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Composing across Modes: Collage as Critical Pedagogy in the Transnational Classroom

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Abstract

This paper examines collage as a multimodal teaching tool in a college-level English class at VCUarts Qatar. Set within the unique context of an arts-centered, transnational educational environment, the paper explores how incorporating visual collage activities into writing lessons encourages student engagement, boosts critical thinking, and supports various literacies. Drawing on multimodality, composition teaching, and arts-based learning theories, the paper presents a qualitative case study involving first-year students who created visual collages in response to literary texts and used these as foundations for analytical writing. Results indicate that the collage-making process fosters deeper emotional and cognitive connections to course materials, promotes student agency, and introduces alternative forms of expression that are especially meaningful in an arts and design setting. The paper also discusses the implications of this approach for inclusive and culturally responsive teaching, emphasizing how visual and tactile meaning-making methods can challenge traditional ideas of academic writing and broaden the scope of scholarly literacy.

Keywords: Arts-Based Learning, Collage, Composition, Pedagogy, Transnational Education