

Rites and Writing: Adapting the Activity Theory Model for Word processor Research (Poster)

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Abstract

Two distinct bodies of literature deal with the effects of word processors on writing. The first, are empirical studies which generally deal with “within-writer issues” (i.e. writing practices and cognitive processes); and the second are philosophical essays which address issues concerning consciousness, society and culture. These two groups write in parallel and have reported very different conclusions. We introduce an additional option – the Activity Theory, which relates to both personal and cultural aspects of activity, and may therefore serve as an alternative approach to word processor research. An authentic and complex writing process of 5 university students was studied and was analyzed using the Activity Theory Model. Generally, writers demonstrated recursive activity of planning-translating-reviewing of sub elements (chapters, ideas, paragraphs) throughout the process, findings similar to other word processing studies. Yet, with the use of the Word Processor and the Internet the concepts of "the writer", "process of writing" and "the audience" are influenced by the instrument and therefore should be studied in empirical writing research.

Keywords: cognition, writing, word processors, Activity Theory.