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Title: Online Versus Print

RR1-2

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English 203, Section 19

Prompt 2: In this unit we have been reading about communication and visual images. Read the print text I gave you in class (Jansuz, *Marketing on Social Networks*). Then read the online text at <http://mashable.com/2010/12/21/advertising-industry/>.

For this response I would like you to focus on the **reading process** in online and print reading practices and the **differences** and **similarities** between them. Your reading response should consist of three major blocks. The first block should cover the issues / point on reading the online text listed under question 1. The second block should cover the listed points on reading the print text under question 2. The third section should cover the listed points under comparison of the process (question 3). In all three sections you are examining HOW you read.

1. Describe how you read the **online text** noting the following:
   * Before reading the text:
     + Did you skim to get an overview?
     + Did you examine the site to determine its credibility and quality?
     + Did you follow links on the page? Did you come back to the original reading text?
   * While reading the text:
     + What other activities were you taking part in simultaneously (facebook, sms, tv, etc)
     + **HOW** did you read? Did you read from beginning to end or did you skim and scan? Did you follow the links? Did you read the text intensively or superficially?
     + Did you feel you thoroughly understood the text?
     + Did you read the text intensively or superficially?
     + Did you feel you thoroughly understood the text?
2. Describe how you read the print text:
   * + Before you read the print text
       - Did you examine the text for length, title, headings, source, and so on?

* While Reading the text:
  + What other activities were you taking part in simultaneously? (facebook, sms, tv, etc)
  + **HOW** did you read? Did you read from beginning to end or did you skim and scan? Did you skip any parts? Did you write marginal notes and underline?
  + Did you read the text intensively or superficially?
  + Did you feel you thoroughly understood the text?

1. Compare both readings **PROCESSES**

* How are they similar
* How are they different
* Which is more enjoyable and why?
* Which reading **process** did you feel was better and why

Reading is an essential part of every literate person’s life. Everyone reads according to his interests and needs. The list of reading material is long and can vary between books, newspapers, magazine articles or even homework texts. However, modern times have added online reading to this list and have made it an integral part of every person’s life, especially students. The step by step analysis of the process of reading online and print texts helps us understand the differences and similarities between the two and can lead us to decide on the efficiency of each.

Online texts are characterized by the enormity of material they can offer, while entertaining the reader. For example, the page, “mashable.com”, opens with, of course, the title “Mashable Business” and “6 Predictions for Digital Advertising”, but at the same time with the big picture of “Twitter vs. Facebook” which imposes itself on the text and moves the student’s attention from the titles to analyzing the meaning of the picture (J. Thomas, 2011). In an attempt to understand, the student is obliged to go back to the title and subtitles. In the process, his focus is unconsciously directed to the many scattered links on the page. The student next takes a quick look at the whole page that doesn’t seem lengthy and looks far from boring. Encouraged, he starts reading in proper order, but links like “Foursquare”, “Groupon” or “a brand’s best bet in social media is randomness” intrigue him and surly, he clicks on each for a better understanding of the text (J. Thomas, 2011). However, each link takes him to even longer pages with explanations, more links, images, stories and even feedback. After spending some time reading them, he decides to go back to the original text, where he watches the already downloaded video that explains the subject further. The main theme clearer in his mind, he resumes the reading, but can’t stop clicking on the links he comes across. In the process, he falls in love with the new Nokia phone on the right of a link page and gets disgusted at the Skittles ad at the bottom. Realizing that he is running out of time, the student returns to the main page, with the determination to read only what is there. Unfortunately, he is trapped again in all the feedback at the bottom of the page. He also can’t fight the urge to know why Obama needs social media to win 2012.

Evidently, a student (like me) feels dizzy with all the information he was exposed to and at the time it took him to read one page. He also finds the bowl of buttery popcorn next to him empty. When did he manage to eat it all? He next wonders about what he really understood from the text and the feeling of uncertainty takes him back to reading the page one last time. Surly, now everything makes perfect sense. It is then that he realizes he should check the author and the credibility of the text. Though convinced, he realizes that he has spent almost two hours reading one webpage but decides that it was worth it. Not very efficient, but he really did enjoy it.

Reading print texts, for the today’s student, is an entirely different experience. It is usually the part of homework he dreads and chooses to do last, because print, with all black letters and no pictures, has a serious look to it and most of the time seems boring and tedious, especially for the new generation. For example, a student like me would always do this kind of reading in the car, while on his way to university. The first reaction of a student about to read the print text “Twitter My Space and Facebook Demystified” is flipping the pages of the handout to check how long it is. Four pages is a fair length. The student next glances at the title and the author’s weird family name catches his attention. When he starts reading, he finds the subject of social media familiar. He surly knows all about You Tube and Yahoo and of course, knows all about Facebook and why and where it was made. Nevertheless, the success of Bledtec and the age groups of the visitors of My Space grab his attention (Janusz, 2009). The whole text takes him about five to ten minutes to read and the message of the text is already clear in his head. Since he hasn’t underlined or taken notes while reading, the student goes back to the text one more time, cross reading, to see if he has missed anything, including the reference part in the end. While still feeling impressed by the information about the author, he realizes that before he knew it, he was done with the reading and he didn’t even glance once out of the car window while reading. The whole experience of reading this particular text leaves him with a feeling of amazement at his involvement in the text, his ability to focus and his efficiency. He decides that print text can sometimes be interesting and even easy to understand.

Evidently, reading online and reading print text are similar in that they are both reading experiences that lead to acquiring knowledge and they can both be efficient, each in its own way. However, they are also very different in many ways. For example, online reading is a time consuming and dizzying experience, because of the diversity of the material one is exposed to. Each link takes the reader to new horizons and can even make him momentarily forget the main subject of reading. In contrast, print text is focused and keeps the reader’s mind directed to the main subject and it is definitely less time consuming. However, online reading is enriching in that it offers the reader the option of choosing what links to follow and also to interact with the material actively. Consequently, it empowers him with a vast general knowledge that knows no limits, as long as the he is eager to acquire more. Print texts, on the contrary, limit the information to what is there on the paper. In addition, online reading can be very effective in some cases. For example, binary conversion, used in computer language, is very hard to understand in the EECE200 textbook, but it takes the student exactly two minutes of reading a certain illustrated page on Yahoo to master the process. However, this takes us to a crucial issue, namely, could online reading limit our thinking abilities by giving us all the answers with minimum effort? Through visual images, videos, examples, real life stories and feedback, on line reading facilitates the process of understanding a text. Whereas, in the absence of all these facilities, print text reading enhances thinking, because it obliges the reader to think, visualize and of course, use his own conceptual abilities. It imposes full focus and full engagement in the reading process (no eating, sms, TV…).

In conclusion, both online and print text readings are useful and necessary in our lives. It is the reader who decides which is more enjoyable. Surly, younger generations, who like everything easy and quick, enjoy online reading and learn better on the web, while older ones, like our mothers, prefer sticking to their habits and read print texts. However, print texts that deal with contemporary issues and written in modern style and language, are surly as enjoyable and informative as any online text and can encourage the web generations to read print texts and may be whole books; thus, preventing books from becoming mere decoration items or even extinct in the future.

References:

Janusz T., *Twitter,* *My Space and Facebook Demystified*, 2009.

Thomas J., *6 Predictions for Digital Advertising in 2011,* http://mashable.com/2010/12/21/advertising-industry/