

Successful Online Learning Collaboration: Peer Feedback and Technology Integration in English Composition Courses

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Abstract

The following paper describes learning processes that occurred in six classrooms of approximately 97 advanced and novice English composition students studying at an American university in the Middle East. The students came from multicultural backgrounds; including African, Middle Eastern, Asian, European and American. Due to scheduling issues (long breaks and accelerated lectures), students were highly encouraged to integrate technologies to extend their learning outside of the classroom and to develop collaborative learning groups. Assigned tasks required students to use a collaborative editor to provide support in synchronous and asynchronous learning contexts. Peer feedback on writing errors and content was requested. The learning objectives were to develop skills in locating and classifying data, summarizing literature, and reviewing and applying composition formatting and content information provided. Learners were expected to produce individual compositions in narrative form (Novice Writers) and academic report formats (Advanced Writers). Throughout the courses, self-correction of writing errors increased in quantity and quality. Autonomous Learning was evidenced in the individual compositions produced. Student Satisfaction was high with learning experiences across the groups described, as supportive of critical thinking and highly motivational. Retention and pass rates for the six courses reported were significantly higher than the average outcomes reported typically for those courses by the institution. A key factor in these successful outcomes appears to be the participation in online collaborative learning both self-directed and instructor assigned. Convenience factored greatly in what technologies were selected and used by individuals.

Keywords: CALL, error correction, learner autonomy, online collaborative learning, peer learning