

## **Online Writing and Peer Feedback: Environments and Strategies that Work for Second Language learners**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigates vocabulary use in online interactions of 60 Malaysian undergraduates enrolled in a workplace English course. The subjects' initial vocabulary level was significantly lower for the second and third thousand word levels in the pre online writing report. Following a reading activity, the subjects were required to work on a case study, which required students to work out the issues through online interactions for five weeks, followed by a post-test writing on a similar topic. Students' range of vocabulary use increased over the first three weeks and the online writings showed that peer feedback helped learners help improve their language accuracy and enabled use of a wider range of words types and families. The analysis of 45 online interactions revealed that while meaning negotiation, error corrections and technical action did occur, social talk and content management dominated online interactions. Prolonged usage revealed that online feedback could bring about positive changes to students' language use provided instructors and informed peers intervene from time to time.

**Keywords:** Output, peer feedback, error correction, online interaction, lexical frequency profile

## INTRODUCTION

In the words of Lee (2003), writing in context with attention to vocabulary use can serve as a valuable tool for second language development (p. 538). Though research suggests that insufficient vocabulary contributes to writing difficulties (Santos, 1988), longitudinal studies (Laufer, 1998) have shown that learners' L2 receptive vocabulary develops much faster than their productive vocabulary due to the limited opportunities made available for learners to engage in productive tasks that elicit and provide practice for learners to use familiar or novel vocabulary. While Henriksen (1999) stressed on the importance of converting receptive vocabulary into productive vocabulary by encouraging learners to actively use vocabulary, Coady's (1997) and Arnaud and Savignon's (1997) have called for advanced learners to be given explicit instruction on the use of multiword phrases and collocations. This is based on the fact that both vocabulary and grammar happen to be central to learning to use language well. Nevertheless, as cautioned by Lee (2003), the quality of learners' vocabulary use in writing has not been widely investigated. While it is known that explicit vocabulary instruction can result in greater use of contextually appropriate words caused by noticing and awareness effect, Laufer's (1994) claim that there is no empirical evidence to show the possible relationship between explicit vocabulary teaching and improvement in the lexical quality holds water as well.

In terms of vocabulary, both lexical quality and lexical variation (LV) are important to the writing classroom, but there is also the need to get learners to become communicatively competent in settings where time is a factor. The issue of communicative competence brings to the forefront Kramsch's (2011) concern about the rise in sharing taking place in cyberspace. This is especially so where learners, in addition to learning about words, meanings, accuracy and appropriacy in English, need to also learn that language can be easily manipulated. Learning languages constitute much more than words and actions, and learners must learn to embrace multiple, changing and conflicting discourse, speakers, opinions to help them become communicatively competent (p.

356). Another factor being that non-native speaker (NNS) discourse in L2 classrooms differ according to context. Instructors are now confronted with a second language (L2) learning environment where learners enter with varying level of proficiency and yet, they need to be able to communicate and arrive at meaning in real time and complete tasks that do not discriminate between proficiency in many situations while the basic variety is still taking shape. Even more disconcerting is the fact that with the increasing numbers of foreign language and L2 instructors who are L2 speakers themselves, there is the risk of instructors not being able to notice or overlooking certain words and forms including specific inflections that students omit due to ease of use. As pointed out by Ellis (2008), high frequency of word use can contribute to certain grammatical markers ‘wearing away’ creating a pressure for others to replace in the L2 situation. The fact being that when there is frequent omission of inflected forms, learners who learn hearing and seeing such forms can end up pronouncing the default version of the sounds over time. Large classroom size can prevent instructors from giving sufficient attention to error correction to focus on forms. This makes it necessary for instructors to work with more proficient learners to get other learners to notice and draw one another’s attention to inaccurate or inappropriate language forms while interacting within the online learning environment.

Peer response is said to increase learners’ chances for meaning negotiation and language practice (Lockhart & Ng, 1995; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; Liang, 2010), encourage collaborative reading and writing (Tsui & Ng, 2000), and promote writing revisions (Berg, 1999; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; Min, 2006, 2008). Online peer response when used as alternative to face to face (F2F) communication can facilitate spoken, written and electronic communication, promote student motivation, participation and collaboration (Warschauer, 2002), raise awareness of audience needs and enhance critical analysis of linguistic features and negotiation skills (DiGiovani & Nagaswami, 2001). This study is motivated by two concerns expressed in L2 research. First, there is a possible relationship between peer vocabulary noticing and feedback and L2 writing development. Second, while there is concern for L2 learners’ omission of inflection forms, there has not been a study that has clearly defined the interaction patterns. Corpus

based studies and lexical profilers, however, have provided deep insights into interaction patterns of learners in second and foreign language teaching and learning context (Aswini & Srinivasan, 2016) and these instruments can be used to look at the interaction features in online learning.

## **Framework for Designing a Revision Related Course**

Multiple frameworks exist for discussing revision related discourse and areas of revision dealing with online conferencing approaches. DiGiovanni and Nagaswami (2001) examined L2 students revision related discourse based on questions, explanations, restatements and suggestions for both online and face to face (F2F) oral settings and found negotiations in F2F to be higher while agreement and disagreement with ideas and negotiation higher for asynchronous peer discussions. Jones, Garralda, Li, and Lock (2006) found first year EFL students more likely to discuss textual and linguistic issues (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, and style) in F2F sessions and focus on broader concerns (e.g. content, organization, topic, and thesis) and relational communication in synchronous online sessions. Both studies while agreeing about the marked differences in terms of peer comments for both modes of communication, admit that it is not possible to generalize both platforms as similar. Hewett (2006) looked at the communicative utterances (e.g. content, form, process, context, and phatic expressions) in online Business English classes and found talks to center on interpersonal connections, interaction facilitations and workspace discussions. However, when concerning revision related discourse, 25% focused on content and context of writing, 62% on writing problems and processes, and 13% on mechanics of writing and citation issues. A comparison of revision related discourse and actual revisions found most writings, despite being related to writing and revisions, generally did not contribute significantly to improvements in learners' language per se. Hewett's findings remain significant since it paved the way for online interactions to emerge as useful avenues for helping learners to write and revise for the L1 writing context. However, the types of interaction and their connections to specific vocabulary revision and extensions for the L2 contexts have yet to be defined.

Toyoda and Harrison (2002) looked at the negotiation of meaning skills between students and native speakers of Japanese over a series of chat conversations and found that difficulties in understanding among NNS can trigger negotiation of meanings between students even when no specific communication tasks were given. The study analyzed negotiation patterns into nine categories namely: a) recognition of new word, b) misuse of word, c) pronunciation error, d) grammatical error, e) inappropriate segmentation, f) abbreviated sentence, g) sudden topic change, h) slow response, and i) intercultural communication gap. Fitze (2006) used this classification to compare F2F and written electronic whole class discussion from two intact classes and found advanced students to utilize a wider variety of vocabulary and communicative strategies (e.g. clarification request, disagreement statements, social formulations, topic managements) in online discussions. Liang (2008) proposed a framework with six major interaction features as follows: a) meaning negotiation, b) content discussion, c) error correction, task management, e) social talk, and f) technical action. The study initially found the total percentage of turns for meaning negotiation, error correction, task management, and technical action to be low with two thirds of the turns being spent on social talk and content discussion. There was no discussion about the types of words used. Liang (2010) reused the framework and found different composition of groups as capable of generating different proportion of interactions and the use of chat episodes not being used as compensation for better comprehension, but serving as a deliberate strategy for managing chat discourse.

In measuring vocabulary development, lexical quality is determined by lexical variation (LV) and Lexical Frequency Profile (Laufer and Nation, 1995; Laufer, 1994). While LV refers to the type token ration of words used by learners, the ability to use a larger number of different words is construed as the mark of better writing skills. The LFP is assessed by the number of words that come from four levels of vocabulary categorized by Xue and Nation (1984) with each level consisting of 1000 most frequently used words in English.<sup>1</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> Following the compilation of the 100 million British National Corpus (1986) the words have been modified for work on Lextutor and LFP and can be used to explore the differences between written and spoken English.

vocabprofiler (VP) meanwhile is a computer program that measures the proportion of low and high frequency vocabulary used by both native speakers and language learners in written works. It is assumed that a typical NS's written input would result in 70-10-10-10 (70% from the 1<sup>st</sup> 1000, 10% from the second 2000, 10% from the academic word level and 10% less frequent words). The tool has been successfully used to understand the lexical acquisition and development patterns of L2 learners (Morris & Cobb, 2004). Muncie's (2002) used the LFP with Japanese students and found that learners did not improve significantly in the revision process writing approach, though there was a higher percentage of sophisticated words in subsequent drafts. Laufer (1994) and Muncie (2002) went on to recommend explicit vocabulary instruction to improve writing.

Taken together, the findings from the various studies tend to gravitate towards learner interaction and negotiation skills (de la Fuente, 2002); and this study assumes that attention to language forms and feedback from accuracy minded peers through the online learning environment could help learners develop their vocabulary, improve their negotiation skills, and eventually contribute to communicative competence. To understand the extent to which this language learning development can progress within a brief period, this study was initiated and two research questions were formulated as follows:

1. Is there a change in the levels and types of words used in online writing classes over time?
2. To what extent does peer feedback contribute to learners using accurate language forms over time?

## **THE STUDY**

The subjects were 60 undergraduates taking an occupational English course from a public university in Malaysia. All students were L2 learners with above average proficiency in English. The students had obtained either a Band 4 or 5 (competent users) for the Malaysian University Entrance Test. A better command of the language was required for the course due to the complexity of the reading texts and level of analysis involved in the course. Students were required to interact in both oral and written forms using a variety of workplace

discourse simulating the google classroom. The course used the case study approach and focused on getting students to solve workplace issues through a series of F2F and online meetings. The subjects were informed that they would need to carry out a number of online tasks to complete a portfolio that would be graded, but the number of online tasks were not specified. In groups of three, students were made to write online about *sexual harassment at the workplace*, conduct three online meetings to solve a related workplace problem and submit an online report (in groups of three) at the end of five weeks. All writings were done via *Google Docs* and managed via *Google Drive*.

## Materials

### *Reading Task*

The students were required to work in groups of three and identify a problematic situation from a 800 word newspaper article on “sexual harassment / bullying at the workplace” following which they worked on their first report (pre-writing) collectively. During the first class, the students were taught how to share information through a closed network in cyberspace, provide feedback, and respond to comments on how to improve the writing. The students were told to look out for the following: a) editing for grammar and punctuation, b) group writing b) building critical skills c) group think and d) the steps in planning, conducting and recording meeting. The subjects received an average of 120 minutes of ESL instruction per week. During the time, students were briefed about the role of the leader, the secretary in a meeting, and task distribution before being told to work on electing their respective office bearers and run the online meetings as if they were in charge of a preselected company. Students were required to set up a workspace through Google Docs and meet online for at least three 20 minute sessions to discuss the work progress which included informing, encouraging, motivating, summarizing and keep members on track. All instructions were made available online and students could refer to them at ease. All meetings had to be carried out on Google Docs and students had the option of interacting and using the chat to ask for feedback or negotiate further. The chairperson with the help of an assistant was required to create a workspace where learners could share

all information. The instructor was given editing rights and could keep track of the writings by looking into the history of changes.

### *Online interaction*

1<sup>st</sup> online meeting: This was a twenty minute to one hour online session. Students were required to conduct their own meetings and document the interaction via Google Docs. During the meeting, the chairperson introduced the issues based on agenda and conducted the meeting using *Robert's Rules of Order*. Each student was given a list of responsibilities which they had to complete and the meetings were meant to keep members informed of their actions and progress,

2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> online meeting: These were 20–40 minute sessions held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Week. During the meetings, the students were allowed to share information (e.g. post links to their data, summarize some of the ideas) via Google Drive for easy access. Students were allowed to leave comments and suggestions for their peers to improvise their writings. Active learning strategies such as coordinating, encouraging participation (think-pair-share), checking feelings, solving problems, blocking, dominating, clowning, agreement and disagreement were encouraged. The fifth week was reserved for the post writing.

### *Training*

Students in groups of four to five were taught to go through a self-paced module to obtain supportive materials on the purpose of meetings (e.g. evaluating, making decisions, creating documents, and motivating members). In small groups students were made to practice collaborative skills involving active listening skills by paraphrasing (e.g. “You are saying that ...”), mirroring feelings (e.g. It sounds like ...”), stating one’s feelings (e.g. I’m frustrated that ...”), asking for clarification (e.g. What part seems most ...) and offering help (e.g. “Is there anything else...”). Students were also given a checklist to correct errors and manage task.

### *Instrument*



It was decided that the online meetings will be based on a naturalistic environment with no intervention by the instructors. The minutes of the initial meeting documents, minutes of the meeting and position paper were subjected to revisions via Google Docs. The instructor had access to all documents and could comment.

## Data Analysis

The study used both the LFP from *Lextutor* and *AntConc*, a freeware multiplatform tool for carrying out the analysis. A total of 90 files of 800 words (totaling 76862 words) were analyzed. The students' productive vocabulary was analyzed through the LFP after all the proper nouns and punctuations were removed. For this study the neo-classic (NGSL) wordlist comprising the new academic wordlist (NAWL), the TOEIC service list (TSL) and Business Service list (BSL) were used. A vocabulary item containing a minor error, if it did not distort the meaning, were accepted as a word but incorrect words and codes witching / Malay words were omitted. In terms of word type and family, a vocabulary item if used more than once was counted as one for type and a word was considered to come from a single family if the words shared the same root word. *AntConc* was chosen because it contained several tools (e.g. concordance tool, concordance plot, wordlist, cluster grammar tools, collocate tool, key word list and word list) that made it easier to track word use, frequency and occurrence in words during actual interactions. In the actual analysis, 18 target words as single words and phrases were listed beforehand as in Table 1. The words were taken from Xue and Nation's (1984) 2K word frequency levels and 3K word level.

Table 1: Selection of target words

First 1K words	Second 1K words	Third 1K words
<i>appear, consider, deal, expect, inform</i>	<i>accuse, argue, assume, deserve, maintain, seek</i>	<i>acknowledge, communicate, disagree, intervene, negative</i>

For this study, the first 1K words were considered basic vocabulary and an increase at the second and third 1K word level was seen as lexical development.

## *Writing Assignment*

This was a 30-minute writing task which students had to write and submit online on two occasions. The pre-writing activity required learners to talk about workplace harassment after discussing the newspaper article on the subject. To provide opportunity for all subjects to begin with sufficient background, all students were required to read and discuss the topic in class thirty minutes before the writing session. The three online meetings were about taking a stand on sexual harassment at workplace. The post writing assignment was a report about decisions taken at the meeting about curbing sexual harassment at the workplace.

A native speaker trained in the teaching of ESL judged the writings and found the words and author's voice in the post writing to be more earnest and genuine compared to the pre writing. Sentence syntax and overall expressions were said to be coherent and cohesive.

## **Results**

A comparison of the vocabulary scores was obtained by running the various writings and interactions using repeated measures, independent t-test and the alpha level 0.05 was used. Due to the uneven number of single words (tokens), their scores are not reported separately and statistical test was performed for the three modes of online interaction namely pre writing – online writing – post writing. Fifteen group were randomly selected. Each student was given a number 1-60 and every 4<sup>th</sup> students group interaction was included in the analysis. In the event of the subject being already in a previous group, the next number was included.

## **Levels and word types**

Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics for the study. In terms of differences in word families and word type for the prewriting and post writing task, approximately 64 to 206 families with a mean average of 130.13 families and SD (45.676) were used for the prewriting task was used. The word families in post writing ranged from 139 to 410 families

with a mean of 323.47 (SD=72.178) showing a rise in the families and types of words used.

Table 2. Mean of Word Types and Families

		Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Prewriting	family	68	206	130.13	45.67
	type	77	241	150.67	55.23
	token	123	564	299.47	143.79
online interactions	family	232	367	289.53	47.06
	type	284	458	361.80	58.42
	token	854	1718	1146.93	274.36
Post Writing	family	139	410	323.47	72.17
	type	169	511	409.47	91.77
	token	342	1297	1097.13	293.24

N=45

Table 3 provides the mean distribution according to the three types of interaction.

Table 3. Mean Percentage of Word Levels used in the Online Interactions

Group		Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Prewriting	k1	65.00	85.52	75.42	5.46
	k2	6.18	17.11	12.34	3.76
	k3	3.22	15.00	6.68	2.81
	Others	.00	5.34	2.13	1.32
online interactions	k1	78.52	85.14	81.79	1.92
	k2	5.68	10.57	8.96	1.43
	k3	3.66	7.01	5.05	1.20
	Others	.70	5.15	1.77	1.05
Post Writing	k1	70.31	77.85	73.31	2.27
	k2	6.85	14.62	11.53	1.98
	k3	4.68	9.38	7.23	1.20
	Others	1.11	6.83	4.23	1.92

N=45

K1=1<sup>st</sup> 1000 words, K2=2<sup>nd</sup> 1000 words, K3 =3<sup>rd</sup> 1000 words, Others= Beyond 4<sup>th</sup> 1000 – 2500 words

In terms of word used in online interactions and writings, distribution of the words according to percentage for 1k-2k-3K were for prewriting – approximately 75% – 12% – 7% – 2%, online interactions 81% – 9% – 5% – 2% and post writing at 73%, 12%, 7% and 4%. There was a drop for the first 1K words and 2<sup>nd</sup> 1K words but an increase at the 3K level. Table 4 meanwhile compares the strength of relationship

in terms of word use for the various levels. The paired sample correlation showed an inverse correlation for the first and second 1K level for all three categories of online writing. However, there was a positive correlation between the online interactions and the post writings.

Table 4. Correlation between Pre and Post Writings

Group			N	Correlation	Sig.
Prewriting	Pair 1	k1 & k2	15	-.753	.001
	Pair 2	k2 & k3	15	.171	.543
	Pair 3	k1 & k3	15	-.532	.041
online interactions	Pair 1	k1 & k2	15	-.842	.000
	Pair 2	k2 & k3	15	.616	.015
	Pair 3	k1 & k3	15	-.684	.005
Post Writing	Pair 1	k1 & k2	15	-.632	.011
	Pair 2	k2 & k3	15	.086	.761
	Pair 3	k1 & k3	15	.011	.970

Table 5 compares mean differences between the various vocabulary levels for the various interactions. The Sig. (2 Tailed) value is 0.000 and this allows us to conclude that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean percentage for the K1, K2 and K3 levels and the differences are not due to chance.

Table 5. Mean Percentage of Word Use in Online Interactions

			Mean	SD	SEM	t	df	Sig (2T)
Prewriting	P1	k1 - k2	63.08	8.66	2.23	28.19	14	.000
	P2	k2 - k3	5.65	4.29	1.10	5.09	14	.000
	P3	k1 - k3	68.73	7.36	1.90	36.15	14	.000
online interactions	P1	k1 - k2	72.83	3.22	.83	87.43	14	.000
	P2	k2 - k3	3.91	1.17	.30	12.90	14	.000
	P3	k1 - k3	76.74	2.88	.74	103.08	14	.000
Post Writing	P1	k1 - k2	61.77	3.84	.99	62.19	14	.000
	P2	k2 - k3	4.30	2.22	.57	7.47	14	.000
	P3	k1 - k3	66.07	2.56	.66	99.84	14	.000

N=45

## Contribution of Peer Feedback to Learners accurate Language Use over Time

The analysis of the learners' interaction revealed peer correction to be few and related to content. Content management and error correction were common forms of peer revision as indicated in (2) and for clarification as in (3) below. Students were polite in the beginning. Most questions or concerns were quickly settled/accepted without much debate and interactions were extremely polite.

Peer feedback on content and negotiation of meaning and content.

### (2) Text ON13

Arine: ... *I think we should **consider** to give the victims an alternative job position if they are harassed. However, I agree with you because we need to **consider** space and suitability. We should increase the number of agencies for people to lodge a complaint if they feel insecure. Do you agree with what I **consider**?*

Chairperson: *I believe that what you **consider** is an excellent ideas. Do you mean involving outside agencies? However, I think that less people knowing about this would be better for the victim. I am sure a better solution will **appear** if we discuss further.*

In exchange (2) the word consider appears in four instances but there is effort to vary word use. Students were also quick to jump into another topic when there is a disagreement as indicated in (3) below:

### (3) The use of the word seem in a disagreement

#### Text OM18

Chairperson: *How does Friday in two weeks' time sound to everyone? Let's meet to discuss this matter at the same time, 2 o'clock. Does it **seem** OK for everyone?*

Secretary : *No one **seems** to be opposing that matter, Mr Harith.*

Treasurer: *No one **seems** to oppose does not mean everyone agrees.*

Chairperson : *Let's not pick on this matter. We need to meet and it appears like we can meet next Friday. A group photo will be taken for the purpose of documentation. Please remember to dress appropriately.*

Treasurer: *We cannot assume everyone can come because some **seem** to be absent. Why are we talking about photos?*

Chairperson : *Never mind. It **seems** that the others have come to a consensus. That concludes the formal part of our meeting. The formal meeting is adjourned.*

In exchange (4) and (5), error correction is dealt with immediately without much argument or ended without discussing it.

#### (4) Peer Correction.

##### Text OM 18

Chairperson : *Before that, can we go through the last minutes of the meetings? Anyone got questions or comments?*

Welfare Officer: *I am not happy with the many language errors in last minutes. I **acknowledge** that it is difficult to write minutes but more care should be given to grammar.*

Chairperson : *Great then. Where do you find the mistake?*

Welfare Officer: *You are saying we go through it now? I disagree that we discuss each mistake now because this takes time. Maybe we can take turns to edit the language mistake.*

Chairperson: *Excellent. Now we start on our first agenda that is to locate the suitable ways for helping staff with complaints. Are there any addition or corrections for this ?*

#### (5) Text FB 19: Peer correction dealing with language accuracy

Mintra: *I have to disagree with you. It think it is "the company informs" in section three.*

Fitya : *Yes, I am agree with you. Is it because of the word budget in front.*

*Mintra: Not that. The company is singular, so the verb has an 's'.*

## Discussion

The data confirmed that the subjects' vocabulary levels for the 2K and 3K levels did increase following the online interaction. Regarding the first research question as to whether there was a change in the levels and types of words used in online writing classes over time, it was found that the online interaction encouraged students to work with a wider variety of vocabulary and this contributed to an increase in receptive vocabulary becoming active vocabulary for the learners. There was an increase of 71 word families in the post writing. As for word levels, there was a slight increase for the second and third 1000 word level suggesting that vocabulary size, levels and families do increase during online interaction.

The distribution of percentage of words from 75% – 12% – 7% – 2% to 73%, 12%, 7% and 4% is also reflective of the fact that increased interaction can contribute to a higher awareness of the second and third level words which can be translated to actual word use as indicated in the study. The paired sample correlation showed improved LFP and LV which could be seen as overall improvement in the writings. The study was also able to show that writing on topics related to the reading material help learners focus on the target words, allows peers to work on the same context and use contextually appropriate words. This study supports Lee's (2003) findings and adds weight to Cummin and Swain's (1986), Swain (1995) and de La Fuente's (2000) call for output in writing interactions. It is important for instructors to plan from the beginning to place an emphasis on words, grammar, and accuracy to get learners to develop both writing skills and communicative competence.

In terms of error correction, it was evident from the study that peer correction when systematically carried out can become a part of the learning environment. It was evident that content management and task completion were the primary focus, and students though polite were not very comfortable when their errors or a negative remark was provided. Error correction appears to be less popular. It might be necessary for

instructors to get learners to understand that peer correction is necessary for learners to develop their writing skills. Learners also need to be reminded that being L2 learners, their vocabulary tend to be small and they need to expand their vocabulary knowledge by working with peers to produce focused sentences, use more words by reading and listening to words being used widely and learn to reuse familiar words in different ways. This is in line with Long's (1996) suggestion that speaking and writing partners in the L2 environment can beside providing comprehensible input, facilitate learner output through meaning negotiation and error correction.

## **CONCLUSION**

The whole case study took place for five weeks with approximately 10 hours being devoted to it in class. The instructors succeeded in increasing the students' vocabulary and communicative competence by providing opportunities for students to interact online and to construct their own learning experience. Obviously, giving students opportunity to manage their own learning, make modifications, and see them in print alongside their peers efforts will provide greater confidence to learners. Running through some of the online discussions and reports through a concordancer revealed that students were using the basic forms e.g. agree (as opposed to agrees, agreement, agreeing,) and learners could have been taught to vary their words more convincingly to get their message across. It is possible that the students were not aware of the missing inflections. The use of the online meeting format via Google Docs enabled the students to see the general flow of conversation more vividly and take stock of the situation, which in turn favored more constructive ideas and views, since more students had time to think and participate. The case study approach also helped narrow the gap between theory and practice by making connections between knowledge and practice. In addition, they worked well with the learning styles of adult learners (Jackson, 1996). Drawbacks if any would be that case studies like these fall among the more difficult strategies to be used (Esteban & Perez, 2004; Boyd, 1991) but given the enhanced features of modern day technology and research tools, the insights can prove to be interesting.



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