

CHAPTER 13.

DOES THE INTERNET CONNECT WRITING IN AND OUT OF EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS? VIEWS OF NORWEGIAN STUDENTS ON THE THRESHOLD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Håvard Skaar

Oslo and Akershus University College

What Internet-based writing practice means for the development of writing in young people and how this writing practice should be taken into account by educational institutions is the subject of international debate. In writing-related research there is general agreement that digital technology has led to more writing among young people, but there is less consensus about what significance this has for the development of their writing ability (MacArthur, 2006). A preliminary conclusion in *The Stanford Study of Writing*, a broad-based American study of several years' standing, claims that students have higher expectations of their own writing practices than they used to: "good writing changes something. It doesn't just sit on the page. It gets up, walks off the page and changes something" (Haven, 2009, p. 1; see also Rogers, 2008). In concurrence, some researchers underline that the writing young people do on the Internet on their own initiative is more engaged and directly aimed at a readership they care about than the writing they are required to produce in their role as school and college students. These researchers argue that this self-initiated online writing should be made as relevant as possible to their classroom writing and learning (situation) (Grabill et al., 2005; Hull & Schultz, 2002; Street, 2005; Yancey, 2006, 2009a).

Sceptics on the other hand assert that the forms of writing now taking shape on the Internet can actually destroy young people's critical awareness of their writing practices (Bauerlein, 2008). This scepticism is commonly

voiced in wider criticism of the Internet's cognitive, social or cultural significance (see for example Carr, 2010). A more optimistic view of young people's use of the Internet characterizes these reactions as "moral panic" (Thurlow, 2006). For these proponents, the problem is not that young people's writing is changed through the use of digital media but that educational institutions find difficulty relating to these changes (see for example Tan & Richardson, 2006; Yancey, 2009b).

In the report *Writing, Technology and Teens* it is pointed out that young Americans do not perceive that the way in which they use e-mail or messaging has any relevance for the development of their written language skills in the school setting. There is, it is claimed, a "disconnection" between young people's overrating of writing skills and their simultaneous underrating of their own writing practices on the Internet. "Those who can figure out how to tap into their distinctive, situational communication behaviors and connect them to the process of learning how to write will have taught them an invaluable lesson that will improve their lives" (Lenhart et al., 2008, p. 64). This chapter explores the premises that would enable the creation of such a connection.

Norwegian students here explain how they perceive the relationship between their writing on the Internet in and outside the school setting. The question of the Internet's importance for this connection is just as pertinent in Norway as in the US, Asia and Europe. In Norway, personal computer coverage among young people is close to 100% and netbased communication is now an integral part of the social life of almost all young Norwegians (Torgersen, 2007). In Norwegian schools there has concurrently been a move to integrate both writing (Hertzberg, 2011) and digital technology into all subjects in the curriculum. In some upper secondary schools (high schools) over the last three years all pupils have been issued laptop computers, and in higher education it is a prime aim to link students' writing to digital technology, for example by means of online learning management platforms (Krumsvik, 2008; Skaar, 2005; Wilhelmsen et al., 2009).

The present study is based on individual interviews with 19 students in the same class, a preparatory class for pre-engineering students, in a Norwegian university college. In the interviews, the students described the purposes for which they used writing and what part the Internet played in establishing the conditions for their own writing practices. The analysis shows how these particular students experience the relationship between their Internet-based writing in and outside the educational setting (Bazerman & Prior, 2004; Hull & Schultz, 2002; Moss, 2001). Comparisons of their descriptions and evaluations of their writing practices on the Internet reveal the conditions necessary for them to experience their leisuretime writing as relevant to the school setting.

THEORY

The collection and analysis of data are based on three assumptions as to the critical factors in relation to the students' Internet writing.

First, their writing habits can be understood as a social practice (Barton, 2007; Dysthe & Hertzberg, 2007; Hoel, 1999; Kostouli, 2009; Street, 2003). This means that writing is understood and interpreted in the light of the social context in which it takes place. The meaning and function of the writing for the writer always arises from a social basis and this social basis is taken into account in the analysis of how the students choose to express themselves through writing.

Second, digital technology is understood as a new material basis for writing, giving new conditions for the development of writing skills. On the Internet, writing is no longer anchored to the page but becomes part of a multimodal and hypertextual dynamic. The act of writing, the effort it takes to transcribe and compose written text, as well as the act of reading it, is altered (Haas, 2009; Skaar, 2009). At the same time the Internet makes writing socially relevant to life realms where it has normally been absent or of minor importance, and thus contributes to a profound transformation of the social act of writing. Yancey puts it like this:

Historically, like today, we compose on all the available materials. Whether those materials are rocks or computer screens, composing is a material as well as a social practice; composing is situated within and informed by specific kinds of materials as well as by its location in community (2009a, p. 8).

The material and social basis of writing is bound up in what Bruce calls a "socio-technical practice" (1997), emphasizing that technology and literacy (textual ability) are reciprocal conditions. Digital technology has changed the nature of text and hence also what text means for both writer and reader.

Third, the study is based on an assumption that there is a connection between writing in and outside the educational setting, meaning not only that pupils and students take out with them the writing they learn in this setting but also that they bring their external writing practices into the school.

METHOD

Below, a brief description of these students' relationship to writing is followed by the main findings from their descriptions and assessments of their own practices. The interviews were conducted between February and May 2009

in a class where I was a teacher. In this teacher research (see e.g. Saleh & Khine, 2011) the interviews became material for a “systematic, intentional inquiry” (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1989) relevant to my own practice. Each interview lasted 35-75 minutes. In the interviews the students talked about their experience of written texts and writing and also gave a more concrete description and assessment of their own writing practices in and outside the school setting (Kvale, 1996; about the use of interviews in teacher research see also Postholm, 2007, p. 239)

At the time of carrying out my research I had 10 years’ experience of teaching this category of student and therefore already had good insight into their writing practices and their out-of-school interests. Although this meant I was not looking at the students and their writing practices from the standpoint of an outsider, I was strongly influenced by the prejudices I had developed over my many years of teaching. The practising teacher’s perspective also predisposed me in my role of researcher. My knowledge of the students helped to determine my choice of interview questions and my teaching history was also highly instrumental in forming my critical approach to their writing in and outside the school setting (Kvale, 2005).

My double role as teacher and researcher also entailed the risk that the students might choose to give me the answers that showed them in the best light as scholars. One student answered, for example, when I asked if his laptop was a help in his classroom writing: “I think it helps me ... to take down notes from the lessons ... I write notes from your lessons ... and I don’t think there are many others who do that... .” This form of self-depiction was something I experienced to a greater or lesser degree in all the interviews. In other words, it is reasonable to suppose that the students may have presented their writing practices outside the classroom as being more in line with their school writing than they actually were. By far the majority, on the other hand, saw their writing practices outside the confines of their studies as having only minimal relevance for their school-related writing. Even if we allow for an “air-brushed” presentation of their writing practices to me as their Norwegian teacher, this tendency is very clear.

The analytical software Nvivo 8 was used to define categories that differentiated between the writing practices of individual students and the conditions for this (Bazeley, 2007). The main thrust of the analysis was how the students assessed the relationship between their net-based writing in and outside school. The interviews with the students form the primary research data. The texts they had written in both settings were also included in the raw material but were only used to verify their reported writing practices. The students have given written consent to the research results being published in anonymized form.

FINDINGS

STUDENTS' BACKGROUND AND WRITING CAPABILITIES

The students interviewed were with one exception men between the ages of 21 and 29, with a middle-class or lower middle-class background. They described their writing practices both at the time of the interviews and at earlier periods of their life.

Of the students interviewed, five had a general academic education and the other 14 a vocational background. On average, they had two to three years' occupational experience. All of them were taking the preparatory course as a step towards qualifying as engineers. Only two said they had considered courses that would have involved greater emphasis on writing. The sample was therefore taken from a student group who, with a vocational background, tended to have less interest in writing relative to other categories of student.

Three of the interviewees had particular difficulties with writing Norwegian, as a result of dyslexia and/or insufficient mastery of the language. Of the remainder, 11 assessed their writing skills as average and five as above average. However, about half of those who assessed their skills as average were graded as below average on the assignments sent in over the school year.

WRITING PRACTICES *IN* THE EDUCATIONAL SETTING

All the students owned a personal computer and/or laptop and all of them had Internet access both at home and at school. Of the 17 who owned a laptop only four took it with them to school, the others opting to use the personal computers in the school computer room. Twelve of them gave as their reason that using a laptop led to distraction and loss of work concentration.

The students were required to hand in 10 written assignments over the school year before being allowed to take the final examination. When writing these papers all the students, with one exception, elected to use digital tools. In the examination, conversely, longhand was compulsory. The homework assignments took the form of essay-writing in Norwegian, either discursive topics or text analysis. Throughout the year, 2/3 of the students handed in a little less than, and never more than, the minimum length required (typically three to four pages), while four students wrote more than the minimum. The directions for grading examination papers stipulate three main areas for assessment: use of language, structure and content. When a voluntary extra assignment was set at the end of the year, only one student handed in a paper.

WRITING PRACTICES *OUTSIDE* THE EDUCATIONAL SETTING

In their leisure hours, the time the students spent on the Internet varied from 30 minutes to more than seven hours a day. Between one and three hours was typical, with writing taking up 10 to 30 minutes. This writing took place on e-mail, blogs, MSN, Facebook and Twitter. Other arenas for writing were discussion fora and comments columns in online newspapers and in the context of computer games. Writing was primarily a means of pursuing contact and social interaction with friends and acquaintances. One of the students described having set up a blog for this purpose during trips abroad. The following interests were also cultivated in various discussion fora: cycling, computer games, paintball, computer technology, political debate, film and web design.

In addition to digital writing there is longhand writing. Three of the students wrote nothing at all in longhand outside the school context but most said they wrote checklists and Christmas cards. Only one student still wrote letters by hand, while three said they had kept a diary in connection with training, treatment and travel. One student had at some time or other also made an attempt to write fiction.

The texts the students produced on the Internet in their leisure time were consistently brief, most commonly taking the form of comments on MSN or Facebook or in connection with online computer games. These varied from one word to two to three lines, with slightly longer texts occurring in e-mails, discussion fora and on blogs (see Table 1).

ASSESSMENTS OF RELEVANCE

The students' assessment of the relevance out of school writing had for how they wrote in the school context can be categorized in relation to the requirements concerning use of language, structure and content which formed the grading criteria.

Eleven students said that in their view their leisuretime writing was irrelevant or only minimally relevant to use of language, six students said the writing was relevant in terms of use of language, and structure, while two students thought their writing was relevant in relation to all three areas (of use of language, structure and content)(see Appendix 1).

The students justified their online writing with reference to tools, texts and networks/audiences. Tools simplified the coding of words, sentence construc-

Table 1. Student writing

Internet Based Writing		Longhand Writing	
Email	17/19	Notes for memoration	12/19
Facebook	14/19	Postcards	8/19
MSN	11/19	Diary (training, travel or treatment)	3/19
Forum	9/19	Fictional writing	1/19
Computer games	3/19	Letters	1/19
Blog	2/19		

tion and textual disposition on the Internet. Texts linked the use of writing closer to the fostering of their own interests, while networks and audiences made writing functional and meaningful (see Appendix 2).

On the other hand, the same access to tools, texts and networks/audiences was given as a reason for not writing on the Internet. Two of the students stated a preference for longhand over the keyboard, while many more experienced access to texts and networks/audiences as more distracting than stimulating in relation to a writing task (see Appendix 3).

PREREQUISITES FOR RELEVANCE

None of the students in the study were excluded from using the Internet and many of them spent comparatively much time there too. Most were well aware of the continuous development of some websites and communication platforms. Nevertheless, only a few of them used these websites to write in a way relevant to their writing practices in school. The determining factor was not how much they knew about the new forms of digital communication but how they approached the activities of writing, reading and knowledge sharing, whether on the Internet or not.

The students' relationship to writing can be characterized as instrumental or processual. An instrumental relationship meant that writing was chosen because it was the cheapest, simplest, quickest or most effective means of contact in the communicative situation. If it was possible to communicate in a simpler way, writing was not chosen. In contrast, a processual relationship to writing meant that the act of writing was attributed with cognitive and/or social importance beyond that of a purely practical communicative function.

Instrumental relationship to writing	Processual relationship to writing
<p>... I feel I'm living in a world where I really don't have time ... or I think I can save so much time at that point ... by expressing myself verbally rather than in writing...</p>	<p>It was something necessary as part of a course of treatment I was undergoing ... then I had a very ... in a way something of a revelation ... you might say ... well ... I can go around with thoughts in my head ... but I don't have any clear idea of what's going on until I write it down and get it on to a sheet of paper I can touch so it becomes something physical ... and not just thoughts ...</p>

The difficulty for most of these students was to force themselves to accept the time delay writing entailed in relation to speech, and to bear with the frustration and resistance involved in a writing process of the kind they had to tackle when producing written answers to course assignments:

... I don't like it ... I have a struggle getting started... (then) I think well f ... it I HAVE to get it over with ... and so I sit down at the PC ... just staring at the assignment ... and then, well, I just seem to make a start . . and the first few lines go f ... ing slowly . . and then it gets to be more like a ... what shall I call it? A domino effect, that's it. I just begin and then I see, like, that: okay, I can actually do this, how can I put it, build more on it then, change the wording a bit, and maybe flesh it out a bit . . and then suddenly there seems to be . . a lot...

Only a few of the students in this study chose to write to networks/audiences on the Internet in their leisure time in a way that created this "domino effect." Most of them shied away from it before they got that far.

In terms of their relationship to text, we can distinguish between students who associated their online writing with text-based interests and those who applied it to non-text-based interests. Text-based interests, such as literature, film, political debate or web design, provided more of a platform for writing in line with school-related writing than interests which were not text-based, for example cycling, computer games, paintball or computer technology. An interest in gambling was played out on the website Swiss Casino, while an interest in games was played out through participating in World of Warcraft. These latter interests can in theory also be purely text-based: someone may be interested for example in cycling journalism even if he is a non-cyclist, but for these students the basis for writing was the non-textual activity. Only a minority pursued text-based interests through their Internet writing.

None of the students were active Internet bloggers. A rejection of blogging as “self-digging” was unanimous among these (with one exception) male students, the general opinion being that you needed to have something specific to talk about before joining the ranks of bloggers:

(Bloggers) ... must be politicians of a sort, actually hold views about different issues ... who are . . . where you can get something meaningful out of it.

One student had kept a blog in connection with a journey, while another had tried to blog about societal issues and politics. Both had given up:

... I've had (blogs), yes, this summer . . . I was at home (sick) for a year, and one of the ways of getting out my frustrations about being (stuck) at home was to write. But it never worked out quite as I'd thought it would, so I gave up and deleted the lot.

Some of the students, however, shared their interests with others in various fora. These students realized that this kind of knowledge-based relationship to networks or audiences fostered school-relevant writing to a greater extent than writing directly about oneself or general social issues. Two students said that they had at various times written texts in online fora that were highly akin to school writing. Both had a relatively good level of writing in the educational setting and they experienced their writing practices in the discussion fora as academically relevant. On the other hand, none of the students who described

themselves as writing-shy or had serious writing difficulties in connection with their schoolwork found that they could compensate for, or overcome, these problems through writing on the Internet in their leisure time.

DISCUSSION

The students found that access to tools, texts and networks/audiences on the Internet made it easier to write, to find something to write about and to find someone to write to. This applied to contexts in and outside school. I have described above how the students made use of these opportunities and to what extent they found that the Internet thereby created a connection between their writing in the different settings. Three factors emerged as critical for the creation of such a connection, namely the students' relationship to writing, their relationship to text and their relationship to networks or audiences.

By far the majority of the students had an instrumental relationship to writing. An instrumental writing practice was primarily associated with social interaction and most typically limited to the coding of words and short sentences in contexts where the norms of morphology and syntax were not adhered to. For instrumental users, chatting on MSN, Facebook walls and the comments spaces on webpages gave written expression to verbal discourse but without the typical features of the written genre. Since this instrumental approach meant that they tended to avoid writing if there were less demanding means of communication at their disposal, these students did not find that their leisuretime use of the Internet encouraged a more processual relationship to writing and hence saw it as less academically relevant.

The Internet enabled students to cultivate their interests through writing and the present study provides a basis for differentiating between text-based and non-text-based interests. Text-based interests, much more than non-text-based, were seen to have generated the production of written texts the students saw as relevant to their course-related writing. School assignments are based on textual norms for how discussion and analysis should be practised within the dominant writing culture, and students are examined in their willingness and ability to comply with these norms. An interest in texts obeying the same norms therefore gives the best foundation for writing in accordance with the norms of academic writing, both in and outside the educational setting. A minority of the students in this study had developed an interest in these kinds of text, and had done so independently of their use of the Internet.

Writing outside the school context was seen as educationally relevant by those students who were active in knowledge exchange in different fora or who

tried to blog about knowledge-based matters. The problem was that interest in writing about such issues was generally minimal in the group as a whole. Most of the students limited their Internet-based writing outside the school context to personal communication with friends on e-mail, MSN, or Facebook. Knowledge-based writing occurred, but in a textual scope most of the students did not see as relevant to their studies.

The students saw that the Internet lowered the threshold for the practice of writing both in and outside the school context. At the same time, they all recognized that the Internet could also divert their attention, interest and concentration away from writing. In the school context a majority of the interviewees thought it was those interests least calling for writing competence that the Internet served to stimulate. This made it more difficult for them to concentrate on study-related writing, and many of the students therefore chose not to bring their laptops to school. Outside the school context, all the interviewees thought that the Internet had given them a range of new opportunities to write but also to communicate in ways which reduced writing to a kind of verbal hybrid, or rendered it superfluous. The Internet made it easier to write but also easier to reject writing as an option.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The Internet has created a new textual landscape and given young people new writing possibilities. At the same time, as noted, the majority of students in this study saw their writing on the Internet outside school as little relevant to their studies, at least to the writing required of them on their course. For, even though young people write more than ever on the Internet in their leisure time, the key to educationally-relevant writing is still to be found in the school and other educational institutions. As mentioned in the introduction, it may be claimed that the key question is not how writing outside school can be brought into line with writing in the school context, but how writing requirements in the school context can be brought more into line with students' actual writing practice outside school (See e.g., Yancey, 2008b). The Internet affords new didactic possibilities for also making academic writing relevant outside school, so that students will find that what they write is part of a body of genuine "live" writing, not just an academic exercise. In educational institutions, teachers should naturally seize the opportunities afforded by the Internet to help students realize this. But even if they succeed in doing so, academic studies will inevitably continue to incorporate writing practices most students will not become familiar with in their lives outside the school context and which are not

perceived as relevant there either. Educational institutions will also continue to rank student performance in relation to how they satisfy academic requirements, including those tasks in written form. Academic requirements can be made more stringent or less demanding but the challenge of teaching writing will remain how to enable students to engage in academic writing through accepting the need for deeper absorption, concentration and patience this writing requires. In the research study, this appeared to be the factor that caused students the biggest problem.

The study indicates that a connection can be made between writing in and outside school if students using the Internet succeed in moving from instrumental to processual writing, from non-text-based to text-based interests and from the purely social to a knowledge-based relationship to networks/audiences. On the other hand, most of these students had instrumental writing practices linked neither to text-based interests nor to a knowledge-based relationship towards networks/audiences. The minority who perceived that writing was of major or critical relevance all demonstrated good or excellent writing skills in their academic work. Conversely, students with weak or very weak writing skills in the school context found that their writing on the Internet outside school had very limited relevance. This points to the danger that, taken in isolation, tapping into students' out of school writing on the Internet as a strategy for teaching writing will favourize students who already have well-developed writing skills, and hence reinforce the existing imbalance.

According to Baron, the Internet can be held responsible for "flooding the scriptorium" (2008, p. 193). The problem is that when we write so much more we simultaneously become less particular about how we write. At the same time, the Internet has led to a "context collapse" which makes it more difficult to distinguish between the contexts in which writing takes place (Wesch, 2009). An approach to the teaching of writing that pays greater attention to what divides and unites students' writing strategies in different contexts will give all students greater opportunity to develop a critical approach to their own writing. In the school context, the students in this research study used writing to organize a textual totality in line with basic principles not immediately accessible to them. Outside the educational institution, on the other hand, the students described how, in a variety of contexts, they used writing in the simplest ways to communicate with others when and wherever they wanted. In many cases, this writing required no processing other than rudimentary coding, and the writer's relationship to the recipient could be informal, non-committed and undetermined. None of the students believed that this writing practice might apply to the other, but there was nevertheless a connection between their writing ability and their understanding of the similarities and differences between the writing

practices they engaged in. Since the Internet has led to a more differentiated use of writing, what is needed now is also a more differentiated awareness of how writing actually functions in different contexts. This understanding is acquired through practical experience but to benefit from experience students must have a reflective relationship to their own practice. This has implications for the teaching of writing. By developing an awareness of the assumptions for their own writing practices in different contexts, it becomes easier for students both to distinguish between their different writing practices and to tie them more closely together. In the school context, this will help them to write better, while outside school it will help them to exploit the opportunities open to them through the Internet of entering into contexts from which they were previously excluded.

As far as possible, students should learn through experience that school-based writing enhances their opportunities for personal development and social interaction. Practical writing assignments must bring them irrefutable proof that writing is truly capable of helping them to overcome difficulties and achieve their goals. Writing teachers who succeed in creating a link between writing in school and the possibilities that mastery of writing opens to students outside school will have won a great victory. The Internet gives teachers novel opportunities to design relevant tasks.

If they succeed, the Internet may play a part in ensuring that more students choose to engage in the painstaking work involved in developing varied and well-functioning writing practices.

REFERENCES

- Baron, N. S. (2008). *Always on: Language in an online and mobile world*. New York: Oxford University.
- Barton, D. (2007). *Literacy: An introduction to the ecology of written language* (2 ed.). Oxford UK: Blackwell.
- Bauerlein, M. (2008). *The dumbest generation: How the digital age stupefies young Americans and jeopardizes our future*. New York: Penguin.
- Bazeley, P. (2007). *Qualitative data analysis with NVivo*. London: Sage.
- Bazerman, C., & Prior, P. (2004). *What writing does and how it does it: An introduction to analyzing texts and textual practices*. Mahway, NJ & London: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Bruce, B. (1997). Literacy technologies: What stance should we take? *Journal of Literacy Research*, 29(2), 289-309.
- Carr, N. G. (2010). *The shallows: What the Internet is doing to our brains*. New York: Norton.

- Dysthe, O., & Hertzberg, F. (2007). Kunnskap om skriving i utdanning og yrkesliv: Vor står vi i dag? In S. Matre & T. L. Hoel (Eds.), *Skrive for nåtid og framtid bind I* (pp. 10-28). Trondheim, Norway: Tapir Forlag.
- Grabill, J. T., DeVoss, D. N., Cushman, E., Bill, H.-D., & Porter, J. (2005). Why teach digital writing? *Kairos*, 10(1). Retrieved from <http://english.ttu.edu/kairos/10.1/binder2.html?coverweb/wide/index.html>
- Haas, C. (2009). *Writing technology: Studies on the materiality of literacy*. New York: Routledge.
- Haven, C. (2009). *The new literacy: Stanford study finds richness and complexity in students' writing*. Stanford University News. Retrieved from <http://news.stanford.edu/news/2009/october12/lunsford-writing-research-101209.html>
- Hertzberg, F. (2011). Skriving i fagene: Viktig, riktig og nødvendig. In K. H. Flyum & F. Hertzberg (Eds.), *Skriv i alle fag!: Argumentasjon og kildebruk i videregående skole* (pp. 9-20). Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Hoel, T. L. (1999). Læring som kulturell og sosial praksis: Med eksempel frå elevsamarbeid i skriving. *Norsk pedagogisk tidsskrift*, 83(6), 343-354.
- Hull, G. A., & Schultz, K. (Eds.). (2002). *School's out: Bridging out-of-school literacies with classroom practices*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Kostouli, T. (2009). A sociocultural framework: Writing as social practice. In R. Beard, D. Myhill, J. Riley, & M. Nystrand (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of writing development* (pp. 98-116). London: Sage.
- Krumsvik, R. (2008). Educational technology, epistemology and discourses in curricula in Norway. *US-China Education Review*, 5(5), 1-16.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kvale, S. (2005). On interpretation in the qualitative research interview. *NordiskPedagogik*, 25(1), 3-15.
- Lenhart, A., Arafeh, S., Smith, A., & Macgill, A. R. (2008). *Writing, technology and teens*. Pew Internet & American Life Project. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2008/Writing-Technology-and-Teens/10-What-Teens-Tell-Us-Encourages-Them-to-Write.aspx?view=all>
- Lytle, S. L., & Cochran-Smith, M. (1989) Teacher research: Toward clarifying the concept, *National Writing Project Quarterly*, 11(2), 1-3, 22-27. Retrieved from http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/download/nwp_file/11019/Teacher_Research.pdf?x-r=pcfile_d
- MacArthur, C. A. (2006). The effects of new technologies on writing and writing processes. In C. A. MacArthur, S. Graham, & J. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Handbook of writing research* (pp. 248-262). New York: Guilford.
- Moss, G. (2001). On literacy and the social organisation of knowledge inside and outside school. *Language and Education*, 15(2&3), 146-161.

- Postholm, M. B. (2007). Læreren som forsker eller lærer. *Norsk pedagogisk tidsskrift*, 91(3), 233-244.
- Rogers, P. (2008). The Development of Writers and Writing Abilities: A Longitudinal Study Across and Beyond the College-Span (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of California, Santa Barbara, CA.
- Saleh, I. M., & Khine, M. S. (2011). *Practitioner Research in Teacher Education: Theory and Best Practices*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Skaar, H. (2005). Classfronter, pedagogikk og endring. In O. Talberg (Ed.), *Strategier for læring. Pedagogisk utviklingsarbeid på ingeniørutdanningen* (pp. 37-49). Oslo: HiO-rapport.
- Skaar, H. (2009). In defence of writing: A social semiotic perspective on digital media, literacy and learning. *Literacy*, 43(1), 36-42.
- Street, B. (2003). What's "new" in new literacy studies? Critical approaches to literacy in theory and practice. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 5(2), 77-91.
- Street, B. (Ed.). (2005). *Literacies across educational contexts: Mediating learning and teaching*. Philadelphia: Caslon.
- Tan, K. E., & Richardson, P. W. (2006). Writing short messages in English: Out-of-school practices of Malaysian high school students. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 45(1), 325-340.
- Thurlow, C. (2006). From statistical panic to moral panic: The metadiscursive construction and popular exaggeration of new media language in the print media. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 11(3), 667-701.
- Torgersen, L. (2007). Kjønnforskjeller i ungdoms bruk av PC, TV-spill og mobiltelefon. *Tidsskrift for ungdomsforskning*, 7(1), 103-112.
- Wesch, M. (2009) YouTube and you: Experiences of self-awareness in the context collapse of the recording webcam. *The Journal of the Media Ecology Association*, 8(2), 19-34.
- Wilhelmsen, J., Ørnes, H., Kristiansen, T., & Breivik, J. (2009). *Digitale utfordringer i høyere utdanning*. Tromsø, Norway: Norgesuniversitetet.
- Yancey, K. B. (2006). Delivering college composition: A vocabulary for discussion. In K. B. Yancey (Ed.), *Delivering college composition: The fifth canon* (pp.1-16). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.
- Yancey, K. B. (2009a). *Writing in the 21st century*. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Yancey, K. B. (2009b). By any other name. *Principal Leadership*, 10(1), 26-29.

APPENDIX

Table 1. Assessments of relevance

Not relevant	... it hasn't got anything to do with it, and when I chat the grammar isn't all that good, I suppose... .
Relevant in relation to use of language	Much the same attention to it being correct but perhaps not to content ... that the language flows well and so on ... I'm not so bothered about that sort of thing ... but they are quite like each other.
Relevant in relation to use of language and structure	... I see it as ... a kind of basic learning ... something you use all the time to ... you do get better ... or maybe not better ... but you keep your basic learning up to scratch, what you once learned.
Relevant in relation to use of language , structure and content	I think I use the same approach to what I write in online fora and school assignments.

Table 2. Why students write on the Internet

Tools	I feel it's easier to keep track of... I feel myself I get better results if I can sit and write on a PC. If I use longhand I think it takes so long ... like two steps forward and one back... .
Texts	1. ... I play paintball ... sports like that ... and there's a forum just for that ... where I write occasionally to try to influence things, for there's a lot of talk about rules and the like ... so I write a few words now and then, but not so often ... just to say what I think... . 2. ... I had a discussion with a journalist from VG (Norwegian newspaper) by e-mail ... not so long ago, and then I wrote about four pages . . on the PC, like, and sent it ... (... ..) about ... the financial crisis.
Networks/ audiences	... You play, you die too, don't you, you get shot ... and while you're waiting for the next round you sit and chat ... the people you talk to in their ears are usually the same people you're on the team with and such like ... maybe friends you have a lot of contact with ... but all the other folks that happen to be online you talk to... write ... but it's very short in a way, like in an ad ... lots of abbreviations... . If you open your inbox and find 10 e-mails you have to answer them all ... and then there's a lot of writing ... (but) if there's nothing there ... and no messages on Facebook ... (then) it's not true that I get itchy fingers to send messages on Facebook just so's to get enough answers ... then it can be ZERO... . I've written quite a lot on my blog, actually ... Yes, I would have written less (if I didn't use the Internet) because I wouldn't have written blogs, for example, last year. No, I guess I wouldn't have done that. I wouldn't have sat down and written ... the same ... in a book. ...

Table 3. Why students don't write on the Internet

Tools	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I can write, sure, (but) if I could choose I'd rather . . . what can I say ... be told what to write ... (rather) than writing it myself ... I don't feel I express myself better in writing than in speaking... . 2. S. Even if I have my PC beside me, I may still choose to write in longhand. Int. Really, how come? S. I don't really know (laughter) depends on my mood, maybe... .
Texts	<p>It's easy to lose concentration when you're using a PC. Because you have so many more choices, don't you? I look at the people round about me with their PCs ... lots of games and websites flying up and down ... and I really feel that when you're at school you should be doing school work and not wasting time with other things.</p>
Networks/ audiences	<p>A problem when you're on the PC is that you have so many other things to, like, distract you, yes ,you could be sitting there with the browser open while you're writing and suddenly there's someone talking to you on MSN, or... something or other, isn't that so ... so there are a lot of like ... distractions ... on the PC.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ... I found out that when I spent my evenings chatting on MSN with my schoolmates about this and that ... when I came to school the next day and had half-an-hour to kill ... everything had been said ... there didn't really seem to be much more to talk about ... so I guess it was in my last year at high school that I cut out all those kinds of social media... . 2. ... the worst thing I know ... absolutely the worst I know is those Facebook blogs where people just sit and natter on about their own lives ... and I'm sure it's interesting for friends ... and family and so on, but it's of no interest to me.