

August 30, 2009

Hi Debe,

Thank you very much for your review of the article “Video Cameras As Teachers: Toward the Transformation of Student-School Relationships in High School” for THEN, the journal about technology, humanities, education and narrative. This short collection of thoughts has been written in response to your request for feedback on your comments as a reviewer for the previously mentioned article.

To begin, though not required it was certainly helpful for you to place yourself in context as a reviewer by naming your qualifications and your scholarly and professional experiences. Given the volume of articles we receive and review, the authors we communicate with, and the reviewers in our network, we sometimes too easily overlook the unique perspectives and backgrounds that individuals bring to their contributions. So thank you for the useful model – if only some of our other colleagues were as thoughtful!

As for the content of your review: First, it is significant to note the consistency between you and your fellow reviewers regarding the author’s need to place the article’s focus of video cameras within a larger context of social and digital media. One other reviewer echoed your reference to the work of Dr. Wesch and the inclusion of such necessary theoretical foundations have been conveyed to the author in light of future revisions.

In some ways the crux of the article, and your review, lies in the author’s use of Cultural Historical Activity Theory. To begin, I have not, as you note about yourself, presented a paper on CHAT and am only superficially familiar with the theory. In light of your expertise, your following analysis was quite helpful: “In either case, CHAT theory (as I understand it) doesn’t assign the role of agent to a video camera that is being used by a student (subject) in the pursuit of an outcome. I question if the author of this article has a substantial enough mastery of this theory to base his presentation upon it.” It is clear, thanks to your review, that should the author choose to base analyses in Activity Theory there is then a burden to both present CHAT more concretely and comprehensively (as you conveyed nicely with your additional quotations), while also convincingly connecting these theoretical foundations to the article’s evidence (which has yet to be fully presented). Generally speaking, other reviewers also felt as though the author did not create a solid theoretical platform to base, as you concluded, the evidence’s final “unsupported” “leaps.”

Additionally, your analysis of the author’s use of Miettinen led you to write, “I don’t see where the role of a teacher is assigned to the camera.” This observation fit well with subsequent reviewers who also questioned the author’s “anthropomorphizing descriptors” and the limited, and in some ways unsupported, use of the “video camera as teacher” metaphor.

Finally, your section on scholarliness was an appropriate critique not only of the author’s “Teaching Movement” section, but also of the article’s overall organization. I appreciated your suggestion about linking the author’s description of different

video cameras back to CHAT when you wrote, “It would have been better to devote that space to a deeper discussion of Activity Theory, in the hopes of communicating how a video camera goes from artifact to agent.” Additionally, I would add (and have suggested to the author) that such description might also be appropriate within a Methodology section within which the author could describe the nature of the study (if, as you noted there indeed was one), the details of the after school program and students’ participation, specific video camera information, and other relevant research information.

I hope you find the following feedback useful. Overall your review – standing on both its individual contributions and also in comparison to your colleagues’ reviews of the same article –clearly presented and supported thoughtful critique, highlighted areas for the author to improve with useful suggestions for future directions of that improvement, and held the article to an appropriate level of scholarliness and quality of writing necessary to contribute meaningfully to the field.

If you have any other questions or comments about your participation as a review for THEN please do not hesitate to contact me. We would appreciate reviews of similar quality for future articles and have noted your interest in virtual worlds.

Thanks again,

Remi Holden
THEN Associate Editor
remi.holden@gmail.com