



## **Multilingual, Multicultural, and Multidisciplinary? - ICT is the Solution.**

**Arna Peretz**

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (Israel)

[aperetz@bgu.ac.il](mailto:aperetz@bgu.ac.il)

### **Abstract**

The rapid developments in information and communication technologies (ICT), the multitude of Web-based tools available to institutions of learning, and the ever-increasing technical skills of students continue to change the ways in which we teach and learn. In this paper I describe the incorporation and role of ICT in graduate-level scientific/academic writing courses at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel. The graduate students in these courses are multilingual and multicultural non-native speakers of English from a wide range of disciplines. The underlying premise of the course, that writing is interactive and social in nature and that form and function interact in real-world writing, and its effect on course format and the decision to incorporate ICT as an integral part of the course, will be discussed. The use and integration of computer-mediated communication (CMC), including such electronic discourses as email and Powerpoint, one-on-one writing consultancies via email, on-screen marking using such techniques as color-coding, the comment function and editing tool, and email submission of written assignments, will be described. Another aspect of the multilingual, multicultural, and multidisciplinary writing courses, a novel use of asynchronous online forum discussions and their role in promoting interaction/communication between course participants will be examined. "Conversational" forums were integrated into the writing courses at the request of students who wanted to be able to talk or chat with each other on subjects unrelated to the writing course and their particular disciplines. Drawing on student evaluations, I examine whether such forums, conducted in an open, non-threatening, and 'faceless' environment, truly enhance conversation between course participants. Finally, the many advantages of online communication, including how information technology can contribute to satisfying students' demands for personal relevance and to solving such problems as multilingual and multicultural classes, multidisciplinary groups, and mixed classes of Masters and PhD students, will be explained.