CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL E-PARTNERING

IN AN ONLINE DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSE FOR

ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) EDUCATORS

by

LESLIE OPP-BECKMAN

A DISSERTATION

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_____
Diane Dunlap, Chair of the Examining Committee

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Date

Committee in Charge: Diane Dunlap, Chair
Juliet Baxter
Paul Yovanoff
Arthur Farley

Accepted by:

_____
Dean of the Graduate School

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Approved: _____
                              Diane Dunlap

Online distance education is increasing in use for professional development with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators worldwide. It creates training opportunities that would not otherwise exist in developing countries and among populations that face geographical, socio-political, and temporal barriers. Persistence and methods for supporting success in online distance learning remain significant challenges for institutions that develop and offer such programs and courses. The use of e-partnering has emerged as a successful method for helping to reduce attrition rates in online training. However, there has been little research to explain how and why e-partnering works. The purpose of this research study was to seek a deeper understanding of how and why the e-partnering system works, in order to inform instructional design, teaching, and learning practices in future online distance education teacher training courses. I addressed three research

questions. What were the characteristics (types) of e-partnerships "dyads" in this online distance education course for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators? What were the learning outcomes for the different types of e-partnerships? What were the communication patterns for the different types of e-partnerships? How did their communication patterns develop during the course?

This was a case study of an online distance education course offered Fall 2006 at University of Oregon (UO) where 22 successful pairs or "dyads" of EFL educators in predominantly Muslim countries were studied. I used multiple methods of analysis on multiple data sources: Self-directed Learning Readiness-Adult Basic Education (SDLRS-ABE) and Distance Learning Readiness (DLRA) pre vs. post inventory scores; pre vs. post scores from weekly multiple-choice knowledge tests; pre vs. post survey of e-partners' perceptions; analysis of text from asynchronous course discussions and other sources; and review and analysis of three action plan projects completed by the e-partners.

Data analysis revealed trust, partner accessibility, regular and consistent communication, and mutual support/accountability as common themes in defining successful e-partner relationships. Successful dyads were comprised of participants who perceived themselves to be in peer-peer or mentor-mentee roles. Communication patterns varied. Recommendations are made for changes in practice and for future research on this topic.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Leslie Opp-Beckman

PLACE OF BIRTH: Portland, Oregon, U.S.A.

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

   University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon, USA.

DEGREES AWARDED:

   Doctor of Philosophy, Department of Educational Leadership, 2007,
        University of Oregon.

   Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics, 1989, University of Oregon.

   Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and French, 1979, University of Oregon.

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

   Education and Technology.

   Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

   Senior Instructor and Technology Coordinator, American English
        Institute, Linguistics Department, University of Oregon, 1995-
        present and 1988-1991.

English Language Specialist, Office of English Language Programs, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State, 2002-2007 in Bahrain, Costa Rica, Egypt, Guatemala, Hungary, Israel, Jordan, Korea, Kuwait, Laos, Libya, Mozambique, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Vietnam, and Yemen.

Consultant, Global Technology Corps-South Africa, U.S. Department of State, 2004.

Consultant, Language Learning Solutions (LLS), 2003.

English as a Second Language Teacher Trainer, TESOL Summer Academies, 2000-2002, in Boston, Chicago, and Denver.

Consultant, Longman Publishers, 2001.

Consultant, Intensive English Language Program II-Egypt, 1999-2002.

English as a Second Language Instructor, Lane Community College, 1993-1995.

English as a Second Language Instructor, Crow-Applegate-Lorane School District 66, 1994.

Migrant Education Specialist, Redmond 2J School District, 1992-1993.

English as a Second Language Instructor, American Language Institute in Doha, Qatar, 1991-1992.

GRANTS, AWARDS AND HONORS:

Grant, Production of the video-based teacher training product *Shaping the Way We Teach English*, 2004.

Grant, Development of the *Online English Language Center* Web site, 2004-2007.

Grant, Production of a videoconferencing teacher training series with the Royal Thai Distance Learning Foundation, 2004-2007.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study was founded on the lives and learning choices that linked a
group of international educators in an online professional development course for
more than 12 weeks during the late summer and autumn of 2006. The American
English Institute (AEI) at the University of Oregon's (UO) Linguistics Department
had been engaged in face-to-face EFL teacher training for more than 15 years, and
in online distance education for more than 10 years. Initially, my department
experienced high attrition rates in online distance education courses as a
professional development intervention for EFL colleagues. We quickly developed
a number of strategies to improve retention rates and persistence. One such
strategy was the modification of instructional design principles, tasks, and tools to
fit the needs of course participants in order to increase their level of access to
online resources.

Another was paying closer attention to the frequency and quality of online
interactions between instructors and learners and among learners themselves.
Initially, UO AEI online courses primarily attracted students who were new to e-
learning. For the first time in Fall 2006, we identified, invited, and strategically

integrated some EFL educators who were experienced in to a course. Identifying experienced e-learners in advance, and purposefully pairing as many of them as possible with "newbie" course participants, was a new "study buddy" strategy intended to further support persistence. It led to the creation of several different kinds of pairings of participants, and, some surprising results. This "weeding out" and "shoring up" process with participants during the orientation period has become a regular administrative and teaching practice in UO AEI's online courses for EFL educators over the past 10 years and has helped stabilize classes and lower dropout rates once the course has started. However, it has not in itself been enough to prevent attrition in all cases.

Another strategy that we began to experiment with was the partnering of participants at the start of the courses. We have required participants—regardless of whether or not they have had had previous online learning experience—to work with an e-partner or "study buddy" on relevant tasks in the course and to maintain communication with that partner throughout the course. Even in cases where participants have been somewhat resistant to working with an e-partner initially, by the time the courses have finished, learners have consistently given positive feedback in their course evaluations on the e-partner system. From the perspective of the course administrator, we are also able to "virtually shoulder tap" an individual by email or other electronic communication when his or her partner disappears from the course and ask the partner if s/he knows what has happened to the partner. In this way, we can more often than not find out why that person has dropped out of communication. With this type of early

intervention, we have been able to successfully encourage, negotiate, and support re-entry of temporarily missing participants back into the course while there is still time for him or her to catch up with the class.

An analysis of retention patterns in online distance education teacher training courses for EFL educators offered through UO AEI over the past 10 years (n=500+) had shown that learners who enroll in pairs or small cohorts as part of a study buddy system at the start of a course were much more likely to stay in the course and to persist in their studies. Based on enrollment patterns, we know that the study buddy e-partnering system works with our remote EFL educator-learner population but we don't really understand how and why it works.

Retention/attrition patterns are common measures for helping gauge student, course, and program efficacy in face-to-face (F2F), distance education, and more recently in online or "e-learning" environments (Buchanan, 2004; DiRamio & Wolverton, 2006; Moody, 2004; Rovai, 2003; Terrell, 2005). Research on persistence in adult learners has shown that learners who have a strong motivation and clear goals or expected outcomes when taking a course, and who are able to self-direct their learning, are more persistent in their learning (Comings, Parrella, & Soricone, 1999). Recent research on e-learning dropout rates with U.S. community college students has shown that the reason students most often report for dropping out has been because "the student could not obtain, access, or install all the required learning materials in a timely manner and that they dropped the course while they still had a chance to do so" (Muse Jr., 2003).

Results from another study showed that students' satisfaction with e-

learning was a key indicator in the their decision to drop out from e-learning courses (Levy, 2007). These reasons may all seem obvious and logical at face value, but have potentially far-reaching implications for persistence in e-learning environments overall. If a learner feels unsuccessful and, for this reason, does not complete (persist in) his or her early e-learning course attempt(s), the implication is that s/he will be less likely to engage in future e-learning courses.

As institutions of higher education move further into the global educational arena, it will become increasingly important to understand how best to structure, implement, and evaluate online learning opportunities for international learners. However, as Rovai aptly observed (Rovai, 2003):

> ...[previous] models [for student attrition] were developed with on-campus programs in mind and, although they are broadly relevant to distance education programs, their ability to explain the persistence of online students is limited. Distance education students have characteristics and needs that differ from traditional learners and the virtual learning environment differs in important ways from an on-campus environment...research [is needed] into the needs of online distance education students in order to synthesize a composite model to better explain persistence and attrition among the largely nontraditional students that enroll in online courses (p. 1).

Programs and courses—even those with excellent content and faculty—are negatively impacted by high attrition rates and are at risk for non-continuance. This phenomenon is widely reported in online distance education programs

around the world and is the subject of much discussion in research and best practices literature (Bocchi, Eastman, & Swift, 2004; Buchanan, 2004; Levy, 2007; Terrell, 2005)

Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study

For this study, I wanted to know the answers to many questions about e-partnerships. How did these pairs of educators with such diverse interests and beliefs start out together in an online "e-learning" distance education course? What happened over time? E-partnering appeared, in other courses, to be very successful for some learners. Were their particular characteristics, or types, of e-partner dyads that were more successful than others? What were the learning outcomes for the different types of dyads? How did dyads apply knowledge from the course locally? What were the communication patterns for the different types of dyads? How did patterns develop during the course? How did dyads engage in their learning and demonstrate positive learning outcomes? What can instructors do when previously established partners show resistance to working with new partners in an online course, a newly documented phenomenon in online courses also known as "selective disengagement" (Chavez, 2007)?

I refined these questions into the following purpose statement and three related research questions. The purpose of this research study was to seek a deeper understanding of how and why the e-partnering system works, in order to inform instructional design, teaching, and learning practices in future online distance education teacher training courses.

1. What were the characteristics (types) of e-partnerships "dyads" in this online distance education course for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators?

2. What were the learning outcomes for the different types of e-partnerships?

3. What were the communication patterns for the different types of e-partnerships? How did their communication patterns develop during the course?

This study incorporated data from a 14-week pilot ODE course that the American English Institute (AEI) in the Linguistics department at the University of Oregon (UO) offered Fall 2006. Participants included 49 EFL educators living in 15 different developing countries in the Muslim World. In addition, approximately 12 non-participatory or lurking sponsors freely observed the course, and several guest facilitators participated for 1-2 week periods at regular intervals throughout the course.

Definitions

Several of the geographic and economic definitions that follow affected understanding and interpretation of the findings of this study.

Muslim World

First, these participants were all from Muslim World countries, as indicated on the map that follows (University of Texas Libraries, 1995).

Figure 1

Muslim World
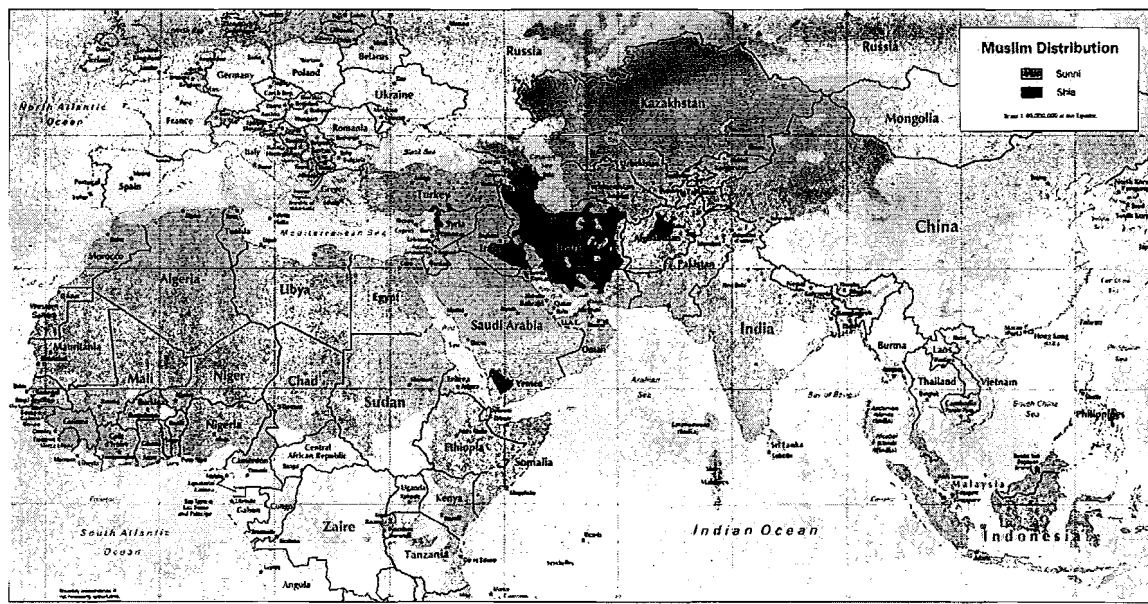
The 15 countries included (in alphabetical order): Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine (West Bank/Gaza Strip), Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Yemen.

Developing Countries

In addition, the participants were all from developing countries, which is in itself a complex concept and a term with more than one definition. According to the World Bank, the term which has now superceded *developing countries* in their classification system, *developing economies*, is a category made up of countries with low ($905 or less gross national income (GNI)) and middle ($906 - $3,595 GNI), and

high income economies (World Bank Group, 2007a). The World Bank further

clarifies the importance of distinguishing between a country's overall

development status and that of its economy as follows:

> Low-income and middle-income economies are sometimes referred to as
>
> developing economies. The use of the term is…not intended to imply that
>
> all economies in the group are experiencing similar development or that
>
> other economies have reached a preferred or final stage of development.
>
> Classification by income does not necessarily reflect [a country's overall]
>
> development status.

High income coupled with emergent development in the industrial and

human sectors is an accurate profile for some of the countries represented in this

proposed study as well (e.g. Bahrain and Saudi Arabia). The case of Israel is

somewhat of an anomaly, however, in that while the standard of living and

economic level are high for parts of the population, the opposite is true for other

socio-religious sectors. A clear understanding of the economic and development

status of the countries represented in this study is important because it provides

relevant contextual information about the participants' locales, their educational

settings, and their online learning environment.

I have used the term *developing countries* to describe all the countries

represented in this study, not in any kind of pejorative sense, but as a neutral

unifying term that acknowledges the fact that they are all experiencing

development challenges and change. This is in keeping with the practices of many

other international reporting agencies such as the United Nations Educational,

Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Daniel, 2004), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 2006), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (United States Agency for International Development, 2004), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) .

Many of the participants in this study lived in areas where schools struggle with overcrowding and/or low-resource conditions. Many of them worked in settings where teachers had limited access to professional development, especially in an international context. The UNESCO Forum, for example reports that it is (Daniel, 2004):

> ...paying particular attention to the developing countries, because higher education and research is central to any viable plan for economic growth and prosperity. [UNESCO] recognises the need for ongoing education and training in a complex knowledge society. Research is crucial because it provides the link between knowledge and sustainable development. Yet the majority of developing countries do not have a critical mass of research capacity, which gives them small opportunity to define and formulate problems and their solutions. By default, wholesale problem definitions and solutions appropriate for another context may be the only available answer, causing inappropriate consequences and unintended effects.

This lack in higher education resources means that it is also difficult for many developing countries to initiate and sustain high quality EFL teacher

training and educational administration programs (Birdsall, Levine, & Ibrahim, 2005; Delamonica, Mehrotra, & Vandemoortele, 2004).

In extreme cases, as with Least Developed Countries such as Yemen, resources are already stretched thin with efforts to raise literacy rates and increase enrolments in basic primary and secondary education (United Nations Development Group, 2006). In short, economic, political, social, and geographical challenges make it difficult both for EFL professionals to study in institutions of higher education in countries where English is the predominant language and for trainers to deliver face-to-face EFL training in developing countries.

> Limited access to native speaker communities and to pedagogy that informs current classroom practices therefore makes access to online professional development opportunities important.

Online distance education, of the type reported in this study, can help bridge this development gap by providing important opportunities for EFL educators to participate in teacher training courses such as the one in this study and to network with colleagues at the regional and global levels. However, in order to do so appropriately, as others have also noted, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) (Sein & Harindranath, 2004) "...needs to be conceptualized in its many facets, perceptions, and in its manifold impact in societies..." including the education context. Hence the need for more research related to developing countries and e-learning models.

E-Learning and Online Distance Education

For this dissertation, I used the terms *e-learning* and *online distance education* interchangeably to refer to learning primarily in a computer-based context, though additional resources such as printed materials, CDs or DVDs, audiotapes, and/or verbal communication may also be involved in the learning context. The course incorporated the newly developed digital video-based teacher training materials (Opp-Beckman, 2006) and supplementary text (Opp-Beckman & Klinghammer, 2006a) called *Shaping the way we teach English, Successful practices around the world (Shaping)*. Copies of all materials and all electronic discussion activities were housed on the UO Blackboard course management system (CMS). In addition, participants all had personal copies of all *Shaping* materials in print and electronic (CD) format for offline viewing.

Persistence

I used Kerka's definition of persistence in relation to the online course in this study as, "the length of time adults attend a class or tutoring sessions" (Kerka, 2005).

Outline of the Dissertation

In Chapter I, I have introduced this research study and define several key terms used throughout the study. Chapter 2 is a literature review with a three-point focus on: (1) retention and persistence, (2) e-learning instructional design using a social constructivist model, and (3) the dialogic process as a learning

strategy. Chapter 3 is focused on the methodology I used in the case study

framework for this research and includes a description of the course itself and of

the participant population. In Chapter 4, I have reported the data in order of the

research questions. This is followed by an interpretation of the results in Chapter

5. The dissertation closes with conclusions and recommendations for future

directions in research and practice in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The literature review focused on social constructivist principles as embedded in an e-learning instructional design, as illustrated in the following figure.

Figure 2

Literature Review Focus Areas
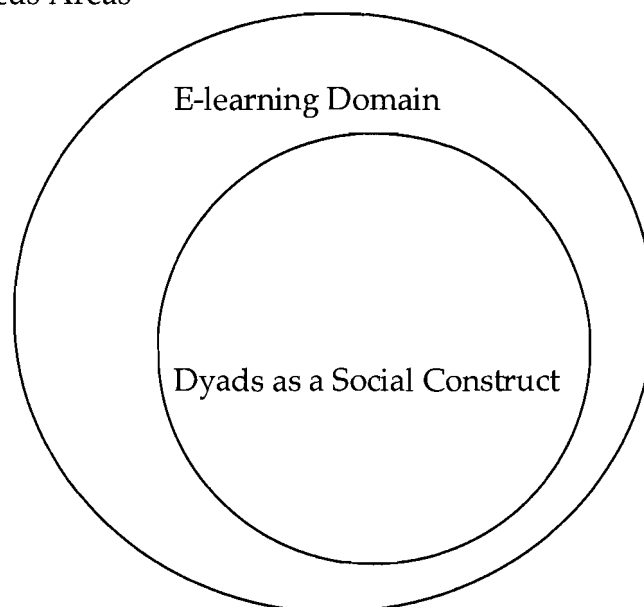
Social Constructivism and Situated Learning

Social-constructivist theory is based in part on the work of well-known cognitive researchers and philosophers such as Dewey (Bruner, 1977, 1996; Dewey, 1997; L. S. Vygotsky, 1978), Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1962; L. Vygotsky, 1978), and Bruner (Bruner, 1956, 1968, 1996). They conceived of learning as a highly individualized knowledge-building process, rather than an extant package of facts to be handed down by the teacher and instilled into the learner. Situated learning has its roots in the same constructivist literature and has been broadly described as (Bredo, 1994):

> ...a common theme uniting many situated approaches to cognition [as] a shift in the way the person/environment relationship is conceived. Rather than a person being 'in' an environment...the activities of person and environment are viewed as parts of a mutually-constructed whole.

In other words, in a social constructivist framework, all learning is both highly individualized and also fully grounded in and dependent upon the social context in which it occurs (Chaiklin & Lave, 1993; Lave, 1988; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Or, put simply and eloquently (Lave, 1996):

> Why pursue a social rather than a more familiar psychological theory of learning? [Because] being human is a relational matter, generated in social living, historically, in social formations whose participants engage with each other as a condition and precondition for their existence (p.149).

It has also been suggested that conceptions of learning and preferred learning approaches "vary cross-culturally [and that] the extent to which learning is 'student-centered' or 'teacher-centered' [is] also subject to cultural variations" (Venter, 2003). The value of multi-perspective thinking or being able to virtually "walk a mile in someone else's shoes" has been suggested as an important aspect of the shared learning process (Mitsuhara, Kanenishi, & Yano, 2006). The relevance of situated learning to the myriad cultures and contexts in language teacher education is apparent in research that has demonstrated positive outcomes when trainers recognized the importance of establishing social learning systems, and created communities of practice in which teachers could learn through engaging in activities and discourse (Singh & Richards, 2006). Similarly, in an ODE context, researchers and course developers have documented the importance of aligning local context or situation with technologies that support and promote effective learning tasks within these communities of practice (Dalsgaard & Mikkel, 2007; Dennen & Wang, 2002).

Context and situated learning figured heavily in the design of the *Shaping* course used for this case study. *Shaping* participants engaged in a variety of learning processes, working individually, with partners, and with the whole group, depending on the particular type of task and the desired learning outcome. Reflective practices, group discussion, project-based learning assignments, and formative peer reviews of those projects (see Project Template in Appendix F)—all based on local adaptations of ideas and strategies (knowledge) from the weekly modules—constituted the bulk of the learning tasks. Participants, as "experts" in

their own local educational contexts, selectively and purposefully applied knowledge from the course to their local settings in culturally and pedagogically appropriate ways.

E-Learning Instructional Design in a Social Constructivist Framework

Instructional design for e-learning courses shares many practices with face-to-face instructional design, for example: analyzing learners' needs and interests; establishing learning goals and content; creating opportunities for learning processes to occur; and conducting formative and summative evaluation of learners, instructors, and course-related resources. However, as mentioned previously in Chapter 1, e-learning courses require special consideration. It is seldom appropriate for a developer-instructor to simply copy over materials from a face-to-face course into electronic format, without regard for the variation in context, task design and delivery, and the communicative processes that participants in an e-learning course will encounter. ODE instructional design must take into consideration differences and issues such as:

- How instructional practices and processes occur (i.e. their delivery through electronic or digital means).

- How learners receive feedback on their performance, are monitored or tracked in their performance (e.g. attendance, grades, quality of work, number of courses successfully completed), and then subsequently advised as they move through a course or program.

- The amount of time that may be necessary for learners to engage with materials and each other and/or to complete tasks (e.g. it may take more time to orient learners to new online learning tools, yet less time for learners to receive automated feedback on tasks that incorporate computer-based survey and testing kinds of tools).

- The fact that—especially when given significant time zone and social/academic calendar differences—learners, instructors, and the servers that house instructional materials and tools may all be operating on very different asynchronous schedules and in a wide variety of distributed locations. For example, in the *Shaping* course, we were spread out across time zone differences of 10 or more hours and official work week schedules with people (and server back-ups) on a combination of Thursday-Friday, Friday-Saturday, and Saturday-Sunday weekends.

In short, the *situation* in which the learning occurs and the *way that the learning processes occur* are key considerations when designing any e-learning experience, and in this case, designing one for EFL in-service educators in developing countries. Thus, a situated, socially constructivist theoretical framework seems most appropriate for the design of the course used in this research project.

Online Learning and Task Design

Online learning *task type* has recently drawn attention in the research literature, with studies and suggested models for online learning tasks, in an effort to more closely align appropriate tasks with learning outcomes and to improve learner satisfaction in online courses (Kay & Knaack, 2007; Rogerson□Revell, 2007; Rourke, Anderson, Garrison, & Archer, 2001; Salmons, 2006; Schrire, 2006; Tallent-Runnels et al., 2006).

One such field study examined the influence of cognitive styles on the performance and the perceived effectiveness of computer-based education (CBE) delivered from CD-ROM vs. computer-aided education (CAE) delivered over the Web (Workman, 2004). Results showed significant differences in learners' performance based on their cognitive styles and their preferred modes of education (CD-ROM vs. Web). People who were able to work with more abstract information performed better in CAE, whereas people who preferred concrete detail performed better in CBE. Also, people who preferred collaborative learning performed better in CAE than their counterparts who preferred individualized learning. However, the use of CAE vs. CBE has become increasingly blurred as CD-ROMs extend their boundaries by incorporating links to related Web-based resources, allowing users to move back and forth between the two forms of media.

In a developing country context, factors such as added costs to use the Internet connection on a computer or the relative availability of an Internet connection vs. a CD drive on a computer may be of equal or even greater importance in determining a CAE vs. CBE mode of delivery. Plus, it was not clear

from this single study whether the findings would be similarly appropriate in all types of cultural settings.

By way of comparison, the *Shaping* course used for this study, accommodated individual learning preferences and variations in the local availability of offline vs. online technologies in two important ways: (1) by incorporating a combination of both individual and partnered tasks in the instructional design, and (2) by providing participants with access to all readings and videos both in "hard copy" print/CD-ROM format as well as in electronic (digital) format through the UO Web-based course management system (CMS).

The video-based materials in the *Shaping* course—divided into 14 thematic modules—were a way for participants to be able to observe key classroom practices and resources in other English language teaching classes around the world. The *Shaping* videos were a new and innovative product at the time and, to the best of my knowledge, there were no other comparable materials widely available for use with the teacher population in this course. Researchers from University of Michigan-Ann Arbor recently studied the impact of the length and format of similar such multimedia instructional videos and tasks with regard to: information recall, persistence, perceived content difficulty, aesthetic appeal, and perceived module length (the actual length of the video modules was 7, 14, and 20 minutes) (Pomales-Garcia & Liu, 2006). Their results showed no difference in information recall between the different module lengths and formats; however, as the module length increased, participants were less likely to persist and to not complete the modules. The authors noted that, "Systematic evaluations of module

length along with its visual appearance gives us insight to understand important factors that need to be considered when designing Web-based distance learning environments." In accordance with Pomales-Garcia and Liu's findings and recommendations, each *Shaping* video was no more than 12 minutes in length and was set in a visually appealing format that portrayed real-life class scenes (not scripted scenes or "talking head" lectures).

In alignment with situated learning, the *Shaping* course and materials along with the learning context in this study exhibited the following key features.

- Participants and context: Participants themselves, using their expertise as experienced educators in their local cultures and contexts, critically selected the type(s) of resources and innovations from the *Shaping* course that they then experimented with in their own EFL classes. This was an example of situated learning in which the e-learning instructional design—although in a distant locale and different context—took into account participants' local context (for both the teachers-as-learners in the course and the student populations that they would then be impacting in real-life) along with the unique social aspects of the many cultures represented in the group as a whole.

- Materials and tasks: The *Shaping* materials, which were designed for use as interactive observation and knowledge-building experiences (rather than being "spoon fed" with passive listening or "talking head" kinds of lectures), created unique opportunities for EFL educators to access and critically evaluate authentic practices and scenes from other educators'

real-life English language teaching classes. Tasks, which were linked to the materials and took into account learners' varied educational contexts, were similarly structured to accommodate a range of learner preferences and abilities. This was an example of situated learning in which the e-learning materials and tasks were based on shared principles and, as such, supported the overall instructional design.

- Evidence of learning outcomes: Learning outcomes were an integral part of the participants' learning process. Throughout the online course, participants had ongoing opportunities to make choices about and (re-) focus their own learning objectives and related learning outcomes. These outcomes were self-evident in these three ways, at a minimum, through: (1) the individual weekly Knowledge Challenge activities, with results tracked and made individually (confidentially) available through the course management system test tools and gradebook; (2) the three PBL activities at equi-distant points in the course in which participants demonstrated the applied use of their knowledge in local settings, and which partners then peer-reviewed in a formative evaluation process; and (3) participation in one or more weekly asynchronous discussion topics, based on themes and video observations from the weekly *Shaping* modules.

Project-based Learning (PBL)

As one of many practices stemming from social constructivist-based theory, PBL served as a framework for one of several key tasks in the *Shaping* class—

Action Plan projects—as noted above. Researchers both in and outside the U.S. have documented the value of the use of project work in post-secondary courses akin to *Shaping* for many years now (Boud & Costley, 2007; Koschmann, Myers, Feltovich, & Barrows, 1993; Moursund, 1999; Yiping & MacGregor, 2004). Boud and Costley have examined the implications of PBL vis-a-vis project advising and argued that "the conception of the role of academics in project work needs to change from one focused on project supervision to one of learning adviser." This parallels literature advocating a paradigm shift toward more student-centered instructional practices in which teachers move from the role of "sage on the stage" to "guide on the side" not only in face-to-face classes but in online classes as well, with increased opportunities for meaningful discourse and development within a social constructivist framework (Papastergiou, 2007; Poole, 2000).

The three Action Plan projects provided an opportunity for participants to demonstrate in concrete terms how they would apply what they had learned from the course. PBL has been described in a variety of ways. However, a key characteristic is that it often involves learners becoming engaged in a substantial learning activity that is at least partly self-initiated and managed. Positive results have also been reported in linking electronic discussion forums with PBL tasks (Sorensen & Baylen, 2004; Yiping & MacGregor, 2004). In some courses, learners interacted with their peers, the instructor, and outside guest experts as well in order to enhance their knowledge and complete a group project (ChanLin & Chan, 2007). Students' online interactions and their written reflections were used to identify the types of online support which contributed to self-directed, Web-based

learning in a PBL context. The study concluded that both cognitive support

(guidance, clarification, suggestion, inquiry, information) and affective support

(comment, confirmation, reminding and encouragement) were necessary in order

to facilitate the process of learning. ChanLin and Chan reported that learners,

overall, were positive about this approach. Researchers have also focused on the

purposeful use of online group discussion assignments as an instructional strategy

intended to trigger individuals' cognitive processes (Schellens & Valcke, 2005).

Schellens and Valcke found that the "amount of imposed structure in the

discussion…and the complexity of the task are considered to influence the nature

of the cognitive activities. This results in varying levels of knowledge

construction."

E-partnering as a Learning Process

This linking of online discussion tasks to the knowledge construction

(learning) process is an important point. Studies have shown that dyads who

engaged in *transactive* online discussion—that is, the negotiation of meaning and

as a shared knowledge-building or problem-solving process—showed more

improvement than dyads who did not have transactive discussions (Teasley,

1997). In other words, having a partner was not a necessary or sufficient condition

for producing transactive talk but it increased the likelihood that it would occur. In

a parallel virtual classroom, communal accountability and reciprocal commitment

emerged as salient attributes in online composition course (Fleckenstein, 2005).

The data from these and other studies (Joshi & Rosé, 2007; Weinberger & Fischer,

2006) has suggested that the value of peer collaborations may be that the *presence of a partner* provides a natural context for elaborating one's own reasoning and that the nature and structure of the task or project influenced the learning process and outcomes.

There was a curious split in the literature when learning pairs become the focus. Below, I briefly review looking at learning partners as a form of computer supported collaborative learning, as a type of mentoring relationship, and as an example of peer-to-peer learning. While results are incomplete in each topical area, and few studies have been done with the particular population studied here, in general, each branch of study of partnering seems to point to it being important even though little is known about exactly why it may be important.

Computer Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL)

Computer supported collaborative learning (CSCL) literature studies the nature and efficacy of shared dialogue and communication in a specific e-learning environment. Some research has suggested that CSCL can be more effective when the course design is compatible with participants' personal learning preferences and cognitive styles (Karampiperis, Lin, & Sampson, 2006). On the other hand, contradictory research findings have indicated that students' cognitive styles were not significantly correlated with their attitudes and preference for instructional delivery modes while other factors such as previous online learning experience and computer competency were instead significantly correlated with students' learning outcomes and attitudes toward online instruction (Oh & Lim, 2005). Data

analysis from similar research, but with more of a focus on individual learner study habits, revealed that the quality of the online instructor, learning motivation, and learning involvement were significant variables influencing the course and learning outcomes (Lim & Morris, 2006).

There was no clear consensus at the time of this study as to whether or not cognitive learning styles are an important consideration in structuring CSCL tasks. The relevance of learning involvement or engagement and previous online learning experience interested me however, as previous engagement in (persistence) and prior successful experience with online EFL teacher training was in fact a factor for selecting would-be mentors for half of the dyads in the *Shaping* course (as further detailed in coming chapters).

Additional research in the CSCL arena has analyzed how a "Learning Partners" collaborative learning strategy, with many similarities to the e-partnering strategy used in the course in this study, affected various pedagogical outcomes in the online classroom, for example: community building, task completion, and learning (Stathakos, 2003). Results showed that the use of such e-partners helped to establish a sense of online community, with students reporting that they felt closer to their classmates and less isolated. However, it was not an effective strategy when ill-matched with tasks that could have otherwise been completed individually. This study demonstrated the importance of matching appropriate tasks with e-partner work. In comparison, formative and summative evaluations from the *Shaping* class indicated that participants overall felt the

individualized vs. partner-based tasks were adequately balanced and useful in their learning process.

A quasi-experimental study in a German as a foreign language learning setting took a more in-depth look at task-based learning in order to determine the extent to which task-type and group size impacted both the quantity and quality of learner discourse in online communication (Keller-Lally, 2006). An important finding that emerged from this foreign language (FL) online learning context was that participants overwhelmingly preferred open-ended and the least constrained of opinion exchange tasks. Findings such as the above underscored the importance of recognizing and accommodating learner preferences in a variety of learning modalities and of linking them with appropriate task design (Fill & Ottewill, 2006). In sum, however, "Regarding the importance of characteristics of individual students, there is little [conclusive] research evidence about their specific effect in the computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL) field (Schellens, Van Keer, & Valcke, 2005)," and even less is known about their effect on e-partnerships. Hence the need for this study.

E-mentoring

It was not clear as I commenced this study whether the e-partner dyad needed to have some aspect of mentoring in it of at least one partner to the other. There are many studies documenting the efficacy of mentoring relationships in teacher training in face-to-face classroom environments, especially in the partnering of new teachers with experienced teachers (Ganser, 2002; Harris, 1995;

Moir & Bloom, 2003) and even retired teachers (Goddard & Habermann, 2001).

Research has also shown that pairing mentee teachers together with each other can

also be a highly effective practice (Baker & Milner, 2006). Researchers have noted

that with the advent of Internet-based mentoring, "Mentoring has transformed

from traditional master-apprentice relationships into multiple developmental

relationships that extend beyond functional, organizational, and geographic

boundaries" (Whiting & de Janasz, 2004).

More recently, a number of descriptive case studies have emerged that

report similarly positive outcomes for education, health, and business

professionals who have connected through e-mentoring environments in a

mentor-mentee type of relationship (Bierema & Hill, 2005; Brintnall, 2002; DeWert,

Babinski, & Jones, 2003; Margerum-Leys & Marx, 2004; O'Neill & Harris, 2004;

Stewart, 2006). A single, descriptive, exploratory case study investigation of 17 e-

mentors who used email for mentoring purposes and 28 who mentored face-to-

face asked the question, "What online communication patterns can be identified

among participants of the study?" (Welsh 2003). Results showed that participants

felt that email (online communication) could provide peer mentors with an

environment that was "interactive, honest, supportive, and respectful." Other

reports have also described positive results with faculty peer mentoring (Dabl,

2005; McKenzie, Özkan, & Layon, 2006), "e-coaching" (Rossett & Marino, 2005),

and "dialogic mentoring" in an organizational learning context (Bokeno & Gantt,

2000).

In a related vein, case study research has also shown that "collegiality" among e-partners (relationships characterized as being relatively equal to each other in status and power) can be a stronger motivating force than "managerialism" (relationships in which one partner has higher standing or more authority than the other) in supporting continuous professional development among faculty (Harwood & Clarke, 2006). Results from another case study indicate the importance of the instructors' roles in shaping impressions of the value of using the course delivery systems and the potential underutilization of peer influence to shape behavior in online courses (Shen, Laffey, Lin, & Huang, 2006).

Formative Peer Review

Formative peer review, as another form of transactive dialogue, is typically structured to allow for recognition of strengths alongside respectful suggestions for improvement. Course developers and researchers continue to link such social-constructivist assessment processes with knowledge-building on the premise that using "the theory of a social-constructivist assessment process...[that] actively engage[s] the students with feedback on their work, and the feedback process" can positively impact their learning (Price, O'Donovan, & Rust, 2007). Research on peer review in an e-learning context has yielded unclear results so far, however. Price et al reported that although learners in their study perceived peer review activities to be beneficial, an analysis of learners' scores and outside raters'

evaluations "failed to demonstrate any tangible improvement in the efficacy [of peer review]" (p. 150).

In other literature, peer assessment has been touted as a means of saving time for the instructor and creating an added benefit for students with "students 'marking' or 'commenting on' each others' work and then being judged for the quality they show in performing these judgments (Davies, 2006)." Results from a research study with international educators in Taiwan revealed that in-service teachers (even more so than pre-service teachers) positively viewed online peer assessment as a "learning aid" in their professional development experience (Wen, Chin-Chung, & Chun-Yen, 2006). Justifying the use of peer review on the grounds that it (perhaps) saves time and that learners perceive it to be beneficial and/or enjoyable is interesting from a teaching practices perspective, but there was still a need for research to further investigate the efficacy of those claims from a learning theory perspective.

Under the label of "learning-oriented assessment," peer review was a key component in a University of Hong Kong case study which examined: assessment tasks as learning tasks, learner involvement in assessment as peer- or self-evaluators, and feedback as "feed forward" that was intended to positively guide the learning process (Carless, 2007). Course topics were organized according to modules, as they were in the *Shaping* course as well. In this instance, Carless found that peer review had a positive impact on learning outcomes.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research study was to seek a deeper understanding of how and why the e-partnering system works, in order to inform instructional design, teaching, and learning practices in future online distance education teacher training courses. Reports concerning Adult Basic Education (ABE) and adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners have noted that the reason for persistence in courses and programs tends to be highly individualized and that the importance of social support systems can play an important role (Kerka, 2005; Roberts, 2006). However, there has been a lack of research to explain how and why e-partnering as a social support system has worked in an online distance learning context, in general, and with international groups of EFL educators in particular. Building on the research focus areas from the Chapter II literature review, the following research questions about dyads emerged to form the basis for this study.

Research question 1 was based on the need to better understand how and why e-partnering improves *retention and persistence* in online distance education courses as EFL teacher training interventions:

1. What were the characteristics (types) of e-partnerships "dyads" in this online distance education course for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators?

Research question 2, based on *a social-constructivist theory of learning linked with sound instructional design principles and e-learning practices*, examined the nature of the relationship—if any—between types of dyads (as determined in research question 1) and their learning outcomes:

2. What were the learning outcomes for the different types of e-partnerships?

Research question 3, also based on a social constructivist theory of learning, examined the *learning process as evidenced in course communication and dialogue-based tasks* and looked for possible relationships between types of dyads (as determined in research question 1) and their communication patterns.

3. What were the communication patterns for the different types of e-partnerships? How did their communication patterns develop during the course?

The E-Course Itself as the Context for Research

Culture is an innate part of context and therefore had some bearing on this study. As previously mentioned, participants in the course in this study came together from 15 different countries—from as far West as Morocco to as far East as Kyrgyzstan—each of them representing in some unique fashion their nation, their culture, and the student population with which they worked. Given the broad geographical region and the many barriers against travel (family obligations, jobs, economics, time, etc.), the only way this group *could* be connected was through an e-learning course. An instructional design that incorporated regular face-to-face

contact for the whole group was simply not an option. the clear need for online

distance education as a mode of delivery condition both enabled and, in some

ways, constrained the design and implementation of the course and this

subsequent study in fundamental ways.

For this study, I used data from one online distance education course for 49

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators that took place during Fall 2006. In

addition, approximately 12 non-participatory or "lurking" sponsors freely

observed the course, and several guest facilitators participated. The course opened

with an extended 4-week period for orientation and needs analysis, followed by 14

weeks of instruction. for 1-2 week periods at regular intervals throughout the

course.

As introduced in Chapters I and II, the course itself was developed out of

extensive practice with similar populations and similar e-settings, and was based

on a social constructivist theory of learning and related practices, such as testing-as

learning activities, project-based learning tasks, formative peer review, and

knowledge construction linked with other transactive and collaborative

dialoguing tasks. The course incorporated video-based teacher training materials

(Opp-Beckman, 2006) and supplementary text (Opp-Beckman & Klinghammer,

2006a) called *Shaping the way we teach English, Successful practices around the world*

*(Shaping)*along with numerous freely available Web-based resources. Copies of all

materials and all electronic discussion activities were housed on the UO

Blackboard course management system (CMS). In addition, participants all had

personal copies of all *Shaping* materials in print and electronic (CD) format for offline viewing.

"Shaping" the lives of EFL educators from so many different locales through an online professional development course was obviously more complex than simply moving through a set of materials. *Shaping* materials—made up of 14 different modules on EFL teaching and learning practices—contained a wide range of English language teaching classroom scenes from around the world, accompanied by a user manual with interactive, guided observation and discussion tasks, plus about 200 additional related readings (Opp-Beckman & Klinghammer, 2006b). (See Appendix A for a list of modules and topics.) Course participants accessed readings, course information, assignments, and asynchronous discussions through UO's Blackboard course management system (CMS). They had copies of the videos on CD as well, for offline viewing. Participants enrolled in pairs as study buddies or e-partners at the start of the course. These dyads were the focus of this research study.

Unit of Analysis: The Dyad

The unit of analysis in this study was the dyad: an online or *e-partnership* made up of two individuals. I have used the terms *dyad, pair,* and *e-partners* in this study interchangeably to refer to pairs of individuals who worked together from the beginning to the end of the course.

From an initial pool of 28 e-partnerships in the course, 5 dyads dropped out of the course during the orientation period of the course, bringing the total down

from 28 to 23. I omitted 1 of the e-partnerships because it was a triad, an oddity

consisting of three individuals instead of two. I further omitted another 2 dyads

which each contained a native speaker of English (all other participants were non-

native speakers of English), for two reasons: (1) the native speakers' level of

English language proficiency and their degree of access to formal language teacher

training was markedly higher than many of the non-native speaker participants

and therefore placed their project work in a separate category, which would have

been difficult to comparably rate in a research framework; and (2) as educators

and members in the local international communities, their position was clearly one

that was outside the context or situation in which the other participants were

operating. Although these individuals and their partners were highly successful as

learners in the course, their relative otherness made them fundamentally different

from the other dyads for them to be included in the study. I ended up with 20

dyads to study for this research project.

<p style="text-align:center">Case Study Rationale</p>

I used a multiple case study design. According to case study criteria as

outlined by Yin (Yin, 2003), "In general, case studies are the preferred strategy

when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little

control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within

some real-life context" (p. 1). He further clarified that, "The case study is preferred

in examining contemporary events, but when the relevant behaviors can not be

manipulated" (p. 7). As the research questions for this study indicate, I was

looking for answers to what (descriptive) and why/how (analytic) questions about

e-partners in a specific context: an online professional development course for EFL educators in 15 different developing countries in the Muslim World. For ethical and practical reasons, it was not possible to create a separate class or to divide the one class in half and make the other section partner-free in order to manipulate their learning according to experimental or quasi-experimental design structures.

I planned to use primarily quantitative kinds of methods to obtain as detailed a description as possible of the attributes that characterized all 20 dyads in the course (in other words, addressing Research Question #1). These classes of attributes, or typologies, would then serve as criteria for the purposeful selection of a smaller set of representational dyad cases that I could then use to address Research Questions #2 and #3. I used a number of case study triangulation techniques to seek out "converging lines of inquiry" (Yin, 2003) in order to strengthen the study's construct validity. Following are some forms of triangulation that are well-recognized in case study research (Patton, 1987), along with examples of how I addressed them in this dissertation. I used multiple sources of data to seek answers to each of the three research questions. I used multiple methods of analysis including quantitative (statistical), qualitative, and discourse methods. I maintained case study notes, constructing a detailed chain of evidence to document how and when I obtained data, along with the rationale and steps I used for conducting different kinds of analyses. I analyzed more than 30,000 lines of text, using discourse analysis techniques. I used four outside raters for the independent evaluation of participants' projects and peer reviews. I also

consulted with, and had experts check, the measures (such as the rubrics that raters used) and my formulas and calculations in the statistical analyses. In addition, I conducted member checks with participants and sponsors from the course as I worked my way cyclically through the data analysis process.

Data Sources

The sources of data I used to help answer the above research questions included the following.

Demographic Information

At the start of the course, as part of the enrollment process, participants provided demographic information such as: gender, age, location, institutional affiliation, number of years experience teaching EFL, current work responsibilities, and amount of experience in previous online courses. Sponsors emailed this data in spreadsheet format as a file attachment. An administrative assistant in my department then verified it individually with participants via email to make sure it was accurate, and made updates as needed before importing it into our departmental database.

Pre and Post Results for the Survey on Partner Work

I developed a 20-item survey (see Appendix B), administered electronically pre and post via UO's course management system (CMS), which participants answered individually and confidentially. In it, I asked them to identify: their role

in the course (peer, mentor, or mentee); the frequency with which and the ways in which they communicated with their partner (face-to-face, phone, email, etc.); and the degree to which they felt their partner was responsive to their needs and provided help and/or support when requested.

Results from items 1 and 2 on this survey provided data for research question 1 (describing dyad characteristics) . Results from the remainder of the survey items provided data for the research question 3 (dyad communication patterns).

Pre and Post Scores for the SDLRS-ABE and DLRA

Before the class began, I hypothesized that a reliable, well-validated instrument for assessing participants' levels of self-efficacy (administered pre and post at the beginning and end of the course) might yield interesting and useful information about participants' level of preparedness and attitudes toward learning. I considered a number of possibilities, among them the respected 24-item (P. J. Guglielmino & Guglielmino, 2006b; Harvey, Rothman, & Frecker, 2006)(OCLI) (Oddi) and the combined Self-Directed Learning Readiness Survey-Adult Basic Education (SDLRS-ABE), and Distance Learning Readiness Assessment (DLRA). Both have been validated and used extensively in professional development settings for adult learners (L. M. Guglielmino, 1978; P. J. Guglielmino & Guglielmino, 2006a).

In the end, I determined that the combined SDLRS-ABE and DLRA instruments would be the best match for my learner population and our context,

as they were more education-oriented, while the OCLI was more health occupation-oriented. With the author's permission, I administered the SDLRS-ABE and DLRA assessments electronically and confidentially pre and post via UO's CMS (see Appendices C and D for the SDLRS-ABE and DLRA instruments, respectively). The CMS conveniently calculated and tracked all answers, which I then exported to a spreadsheet file, used automated converters to recode the answers from text to numerical form, and sent as an email attachment to the testing service for scoring. They, in turn, returned scores in electronic format as well. There was no hand-entry of data at any point so as to minimize the chance of introducing mistakes. I also kept original copies of files before making recoding or other changes to them in order to maintain an audit trail and to be able to backtrack to analytical points, as needed, in the event a file became corrupt or needed to be reworked.

Pre and Post Scores on Weekly Knowledge Challenge (KC)

Tests-as-Learning Activities

Each week the course presented a new topic based on modules from the *Shaping* materials (see Appendix A for a list of modules and topics). For each of these topics, there was a 20-item multiple choice "test" in the CMS. Participants took the pre-KC version each week before engaging with the materials and discussion boards (see Appendix E for a sample Knowledge Challenge test).

There were two purposes for the pre-KC: (1) to establish a benchmark that only I, as instructor, could see; and (2) to serve as a background knowledge and

schema activation device to help prepare participants for the main points that would come up in that week's materials. For the pre-KC, participants could only take it once, they had to complete all items in one sitting, and they could not see their numerical score but instead received a checkmark and full points for completing it.

The purpose of the post-KC was to act as a self-measure in a testing-as-learning activity for individuals. They could improve as much or as little as they needed or wanted. For the post-KC, participants could begin taking it at any time they liked after completing the pre-KC (the CMS allowed for adaptive release of the post-KC, dependent on individual completion first of the pre-KC), they could take it as many times as they liked (each subsequent score automatically overwrote the previous one), they could see their scores at any time in the gradebook, and they received detailed feedback on right vs. wrong answers with pointers on where to look in the materials to get additional information.

The pre and post KCs in any given week contained the same 20 items. Those items changed each week, based on the course content. However, for the post-KC, the CMS test tool randomly ordered each time an individual attempted it: (1) the 20 items on the test, and (2) the specific answers to each of those 20 items (with the exception of answer sets that included an "all of the above" or "none of the above" option). At the end of each week, the KC for that period of time became unavailable and the next KC opened.

At the start of term there was a practice pre and post KC so that participants could become familiar with the CMS testing tool and the format and content of the KCs. These scores were not included in the analysis. Likewise, the final set of scores were not part of the analysis as they were erratic and not fully completed. Participants reported being too busy with other end-of-term activities and requirements.

Three Action Plan Projects with Partner Reviews

At three equi-distant points in the term, participants used the course Action Plan template to individually create "visionary" descriptions that demonstrated what innovations they had chosen to incorporate from the *Shaping* course into their local teaching context. Their respective partners—the same partners in the same dyads each time—also conducted a written formative review for each project, using the guide in Part B of the Action Plan template (see Appendix F for a copy of this template). Dyads then submitted their projects + partner reviews (project + review in one combined document) electronically through the CMS dropbox or as email attachments to me.

In order to accustom participants to working together and to becoming familiar with the use of a template, they first produced similar trial projects and reviews on a smaller scale. These trial projects were not included as a data source for this study.

Identifying raters. I identified four local raters using as selection criteria the following qualifications:

- A Masters degree or higher in the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), Applied Linguistics, or a related field.

- Five or more years experience teaching English to non-native speakers.

- Prior experience with the use of project-based learning and partner review teaching techniques in a TESOL context.

- Prior experience in norming for and acting as a rater of similar kinds of projects and with similar kinds of rubrics.

Rater materials. Each rater received copies of the following at the time of the norming session.

- *Shaping the Way We Teach English* video set, training materials, and list of 14 modules.

- Print copy of the *ACTFL Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers (2002)* with a focus on Standards 3b and 4c with reference to the online document at:

  http://www.ncate.org/documents/ProgramStandards/actfl2002.pdf

- Rating instructions.

- Practice norming packet.

- Complete set of anonymously authored and numerically coded project samples in print format, with projects in each rater's set arranged in a different random order.

- Scoring sheet in electronic spreadsheet file format.

- Set of brightly colored highlighter markers for recording scores directly onto projects. Raters returned their sets of marked-up projects to me after they completed the scoring.

The raters participated all together as a group in a face-to-face norming session with me prior to beginning to rate the projects. They used a standards-based rubric that I adapted from the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Program Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers at the Undergraduate and Graduate Levels (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2002). The rating rubric separately evaluated the quality of the projects (this yielded one score) and the partner reviews (this yielded a second score). For practice rating, we used projects and reviews that were not part of the set they later rated on their own. All projects that contained work from native speaker (NS) participants were omitted. I ran spell-check on all remaining projects so that spelling (typographical errors) would not interfere with raters' evaluation of the project content. Practice projects were those that met one or more of the following criteria.

- Projects with no reviewer comments (reviewer comments were missing altogether, or the reviewer was a NS and I manually deleted those portions).

- Projects that were created by non-native speaker (NNS) participants who were without established partners and who obtained reviews on an ad hoc basis from other class participants.

- Projects that were created by NNS participants that belonged to a non-dyad partnership, for example, a triad.

- Projects in which partners, for unspecified reasons, submitted work will all parts authored collaboratively.

Raters also received printed instructions for conducting their independent rating as follows.

- Raters were required to review the projects in the order in which they are placed in the packet and to *not* re-shuffle or re-organize them. It was important that the projects stayed in random order so as to avoid any inadvertent patterning in scoring. It was also important that each rater's order remained different.

- Raters were instructed to write all scores and notes directly onto the projects. This gave me a reference point in case of a missing score on the final report and I needed to go back and see what they had done.

- Once the norming session was complete, raters were instructed not to discuss scoring results at any point with any other rater until after the deadline or the point at which all raters had turned in their scoring results, whichever comes first. In case of questions, they should contact the PI directly.

- Raters were instructed to complete all ratings prior to entering scores on the pre-formatted reporting spreadsheet.

- Raters submitted their scores to me electronically, using the pre-
  formatted spreadsheet file that I gave them.

See Appendix G for a copy of the project and partner review rubric to which raters uniformly assigned—in 100% agreement—low (1-approaches standard), mid (2-meets standard), and high (3-exceeds standard) scores.

After receiving all raters' scores, I then merged the files and ran inter-rater reliability analyses of the scores. I used the Scoring Handbook from UCLA's National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) (CRESST) as a guide for both the preparation and conducting of the norming session and for the inter-rater analysis. On average, raters were in agreement 80% of the time.

Discourse Analysis of Text-based Communication

For a more in-depth look at the specific cases in the study (not the whole group), I used a combination of grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1967; Schrire, 2006) and Henri's widely used asynchronous discussion content analysis framework (De Wever, Schellens, Valcke, & Van Keer, 2005; Henri, 1992; Strijbos, Martens, Prins, & Jochems, 2006) to analyze text data such as the discussions archived on the CMS, email correspondence (with individuals, with dyads, with larger groups and the whole class, with sponsors who nominated the dyads for inclusion in the course, etc.); participants' reflective writing in the blogs section of the CMS; and text from open-ended comment boxes on surveys, assignments, and periodic course evaluations.

Course Management System (CMS) Statistics

The CMS automatically tracked and recorded individuals' activity on the course site in terms of the total number of *hits* for the course, and the number of hits in the asynchronous discussion board and other sections of the course. One hit is defined as one instance of an individual clicking on a link inside the CMS site. The CMS was available to participants 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (with the exception of brief outages for regularly scheduled maintenance and back up). This set of statistics was of limited value by itself (a hit did not indicate, for example, how long the person stayed on a particular part of the course site, the quality or depth of their engagement with the materials there, or what else they might have been doing or multitasking while they had that part of the site open on their computer screen). However, when viewed in conjunction with other data such as the KC results or amount posted at that time on the discussion board, it could provide useful corroborating information.

Case Selection Criteria and Analyses

In Phase 1 of the study, I first collected and analyzed the data for the whole group (20 dyads) in detail and developed relevant criteria that would serve as a filter to help me identify and purposefully select, in Phase II, 3-4 dyads as cases for more in-depth analysis. Those cases could have been selected in a couple of different ways, for example, focusing on cases all from one sub-region for the sake of increased cohesion as opposed to selecting representative cases from a range of

more to less "healthy" dyads but from a wider distribution of countries and contexts. In the end, I determined I had the most complete sets of data for the sub-region set of cases and therefore elected to focus on them in this study.

This was an a cyclical or iterative process, which began with the data and analyses for research question #1:

1. What are the characteristics (types) of e-partnerships "dyads" in this online distance education course for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators?

The initial analyses, applied to the whole group included:

- Standard descriptive statistical analyses for gender, age, years of teaching experience, country of residence, etc.

- The quantitative analysis of pre/post self-perceptions regarding peer-mentor-mentee roles in the course. From this, a typology emerged containing the attributes: +/- peer and +/-static. These attributes were one way to characterize all dyads in the study (more about this in Chapter 4 on data analysis).

As various patterns and possible data groupings emerged, I used naturalistic inquiry techniques (Barbara, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), including the constant comparative method to check back, looking to other data sources that might enhance or refute those lines of thinking. Next, looking to research question #2, I used the following data sources and analyses.

2. What are the learning outcomes for the different types of e-partnerships? In what ways do dyads apply learning outcomes to local educational settings?

- Knowledge Challenge pre/post tests: Statistical analysis of pre vs. post KC scores of individuals to identify low-->high vs. high-->high patterns over the duration of the course. One of my committee members, an expert in quantitative analysis, checked my calculations on this and verified that the data was accurate. This then yielded a typology of dyads characterized as being made up of either [L-->H:H-->H] or [H-->H:H-->H] individuals (more on this in Chapter 4 on data analysis). I used the ETS scoring guidelines for the PRAXIS test on Foreign Language Teaching Pedagogy to set a cut-off point for low (less than 75% accuracy on answers) vs. high performance on pre and post KC scores (Educational Testing Service, 2005, 2007).

- Projects: Four outside raters used an ACTFL standards-based rubric (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2002)to evaluate all of the projects that participants produced as a demonstration of applied knowledge in their local contexts (40 participants x 3 projects each = approximately 120 projects total per rater, with some exceptions for missing or incomplete work).

I then used results from the above analyses as criteria for the selection of the cases focus cases in this study. For those cases, I conducted the more in-depth qualitative and discourse analyses that would help answer research question #3:

3. What are the communication patterns for the different types of e-partnerships? How do their communication patterns develop during the course?

- Qualitative analysis, using Henri's coding scheme and grounded theory, of discourse and text from: asynchronous discussions, email communication, reflective blog entries, and comments on surveys.

- Statistical analysis of CMS "hits" for individuals (e.g. total number of hits, percentage of time spent in specific BB areas, login/usage patterns, etc.).

Analyzing the learning processes that take place in a computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL) environment—in this case through non-public CMS discussion boards—have been found to be of benefit to course designers, instructors or tutors, and researchers who are involved in collaborative learning experiences (Pozzi, Manca, Persico, & Sarti, 2007)." Keeping track of meaningful discourse events can serve at least three purposes: (1) the evaluation of the quality of the process, (2) the monitoring of participants' performance in real time, and (3) the assessment of learning performances. Content analysis specialists working with online asynchronous discussion data recommended using both macro and micro levels of analysis (De Wever et al., 2005). I therefore used in my analysis of participants' online discourse a combination of the following.

- Thematic unit within a message and/or for a discussion thread (macro level).
- Complete message (macro level).

- Sentences or phrasals within the messages (micro level).

I worked the analysis simultaneously in two directions: top-down (macro to micro) and bottom up (micro to macro). I started with some concordancing (word frequency count) and collocation (word association) techniques to begin identifying a first round of issues and beliefs shared among participants.

I used Henri's coding scheme at the macro level, with the five dimensions: (1) participative, (2) social, (3) interactive, (4) cognitive, and (5) metacognitive (Henri, 1992). This coding method appears regularly and is well-validated in peer-reviewed research related to asynchronous online communication (Hara, Bonk, & Angeli, 2000; Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006; Rourke et al., 2001; Schrire, 2006; Weinberger & Fischer, 2006).

I also made selective used some of the mapping techniques recommended in similar studies to diagram out some of the more complex and recurring kinds of interactions (Hara et al., 2000; Howell-Richardson & Harvey, 1996; Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006; Novak, Ponting, & Bhattacharya, 2007; Schrire, 2006).

I drew on discourse analysis techniques from systemic functional linguistics (D. F. Yang & Goodyear, 2006) and speech act theory (Howell-Richardson & Harvey, 1996) as another lens through which I could analyze and cross-check communication and discourse content. I regularly consulted my field notes and returned to grounded theory and constant comparison methods to ascertain if the analyses I was doing were proceeding on parallel lines. I also used member checks to verify if participants agreed with my interpretation of and over-arching themes in their communication and discourse.

Participant Observer Researcher Role

My role in this study was that of a participant-observer as I was both a developer-instructor of the course, as well as the researcher. I used as a definition for participant-observer (assuming that Becker used the term "he" in the generic sense, since I am female), one who "gathers data by participating in the daily life of the group or organization [s]he studies. He watches the people he is studying to see what situations they ordinarily meet and how they behave in them" (Becker, 1958) (p. 652).

With regard to participant-observation and acting as an insider Labaree (2002) commented as follows. It

> ...offers a distinct advantage in terms of accessing and understanding the culture. However, these advantages are not absolute and the insider must be aware of ethical and methodological dilemmas associated with entering the field, positioning and disclosure, shared relationships and disengagement" (p. 97).

Limitations of the Design

My pedagogical assumptions about how participants may have learned in the course and interacted with the *Shaping* materials unavoidably influenced the resulting data that the course produced. I attempted to address this possible limitation by careful data analysis and by using four outside expert reviewers.

As noted previously, e-research and face-to-face case study research can have much in common: a set of research questions grounded in a relevant

research questions; a cohesive set of analytical methods and strategies; and, data. Some areas in which they can differ include: the type and format of data collected, the tools and methods of analysis, and the potential threats to validity that they must address.

This e-research study format meant data was all in digital format (for example: discussions, email communication, survey and test results, projects, etc.) and much of the analyses involved the use of computer-based tools (for example: servers in various locations and for various file storage storage and back-up purposes; a course management system; and spreadsheet, word processing, bibliographic, concordancing, statistical analysis, and database software Because e-partnering was the focus of the study, it was not possible to address the possible limitation of the data being in digital format.

Reactivity

Reactivity is the influence of the researcher on the setting. In a case study such as this one, in which I was a participant observer researcher, there was the potential for me to bias the type of data that participants' produced. Qualitative research experts, such as Becker, have claimed that, in fact, the setting is likely to have more influence on the data than the researcher (Becker, 1970). Given that the instructional design of the course, the *Shaping* materials used in the course, and the case study about the course itself were all aligned within a social constructivist (situated learning, learning in context) theoretical framework, Becker's position

that setting (i.e. situation, context) would hold the most influence was applicable to this study as well.

On the other hand, it's also true that I guided the development of the course and knew in advance what kinds of data it would generate. I believe that one of the potential flaws in this is that I may have missed an opportunity to elicit and gather data that, in hindsight, might have been useful. For example, had I known in advance I would meet all the participants face-to-face after the course in Cairo Egypt, I could have included face-to-face interviews with them as part of my research plan.

Participant Identity

One of the concerns often voiced in an e-learning context is question of whether or not the learner did his or her own work. From a research perspective, it could lead to inaccurate results to have one person's work substituted for another's. There were no absolute guarantees on identity and authorship in the course. However, there were a number of checks and balances built into the instructional design that precluded much "cheating" or misrepresentation of authorship. The course management system required the use of an individual login and password for each participant. There was no way to prevent login and password sharing. This was not a required course and demand exceeded available course capacity. Participants volunteered to take part in the course and presumably benefited from it to whatever extent they expended effort and energy to do so.

A very practical response to the concern about identity and ownership might also be: "Why on earth would someone else voluntarily take on that kind of additional workload?" Again, the course required a considerable time commitment and the motivation for participating in the course came from the individuals themselves. Their course work was a highly individualized learning *process* that took place on a daily and ongoing basis;. It was not the memorization of random facts followed by an occasional pass/fail gate-keeping exam that so often creates settings in which cheating becomes manifest.

Another response to the identity concern might simply be: "Who cares?" If the learner chose, for whatever reason(s), not to engage in the activities and work for one or more parts of the course, it was simply his or her choice to opt out (and this is sometimes what participants did, leaving gaps in their learning process and record). There was no obvious incentive to have someone else do another person's work. In most cases, it would have been patently obvious this had happened because of the deeply personal nature of the discussions and projects that participants chose to do and the openly dialogued "chain of inquiry" that accompanied them.

In the case of a truly "distant" course such as this one, the question of identity could go one step even further and challenge even the very existence of the participants in the course. The two "proofs" in answer to this are: (1) sponsors, who I knew personally from previous EFL teacher training projects, had had face-to-face contact with the participants prior to nominating them for enrollment, and in many cases checked in with them on one or occasions throughout the course;

and (2) a month after the course finished, I had a rare opportunity to actually meet this group of participants in person and spend several days with them at a professional gathering in Cairo, Egypt. From this experience, I can tell you that they were all real people and all really the people who were in the course.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

Overview

In an e-learning course such as the one in this study, with participants in geographically remote locations, some participants may have been able to communicate through phone or even face-to-face with their immediate partners but, in the end, they all had to rely on dialogue through shared communication tools such as asynchronous discussion boards and email. The learning process was therefore a dialogic one, at least in part, based on electronic discourse with one or more other participants in the course.

The analysis took place in two phases:

- Phase I: Whole-group statistical analysis of all 20 dyads to determine group characteristics (research question #1) and establish patterns in their learning outcomes and project work (research question #2). Results from this set of analyses provided a basis for the selection or filtering out of a smaller set of sub-cases for more in-depth study.

- Phase II: Qualitative and discourse analysis of communication patterns and themes (in answer to research question #3).

Overview of Data Analysis Steps

Phase I: Analysis of the Whole Group (20 Dyads)

In sum, I conducted a first round of whole-group analysis to create as cohesive as possible of a data set of dyads (n=20 dyads). This process included the following first steps.

- Elimination of non-dyads (individuals and triads).

- Elimination of dyads containing native speakers.

- Scoring and analysis of individuals' SDLRS-ABE and DLRA results from the test developers. I compared results to determine whether there was any significant difference pre vs. post. As there was no significant difference, I did not work further with this data.

- Use of descriptive statistics to create a comprehensive set of descriptive characteristics for each dyad (e.g. sex, age, location, proximity to course partner, student population they serve, etc.).

I then conducted a second round of analysis of all 20 dyads in the group using these three primary data sources:

- Use of statistical analysis for results from items #1 and 2 on the pre vs. post survey in which individuals reported their perceptions with regard to their perceived roles within their respective dyads (i.e. in a peer-peer vs. a mentor-mentee relationship). This yielded a distinct 4-way classification system which accounted for all dyads' responses.

- Use of statistical analysis for results from the Pre/Post-Knowledge Challenge (multiple choice test) to identify dyads' scoring patterns of over the duration of the course. This, too, yielded a distinct classification system which accounted for the performance patterns of all dyads.

- Scoring of dyads' 3 projects (each project was comprised of an individual's teaching-related action plan + the partner's review of that plan). A team of 4 outside raters, all experienced EFL teacher trainers, used a rubric based on teacher preparation standards from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) to score all projects from the course. I then used UCLA's National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) guidelines for determining inter-rater reliability of those scores and, from that, created a data set of scores for each dyad.

Note that all dyads shared the attribute of "success," as defined by (1) average or higher pre/post SDLRS-ABE and DLRA scores; and (2) successful completion of all course requirements.

Phase II: Analysis of a Sub-set of Dyad Cases

I then purposefully selected a sub-set of dyads from the group of 20 (above), using to the following criteria as a filter:

I analyzed and classified data from descriptive characteristics (e.g. sex, age, location, proximity to course partner, student population they serve, etc.) to establish common ground for the geographic sub-regions and socio-economic

conditions in which the dyads worked.

I rank-ordered dyads to determine which ones contained the most complete or "richest" data sets for items 5 through 7 above.

I rank-ordered dyads according to the frequency with which they engaged in the online asynchronous discussions on the Blackboard course management system, again looking for dyads which consistently produced the highest percentages (amounts) of data in the form of dialogic text.

This screening process yielded 2 strong sub-sets of dyads as candidates for the qualitative analysis phase of this case study: a set of dyads in Central Asia, and another set in the Arabic Gulf region of the Middle East. To choose between the two sets, I compared the results from items 5-7 above, looking in this case for variation in classification patterns within each of those sets of dyads. My rationale for this was that I wanted to try to identify and better understand different forms of e-partnering success within the same sub-region. This cross-comparison, or triangulation of data, revealed that the Central Asia set of dyads formed a cohesive regional sub-grouping and at the same time would provide the highest degree of intra-regional variation for items 5 through 7. I therefore selected the 3 dyads from Central Asia for further in-depth case study analysis.

For the 3 Central Asia dyad studies, I then used the following additional analyses. I used statistical analysis for the remaining items (numbers 2-22) in the pre vs. post survey results in which individuals self-reported on the modes (email, phone, FAX, etc) and frequency with which they interacted with their partners, the kinds of topics they discussed, and the quality of their relationship with their

partners. I used dialogic analysis of text that dyads produced in the asynchronous online discussions to identify (1) at a macro level, salient themes and issues; and (2) at a micro level, the types of dyad interactions. I used constant comparison qualitative analysis to identify salient themes and issues in other forms of online communication such as email correspondence, open-ended responses on class evaluations, open-ended responses on the partner review portion of participants' action plan projects, and open-ended responses on the pre vs. post survey. I compared findings from the above data sources to establish stronger vs. weaker results through triangulation of results. I used member checks with dyads to substantiate or refute findings. I conducted regular cross-checks of statistical analyses and grounded theory findings with experts and other professionals from the field to help identify weaknesses in my research, examine alternative approaches, and corroborate findings.

To maintain consistency, I have structured the data analyses in this chapter using the same order in which the analyses appeared in the case study framework (outlined in Chapter 3 on methods). They are as follows.

- Research Question 1: Dyad Characteristics.

- Research Question 2: Patterns in Learning Outcomes as Evidenced in Knowledge Challenge Tests and Action Plan Projects + Partner Reviews.

- Research Question 3: Online Communication Patterns and Themes.

Research Question 1: Dyad Characteristics

This first data analysis section is divided into three sections: demographics; Partner Survey responses for items 1-3; and other descriptors such as usage patterns in the CMS, frequency counts on email correspondence, and responses from participants' evaluations of the course.

Demographics

All participants received full scholarships from and enrolled in the course with the support of the following local sponsors (in alphabetical order by type of post and location).

- U.S. Consulate General Jerusalem, Israel, Cultural Programs Office, Cultural Programs Specialist for Israel and West Bank.

- U.S. Embassy Amman, Jordan, Public Affairs Office, Regional English Language Officer for Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Israel.

- U.S. Embassy Ankara, Turkey, Public Affairs Office, English Language Officer for Turkey.

- U.S. Embassy Cairo, Egypt, Public Affairs Office, Regional English Language Officer for Egypt, Yemen, and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

- U.S. Embassy Manama, Bahrain, Regional English Language Officer for Bahrain.

- U.S. Embassy Rabat, Morocco, Regional English Language Officer for Morocco.

- U.S. Embassy Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Regional English Language Officer

  for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

Participants in this study shared many of the same characteristics (or "variables"), as follows.

Participation. They were voluntary participants in the course and in the study, and received no monetary remuneration for either one.

Profession. They were practicing in-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators.

Language. They were non-native speakers of English.

Language proficiency. Their level of English language proficiency at the time of the course was in the 2+/3 level range or higher for reading and writing on the 5-point U.S. Foreign Service Institute (FSI) Interagency Language Rountable (IRL) proficiency scale, where 0 is no functional proficiency and 5 is equal in all respects to that of an educated native speaker (IRL, 2007a, 2007b).

Self-efficacy. They scored in the average to high range on the Self-directed Learning Readiness Scale-Adult Basic Education (SDLRS-ABE) and Distance Learning Readiness Assessment (DLRA), both at start and the end of the course (pre/post). I chose the Adult Basic Education (ABE) as it was equivalent to the non-ABE version but had the advantage of simplified language for this non-native speaker population.

Course preparation. They completed all assigned orientation tasks on the course management system (CMS) in order to prepare for the course.

Region. They lived in the Muslim World (Wikipedia, 2007a), a regional community of over 1.4 billion people, or approximately one-fifth of the world's population.

Although they had much in common as a group, individuals in the course also varied according to some of the following characteristics.

Gender: The majority of participants were female:

75 % Female (F)

25 % Male (M)

As a side note, of the 5 dyads that dropped out at the start of the course, 3 were M/M, 1 was F/F, and 1 was F/M. In other words, 7 of the 10 drop-outs were male. This is a pattern I have observed in other similar online courses in my department. Many of the participants in these courses have been in countries where segregation by sex is mandatory for teachers and students in the schools, yet males are not equally represented in these online courses and are seemingly at greater risk for attrition.

The majority of the dyads (17 out of 20, or 85%) contained two partners of the same sex:

13 F/F dyads made up of two females.

3 M/M dyads made up of two males.

4 F/M dyads with one female and one male.

Age. Individuals ranged in age from 24-59 with an average (mean) age of 40. Men were ages 30-55 with an average age of 41, while women were 24-59 with an average age of 37.

Native language (L1). In the Muslim World, people are united through the shared beliefs of their central religious text, the "Qur'an,"written in standard or "classical" Arabic. It is also widely translated into many languages. Although the participants in this study all lived in the Muslim World, not all of them used Arabic. Many of them grew up with other native languages (e.g., Turkish, Uzbek, Kazak, etc.). Within each dyad, partners shared the same first language.

Age and language proficiency of the learner population with which they were working. Dyads variously worked with primary, secondary, and post-secondary students in a range of EFL proficiency levels.

Amount of previous online professional development experience. Some participants in the course had had no previous experience with online distance education while the others had been in one of several similar kinds of online courses at some point during the last 2 years.

Location within the Muslim World. As previously indicated, participants came from 15 different countries (see Table 1 below). From a contextual perspective, it is important to note that the notion of a "country" is a dynamic (non-static) geo-political construct. Boundaries and labels for countries have been hotly contested throughout human history. At the time this course took place, for example, Palestine, was not recognized as a country universally and was sometimes left out of country lists completely or alternately labeled Occupied

Palestinian Territory or West Bank /Gaza Strip. In this study, I used the term

Palestine and counted it as its own country in recognition of the world views of

the participants in the course who lived in that location. Within each dyad,

partners were working and living in the same country, though not necessarily in

the same city.

Table 1

Number of Participants and Names of Countries

Name of Country	Number of Participants	Percentage of the Group
Bahrain	6	15
Egypt	4	10
Jordan	4	10
Kazakhstan*	2	5
Kyrgyzstan*	2	5
Lebanon	4	10
Morocco	2	5
Palestine (West Bank/Gaza Strip)*	2	5
Syria	2	5
Tajikistan*	2	5
Turkey	2	5
Uzbekistan*	4	10
Yemen*	4	10
Total	40	100

*Least Developed Countries (LDC), according to United Nations Millennium

Development Goals statistics and to World Bank Income Groups. Of these, the

United Nations lists all but Yemen and Palestine as Landlocked Developing

Countries (LLDC), typically an indicator of additional challenges, as well.

Economic context. Participants were all from developing countries (as

noted previously and defined in Chapter 1). However, within that grouping there

were countries with low, lower middle, upper middle, and even high economies.

See Table 2 below.

Table 2

Participants from High-to-Low Economies in Developing Countries

World Bank Economic Level	Number of Participants	Percentage of Class Participants
High (Bahrain, Israel, Saudi Arabia)	11	22
Upper Middle	7	14
Lower Middle	19	39
Low	12	25
Total	49	100

Consideration of economic level became contextually important at this

point in the study because participants reported that it impacted their levels of

access to computer-based resources and the context and content of their course

projects (lesson plans, projects, training plans, etc.) in terms of available classroom

resources.

Definition of a region. While there were differences among participants in

terms of native languages, cultures, and countries (and even within countries, for

example, formerly Marxist Southern Yemen and Northern Yemen, united as one

country as recently as 1990), there were also many unifying traits, region among them. The notion of a region such as the Muslim World or Islamic World—known as the *unmah* in Arabic—can be a nebulous concept and subject to socio-political, geographical, natural, and other kinds of interpretation (International Telecommunication Union & International Network of UNESCO Chairs in Communications (Orbicom), 2005; United Nations Development Group, 2002; Wikipedia, 2007a, 2007b; World Bank Group, 2007b). However, since the rationale and funding of this course was based in part on the concept of educators in the Muslim World, and since it was a construct with which participants in the course identified, it was a legitimate unifying characteristic when describing them as a whole group. As noted in the Chapter 1, historically, educational and economic issues in all the developing countries have been tightly coupled with the need for EFL development. I therefore chose to use the set of definitions United Nations (UN) Millenium Development Goals (MDG)—which is based on educational and economic indicators—for the following geographical sub-regional classification of the Muslim World.

This was an important decision at this point in the study in the selection of dyad cases, as participants from countries within these three sub-regions shared more common attributes as a sub-grouping than when viewed individually as part of the whole. See Table 3 below.

Table 3

Geographical Sub-regions, and Countries in the Muslim World

MUSLIM WORLD		
Commonwealth of Newly Independent States (Central Asia)	North Africa	Western Asia (Middle East)
Kazakhstan	Egypt	Bahrain
Kyrgyzstan	Morocco	Egypt
Tajikistan		Israel
Uzbekistan		Jordan
		Saudi Arabia
		Palestine
		Lebanon
		Morocco
		Syria
		Turkey

Note that Egypt is listed as part of the Middle East in other regional classifications. Also, Palestine is not recognized as a country in some regional classifications or is alternately labeled West Bank/Gaza Strip, Palestinian Autonomous Territories, or Palestinian Occupied Territories. And, Turkey's history as a geographical, religious, and political crossroads means it is listed as

part of the Middle East, Western Europe, or Eurasia in other regional classifications.

Peer, Mentor, Mentee Roles

All participants enrolled in the course in tandem with a partner. They constituted a pair or dyad from the very beginning , and knew that they would be working together throughout the course. In some cases, they had chosen their partners and in others, the course sponsor (funding agent) created the partnerships. Whenever possible, the sponsor created a dyad in which at least one of the members had had a prior successful experience in a similar online training course. The intent was that the more experienced person could help mentor the less experienced one.

To establish a typology of dyads in the course as a whole, I began by comparing results for each set of partners 1 and 2 (individuals from within the same dyad) on their pre vs. post "Partner Survey" responses for items 1-3 from the survey (see Table 4 below). See Appendix B for a copy of the complete survey with all 22 items.

The pre and post versions of the Partner Survey were identical. All participants took the pre at the start of the course and the post at the end, both times through the UO's CMS. The CMS automatically recorded and tabulated all results, which I then directly exported to spreadsheet software for analysis. There was no hand-entry of data at any point.

Table 4

Partner Survey, Items 1-2

Question 1: You are working with a partner in this course. Some partners in the class are working as peers (peer:peer) and some are working as mentor:mentee. Carefully read the following definitions and then select the one answer that best describes your relationship with your partner in the context of this course.

From Merriam-Webster Dictionary online [linked]:
    * Mentor: "A trusted counselor or guide; tutor; coach."
    * Mentee: "One who is being mentored; a protege."
    * Peer: "One who is of equal standing with another."

Answer choices...
    1. Mentor : Mentee (the mentor is guiding the mentee or protege).
    2. Peer : Peer (peers are co-mentoring each other).
    3. I am a guest or observer.
    4. Other (please describe in the comments box directly below, Question

Comment box attached to Question 1, opend-ended with no limit on words.

Question 2: In this partnership at this time I am a (select the one best answer):

    Answer choices...
    1. Mentor.
    2. Mentee (protege).
    3. Peer.
    4. Guest, observer, or other.

Before conducting this analysis, I predicted there would be three types of dyads per Table 5 below, closely mirroring the types of partners we (I, as the course developer-instructor, in coordination with the U.S, Department of State

course sponsors) believed we had selected and enrolled in the course, in roughly
equal numbers:

- Peer:Peer, in which there would be some dyads with two individuals
  who had no previous online professional development experience, and
  some with two experienced individuals.

- Mentor:Mentee, with the mentor having had previous experience in
  one other similar online course, offered through the same Department
  of State training program, and the mentee being new to online
  training.

Table 5

Types of Partners in the Online Distance Learning Course

X	=	experienced in ODE	
Y	=	inexperienced in ODE	
#		Type of Configuration	
00	X:X	peer:peer	
00	Y:Y	peer:peer	
00	X:Y	mentor:mentee	

As it turned out, all 10 dyads that instructor/sponsors classified as
peer:peer [X:X or Y:Y] at the start of the course also individually self-identified on
the participants' side as being in peer:peer partnerships.

As instructor/sponsors, we believed we had enrolled 10 mentor:mentee dyads in the course as well. However, mentors self-identified as such at the start of the course in only two dyads, and there were no dyads that started out self-identifying in the originally conceived mentor:mentee partnership. Furthermore, there was considerable shifting in self-identified roles within dyads pre vs. post.

Why then was there such a disconnect between the way in which course developer/sponsors conceived of mentor:mentee dyads and the way in which participants self-identified as mentors or mentees, or as peers instead?

Some explanatory possibilities that come to mind are: (1) the concept of mentor:mentee in a professional development setting was an unfamiliar to participants; (2) there was confusion—even given the Merriam Webster definitions that were clearly posted at the start of the survey—as to what it meant and how it might work in a professional development context for educators; and/or, (3) participants' local mentor:mentee criteria and socio-cultural dynamics over-rode the criteria that the course developer/sponsors used as a means of classifying individuals within dyads (i.e. previous experience in a similar online training course). Considerations such as age, seniority in the workplace, perceived status according to participants' student populations (e.g. teaching primary level students vs. conducting teacher training at the university level), English language aptitude, and gender were perhaps greater factors in determining mentor:mentee roles than previous experience in a similar online professional development course.

Setting that issue aside for further interpretation in Chapter 5, however, and looking at the analysis of partner survey responses to items 1-2, two salient characteristics emerged that, in various combinations, accurately characterized all dyad types in this data set:

+/-   (P) Peers

+/-   (S) Static roles over time (beginning vs. end of the course)

Together, they [+/- P and +/- S] form a typology consisting of up to 4 possible configurations of dyads (using the end of the course as a defining point because of the +/- Static longitudinal time factor), as illustrated in Table 6 below.

Table 6

E-partner Attributes

+P / +S	+P / -S
-P / +S	-P / -S

+P / +S   Dyads in which partners agree they are both peers (+P) at the beginning and at the end of the course (+S), i.e. their roles remain static over time. There were 14 such dyads.

+P / -S   Dyads in which one of the partners self-identifies as a peer but the other does not at the start of the course. However, they agree that they are peers (+P) by the end of the course (-S). There were 2 such dyads.

-P / +S   Dyads in which one of the partners self-identifies as a peer but the other does not, so the dyad is therefore not truly functioning in a peer:peer relationship (-P). This imbalance is the same pre and post (+S). There was 1 case of this type of dyad.

-P / -S   Dyads in which one of the partners self-identifies as a peer but the other does not (-P). Over time, one or even both of the partners' self-identity within the dyad shifts (-S). There were 6 such dyads.

Note that there was considerable movement in self-identity in many directions (e.g. peer to mentor, peer to mentee, mentor to mentee, mentee to mentor, mentor to peer, etc.). In 3 cases, partners actually swapped self-identified roles pre vs. post. Given a larger pool of dyads, further distinction and patterning in self-identification within this configuration may be possible.

Other Data Sources as Descriptors

Following are some other data sources that provided corroborating, or in some cases refuting, evidence for analyses. These were also useful sources to revisit for more in-depth analysis once the 4 dyad cases were determined.

- Amount of activity on the CMS in terms of the total number of hits for the course and the number of hits in the asynchronous discussion board section for comparison among individuals, dyads, and the group as a whole.

- A preliminary analysis of the text generated through communication such email (e.g. correspondence with individuals, dyads, larger groups, the whole class, and with sponsors who nominated the dyads for inclusion in the course), reflective writing in the blogs (grouped according to country or region), and open-ended comments from surveys, and open-ended comments from formative and summative course evaluations.

Research Question 2: Patterns in Learning Outcomes as Evidenced in

Knowledge Challenge Tests and Action Plan Projects + Partner Reviews

Patterns in Learning Outcomes for the "Knowledge Challenge" Tests

The Knowledge Challenge (KC) test activity was available through the online CMS in pre and post format each week. All participants were required to complete a practice pre/post KC set during orientation week, so they could learn and acclimate to the online course management setting and the KC format itself. This was followed by a series of 10 KC pre/post sets—one per week—throughout the term. I discarded the final 11th set of pre/post scores from the data set because participation in it was so erratic (participants reported that they chose not to do it or gave it less than their usual attention in favor of completing other end-of-term assignments and tasks).

Individuals could take the pre version once each week. Each participant received full points for completing the pre-KC task but did not see his or her "benchmark" pre score so as not to influence work in the course for that week. Having completed the weekly pre-KC, individuals could then take that week's post version of the KC as many times as they liked. Feedback on incorrect responses directed them to points in that week's course materials for the correct answer(s). They could each thereby improve their scores (and learn more about the topic) to the extent that they wished. It is worth noting that the majority of

participants improved their post scores each week and a high percentage of them worked to achieve perfect scores.

The KC questions changed each week, in tandem with each week's new topic. Each pre/post KC contained that week's same 20 multiple-choice items, presented in random order each time an individual attempted the post KC. Each week's KC was available for the limited period of time that it was relevant (about 9 days). Participants could not go back and retake a pre or post KC later in the course.

Each item on the KC test was equivalent to one point (20 items = 20 points per test). These scores were automatically recorded in the CMS each time an individual completed a KC. I exported scores directly from the CMS to a spreadsheet. Again, there was no hand-entry of data.

For the purposes of developing a KC scoring typology, and as another means of further characterizing the dyads, I divided participants according to whether or not they achieved low vs. mid/high KC scores on the pre version of the KC.

> Low: Individuals who missed 25% or more on the items on the pre version of the KCs at least (25%) of the time, i.e. scored 16/20 or less, for 3 or more times. The 25% cut-off point on scores is on a par with the passing score guideline of 75% as set by ETS on the PRAXIS exam for Foreign Language Pedagogy (Educational Testing Service, 2005, 2007). This created a low (L) vs. high (H) test scoring pattern dichotomy.

High: Individuals who missed 25% or less on the items on the pre version

of the KCs less than one third of the time (i.e. scored 16/20 or less, 0-2

times).

Individuals emerged as belonging to the following types of scoring

patterns for pre vs. post KC's.

L→H Regularly scored low (L) on pre-KC's and high (H) on post-KC's.

H→H Regularly scored average or higher (H) on both pre and post KC's.

L→L Regularly scored low (L) on both pre and post KC's.

H→L Regularly scored high (H) on pre-KC's and low (L) on post-KC's.

I then matched scoring characteristics together for individuals, which

resulted in the following scoring typology for KC dyads.

Table 7

Typology of Knowledge Challenge Scores

[L→H : L→H]   Both members in the dyad shared the L→H scoring

characteristic.

[H→H : H→H]   Both members in the dyad shared the H→H scoring

characteristic.

[L→H : H→H]   One member of the dyad had a L→H scoring pattern,

while the other had a H→H pattern.

I did not include dyads containing one or more [L→L] or [H→L]

individuals in the table above because they were so few in number.

At this point, I was interested in seeing, with further analysis, if there was

any correlation between the (+/- P and +/-S) role typology and the [L] vs. [H] KC

scoring typology.

I cautiously predicted that:

[L→H : L→H] dyads would correlate more highly with dyads that

instructor/sponsors believed were peer:peer partnerships.

[H→H : H→H] dyads would correlate more highly with dyads that

instructor/sponsors believed were peer:peer partnerships.

[L→H : H→H] dyads would correlate more highly dyads that

instructor/sponsors believed were mentor:mentee

partnerships.

Patterns in Learning Outcomes for the Action Plan Projects + Partner Reviews

Classifying Knowledge Challenge (KC) scores per the [L] vs. [H] typology
(as explained above) provided one means of capturing one aspect of the dyad's
learning process over time. Another means of measuring learning outcomes and
was to rate the "Action Plan" (AC) projects that participants individually authored
and then partner reviewed, using the same partner within each dyad for the
review each time.

I worked with online foreign language (FL) assessment experts from UO's
Center for Applied Second Language Studies (CASLS) to develop a rubric for
evaluating the project and partner review components of the AC's. I based this
rubric on a standards framework recommended by the National Council for the

Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (NCATE, 2007) and set forth by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) (ACTFL, 2007).

I conducted a practice norming session with colleagues who have taught in similar classes, and made minor modifications to the rubric and the norming process based on their critical feedback. I then identified and trained ("normed") 4 raters. All 4 raters had previous EFL teacher training and rating experience with other similar kinds of instruments.

Each rater evaluated all projects from all participants in the course, and submitted their scores to me electronically. I then analyzed the scores for inter-rater reliability in accordance with the guidelines in the handbook from the CRESST National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST).

In all, raters each evaluated 179 items (projects + reviews). We used an additional 20 projects for rater norming. Rater achieved agreement rates as indicated in Table 8 below.

80% Average Inter-rater Reliability

79% Median Inter-rater Reliability

Table 8

Inter-rater Reliability (Agreement) on Scoring of Action Plans + Partner Reviews

Dyad ID	Inter-rater Reliability	Selected for Further In-Depth Analysis
22	0.95	Yes
11	0.88	Yes
14	0.88	
21	0.88	
23	0.83	
06	0.83	
07	0.81	
12	0.81	
19	0.80	
05	0.79	
18	0.79	
02	0.78	
16	0.78	
20	0.77	Yes
09	0.75	
10	0.73	Yes
04	0.72	
15	0.70	
13	0.66	

Dyads who had the most complete sets of project and peer review work received preferential status for consideration as cases for more in-depth analysis (marked as "Yes" in the table above).

Research Question 3: Online Communication Patterns and Themes

Overview of Dyads Selected for Further In-Depth Study

As a group, the dyads selected for further study shared the following, cohesive set of characteristics. They were all:

- Successful self-directed learners in this online distance education context.

- Female.

- In-service EFL educators working with secondary and / or post-secondary (university) level language learners.

- Living in and native to the Central Asia region.

- Working in educational settings with similar, low-resource economic circumstances.

- Working in countries with similar education rights and percentages of learners enrolled at the primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels (10% or fewer of high school graduates go on to higher education) (Education International Barometer of Human & Trade Union Rights in Education, 2007; United Nations Development Group, 2003).

In addition, they all consistently produced a high percentage of dialogue on the weekly topics in the asynchronous class discussion boards (they reported spending 7-10 hours per week on average on course-related work).

As a next step, I compared information and patterns among these dyads according to the following attributes (see Table 9).

Table 9

Comparison of Dyads, Cases 1-4

Case #, Dyad #	Reside in the Same City	Partner Roles with +/- Peer +/- Static Attributes	Knowledge Challenge Pattern Partner A Pre->Post: Partner B Pre->Post	Scores on Action Plan + Partner Review Projects Partner A: Partner B
Case 1, Dyad 10:	No	-P / -S	L->H : L->H	2.0 : 2.0
Case 2, Dyad 11:	Yes	+P / -S	L->H : H->H	2.0 : 3.0
Case 3, Dyad 20:	Yes	+P / +S	L->H : H->H	3.0 : 2.0
Case 4, Dyad 22:	Yes	-P / -S	L->H : L->H	2.5 : 2.5

Key

Knowledge Challenge (KC) Scores. I used the same cut-off point for the KC as the ETS PRAXIS Series, Foreign Language Pedagogy as they were both multiple-choice tests for FL teacher knowledge.

L (Low)   =   Less than 75%

H (High)   =   75% or Higher

Action Plan + Partner Review Projects. Raters used an ACTFL-based rubric and scoring system to evaluate these projects:

1.0	=	Approaches standard.
2.0	=	Meets standard.
3.0	=	Exceeds standard.

As the above table indicates, there were many variations in characteristics among each of these very successful dyads, both for those who resided in the same city and those who lived quite far apart. Increased access to one's partner or greater ease in communication were not a given, however, for those who lived in the same city. Participants reported that one or more of the following kinds of barriers could act as a significant impediment to communication and/or face-to-face meetings locally.

- Low pay creating the need to hold multiple jobs and work many hours over the "standard" Western 40-hour work week, thereby decreasing the amount of overlapping time available in partners' schedules.

- High cost of per-minute, as opposed to flat-rate, telephone communication.

- As females, traditionally having extra family responsibilities at home, especially during Ramadan.

- Unstable electricity and heat in institutional and residential settings, creating extra hardship during cold weather months.

- Communal participation in the local agricultural economy, for example, the necessity of helping with the harvest during the autumn months.

- As females, limited access to good jobs with high pay.

Analysis of Dyad Dialogue at the Macro Level

Concordancing and discourse analysis of asynchronous course discussions produced the following top 10 themes and issues among the dyads.

Table 10

Macro-level Themes and Issues for Cases 1-4

Top 10 Themes and Issues	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4
1. Partner accessibility or "presence."	√	√	√	√
2. Regular communication patterns.	√	√	√	√
3. Problem-solving together.	√	√	√	√
4. Agency in (control over) change.		√	√	√
5 . Open-mindedness to change.	√	√	√	
6. Mutual trust.	√	√		√
7. Mutual respect.		√	√	√
8. Friendship.	√	√		√
9. Partner expertise in methodology.	√	√	√	
10. Partner experience in teaching.		√	√	√

Although the themes and issues remained relatively constant throughout the course, they were manifested in somewhat different ways at the beginning vs. the end of the course. Following are some quotes that nicely capture these elements as evidenced in online asynchronous discussions at the start of the course and at the end.

Sample Comments from the Beginning of the Course

Case 1: My partner is a nice, young, clever lady. I think, she knows much than I do. We do much work together.

Case 2: I wish I would know the criteria applied to set up such a role allocation, e.g. who are the mentors? Who is eligible to become a mentor in this course? Will the mentors, like the peers or mentees, receive a certificate upon the completion of the course?

Case 3: Addressing technical issues together is very important (computer, CD, email, Blackboard, saving files, software, online connection, passwords, etc.).

Case 4: My partner is enrolled in such courses for the first time. She looks for some guidance on how to proceed through the course of work.

An overall need to reduce uncertainty in partnership roles and the need to quickly master the technical side of handling the course played primary roles in framing the context in which dyads worked.

Sample Comments from the End of the Course

Case 1: I like to solve hard problems. My friends always come to me for advice.

Case 2: Even if I am not in a real class, I feel the life is a real class for me, and I try to broaden my knowledge while dealing with my own business (teaching) and what is happening around me.

Case 3: Working as pairs helped me a lot so whenever I needed help I could call my colleague and discuss it.

Case 4: The best examples...I see every day [are] when my colleagues, after the classes or during lunch time, speak about our classes and things that worked or didn't work. Sometimes we say, "Let's speak about other things." But very quickly we again switch into the discussion about our teaching. This is the most interesting topic for discussion. I like when the teachers who teach the same course prepare their lesson plans together.

As the course progressed, dyads reported having established a comfortable routine working together, and their comments and actions in their discussions and project work reflected this. Increasingly, dyads connected course topics, activities, and ideas that others in the course contributed with their local context outside of our online course. For colleagues in this part of the world, this represented a dramatic departure from lock-step teaching practices and research based on closely guarded data and hypotheses. The next chapter on interpreting these results will go in to more detail on this point.

Analysis of Dyad Dialogue Patterns at the Micro Level

As outlined in the Methodology chapter, I used Henri's (Henri, 1992) five key variables to examine dialogue patterns at the micro level: (1) student participation rates; (2) electronic interaction patterns; (3) social cues within student messages; (4) cognitive and metacognitive components of student messages; and (5) depth of processing—surface or deep—within message posting.

Participation rates. Analysis of content from course discussion showed that, while students were required to post a minimum of one substantive comment per week to one course discussion thread, many of them in fact posted multiple times to the same thread and even to more than one thread.

Electronic interaction patterns. At the beginning of the course, individuals from dyads addressed each other online regularly but this decreased as the course progressed. By the mid-point in the course, they reported interacting more frequently in email "side conversations" outside of the group. Their online comments and ideas for the remainder of the course tended to intersect almost exclusively with individuals outside of their dyads instead. Weekly activity graph analysis revealed that, although participants' discussion comments became more interactive over time, they remained solidly situated within the framework established by instructor and guest speaker-led discussion prompts. The one exception to this was the open-ended "café" which participants chose to use as an exchange forum for their own publications.

Social cues within student messages. Personalities emerged in the form of "signature" comments or speech acts. For example, there was one individual who

consistently closed her postings with an upbeat "Smiles." Over time, class members informally settled on a wide range of emoticons and gestural expressives that were mutually understood and accepted. A small subset of the same "pioneers" were generally the ones who introduced these into online discussions on a trial basis. Other class members assumed the role of "devil's advocate" on a regular basis, encouraging others in their expression of alternative opinions and practices. During the orientation period, we had together established a set of agreed-on communication practices in order to avoid "flaming" in these situations and, to their credit, participants consistently adhered to them. At the other end of the spectrum, another sub-set of participants emerged who regularly offered a verbal "pat on the back" or validation to others' contributions.

Cognitive and metacognitive components of student messages and depth of processing. I found these attributes more difficult to "observe" or accurately track and measure, even given examples from Henri's and others' research that made use of Henri's 5 variables (Hara et al., 2000; Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006; Rourke et al., 2001; Schrire, 2006). Some of this difficulty may have been due to variations in cultural communication patterns or non-native speaker styles of rhetoric, as most of the referenced research was situated in a homogenous native English speaker context. As the course progressed, participants gave detailed vignettes in which they sophisticated and complex adaptation and application of course content in their local educational settings. Some examples follow.

Case 1: To summarize my personal impressions of our team-work, first, I feel myself greatly honored to be a member of our team and to have had an

opportunity to work with all of you during these 12 weeks; second, I would characterize our "Shaping" course as a genuine source of enlightenment, empowerment and inspiration; [and] third, the added value for me is the cultural enrichment I have gained because you have been so generous in sharing your experience, perceptions, cultural values, attitudes and traditions – all these have expanded my worldview and made me realize how beautifully diverse our planet is.

Case 2: Dear coursemates, Thanks for your sharing of useful materials and publications. I also have something to share: two sample rubrics for teacher self-evaluation and a practical guide for how to reflect on one's teaching.

Case 3: In December we had a big conference where all teachers from [our region] participated in it. It was held by English Teachers' Association. The topic was "Innovative Ways of Teaching English'." Under the guidance of [our course sponsor] we demonstrated our course. First we had an introduction about the course, then we showed video telling about the modules. After that we showed our examples from taken from real life. I showed Critical Thinking using an elephant with eight legs, authentic materials such as realia…students' creative works (poems and stanzas) and of course our Action Plan Project….A lot of teachers were interested in this course and wanted to learn more [about what we were doing].

Case 4: In my opinion all institutes should require a teacher portfolio from teachers that show their performance of their work…where they keep different documents such as: CV, philosophy of teaching, syllabus designed by them,

sample of lesson plans, certificate and awards, evaluation by students, feedback given to students' work, articles written by teachers, sample of designed materials, critical incident analyses, and photos from the of students where they are involved in different tasks. Moreover, new teachers who want to teach in our program should present their portfolios that show their teaching experience. [At this time,] we don't have a community contribution section in our portfolio. It would also be a good idea to see how teachers do social work and contribute to the community, not only to teaching.

I believe the above sampling of reflective statements and practical applications of course-related materials and projects are clear demonstrations of metacognitive learning practices and "deep processing" of course content on the part of participants. In addition, they echo many of the values that emerged in their top 10 themes at the macro level (as outlined in Table 10 above).

CHAPTER V

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

Overview

The following interpretation is based on a combination of the theory that supported it (Chapter II's Literature Review) and the results from the data analysis (Chaper III on Methodology in conjunction with Chapter IV on Data Analysis). The results supported some of the observations and findings from previous research but yielded some surprising results as well. As a case study, it points to directions for future research as well. Chapter VI on Conclusions addresses that topic.

Shaping participants shared a common desire to both succeed in their own learning and to pass on the wisdom of that learning to others in their educational communities. They worked with their partners to formatively peer review each other's project work in writing. Project-based learning and formative peer review were new kinds of learning/assessment tasks for many of the EFL educators in the course. Even if they were familiar in principle with the theories behind them, few of them had actually engaged in the real-world process of project work or structured peer feedback. A key instructional goal for the course was to create

opportunities for *Shaping* participants to link together—through transactive and collaborative dialogue—and put into practice individualized selections of the actual methods, strategies, tools, and materials portrayed in the course video and text resources. This social-constructivist approach to e-learning reflected and accommodated the real-life or authentic context in which teachers were learning and working, and provided ongoing support for task completion and positive learning outcomes.

This emerged as a transformative learning experience in which participants took risks, faced their fears, expressed appreciation for newly discovered differences in others, persevered, and effected local change. They did this on their own but also with the support of their e-partners.

The participants in this study all persisted in and successfully completed the online course. Having made that claim, however, it's important to note that some initial participants whose needs, interests, or level of access to online tools (e.g. regular access to computer, Internet connection, basic knowledge of how to use the tools) were not a good fit for the course opted out or were dropped from the course during the orientation period of the course.

The following kinds of comments were made as the participants introduced themselves and their partners in the beginning of the course (pseudonyms and italics mine):

> Geena: Last year the principal of our school retired, so I took the post. I
> really enjoyed teaching, but being a principal is totally different. *You feel*

that you have the power to do everything you dreamed of concerning

*education......*I hope to have a great time with this course too!

Dee: *I have always dreamt of teaching in different countries and experiencing the different teaching situations along with different cultures.* I am so excited to be in this course and I am sure that you all have a lot to share.

On a related ethical note, in compliance with Human Subjects guidelines at UO, I did not seek permission from participants to use materials and communication they had generated as part of their learning process in the course as data for this case study until after the course was done and all grading and evaluation had been completed. 100% of the participants agreed, electronically, in writing to allow their course work and communication to be used as extant data. I have those permissions archived and securely stored. After the course had finished, I had an unusual opportunity to meet face-to-face with the participants in a 3-day professional development event in Cairo, Egypt. At that time, they re-affirmed their willingness to participate in the study and to accept follow up email contact about it afterwards, as needed.

Participants in this study actively sought common ground not only in their academic learning but through the things they shared and felt strongly about in their personal and professional lives as well.

Khalad: My partner is a teacher and is looking forward to be a trainer. So wish him good luck! All his e-mails show that he is interested in this

course and that he has very creative ideas. I am looking forward to working with him.

Manal: I teach courses in ESP (business, economics and finance) and Analytical Writing. I also have three daughters who are the most precious and enjoyable part of the life. My partner also has a daughter who has successfully entered a university this summer. She is very proud of her. Leila and I love to talk about our children. And this is great because I'm sure that partners become a good team if they share not only goals in a project but can share common interests and challenges in communicating interpersonally.

Research Question 1 Results: E-partner Characteristics

Research question 1 was based on the need to better understand how and why e-partnering improves *retention and persistence* in online distance education courses as EFL teacher training interventions:

What were the characteristics (types) of e-partnerships "dyads" in this online distance education course for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators?

SDLRS-ABE and DLRA Results

Results from the combined Self-directed Learning Readiness Scale-Adult Basic Education version (SDLRS-ABE) and Distance Learning Readiness Assessment (DLRA), which rated the participants in this course and research study at average or higher levels, correctly predicted that they would be motivated and self-directed learners in an e-learning context. I chose the SDLRS-ABE version—with fewer items on the questionnaire and designed to accommodate adults with lower reading proficiency and non-native English speakers—over the SDLRS version, knowing that not all participants in the course would be native-like speakers of English. Although the SDLRS has been translated into 17 languages other than English, there were no SDLRS or DLRA versions available for most of the many "less commonly taught" languages represented in this course (e.g. Uzbek, Kazakh, Tajik, Kyrgyz, Berber, etc.). Therefore, the English version was the best choice.

Research using the SDLRS and DLRA assessments with other non-native speaker populations has emphasized the importance of considering cultural values such as individualism vs. collectivism (Lee, 2004) when interpreting the assessments' results and aligning them with classroom practices. Other research has similarly advocated sensitivity to reducing uncertainty in order to increase cooperation among learners in culturally mixed contexts (Mäkitalo, Weinberger, Häkkinen, & Fischer, 2004). However, much of this research has been based on courses that had no more than 2-3 groups of culturally homogenous learners. In

the case of this course, with more than a dozen countries and cultures mixed together, there was no significant difference among participants' performance on the SDLRS-ABE and DLRA pre and post scores. The issue of cultural values in an academic context, both as part of the workings of this course and in participants' local settings, was in evidence instead in participants' asynchronous discussion dialogues and project work. For more on this, see the section for Research Question 3 below.

Dyad Characteristics

Dyads were intriguingly complex in terms of the kinds of variables they exhibited in connection with persistence and success in the course. Factors that have been associated in the literature with e-learning but did not seem to make a significant difference in the case of this international EFL educator population included the following.

Relative age of partners. Dyads were made up of individuals aged 24-59, and in a number of cases individuals had 10 or more years difference in ages between them. Research results have been mixed with some reporting age as a significant factor in e-learning success and, in more recent research, some reporting age as a less important than a more complex interplay of "personal factors" such as motivation and anxiety (Vandenbroeck, Verschelden, & Boonaert, 2007). In this study as well, personal factors such as motivation played a greater role in determining success. In the future, as computer-based technologies increase in ubiquity in developing countries, age seems likely to become even less relevant

from an information technology literacy standpoint. However, there remain significant socio-cultural barriers related to age and gender in place in some nations. In countries such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), for example, females in the course (and native to KSA) reported that women over the age of 40 are barred at this time from government support for education or professional development. The kind of e-learning course in this study, offered through equal opportunity sponsors and academic institutions, can open up access to important avenues of learning for this sector of the teaching population.

Agreement on partner roles. Surprisingly, more than half of the dyads did not mutually agree on the nature of their relationship with their partners (a peer:peer relationship vs. a mentor:mentee relationship). In more than half of the dyads, partners also changed their minds about their respective roles in their dyads over the duration of the course (pre vs. post). Interestingly, this had no apparent direct, detrimental effect on learning outcomes or course communication, however. As evidence, all dyads successfully completed the course and uniformly reported high satisfaction rates with their partners at the end of the course. The less dichotomous concept of "co-mentoring" (Rymer, 2002; Thomas, 2002; S. C. Yang & Liu, 2004), which assumes that both partners in a dyad have more or less equal but perhaps different kinds of contributions they can make to the relationship, may be a better model for the kinds of e-partner relationships in this type of course and study.

Geographic proximity. Dyads were equally successful in terms of learning outcomes and course completion rates, regardless of whether or not both members

were in the same city or institution. However, it's important to remember that the individuals in Weeks 1-14 of this course and study all had high self-efficacy levels. Prior to the start of the course, a number of potential participants—some in the same institution or city and some not—did not complete the registration and orientation process and were eliminated or simply "disappeared" during that extended screening and preparation process. Therefore, it's not surprising that low or nonexistent levels of face-to-face contact and interaction had little effect on dyad success. As noted in Chapter VI on Conclusions for this dissertation, this "no show" population is one that, access permitting, would merit further in-depth study as well.

More important than perceived or real physical (geographic) proximity, was the psychological sense of acceptance and belonging that participants reported. This is substantiated in other e-learning research (Kemp, 2002; Yorke, 2004). Yorke's concluding remarks emphasize the need to more purposefully include this in e-learning instructional design and practices:

> While student persistence is influenced by a variety of factors, students' perceptions of their learning experiences and how they have been treated by providers of courses are likely to be of prime significance. They are also matters over which providers can exercise a considerable degree of control....The development in students of a sense of belonging is particularly challenging in open and distance learning, but matters such as considerate tutoring and supportive formative assessment are widely accepted as components of good pedagogic practice (pp. 29-30).

Retention and Persistence, Administrative Support

Participants also reported that they shared some of the same conditions for the sustainability of innovations they were making in their classrooms and curriculum as a result of this course, as described in recent research with educators from the same region (Owston, 2007). These conditions included student support of the innovation (though in some cases teachers had to overcome initial resistance to classroom activities that "did not appear on the national exam") and administrative approval of the innovations, from Inspectors and Headmasters/mistresses. Across the board, the biggest challenge they described in moving away from "drill-and-kill" rote memorization and grammar-translation kinds of activities toward more integrated skills, communicative kinds of activities was the perception on the part of administrators that the classes were too noisy and uncontrolled and therefore reflected poor teaching practices. Before introducing these new (louder) learning activities, teachers found it useful to first educate administrators as to how and why this would be a beneficial change. The biggest problem they reported in making this innovation was that their students liked it so much, they expressed resistance to the former kinds of activities not only in their English classes but in their other subject areas as well. Participants reported getting negative feedback and pressure to stop using the innovative teaching techniques from other educators in their same department and in other departments who were still using the more "traditional" methods.

Parental support also emerged as an additional factor impacting sustainability of innovation. Participants reported receiving criticism from parents who perceived authentic, integrated skills kinds of projects (for example, iEARN, a web-based educational organization that networks classrooms internationally through projects) as a "waste of time." These are academic cultures that place a high value on passing standardized exams and, personal finances permitting, engage personal tutoring services for the purpose of doing so (which is, ironically, additional part-time work for many of these same classroom teachers). Participants therefore developed strategies for educating parents about the benefits of the new teaching practices as well. One savvy teacher, who had persisted in offering after-school "English Club" iEARN-based activities for 5 years, had overcome parental objections by collecting and comparing English language test scores of students who participated in extracurricular English Club vs. exam tutoring activities. Since the English Club group scores were consistently higher, parents became convinced of its value.

Other factors and shared cultural values that helped offset feelings of isolation and increased dyads' persistence and therefore success in the e-learning course included the following, as reported in surveys, online discussions, and email correspondence.

Dependability in partner communication. The top 2 themes or issues that emerged as important factors in dyad success were actions related to partner accessibility or "presence" and the use of regular communication patterns in one or more established modes (whether through email, phone, face-to-face planned or

spontaneous meetings, or other). Frequency and mode varied among dyads but was set in the very early stages of the course and remained in place throughout the course. As with other research, participants reported that prompt instructor response to inquiries and regular contributions to moderated discussions were also important (Chen & Lin, 2002; Lim & Morris, 2006). However, partner responsiveness was even more highly rated.

Cognitive and metacognitive attributes. The next most important cluster of themes centered on partners' ability to problem-solve together in equal weight: technical, pedagogical, and teaching-related issues. Within dyads, partners' perceived degree of agency or control over changes as a result of problem-solving and their relative degree of open-mindedness to accepting change were also rated as highly important.

Trust, respect, and friendship. Notions of trust, respect, and friendship were interwoven in dyads' perceptions as to what made them successful in this collegial context. This varies somewhat from U.S. and other "Western" ideas about collegiality, which operate on the premise that professionals can trust and respect each other in collaborative learning relationships without necessarily being the best of friends (Duffy, Mattingly, & Randolph, 2006; Harwood & Clarke, 2006; Holloway, 2001).

Partner expertise in teaching methodology and practices. At the same time, dyads uniformly rated partner expertise in teaching methodology and teaching experience as important attributes. In other words, they were pleased to be partnered with individuals who they perceived as proficient in EFL teaching

knowledge and skills. In most cases, this was expressed positively in the form of praise for the work that a partner had accomplished or insight s/he had offered. In one or two cases, however, partners were resistant to partnering with colleagues who worked in what were perceived to be "less professional" (lower status) institutional settings. This actually resulted in the reconfiguration of two dyads and the loss of two potential participants during the registration and orientation period of the course. As previously indicated the Chapter II, this type of "selective disengagement" (Chavez, 2007) pattern in partner formation is increasingly documented in e-learning and is a learner behavior that can negatively impact e-course dynamics.

Research Question 2 Results: Learning Outcomes

Research question 2, based on *a social-constructivist theory of learning linked with instructional design principles and e-learning practices*, examined the nature of the relationship—if any—in types of dyads and their learning outcomes:

What were the learning outcomes for the different types of e-partnerships? In what ways did dyads apply learning outcomes to local educational settings?

E-learning Outcomes for Knowledge Challenge (KC) Tests

Dyads were made up of individuals whose typical scoring pattern on the weekly Knowledge Challenge (KC) pre and post tests over the duration of the course was one of the following.

- L -> H: Scored low (below 75%) on the majority of the pre-tests and high (above 75%) on the majority of the post-tests.

- H -> H: Scored high (above 75%) on both the pre and post-tests.

I had predicted that peer:peer dyads would be more likely to associate with L->H:L->H (or H->H:H->H) "balanced" knowledge scoring patterns and that mentor:mentee dyads would be more likely to associate with L->H:H->H or "uneven" scoring patterns. While there was some indication that this pattern might hold true, the association was not strong enough to claim it was an absolute. This could be due in part to the apparent ill-fit of and confusion around mentor:mentee roles. A larger data set with more dyads might also be necessary in order for this or alternative patterns to clearly emerge.

I had also predicted that, coming from highly centralized exam-driven educational systems, dyads would raise objections to the lack of a numerical score on their KC pre-tests. However, they were actually very quiet on this point even though they were not shy about making suggestions or challenging other aspects of the course (e.g. when they felt that the additional small-group discussions— reflective "blogs"—would make the course workload was too high). When I asked

them at the end of the course about their apparent lack of objection to non-access to pre-KC scores, they reported they were content so long as there was a checkmark instead of a zero in the pre-test gradebook slots and happy because they got full points just for taking it.

There were a couple of additional unforeseen and interesting dyad behaviors that occurred with the KC e-tests. For example, I was surprised at the level of perfection to which individuals held themselves on the post-scores. Across the board, people held themselves to a very high standard and frequently retook the post-test three or more times in order to get a high score (and, I hope, in order to learn the content). On the other hand, once they got to the end of the course and realized they would pass, about half of them omitted doing the last of the challenge tests at all and half of the ones who did take them were satisfied with low post-test scores. One way to interpret this is that a successful self-directed learner knows not only when to keep going in a particular direction but also when to taper off or stop. Another possibility is that although I, as course developer and instructor, set the KC tests up as learning-through-testing kinds of activities, participants on the other hand viewed them simply as tests in much the same way their students (and students' parents) viewed exams.

E-learning Outcomes for Action Plan Projects with Partner Reviews

In keeping with long-standing recommendations for project-based learning instruction in computer-based learning environments (Koschmann et al., 1993) (Moursund, 1999), the Action Plan project activity progressed through four steps:

(a) making explicit the instructional requirements that serve as design goals for the project; (b) performing a detailed study of current educational practice with regard to these goals; (c) developing a specification based on the identified requirements/limitations of the instructional setting and the known capabilities of the technology; and (d) producing an implementation that allows for local adaptation to instructional practice. Participants rated the projects very highly in terms of value to their learning and their teaching practices. As with other studies, the partner review component of each project was also perceived favorably by the participants and had a positive impact on their collaborative learning skills, the knowledge revealed through their online dialogue, and the workplace-based projects themselves (Boud & Costley, 2007; Yiping & MacGregor, 2004).

The project-based learning Action Plans and Partner Reviews, due at 3 equi-distant points in the course, were a new type of learning activity and formative assessment for many of the course participants. Over time, participants' projects showed increased complexity and improved content. Raters gave less than 10% of them low ("approaches standard") scores. Participants consistently linked project work to active experimentation with new techniques and materials that came out of the course, in some cases expanding later projects into training and professional development opportunities for others in their region. Review comments increased in complexity and effectiveness as well. By the end of the third set of projects, it was exciting to see that about 25% of the project authors were voluntarily commenting on reviewers' feedback in an extended give-and-take review dialogue. (Note that I changed the name of the review activity from

Peer Review to a more neutral Partner Review because of participants'

ambivalence with regard to the peer:peer and mentor:mentee roles.)

Learning outcomes on the Action Plan projects showed that the course was

successful in providing clear connections in the instructional design between (a)

acquisition of key knowledge areas as presented in the materials (classroom

observation through the Shaping videos and pedagogical knowledge through

supporting readings); (b) engaging in transactive dialogue (discussion) tasks that

were based on the knowledge areas; and (c) the application of acquired knowledge

to local educational contexts through the Action Plan projects.

Research Question 3 Results: Online Communication Patterns

Research question 3, also based on a social constructivist theory of learning,

examined the *learning process as evidenced in course communication and dialogue-based

tasks* and looked for possible relationships between types of dyads and their

communication patterns. This part of the study focused in more depth on a sub-set

of dyads in the Central Asia region, Cases 1-4 (dyad numbers 10, 11, 20, and 22),

who generated thousands of lines of text through online discussions, email, and

reflections (through CMS-housed Web logs or *blogs*):

What were the communication patterns for the different types of e-

partnerships? How did their communication patterns develop during the

course?

Communication patterns among dyads varied and was dependent in part, predictably, on the content of the topics (the Shaping modules, see Appendix A), which changed each week. Participants could choose from multiple threads for each topic, and their tendency was to regularly post to the same type of thread within each topic. They reported that this tended to be the one that most interested them and/or for which they felt they could make the most substantive contributions. This, and the amount of time they had available for that week, also influenced the amount that they posted per topic. The basic threads each week were (sometimes there were optional threads or additional topics that participants requested/initiated):

- Reading Insights (based on related pedagogical readings and teaching theory).

- Video Perceptions (based on the classroom practices videos for each module).

- Putting it into Practice (based on related teaching practices).

Knowing this now, in future classes in the second half of the course, I would watch for this "comfort zone" pattern again and considering encouraging participants to break that pattern and at least occasionally dip into other types of threads.

In spite of this comfort zone patterning, analysis of discussions revealed that participants were successful throughout the course in engaging in "multiperspective thinking" (Mitsuhara et al., 2006), an important aspect of the

shared learning process. For examples of participants' dialogue in support of this,

see Table 11 below.

Table 11

Examples of Multiperspective Thinking

Week 1	"I liked both lessons very much because the classrooms were very clean and students were very free with teachers. The teachers were very kind and generous with students, like [they were] their friends. The classroom is so colorful and very convenient both for teachers and students. I liked the [two] role plays of pilgrims and rainforest. And I liked very much how teacher encourages students. I will use all of it in my teacher training courses. I hope everybody will love it."
	"Dear All, Thanks for your detailed explanation on how the less experienced or new teacher is put in situations to benefit from the experienced ones by working collaboratively. You are certainly right it is much beneficial to get teachers to work right from lesson planning, on its delivery and the reflection [of it] and so on. Do you know that your comments came at the right time and has consolidated my view of this matter, as I am now engaging in writing an article...entitled: Creating a Collaborative English Department Culture. I envy you, and wish that this system will be implemented in our schools as well. In fact, it is not a matter of vision, but there are other aspects, the financial one! However, I think when there is a well, there should be a way to do it!"
Week 7	"Dear M., Thanks for the article from Country A – it really reflects teaching problems in many schools here [in Country B]. I'm particularly interested in the practical side of it – which of those suggested solutions have you tried? Did they really work for your situation? If not, what challenges have you faced implementing them?"
	"Thank you, K., for sharing the Discipline article [from Country C] with us. As I was going through the article I noticed that we in [Country D] have the same problems in Government schools. There are still a few problematic areas here in [Country D] which are not mentioned or did I miss them? These are Vandalism, Graffiti and students hanging around in the streets instead of being in class. These are usually boys and some of them are at schools for the first two classes and then they are there jumping over the walls and out of school! Is this the same with you?"

"I see some of you have been discussing late-comers. At my place of work we mark the late comers 'Tardy' and 3Ts =one absence. In some of our government schools the principals will send the students home (the students don't go home because they'll be punished at home) or allow them in but they miss the first class. Regarding rules, we make our rules clear to all the students on the first day. The list is then put on the bulletin board for those who are not in class on the first day. Some of these rules are written as dialogues and through them the message is sent to the students. What other strategies are you using at your schools?"

Week 14   "It is kind of sad to think that this is the last day of our course. I have really enjoyed the academic side, but I treasure the personal side. You have all opened my eyes to so many things, and helped me to appreciate better the things that I do have rather than dwell on what I don't.... Today begins the Festival of Lights, a beautiful holiday which celebrates the importance of standing up for what you believe in, and for bringing light to vanquish the darkness. I feel that this is a big part of what our jobs are, to bring light. This course has helped me to do so more effectively."

"To summarize my personal impressions of our team-work, first, I feel myself greatly honored to be a member of our team and to have had an opportunity to work with all of you during these 12 weeks; second, I would characterize our "Shaping" course as a genuine source of enlightenment, empowerment and inspiration; third, the added value for me is the cultural enrichment I have gained because you have been so generous in sharing your experience, perceptions, cultural values, attitudes and traditions – all these have expanded my worldview and made me realize how beautifully diverse our planet is."

"I was very happy to spend the time with you by sharing our good ideas and experiences with each other. It was like a big and friendly family. Don't forget that we have our home together, University of Oregon."

Research that similarly analyzed learner interactions in asynchronous online discussions (Wozniak & Silveira, 2004) used 2 levels to characterize contributions as "individual thinking" vs. "interactive thinking," roughly aligning them with Henri's cognitive and metacognitive dimensions respectively. In the case of this study, in which the unit of analysis was the dyad (not the individual), I looked for communication that involved or somehow linked individuals from the same dyad. As the course progressed, dyads reported that much of their partner-based communication occurred privately. Partners used the more "public" all-class discussion forums most frequently for individual postings and to show support for a partner by agreeing with what s/he said, or adding a supporting comment or resource (e.g. an example, a reading, a lesson plan, a URL, a technique, etc.).

The second most frequent type of dyad-related posting was for one member of the dyad to pose a query or a challenge on behalf of both partners to a member of another dyad or to the whole group.

Finally, participants in this course, compared to results from other similar studies (less than 10%), produced a high percentage (more than 20%) of "interactive" (Wozniak & Silveira, 2004) or "metacognitive" (Henri, 1992) kinds of postings. These tended to be—in order of frequency in online discussion—evaluating, summarizing, synthesizing, hypothesizing, and predicting kinds of statements or questions, all trademarks of Blooms's well-known "higher order thinking skills" domain as well (Bloom, 1956, 1976).

While online distance education is regularly touted as a means of easing feelings of isolation for marginalized and remote populations (Johnson & Huff, 2000; Ledesma, 2000; Southwick, 2003; Stacey, 2005), many online students in fact reported feeling socially isolated. This lack of a sense of community in their online learning experience in fact *causes* rather than relieves a sense of isolation, which is then linked to attrition patterns and/or a perceived lower quality learning experience (Cook, 2007; Lake, 1999; Maged, Andrea, & Alice, 2005; McPherson & Nunes, 2004; Venter, 2003). Ideally, EFL teacher-learners are not only a physical presence or "warm body" in their online courses (i.e., they are retained) but they are also persistent in their learning (i.e., actively engaged in the learning process throughout the duration of the course), and make measurable progress over time.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Conclusions

Online distance education (ODE) has enormous potential to help bridge the gap in educational training resources for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) professionals in developing countries (De Bot, 2007; van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2001). It can be especially important option for females who may face difficulties getting funding for local post-secondary education and training opportunities due to age or other factors (participants from Saudi Arabia, for example, reported that women over the age of 40 were generally excluded from this type of public funding).

Other fields such as medicine have a rapidly growing literature base for both formal and informal learning through ODE (Borzekowski, Fobil, & Asante, 2006; Khoja & Scott, 2007), and while the EFL profession is making some progress in this area (Cobb, 2006; Keller-Lally, 2006; Potter & Naidoo, 2006), there is a need for more research that will inform teaching practices and learning for future online distance education teacher training courses. A better understanding of how to structure online distance education for EFL professionals can help lead to more effective use of scarce resources and support improved educational outcomes for

EFL language teachers and learners

Strategies and policies for educational reform and intervention that work well in developed countries do not necessarily work the same way in developing countries; however, there is little information or consensus as to what might work well instead (de Grauwe, 2005; Lien, 2006; St. George, 2006; Wigley & Akkoyunlu-Wigley, 2006). International researcher Owston has observed that, "Pedagogical innovation—whether involving technology or not—is shaped by a complex interaction of the innovation with contextual factors such as school and school district policy, leadership, cultural norms and values, teacher attitudes and skills, and student characteristics" (Owston, 2007). In a study of 174 cases of innovative pedagogical practice in schools in 28 countries (across North America, South America, Europe, Australia, Asia, and Africa) he found that they shared conditions for the sustainability of classroom innovation, such as: teacher and student support of the innovation, teacher perceived value of the innovation, teacher professional development, and principal approval. Additional factors that contributed to sustainability included supportive plans and policies, adequate funding, innovation "champions," along with both internal and external recognition and support.

Some institutions have had success with "hybrid" or "blended" learning designs that bring learners and instructors together face-to-face (F2F) for one or more sessions during the course to reduce feelings of isolation and build community, among other reasons (Brown, 2004; Doering, 2006; Hochberg, 2006; Tabor, 2007; Yanes, 2004). In cases such as ours, however, it was not possible to

bring EFL teacher participants from such remote locations together. We needed effective non-F2F retention and learning support strategies instead.

Profile of a Typical Dyad/Learner

Results from this study, along with data collected prior to it as part of my department's administrative practices, provided a more detailed profile of the typical student in my department's online distance education courses for EFL educators in developing countries. We know that that person is more likely to be female than male, that she is actively working in her field (at least half of the time in more than one place of employment at a time), and that she is unlikely to have had a high level of access otherwise to internationally-focused professional development opportunities. We know, from a cognitive perspective, that she is highly motivated and self-directed, she is able to set clear goals and manage her time well, and that she is open to change and willing to innovate in her local context. From a social perspective, she is eager to network with and can learn in a multi-perspective way from others, she finds value in and makes effective use of her e-partner relationship, and she enjoys working with her learner population.

This information can help inform our recruiting and selection practices, the ways in which we prepare and orient learners to our courses, and the ways in which we structure our student support services in the area of online distance education. As our online programs expand, it can also guide us in our selection and training of future instructors who can work effectively with this population.

Instructional Design

From an instructional design standpoint, this study provided data on what has been working well from the learners' perspective. It also showed us—the hosting institution, instructor-developer, and support staff—where our instructional goals (for course content, learning process, and learning outcomes) were more vs. less effective. On the positive side, there were clear course goals; consistent and clearly established lines of communication with the instructor and among participants; strong connections between course content, learning activities, and participants' real-life classrooms; a balance between individual vs. collaborative (partnered) work; and an emphasis on process and project-based learning, and on formative evaluation.

From a technical standpoint, the course management system, though somewhat daunting for many at first, was overall a satisfactory means of housing most course-related materials and communication tools in one central location. Participants positively rated the round-the-clock access to the course through the CMS, the immediate feedback on the Knowledge Challenge tests, and the ability to view their grades confidentially at any time. A lack of local technical support, lack of transparency in CMS navigation, and low bandwidth/connectivity were some of the negatives that participants reported. Access to core materials (video and readings) in offline format partially compensated for the bandwidth/connectivity issues.

E-partnering, Why it Works

In a nutshell, why then *does* e-partnering work? I do not claim that it is a one-size-fits-all "silver bullet" that can solve all the problems and challenges in online distance education. However, results from this study that helped shed further light on the answer to this question clearly clustered along two dimensions, the role of e-partnering in: (1) the act or process of learning or acquiring knowledge, and (2) the emotional and social connections that supported and sustained that learning process. Hence the term "social constructivism," which blends them together.

When incorporated with social constructivist instructional design practices—linking online dialogue-based tasks with knowledge construction and real-life classroom innovation—this study showed that e-partnering can bolster retention rates and contribute to the quality of a participant's learning experience and learning outcomes. Participants indicated they preferred for collaborative or e-partnered to be balanced with individual work. Feedback and evaluation should likewise be appropriately aligned with the type of task, and should occur in a variety of modalities: techno-automated (e.g. test scores generated on the fly through the CMS) vs. personalized (e.g. from a partner, others in the course, or the instructor).

In the end, personal human factors related to mutual accountability, a reduction in feelings of anxiety and isolation, and just knowing that someone else in the class would "always be there for me" (the notion of "presence" or "solidarity" in friendship) were additional core defining factors in explaining what

it was about the e-partnerships that worked. While these may seem more elusive than concrete test scores or action plan texts, in the ephmeral and virtual world of online distance learning, these core e-partnering precepts served participants well.

Future Directions

As with many aspects of humanity—including but not limited to language, socio-cultural systems and values, and the educational systems in which they thrive—we tend to be dynamic rather than static. Innovation creeps in to all of these unintentionally, serendipitously, and even purposefully. So I imagine it will be with e-partnering as well, both in terms of how it is defined and the degree to which it continues to play a serviceable role in online distance education in the future.

The social and learning implications of this are important as we already know that lack of an e-partner that can contribute to non-persistence for EFL educators in developing countries. Because UO AEI course participants in the course in this study were in a wide range of geographically remote locations, it was difficult to follow up on dropouts who, for whatever reason(s), did not regularly communicate via email or other online tools and who were not responsive to study buddies, or were study buddies with each other and equally uncommunicative with us. Course sponsors in these cases promptly suggested replacements for dropouts so that, by the end of the orientation period, the participants in the course were all voluntarily enrolled and had demonstrated that they were motivated, engaged, self-directed learners. However, those we "lost"

remained lost and may, unfortunately, be at risk for non-continuance in the future. A better understanding of these non-persisting learners is an avenue for possible exploration in future research.

Other future directions for possible research are those that would expand the number of participants and thereby increase the amount of data available for the surveys and assessments used in this course. Access permitting, it would also be useful to learn more about those who opted out of the course during the enrollment and orientation period (we typically extend this to 2-4 weeks for our online courses, which is considerably longer than the 1-week period in our face-to-face classes). This might then allow us to broaden our profile of a successful learner and e-partner, and to benefit from the collective experience and wisdom of that "missing" sector as well.

APPENDIX A

SHAPING THE WAY WE TEACHING ENGLISH:

LIST OF MODULES AND TOPICS

Module Number	Topic
01	Contextualizing Language
02	Building Language Awareness
03	Integrating Skills
04	Pair and Group Work
05	Learner Feedback
06	Classroom Management
07	Learning Strategies
08	Authentic Materials
09	Critical and Creative Thinking
10	Alternative Assessment
11	Individual Learner Differences
12	English for Younger Learners
13	Teacher Development: Peer Review
14	Teacher Development: Reflective Teaching Practices

APPENDIX B

PARTNER SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Description

These are some questions about how you like to learn and how you feel about learning. Your answers will be used to help shape and improve the course. There are no right or wrong answers, so be sure to mark the answer which tells how you feel. Usually the answer that comes to your mind first is the answer that is true for you.

Instructions

There is no time limit for this questionnaire. However, once you begin, you must respond to all the items in one sitting.

Some of the questions are short answer (you will write a number or some text).

Some are multiple answer (you may choose one or more answers).

For the remaining items, choose one of the following responses:

1. I never feel like this.
2. I feel like this less than half the time.
3. Half the time I feel this way.
4. I usually feel this way.
5. I feel like this all the time.

Click the "Submit" button at the bottom of the screen when you are finished.

Question 1
You are working with a partner in this course. Some partners in the class are working as peers (peer:peer) and some are working as mentor:mentee (protege). Carefully read the following definitions and then select the one answer that best describes your relationship with your partner in the context of this course.

From Merriam-Webster Dictionary online:
- Mentor: "A trusted counselor or guide; tutor; coach."

- Mentee: "One who is being mentored; a protege."

- Peer: "One who is of equal standing with another."

Answer:
1. Mentor : Mentee (the mentor is guiding the mentee or protege).
2. Peer : Peer (peers are co-mentoring each other).
3. I am a guest or observer.
4. Other (please describe in the comments box directly below).

Comments (optional):

Question 2
In this partnership at this time I am a (select the one best answer):

1. Mentor.
2. Mentee (protege).
3. Peer.
4. Guest, observer, or other.

Question 3
So far in the course, my partner and I have communicated in the following ways (you may have multiple answers, please select all that apply):

- Face-to-face (F2F).

- Phone.

- Email.

- All-Class Discussion Forum.

- Small Group Reflection "Blogs".

- Chat (online, in real-time).

- Other (please describe in the comments box directly below):

Comments (optional):

Question 4
So far in the course, my partner and I have communicated and worked together on the following course topics (you may have multiple answers, please select all that apply):

- Addressing technical issues together (computer, CD, email, Blackboard, saving files, software, online connection, passwords, etc.).

- Viewing and/or discussing content of video together.

- Discussing reading materials together (articles, web sites, etc.).

- Planning projects related to this course.

- Other (please describe in the comment box directly below):

Comments (optional):

Question 5
So far in the course, I have worked on my own on the following topics (you may have multiple answers, please select all that apply):

- Addressing technical issues (computer, CD, email, Blackboard, saving files, software, online connection, passwords, etc.).

- Viewing content of video.

- Reading materials (articles, web sites, etc.).

- Planning projects related to this course.

- Reading and/or posting comments to the all-class Blackboard discussion forum(s).

- Doing Knowledge Challenge activities.

- Doing other surveys (Trivia Game, Ready for E-Learning, and Ready for Partner Work).

- Other (please describe in the comments box directly below):

Comments (optional):

Question 6
Read this sentence and give an answer for [XX] using a number:

"So far in the course, I have spent about [XX] hour(s) working together with my partner."

Round up or down to the nearest hour. For example, 3 hours and 35 minutes rounds up to 4 hours; 3 hours and 25 minutes rounds down to 3 hours. If it's one hour or less, please write the number 1 ("one"). If you have had no contact with your partner, please write 0 ("zero").

Question 7
Read this sentence and give an answer for [XX] using a number:

"So far in the course, I have spent about [XX] hour(s) working alone (on my own)."

Round up or down to the nearest hour. For example, 3 hours and 35 minutes rounds up to 4 hours; 3 hours and 25 minutes rounds down to 3 hours. If it's one hour or less, please write the number 1 ("one").

Answers for items 8 through 18 below are:

1. I never feel like this.
2. I feel like this less than half the time.
3. Half the time I feel this way.
4. I usually feel this way.
5. I feel like this all the time.

Question 8
So far in the course, I am able to contact my partner when I need to.

Question 9
So far in the course, I have been able to help my partner when s/he needs it.

Question 10
Whenever I ask for help in the course, so far my partner has assisted me.

Question 11
So far in the course, my partner "listens" to me and can understand what I say.

Question 12
So far in the course, I can easily understand what my partner says.

Question 13
So far in the course, my partner takes my suggestions seriously and includes them in our work together.

Question 14
So far in the course, I take my partner's suggestions seriously and include them in our work together.

Question 15
Overall, the partnership strengthens my learning experience.

Question 16
Overall, the partnership strengthens the quality of the work I produce.

Question 17
Overall, my partner and I have worked well together so far in this course.

Question 18
Overall, my experience with this course so far has been positive.

Comments (optional):

APPENDIX C

SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING READINESS SURVEY-ADULT BASIC
EDUCATION (SDLRS-ABE) © LUCY GUGLIELMINO AND ASSOCIATES

Answers for all items (1 through 34) in the SDLRS-ABE below are:

- I never feel like this.

- I feel like this less than half the time.

- Half the time I feel this way.

- I usually feel this way.

- I feel like this all the time.

Questions:

1. I know what I want to learn.

2. When I see something that I don't understand, I stay away from it.

3. If there is something I want to learn, I can find a way to learn it.

4. I love to learn.

5. I believe that a big part of my education should be thinking about what kind of person I am and what kinds of things I want to do with my life.

6. I know where to go to get information when I need it.

7. I can learn things by myself better than most people my age.

8. If there is something I have decided to learn, I can find time for it, no matter how busy I am.

9. Understanding what I read is a problem for me.

10. I know when I need to learn more about something.

11. I think books are boring.

12. I can think of many different ways to learn about something new.

13. I try to think about how the things I am learning will fit with the plans I have for myself.

14. I really enjoy looking for the answer to a hard question.

15. I am interested in a lot of things. [Altered, with the test author's permission, for better clarity for the non-native English speaking population in this course, from the original: "I have a lot of questions about things."]

16. I'll be glad when I'm finished learning.

17. I'm not as interested in learning as some other people seem to be.

18. When I decide to find out something, I do it.

19. I like to try new things, even if I'm not sure how they will turn out.

20. I'm good at thinking of new ways to do things.

21. I like to think about the future.

22. A hard problem doesn't stop me.

23. I can make myself do what I think I should.

24. I am really good at solving problems.

25. I become a leader in learning groups.

26. I like talking about ideas.

27. I don't like learning things that are hard.

28. I really *want* to learn new things.

29. When I learn more, the world becomes more exciting for me.

30. It's really my job to learn--the university and the instructors can't do it for me. [Altered with the test author's permission, to better fit the post-secondary setting of this course, from the original: "It's really my job to learn—the school and the teachers can't do it for me."]

31. I learn many new things on my own each year.

32. I am a good learner in the classroom and on my own.

33. People who keep learning are leaders, because they know what's happening.

34. I like to see if I can solve hard problems.

APPENDIX D

DISTANCE LEARNING READINESS ASSESSMENT (DLRA)

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Answers for items 1 through 32 in the DLRA below are:

- I never feel like this.

- I feel like this less than half the time.

- Half the time I feel this way.

- I usually feel this way.

- I feel like this all the time.

Questions:

1. I am confident of my ability to use e-mail.

2. I like to learn new ways of communicating over the Internet.

3. I am comfortable writing at the computer.

4. I have difficulty opening and attaching e-mail files.

5. I like using the computer.

6. I can quickly find information I need on the Internet.

7. I have excellent reading skills.

8. I can express my ideas well in writing.

9. I am confident of my ability to use correct grammar and punctuation.

10. I have easy access to the equipment I need for distance learning.

11. When I need technical support, I can get it.

12. I need a lot of face-to-face interaction when learning.

13. I am willing to ask for help when I need it.

14. I am highly motivated to learn through distance learning.

15. I am good at organizing my time for learning.

16. If there is something I want to learn I can find a way to learn it.

17. I am good at learning things by myself.

18. I enjoy learning new things.

19. If there is something I have decided to learn I can find time for it, no matter how busy I am.

20. Understanding what I read is a problem for me.

21. I know when I need to learn more about something.

22. I learn well from written materials.

23. I can think of many different ways to learn about something new.

24. I try to think about how the things I am learning will fit in with the plans I have for myself.

25. I enjoy looking for the answer to a hard question.

26. When I decide to find out something, I do it.

27. I can make myself do what I think I should.

28. I am really good at solving problems.

29. I become a leader in learning groups.

30. My learning is my responsibility--no one else can do it for me.

31. I know where to go to get information when I need it.

32. I like to try new things, even if I am not sure how they will turn out.

Optional Course-specific Questions

If your test administrator asks you to complete this section, answer the questions in relation to the course you are currently taking or considering.

33. My current need for this class is:

- High.

- Moderate.

- Low.

34. The time I currently have available for this class is:

- Very little.

- Adequate.

- More than enough.

35. Comments (optional):

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE OF A WEEKLY PRE AND POST KNOWLEDGE CHALLENGE TEST

Description

Based on Module 8 on Authentic Materials from *Shaping the Way We Teach English*. What do you already know about using authentic materials in language classes? Take the Pre-Knowledge Challenge before you watch the video or read about Module 8 in the manual.

There are 20 multiple choice questions.

Instructions

Answer all items in one sitting without pausing.

Be sure to click on the "Submit" button (not the "Save" button) at the bottom of the page when you're done.

Follow Up

Want to improve your score afterwards?

Read Module 8 in the manual, watch the video, and read the supporting readings on this topic from other authors in this field. Then, take the Post-Knowledge Challenge and see if your score improves.

If you have an incorrect answer, you will see a "Hint" on the screen that directs you to the materials that will help you learn about that topic.

Go back and revisit the video and readings as many times as you like if you need to find more answers. You can re-take the Post-Knowledge Challenge as many times as you like. Your new score replaces any previous score(s) every time you take it. You will be able to see your second set of scores at your convenience at any time in the Blackboard gradebook, where they are automatically recorded.

Multiple Choice Questions (1 point each)

Note: Answers in this format are underlined for identification purposes. In electronic format, they could be randomized to appear in a different order, depending on the item.

1) Authentic materials are...

- Created for use by native speakers.

- Designed for use for language learners.

- Useful for teachers but not students.

- Usually created by art students.

Hint: See the video and read the manual for Module 08, Authentic Materials for information on this topic. Pay attention in particular to the introductory segments.

2) In a language classroom, authentic materials can be good tools for learning because they...

- Use authentic language.

- Are interesting.

- Provide cultural context.

- All of the above.

Hint: See the video and read the manual for Module 8, Authentic Materials for information on this topic. Pay attention in particular to the introductory segments.

3) Which of the following are guidelines for choosing authentic materials? They...

- Contain examples of the point of the lesson.

- Are in a style of English learners will hear and use.

- They are of good quality in (text, picture, sound).

- All of the above.

Hint: See the video and read the manual for Module 08, Authentic Materials for information on this topic. Pay attention in particular to the introductory segments.

4) Extensive Reading or Listening is a method in which the learner...

- Chooses materials to read or listen to for pleasure.

- Reads or listens to materials and then takes a test.

- Reads or listens to materials for exactly 15 minutes a day.

- Competes in a reading or listening contest.

Hint: See the Preview Vocabulary section of the manual for Module 8.
For more information on this topic, also see
"Extensive Reading Pages"
http://www.extensivereading.net/
and "Extensive Reading: Why? And How?"
http://iteslj.org/Articles/Bell-Reading.html
by Timothy Bell.

5) Which of the following is an example of realia?

- Clothing.

- Ideas.

- Beliefs.

- Emotions.

Hint: See the Preview Vocabulary section of the manual for Module 08 and examples from Video Segment #1.

6) Which of the following is *not* an example of authentic materials?

- Language textbooks.

- Newspapers.

- Travel brochures.

- Restaurant menus.

Hint: See Video Segment #2 and the corresponding section in the manual for Module 8.

7) Some authentic materials present challenges such as...

- Difficult language.

- Unneeded vocabulary items.

- Complex language structures.

- All of the above.

Hint: For more information on this topic, see
"Authentic Materials and Cultural Content in EFL Classrooms"
http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Kilickaya-AutenticMaterial.html
by Ferit Kilickaya.

8) One solution for overcoming disadvantages with authentic materials is to...

- Automatically fail students who don't understand them.

- Automatically pass students even if they don't understand them.

- Assign suitable tasks in which total understanding is not important.

- All of the above.

Hint: For more information on this topic, see
"Authentic Materials and Cultural Content in EFL Classrooms"
http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Kilickaya-AutenticMaterial.html
by Ferit Kilickaya.

9) When using authentic materials, teachers also have to determine if they are working with a concept that is new to learners. In such cases the teacher can...

- Identify things from learners' lives to build a meaningful context.

- Add more new concepts to make an even more complex context.

- Translate everything to help learners understand those materials.

- Ignore the lack of context and hope learners will understand.

Hint: For more information on this topic, see
"From Lessons to Life: Authentic Materials Bridge the Gap"
http://www.eslmag.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=18
by Maria Spelleri.

10) Use of authentic materials should be linked to specific learning objectives. The same material—an information brochure, for example—might be used at different times for...

- A lexical objective.

- A life-skill objective.

- A critical thinking objective.

- All of the above.

Hint: For more information on this topic, see
"From Lessons to Life: Authentic Materials Bridge the Gap"
http://www.eslmag.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=18
by Maria Spelleri.

11) The same authentic materials can sometimes be repurposed for use with different…

- Language levels.

- Topics.

- Skills.

- All of the above.

Hint: For more information on this topic, see
"Using Authentic Materials"
http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/resources/authentic_materials.shtml
by Sam Shepherd.

12) Using authentic materials and assisting students in "conquering" real language is likely to lead to a direct improvement in learners'…

- Confidence.

- Art skills.

- Motor skills.

- All of the above.

Hint: For more information on this topic, see
"Using Authentic Materials"
http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/resources/authentic_materials.shtml
by Sam Shepherd.

13) Which of the following is *not* a primary consideration when choosing authentic texts?

- Students' test scores from previous classes.

- Students' background knowledge on topics.

- How much text topics will interest students.

- Supporting illustrations or other materials.

Hint: For more information on this topic, see
"Selecting Authentic Materials"
http://www.richmond.edu/%7Eterry/Middlebury/authentic.htm
by Chantal Thompson.

14) Which of the following is *not* a primary consideration when choosing authentic video or audio materials?

- The age of the actors or speakers.

- Length of the clip (segment).

- Quality of sound and/or image.

- Visuals and sound supporting each other.

Hint: For more information on this topic, see
"Selecting Authentic Materials"
http://www.richmond.edu/%7Eterry/Middlebury/authentic.htm
by Chantal Thompson.

15) Listening exercises can be divided into three main parts:

- Pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities.

- Pre-listening, post-listening, and while-sleeping activities.

- Pre-listening, while-eating, and post-listening activities.

- While-listening, post-listening, and post-sleeping activities.

Hint: For more information on this topic, see
Developing Listening Skills with Authentic Materials
http://www.eslmag.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=20
from Lindsay Miller.

16) When preparing learners for academic listening, English language teachers often choose to use a textbook with a title such as "Academic Listening: Preparing Students for Lectures." However, research shows that what academic listening textbooks prepare learners for can be very different from real-life lectures. One solution for this would be to...

- Find and use real lectures from real classes.

- Stop preparing students for academic lectures.

- Convince lecturers to speak more like the books.

- Translate textbooks in more detail.

Hint: For more information on this topic, see
"Developing Listening Skills with Authentic Materials"
http://www.eslmag.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=20
from Lindsay Miller.

17) In some cases, you may want to adapt authentic text by simplifying it. Some important linguistic aspects to consider include...

- Semantic and lexical elements.

- Discourse elements.

- Syntactic elements.

- All of the above.

Hint: For more information on this topic, see
"Forum: Adapting Authentic Materials for Language Teaching"
http://exchanges.state.gov/forum/vols/vol39/no2/p2.htm
from Steven Darian.

18) Which of the following can be useful strategies when simplifying authentic text?

- Substitute more commonly used words for less commonly used ones.

- Delete unnecessary or redundant information.

- Avoid idioms and overly complex grammatical structures.

- All of the above.

Hint: For more information on this topic, see
"Forum: Adapting Authentic Materials for Language Teaching"
http://exchanges.state.gov/forum/vols/vol39/no2/p2.htm
from Steven Darian.

19) Authentic materials and realia can also be effective for learning about culture and context.

- True.

- False.

- Don't know.

- Culture can't be taught.

Hint: For more information on this topic, see
"Culture in Second Language Teaching"
http://www.cal.org/resources/digest/0309peterson.html
by Elizabeth Peterson and Bronwyn Coltrane.

20) Teachers can adapt their use of authentic materials to suit the age and language proficiency level of the students. For example, even beginning language students can watch and listen to video clips taken from a television show in the target language and focus on such cultural conventions as greetings. They might look for examples of...

- The physical distance between speakers

- Gestures and eye contact.

- Societal roles, and how people relate to each other.

- All of the above.

Hint: For more information on this topic, see
"Culture in Second Language Teaching"
http://www.cal.org/resources/digest/0309peterson.html
by Elizabeth Peterson and Bronwyn Coltrane.

APPENDIX F

TEMPLATE FOR ACTION PLAN PROJECTS AND PARTNER REVIEWS

PART A: To be completed by Action Plan Project creator.

Module(s): _____   Project Creator: _____
Date   Project
submitted: _____   Reviewer: _____

Students' age: _____   Language level: _____
# of students: Other
                                           (optional):

My Class Now (A Snapshot)	My Class in the Future (My Vision)
Provide a description of the item in your classroom that you are targeting for change:	Provide a description of what you expect the item to look like after you've made the change:
Technique(s) I use *now*.	Technique(s) from this module that I *will* use.
Material(s) I use *now*.	Material(s) or ideas from this module that I *will* use.

Additional Explanation from Project Creator

In "My Class in the Future (My Vision)" you described and predicted a change that you would like to see happen in your class. Provide additional information for the following related items. Write as though you are informing a person who knows nothing at all about your educational setting.

- The benefits I predict from this change:

- Challenges I expect:

- How I will address those challenges:

- Steps needed in order to complete the change:

- Timeline for completing the change:

- How I will assess the degree of success of the change:

- Other comments:

Part B: To be completed by the project creator's partner.

Project Reviewer Comments

1. Is the proposed change clear (the snapshot of "My Class Now" vs. a vision for "My Class in the Future")?

2. Do the steps and the amount of time allotted for the change seem realistic?

3. What do you believe to be the strengths of the proposed change?

4. Do you perceive any additional challenges and/or have additional advice for meeting challenges related to the proposed change?

5. Is the assessment an appropriate match for the goals and outcomes of the proposed change?

6. Optional: Other comments or questions?

APPENDIX G

RATING RUBRIC FOR ACTION PLAN PROJECTS AND PARTNER REVIEWS

Based on the 2002 American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers: http://www.ncate.org/documents/ProgramStandards/actfl2002.pdf

ACTFL STANDARD 3: Language Acquisition Theories and Instructional Practices

Standard 3.a. Understanding Language Acquisition and Creating a Supportive Classroom. Candidates demonstrate an understanding of language acquisition at various developmental levels and use this knowledge to create a supportive classroom learning environment that includes target language input and opportunities for negotiation of meaning and meaningful interaction.

Standard 3.b. Developing Instructional Practices That Reflect Language Outcomes and Learner Diversity. Candidates develop a variety of instructional practices that reflect language outcomes and articulated program models and address the needs of diverse language learners.

Supporting Explanation for Standard 3b
[Teachers] provide a range of learning opportunities for learners of various ages, developmental and linguistic levels, language backgrounds, and learning styles. They demonstrate the ability to adapt language instruction to address students' multiple ways of learning and to meet their special needs. They are willing to seek out information about their students' needs in order to adapt instruction accordingly. [Teachers] use a variety of instructional strategies to engage students in critical thinking and problem solving. They value the role of inquiry and collaboration in the language classroom. They maximize learning and interaction through the use of pair, small group, and large group activities. Candidates use questioning strategies and task-based instruction as appropriate given the goals of instruction in the language classroom.

Sample Candidate Evidence For Standard 3

- Written classroom learning scenarios in which the candidate describes

  expected outcomes of the teaching segments, instructional decisions

made prior to and during the lessons, and an assessment of student learning and teaching performance.

- Reflections on lesson plans that illustrate teaching practices based on language acquisition theories.

- Lesson plans (and reflections on lessons) that illustrate modifications to meet specific learner needs, address multiple ways of learning, promote cultural thinking and problem solving, and engage students in pair and group activities.

- Reflections on classroom observations and/or case study reports that include discussion of theory and practice.

- Performance on examinations demonstrating understanding of language acquisition theories and the relationship between theory and practice.

- Self-evaluations/reflections on video taped lessons taught by candidate.

- Analysis of teaching performance over time that addresses progress made in providing target language input, using negotiation of meaning, engaging students in interactions, serving as facilitator in the classroom, providing feedback that focuses on meaning and accuracy, using questions and tasks appropriately, and encouraging students to take risks in using the target language.

- Written synthesis of professional journal articles that address current research and/or teaching practices, together with a reflection on the information learned.

ACTFL STANDARD 4: Integration Of Standards Into Curriculum and Instruction

Standard 4.a. Understanding and Integrating Standards In Planning.
Candidates demonstrate an understanding of the goal areas and standards of the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* and their state standards, and they integrate these frameworks into curricular planning.

Standard 4.b. Integrating Standards in Instruction. Candidates integrate the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* and their state standards into language instruction.

Standard 4.c. Selecting and Designing Instructional Materials. Candidates use standards and curricular goals to evaluate, select, design, and adapt instructional resources.

Supporting Explanation for Standard 4c
The *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* have served as a catalyst for change, not only in the areas of planning and classroom instruction, but also in the selection, adaptation, and design of instructional materials. Candidates use the organizing principles of the standards as they evaluate, select, and create instructional materials. **Where in the past the textbook was the primary resource, candidates now use the textbook as one of many resources. These resources include visuals, realia, authentic printed and oral texts, and other authentic materials obtained through technology (e.g., Internet). Candidates locate and use authentic materials in their teaching, since the value of authentic materials is that they reflect real-world language as it is used by native speakers in target cultures. Candidates adapt the textbook and other materials to align them with [standards-based] goals. They devote the effort necessary to locate effective materials, to adapt them, and to design their own.**

Sample Candidate Evidence For Standard 4

- Written rationales for the selection of materials used in lessons.

- List of sources of [standards-based] lesson materials, including authentic materials and those obtained through various technologies.

- Written critiques of instructional resources such as the text, websites, video segments.

- Instructional materials adapted by the candidate with a description of how and why materials were adapted.

- Instructional materials created by the candidate and a description of how materials are used and for which learning outcomes.

- Written classroom learning scenarios [that illustrate integration of standards into teaching].

- Unit / lesson plans (with reflections) that illustrate standards-based lessons and samples of K-12 student work.

- Journal entries that describe how the candidate uses technology to integrate the standards into instruction.

- Written correlation of the candidate's state standards to national standards.

PART A: "MY CLASS NOW/FUTURE" ACTION PLAN
MAXIMUM TOTAL POINTS = 15

	(1 POINT) APPROACHES TARGET	(2 POINTS) MEETS TARGET	(3 POINTS) EXCEEDS TARGET	SCORE
A. Assignment completion.	One or more parts of the assignment are incomplete.	All parts of the assignment are complete.	The assignment is complete and contains value-added content.	
B. Students' language levels, language backgrounds, and learning styles.	Recognizes that students have a wide range of language levels, language backgrounds, and learning styles. Attempts to address these differences by using a limited variety of instructional strategies (3 or less).	Recognizes that students have a wide range of language levels, language backgrounds, and learning styles. Implements a variety of instructional models and techniques to address these student differences.	Consistently uses information about students' language levels, language backgrounds, and learning styles to plan for and implement language instruction.	
C. Critical thinking and problem solving.	Implements activities that have a predictable right/wrong answers and allow little room for critical thinking and/or problem solving.	Implements activities that promote critical thinking and/or problem solving skills.	Rewards students for actively engaging in critical thinking and/or problem solving skills.	

D. Grouping.	Teaches primarily with large-group instruction. Pair and small group activities generally consist of students grouped together but working individually.	Conducts activities in which students work collaboratively in pairs and small groups. Defines and models the task, gives a time limit and expectations, groups students, assigns students roles, monitors the task, and does a follow-up activity.	Provides regular opportunities for students to work collaboratively in pairs and small-groups. Teaches students strategies for assuming roles, monitoring their progress in the task, and evaluating their performance at the end of the task.
E. Materials.	Uses instructional materials that are readily available.	Locates additional resources that enhance topics/themes in the curriculum.	Addresses learning goals through appropriate materials. Seeks out appealing resources from which to create materials.

TOTAL:

PART B: PARTNER REVIEW OF ACTION PLAN
MAXIMUM TOTAL POINTS = 15

	(1 POINT) APPROACHES TARGET	(2 POINTS) MEETS TARGET	(3 POINTS) EXCEEDS TARGET	SCORE
Peer review completion.	One or more parts of the assignment are incomplete.	All parts of the assignment are complete.	The assignment is complete and contains value-added content.	
Questions 1 & 2: Proposed change and timeline.	Gives a simple "yes" or "no" answer with little or no elaboration or justification for that answer.	Gives a "yes" or "no" answer with some elaboration or justification for that answer.	Gives a detailed response with a clear elaboration or justification. Provides examples, suggestions, or asks questions for further clarification.	
Question 3: Project strengths.	Gives a minimal answer, and/or paraphrases or copies from the project with few detailed observations or additions.	Makes relevant and concrete observations about the strengths of the project in a respectful and helpful way.	Provides a detailed and relevant analysis of the project's strengths and offers examples, suggestions, and/or asks questions for further clarification.	
Question 4: Project challenges.	Gives a minimal answer, and/ or paraphrases or copies from the project with few detailed observations or suggestions.	Makes relevant and concrete observations about challenges the project may encounter in a respectful and helpful way.	Provides a detailed and relevant analysis of the project's challenges and offers examples, suggestions, and/or asks questions for further clarification.	

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Question 5: Project goals aligned with assessment.	Gives a simple "yes" or "no" answer with little or no elaboration or justification.	Gives a "yes" or "no" answer with some relevant and useful elaboration or justification.	Gives a detailed response with a clear elaboration or justification. Provides examples, suggestions, and/or asks questions for further clarification.

TOTAL:

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