



Researching online writing in a blended learning programme: The Sharing Cultures Project experience

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Agenda

- Sharing Cultures project
- Computer-mediated communication
- Homo Ludens as an analytic lens
- Review of literature
- Analysis of ludic and serio-ludic discourses



Sharing Cultures Context

- Sharing Cultures - an international, intercultural, multilingual, online reading and writing, collaborative adventure
- Hospitality as a metaphor for this type of project



Computer mediated communication

- Platform for intense social activity
- Writing is a social act
- Audience, purpose and ethos shift
- Writing in CMC's not about argument or good grammar: encouraging readers to keep reading, generating as much response as possible
- Type of writing not harmful to students
- Discourses students use provide us with deeper understanding of how they write, chat and play



CMC's

- Ludic discourses- cyberword used to describe online writing (ludicrous)
- Serio-ludic discourses-engage in serious discussion
- Our purpose: to analyze postings to view how students initiate and sustain discussion using ludic and serio-ludic discourses



Homo Ludens as an analytic lens

- Play as cultural phenomenon
- "Play is significant; always present in culture
Involves fun; characteristic includes its freedom; lies outside of real life; secluded and limited in time; represents something; reality is accessed by playing with it"

(Huizinga, 1970)



Review of literature

- Reference to ludic and play have appeared in CMC studies (Daisley 1995, Hawisher 1992)
- Daisley: play and pleasure aspects were productive for practice of literacy
- Rouzie (2001) ludic , play integrated aspect of human nature and dialogic practices
- Holcomb (1997) joking powerful way of creating online sense of community
- Rouzie (2001) provoke and mediate conflict, negotiate power relations



International context

- Two important studies:
 - Basharina (2007) Project between three countries students preferred chatting off discussion board because formal essayistic writing not much fun
 - Warner(2004) noted three types of play:
 - Language
 - Identity
 - Frame
- Deserved attention of applied linguists
- Ludic discourses as a rhetorical and social act that is central to how we talk and write to one another



Researching Student Writing

- Introductions and Ludic discourse
 - play as a means of establishing connections
 - Play with identity
 - Play with language
 - Play with frame
- Cross-cultural negotiation through humor
 - What works



Fascinating isn't it?

Thank you for waiting,my name is XXXX from the friendly city of Port Elizabeth in South Africa.I took so long to write 'cause **my pet lion 'Killa'wouldn't** get inside the cage.I'm currently studing a foundation program in media, communications and culture at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University named after a friend of mine.I'm a huge fan of international football especially the english and spanish leagues.I've got ambitions of starting a media empire,make loads of cash and **cheat with an international footballer's wife.I** socialise a lot and listen to a lot of house music,R&B and Biggie Smallz,'the junior mafia'.I hope to here a response from yal even if **it's from Irag,peace out my gifted ones.**

By XXXX at 2006-02-23 07:08 | Introductions | XXXX blog |



i have a lion too

my lions name is tuna. my lion was built in a lab, and made to look like a goldfish. i keep him in a bowl of water in my basement. i feed him stupid people. to kill two brids with one stone my lion gets fed and less stupid people.

By XXXX at Mon, 2006-02-27 15:55



Help offered!

Dude u're confused but don't lose hope because to me u're special and most important 'gifted'.

By XXXX at Thu, 2006-03-09 06:59 | you can't post comments

my lion seller lied to me 8y(<(its a sad face)

The other day I was looking at my lion swimming in its bowl and I realized that it is not a lion. The scientist I bought it from must have lied to me. This sucks, I don't have a lion just a gold fish that eats stupid people.wait.....i have a gold fish that eats stupid people....that is awesome! Do you know any stupid people I can feed to my super-awesome-fantastic-rock & rollin-gold fish? How did you get a lion...ebay?I have another question...the cops by us use dogs to sniff out drugs, and attack crimanals running from the law. Do the cops in South Africa use lions as guard dogs? If not what do they use?

By mgeiza at Mon, 2006-03-13 15:58



mgiza mgiza mgiza!

XXXX, judging from your ambitions, the interest you have on the police has no focal point except if you still blunt then in that case, dogs are used. I'm thinking of proposing a tv program to the SABC since you familiar with the field perhaps you can tell me how. I apologise for the scientist incident, weed does have consequences. I'll look out for the book you're reading. I'm still not sure when you attend lectures and where you're originally from.
By XXXXXX at Thu, 2006-03-16 07:10 |



Lenses and filters

- Huizinga (1971) refers to the above aspect of play as contest or jousting.
- Goes beyond responding and takes on a dimension of battle
- Use sophisticated language and structuring to achieve this sequence and to sustain it



Researching Student Writing

- From Connection to Deeper Discussions
- Serio-ludic discourses: used to critique and negotiate power..
 - Negotiation of "taboo" or difficult topics
 - gay marriage
 - 9/11 conspiracy theories
 - Religion
 - Zuma rape trial
 - Iraq War
 - HIV/Aids



Deeper discussions (Opening Gambit)

• America to take over the world

America has a hidden agenda which is a conspiracy to establish a american empire and rule the world...Furthermore **its** been said that the september 11 has been used to manipulate public opinion, using peoples grief, anger and fear to t guarantee american support to the New world order, and to bound a new era of american internationalism. **Respond and tell wether this would be good for the world or its just one of the worlds conspiracy theories.**
(xxxxx2006)



Deeper discussion (Counterattack)

- "American Conspiracies♦?
On the Global Issues section of the Drupal web site I came upon this post by a South African named xxxxxx, titled America to Take Over the World. This is what this person wrote on 03-29-2006.
- I personally love conspiracy theories because half the time they make absolutely no sense. The one I love the most is one of the comments to America to Take Over the World, posted that it says that the government blew up the World Trade Center, because it is impossible for a Boeing 737 to create the damage to brough the towers down. Believe me when I say this it is very, very possible for a plane to create the damage that brought them down; all you have to do is study the construction of the buildings and the circumstances of the day.



Lenses and filters 2

- Initiation of sensitive topic 9/11
- Makes indirect proposition "it has been.."
- Respondent engages in equally unemotional way. Huizinga (1971) refers to this as playing and knowing; competition for superiority is always play. This includes contests of knowing



What it all means

- Writing classes have much to gain by using CMC's purposefully
- Recognize shift in pedagogy regarding use of technology, and role of play as a social cultural activity
- Huizinga's (1971) *homo ludens* provides a useful lens through which to view play, writing activity and development



So what has this to do with writing?

- Read and write quantitatively more
- Audience awareness: SSW (2008) awareness of audience statistically significant predictor of writing development
- Engage in academic writing strategies through dialogic community building practices
 - Connecting to audience
 - Engaging with and responding to,
 - Building on the ideas posited by others



But students sum it up best..

- “..my lecturer will kill me if she sees the slang I used in this posting..” (XXX:2006)
- ..”So your professor wants you to conduct these blogs in a formal manner..Why is that, doesn’t he/she know that when people are formal they hide their true selves..” (XXXXX: 2006)

