Project: Case Studies on How Chinese English Learners in Hong Kong Secondary Schools Mediate Automated Content Feedback and Related Contextual Learning Elements for Essay Writing: Implications for Pedagogy

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Abstract:

Twelve male and female Secondary 3 and 4 students who represented high, mid and low English proficiency levels from two government-aided secondary schools in Hong Kong participated in the research. Drawing on the Activity Theory and adopting the Essay Critiquing System (ECS2.0), an immediate and personalized feedback system on writing ideas, concurrent verbal and stimulated recall protocols, videotaped writing processes (drafts were shown on the computer screen) and interview data were collected from three workshops with a view to studying how the students mediated automated content feedback, and how other learning factors influenced writing.

Videotaped recordings and verbal reports showed that the three groups of participants frequently clicked the feedback button of the System. They initiated actions to mediate content feedback they received from the System, ranging from reading the covered or suggested arguments and related sentences in their texts, seeking additional topic-related information and language assistance (both English and Chinese) from the Internet, to editing and revising drafts. Their stimulated recall protocols affirmed that the participants expressed concern over writing ideas (i.e., content and what to write), followed by language use (i.e., how to express). The interview data revealed that learning motives, writing practice at schools, timing, and topic instructions also influenced their writing and mediated the system input. More importantly, the mediating process could be affected by individual preference, awareness and language needs. Finally, pedagogical recommendations on the application of the ECS2.0 or similar computer-generated feedback system are made.