

Chapter 10

English Journal Writing on Moodle for EFL College Learners: An Investigation of English Self- Efficacy and Writing Performance

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ABSTRACT

The present study is to explore the effect of Moodle English journal writing for general purposes on language learners' writing performance, conjunction preferences and English self-efficacy. Self-efficacy, claimed by a large number of researchers, has a direct and powerful influence on learners' academic accomplishments. However, there is little research on enhancing the level of English self-efficacy and writing performance through keeping E-journals, particularly in an EFL context where the learners develop both native and foreign languages and cultures. Multiculturalism should be taken into consideration before language curricula are designed. The participants, in the study, 40 non-English-majored college students in Taiwan, were required to keep a journal through Moodle. The findings of the study reveal that the participants' general perceived English abilities and writing confidence were enhanced after their efforts on Moodle E-journal writing. From the pieces of writing, they present both characteristics of the native and target languages and cultures.

INTRODUCTION

With the fast-growing popularity of computer-assisted language learning, learners' output does not just happen in a traditional face-to-face context, but quite often on cyberspace. On cyberspace, language learners are provided with a more equitable platform for discussion (Warschauer, 1996); moreover, they interact more with each other (Al-Fadda & Al-Yahya, 2010; Chun, 1994; De Andres Martinez, 2012;

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Ducate & Lomicka, 2008; Elola, 2010; Goertler, 2009; Huang, 2013; Kern, 1995; Kuzu, 2007; Lin, Zheng, & Zhang, 2016; Sharma, Ke, & Xie, 2010; Shih, 2013; Warschauer, 2009; Yang, 2009). Zheng and Warschauer (2015) conducted a study investigating English learners' participation and interaction patterns in an online discussion environment; in the study, the participants wrote English on their blogs and also made comments on their peer's blogs. The results showed that the learners' participation and interaction were significantly enhanced after a year-long experimental study. Among online educational technology, Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment (Moodle), a course management system, which has been widely applied to different school subjects, levels of institutions, and experimental instruments, stands out as one of the main and primary online platforms for school teachers and students (Suvorov, 2010; Stanley, 2007) because of its easy-to-use layouts and functions (Su, 2005). With its multiple functions, Moodle is served as a virtual classroom in which teachers could share handouts, make announcements, hold tests, calculate scores, hold discussions, and so forth (Al Naddabi, 2007). Participating in a virtual classroom, learners could possibly lower their anxiety of facing teacher figures or peers, build up their confidence in using a target language, and increase motivation to learning. Environments, based on the perspectives of Social Cognitive Theory and Sociocultural Theory, play a significant role in learning. Besides environments, learners' personal factors and behaviors are also interacted with each other.

Humans, rooted within Bandura's conceptions (1995), are equipped with the distinctive abilities to "symbolize, plan alternative strategies (forethought), learn through vicarious experience, self-regulate, and self-reflect" (Pajares, 2008, p.112). With these abilities, humans would be able to determine their own fortune in which they are actively engaged and moreover, by their own actions, they can make things happen. Self-efficacy beliefs, as defined by Bandura (1995, p.2), are "the beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations." In other words, once people have the confidence in themselves to produce the desired outcomes, they will have the motive and incentive to perform the action and to continue doing so even in the face of difficulties or adversity. While facing difficult tasks, people with a higher level of self-efficacy take them as challenges and they would do their best to cope with them (Bandura, 1989, 1997; Bandura & Adams, 1977; Cervone & Wood, 1995). As a result, self-efficacy has a direct and powerful influence on whether or not individuals accomplish their goals (Pajares, 2008). The accomplishments could be in academic contexts where students complete a school task and believe that their efforts succeed.

In sum, the inter-relationship among behavioral, personal, and environmental factors, according to Bandura (1986), makes it possible for educators to help students improve their academic performance, as well as self-confidence, in learning. The learning or academic performance could be influenced more by self-efficacy than other motivational beliefs or other competence-related perceptions (Bandura, 1997; Hwang et al, 2016; Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1987; Pajares, 1996; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996; Valentine, DuBois, & Cooper, 2004). Therefore, perceived self-efficacy could be applied to predict subsequent actions or behaviors related to learning and performance (Schunk & Meece, 2005). Successful learners with a higher level of self-efficacy would be more able to regulate their behaviors and to accomplish different tasks, even challenging ones (Fong & Yuen, 2016; Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1984; Schunk, 1991, 2008; Zimmerman, 1989, 1990; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990). High-ability learners, generally speaking, would feel more efficacious about their performance than low-ability learners do (Schunk & Meece, 2005); the ones with higher levels of self-perceived competence could positively influence learning motivation, further leading to better academic performance (Liu, Ye, & Yeung, 2015).

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