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Reflective Inquiry in the Virtual Brainstorming of Writing Tasks: The Case of Padlet and Facebook

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Abstract

Brainstorming of ideas is an important step in writing and it is usually done in the classroom through face-to-face group discussions. However, due to the time-dependent nature of such activity, the discussion is largely dominated by learners who are more proficient than the rest. This creates limited opportunities for healthy exchange of ideas among all group members. Hence, virtual platforms can reduce this constraint by permitting seamless brainstorming sessions to flourish beyond the classroom hours. It also increases the participations of all members since they are given ample time to reflect and respond. In this study, 320 students of a remedial English course were equally classified into Category P and Category F after they have formed groups of 5 students. The groups in Category P were told to brainstorm on a writing task via Padlet while those in Category F were required to brainstorm the same task through Facebook groups. The links for their Padlet walls and Facebook groups were compiled and their interactions were analysed based on the Practical Inquiry Model. The findings revealed that students in the Padlet groups were more frequently engaged in reflective thinking when providing their brainstorming responses as compared to those using Facebook groups. The post-course survey results indicated that the clean interface of Padlet allowed the students to stay focus during brainstorming and the extraneous features of Facebook usually caused distractions. Ultimately, this study has provided valuable insights on the potential use of Web 2.0 tools in the virtual brainstorming of writing activities.