

**ZMATH 2013e.00771**

**Ng, C. S. L.; Cheung, W. S.; Hew, K. F.**

**Interaction in asynchronous discussion forums: peer facilitation techniques.**

J. Comput. Assist. Learn. 28, No. 3, 280-294 (2012).

Summary: Peer facilitation is proposed as a solution to counter limited interaction in asynchronous online discussions. However, there is a lack of empirical research on online peer facilitation. This study identifies, through cross-case comparison of two graduate-level blended courses attended by Asian Pacific students, the actual peer facilitation techniques that could encourage online interaction. Analyses of interviews and online discussion transcripts suggest that techniques such as ‘showing appreciation’ and ‘considering others’ viewpoints’ encourage online interaction. However, instructors intending to incorporate peer-facilitated online discussions should also consider the influence of factors such as the design of the online discussion activity and learners’ cultural background as some participants could consider challenging others’ ideas culturally inappropriate and need to be encouraged through techniques such as ‘general invitation to contribute’. Facilitators might also re-consider the use of certain traditionally recommended strategies such as directing an online message at specific participants to encourage responses. This study suggests that doing so could sometimes backfire and discourage online contributions.

*Classification:* Q40 Q60 R30 U50

*Keywords:* asynchronous online discussion forums; interaction; knowledge construction; participation; peer facilitation techniques; student facilitators; computer aided instruction; Internet; media technology; online learning; communication technology; learning environments; research; case studies; student student interaction; sociocultural aspects; communication; participation; adult learners  
doi:10.1111/j.1365-2729.2011.00454.x