

TBLT and SCMC: How Do Students Use Communication Strategies?

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Recent research has highlighted the valuable role that synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC) can play in second language learning. While the advantages of using SCMC for second language communication opportunities are well documented, little is known about how students engage in tasks via SCMC. The current study examines the communication strategies (CS) used to promote and manage communication in an SCMC-based group discussion task in the context of a Malaysian tertiary EFL class for engineering students. The findings reveal that, although the pattern of use is different from that found in previous studies of CS in face-to-face communication, CS are frequently used in the SCMC-based task indicating that SCMC can provide a rich and communicatively challenging environment for task engagement. These results emphasize the importance of the careful development and use of communicative tasks in SCMC to promote language practice.

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is increasingly common in academic and professional communication. Warschauer (1998) claimed that, for one to be considered a proficient second language (L2) learner, s/he needs the ability “to read, write and communicate in an electronic environment” (p. 757). CMC occurs in two modes: asynchronous (ACMC) and synchronous (SCMC). ACMC (e.g., e-mail or forum) involves delayed interaction which allows extra time for composing and editing before posting to the public. Studies of ACMC have generally found that, because of the lack of time pressure, ACMC output tends to be