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The Implications of E-mail for the College Writing Instructor

This text comprises the contents of my research project for Dr. Steve Krause's English 516 Computers and Writing: Theory and Practice. It is available at my class web site at <<http://home.earthlink.net/~mizmel/research.htm>>. The site is designed so each section can be read alone, so when the contents are read from beginning to end there is some repetition. Underlining indicates inclusion in the Glossary; only the first use of each word in a section is linked to the Glossary.

NOTE: Electronic mail is referred to as e-mail or email. I prefer e-mail.

Intro

Electronic mail, or e-mail as it is more commonly called, is such a part of my everyday life that I don't even think about it. I started thinking about it after I heard a story on National Public Radio where the guest was asserting that e-mail was changing the way we write and that the language of e-mail was a hybrid of written and spoken English. Since I had never considered how we write e-mail I found the idea intriguing. As a college writing instructor, I know that my students are more familiar with e-mail than college composition. That made me wonder about the influence of e-mail on student writing and the resulting implications for college instructors.

In the past three decades "e-mail has grown from a government-initiated, academically-implemented system for sharing research and information into an international alternative to long distance phone calls, interoffice memos, and face-to-face encounters" (Baron "Letters" 134). E-mail, once considered accessible only to the privileged few, is now free through services such as hotmail.com. Even those who don't own computers but want to access e-mail can find it in most public libraries (which

offer free Internet access). Because the use of e-mail is so common, a special electronic style of writing has developed – a style that is more casual than standard English – and this style not only influences the way students write e-mail, but the way they write academic papers. Teachers need to understand this electronic style so they can understand what their students are trying to communicate. Teachers can use this to their advantage by including e-mail in the writing classroom and using it to teach drafting, revision, analysis, and critical thinking.

This adaptation is especially important for college writing instructors whose students are more comfortable and experienced with e-mail than academic writing. Instructors not only need to understand their students, they need to be able to articulate the difference between e-mail style and the standard English used in academic writing. Before teachers can incorporate e-mail in the classroom they need to understand why e-mail is so appealing to their students and how it influences student writing.

Researching E-Mail

When I started this project I assumed a lot of research had been done on e-mail. After all, it's a relatively new type of writing and there are so many areas to research: who writes it, how it's written, the language of e-mail, the rhetoric of e-mail, the pedagogy, etc. One of the problems cited by several of my sources (especially Naomi Baron and Brenda Danet) is that e-mail is private and it is difficult to get permission to study a wide sample of personal, private messages. Because of this, most research on e-mail has been done by examining messages sent to listservs (mailing lists) or Usenet (newsgroups or bulletin boards), that is, messages sent from one person to many people in an electronic discussion group devoted to a particular topic. Brenda Danet, professor emerita of Sociology and Communication at Hebrew University of Jerusalem, explains that this type of research is easier because "The general consensus that group forms like

Usenet postings are public in nature, and that collecting and analyzing such material is far less problematic than is the case for private e-mail letters” (2). Usenet or listserv messages are similar to private e-mail but because they were sent to many people, privacy is not an issue, therefore researchers can use these messages for research without being unethical. E-mail is also similar to instant messaging, synchronous chat between two or more users with programs like AOL Instant Messenger (IM), so instant messages are sometimes cited in e-mail research.

I was also surprised at how little research has been done on the relationship between e-mail and composition (especially college rhetoric). In 1993 Gail E. Hawisher and Charles Moran argued in “Electronic Mail and the Writing Instructor” that this needs to be changed:

Articles on e-mail abound in journals in other fields, particularly Communications, Management, and Distance Education. There has been an occasional piece on e-mail at the margins of our field, but in mainstream journals there is little to be found on the subject. ... It seems clear to us that we cannot, as professionals in English continue to pretend that e-mail is not important (628).

Since e-mail clearly influences the way students write (as we’ll see) not only is more research imperative, but college writing instructors need to be aware of this influence. They also need to understand why e-mail is so appealing to their students and the kind of language they use to write it.

The Appeal of E-mail

E-mail appeals to users for many reasons. It’s inexpensive (or free), easy to use, fast, and it feels intimate to the writer. This feeling of intimacy allows writers to communicate more openly than they would face-to-face even when writing about very personal information. However, because the writer and reader are **not** communicating

face-to-face, e-mail's lack of paralinguistic cues makes it easy to misunderstand the meaning of the message. Paradoxically, this means the writer feels more intimate, but is actually isolated from the reader, reacting only to the computer screen. This psychological distance can lead to flaming (rude, angry replies).

E-mail's feeling of privacy gives members of a mailing list a sense of belonging. In "The Rhetorics and Languages of Electronic Mail" Charles Moran and Gail Hawisher explained that "Even in large listserv discussion groups, participants note the intimacy they feel with other participants ... messages in such conferences ... seem to foster among participants a sense of belonging" (88). This sense of belonging makes people feel like they know other members of the list, even if they have never met face to face.

Ronald Rice, a Professor of Communication at the University of Tulsa, agrees that the apparent privacy of e-mail is part of what makes it so appealing. He observes that the intimate feel of e-mail allows users to discuss things that can't discuss directly in face-to-face conversation. "Studies show that people actually are more likely to disclose things through a mediated form than they are face-to-face because they 're shy or they're concerned about how people are going to interpret them" ("E-mail" par. 66).

Despite this feeling of privacy and belonging it can foster, e-mail differs from face-to-face communication because it lacks paralinguistic cues (facial expression, body language, etc.) to clarify meaning. Moran and Hawisher observed that instead of making users more isolated, the lack of paralinguistic cues makes them more social (91). Because users on a mailing list often know each other only by what they write in their e-mail, one might think this type of communication is egalitarian and eliminates social and sexual stereotypes, but Moran and Hawisher found the opposite to be true. Rather than neutralizing gender, "the electronic medium encourages its intensification ... network users exaggerate societal notions of masculinity and femininity" (ibid.).

Perhaps exaggeration makes users feel they are compensating for the lack of paralinguistic cues. It's a paradox: the less the readers know about us, the more likely we are to write what we really think and to exaggerate. While this may sound unappealing, the increasing use of e-mail indicates that the positive appeals outweigh any negatives.

Naomi Baron also believes that the lack of social cues is what makes e-mail communication more intimate. In Alphabet to Email: How Written English Evolved and Where It's Heading she explains that writers feel free to communicate more directly than they would face-to-face with people they don't know well, whether it is with colleagues of the opposite sex, subordinates to superiors, or students to teachers (233). The same is true of children and parents. Baron cites a striking example of college students, who were not close to their parents in high school and who rarely write or phone home, e-mail their parents to chat. As one father put it "I can ask [my daughter] questions that she would never answer in person, but she'll sit down and e-mail ... The kind of communication we have now is much richer than we ever had face to face" (Baron 234).

Another appealing feature of e-mail is its speed. It's fast, almost synchronous. Bruce Maylath believes this speed reduces the physical and psychological distance between the writer and the reader. In a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication in March 1993, Maylath said that the speed of e-mail is important because lack of distance is a key feature of orality, which means e-mail is almost as instantaneous as speech. E-mail is so much like speech, in fact, that e-mail is often blunt or rude (3). So while the speed of e-mail is part of its appeal, speed also makes flaming easier. Flaming is one of the disadvantages of e-mail.

A Few Disadvantages of E-Mail

Despite its appealing features, e-mail has a few disadvantages. The sense of privacy and isolation makes flaming easier, and contrary to appearances e-mail is neither private or ephemeral. This means users may write things they would never say in a face to face encounter and what users assume to be private and temporary is monitored and archived by the companies that provides e-mail access.

Paradoxically, the conditions which make e-mail feel private also make the writer feel a sense of distance from the reader, and this isolation makes it easier to defy social conventions. That is why so many e-mail messages are blunt or rude. As Naomi Baron explains “Since we construct (and send) e-mail in social isolation, and since we see the medium as ephemeral ... we don’t feel particularly constrained by the social conventions that govern face-to-face exchange or written communication” (235). This leads to flaming: an angry or hostile message, often based on a misinterpretation of a message. Flaming occurs because “in writing to a screen, writers may at times lose the sense of an audience, become self-absorbed, and lose the constraints and inhibitions that the imagined audience provides. What would be censored in a face-to-face confrontation or in a paper-mail letter may not be censored on e-mail” (Hawisher and Moran 631).

Contrary to appearances, e-mail is neither private or nor entirely ephemeral. Although privacy is assumed, even a message sent privately from one individual to another is not really private. The message can be forwarded to others without the author’s knowledge, hence the advice “Do not put anything in writing ... that you would not want to see on the front page of the newspaper or read to a federal grand jury” (Baron “Letters” 156). We also assume that once we click “Send” and the message is gone, it’s not traceable, but e-mail is easily reproducible. A record is kept for every e-

mail sent and each computer system has a system operator (sysop) who can read every message sent on the network (Hawisher and Moran 631). Many e-mail users are aware of these features, but the illusion of privacy is so strong that the positives of e-mail seem to outweigh the negatives.

The Language of E-Mail

E-mail is different than other types of writing. The electronic style which has developed as a result of e-mail and instant messaging is more like spoken than written English, uses acronyms and emoticons, and is much more casual than standard English, although audience has a strong influence on the style and content of e-mail. Business-related e-mail tends to be written much like standard English (Gains 98). Personal e-mail is more likely to be casual, with more emoticons, acronyms, and spelling and grammar errors. Academic e-mail tends to be somewhere in between (Gains 99).

Recent studies reflect the growing perception of e-mail as a hybrid of written and spoken English which is still evolving. In 1996 Milean Callot and Nancy Belmore argued in "Electronic Language: A New Variety of English" that the elements of e-mail style make electronic language more like spoken than written English. After a study of language used on computer bulletin boards they concluded that "electronic language displays some of the linguistic features which have been associated with spoken language" (21). In 1998 in "Letters by Phone or Speech or by Other Means: The Linguistics of E-mail" Naomi Baron summarized e-mail style based on previous studies of e-mail. Compared to traditional writing: e-mail is informal, e-mail helps develop a level conversational playing field, e-mail encourages personal disclosure, and e-mail can become emotional (flaming) (147). In 2000 Naomi Baron argued in Alphabet to Email: How Written English Evolved and Where It's Heading that there are two types

of e-mail style: one informal (unedited), the style we typically think of a electronic or e-mail style, and one that is formal (edited) and more like standard English (242).

The fast pace of e-mail has also influenced the way we write it. The speed of transmission and likely response makes e-mail feel synchronous. As Moran and Hawisher explained in “The Rhetorics and Languages of Electronic Mail”: “This sense of immediacy is almost certainly a function of the speed of e-mail and the potentially rapid rhythm of response” (89). Steve Jones, a Professor of Communication at the University of Tulsa, agrees that e-mail has “brought a level of immediacy to our expectations concerning written communication ... we can reply immediately. And if we don’t, sometimes people on the other end will get very quickly annoyed” (“E-mail” par. 17-18). He recognizes that “e-mail is ... in an interesting way compelling. It seems to almost require a response” (par. 31).

Because writers feel a need to reply quickly, they often abbreviate and use a form of electronic shorthand in the form of acronyms, which are also used in instant messages and chat rooms, such as LOL (laugh out loud), oic (oh, I see) and shorthand such as “u” for “you,” and b4 for “before.” This sense of urgency to reply is also why many writers don’t proofread e-mail for spelling and grammatical errors or use conventional capitalization and punctuation. These factors combine to form a style of writing, sometimes referred to as electronic style, which is closer to spoken English than standard written English.

Hawisher and Moran summed up current e-mail style in their 1993 article “Electronic Mail and the Writing Instructor.” E-mail style:

... [uses] emoticons, or pictographic representations of emotional states or rhetorical intent. Read sideways these icons may convey pleasure as in a smiley face :), dismay :(, and frustration :-?. Or they may indicate that the writer

“writes” with tongue in cheek :-^ In some situations, using all capital letters is read as “shouting,” and the asterisk becomes a sign of emphasis (631).

Although e-mail is fast and feels like spoken conversation, the lack of paralinguistic cues (facial expression, vocal intonation, body language, etc.) makes it easy to misinterpret e-mail. As Bruce Maylath explained in a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication in March 1993, “Indeed, e-mail users think so much in oral terms that they forget that extralinguistic cues absent from print – things like a frown or a smirk – can’t be seen on the receiver’s screen. So many messages of mirth and irony were being misinterpreted as serious messages that e-mail users eventually created a non-verbal symbol to transmit the lacking facial expressions. Still tied to the keyboard, they created a sideways smile, :)” (3). The smiley symbol has become so much a part of the electronic style that most users don’t know where it came from. National Public Radio recently celebrated the 20th anniversary of the smiley emoticon by interviewing Scott Fahlman, who first used it in 1982. This was the first documented use of an emoticon (“20th” par. 11).

Professor Steve Jones thinks that in addition to emoticons “e-mail has developed its own set of what we might call peripheral cues so that even if we don’t have face-to-face contact and we can’t tell things from body language, in this medium we do have things like emoticons, the smiley faces and other ways of communicating to know something about maybe style and tone and the way we want to deliver a message” (“E-mail” par. 64). For example, asterisks used on either side of a word for *emphasis*.

Brenda Danet, Professor Emerita of Sociology and Communication at Hebrew University of Jerusalem says that the casual style of e-mail is common to users, regardless of age: “Multiple punctuation and eccentric spelling are common in online

writing, not only of children but also of adults” (8). She agrees that e-mail is less formal than other kinds of writing, but see it as a reflection of the changing culture, not the result of the existence and speed of e-mail:

Although I have argued that the new medium invites informality even in business or official contexts, it would be a great mistake to attribute too much to the effect of technology per se. Rather, I believe that the new technology is strengthening, or converging with, a general cultural trend, which was already in place. ... In short, cultural trends have converged with technology to foster a more oral style of letter writing than in the past, even in business letters (23- 24).

The casual style may also be influenced by the age of the writer, writing and typing ability, and whether the writer is composing quickly (online) or more carefully (offline). Adults who did not grow up with e-mail tend to write e-mail in standard English, while younger users who have grown up with e-mail and are more comfortable with electronic style tend to use more acronyms, emoticons, etc. Naomi Baron theorizes that adults who can type well and quickly will produce more polished, more formal e-mail than those who can not type well, and younger users who can neither type nor read well are not likely to want to send or receive long messages (Alphabet to Email 252). Style is also influenced by whether the message is composed online or offline. Brenda Danet summarizes by saying that “e-mail composed offline is likely to be relatively more writing-like in its linguistic features than e-mail composed on the fly when logged on” (7). Now that broadband Internet connections (where the user is always connected to the Internet via cable modem or satellite) are becoming more common users may feel less compelled to write “on the fly.” Since they are always logged on, the sense of urgency might diminish and users may feel they can compose messages more carefully.

Although e-mail's casual style is widely accepted, it is likely that e-mail style will continue developing as technology changes. Writing instructors need to keep abreast of the developing style and be prepared to communicate with students who are most comfortable writing that way.

Future of E-mail

Although an electronic style has evolved, e-mail will mostly likely continue to change and evolve along with technology. Teachers need to be prepared for and adapt to changes as they develop. They need to be aware of their students' comfort level with technology and plan writing assignments that fit the students' level of computer skills.

How is e-mail likely to change in the future? Ronald Rice, a Professor of Communication at the University of Tulsa, theorizes that e-mail will support collaborative or group writing, voice and/or multi-media capabilities ("E-mail" pars. 212-215). Some of these features are already available to e-mail users who use file attachments. Text and multi-media files (sound and animation) can easily be attached and sent, but the writer has to know and anticipate the hardware and software compatibility of the reader. For example, an executable (.exe) multi-media file which works on a PC will not work on a Macintosh. Students in on-line classes already use e-mail to share ideas, drafts, and feedback for peer evaluation and collaborative writing.

Teachers not only need to anticipate the evolution of e-mail, but prepare their students for future possibilities. In a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication in March 1993, Bruce Maylath speculated on the future of e-mail and its implications for college writing instructors. Instructors need to prepare for an age of "secondary orality": the orality of "telephones, radio, television, virtual reality, and e-mail, all of which depend on texts for their existence and operation" (3). Instructors also "need to make sure we're not preparing

children for their parents' past, nor even our present, but instead for their future, a future which includes hypertext, e-mail, and virtual reality" (Maylath 4). Teachers can not expect their students to keep up with technology and be comfortable with it unless teachers do likewise.

Teachers also need to be aware of student attitudes toward technology and adapt to the students' comfort level. In 1997 Danica Hubbard and Herbert J. Walberg conducted a study to identify student ideas about the effect of computers on writing. The results confirmed their theory that students seem to simultaneously admire and fear using computers for writing. Because of this, Hubbard and Walberg think that "teachers should reassess students' experiences with computer-aided instruction and strive to make technological teaching as smooth a transition as possible" (70). They also stress the need for more research on using computers for composition and the electronic classroom.

Despite Rice, Maylath, and Hubbard and Walberg's assertions that teachers need to plan for the future, e-mail is already affecting student writing, for better or for worse.

How E-mail Influences Student Writing

Many high school and college students are so comfortable with e-mail and instant messaging that it is affecting the way they write papers for school. Some teachers are dismayed to see more spelling and grammar errors, electronic shorthand (like "&," "@," and "\$"), and emoticons in their students' papers; others are excited by the fact that the students are writing – in any form – and see it as an opportunity to teach revision and critical thinking.

Melanie Weaver, an instructor at Alvernia College in Reading, PA recently received a batch of term papers from 10th grade students and was appalled. "They would be trying to make a point in a paper," she says, "they would put a smiley face in

the end. If they were presenting an argument and they needed to present an opposite view, they would put a frown” (Lee par. 14).

Some teachers see this change as an assault on the English language due to the influence of technology. “Students are prone to use bizarre abbreviations and spellings,” says Tina Deamicis, an English teacher at St. Cloud High School, who blames instant messaging for the shift to sloppy writing. “They don’t seem to make the distinction between casual and academic language” (Cobbs par. 4).

Others teachers are more flexible and see it as part of the evolution of language (Lee par. 18). Since e-mail is not likely to go away, teachers need to find ways to use it to their advantage. One way is to incorporate it into the writing process. Ms. Fogarty, a sixth grade teacher in Houlton, Maine encourages her students to use e-mail-type shorthand in their first drafts. “When my children are writing first drafts, I don’t care how they spell anything, as long as they are writing. If this lingo gets their thoughts and ideas onto paper quicker, the more power to them” (Lee par. 37). Of course, she expects her students to switch to standard English when editing and revising their papers.

Some teachers, like Leila Christenbury, president of the National Council of Teachers of English and an English Professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, are glad to see students doing any kind of writing. She realizes that spelling, grammar, and electronic shorthand errors can be overcome during revision. “We should be encouraged to see a generation of youngsters tapping away at the keyboard instead of fingering a remote,” she says. “My gosh, this is an English teacher’s dream. It’s something to celebrate and exploit. Enforcing correct usage is a constant battle, but an ampersand and the numeral 4 in students’ writing are surmountable” (Cobbs pars. 10-11).

Most writing instructors consider revision the heart of the writing process, but students who are used to the speed of e-mail and instant messages are not familiar with revision. Instead of reading and revising, many students rely on the spelling and grammar checkers in their word processing software. “This means students use a conversational voice, and that they do not proofread or copy-edit their writing,” says Rosalyn Bernstein, a Professor of English and Journalism at Baruch College of the City University of New York. “I generally make it clear to students that I expect carefully written prose, and I circle each and every problem area on the paper first” (Lee par. 14). Some students don’t think punctuation and spelling rules apply to them. “It’s OK in IM [instant messenger], so why not in school?” (Cobbs par. 18).

Other instructors, like Steven Pinker, a Professor of Brain and Cognitive Science at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, believe that many students do know the difference between electronic style and standard English. Pinker points out that the electronic style used in e-mail and instant messaging is similar to the shorthand used by stenographers, reporters, and even telegraph operators. Telegrams were billed by the word, so writers omitted prepositions and articles without forgetting how to write standard English (Cobbs par. 36-39). “...people are writing more than ever,” he says. “If they’re writing informally, well, so what? The use of shortened forms and abbreviations was enormously common in Latin in the Middle Ages. The issues are similar today” (Cobbs par. 43).

Since e-mail is so familiar to students and is already influencing the way they write, teachers could incorporate e-mail in the writing classroom and use it to teach drafting, revision, and critical thinking.

Implications for College Writing Teachers: Using E-mail in the Writing Classroom

The casual style of e-mail is influencing teachers as well as students. Many teachers are more tolerant of errors in e-mail than they are in other types of writing. Given this, it's not difficult for teachers to simply think of e-mail as another type of legitimate writing. Although there is no real pedagogy for e-mail, teachers can develop one while using e-mail in their writing classrooms. Using e-mail in the classroom allows teachers to encourage students to write by using a tool with which students are already familiar. There are several ways teachers can do that. Students can use electronic style to draft their papers, use e-mail as means of analyzing their own writing, and a way to send drafts to teachers and peers for feedback. Some teachers encourage students to publish their writing on the web for feedback from a real audience, while others use it as a way to introduce critical thinking. The latter is perhaps the most practical use because while the tools we use to write constantly change, sound thinking, the basis of good writing in any form, does not.

The casual style of e-mail is already influencing teachers as well as students. In "Warning: You Have an E-mail Message" John Piirto analyzes the way college faculty read and write e-mail. He found that even faculty who would otherwise be critical of errors are very tolerant of errors in e-mail (119). He believes that e-mail is developing its own, more relaxed style and rhetoric, and asks "Do faculty really want old social codes (i.e., rules of grammar, mechanics, and overall rhetorical concerns) relaxed or forsaken for a new community? Perhaps the larger question is, could faculty even stop this community from forming if they wanted to?" (125). The point is, however, faculty can not change or ignore the influence of e-mail, so the best solution is to adapt to it.

Adapting to the casual style of e-mail does not mean teachers have fully accepted e-mail as a legitimate form of writing, partly due to its lack of pedagogy. In "Notes

Towards a Rhetoric of E-mail” Charles Moran argues that writing teachers need to consider e-mail a legitimate form of writing, that we need to develop a rhetoric and pedagogy for e-mail (15). Such a rhetoric would take into account the audience, the format/interface of the message, and speed of e-mail. The audience can be one person or many. This is complicated by the fact that even a message sent to one person can be forwarded to others without the author’s knowledge. Another complication is that once the author clicks “Send” the message is gone, with no chance of recalling it. The format/interface of e-mail looks different to each user, depending on the type of hardware and software used, but some common features of e-mail are the memo-like date, to, from, and subject at the top, and the brief salutations and closings. The speed of e-mail seems to demand and provide a faster response (19). This means we reply to e-mail quickly and are more casual about grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.

Hawisher and Moran believe that pedagogy which includes e-mail will inevitably be project-oriented and probably cross-disciplinary (633). The collaborative scenario they described in 1993 in “Electronic Mail and the Writing Instructor” sounds much like an on-line classroom, with the teacher using e-mail to set deadlines and agendas, students e-mailing each other drafts, and sharing ideas on a class bulletin board (633). They see e-mail’s lack of paralinguistic cues as inviting to students who normally don’t speak up in class – something on which many on-line teachers comment.

One way teachers can incorporate e-mail is to create a class mailing list. The list not only provides a means of communication, but provides a meaningful example of electronic style that students can analyze. Dean Woodring Blase, a high school English teacher at Indian Hills High School in Cincinnati, Ohio incorporated e-mail in his classroom in the form of a mailing list. He and his students analyzed their messages

and came up with their own definition of the characteristics of effective electronic academic discourse: has a strong voice; uses, clear, correct writing; includes specific information from literature; offers new ideas, rather than restating others' opinions; consists of relatively short messages, not full essays [sic]; asks questions, invites responses; is humorous but respectful; uses electronic media to enhance writing (fonts, colors, etc.) (Blase 51). This would be very easy to do in the college classroom since many schools require students to have university e-mail accounts.

E-mail can be used to for individual communication between teacher and student for questions, feedback, etc. Students can also use e-mail to submit their work electronically, cutting down on paper work and allowing teachers to type comments electronically rather than grading by hand. Tim Brookes, a professor at the University of Vermont, incorporated e-mail into his classroom, thinking electronic copies of student papers would be easier to grade (i.e., harder to lose) and his comments would be more legible. His experiment was more successful than he anticipated: during the first two days of the semester he received 75 e-mail messages ("Vermont" par. 5). E-mail proved successful in other unexpected ways:

Once we started using e-mail, it proved to have benefits I hadn't expected.

Virtually all my students loved having it ... The Internet had a chatty hipness which affected everything we did. My comments became less terse and gruff and more like letters, and their papers were often accompanied by notes explaining the difficulties they were having and asking for advice. The range of communication between teacher and student suddenly had unlimited horizons. And for once I felt as if we were on the same side of the writing endeavor.
("Vermont" par. 4)

Some teachers carry the idea one step further: instead of submitting their writing to the teacher, they publish it on the World Wide Web and provide an e-mail address for feedback. Diane Davis, a Professor of Rhetoric at Iowa, does this because she notices a difference when her students write for someone other than the teacher. “They know when it comes down to it, the real audience is the teacher – and the teacher is not a very interesting audience. But when I say, ‘You’re going to put this work on the Web, offer your e-mail address, and submit it to search engines,’ students get excited” (Liebowicz par. 29). When students know their work is going to be read by a real audience they work harder. “When students can receive e-mail responses to their posted writings from anywhere in the world, they pay more attention to how they can best express their ideas, and they worry about how poorly written prose may look to their readers,” Davis says (Liebowicz par. 28). While creative, this idea would probably work better with smaller classes where the teacher can keep an eye on the type of feedback students receive. This would allow the teacher the opportunity to discuss constructive versus destructive criticism and protect students from unwanted advances from strangers (rare, but possible).

Perhaps the best use of e-mail in the classroom is to use it like Kathleen Sukubikowski, an instructor at Middlebury College, who uses e-mail as an opportunity to teach precise thinking. “The tools will always change. We must teach what won’t change. That’s the connection between critical thinking and critical writing. At the center is precise thinking – the ability to articulate what you know” (Liebowicz par. 23). This also reminds students that writing is a physical act, as well as an intellectual one (Liebowicz par. 41). Students need this because “they don’t put ideas together well,” says Marty Gartell, a ninth grade teacher at Lake Brantly High in Altamonte Spring. “E-mail style is short, terse statements without development” (Cobbs par. 24). Teachers

can use e-mail as means of teaching revision as well as concise thinking, especially if students use very casual electronic style (abbreviations and emoticons) in early drafts.

Teachers need to recognize e-mail as a legitimate form of writing and take advantage by incorporating it into the writing classroom. Since most students are already comfortable with the casual style of e-mail, it is a valuable tool for teaching drafting, revision, analysis and critical thinking. This adaptation is especially important for college writing instructors whose students are more comfortable and experienced with e-mail than academic writing. Instructors not only need to understand their students, they need to be able to articulate the difference between e-mail style and the standard English used in academic writing.

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Gains, Jonathan. “Electronic Mail—A New Style of Communication or Just a New Medium?: An Investigation Into the Text Features of E-Mail.” English for Specific Purposes. 18. 1 (1999): 81-101.

Hawisher, Gail E. and Charles Moran. “Electronic Mail and the Writing Instructor.” College English. 55.6 (October 1993): 627-643.

Hubbard, Danica and Herbert J. Walberg. "Student Views of Computer-Composition Effects on Writing." Computers and Composition. 14 (1997): 59-71.

Lee, Jennifer. "Nu Shortcuts in School R 2 Much 4 Teachers." The New York Times. Sept. 19, 2002. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/19/technology/circuits/19MESS.html>>.

Liebowitz, Wendy R. "Technology Transforms Writing and the Teaching of Writing." Chronicle of Higher Education. 46.14 (Nov. 26, 1999): A67-68.

Maylath, Bruce. "Electronic Literacy: What's in Store for Writing and Its Instruction." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. San Diego, CA, Mar. 21-Apr. 3, 1993.

Moran, Charles. "Notes Towards a Rhetoric of E-mail." Computers and Composition. 12.1 (1995): 15-22.

Moran, Charles and Gail E. Hawisher. "The Rhetorics and Languages of Electronic Mail." Page to Screen: Taking Literacy into the Electronic Era. Ed. Illana Snyder. London: Routledge, 1998.

Piirto, John. "Warning: You Have an E-mail Message." Journal of Higher Education. 9.1 (Fall 1997): 115-126.

"Vermont Professor Tries the High-Tech Route to Teaching." Weekend Edition. Host: Lisa Hansen. National Public Radio. Sept. 17, 1995. <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>>.

Annotated Bibliography

“20th Anniversary of the First Use of the Smiley Face in Internet Communication.” Talk of the Nation. Host: John Ydstie. National Public Radio. Sept. 18, 2002.
<<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>>.

A lighthearted look at the use of the smiley emoticon. It's short (only one page) but I might use it if I discuss emoticons.

Baron, Naomi. Alphabet to Email: How Written English Evolved and Where It's Heading. New York: Routledge, 2000.

A history of written English and how e-mail is changing our language.

Baron, Naomi. “Letters by Phone or Speech or Other Means: The Linguistics of Email.” Language and Communication. 18 (1998): 133-170.

Includes email as a genre, the history of email, email as computer mediated communication, the linguistics of email, a object study of electronic language, and a linguistic profile of email (an analysis of whether email is more like written or spoken language).

Blase, Dean Woodring. “A New Sort of Writing: E-Mail in the E-english Classroom.” English Journal. Nov. 2000: 47-51.

The author, a high school English teacher at Indian Hills High School in Cincinnati, Ohio, explains how he incorporated e-mail in his classroom.

Bolter, Jay David. Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext, and the History of Writing. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc., 1991.

Looks at how the Internet and hypertext are changing the way we read and write.

Brent, Doug. Doug Brent's Rhetoric and Communications Studies Page. Nov. 9, 2002.
<<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~dabrent>>.

This site is by a professor at the University of Calgary (Ontario) for his students. It has links to articles and information for students in rhetoric, communications, and information technology classes. This page is one of the references used by Nicholas Burbles for “Rhetorics of the Web: Hyperreading and Critical Literacy,” which Burbles annotates as “Rhetorics of the web: implications for Teachers.” Lots of interesting info, but more about reading than writing.

Bruhn, Mark. “E-mail's Conversational Value.” Business Communication Quarterly. 58.3 (1995): 38-44.

This is part of a column called Focus on Teaching on e-mail. Bruhn argues that e-mail promote communication across the curriculum. Other parts of the column (by other authors) have practical suggestions for using e-mail in the classroom.

Callot, Milean and Nancy Belmore. "Electronic Language: A New Variety of English." Computer-Mediated Communication: Linguistic, Social and Cross-Cultural Perspectives. S.C. Herring, ed. Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 1996: 13-28.

Explains research done on language of computer bulletin board users. Measures and evaluates six textual dimension: informational vs. involved production, non-narrative vs. narrative, situation-dependent vs. explicit, overt expression of persuasion, non-abstract vs. abstract information, and on-line informational elaboration.

Cobbs, Chris. "Kewl or 2 Much?" Orlando Sentinel Oct. 12, 2002. <<http://orlandosentinel.com/featres/lifestyle/orl-livinstant12101202.story>>.

A look at how high school teachers and students deal with the influence of e-mail and instant messaging shorthand on student writing.

Crump, Eric. "E-mail: The Rebirth of Letter Writing?" Writing Lab Newsletter. 18.5 (1994): 10-11.

This is a series of letters from writing center specialists who think that, contrary to popular opinion, e-mail is increasing letter-writing.

Danet, Brenda. "The Language of Email." European Union Summer School, University of Rome, June 2002, Lecture II.

The author is a professor emerita of Sociology and Communication, Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Visiting Fellow in Sociology, Yale University. She focuses on two-person asynchronous e-mail, an area which she believes needs more research, and examines the oral, informal aspects of this type of communication.

Eldred, Janet Carey. "The Technology of Voice." College Composition and Communication. 48 (October 1997): 334-347.

Compares the on-line voices of family members to their spoken voices and letter-writing voices. Focuses on her family and their writing, but reflects on how her writing has changed, not because of technology, but because of the her parents' deaths.

"Email" Talk of the Nation. Host: Melinda Penkava. National Public Radio. May 1, 1997. <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>>.

Steve Jones, Professor and Chairman of Communications, University of Tulsa; Ronald Rice, Professor, School of Communication, University of Tulsa; and Steve Dorner, Vice President of Technology, Qualcomm, Inc. discuss how email is

changing the way we communicate socially and professionally. This is probably the story which inspired my topic, although I heard only a bit of a rebroadcast at a later date.

Evans, Meryl. "I Say E-Mail, You Say Email – Let's Call the Whole Thing Off!" © 2002 Jupitermedia Corporation. Nov. 21, 2002. <<http://webreference.com/new/webgrammar.html>>.

A brief intro to e-mail which explains abbreviations when to capitalize Internet, Web, etc.

Gains, Jonathan. "Electronic Mail—A New Style of Communication or Just a New Medium?: An Investigation Into the Text Features of E-Mail." English for Specific Purposes. 18. 1 (1999): 81-101.

Gains examines commercial and academic use of e-mail, and the styles and conventions of each group. He questions whether e-mail is a new genre of writing and concludes by promoting further research into e-mail communication.

Haas, Christina. Writing Technology: Studies on the Materiality of Literacy. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc., 1996.

Haas examines "the technology question": the relationship between writing and the material technologies that support and constrain it. She includes the role of technology in the cognition of literacy, the social and cultural construction of literacy Tools, and her conclusions and suggestions for future study.

Hansen, Mark. Embodying Technesis: Technology Beyond Writing. Ann Arbor: The Univ. of Mich. Press, 2000.

Technesis = the putting-into-discourse of technology. Hansen argues that technology is more important to everyday life than theory. He examines the theories of Freud, Heidegger, Derrida, Lacan, and Foucault – theories that "reduce technology from material reality to discourse."

"The Hazards of E-Mail." Talk of the Nation. Host: Ray Suarez. National Public Radio. Nov. 10, 1998. <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>>.

Guests David Bennahum, Contributing Editor, Wired Magazine and author of *Extra-Life: Coming of Age in Cyberspace*; and Andrea Johnson, Law Professor, California Western School of Law, San Diego discuss digital culture and the potential hazards of cybercommunication. (Might be similar to "Terror On-Line" and "A Rape in Cyberspace.")

Hawisher, Gail E. and Charles Moran. "Electronic Mail and the Writing Instructor." College English. 55.6 (October 1993): 627-643.

The authors discuss the importance of electronic mail in academia and argues that instructors need to research issues related to e-mail. Includes authors' vision of rhetoric and pedagogy in their fields.

Hawisher, Gail E. and Cynthia L. Selfe. "The Rhetoric of Technology and the Electronic Writing Class." College Composition and Communication. 42 (February 1991): 55-65.

The authors examine the influence of computers on rhetoric, especially in computer-supported writing classes. Includes the rhetoric of technology and electronic conferences and teaching practices.

Holdstein, Deborah H. "Power, Genre, and Technology." College Composition and Computers. 47 (May 1996): 279-292.

This article is included in the section "Interchanges: Counterpostings on a Genre of Email" and were written as a response/companion article to Spooner and Yancey's "Postings on a Genre of Email" (which we read in class) in the same issue. Holdstein briefly examines genres on the Internet.

Holtzman, Steven. "Digital Age Certain to Change Our Ways of Expression." All Things Considered. Host: Robert Siegel. National Public Radio. Feb. 2, 1995.

Holtzman, author of Digital Mantras, speculates about how digital technology will change our language.

Hubbard, Danica and Herbert J. Walberg. "Student Views of Computer-Composition Effects on Writing." Computers and Composition. 14 (1997): 59-71.

The authors examine student ideas about the effect of computers on writing. It does not include anything on e-mail specifically, just CMC in general.

Kinkead, Joyce. "Staffroom Interchange-Computer Conversations: E-Mail and Writing Instruction." College Composition and Communication. 38 (October 1987): 337-355.

Examines the use of e-mail by composition students and their teachers. Includes very brief discussions of student-to-student correspondence, Writing Center correspondence, and student-teacher correspondence.

Lanham, Richard A. The Electronic Word: Democracy, Technology and the Arts. Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993.

A collection of essays which explore the effects of electronic text on the humanities (visual arts and music, not just writing).

Lee, Jennifer. "Nu Shortcuts in School R 2 Much 4 Teachers." The New York Times. Sept. 19, 2002. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/19/technology/circuits/19MESS.html>>.

Middle school English teachers deal with instant messaging shorthand (u, r, b4, wuz, cuz, etc.) in student papers.

Liebowitz, Wendy R. "Technology Transforms Writing and the Teaching of Writing." Chronicle of Higher Education. 46.14 (Nov. 26, 1999): A67-68.

The author examines the effect of e-mail and writing on a word processor on college students' writing. Includes strategies instructors can use in the classroom.

Maylath, Bruce. "Electronic Literacy: What's in Store for Writing and Its Instruction." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. San Diego, CA, Mar. 21-Apr. 3, 1993.

Maylath argues that the speed of e-mail reduces distance, making it more like speaking than writing and that teachers of literacy need to get ready for students who are used to communicating via hypertext and e-mail.

Moran, Charles. "Notes Towards a Rhetoric of E-mail." Computers and Composition. 12.1 (1995): 15-22.

Moran examines the difference between paper messages and e-mail messages by focusing on audience, interface, and rhythm of response. He argues in favor of accepting e-mail as a legitimate form of writing.

Moran, Charles and Gail E. Hawisher. "The Rhetorics and Languages of Electronic Mail." Page to Screen: Taking Literacy into the Electronic Era. Ed. Illana Snyder. London: Routledge, 1998.

The authors believe print is altered by the existence of e-mail and explore some of the rhetoric and language of e-mail, such as e-mail illusion of intimacy, the social role of the e-mail writer, and a brief look at the different ways each type CMC use language.

Nantz, Karen S. and Cynthia L. Drexel. "Incorporating Electronic Mail into the Business Communication Course." Business Communication Quarterly. 58.3 (1995): 45-51.

The authors argue that to be good communicators, students need to be able to understand the "electronic organizational hierarchy and electronic communication and costs" - something that most business teachers don't provide. Includes exercises business communications teachers can use in class.

Piirto, John. "Warning: You Have an E-mail Message." Journal of Higher Education. 9.1 (Fall 1997): 115-126.

Examines how e-mail affects the way college faculty write and read e-mail. Surprisingly, faculty are tolerant of errors in e-mail, unlike other types of writing.

Porter, James E. "E-mail Variables of Rhetorical Form." The ABCA Bulletin. 56.2 (1993): 41-42.

Porter has compiled three articles which examine e-mail and its use in different disciplines. His goal is to encourage research in how e-mail is written because it's not like a paper memo or letter.

Reynolds, Nedra, et al. "Review-Fragments in Response: An Electronic Discussion of Lester Faigley's Fragments of Rationality." College Composition and Communication. 45 (May 1994): 264-273.

I thought this was an interesting way to review a book! It's also a great example of the academic use of e-mail and I will be comparing it to Baron's article whether or not I actually end up using it in my paper.

Richards, Geraldine A. "Why Use Computer Technology?" English Journal. November 2000: 38-41.

The author examines the use of computers in the English classroom, especially Web Board, for teacher-student interaction and peer response.

Rickly, Rebecca and Eric Crump. "It's Fun to Have Fun But You Have to Know How! Or, How Cavorting on the Net Will Save the Academy." Computer-Mediated Communication Magazine. 2.1 (January 1, 1995): 11.
<http://www.december.com/cmc/mag/1995/jan/rickly_crump.html>

Brief scholarly discussion of different types of on-line CMC.

Selfe, Cynthia. Technology and Literacy in the Twenty-First Century: The Importance of Paying Attention. Carbondale, IL: The Conference on College Composition and Communication of the National Council of Teachers of English, 1999.

Selfe explains how the national project to expand technical literacy came about and identifies the effects of electronic literacy, specifically the "shameful inequities it continues to generate in our culture and public education system."

Sherwood, Kaitlin Duck. "A Beginner's Guide to Effective Email." World Wide Webfoot Press. Published Dec. 30, 1995. Revised Jan. 25, 1999. Nov. 21, 2002
<[www.webfoot.com/advice/ email.top.html](http://www.webfoot.com/advice/email.top.html)>.

Overview of e-mail including makes email different (from other types of writing), context, format, page layout, intonation, gestures, status formality, greetings and signatures, acronyms and jargon, and domain names.

Standage, Tom. The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century's On-line Pioneers. New York: Walker and Co., 1998.

It's not about e-mail, but it does make some interesting comparisons between the telegraph and the Internet, including the way it changed language and the way users had a special language for it.

Straussman, Barbara K. and Melanie D'Amore. "The Write Technology." Teaching Exceptional Children. 34.6 (July/Aug. 2002): 28-31. <<http://FirstSearch.oclc.org>>.

How Melanie D'Amore integrated Electronic Read Around and on-line synchronous chats into her writing curriculum to give students opportunities to write in different media, including the Internet, with voices appropriate to the audience and purpose.

Takayoshi, Pamela. "The Shape of Electronic Writing: Evaluating and Assessing Computer-Assisted Writing Processes and Products." Computers and Composition. 13 (1996): 245-257.

Examines the features of electronic texts which have changed writing and writing instruction: the creation of seamless text, word publishing as a rhetorical act, and hypertextual writing and thinking. Argues that these changes must influence the way teachers read, respond to, and evaluate student writing.

Tuman, Myron C., ed. Literacy Online: The Promise (and Peril) of Reading and Writing with Computers. Pittsburgh: The Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1992.

A collection of essays that examine both sides of the literacy debate (computers are the great equalizer vs. computers are obstacles). All of the essays were first presented at the Sixteenth Annual University of Alabama Symposium on English and American Literature in 1989, so they may be a little dated.

Tyner, Kathleen. Literacy in a Digital World: Teaching and Learning in the Age of Information. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc., 1998.

Tyner examines the history of technology and how new communications technology is resisted then accepted. She also explores the connection between educational technology and media education and how they can be used to improve education.

"Vermont Professor Tries the High-Tech Route to Teaching." Weekend Edition. Host: Lisa Hansen. National Public Radio. Sept. 17, 1995. <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>>.

Essayist and professor Tim Brooks describes his students' positive and enthusiastic response to his decision to incorporate e-mail into his teaching program at the University of Vermont.

Glossary

Acronyms or Electronic Shorthand – abbreviations for commonly used phrases in e-mail and instant messaging. Includes combinations of letters and numbers, symbols, and unconventional use of caps and asterisks. Some common acronyms:

& or + = and
 \$ = dollars, money
 * = emphasis (put on either side of *important* word)
 @ = at
 2 = to, too, two
 ALL CAPS = shouting
 b4 = before
 brb = be right back
 cuz = 'cause (because)
 f2f = face to face
 jk = just kidding
 kewl = cool
 l8r = later
 lol = laugh out loud
 nm = not much
 oic = oh I see
 r = are
 ttyl = talk to you later
 u = you
 wuz = was

Emoticons – Also referred to as “smileys.” Symbols used to indicate emotion by depicting facial expressions. To read an emoticon, tilt your head 90 degrees to the left. Some common emoticons:

:) = smiley, pleasure, agreement
 :(= frown, dismay, disagreement
 :-? = frustration
 :-^ = tongue in cheek

Flaming - rude, angry, or hostile e-mail messages sent as a reply, in response to a misinterpretation of a message.

Instant Messenger (IM) – a program used for synchronous communication or “live” chat. America On Line (AOL) IM is the most common program. Also used as a verb: instant messaging. Also referred to as “chatting.”

Listserv – an electronic mailing list devoted to a particular topic. To participate members send a message to the server (listserv) which e-mails it to all list members. Anyone can create a mailing list at Yahoo! Groups <groups.yahoo.com>.

Paralinguistic or Extralinguistic Cues – visible or audible social cues (such as facial expression, body language, or vocal tone) used in addition to words to convey meaning.

Pedagogy – the art or science of teaching; teaching methods (Oxford English Dictionary, 1971).

Rhetoric – Skill in using eloquent or persuasive language (Oxford English Dictionary, 1971).

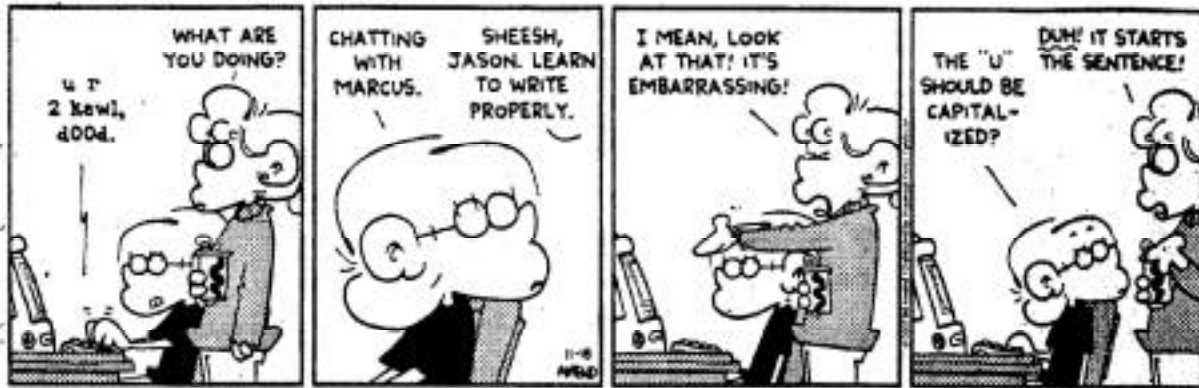
Synchronous – simultaneous communication or “live” electronic chat.

Usenet – Internet newsgroups; discussion groups devoted to a particular topic; the most recent version of electronic bulletin boards. Messages can be sent to individual members (like a listserv) or be kept in an archive on the World Wide Web which users can access at will (like an old-fashioned bulletin board). Google Groups <groups.google.com> is one example.

Humor

A couple funnies I found during my research...

FOX TROT • By Bill Amend



Foxtrot. Nov. 18, 2002.



"On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog."

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