

ABSTRACT

LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES OF WRITTEN COMPLEXITIES DEVELOPMENT THROUGH DISCUSSION BOARD ACTIVITIES IN CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASS

by

Xiaorong Wang

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2020

Under the Supervision of Professor Tatiana Joseph

This qualitative case study examines learners' experiences in the development of written complexities during Discussion Board (DB) assignments in an Advanced university level Chinese class. Discussion Board was chosen as the avenue for written complexity development because it provides learners a supplementary space with additional time and opportunities for low anxiety writing. The data collection for this study came from two sources, DB posts and interviews. This study seeks to fill gap in the literature in two ways: one, this study proposes a measurement of written complexities that consists of propositional complexity, lexical sophistication and accuracy. Second, this study highlights student experiences and explores the learning process from their perspective. Using Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural theory as theoretical framework, the findings of this study generated new knowledge about what tools and strategies Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) learners used to develop written complexities during the DB discussion activities. Additionally, this study examined how CFL learners utilized DB activities and interactions on DB to develop written complexities. Finally, this study demonstrates how DB can serve as a supplementary learning space, where if designed appropriately, can lead to opportunities for students to develop their written complexities.