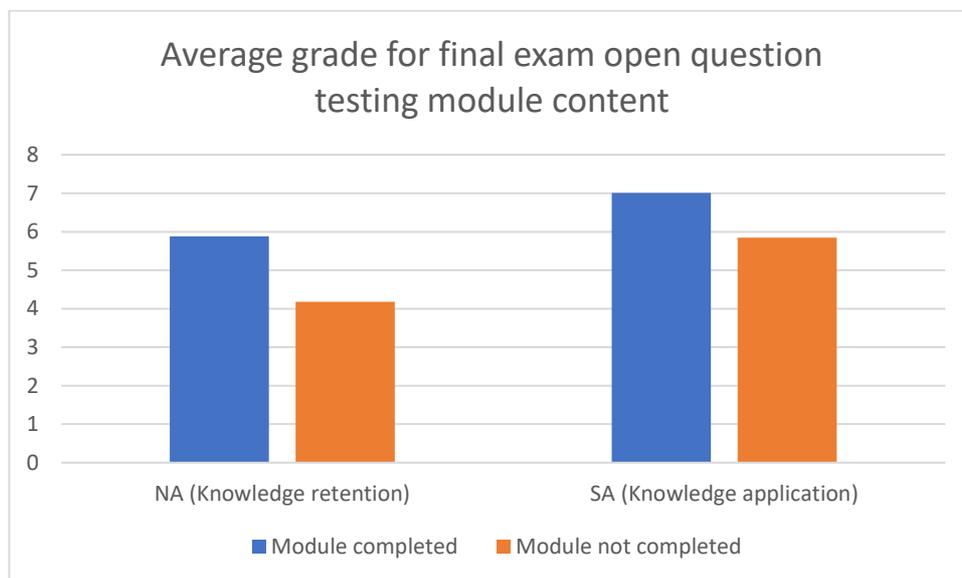
Project assessment

To examine student perceptions of modules' effectiveness, as well as how they integrated the modules into their learning routines, we collected the following types of data:

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| Student survey January 2020 N=220 | In-depth interviews Feb – March 2020 N=6 | Student reflections on approaches to learning and the role of the modules in weeks 1, 6 and 8 Oct 2019 – Jan 2020 | Assignment grades (mid-term in-class quiz and final exam) |
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Use of blended modules vs. final exam performance

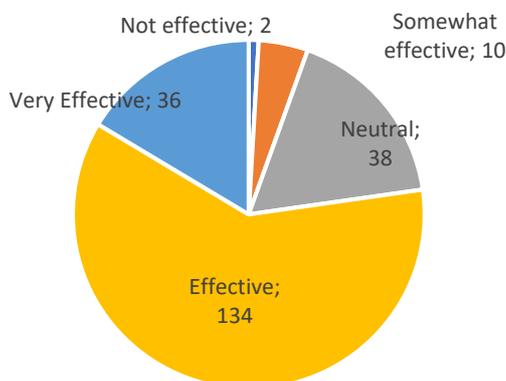
- Two open ended questions testing knowledge from the blended modules were included in the final exam.
- The semiotic analysis open question tested *knowledge application*, while the narrative analysis question tested *knowledge retention*.
- Students performed better on knowledge application. However, this method had also been more extensively discussed and illustrated in the lecture and tutorials.
- Assessing the impact of the blended modules on final exam performance is difficult, given many of the mediating factors that influence exam performance.
- On average, students who had previously completed the respective module performed better on the relevant final exam question than those who did not complete the module.



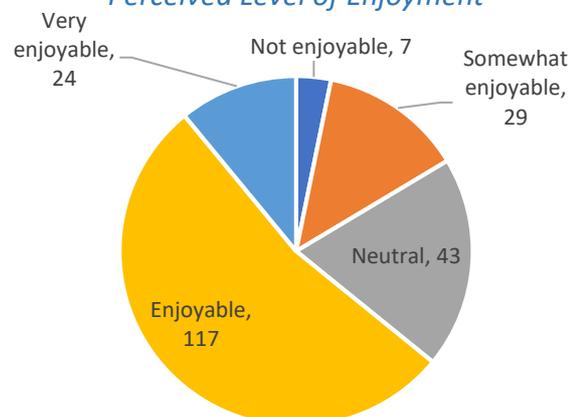
Student perception of the blended modules

- A vast majority of students perceived the modules as effective, enjoyable, and useful in terms of their own level of preparedness.

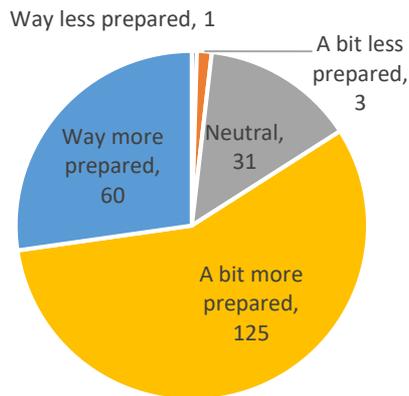
Perceived Level of Effectiveness



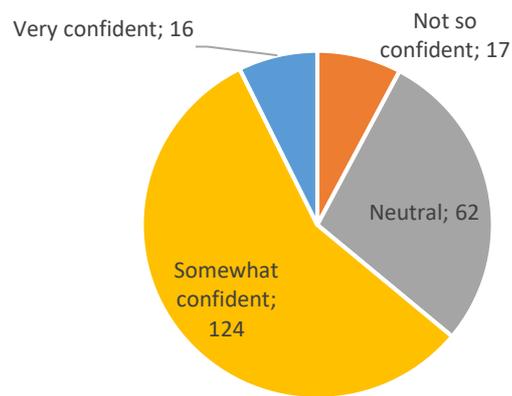
Perceived Level of Enjoyment



Perceived Level of Preparedness



Perceived Level of Confidence



Digital Modules: Likes and Dislikes

| Perceptions of Usefulness (“Likes”) | Perceived Limitations (“Dislikes”) |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modules provide step-by-step learning: <i>“The digital modules made [the learning] process a lot easier, as [they] showed step by step what the analyses intended to do.”</i> • Modules encourage (“force”) pre-reading: <i>“With the digital modules, I was forced to start and finish the readings and engage with them actively.”</i> • Videos provide expert insights: <i>“[The digital modules] allow knowledge learned through the readings to be further explained by an expert and tested straight after. Hence, they enable concepts to be applied as they are being learnt, allowing doubts and uncertainties to be cleared right away, and knowledge to be cemented.”</i> • Modules help practice the theory: <i>“I am better able to understand the nuts and bolts the types of analysis used in qualitative social research. It is a smart way of studying and way more practical.”</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modules need more opportunities to practice: <i>“I think that practicing a certain analysis once is not very useful”</i> • Students still struggle with lack of confidence to do activities: <i>“For most of the activities, I did feel a bit lost because I hadn't really done anything like this before.”</i> • Body language or pronunciation in expert videos as distracting. • The reflection component needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Better integration in tutorial. ○ Clearer explanation of how it benefits learning (i.e. students underappreciate role of reflection). |