

# The Impact of Emerging Literacies on Instant Messaging and Supplemental Writing Instruction

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# Workshop Goals

- Position IM within the framework of (pedagogical) technologies
- Discuss what roles IM can play in a Writing Center
- Gain an understanding of IM literacies and how they factor into IM writing tutorials
- Position IM as an option for web-based interaction with students who need writing instruction

# Outline of Mini-workshop

- Introduction and set up
- Introductory remarks
- Workshop exercise (role playing)
- Discussion/Examples
- Closing Remarks
- Question and Answer (group discussion)

# For this workshop, you will need to...

- Create a Gmail account (if you don't have one):
  - go to <http://gmail.com> and click on create an account if you do not have one
  - fill out the required information and click "create my account" when you are completed
- Pair up and decide who will be the student and who will be the tutor
- Add your name and email address to the list of participants
- Utilize the Chat feature of Gmail to communicate with your partner and email the transcript of your chat to me when you are finished (if you wish to share an example)

# The Impact of Emerging Literacies on Instant Messaging and Supplemental Writing Instruction

*Introduction and set up*

## **Introductory remarks**

*Workshop exercise (role playing)*

*Discussion/Examples*

*Closing Remarks*

*Question and Answer (group discussion)*

# Do Students Use IM?

<b>Daily Social Communication Choices</b> <i>% of teens who engage in each activity every day</i>	
<i>All teens (n=700)</i>	
Spend time in person outside of school	39%
Send text messages	36
Talk on a cell phone	35
Talk on a landline or home phone	35
Send instant messages	29
Send messages through a social networking site	23
Send email	16

*Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Teen/Parent Survey on Writing, September-November 2007. Margin of error is  $\pm 5\%$ .*

# IM is not the same as SNS's

## Definition of a SNS:

Users should be able to “construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (boyd and Ellison, 2007, p. 1)

SNS's (e.g. Facebook) have an IM feature

Social Networks and Daily Communication Choices % of social networking teens who use the following features of SNS sites	
	Social networking teens (n=434)
Add comments to a friend's picture	83%
Post messages to a friend's page or wall	77
Send private messages within the SNS system	71
Post comments to a friend's blog	66
Send a group message to all your friends	54
Send IM or text messages to friends through the SNS system	54

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Teen/Parent Survey on Writing, September-November 2007. Margin of error is  $\pm 5\%$ .

Lenhart, Arafeh, Smith, & Macgill (2008)

# University Students Use IM

Quan-Haase (2007) found that 67% of students surveyed in the study utilized IM daily, with another 29 percent using IM weekly (n=268)

## Reasons:

- IM is a free alternative to mobile phone usage (helping to maintain distant ties to secondary school friends)
- Students spend a great deal of time at their computers working
- IM helps students maintain existing social networks at school
- Performs a social networking function similar to a SNS

(Quan-Haase, 2007; Boyd and Ellison, 2007)



# IM and new literacies

“When technology becomes “normal” [...], it is no longer complicated, nor is it notable to its users. It is a fact of life, a way of being in the world, a producer of social subjects that find it unremarkable—so unremarkable that it seems ‘everybody does it’” (Lewis and Fabos, 2005, p. 470).

Literacy:

“the range of practices involved in the alphabetic coding of socially and culturally relevant signs and symbols” (p. 474)

Digital literacies are socially mediated and multimedial

(Lewis and Fabos, 2005)

New literacies have **enormous** potential

New literacies “offer the possibility of empowerment (as opposed to disenfranchisement)” (p. 360).

- Students who falter in traditional literacies often excel in new literacies

New literacies foster a collaborative approach to learning that traditional literacies may not

# IM in the WC

“the success or failure of technology in education is inescapably tied to the dynamics of the very human system into which it is introduced. Technology succeeds pedagogically when it supports, enhances, or otherwise extends the social fabric of a community; it fails—that is, proves unsustainable—when it violates the expectations, rules, or needs of that same community” (p. 248)

(Smith & Sloan, 2009)

# IM in the WC

	“wary traditionalists”	“optimistic pragmatists”	“visionaries”
Reasons for web interactions	give an online “face” to the WC, satisfy admin, and disseminate materials	“must embrace new technologies if [WC’s] are to remain relevant to student writers and their needs”	Embrace WC's decentralized position in Universities and teach students to collaborate and converse in “literate networks”
Manifestations	Static OWL’s Informational websites	“clear-sighted, judicious visions of and uses for new technologies supported by continuous research to help define best practices”	???
Views on the role of technology	Supplemental to F2F interaction	Increasing future use of technology is warranted  Recognize the potential for resistance from students and the academy	Supplants F2F interaction where appropriate (in multimodal literacies)

(Smith & Sloan, 2009)

# IM is more than just a distance learning option

- IM allows students to “overcome social apprehensions” associated with F2F contact (Tierney, Bond, & Bresler, 2006)
- Stresses collaborative interaction more than asynchronous methods such as email
- IM technology allows a space for unique interactions to take place between tutor and student

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*Introductory remarks*

## **Workshop exercise (role playing)**

*Discussion/Examples*

*Closing Remarks*

*Question and Answer (group discussion)*

Download an altered copy of the proposal for this mini-workshop at:

[http://mypages.iit.edu/~aroback/writing\\_sample.html](http://mypages.iit.edu/~aroback/writing_sample.html)

(or use your own writing sample!)

Hint: you can copy and paste the text into Google Docs!

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*Workshop exercise (role playing)*

## **Discussion/Examples**

*Closing Remarks*

*Question and Answer (group discussion)*

# Common codes in IM literacies

“Participants used linguistic features to manipulate the written tone, voice, word choice, subject matter, and structure of messages in order to sustain interesting conversations and cut off those that were not of interest” (p. 482)

- participants prefer meaningful interaction over one word responses
- “nonlinguistic visual elements”
  - ellipses
  - placeholder phrases
  - codes (\* for misspelling) or acronyms (LOL)
  - emoticons
  - colors and font sizes
- language appropriation of preferred styles or linguistic mannerisms
- rapid response through fragmentation



# Some examples from an IM Tutor

## Fragmentation:

Tutor: I noticed your unique intro and ending. It's good to bring in personal experiences and catch readers' attention.

+

Tutor: However, I'm a bit concerned with your structure. Some of your paragraphs seems to address multiple topics, and it's not always clear where you're taking the reader.

-

Tutor: You might want to make sure that each paragraph addresses one area of difficulty in which you're improved. That section can also include papers in your portfolio that are examples of how you're improved.

-

Tutor: The content is good, but I think you can reorder some sentences and expand on some of those ideas. Right now, the organization seems a bit random.

+

# Some examples from an IM Tutor

Tutor: One of the most common problems I saw was adjectives that are multiple words that need to be hyphenated, such as "office-based." I might not have underlined every single instance of this, but I suggest when you have time, go back and carefully look for any of these words.

# Some examples from an IM Tutor

## Specialized code/appropriation:

Tutor: After you state that they need to do those things better, you could say something about how the potential disasters are larger but the potential benefits are larger also. Discuss that briefly?

Student: sweet

[...]

Student: i feel like i have too many awkward lists in my paper... ideas?

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*Question and Answer (group discussion)*

# Uses of IM in the WC

“The blending of spoken and written textuality resulted in hybrid language forms to represent the casual, insider exchanges of informal speech through written textual features” (Lewis and Fabos, 2005, p. 495).

“appropriation [of IM technology by instructors] would change the objectives and motives of the activity, the roles of the young people engaging in the activity, and the group norms associated with the activity” (Lewis and Fabos, 2005, p. 496).

You can tap into technology, but not into social context

# Ideas to Consider

- Online consultations provide a textual artifact, something students can consider when (re)writing pieces (Eodice, 2005)
- Return on investment is an important consideration (Eodice, 2005)
  - IM technology is free, but time, training, and web infrastructure are not
- Bias towards F2F interaction (Lenhart, Arafeh, Smith, & Macgill, 2008)
  - Students don't consider IM to be "writing"
  - Students interact in F2F settings more often than online
  - Value?

# Central Tension for WC Practitioners

“The blending of spoken and written textuality resulted in hybrid language forms to represent the casual, insider exchanges of informal speech through written textual features” (Lewis & Fabos, 2005. p. 495)

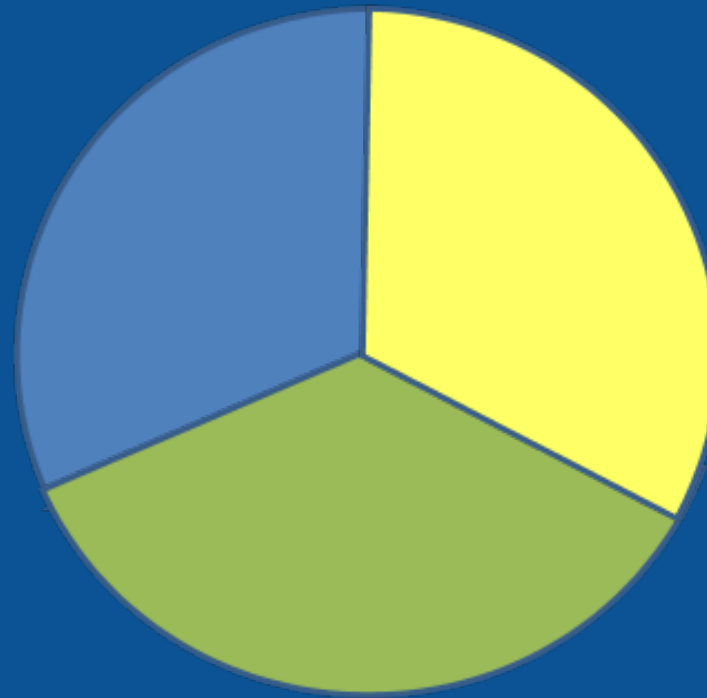
Using online interactions as a way to model academic, written literacies and standard American English side by side with informal, communicative language (Dietz, Roback, & Maloof, 2009)

Distinctions between modeling are critical in avoiding inadvertent interactions with students (Remington, 2006)

# An example

## Modeling versus Communication:

Informal  
(Communicative)



You wont be typing  
the whole time

Formal  
(Modeling)



# Future Research

- Technical Communication
- Linguistics
- WC Case Study

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# References

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# Additional References

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IM modeling chart from a 2009 presentation to the DePaul Writing Center staff

Transcripts are based on actual tutor transcripts and are illustrative of representative trends observed in transcripts.

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## Thank you for participating!

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