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Essay 3 Draft 1

Literacy Online

When a person sits down to write a forum post online, what dictates the way his or her voice will be perceived or interpreted? How does a writing method or voice translate to being read by an end user on the other side? Does the appearance and mode of transportation play a role? Discerning the differences between conventional and electronic mediums of communication plays a large role in a delicate balance of literacy and self identification.

There is a clear distinction between the methods employed in verbal etiquette used in conversation and that of the Internet. The largest of these is a shift between having body language and inflection available to verbal contact but not electronic. In a conversation, even small changes in stance or actions can control the course or tone of the encounter. For example, crossed arms can relay either animosity or leisure depending on context. Online, these options generally are not available, as video chat is not being included as a mainstream method of communicating. There are systems such as the emoticon, which is commonly printed as a colon and punctuation such as :), that strive to provide more reference feedback in typed text. Unfortunately this system is too clunky for effective use, providing only a handful of very basic facial expressions and the variations in how an emoticon is interpreted swings widely among users. Without the extra dimension of expression, the potential and utility of corresponding over the Internet is diminished and the ability of users to convey the full bandwidth of a conversation is lost.