

Putting Computer-Mediated Communication in Practice in the EFL Classroom: Instructors' and Students' Experiences at Employing Web 2.0 Technologies for an Advanced English Language Course at the University of Cyprus

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Abstract

This study explores the practices and experiences of university EFL instructors and students on the application and effectiveness of computer-mediated communication (CMC) in the EFL classroom. An advanced English language course was designed in such a way that, besides class time, Web 2.0 technologies (wikis, blogs and Blackboard) were employed both as a means of student-student and student-instructor interaction as well as a means of continuous course assessment. This qualitative study included semi-structured individual and group interviews with all students and instructors, conducted after the course was finished; continuous feedback was also gathered via a blog which ran throughout the course. Feedback revolved around (a) instructors' experiences in designing the course, in applying CMC as part of the course and in employing CMC as part of assessing students and, (b) students' experiences in dealing with CMC for this language course and their views on its advantages and drawbacks. Data were transcribed and analyzed following the Miles and Huberman (1994) model of interview data analysis. There were a number of suggestions which included, inter alia, further training of both instructors and students in CMC, use of language-specific programs, and more user-friendly virtual environments. Suggestions were also made as to how putting CMC into practice in the EFL classroom could improve. The overall conclusion is that while there is general consensus that CMC can be put in great use in the foreign language classroom, not everyone feels comfortable using it because it is a relatively innovative development, because of a lack of training, and also because some instructors/students are accustomed to more traditional learning methods.