Investigation of the Generational Differences of Two Types of Blog Writers: The Generation Gap Influence

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to gain insights into the differences in perceptions of blog writing of two types of writers (i.e., digital natives [DNs] vs. digital immigrants [DIs]). The study focused on the generational literature and Web 2.0 as an online writing platform, investigating the generational differences in DN and DI writers’ perceptions on a blog-based writing platform. The “WritingGen” blog was developed for this study to provide a web-based writing place to facilitate writers’ writing and editing practices. An empirical study was conducted involving 34 Taiwanese blog writers with five hypotheses to be verified. Data were analyzed using independent samples t tests and logistic regression. The results revealed that the DN writers have significantly more positive attitudes toward blog writing, higher frequencies in blog-based writing behavior, perceived higher satisfaction, and higher knowledge acquisition than the DI writers. Based on these findings, pedagogical implications are provided.

KEYWORDS

blog, generation gap, generational differences, learning outcomes, satisfaction, writing attitude, writing behavior

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of access to a greater variety of social media to engage in writing has made a great contribution to the act of writing. Weblogs (i.e., blogs) are one of the obvious Web 2.0 tools (Karsak, Fer, & Orhan, 2014) that break the boundaries of conventional writing practice. According to Bausch, Haughey, and Hourihan (2002, p. 28), a weblog is “A reflection of its author, and provides a view into the writer’s life and mind through the content the author chooses to reveal and share with the audience.” Thus, blogs are recognized as being a convenient platform for personal writing practice (Godwin-Jones, 2008). Writers can be more focused when using blogging tools for writing due to the fact that they facilitate the expression of a strong sense of the writer’s point of view (Nardi et al., 2004). Moreover, they enhance meaningful review and they allow writers to comment with scientific reasoning through written reflection (Angelaina & Jimoyiannis, 2012). Therefore, using a blog for writing can increase writing confidence by adding visual representations (Zhang, 2009) and classifying the writers as bloggers or blog writers. The terms “blogger” or “blog writer” refer to individuals who have their own blogs and update them on a regular basis. Research has shown that the more regularly writing is performed, the more likely it is that the cognitive processes involved

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will take on an automatic nature in the future, which will enhance writing achievements (Alexander & Winne, 2006). In addition, sharing of information and ideas of writers including data-management features, such as blog writing entries according to their popularity, user ID, number of submissions and number of comments received (Sun, 2010), can inspire writers to write on their blogs on a regular basis. Such kinds of blog-based writing tools may have attracted an entire generation of writers as an extension of their regular writing practices. However, due to the broad characteristics of individuals’ needs (e.g., a specific writing style, writing amount and type of technology use and/or set of writing preferences) to accept blog writing, different generations could differ in their use of such tools.

Previous studies have shown important differences in the usage of technology for different purposes by younger and older generations (Chung et al., 2010; Metallo & Agrifoglio, 2015; Vodanovich, Sundaram, & Myers, 2010). Metallo and Agrifoglio’s (2015) study provides some examples from the work of other scholars (Chung et al., 2010; Vodanovich et al., 2010). They mentioned that the younger generation’s usage of microblogging, social networking, and other ubiquitous technologies for different purposes, such as watching videos, downloading music, playing games, reading blogs online (Jones & Fox, 2009), and for interacting and communicating with others. On the other hand, the older generation is more likely to use asynchronous tools such as email (Metallo & Agrifoglio, 2015) and reading online news for different purposes such as seeking health information, making purchases, and obtaining religious information (Jones & Fox, 2009).

In recent years, considerable attention has been paid to investigating how the different generations can be categorized (Metallo & Agrifoglio, 2015; Prensky, 2001) based on their usage of technology with respect to age and expertise. For example, Prensky (2001) defined two generations, namely “Digital Natives” (DNs) and “Digital Immigrants” (DIs) based on their age associated with their first technological experience. He defined DNs as those who were born in or after 1980, while those born before 1980 are the DIs.

Due to the emergence of greater varieties of digital tools with diverse functionality, technology is being used by both the DN and DI generations. Moreover, they have their own interests and writing styles that could differ from each other. However, there has been little empirical research comparing the generation gap differences in the technology skills, experiences and acceptance of writing online for DN and DI writers. Previous research on these two generations has focused on the differences in the learning and cognitive processes, and the related implications for education (Kolikant, 2010; Margaryan, Littlejon, & Vojt, 2011). It is not yet clear, however, how the observed differences in the technology-oriented writing behaviors of DN and DI writers should be interpreted in a blog-based writing platform. Therefore, this study developed the “WritingGen” blog to facilitate online writing and to conduct an empirical study. The aim of this study is to contribute empirical evidence of the differences in the perceptions of DN and DI blog writers. An experiment was conducted to explore whether any significant differences existed in the writers’ attitudes toward writing on the blog, their frequencies of blog-based writing behavior, their perceived satisfaction with the blog platform, and the perceived knowledge acquisition by the two groups using the designed blog platform “WritingGen.”

**REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

**Generation Gap and Generational Differences**

The term “generation gap,” which first appeared in 1960, is an idea that is more myth than reality, but it focuses on talent management which is a critical issue in the 21st century (Giancola, 2006). It also refers to the inter-group perceptions that are defined by age. According to Bengtson (1971), the differences in perceptions of intergenerational interaction require determination of three propositions, namely the age of the perceiver, the relationship between the perceiver and the referent person or group, and the context of the perceiver-referent relationship. This paper used the most widely accepted definition by Bengtson (1971) to recognize the generation gap that is perceived as greater for ‘people
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