Abstract

Task type is a fundamental element that directs learners' interactions in collaboration. The study grounds its design in McGrath's (1984) task type circumplex and examines students' online behaviors, process of argumentation, and collaboration. Students were asked to solve an authentic organizational challenge in a five-day online discussion in a blended undergraduate business course (face-to-face and online). Two kinds of tasks were given: a task with an open-ended question, and a task with two contrasting alternatives. Twenty-three groups (107 students) agreed to participate; the content of their posts and participation (click-stream) data were collected. The results show that the groups given an open-ended question participated more actively in reading and reviewing activities; they challenged others more often and provided more supporting reasons and evidence for their arguments, but there seemed to be an unequal distribution of efforts in the time they spent reviewing and the length of post they made.

Keywords: task type; asynchronous discussion forums; argumentation; student participation; mixed methods