

Conference Abstract

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Using Learner Diaries in a Study on Learner Beliefs Toward Group Learning (in an EAP Course)

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This paper presents and discusses the use of learner diaries to investigate the beliefs of NESB (Non English Speaking Background) students toward group learning. For the past few decades the use of group work in ELT has been seen as both valuable in maximizing student learning and essential in developing the communicative competence of ESL/EFL students (Long and Porter 1985).

Although the NESB students enrolled in this paper have all achieved a certain level of English proficiency, many students experience difficulties when using English in an academic environment. In particular many students experience difficulties when participating in tutorial groups.

The beliefs of the participants in this study will be investigated in their specific context with the emphasis on students' own words as well as their behaviours. Multiple data sources including learner diaries, observation, interviews, and a survey are being used as part of a larger study to explore the beliefs of a small group of students enrolled in a first year EAP paper at the University of Otago.

This presentation focuses on the use of learner diaries as the principal source of data. Examples from the learner diaries will be presented and discussed and this will be followed by an assessment of the usefulness of the research tool in examining the beliefs of learners.

Long, M. & Porter, P. (1985). Group work interlanguage talk and second language acquisition. *TESOL Quarterly*, 19 (1), 115-23.