

E-partners and E-tutors: Telecollaboration as an Effective Means of Grammar Instruction

Priority Research Grant
2005-2006 Effective Grammar Instruction

Paige D. Ware, Ph.D.
Southern Methodist University, U.S.A.

Robert O'Dowd, Ph.D.
Universidad de León, Spain



Paige D. Ware



Robert O'Dowd

Project summary

Despite the overwhelmingly positive findings emerging from studies on cross-cultural partnerships online (Belz, 2002; Kern, 1995, 1996; O'Dowd, 2003; Ware, 2005), surprisingly little research has been conducted on how online partnerships (telecollaboration) can promote grammar instruction, an area of language learning highly valued by many ESL and EFL students.

We propose an international project that examines the effectiveness of online partnerships in promoting the teaching and learning of grammar as it is embedded in online written discourse. A total of 120 EFL students from Spain and pre-service EFL teachers in the United States will participate in written interactions in English every week for two semesters. Participants will be randomly assigned to one of two grammar instruction methods: (1) *planned focus-on-form* and (2) *incidental focus-on-form* (Ellis, 2001). In the *planned focus-on-form* condition, U.S. students will act as tutors for the EFL students in Spain by providing enriched input through pre-selected language forms and through focused communicative tasks. In the *incidental focus-on-form* condition, students will attend to form in their online discussions as it arises in the course of written conversation through both preemptive and reactive focus-on-form episodes (Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2001).

In a mixed methods design, we will examine online participation patterns, types and frequency of form-focused episodes, participant satisfaction, and grammatical proficiency in online written discussions. Our findings will document how two different implementations of form-focused-instruction (Doughty, 2001; Long, 1991) support participants' growth in language awareness and proficiency in grammar.