**Introduction:**

As chair, I see that linked classes tend not to fill until the last minute (when there are few other choices), so I was curious to see if there was a compelling reason to keep these “undesirable” classes – my best guess was that students in a linked class would find it easier to carry over information from one class to the next. To test this hypothesis, I designed the following project:

Using unobtrusive and obtrusive assessment throughout linked ENG101/102 courses, I hope to learn whether an emphasis on learning about types of writing (analysis, cause and effect, etc.) in the ENG101 course will carry over to help students as they work on more complex papers in ENG102.

I'll spend significant time on in-class assignments covering how and when a specific type of writing could be used to add to the effectiveness of their writing projects.  I'll incorporate unobtrusive techniques (questioning, observing, etc.) in class as well as obtrusive assessment techniques (quizzes, problem-solving activity presentations, etc.)  I'll collect data from these assessments and from my analysis of their papers.

I'll compare this data from ENG101 with the data I collect from analyzing their ENG102 papers.  I'm hoping to be able to see some connection between the extensive work on writing types in ENG101 and their effective use of writing types in ENG102.  I may also go back and analyze some previous ENG102 papers as a type of control.

**Method:**

My method was first to test and assess my ENG101 students’ performance related to writing development types (cause and effect, analysis, etc.) In general, I found that my students were performing adequately in this area – their quiz scores ranged at about 81%, and my observations of their comprehension and comfort with writing development issues was slightly higher, at about 83%.

The second step was to analyze their major paper in ENG102 to see how students were able to use what they had learned in ENG101 to make a strong and effective ENG102 paper. I looked for evidence of integrating a specific type of writing development and asked three questions about each instance – was is appropriate?, was it effective?, and did it make the paper better? To add some control to the project, I also took some sample ENG102 papers from previous semesters that weren’t linked and examined them in the same way.

**Results:**

With this type of assessment, exact results aren’t possible. I can note when a paper seems to include a specific type of writing development, but I can’t really analyze whether the perfect type of development is being used at all times in the paper. That being said, my results were as follows:

1. The ENG 102 papers mostly showed very appropriate uses of types of writing development – the writers seemed to be aware of the needs of their audience for a specific way of delivering the information
2. The ENG 102 papers were mixed in how effectively the type of writing development was executed – some writers produced extremely strong bits of development, but many examples of pedestrian development were also noted
3. The ENG 102 papers did appear to benefit from the inclusion of specific types of writing development, even when it wasn’t executed very well – because the type of writing development was appropriate, it seemed to be designed to aid in a reader’s comprehension, an important issue in a long research paper.
4. The ENG 102 papers from the linked section showed significantly more instances of including types of writing development – while the control papers did, of course, include types of writing development, they did so less frequently (and/or less clearly) with the overall effect of those papers being more rambling and less precise.
5. When asked, students in the linked class answered that they were confident in their ability to execute the types of writing development, with 20% reporting extreme confident, 67% reporting confidence, and 13 % reporting that they were neither confident nor unconfident in their abilities (I don’t have similar data from the control group to compare this to.)

**Discussion:**

I was somewhat discouraged by the results since I had hoped that the students would be exhibiting mastery of the types of writing development that we had covered in ENG101. However, when I compared the linked section’s papers with the control group, I was gratified to discover that the linked section’s papers showed more evidence of including appropriate types of writing development. So, even though they weren’t always pretty, the ENG 102 papers for this project were better for the inclusion of, say, some cause and effect reasoning or some comparison and contrast. The fact that students felt confident in their ability to execute this was heartening – I will have to get feedback from future classes to make a useful comparison. Overall, I was pleased to see students applying what they had learned, but I am eager to find ways to help them do so more effectively.

Based on what I have learned, I have developed materials (Open Educational Resources) to support learning in the area of types of writing development. I plan to make these available to both ENG101 and 102 students and to require both groups to complete activities related to these resources. In this way, I believe that I can incorporate some of the advantages of the linked-class approach to students in non-linked classes.