Language in the Wild—Living the Carnival in Social Media

# Details

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* Learning
* Internet usage, practices and engagement
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* Digital and socio-cultural environment

## Sample

Four pairs and one group of three students volunteered to participate in the study.

## Implications For Educators About

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

This study presents results from an intervention case study at upper secondary level, in which Blogger was introduced during English class. The overarching interest was to explore the students’ social performances and their interplay with students’ uses of language across multiple forms of literate activities in blogging. The study draws on a sociocultural perspective, taking a particular interest in language as a meditational tool for communication and interaction in the students’ own digital vernacular practices. Goffman’s dramaturgical approach including the concepts of performance and role distance in front and back regions together with Bakhtin’s notion of carnival were invoked as analytical tools for the analysis of video material as well as ethnographic scraping of online content in the blog. It was found that the students presented a witty, humorous image of themselves, while playing around with language as well as bringing in manipulated media for mockery and self-irony. Analytically speaking the students were living the carnival by utilizing a norm-breaking language—a language in the wild. Though this in-depth study presents a limited number of students’ blogging, the findings contribute to an increased understanding of the in situ creation of a blogger text providing a basis for discussing the uses of language in social media and what this implies for learning languages and for teaching practices.

# Outcome

"By applying Goffman’s and Bakhtin’s concepts as analytical tools for interaction and communication we have illustrated that already from the beginning, the students used the blogging space to present the image of themselves, playing with the language, going in and out of resources, thereby contributing to the front stage and the back stage being blurred. Above all, the local context, performance in the physical space, that is the classroom, is closely interlinked with the on-line performance. In line with Prior’s and Thorne’s...arguments for the need to investigate writing across multiple forms of literate activity...our results point to the complexity and multidimensional aspects of performing your social self in social media.
What characterized the results were the uses of language, that is, language in the wild, framing the activity by role distance, and ignoring any implicit traditional framing in relation to the context of schooling. Once the activity was open for interpretation, the students lived the carnival by posting, ridiculing and mocking photomontage, including themselves in self-mockery, in a bantering mode, while performing across spaces. Interestingly, the norm-breaking activity, here exemplified in a posting, when discovered by two other students, functioned as a trigger for other students to join the carnivalesque use of language." (Authors, 889)