

**Genre and Discourse in Online Discussions: A Study of  
Online Discussion Postings in a Thai EFL Writing Course**

**Yupaporn Piriyasilpa**

**BA (English)  
MA (Applied Linguistics)**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**Department of Linguistics  
Faculty of Human Sciences  
Macquarie University  
Sydney ~ Australia**

**February 2009**

## **CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY**

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled 'Genre and Discourse in Online Discussions: A Study of Online Discussion Postings in a Thai EFL Writing Course' has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University.

I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research and it has been written by me. Any help and assistance that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been appropriately acknowledged.

In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of the Candidate

---

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This thesis would have not been possible without the support of many individuals and organisations, to whom I wish to express thanks.

I wish to express my gratitude to my sponsor, the Office of Educational Affairs, Royal Thai Embassy, for giving me the chance to continue my education by supporting me financially throughout my candidature.

My deep and sincere gratitude go to my supervisors: David Hall and John Knox, who were abundantly helpful and offered invaluable comments. With their inspiration, encouragement, and great efforts to explain things clearly and simply, they have provided me the courage to try something new and useful for my students.

I also wish to thank the staff from the Linguistics Department, especially Robyn Guilmette for her useful advice and Lalana Knox for technical support.

My gratitude is also extended to Jim Martin at Sydney University. I appreciate the time he took to provide his insightful comments.

I would also like to thank Cecily Greval for providing some useful linguistic texts.

Special thanks go to the research participants in this study for their cooperation and to my colleagues at the English Department, Rajamangala University Isan, Khon Kaen Campus for taking responsibility on the teaching loads during my study leave.

Last but not least, my thanks must go to my family for their constant support and unconditional love, and in particular to my son, Napat Piriyaasilpa, for his understanding and patience in waiting for my return.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1	Background of the Study	1
	1.1.1 The Impact of Technology on Education	
	1.1.2 The Study	
	1.1.3 Online Discussion	
1.2	Research in Online Discussion	5
	1.2.1 Previous Work Analysing Student Language	
	1.2.2 Previous Work Examining Language in Online Discussions	
1.3	The Scope of the Study	9
	1.3.1 The Research Questions	
	1.3.2 Analytical Tool of the Analysis	
1.4	Preview of the Arguments	16

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1	Introduction	17
2.2	Application of Online Discussion	20
	2.2.1 Introduction	
	2.2.2 Educational Application	
	2.2.3 Conclusion	
2.3	New Literacy	26
	2.3.1 Introduction	
	2.3.2 Social Perspectives of New Literacy	
	2.3.3 Literacy Models	
	2.3.4 Challenges of New Literacies	
	2.3.5 Conclusion	
2.4	Genre	41
	2.4.1 Introduction	
	2.4.2 Genre Traditions	
	2.4.3 Potential Genres in Online Discussion	
	2.4.4 Conclusion	
2.5	Tool of Analysis	48
	2.5.1 Introduction	
	2.5.2 Text and Context	
	2.5.3 Complementarities	
	2.5.4 Conclusion	
2.6	Conclusion	95

## **Chapter 3 Research Methodology**

3.1	Introduction	98
3.2	Context of the Study	98
	3.2.1 Introduction	
	3.2.2 The Participants	
	3.2.3 Context of the Curriculum	
	3.2.4 Conclusion	
3.3	Recruitment of the Research Participants and Ethical Considerations	102
	3.3.1 Introduction	
	3.3.2 Project Announcement	
	3.3.3 Information to Participants	
	3.3.4 Consent Form	
	3.3.5 Care of Participants and Confidentiality of Research Data and Results	
	3.3.6 Thai Approval	
	3.3.7 Conclusion	
3.4	The Corpus	105
	3.4.1 Introduction	
	3.4.2 Collection Method of the Corpus	
	3.4.3 Conclusion	
3.5	Development of the Methodology	113
	3.5.1 Introduction	
	3.5.2 Componential Analysis	
	3.5.3 SFG Analysis	
	3.5.4 Cohesion and Coherence Analysis	
	3.5.5 Genre Analysis	
	3.5.6 Development of the Research Questions	
	3.5.7 Conclusion	
3.6	Conclusion	130

## **Chapter 4 Generic Structure in Student Online Discussion Postings**

4.1	Introduction	131
4.2	Dynamic Perspectives of the Online Discussion	132
	4.2.1 Introduction	
	4.2.2 Dialogism in Student Online Discussions	
	4.2.3 Potential Exchange Structure in Student Online Discussions	
	4.2.4 Conclusion	

4.3 Synoptic Perspective of Student Online Discussion Postings	146
4.3.1 Introduction	
4.3.2 Macro-genre	
4.3.3 Student Online Discussion Postings as a Macro-Genre	
4.3.4 The Development of Macro-Genre in Student Online Discussion Postings	
4.3.5 Hybridity	
4.3.6 Synoptic Perspective: Conclusion	
4.4 Conclusion	244

## **Chapter 5 Cohesion and Coherence in Student Online Discussion Postings**

5.1 Introduction	247
5.2 Periodicity: Information Flow	247
5.2.1 Introduction	
5.2.2 HyperTheme and HyperNew	
5.2.3 Thematic Development	
5.2.4 Achara	
5.2.5 Suchada	
5.2.6 Conclusion	
5.3 Conjunction	288
5.3.1 Introduction	
5.3.2 Conjunction: Connecting Events	
5.3.3 Achara	
5.3.4 Suchada	
5.3.5 Conclusion	
5.4 Reference	317
5.4.1 Introduction	
5.4.2 Reference: Tracking Participants	
5.4.3 Reference Chains	
5.4.4 Achara	
5.4.5 Suchada	
5.4.6 Conclusion	
5.5 Conclusion	342

## **Chapter 6 Conclusion**

6.1 Limitations of the Study	345
6.1.1 Small samples in the study	
6.1.2 Other issues in SFL not investigated	
6.1.3 Teacher interaction has not been investigated	

6.2 Answers to the Research Questions	348
6.2.1 Research Question One	
6.2.2 Research Question Two	
6.3 Implications	360
6.3.1 Implications for Genre Theory	
6.3.2 Implications for Research in Online Discussions	
6.3.3 Implications for Language Pedagogy	
6.4 Areas for Further Study	366
6.5 Conclusion	368
<b>Bibliography</b>	371

## LIST OF TABLES

2.1 The model of literacy described in different terms by different studies	30
2.2 Structural hierarchies in English	62
2.3 Framing semiotic change	70
2.4 Examples of hypotactic and paratactic projection and expansion	73
2.5 Metafunctions and their realisation	82
3.1 Information of the participants	99
3.2 Overview of the EIC curriculum	100
3.3 The Contents of Writing 4 Course	101
3.4 Task descriptions in the five online discussions	111
3.5 Time-line for the fieldwork procedure	112
3.6 Extract from Suchada's posting in discussion one, representing topical Theme	117
3.7 Extract from Achara's posting in discussion two, representing topical Theme	117
3.8 Extract from Suchada's posting in discussion five, representing topical Theme	117
3.9 Extract from Jitra's posting in discussion one, representing Finite as interpersonal Theme	119
3.10 Extract from Super's posting in discussion one, representing Mood adjunct as interpersonal Theme	119
3.11 Extract from Suchada's posting in discussion five, representing Vocative as interpersonal Theme	119
3.12 Extract from Jitra's posting in discussion one, representing Comment Adjunct as interpersonal Theme	119
3.13 Extract from Suchada's posting in discussion four, representing Continuity Adjunct as textual Theme	120
3.14 Extract from Jitra's posting in discussion two, representing Conjunctive Adjunct as textual Theme	120
3.15 Extract from Orawan's posting in discussion four	124

3.16 Schematic stages in extract from Jitra's posting, representing the rhetorical structure of an anecdote	128
4.1 Adisak's and Nutt's postings in discussion two, representing texts organised in multiple speech roles	140
4.2 Percentages of student postings, containing Opening Bonding and Closing Bonding macro-stages	148
4.3 Rhetorical structure of Somsak's posting, representing the text organised from the three macro-stages: Opening Bonding, Responding, and Closing Bonding	150
4.4 Achara's postings in discussion two and three, demonstrating the postings where Bonding macro-stages are developed	152
4.5 Adisak's and Suchada's postings, demonstrating the postings where Bonding macro-stages are developed	153
4.6 Adisak's postings in discussions two and three, demonstrating the postings where Bonding macro-stages are developed	154
4.7 Jitra's and Noppol's postings, demonstrating the postings where Bonding macro-stages are developed	155
4.8 Instances of student postings containing inconsistent structure with the three typical macro-stages	157
4.9 Suchada's posting in discussion two	158
4.10 Schematic stages used in Bonding macro-stages and their common linguistic features	169
4.11 Adisak's posting in discussion one, illustrating prosodic realisation created at lower level in a text	172
4.12 Suchada's posting in discussion two, demonstrating prosodic realisation created at discourse level	173
4.13 Nutt's posting in discussion two, demonstrating prosodic realisation created at discourse level	174
4.14 Extracts from student postings, representing examples of a self Introduction	179
4.15 Extract from Nutt's posting in discussion, demonstrating the structure of a review	186
4.16 Extract from Natjiree's posting in discussion five, demonstrating a text which is organised in inconsistent structure with a review	187
4.17 Schematic stages of an exposition used in different studies	188
4.18 Schematic stages of Kamon's text in discussion two, holding the linguistic features of an analytical exposition	190
4.19 Apiwan's posting in discussion four, illustrating student texts organised from inconsistent structure with an exposition	192
4.20 Description of Challenge and Counter Claim used in Coffin et al (2005a, b)	194
4.21 Different types of Thesis and Claim used in this study	195
4.22 Different types of Claim and Support used in this study	204
4.23 Schematic stages in extract from Achara's posting in discussion one, demonstrating the structure of an anecdote embedded in an exposition	213
4.24 Extract from Jitra's posting in discussion one, illustrating a text which has an anecdote embedded in an exposition	215
4.25 Genres and/or stages used in Responding macro-stages	217
4.26 Schematic stages in Jitra's posting in discussion one	234

4.27 The structure of Responding macro-stage in Adisak's posting in discussion four	238
4.28 A short posting made by Adisak in discussion four, illustrating a generic ellipsis of genre	239
4.29 The structure of Responding macro-stage in Suchada's posting in discussion five	240
4.30 A short posting made by Suchada in discussion five, illustrating a generic ellipsis of genre	241
5.1 Extract from Nutt's posting in discussion one, representing a text organised in cascading structure	253
5.2 HyperTheme, HyperNew and Theme in extract from Suchada's writing	254
5.3 Extract from Achara's posting in discussion two, demonstrating hyperThemes, Themes and Rhemes	262
5.4 Extract from Achara's posting in discussion three, demonstrating hyperTheme, Themes and Rhemes	266
5.5. Extracts from Achara's postings in discussion four (4/1 and 4/2)	268
5.6 Extract from Achara's posting in discussion five, representing a frequent use of personal Pronouns as choices of Themes	270
5.7 Extract from Achara's posting in discussion five	272
5.8 Extract from Suchada's posting in discussion one, demonstrating cascading structure	275
5.9 Extract from Suchada's posting in discussion two, demonstrating cascading structure	276
5.10 Extracts from Suchada's posting in discussion four, demonstrating hyperThemes in cascading structure	277
5.11 Extract from Suchada's posting in discussion 3/2, representing the use of the subject matters in Themes	281
5.12 Extract from Suchada's posting in discussion three, representing Themes and Rhemes in the initial phases	283
5.13 Extract from Suchada's posting in discussion three, representing Themes and Rhemes in the last phase	283
5.14 Extracts from Suchada's posting in discussion five, representing Themes and Rhemes in the initial phase	285
5.15 Extract from Suchada's posting in discussion five, representing Themes and Rhemes in the last phase	285
5.16 External conjunctions	291
5.17 Internal conjunctions	292
5.18 Abbreviations for conjunction types	293
5.19 Continuatives and logical relations	296
5.20 Continuity used in Achara's postings	299
5.21 Conjunction used in Achara's postings	299
5.22 An integration of conjunction and other cohesive resources in discussion five	305
5.23 Continuity used in Suchada's postings	308
5.24 Conjunction used in Suchada's postings	308
5.25 Types of reference	322
5.26 Extract from Achara's posting, representing reference used in discussions one and two	325

5.27 Extract from Achara's posting, representing anaphoric reference used in discussions one and two	326
5.28 Extract from Achara's posting in discussion four, representing the use of endophoric and exophoric reference	327
5.29 Text reference in discussion three	329
5.30 Anaphoric reference in discussion five, representing the use of anaphoric reference to capture the discussed ideas	330
5.31 Extracts from Achara's postings in discussions three and five, demonstrating her use of reference with nominalisation	331
5.32 Reference used in discussions one and two	333
5.33 Anaphoric reference used in discussions one and two	334
5.34 Extract from Suchada's posting in discussion three, representing a sophisticated method of referencing	335
5.35 Anaphoric reference used in discussions four and five	337
5.36 A complex reference in discussion five	339
5.37 The use of exophoric and endophoric reference in discussion three	340
6.1 Relationship of tasks assigned and the use of genres and stages in student online discussion postings	356
6.2 The relationship between genre and hyper thematic development and thematic development in student online discussion postings	359
6.3 The relationship between genre and pattern of reference in student online discussion postings	360

## LIST OF FIGURES

1.1 The structure of online discussion and online discussion postings in this study, indicating different levels of the two terms	5
2.1 An inclusive model of level of literacy	34
2.2 Content and expression in the system of language compared with the traffic light system	51
2.3 Language as the realisation of social context	55
2.4 The MOOD system network, representing indicative and imperative mood	64
2.5 The indicative MOOD system network, representing declarative mood and interrogative mood	64
2.6 The indicative MOOD system network, representing 'yes/no' type and 'WH' type	65
2.7 The MOOD system network, representing the three paradigmatic contrasts	65
2.8 Language stratification	67
2.9 The cline of instantiation	69
2.10 Experiential meaning, realised as parts and whole	74
2.11 Orbital ideational structure	75
2.12 A recount being organised in serial structure	76
2.13 Serial ideational structure	77
2.14 Prosodic intensification in a text	79
2.15 Periodicity at clause structure	80
2.16 Waves of periodic structure	81
2.17 Functional diversification of language and social context	84

2.18 Interface of meaning in the social context	85
2.19 Characteristic features of the online discussion, representing interface characteristics of both spoken and written language	93
3.1 Group structure of the online discussion	106
3.2 Extract from Orawan's posting in discussion four, representing the analysis of HyperThemes	123
3.3 Thematic development in extract from Orawan's posting in discussion four	124
4.1 Oversimplified pattern of online discussion dialogue in this study	136
4.2 Alternative pattern of online discussion dialogue in this study	137
4.3 Multiple speech roles in different levels of student online discussion Dialogue	144
4.4 Nucleus-satellite perspective of the macro-structure of online discussion postings found in this study	149
4.5 The unfolding of Opening Bonding-Responding-Closing Bonding Macro-stages in student online discussion postings	151
4.6 Embedding structure of an anecdote within an exposition	216
4.7 The structure of combining genres within Jitra's Responding macro-stage	235
4.8 Combining and embedding genres in Jitra's Responding macro-stages	236
5.1 Extract from Suchada's posting, indicating waves of information flow	249
5.2 Discourse organisation in extract from Suchada's posting, demonstrating taxonomic structure	251
5.3 Thematic development in extract from student's writing (linear and zig-zag patterns)	255
5.4 HyperThemes organised in different levels in Achara's posting in discussion one	259
5.5 HyperThemes organised in different levels in Achara's posting in discussion two	261
5.6 Thematic development in discussion two	262
5.7 HyperTheme organised in different levels in Achara's posting	265
5.8 Thematic development in discussion three	266
5.9 Thematic development in extracts from Achara's postings in discussion four (4/1 and 4/2)	269
5.10 Thematic development at the beginning of Achara's posting in discussion five	271
5.11 Thematic development in extract from Achara's posting in discussion five	272
5.12 Thematic development in extracts from Suchada's posting in discussion four	278
5.13 Discourse organisation of Suchada's posting in discussion three	280
5.14 Thematic development in Suchada's posting in discussion three	282
5.15 Thematic development in initial phase of Suchada's posting in discussion three	284
5.16 Thematic development in the final phase of Suchada's posting in discussion three	284
5.17 Thematic development in the initial phase of Suchada's posting in discussion five	286
5.18 Thematic development in the final phase of Suchada's posting in discussion five	286

5.19 Conjunctive relations in extract from Adisak's posting in discussion	294
Two	
5.20 Conjunctive relations in extract from Achara's posting in discussion	302
One	
5.21 Connective relations in extract from Achara's posting in discussion	303
Two	
5.22 Connective relations in extract from Achara's posting in discussion	304
Three	
5.23 Conjunctive relations used in extract from Suchada's posting in	311
5.24 Connective relations in extract from Suchada's posting in discussion	313
two	
5.25 Connective relations in extract from Suchada's posting in discussion	314
Three	
5.26 External conjunctives used in extract form discussion four	316
5.27 Presuming reference	319
5.28 Undirected reference	320
5.29 Types of phora	321
5.30 Different types of reference chains	323
6.1 Multiple speech roles in different levels of student online discussions	350
6.2 Nucleus-satellite perspective of the macro-generic structure of online	353
discussion postings found in this study	
6.3 The structure of students' online discussion postings at different levels	354

## List of Texts

2.1 The construction of prosodic structure throughout the text	78
3.1 Extract from Orawan's posting in discussion four, organised through	122
the structure of hyperTheme and hyperNew	
3.2 Extract from Orawan' posting in discussion four, representing	124
thematic development in the first argument	
3.3 Extract from Somsak's posting in discussion 4, demonstrating the use	125
of conjunction	
3.4 Extract from Apiwan's posting in discussion 4, demonstrating the use	126
of reference	
3.5 Extract from Jitra's posting in discussion one	127
4.1. Teacher posting in discussion one, representing dual speech role of	138
A2 and K2	
4.2 Somsak's posting in discussion four	150
4.3 Extract from Achara's posting in discussion one	212
4.4 Jittra's posting in discussion one	233
4.5 Teacher posting in discussion four, prompting students to	238
participate more in the online discussion	
4.6 Teacher's prompt to Suchada in discussion five	240
5.1 Extract from Suchada's posting	249
5.2 Extract from Nutt's posting in discussion one	252
5.3 Achara's posting in discussion one	258
5.4 Achara's posting in discussion two	260
5.5 Extract from Achara's posting in discussion three	264
5.6 Extract from Suchada's posting in discussion three	279

5.7 Extract from Achara’s posting in discussion four, illustrating clauses combined with internal and external conjunctions	289
5.8 Extract from Adisak’s posting in discussion two	293
5.9 Extract from Suchada’s posting in discussion one, representing the use of ‘also’ as a conjunction	296
5.10 Extract from Suchada’s posting in discussion two, representing The use of ‘also’ as a continuative	296
5.11 Extract form Achara’s posting in discussion five, representing the use of Conjunctive Adjunct	297

<b>Bibliography</b>	371
---------------------	-----

## **ABSTRACT**

There have been a number of studies examining online discussions in both English language teaching (ELT) and non-ELT contexts. Studies which take a discourse perspective have analysed linguistic features such as speech acts (Chun, 1994), exchange structure (Bae Son, 2006; Kamhi-Stein, 2000) and turn taking (Bisenbach-Lucas, 2003). Within the theoretical framework of systemic functional linguistics (SFL), there is a growing number of research publications which analyse the language used in computer mediated communication (CMC) such as email messages (Don, 2007), bulletin boards (Taboada, 2004) and online discussions (Coffin et al, 2005a,b; Coffin and Hewings, 2005; Hewings and Coffin, 2004; Hewings and Coffin, 2006; Painter et al, 2003). Don focuses mainly on the use of appraisal in email messages, and Taboada examines the genres which occur in individual bulletin board messages. Coffin and colleagues have investigated the language used in online discussions from a number of perspectives. The first focuses on impacts of tutorial activities on students' interaction (Painter et al, 2003), choices of engagement (Coffin and Hewings, 2005), and the degree of critical reflection when making arguments (Hewings and Coffin, 2006); the second on the use of grammar; and the third on patterns of debate and arguments (Coffin et al, 2005a,b). These studies present important findings and directions for the analysis of language used in online discussions. However they are based on non-ELT contexts. Further studies are still needed to investigate student language in online discussions in ELT contexts in different areas, such as common genres, and the way that cohesion and coherence are managed according to different demands of the tasks assigned.

The current study sets out to examine in particular the language of learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in online discussion postings. The corpus comprises 274 online discussion postings, posted by a teacher and 26 students

participating in five online discussions across a semester. The study uses systemic functional linguistics (e.g. Halliday, 1994; Martin, 1992; Martin and Rose, 2003) as a framework, taking a genre-based perspective and also analysing cohesion and coherence.

The findings of the genre analysis show that online discussion postings are organised by students in a consistent pattern at a macro-structural level. That is to say, the structure of each online discussion posting is consistent with a potential macro-structure consisting of three macro-stages, namely, 'Opening Bonding', 'Responding' and 'Closing Bonding'. 'Bonding' macro-stages work to build relationships and to maintain a community in the online setting while 'Responding' macro-stages respond to the writing task as set by the teacher. Each macro-stage can be realised by stages from one or more elemental genres, and sometimes by a combination of genres and/or stages.

The combination of 'Bonding' and 'Responding' macro-stages in student online discussion postings is related to the social goals of the participants when communicating in this community. That is, online discussion postings are organised by students to maintain two social purposes (to respond to the classroom task assigned by the teacher, and to maintain social relationships with the readers who are their peers and their teacher). This represents a new form of social practice which is realised by the consistent, identifiable textual macro-structure discussed above. At the same time, the combination of elemental genres and stages, constituting individual macro-stages, allows for flexibility in keeping with the nature of the social interaction conducted in this social setting. This macro-genre does not represent any one particular combination of elemental genres and stages described in the various schools of genre studies (cf. Coffin et al, 2005a, b; Martin, 1992; Swales, 1990), but rather,

flexible combinations of them within a relatively stable 'higher-order' macro-structure (cf. Lemke, 2003).

To examine cohesion and coherence, the online discussion postings of two chosen students are analysed closely in terms of hyperTheme, thematic development, conjunction and reference. It was found that where their writing is focused on the writer and/or the reader, these students normally construct their discussion in a more spoken-like pattern. That is, first and second person pronouns ('I' and 'you') are predominant Themes developed in a linear pattern, with fewer conjunctives employed and a frequent use of pronominals to refer to the writer and reader.

However when the discourse changes to focus on addressing the discussion task as set by the teacher, the online discussion is organised in a more written-like manner. Themes are relevant to the content and are often built up from the Given information in the Rheme of the previous clause, and conjunctives and reference are used in a more varied way. Moreover, the findings show that the spoken-like features of language can also be found in 'Responding' macro-stages where the writer composes in order to foreground solidarity with the reader.

The findings in this area reflect two important issues. On the one hand, there is a systematic relationship between the demands of discourse and choices of cohesive resources employed. On the other hand, the online discussions contain combined features of both spoken and written language, representing a defining feature of language used in this kind of communication as commonly stated in the literature (cf. Baron, 1998; Coffin and Hewings, 2005; Hewings and Coffin, 2004; Murray, 2000; Tanskanen, 2006; Warschauer, 2001). But more than this, it is possible to identify consistent patterns within which the student writing is more 'written' and more 'spoken' at certain points, and also to relate this to their discursive purposes. This

finding can inform teachers in deciding which parts of the text to focus on when examining students' language in online discussions. For instance, if the purpose is to practice students' argumentative writing, feedback and assessment may be made in the parts discussing the content only while other parts which are organised to create solidarity may be treated as common features in online discussions.

The findings from this study have implications for both theoretical and pedagogical domains. Theoretically, the description of the macro-genre of online discussion postings provided here builds on the work done by Coffin, Hewings, and Painter (e.g. Coffin et al 2005a, 2005b) in identifying generic patterns in the extended text of online discussions.

The findings of this study are also significant pedagogically for teachers and learners, and for the setting and moderating of tasks in EFL writing courses. That is, they can be used to raise teachers' awareness of the unique features of communication when examining students' language in online discussions, and to raise students' awareness of CMC. Finally, the generic patterns which emerge in learners' language due to different task demands illustrate the importance of online discussions and curriculum working together. Online discussion tasks need to resonate with the classroom pedagogy, and with informed understandings of the nature of language, in order to help students better learn language in this new medium of communication.