



Pedagogical and Technological Ethos in Online Instruction: A Rhetorical Review of On-site and Online Learning Statements

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Abstract: In this essay, I draw from the explications of ethos and imply a technological ethos that would enable a lens for critiquing online instruction and new pedagogical platforms. The paper gathers learning objectives from open online courses and professional position statements of online pedagogies, juxtaposing them against objectives found in traditional, on-site program philosophy. By identifying themes that indicate pedagogical ethos, I discuss and demonstrate the importance of paying attention to technological ethos as a rhetorical element in evaluating the values of online education. By parsing out the ethotic ideals reflected in classical Greek rhetoric literature and as well as contemporary discussions of education and instructional technology, this paper explores the affordances of online instructional methods, particularly in simulating the ethos of face-to-face teaching practices.

Keywords: Ethos, online pedagogy, instructional technology

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Introduction

The material conditions and ideologies surrounding distance learning have been central discussion points within the community of rhetoric and composition for more than just the past decade. From the early door-to-door correspondence courses (in the late 1890s), to radio (1920s-1940s) and TV broadcast lectures (1950s-1980s), to email listserv seminars (1990s), to open educational resources like the MIT OpenCourseWare (2000s), and to lately, the massive open online courses (or MOOCs, beginning 2010s), the advancement in communication technology often goes hand-in-hand with emerging pedagogical approaches and ideals. More recently, distance and online learning is touted by education administrators as a viable solution to declining and limited enrollments in colleges and universities (Lansford, 2009; Quinton, 2013). Yet, despite the many promises and propositions of change that distance and online education were expected to bring about, the online model often falls short of what it attempts to accomplish. One major issue facing most online education today is concerned with student retention and completion rates (Koller et al., 2013). Many studies have examined these problems by looking from technological and instructional design perspectives (Swan, 2001; Johnson & Aragon, 2003; Reiser & Dempsey, 2011). These studies are interested in how the design of learning impacts student achievement in various online platforms.

While critiquing the technology of delivery is helpful for determining the most cost-effective medium and method for instruction, the questions of pedagogical ideals, values, and pragmatics should be addressed from the rhetoric of online education itself. Charles Schlosser and Mary L. Anderson (1994, cited in Imel, 1998), in a review of distance education literature, submit that the goal of distance education in the United States is “to offer the distance student an experience as much like that of traditional, face-to-face instruction as possible” (p. 3). This would mean that distance learning pedagogy would not differ much from that of an ordinary classroom. Tony Bates (1995) contends a different idea. He argues that instead of using technology to replicate traditional methods, it should be used to transform instruction. Borje Holmberg (1989) also discusses these two schools of thought and concludes that distance education as a mode of education in its own right has very different consequences than viewing it as a substitute for face-to-face instruction.

Underscoring these foregrounded contentions is the instructor’s perceived goals of online education. In these contentions, the rhetoric of online education is fickle due to the uncertainty about the intentions of online delivery. Having conducted a MOOC on first-year writing, Kay Halasek and her team (Krause & Lowe, 2014) suggest in their essay, “A MOOC with a View: How MOOCs Encourage Us to Reexamine Pedagogical Doxa,” that online teaching platforms like MOOCs are a disruptive force that encourages teachers to interrogate pedagogical habits of mind that have been long

assumed and unchallenged. In their own words, MOOCs allow teachers to “take a sober look at what we’ve been doing in our classrooms, about the inherited narratives and assumptions that have shapes our approaches, and ask sometimes uncomfortable questions about our motives and motivations” (p. 165). This view is also shared by those who believe that the affordances of the Web, particularly Web 2.0, are untapped when teachers still hang on to the traditional paradigm of teaching and learning (Martin & Noakes, 2012). Considering the context of teaching in the 21st century, composition professor Alexandria Peary (2014), in scrutinizing the ethos of pedagogy, has asked an important question: “What does it mean to position oneself as an outsider in the extracurricular world of Web 2.0 with its manifold opportunities for audiences and feedback beyond the instructor?” (p. 310). Peary argues that without an awareness of ethos in the process and technology of teaching, teachers may lack an understanding of how their attitudes toward technology influence their pedagogical methods or styles.

In her early works, Carolyn Miller sees ethos as a wedge for entering and analyzing all types of discourse. Miller (1980) defines ethos as “the manifestation of character in discourse” (p. 184). She contends that there’s ethos that dwells in the rhetorical community, which makes the rhetor persuasive to the members of the community (Miller, 2004). While ethos has both normative and descriptive uses, Miller wants us to focus on the descriptive values of ethos, one that is purported by Aristotle’s rhetoric. Her technological ethotic framework, when applied on new instructional platforms that reconfigures pedagogical ideals, offers a useful lens for analyzing the affordances of online teaching practices. Thus, in this essay, I draw from Miller, among other rhetoricians and pedagogues’ explications of technological ethos in teaching, to examine the pedagogical models, educational philosophies, and pragmatics of online education. The following pages parse out the ethotic ideals reflected in both classical (Greek) pedagogy and contemporary discussions of education. Specifically, I seek to answer these questions:

- What are some themes that indicate instructional ethos in online environments?
- Do online instructional environments exhibit a technological ethos that simulates ethos in face-to-face models of teaching and learning?

To highlight similarities and differences, the essay gathers learning objectives from open online courses and professional position statements of online pedagogy, juxtaposing them against purpose statement found in a traditional, on-site writing program. By identifying themes that indicate pedagogical ethos, I discuss the importance of paying attention to technological ethos as a rhetorical element in evaluating the values of online education.

Ethos in Classical and Contemporary Pedagogies

The rhetorical concept of ethos is one of the three *pistis*, or proofs, consolidated in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (2007). Aristotle sees ethos as an artistic (technical) appeal of evincing a speaker's personal character, which will make his speech credible. From an epistemological point of view, Aristotle's conception of ethos is concerned with the construction of trust from the audience or students for the speaker or teacher. According to Aristotle, a teacher should speak and adapt to the characteristics of his students; tact and judgement are needed in all kinds of oratory, including instruction. What sets the Aristotelian ethos apart from his temporaries, especially Isocrates, is that Aristotle regards ethos as a distinct rationalized appeal. Whereas for most teachers of Aristotle's time, including Isocrates, ethos is the innate moral character of the teacher. In "Against the Sophists" (2000), Isocrates distinguishes his teaching from those of the sophists by highlight his triad of natural ability (of the speaker), training of the forms, and extensive practice through imitation. Isocrates' sees ethos to be innate to the speaker's character (natural ability) or could be accumulated through the course of actions in the speaker's life. Isocrates contends that such natural ability is "innate in the well-born and developed in those trained with experience" (13.14). This is unlike Aristotle's ethos, which is *entechne* and could be enacted during the communicative event brought about by the speaker (such as teaching).

In differentiating Aristotle from Isocrates, Manfred Kraus (2005) argues that ethos should not be a free manipulation by the speaker, but rather be "given prerequisites" (p. 1) manifested in the speaker's reputation, intelligence, and reliability. Kraus highlights that the character of Aristotle's speaker is also incorporated into the speaker's social standing. This leads him to arguing that logos in a speech serves to create ethos for the speaker – "The character created by speech, of course, is not a mimetic image or copy of the person's real character, but an autonomous product of logos" (p. 7). Kraus concludes that a speaker's ethos is only observable by his audience with inference from the speaker's actions; and actions are made by choice.

For the purpose of contrast, I turn to Plato's *Phaedrus* (2003), which offers us a glimpse into the Platonic ethos through the conversations between Socrates and the youthful Phaedrus. There are two points in *Phaedrus* where Plato has demonstrated his ideal of ethos. First, when Phaedrus mentions Lysias to Socrates, not just by name, but by identifying him by his father's name as well. Lysias is, therefore, given a specific amount of ethos through his family name because his family has an established ethos in the community. Socrates responds with a line that acknowledges his familiarity with the family and then Phaedrus continues with his story, thus beginning the dialogue. Second, in Socrates' third speech about rhetoric and writing (speech-making), he states that an orator should understand the souls of different audiences and speak accordingly. This foreshadows Plato's argument against rhetoric (for dialectic). The Platonic ethos is an

instance of contrast with Aristotle's use of appropriate styles that adapt to a certain character of the speaker/teacher and speak to the audience/students.

The Greeks' conceptions of ethos, whether Aristotelian, Isocratean, or Platonic, focus on the ability of speakers/teachers in convincing an audience/students through their teachings. Evidently, ethos in classical pedagogy is marked as teacher-centered and focuses on the exhibition of the traits of the teacher to invoke trust among the students. Such pedagogical conception is modified in contemporary education to fit the shifting power dynamic in the classroom.

Whereas classical education is committed to the cultivation of wisdom and virtue through a divine quest of knowledge, contemporary education concentrates on vocational trainings that aim to develop specific proficiencies that will help a student enter the labor market upon graduation. Ethos in contemporary education is typically manifested through an institution's teaching philosophy, missions, and instructional practices that reflect these values and beliefs. In a conventional setting, teachers still play an important role in exhibiting ethos by exercising authority, upholding morale, and facilitating learning via various instructional methods and systems. Peary (2014), who urges an awareness of ethos in the writing classroom, sees ethos as the primary concern of students in writing courses as they often base their assumptions of the values of a course or their teacher based on the "suasive dynamic" (p. 291) teachers have with their students. Through her analysis of several process-based writing teachers, Peary highlights the interconnection between teachers' stance toward learners and their curricular choices. Michael Gregory (2013) further contends that teacherly ethos is a pervasive influence in all classroom interactions:

Teacherly ethos is not so much about what a teacher should *do* (in an instrumental or methodological sense) as about who a teacher should *be* (in terms of character and virtue). Students care little about what methods their teachers use but do care immensely about what kinds of persons their teachers are. ... What students see at the front of their classroom is not a disembodied skill or a dissociated idea or a disciplinary skill, but a *person*, and the first thing that all of us do when meeting persons – especially new persons, and especially persons who might have power over us – is to deploy our incredibly sensitive social radar for acquiring information about the new person's ethos. (n.p.)

Such conception of ethos demands the physical presence of both the teacher and students. If ethos is essential to excellence in teaching and learning, Gregory's notion of classroom ethos challenges the validity of distance and online instructional methods since physical interaction is ostensibly unachievable in virtual learning environments. Recent literature are delving into the question of the values of technology and materiality of education that influence how online learning is perceived. In her book,

Electric Rhetoric, Kathleen Welch (1999) charts that literacy in the 21st century must not only consider the new configurations of articulation in learning and teaching, but also account for the “literate, visual, electronic oralism/auralism” that students in the new century inhibit (p.7). Welch also states that changes in communication technology bring about new ways of articulating and new relationships between discourse communities and languages. On the one hand, new materiality is embraced and celebrated. On a more skeptical side, there are faculty members like Edward White who points out how disruptive innovations like MOOCs obstruct writing pedagogy and hence might be a threat to excellent instructions (Krause & Lowe, 2014).

Miller’s Technological Ethos

Aside from pedagogical or teacherly ethos, the evaluation of the affordances of technology in pedagogy can be launched with a discussion of the ethos of the technology itself. From “Technology as a Form of Consciousness” (Miller, 1978) to “A Humanistic Rationale for Technical Writing” (Miller, 1979), to “The Presumptions of Expertise” (Miller, 2003), to “What can Automation Tell Us About Agency” (Miller, 2007), Carolyn Miller continually paints a portrait—of which I call a technological ethotic framework—that, eventually, humanizes technology. Essentially, Miller sees technologies as reflections of human characters and characteristics, and we invent and use them to perform human tasks for human purposes. To theorize the use of technologies is to explore and expand our understanding of human (rhetorical) agency as it plays out within technologically mediated environments.

Citing Paul Edwards’ examinations of computers as machines and metaphors in the politics and culture during the Cold War, Miller (2004) analyzes Edwards’ two modes of human-computer interaction as “the rhetoric of machine control and the rhetoric of computational subjectivity” (p. 199). She explores how expert systems and intelligent agents blur the boundaries between human and machine, asking the question if ethos belongs to the intelligent systems or the humans who designed them. One key observation that Miller (2004) makes is that in expert/artificial intelligent systems, expertise is operational as the effective combination of both rules and facts that are put to work and made available through the system interface. That leads Miller into contending ethos of expert systems as the establishing of expertise and trust—a technological ethos framework that can be used to observe the ethos of online instruction.

While many existing studies continue to observe the general viability of new technology in education, the connection between the mode of instruction and the exposition of pedagogical ethos remains fuzzy. As contentions grow between the teacher and the medium or technology of delivery for being the source of knowledge, the ethotic image of teachers is increasingly blurred by the advancing technology. In

order to critique online instruction, teacherly ethos and the ethos of the instructional method need a closer examination in terms of how they are conceived and presented. As Miller (2001) contends, ethos is “a representation, and as such it must be interpreted” (p. 271).

To bridge the gap, I offer an exploratory study here that identifies themes indicating pedagogical pragmatics in different online instructional systems. As a systematic rhetorical exercise, rather than a social scientific content analysis, this study has employed a selective sampling method that collects data from the following sources:

- Two Writing MOOCs
- NCTE/CCCC Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for online Writing Instruction (OWI)
- Department of Education National Study Report on online learning
- University of Minnesota—Twin Cities’ writing program purpose statement

These avenues represent the diverse landscape of writing instruction within and outside the North American tradition of teaching. The Writing MOOCs offer a language that is designed for a global audience given their open and massive nature. The NCTE/CCCC position statement provides a national (and I argue, international) benchmark for online writing instruction, which is useful for the purpose of locating an overarching yet domestic voice for teaching writing. A national study report produced by the US Department of Education is added to juxtapose against the global (MOOCs) and self-governing disciplinary (NCTE/CCCC) voices for online instruction by indicating national standards drawn from multiple fields of study. And, given my institutional affiliation, it seems only appropriate to include my own department’s positionality in this analysis. The purpose statement from the University of Minnesota’s award-winning writing program gives us a flash of the local tone in articulating its beliefs for online instruction. The next section of this essay showcases these pedagogy statements. The comparison among these statements seeks to identify ethotic patterns and ideologies facilitated by online and on-site instructional methods.

Conceptions of Ethos in On-Site and Online Pedagogies: Some Themes

Course learning objectives, instructional outcomes, and position statements are valuable artifacts to examine for the purpose of understanding how ethos is conceptualized in a given instructional environment as they give us a glimpse into the rationale and philosophies that shape teaching and learning practices.

An On-Site Writing Program’s Purpose Statement

For the purpose of comparison, I begin with an on-site writing program's purpose statement that provides an overview of the learning deliverables and pedagogical objectives. The following statement is taken from the University of Minnesota's First-Year Writing Program website.

The primary purpose of first-year writing at the University of Minnesota is to provide incoming students with the fundamental skills and knowledge about writing demanded in university study. Students write in academic genres such as essays, summaries, and research papers and learn the appropriate conventions and styles that make those forms convincing. In a workshop environment, students practice and study writing as a recursive process of critical thinking, analytical reading, and significant research, all leading to graceful written communication. Drawing on students' diverse skills, backgrounds, and experiences, instructors lead students to discern and participate in important public and university-level conversations. First-year writing offers students a foundation for development and refinement of their writing abilities throughout their college career and beyond. ([First-Year Writing](#), 2015)

The University of Minnesota (UMN) writing program's statement is consistent with most college-level first-year writing philosophies in the US. With a primary goal of preparing students for collegiate studies, the statement above reflects an embedded ethos that is embodied by a series of deliverables of the program, e.g., learning to write academic genres, writing in a recursive manner, cultivating critical and analytical skills, and conducting research. Here, ethos is conceptualized as promises of quality, that is, what students would get out of the program if they participate actively. Second, a teacherly ethos is also ingrained in the purpose statement, one that highlight the capacity of the instructors to lead students in the program to achieving the deliverables.

Two Writing MOOCs and Their Course Descriptions

To explore the similarities and differences in the conception of ethos between fully online and on-site courses, I turn to two writing-related MOOCs, or massive open online courses, as my next points of analysis. MOOCs are considered the latest innovative learning technology that challenges conventional pedagogies and instructional methods as they require a "flipped" instruction. Students first obtain most of their content knowledge by watching compressed lecture videos and then participate in course activities such as contributing to discussions and completing writing assignments. Given such difference from the traditional classroom teaching model, MOOCs are often questioned for their ability to deliver quality, serious pedagogy that are similar to, if not better than, the brick-and-mortar version of a course.

The following are two randomly selected writing MOOCs that were offered via Coursera.org, a course management enterprise for MOOCs designed and developed by sponsoring universities, such as The Ohio State University and Duke University in the examples below. I have gathered the general course descriptions of these two MOOCs – published on the respective Coursera course sites – to study where ethos is exhibited within the narratives.

1. [Writing II: Rhetorical Composing](#) (The Ohio State University)

Rhetorical Composing is a course where writers exchange words, ideas, talents, and support. You will be introduced to a variety of rhetorical concepts—that is, ideas and techniques to inform and persuade audiences—that will help you become a more effective consumer and producer of written, visual, and multimodal texts. The class includes short videos, demonstrations, and activities.

We envision Rhetorical Composing as a learning community that includes both those enrolled in this course and the instructors. We bring our expertise in writing, rhetoric and course design, and we have designed the assignments and course infrastructure to help you share your experiences as writers, students, and professionals with each other and with us. These collaborations are facilitated through WEx, The Writers Exchange, a place where you will exchange your work and feedback. (Coursera.org, 2015)

2. [English Composition I: Achieving Expertise](#) (Duke University)

English Composition I provides an introduction to and foundation for the academic reading and writing characteristic of college. Attending explicitly to disciplinary context, you will learn to read critically, write effective arguments, understand the writing process, and craft powerful prose that meets readers' expectations. You will gain writing expertise by exploring questions about expertise itself: What factors impact expert achievement? What does it take to succeed? Who determines success? Since personal investment yields better writing, you can select an area of expertise meaningful to you (a hobby, trade, profession, discipline, etc.) for your major writing projects, which will be drafted and revised in sequenced stages: an explication of a visual image (600-800 words); a case study of an expert (1000-1250 words) and an Op-Ed (500-750 words). Your writing will be central to the course as we create a seminar/workshop structure with peer response and selected instructor feedback.

Two overarching assumptions about academic writing will shape our work: 1) it is

transferable; 2) it is learnable. Being an effective academic writer involves asking meaningful questions and engaging in complex dialogue with texts and ideas. These skills are useful across virtually all academic disciplines and they provide a valuable means for making sense of non-academic experiences as well. Perhaps even more important, though, is that learning how to write effectively does not require inspiration or genius, but hard work, reflection, and feedback. This means that, with practice, dedication, and working with others, you can be an effective academic writer and contribute your ideas to important, ongoing conversations.

English Composition I has earned a [Certificate of Recognition](#) from Quality Matters, a non-profit dedicated to quality in online education. (Coursera.org, 2015)

Common presentations of ethos were identified in these descriptions. First, instructional ethos is conferred as expertise. In the Ohio State MOOC, the instructional team's "expertise in writing, rhetoric, and course design" is mentioned explicitly in their course description. For Duke, a certification from a quality assurance organization aims to convey an expert ethos for the instructional team and the course as a whole. Second, ethos is rendered by the format and content of these MOOCs. Both course descriptions summarize the kind of mechanism that is developed to ensure students' success in the courses. In its course description, the Ohio State MOOC teases the genres of assignments and course components, i.e., visual and written assignments, and videos, demonstrations, and activities. Whereas, Duke provides a sketch of what the course is consist of, but with a rather detailed description of writing projects that would be assigned during the course (including word count). Finally, similar to the University of Minnesota writing program's purpose statement, both course descriptions have woven ethos into their narratives by highlighting the deliverables of the courses. Students are assured with expected course outcomes, which underpin their confidence for the courses.

A Disciplinary Position Statement

The CCCC [Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for Online Writing Instruction](#) (2013) is created in response to the rise of internet-based writing courses and the abundance of mobile mechanisms for teaching and learning in postsecondary contexts. Adopted by CCCC on March 13, 2013, the document encompasses instructional, faculty, and institutional principles that outline best strategies for teaching writing in blended, hybrid, and distance-based writing courses. At least three of the 15 principles in this document convey an ethotic ideal in online writing instruction:

| |
|---|
| OWI Principle 4: Appropriate onsite composition theories, pedagogies, and strategies should be migrated and adapted to the online instructional environment. |
| OWI Principle 5: Online writing teachers should retain reasonable control over their own content and/or techniques for conveying, teaching, and assessing their students' writing in their OWCs. |
| OWI Principle 8: Online writing teachers should receive fair and equitable compensation for their work. |

Table 1. Three principles extracted from NCTE's CCCC Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for Online Writing Instruction. (OWI stands for online writing instruction; OWC stands for online writing course.)

Seemingly, one direct way of enforcing ethos in online instruction is to impose the same, if not more rigorous, standards for teaching and learning. As observed in Principle 4, theories and methods of on-site writing instruction are encouraged to be adapted into the online environment as a way to preserve the foundation – histories, values, and practices – of writing. Students taking an online writing course could be reassured that the quality of instruction remains on-par with conventional, face-to-face version of the same course. Further, online writing instructors retain a teacherly ethos by assuming control over their teaching and assessing of writing, as expressed in Principle 5. This sustains the authority of the instructor beyond the physical classroom – where the power dynamic between teacher and students is more visible – into the online realm. Finally, as demonstrated by Principle 8, ethos in online instruction is perpetuated by ensuring that online writing teachers receive recognition for their work. This is another instance of making visible the presence of the teacher in online instructional environments by acknowledging their labor – an exemplification of teacherly ethos by reward and recognition.

A National Study Report

Ethos can be assigned from an external source – constructed through negotiated social processes (Miller, 2013) . Another way to scrutinize the ethos in online education is to identify how credit is given to the teaching and learning model from third-party authority. In 2009, the US Department of Education (ED) released a meta-analysis and review of online learning studies to highlight the viability of online instruction. The 90-some-page report examined the comparative research on online-versus-traditional classroom teaching from 1996 to 2008. Some of it was in K-12 settings, but most of the comparative studies were done in colleges and adult continuing-education programs of various kinds, from medical training to the military. The analysis found that, on average,

students doing some or all of the course online would rank in the 59th percentile in tested performance, compared with the average classroom student scoring in the 50th percentile. This leads to the gross conclusion the report featured: “On average, students in online learning conditions performed better than those receiving face-to-face instruction.”

A systematic search of the research literature from 1996 through July 2008 identified more than a thousand empirical studies of online learning. Analysts screened these studies to find those that (a) contrasted an online to a face-to-face condition, (b) measured student learning outcomes, (c) used a rigorous research design, and (d) provided adequate information to calculate an effect size. As a result of this screening, 51 independent effects were identified that could be subjected to meta-analysis. The meta-analysis found that, on average, students in online learning conditions performed better than those receiving face-to-face instruction. The difference between student outcomes for online and face-to-face classes—measured as the difference between treatment and control means, divided by the pooled standard deviation—was larger in those studies contrasting conditions that blended elements of online and face-to-face instruction with conditions taught entirely face-to-face. Analysts noted that these blended conditions often included additional learning time and instructional elements not received by students in control conditions. This finding suggests that the positive effects associated with blended learning should not be attributed to the media, per se. An unexpected finding was the small number of rigorous published studies contrasting online and face-to-face learning conditions for K–12 students. In light of this small corpus, caution is required in generalizing to the K–12 population because the results are derived for the most part from studies in other settings (e.g., medical training, higher education). (US Department of Education, 2009)

While there isn't a specific passage or sentence to point to for the display of online instruction ethos in this report, two main conceptions of ethos have been identified. First, the report assigns ethos to online learning by underscoring student achievement in online learning environments. The ethotic strength of such delivery method is even greater when it is charted against on-site, face-to-face instruction, wherein students did not perform as well. In addition, the report also calls attention to the rigorous methodology involved in the analysis of studies in the report. Such reference aims to create a meta-ethos that validates the evaluation and findings about student achievements in online instructional settings, which constitute the former ethotic value in this artifact.

Comparison Table

To allow a better viewing of the similarities and contrasts between the various artifacts above, the table below juxtaposes the conceptions of ethos within these artifacts.

| | Conceptions of Ethos |
|-------------------------------|--|
| On-site Instruction | |
| UMN Writing Program Statement | Deliverables; Quality; Expertise |
| Online Instruction | |
| MOOCs Course Descriptions | Expertise; Mechanism/format; Deliverables |
| CCCC Position Statement | Quality; Control; Recognition |
| US ED Report | Achievement; Evaluation |

Table 2. Comparison table for on-site and online pedagogical statements.

As shown in Table 2, there are overlaps of the conceptions of ethos between on-site and online instructions – especially between the UMN writing program purpose statement and the two MOOCs’ course descriptions – namely the conception of ethos as expertise and ethos as deliverables. Both formats demonstrate ethos by highlighting the abilities of the respective instructional methods in enabling student success as well as featuring promises of quality education that students can expect to receive in either of the approaches. In the near-external, governing body position statement of online writing instruction by CCCC and the external report of success by the Department of Education, quality and achievements are related conceptions of ethos that can be traced to the UMN writing program’s conceptions of expertise and deliverables. Given these observations, how can we consolidate the ways in which ethos is conceptualized and presented in on-site versus online instruction? Having identified the ethotic themes in these instructional environments, I now turn to address my second research question, that is whether online instructional environments exhibit a technological ethos that replicates face-to-face models of teaching and learning.

Technological Ethos in Online Instruction

Miller’s early work probes the rhetorical nature of technology by examining the ways in which technological activity “both reflects and shapes forms of thought” (1978, p. 229). Miller suggests that technology presupposes a form of consciousness given its features

and character(istics). This form of consciousness, as consolidated as technological ethos in Miller's framework, is useful for evaluating delivery choices amidst the plethora of options we are bombarded with in today's educational contexts. What's more, based on my study, is that a technological ethos for online instruction also resembles the characteristics of both Aristotelian and Isocratean ethos. On the one hand, technological ethos is a rationalized appeal that is *entechne* – i.e., the ethos in an online course can be constructed manually by asserting the values and quality of the course, such as some examples that we have seen in the artifacts above. On the other hand, technological ethos in online instruction can also be accumulated through achievements made over time. This kind of ethos is usually assigned by external appraisals rather than self praise.

As such, technological activity such as online instruction assumes a technological ethos that is innate to human/user intentions and external circumstances around the activity. For online instruction, the teacher and students' use of the technology – their motives, attitudes, and behaviors – as well as extrinsic variables like social, political, and environmental factors, constitute the ethotic value of a course. As observed in the position statements and reports in the previous section, instructional ethos is not necessarily constrained by the technology of delivery. The conceptions of ethos overlap between on-site and online modes of instruction and thus suggest that online instructions could potentially simulate on-site pedagogical ethos, given the clarity in exhibiting similar ethotic traits. Further, this essay observes that the articulations of quality assurance and course deliverables seem to be a predominant way of underpinning students' confidence for both online and on-site pedagogies.

Conclusion

As evident in the emergence of new instructional platforms throughout the 21st century, new media and technological developments influence what and how we learn, as well as the structure of the systems that organize education. In this study, I have explored the ethos embedded within online instruction by examining how credibility is established in a writing program philosophy, a disciplinary position statement, two MOOC course descriptions, and a national study report. These artifacts have shown identifiable themes that indicate a crossover between pedagogical and technological ethos. Accordingly, technological ethos in online instructional settings has the potential to simulate ethos in face-to-face teaching models. For this reason, technological ethos is found to be a rhetorical element that's worth our scholarly attention and a valuable theoretical lens for evaluating the values of online instruction.

As Miller (2004) ponders whether virtue could be captured in computational systems, future studies that are interested in expanding the explication of technological ethos might delve into student and teachers' perception of online instruction and how

virtue or excellence – variations in the conceptions of ethos – could be quantified or measured in virtual environments. Returning to Halasek et al's (2013) inquiry about pedagogical doxa – a complementary proof to the instructor's character and reputation – future studies of technological ethos might also investigate the conception of machinery doxa. Studies could explore whether or not online instruction exerts a similar pedagogical doxa as face-to-face teaching. In closing, it goes without saying that understanding the rhetorical forces in all aspects of online instruction will help various stakeholders better identify ways to maximize the capacity of the instructional medium, increase productivity, and improve quality of instruction and the learning experience. For this reason, we should further invest in research and experimentations that scrutinize the potential and pragmatics of emerging instructional technology.

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