

Applying Computer-Mediated Collaborative Learning into English Foreign Language Classrooms at a Vietnamese University

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

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DEDICATIONS

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, my husband and my daughter, who are my heart and inspiration.

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ABSTRACT

From the sociocultural perspective, as learning is viewed as a process of collaboration, this research investigates how the mediational tool, computer-mediated communication, assists English foreign language students to learn collaboratively. The research emphasises the efficiency of this application in supporting collaborative learning in English foreign language classrooms in Vietnam, in terms of enhancing learning outcomes, and learners' and teachers' attitudes towards the application. A multi-case study is conducted with English foreign language teachers and students from different faculties of a university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; three different treatments, including collaborative learning with computer-mediated communication, face-to-face collaborative learning, and traditional teaching methods, are examined within a semester. A number of data collection instruments including classroom observation, questionnaires, tests, peer reviews, group discussions and interviews, are designed to collect multi-type data from multiple resources.

Findings from the research have confirmed the positive impacts of computer-mediated communication on collaborative learning, in which learners participate actively in learning, and become more responsible and autonomous for their own learning. With its unique features, computer-mediated communication is shown to foster learners' participation and interaction and thus encourage collaboration. Significantly, both learners and teachers have positive attitudes towards this application, and would like to encourage it more in their future classes. Though fewer students participated in learning activities with computer-mediated communication than in face-to-face collaborative learning modes, and more students have positive attitudes towards face-to-face collaborative learning than computer-mediated communication, there is evidence that computer-mediated communication offers English foreign language learners opportunities for learning that are not

possible in face-to-face collaborative learning mode or other traditional practices. Practically, computer-mediated communication provides learners more opportunities for communication among peers, to learn outside the classroom and to access authentic sources of knowledge and information on the Internet.

However, computer-mediated communication has been found to affect the learning of different students in different ways, as learners from the social sciences and humanities group and business-finance-economics group participated more and have more positive attitudes towards computer-mediated communication practices than those from the technological science group. Furthermore, it cannot accommodate all language skills and thus cannot fulfil all English foreign language learners' needs. Therefore, computer-mediated communication is suggested, not to replace, but to blend with other face-to-face teaching and learning practices, to ensure all learning demands are met, and teachers and learners are able to enjoy all benefits from both computer-mediated communication and face-to-face collaborative learning.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACMC	Asynchronous Computer-Mediated Communication
CALL	Computer-Assisted Language Learning
CL	Collaborative Learning
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CMC	Computer-Mediated Communication
CMCL	Computer-Mediated Collaborative Learning
EFL	English Foreign Language
FTF	Face-to-Face
FTFCL	Face-to-Face Collaborative Learning
ICT	Information Communication Technology
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
SCMC	Synchronous Computer-Mediated Communication
SCT	Sociocultural Theory
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
ZCD	The Zone of Current Development
ZPD	The Zone of Proximal Development