

# **STUDENTS' USE OF ASYNCHRONOUS DISCUSSIONS FOR ACADEMIC DISCOURSE SOCIALIZATION** BY GULBAHAR H. BECKETTA, CARLA AMARO-JIMÉNEZ AND KELVIN S. BECKETT

Article reviewed by Theresa Conlon

# Summary

- The authors explored the role of online asynchronous discussion (OAD) in graduate level hybrid courses in which master's and doctoral students were enrolled.
- The authors were interested in the perceptions of the students and focused on different experiences for native English speakers and non-native English speakers.
- Overall, students had largely positive perceptions of OADs. They enjoyed building an online community, felt they had increased interactions with peers, and felt that it gave an opportunity for people who are shy in a face-to-face discussion to have a voice.
- One non-native English speaker remarked that the OADs provided an 'ultimately richer learning environment' because the online setting reduced cultural and linguistic barriers, and students did not have to worry about pronunciation and listening comprehension skills.
- While non-native English speakers thought the OADs were helpful in improving their writing skills, native English speakers did not think they were helpful in improving writing skills.
- Students liked the flexibility of the OADs in that they have time to think about a topic and spend time focusing their thoughts. They thought the OADs were a good complement to face-to-face discussions and thought they were a good venue for practicing academic jargon.
- Students were disappointed when they perceived that there was a lack of participation of other students and some felt discouraged by a lack of participation by the professor.
- Students also felt that there were insufficient guidelines for discussions and thought that the discussion posts should be graded.

# Reaction

- I found this to be an interesting article especially since I am enrolled in an online class in which the discussions on Blackboard are the main forum for communication within the class. Before reading this article, I had not really thought much about how the online experience would be different for students who are not native English speakers, but it seems like these students enjoy this type of communication. Non-native English speakers also became more familiar with American academic culture. Some students had been unfamiliar with American ways of giving feedback, but they learned to adapt. One issue mentioned in the article but not really explored was the role of the professor in the online discussions. The authors mentioned that since these were hybrid classes that the professors might have been actively involved in classroom discussions but were not interested in the online discussions. They also hypothesized that the professors might have felt that master's and doctoral level students were capable of managing the discussions themselves. Overall, I found the findings of the authors to be very similar to my own experiences with online discussions in that they are a beneficial element in a course and provide a good forum for people to share their experiences and ideas.

# Reference

Gulbahar H. Becketta, Carla Amaro-Jiménez and Kelvin S. Beckett (2010). Students' use of asynchronous discussions for academic discourse socialization. *Distance Education*, 31(3), 315-335. doi: 10.1080/01587919.2010.513956