

I began putting the concept of the poster together....Also I tried to write on a level so that a wider group of scientists could understand our research and give us input from their point of view. When the basic layout and text were finished I send a copy to each member of our group for comments. My view of what I had written was that it was almost nothing on the poster that they could point out as unclear or unimportant for the understanding of our research. The response that I got from two of the other three members were full of suggestions to make the text more clear-cut and easy to follow. I was shocked! After three more rounds in the ring with my cowriters we finished the poster. Still licking my wounds I realised that I had some more to learn about academic writing.

(Mikael, Chalmers, Letter 1)

Writing is big part of my daily activities and has been for sometime now. I really enjoy the process and I find it is a good release when you just need to get some emotions out. When most people that know me hear about my feelings towards writing, they don't see it. They see me as an emotionless being, which I must say I know why. I am quiet and usually very calm....My writing usually takes forms of quick poems or journal entries that I keep in a notebook and out of others hands. I love to write but I hate writing for other people. Writing is my release, and I don't like to share my feelings. As long as they are written down somewhere, that's good enough for me....As a writer, one day I hope to be able to write without fear that someone will tear it apart. (Charlie, Clemson, Letter 1)

All of you have reminded me that writing is a part of everyday life (I've been out of the loop for a few years with my kids). For those of you in the business world, I am sure you understood Gabriel's reference to memo writing. That is something they should teach in college. I know I have ruffled my share of feathers around the office. From sociology I learned about "report talk" vs. "rapport talk". Report talk is the exchange of facts and pertinent information where rapport talk is a way of relating information on a more personal level. If we all were able to have rapport with others, then perhaps our reports would be more interesting. I really enjoy communicating with all of you. I hope you enjoy academic, as well as personal, success. (Rebecca, TCC, Letter 2)

In Letter 1 Lindsey (Clemson) uses the salutation “Dear Groupies,” and then in Letter 2 Rebecca (TCC) begins “Hello Groupies (I believe we should adopt this as our group call sign),” and then a few hours later, Gabriel (Chalmers) begins “‘Hello Groupies’ (I am supporting Rebecca’s motion).” Gabriel’s first sentence then follows: “Guys, I am really enjoying your letters!”

Gabriel then says: “It has not been easy to follow such amount of different ideas, comments and experiences regarding writing plays, creative writing, maintenance procedures, résumés, memos, formal and informal letters, and other kinds of impressive writing. I am really learning from you guys.”

Thus, the use of the conversational and slang “guys” to refer to both men and women and the expressive exclamation mark confirm a growing use and acceptance of conversational English within the context of this discussion board.

One of the things I noticed during the letter exchange was that sometimes it was hard to differentiate the age and gender of fellow group members. I noticed that people referred to Xing and Erin as both he and she. Sometimes cultural differences make it difficult to distinguish whether names are feminine or masculine. This is a simple example of the confusion that internet communication can cause. Without knowing the tone of someone's voice, it is harder to sense sarcasm or humor. It also becomes difficult to know exactly who you are talking to. (Lindsey, Clemson, Letter 4).

Hello Groupies, Instantaneous communication across physical borders and political ideologies allows global access to varying perspectives throughout our world....American publications almost always refer to anti-American Iraqis as insurgents, whereas *al-Jazeera* describes them exclusively as resistance fighters. These two terms have opposite connotations describing the exact same group to different audiences. Last week, *USA Today's* website headlined the revelation that Jessica Lynch had been raped by her Iraqi captors....Finally, yesterday [*al-Jazeera*] posted a story quoting Iraqi doctors denying the *USA Today* assertion. Utilizing multiple perspectives via global communications technology allowed me to gain a more in-depth understanding. An open forum with Americans and Iraqis exchanging hopes, dreams and fears may go a long way toward reaching mutually beneficial goals. (Glenn, TCC, Letter 3)

I really enjoyed the comparison that Glenn made between the reporting of the Pvt. Lynch rescue in al-jazeera and *USA Today*. Not only does it say a great deal about how we communicate but also what we communicate.

Technology today is most used to promote what is “fascinating” to the American public, even if it is false.

How strange that we have criticized the Iraqi people for printing false information at the whim of a dictator (entered their country to free them of tyranny) and in this land of the free we choose to print false information. Just food for thought. (Erin, Clemson, Letter 3)

Finally let me try to express my fillings regarding writing to people of different cultures and backgrounds. It has not been easy because after Letter 1 I realized that you guys know much more about writing than I do. I am a scientist and I have been writing for long, but technical papers, nothing like poems, plays or novels. What we have been doing here is completely different, because is related to emotions, personal experiences and opinions. It scared me but at the same time it taught me a lot. Cheers, (Gabriel, Chalmers, Letter 4)

But I still believe that computers are eventually going to make us lazy. I can remember how exciting it was to get actual letters in boot camp. That was the best part of the whole 9 weeks, that every Sunday we got our mail. I still get letters though because most people in Kentucky that I know don't have computers so I still get the giggles and the smiles when I go to the mailbox.... (Lesley, TCC, Letter 4)

... I realize that "connectivity" is a common and fast becoming trite, technology buzzword. But the WAC forum is a perfect illustration of the power of this special connection. I am studying to be an English teacher but what I do for a living is community organizing to prevent child abuse and neglect....What we are trying to do is to put into place a variety of social supports for parents of young children who are isolated as they cope with the overwhelming responsibility of raising their children. The way we are doing this is by trying to recreate the sense of neighborhood. When I was a young child, the people on my block knew who I was, knew my parents, and were available for help and comfort if we needed them. In every way imaginable, we are trying to reconnect parents to their neighbors with the hope of building this type of mutual, reciprocal support that has eroded with the pace and mobility of modern life. What we have done in the WAC forum has been to relinquish our isolation as individual students and enter into a transaction with students across vast distances in the same sort of mutually supportive way. Group 2 has created a small virtual neighborhood and this is a powerful thing. (Tom, Clemson, Letter 4)

