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Yanyan Sun

Teresa Franklin

Fei Gao
Bowling Green State University, gaof@bgsu.edu

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Learning Outside of Classroom: Exploring the Active Part of an Informal Online English Learning Community in China

Yanyan Sun
Ohio University

Teresa Franklin
Ohio University

Fei Gao
Bowling Green State University

Abstract
This study explored how the GRE Analytical Writing Section Discussion Forum, an informal online language learning community in China, functioned to support its members to improve their English writing proficiency. The Community of Inquiry (CoI) model was used as the theoretical framework to explore the existence of teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence in the GRE Analytical Writing Section Discussion Forum. The transcript analysis of postings in the GRE Analytical Writing Section Discussion Forum was used to find the existence of teaching, cognitive presence, and social presence, and an adapted CoI survey was sent to members to measure their perceived teaching, cognitive, and social presences. The results showed strong evidences of teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence, and high levels of perceived teaching, cognitive, and social presences in the GRE Analytical Writing Section Discussion Forum. The well-designed technological environment, distributed teaching presence shared by moderators and members, and extensive evidences of social presence in the discussion forum worked together to support learning in the GRE Analytical Writing Section Discussion Forum.

Introduction

Informal online learning communities are emergent trends in the Internet (Thompson, 2011). An online learning community is a place in the Internet, which addresses the learning needs of its members by facilitating interactions among them (Cook & Smith, 2004; Zhan, Xu, & Ye, 2011). In online learning communities, people share knowledge via Internet-based media (Cook & Smith, 2004). While many online learning communities are built to support formal learning within the classroom, a growing number of informal learning communities are emerging to provide support

for informal learning outside of classrooms (Gray, 2004; Richards & Tangney, 2008; Salavuo, 2006; Thompson, 2011). In informal online learning communities, people communicate with each other via Internet and discuss topics that they are interested. Members join the informal online learning communities for difference purposes and volunteer their contributions.

However, informal online learning communities are not as extensively studied as formal online learning communities. With the growth of informal online learning communities and their increasing impacts on people's learning, it is important to understand how such communities support and encourage learning as it could provide insights on building successful formal online learning communities.

The purpose of this study is to understand how the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum, a sub discussion forum in China's most popular informal online learning community, supports its members to improve their English writing proficiency. Secondly, this study intends to propose pedagogical implications for both informal and formal online learning communities in educational settings, and how they can be leveraged to support structured educational practice.

Informal Online Learning Communities

Informal online learning communities help people who share a common interest but being geographically isolated to make connections with each other (Dieleman & Duncan, 2013; Groth & Bergner, 2007). This kind of online learning communities are usually not supported by any formal educational institutions. People in the Internet gather to form informal online learning communities for different purposes.

Seeking peer advice for their music was a primary reason for members in an informal online learning community of musicians to participate (Salavuo, 2006). People also participate in informal online learning communities to make connections with peers and to learn useful work-related skills. For example, a group of self-employed workers tended to fit into an informal online community to figure out a way of creating connections and learning, although not always successful (Thompson, 2011). In an online learning community of 43 coordinators of Alberta Community Adult Community Adult Learning Councils, the initial motivation for members to join was to help offsetting the isolation of their work environments (Gray, 2004). Members continued to participate in that online community because of the opportunity to learn useful work skills and the professional connections to colleges (Gray, 2004).

A Framework for Evaluating Learning in a Computer-Mediated Environment

The community of Inquiry (CoI) model is a conceptual model proposed by Garrison Anderson and Archer (1999). The model is designed to provide a framework to observe how to use computer conference and computer-media communication to support educational experiences. The model of CoI is based on the assumption that learning occurs within a computer-mediated community when three essential elements interact with each other. According to the model, the three core elements that affect learning in a CoI are: cognitive presence, social presence and teaching presence.

Cognitive presence is concerned with to what extent learners in a CoI are able to construct meaning collaboratively, and is the core concept that defines a community of inquiry. It focuses on higher-order thinking, which is both a process and an outcome (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2001). Garrison et al. (2001) define four phases of cognitive presence: triggering events, exploration, integration, and resolution.

Garrison et al. (2001) conceptualize teaching presence as having three components: instructional design and organization, facilitating discourse and direct instruction. Teaching presence is essential to establish and support social and cognitive presence (Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, & Fung, 2010; Akyol & Garrison, 2008). The absence of teaching presence might have negative effects on the integration and resolution phases of cognitive presence (Kanuka et al., 2007).

The indicators of social presence are "affective expression, open communication and group cohesion" (Garrison et al., 2001, p. 89), which are all related to trust. In a CoI, social presence is mediating aspect between teaching and cognitive presence, which provides context for the learning process (Garrison et al., 2010). Although social presence alone cannot guarantee critical discourse in online environment, it is the foundation to make it occurs (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007). Social presence is related to perceived learning (Caspi & Blau, 2008; So & Brush, 2008). A low level of social presence could result in students' reluctance in challenging others' ideas and fear of rejection when offering tentative solution or hypotheses, which all have

negative effects on achieving high level of cognitive presence (Garrison et al., 2001; Kanuka et al., 2007; Ke, 2010).

The CoI Survey

Arbaugh et al. (2008) developed a CoI survey instrument to measure each of the presences and their inter-relationships. The CoI survey has 34 items. Each item has a statement about one of the three presences for participants to rate. Participants are asked to rate their experience in the CoI using a five Likert-point scale, in which the values selected by the participant indicate a level of agreement. Arbaugh et al. (2008) tested the survey with 287 participants from four different institutions and confirmed its validity and reliability. The Cronbach's Alpha of items for teaching presence, social presence and cognitive presence were .94, .88, and .93 respectively in the survey. A Principal Components Analysis approach was used to verify the three-subscale (teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence) structure of the 34 items in the original CoI survey (Arbaugh et al, 2008).

This instrument has been widely accepted, and adapted in many studies to examine the three presence in various CoIs. The CoI survey has been sent to participants to measure their perceived teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence as well as exploring the inner relationship among them (Arbaugh et al, 2010; Garrison, Cleveland-Innes & Fung, 2010; Hosler & Arend, 2012;Nagel, Kotz & Theuns, 2010).

Research Questions

Though researchers has showed interests in informal online learning communities, the current literature focuses more on learners' perceptions, such as their motivations and intentions to participate in informal learning communities (Gray, 2004; Salavuo, 2006; Thompson, 2011). Limited research has been conducted to explore the learning process in informal online learning communities nor how they function to support learning. This study was conducted to explore how a sub discussion forum in the Jituo online learning community in China, the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum, supports its members to improve English writing proficiency.

To capture members' learning experience, the researchers decided to focus on the active discussion threads with a large number of replies as those are the places where intensive interaction and learning occurs. Focusing on the active part of the discussion forum instead of the sections where little interaction happens could provide us useful insights on how the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum supports its members to learn.

The study selected the CoI model as theoretical framework to examine the learning process in the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum because it provided a framework to observe the learning process in the computer-mediated environment. Based on the framework, the following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence exist in the active part of GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum?

2.   What are members' perceptions on teaching presence, cognitive presence and

social presence in the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum?

Methods

The Setting of the Study

The Jituo online learning community was started by Guangzhou Jiuwei

Educational Technology Ltd. in 2002. The purpose of the Jituo online learning

community is to provide an online environment for people in China who seek higher

education overseas to exchange information and discuss related topics. The Jituo

online learning community is based on a series of threaded discussion forums on

different topics. To date, the Jituo online learning community has 1,230,240 members

and a total number of 10,196,584 postings (Guangzhou Jiuwei Educational

Technology Ltd., 2014). In 2012, the Educational Test Service (ETS) announced the

Jituo online learning community as their only invited media partner in China, and

published their official GRE test preparation video for the new test version in Jituo

(Wu, 2012）.

The Jituo online learning community is an open public online community to all

people from the Internet. Postings in the Jituo online learning community are

available to all visitors. In order to post in the discussion forum, a Jituo account is

required. A valid email address and a user ID are the only requirements to apply for a

Jituo account. A valid Jituo account can be used to post in all discussion forums in the

Jituo online learning community. Members of the Jituo online learning community

post in discussion forums on a voluntary basis. There are several moderators in each

discussion forum in the Jituo online learning community to make rules for participation and to moderate the activities, who are volunteers from members in the discussion forums.

The GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum (see Figure 1 & Figure 2) is a discussion forum under the GRE preparation section in the Jituo online learning community. It is a discussion forum for members who are preparing for the GRE Analytical Writing Section and/or want to improve their English writing proficiency. It is one of the language tests preparation discussion forums in the Jituo online learning community. It is famous among GRE test takers in China as one of the earliest platforms to share information and prepare for GRE Analytical Writing Section (Wu, 2012). The purpose of the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum is to help its members to improve their English writing proficiency. Figure 3 demonstrated the process when a post occurs in the GRE Analytical Section Discussion Forum.

--Figure 1---

--Figure 2---

--Figure 3---

The present study selected popular discussion threads on the front page (Table 1) as sample to explore the evidence of teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence in the active part of GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum. The discussion forum organizes discussion threads based on the recent reply. Any discussion thread that receives a new reply automatically goes to the top of the

discussion forum on the front page. As a result, popular and active discussion threads are more likely to be displayed in the front page as they receive replies more frequently than the unpopular discussion themes.

The researchers monitored discussions in the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum from March 2014, to May 2014. On the 1st and 2nd days of each month, two popular discussion threads were selected on the front page of the discussion forum. On each day of observation, the researcher visited the forum and recorded the first top two threads in the main discussion area. To filter the unpopular discussion threads that happened to appear at the top of the front page, only discussion threads that had more than 30 replies were selected. If the first top two threads had less than 30 replies, the researchers would automatically move to the threads below until the criteria had been met. In total, 12 popular discussion threads were selected as sample (Table 1).

--Table 1--

Transcript Analysis

Transcript analysis was used to explore the evidence of teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence in the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum.

A transcript analysis-coding scheme was adapted from the statements of the CoI survey developed by Arbaugh et al. (2008). To pilot the transcript analysis-coding scheme, one of the researchers and a second coder used the transcript analysis-coding

scheme to code the 161 postings in the GRE Writing Analysis Section Discussion

Forum separately. The Cohen's Kappa between the two coders for the pilot coding

was .88, which can be considered as almost perfect for the strength of agreement

according to Landis and Koch (1997).

Survey

The adapted CoI survey was used to explore members' perceived teaching

presence, social presence, and cognitive presence in the GRE Analytical Writing

Discussion Forum. The following changes were made to the original the CoI survey:

(1) The term 'the instructor' was replaced by 'moderators' or 'members'

because the responsibilities of teaching presence are shared by moderators

and members in the GRE Analytical Writing Section Discussion Forum.

(2) Item 3 'The instructor clearly communicated important due dates/time

frames for learning activities' was deleted because there is no due dates

nor time frames for learning activities in the GRE Analytical Writing

Section Discussion Forum.

(3) Item 4 'The instructor helped keep the course participants on task in a way

that helped me to learn' was deleted because there is no specific defined

task in the GRE Analytical Writing Section Discussion Forum.

(4) Item 9 "The instructor encouraged course participants to explore new

concepts in this course" was deleted because exploring new concepts in

the course was not applicable to the discussions in the GRE writing

composition test discussion forum.

(5) The specific term 'English writing' was used to replace the general terms in the original survey such as course objectives and the class.

The survey was translated into responders' first language, Mandarin Chinese, to obtain a higher response rate and to avoid misinterpretations. The survey had 39 items, and asked participants to rate their perceived teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence on a five Likert-point scale.

The technicians of the Jituo community located members who have posted in the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum since 2002. Then an email invitation to participate in the survey was sent to all members who were located in the first step. A total number of 2000 email invitation was sent out to the selected members in the Jituo community on April 15th, and a reminder was sent out to the same group of participants a week after the email invitation. In total, 25 responses were received. The coefficient of internal reliability for teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence in the survey is. 94, .93, .88.

The low response rate might result from the loose structure of the Jituo community. Members participated in the community on a voluntary basis, and were very likely choose to ignore the email sent from the community. In addition, the email invitation was sent to all members who had posted in the discussion forum since the community was built in 2002. It was possible that members in the early years were less likely to complete the survey because their memories about the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum were vague. In addition, it was possible that some members changed their e-mail addresses and did not received the invitation.

The low response rate made it difficult to know if the respondents were reflective of the target population, which was a limitation of this study. However, the results still had value for providing insights on members' perceptions as a supplementary data source to the transcript analysis.

Results

Teaching Presence, Cognitive Presence, and Social Presence in the Selected Discussion Threads

In total, 782 postings from the 12 selected discussion threads were coded to explore the evidence of teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence in the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum. Table 2 presents the distributions of indicators of the three presences in the coding.

For teaching presence, only 2.30 % (N = 18) of the 782 postings were coded into the instructional design and organization component. Twenty-six point zero eight (N = 204) of postings contained content that related to the facilitation component, and 14.45% (N = 113) postings were categorized into the direct instruction component.

For cognitive presence, the coding results showed that 10.35% (N = 81) of the 782 postings had indictors for the triggering event phase, 15.21% (N = 119) had indicators for the exploration phase, 13.17% (N = 103) had indicators for the integration phase, and 3. 45% (N = 27) had indicators for the resolution phase.

The coding results indicated extensive evidence of social presence in the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum. More than half of the postings had indicators for affective expression (63.04%, N = 493) and open communication (50.98%, N =

398). Four point ninety-nine percentages (N = 39) of the postings had indicators for group cohesion.

---Table 2---

Perceived Cognitive Presence, Teaching Presence, and Social Presence

Table 3 presents the means and standard deviations for each question. For teaching presence, questions for instructional design and organization had the highest average mean of 4.12. The average means for facilitation and direct feedback were 3.90 and 3.91. For social presence, all three components received high ratings. The average means for expression, open communication, and group cohesion were 4.12, 4.28, and 4.16. The same was true for cognitive presence. The average means for triggering event, exploration, integration, and resolution was 4.28, 4.28, 4.24, and 4.00.

---Table 3---

Discussion

Teaching Presence

In general, extensive evidence of teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence were found in the active part of the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum. The survey results indicated participants perceived the teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence in the discussion forum as high.

In the indicators of teaching presence, only a small proportion of postings in the 12 selected discussion threads were coded into instructional design and organization (2.3%). However, participants perceived high level of instructional design and

organization in the GRE Analytical Writing Section in terms of clear discussion topics, clear instructions, and rules for participation.

The low proportion of postings in instructional design and organization might result from the loose structure of the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum. In the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum, there is an About and Regulations Area above the main discussion area, listing the rules on the participation in discussions. In addition, discussion threads on how to participate in discussions were on the top of the discussion area as defaulted. Members are free to initiate discussions under the general rules and regulations of the discussion forum. Both moderator and members are responsible for discussion topics.

Without a per-determined curriculum and an organized structure, the learning in the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum has characteristics of informal learning, such as flexible, self-directed, and open-ended (Damnik et al., 2013; Eraut, 1998; Milheim, 2007; Lu & Carroll, 2007). Members in the discussion forum share a general goal of improving their English writing proficiency for the GRE Analytical Writing Section, and all discussions are based on members' individual learning needs. In this case, no specific learning activities are organized in the discussion forum.

The transcript analysis and survey results indicated the existence of distributed teaching presence (Coll et al., 2009) in the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum. Both members and moderators share responsibilities in facilitating discourses and providing direct feedback.

Although moderators take responsibilities in providing rules and instructions in discussions, the role of moderators are not equal to formal instructors. First, moderators take the role on a voluntary basis. Every member in the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum is able to apply for the moderator role, and moderators can leave the discussion forum whenever they want. Also, the authorization of moderators is not the same as formal instructors. Although moderators usually spend more time in the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum, they do not necessarily have higher English writing proficiency than every member in the discussion forum.

In this case, no authorized roles and imposed knowledge (Black, 2007) exists in the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum. Instead, interactions among participants build educational influence that contributes to social and cognitive processes in the discussion forum (Coll et al., 2009). The variety of participants in the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum provides ranges of expertise and knowledge resources (Black, 2007), which helps to build the teaching presence.

Cognitive Presence

The transcript analysis and survey results indicated evidence of cognitive presence in the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum. However, the number and proportion of postings in the resolution phase was much lower than in the other three phases. One possible reason for the low number of postings in the resolution phase might be the goal of discussions (Akyol & Garrison, 2008; Vaughan and Garrison, 2005). In the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum, no specific learning tasks are pre-determined and not every discussion threads seeks for a resolution. In addition,

it is possible that participants might apply the knowledge they have learned in online discussions to their English writing although they do not share it online. This could explain why participants reported high level of resolution phase in the survey.

Social Presence

In the transcript analysis extensive evidences of social presence were found in the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum. More than half (63.04%) of the 782 postings in the 12 selected discussion threads had indicators for affective expression (63.04%) and open communication (50.98%), which indicated participant were able to express their feelings and make respectful interactions. The survey results were consistent with the transcript analysis. Ratings for affective expression, open communication, and group cohesion were high.

The extensive evidence of social presence in the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum indicated participants were able to build identities and interpersonal relationships with each other via online communications (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007; Rogers & Lea, 2005). Although participants do not know each other in real life, they are able to build a sense of community via computer-mediated communications. Besides learning, high proportion of postings in the discussion forum focused on expressing personal feelings and sharing personal experience. The analysis of teaching presence in the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum showed that both the actions of members and moderators made contributions to reinforce the sense of community.

In addition, the Jituo community provides both synchronous and asynchronous interpersonal community system. It is possible that private communications among participants have positive effects on building the social presence in the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum.

Pedagogical Applications

The GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum is a successful online informal learning community that has evidence of teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence as well as high level of perceived teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence. The results of this study demonstrates that the CoI model is applicable in the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum, which indicates the applicability of the CoI model is not limited to formal educational settings. Also, the evidence of teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence implies that the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum functions as CoI to support learning process, which indicates that online collaborative learning is not limited to formal educational settings. How the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum supports learning as a CoI has several pedagogical applications for building CoIs in formal educational settings.

First, a well-designed collaborative environment is the foundation to support learning. A well-designed learning environment should be easy to navigate, user-friendly for learners with various technological proficiency, and have functions to support interactions among learners. Besides basic functions, optional functions

such as the ability to create digital identities and interpersonal message system might have positive effects to build social presence in a CoI (Harrison & Thomas, 2009).

Second, it is important to take advantages of the distributed expertise of leaners. In the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum, both members and moderators contribute to a distributed teaching presence and compensate for the absence of an authorized role. In a CoI in the formal educational settings, although the role of instructor is available, it is possible to encourage learners to share their expertise and contribute to teaching presence through instructional design such as peer review and reciprocal teaching. Peer feedback can not only contribute to cognitive presence but also help to increase sufficient social presence through interactions among learners (Black, 2007; Lam, 2000; Nagel et al., 2010).

Motivation is another important factor that affects the learning in a CoI. In the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum, participants are self-selected and highly motivated, which has positive effects on participation (Green, 2005). In addition, the discussion topics are determined by both moderators and members based on their individual learning needs, which also motivate participants. In a CoI in formal educational settings, relevance of course assignments increases students' motivation and encourages critical thinking (Hosler & Arend, 2012). To motivate the participation of learners, the instructor could ask students to takes parts in the instructional design and add their individual learning needs to the CoI.

Future Study

The present study have brought up several directions or further investigation. First of all, a participant survey in a larger scale and follow-up interviews are needed to understand how members self-directed the learning process in the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum, and how the learning process benefits the test preparation. To increase the response rate of the survey, researchers may post the survey in the discussion forum to ask for participations or locate the recent participants in the discussion forum instead of sending surveys to all participants since the community has been established.

While the present study focused more on the general functioning of the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum, individual learning experience of members still needs to be understood. It is possible that some members in the discussion forum have better learning experience than others. While the present study selected discussions threads in the active part of the forum, discussion threads that had no replies were not studied. It is important to understand members' experience when a posting has no replies, and why it happens.

Further works also needs to be conducted to understand the role of moderators in the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum or similar informal online language learning community, such as their motivations on taking the role and strategies on instructional design.

In addition, it is important to understand the experience of none-participants in the discussion forum. Since the participation is based on voluntary in the GRE Analytical Writing Discussion Forum, some members would choose not to participate

in discussions and only read others' postings. It is very likely those members have difference learning experience than the ones who participate actively in discussions. Understanding why they choose not to participate and whether they benefit from reading others' postings could provide insights on how to promote participation in a CoI.

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Figures

Figure 1.   The front page of the GRE Analytical Writing Section Discussion Forum. Retrieved from http://bbs.gter.net/forum-23-1.html on April 15th, 2014.

Figure 2. The Google translated version of the front page of GRE Analytical Writing Section Discussion Forum. Retrieved from http://bbs.gter.net/ on July 15th, 2014.
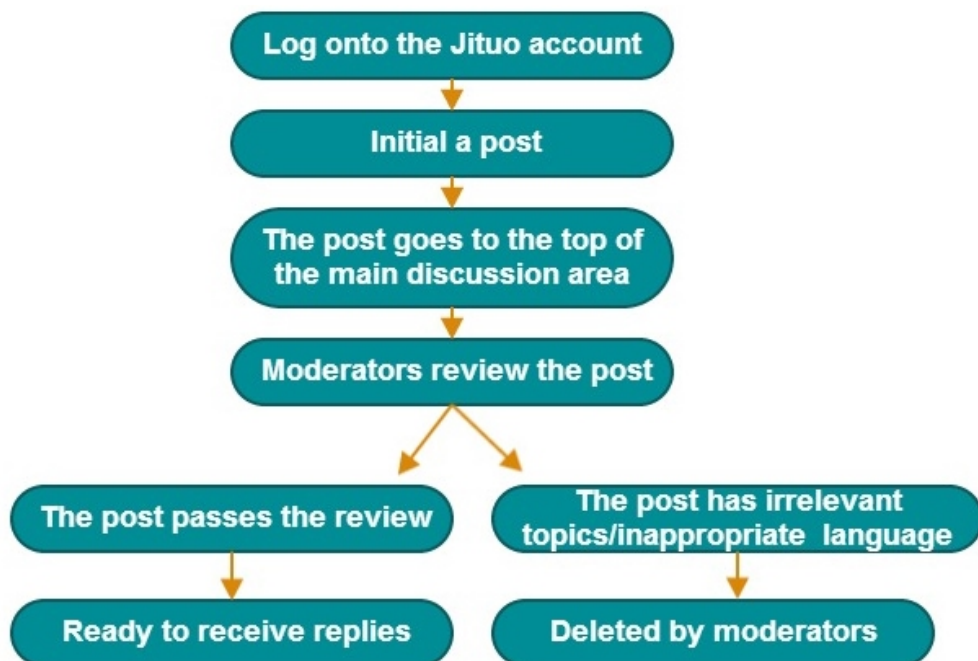
Figure 3. The process when a post occurs in the GRE Analytical Writing Section Discussion Forum.

Tables

Table 1

Links and Replies of the 12 Selected Discussion Themes

	Selection Date	Links	Replies
1	3/1/2014	http://bbs.gter.net/thread-1496294-1-1.html	83
2	3/1/2014	http://bbs.gter.net/thread-1272158-1-2.html	84
3	3/2/2014	http://bbs.gter.net/thread-1316210-1-2.html	47
4	3/2/2014	http://bbs.gter.net/thread-1272162-1-5.html	76
5	4/1/2014	http://bbs.gter.net/thread-708203-1-1.html	74
6	4/1/2014	http://bbs.gter.net/thread-920961-1-1.html	87
7	4/2/2014	http://bbs.gter.net/thread-697337-1-1.html	95
8	4/2/2014	http://bbs.gter.net/forum.php?mod=viewthread&tid=693434&extra=&highlight=&page=1	93
9	5/1/2014	http://bbs.gter.net/thread-921368-1-1.html	46
10	5/1/2014	http://bbs.gter.net/thread-871144-1-1.html	28
11	5/2/2014	http://bbs.gter.net/thread-920961-1-1.html	42
12	5/2/2014	http://bbs.gter.net/thread-1705158-1-4.html	34

Table 2
Teaching Presence, Cognitive Presence, and Social Presence in the Selected Discussion Themes (N = 782)

Indicators	N	%
Teaching Presence		
Instructional design and organization	18	2.3

T1. Moderators who initiated new themes clearly communicated discussion topics	6	0.77
T2. Members who initiated new themes clearly communicated discussion topics	6	0.77
T3. Moderators provided clear instructions on how to participate in discussions.	3	0.38
T4. Moderators provided clear rules on how to participate in discussions	4	0.51
Facilitation	204	26.08
T5. Moderators in the community were helpful in guiding participants towards understanding discussion topics in a way that helped them clarify their thinking.	39	4.99
T6. Members in the community were helpful in guiding participants towards understanding discussion topics in a way that helped them clarify their thinking.	37	4.37
T7. Moderators in the community were helpful in identifying areas of agreement and disagreement on discussion topics that helped participants to learn.	26	3.32
T8. Members in the community were helpful in identifying areas of agreement and disagreement on discussion topics that helped participants to learn.	42	5.37
T9. Moderators in the community helped to keep participants engaged and participating in productive dialogue.	14	1.79
T10. Members in the community helped to keep participants engaged and participating in productive dialogue.	19	2.42
T11. The actions of moderators in the community reinforced the development of a sense of community among members in the discussion forum.	11	1.41
T12. The actions of members in the community reinforced the development of a sense of community among members in the discussion forum.	16	2.05
Direct instruction	113	14.45
T13. Moderators in the community helped to focus discussion on relevant issues in a way that helped participants to learn.	15	1.92
T14. Members in the community helped to focus discussion on relevant issues in a way that helped participants to learn.	35	4.48

T15 Moderators in the community provided feedback that helped participants understand their strengths and weaknesses related to English writing.	21	2.69
T16. Members in the community provided feedback that helped participants understand their strengths and weaknesses related to English writing.	24	3.07
Cognitive Presence		
Triggering events	81	10.36
C1. Problems proposed	81	10.36
Exploration	119	15.21
C2. A variety of information sources were used to explore problems	26	3.32
C3. Different perspectives were proposed by participants	93	11.89
Integration	103	13.17
C4. Combining new information to answer the questions.	103	13.17
Resolution	27	3.54
C5. Reflection discussions helped participants understand fundamental concepts in English writing.	12	1.53
C6. Participants applied the knowledge created in the online discussions to their English writing.	15	1.92
Social Presence		
Affective expression		
S1. Participants expressed their personal feelings in the interactions.	493	63.04
Open communication		
S2. Participants were able to have open conversations.	398	50.98
Group cohesion		
S3. Participants expressed their disagreement without being uncomfortable or making others uncomfortable	39	4.99

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for Survey Questions (N = 25)

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Teaching Presence		
Instructional design and organization	4.12	
Q1	4.48	0.59
Q2	3.96	0.93
Q3	4.36	0.91
Q4	4.04	1.06
Facilitation	3.90	
Q5	4.08	1.00
Q6	3.96	0.73
Q7	3.88	1.09
Q8	3.84	0.75
Q9	3.72	0.94
Q10	3.84	0.90
Q11	4.20	0.82
Q12	3.96	0.93
Q13	3.76	0.93
Q 14	3.72	1.06
Direct instruction	3.91	
Q15	3.88	0.88
Q16	4.20	0.65
Q 17	3.80	0.96
Q 18	3.76	0.93
Social Presence		
Affective expression	4.12	
Q 19	4.04	0.87
Q 20	4.20	0.91
Open communication	4.28	
Q 21	4.56	0.51
Q 22	4.16	0.56
Q 23	4.12	0.73
Q 24	4.28	0.74
Group cohesion	4.16	
Q 25	4.00	1.08
Q 26	4.00	0.75
Q 27	4.48	0.65

Table 3 (continued)

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Cognitive Presence		
Triggering event	4.28	
Q 28	4.24	0.27
Q 29	4.32	0.48
Q 30	4.28	0.68
Exploration	4.28	
Q 31	4.20	0.76
Q 32	4.16	0.75
Q 33	4.48	0.51
Integration	4.24	
Q 34	4.24	0.52
Resolution	4.00	
Q 35	4.12	0.78
Q 36	4.00	1.08
Q 37	3.84	0.80
Q 38	4.00	0.87
Q 39	4.00	0.91