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Contents:

FROM THE EDITOR

GUEST EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

PROCEEDS OF WEBHEADS IN ACTION ONLINE CONVERGENCE: VOLUME 1

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It is interesting to consider how the set of papers in this volume came to be. This is not just another proceeds of a conference put on by people who gather together once every year or two but with little connection to one another apart from interest and expertise in a common subject area. I hope you have paused on reading that assertion. What kind of proceeds is it then? What sets this volume apart from other compilations of articles published in the genre of proceeds?

It's not that there is anything wrong with infrequent contact over interest and expertise in a common subject area, and proceeds very similar to this one might emerge under such conditions. But there is latent potential in the quality of collaboration that can be generated through greater familiarity, and it turns out that online environments address this very aspect of human interaction. So, one crucial difference between these proceeds and others is that the conference in this case was organized and run by participants in a community of practice called Webheads <http://webheads.info>. Whereas few authors of these papers have ever met face to face, for the most part they know one another quite well through interaction online, and the mutual respect arising through frequent opportunities to interact productively over time has brought these authors to converge on an online conference resulting in turn in these proceeds.

By definition, a community of practice is a loose association of peers who meet to further their knowledge of a given practice, in this case the nature and delivery of online learning using free and open source Internet tools. This community has been exploring these tools with each other for several years now, and its members have engaged in numerous collaboration projects and become familiar with each other's work and more

importantly, personalities. It's the personality factor as much as the work ethic that contributes so much to this group's cohesion and which has led it to challenge itself with putting on a completely free worldwide online conference. The significance of that ground-breaking endeavor can be gauged from the quality of papers in this volume, which is part one of a two-part proceeds.

This conference was conceived and implemented in ways unlike most other conferences. Normally, conferences are mounted by entities ranging from universities to professional associations which in most cases put on conferences face to face but occasionally online. In such cases, there are almost always budgetary concerns: either there is a physical plant to rent or maintain, or in the case of purely online conferences money is required to pay staff and support infrastructure, which means that fees are charged participants and used in part to hire speakers to attract more participants.

Our conference, as holds true for our community of practice in general, relied on no funding whatsoever, nor were any fees charged to participants. All organizers and presenters, including keynote presenters with celebrity status, donated their time and expertise for what turned out to be a remarkably worthwhile cause (see Stevens 2005a and 2005b for reports on the results of a survey of participant reactions). The data cited in these reports suggest that although presenting and participating in an online conference such as this one was new to most of the interactants (and incidentally, especially challenging to many of the presenters), impressions of questionnaire respondents were predominantly positive regarding almost all aspects of the conference. Questionnaire respondents found the interfaces easy to use, surprisingly manageable, and intuitively navigable. They found live, empathetic help when needed. They thought the quality of the presentations was surprisingly high. If they had not been a part of the Webheads CoP before the conference, they felt predisposed to learn more, to get to know the others in the environment better. If they were already participants in Webheads then they solidified friendships and developed a deeper appreciation for the creative potential of online communities of practice.

The community realized that the presenters whose work appears here would be challenged by some of the unique aspects of online presentations and conferences. The call for papers was put out to the world of academics at large, and was responded to by a

wide spectrum of practitioners in addition to Webheads members; but because we had virtually limitless time and space for presentations (72 hours or slots available over three days, option to spill into additional days, no constraints on day or night since it was always daytime somewhere for some of our worldwide audience), the referees were able to accept almost all of the proposals submitted with enough detail for the proposal to be considered a serious one. We then developed a coaching system, where needed, to help colleagues develop their text-based proposals into viable online presentations. In the end we fielded 46 presentations spread out over the three 24-hour days of the conference.

So this introduction is converging on several threads. You have gathered that the conference, or convergence as we called it, was highly experimental. (One of our members, Elderbob Brannan <http://elderbob.com/>, suggested calling it a convergence to make the point that we were converging numerous technologies and communities, and the appellation stuck). It was also of high quality, as you will judge when you read these proceeds and those in the next volume. And characteristic of our CoP, it was also friendly in a way that is unique to online environments and generally unfathomable to those who have never experienced one. For the uninitiated the experience was no doubt revelatory. For ongoing interactants in the group, the convergence was a challenging, surprising, reaffirming, yet logical outcome of long-time online collaboration through a CoP.

We hope you enjoy this first of our two volumes of proceeds. Volume Two is due to appear this June as a Special Edition of Teaching English with Technology. And we hope you will join us at our next global, free, entirely online, Webheads in Action Online Convergence tentatively scheduled for May, 2007.

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KEYNOTE ARTICLE

THE END OF CALL AND HOW TO ACHIEVE IT

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The title of this paper intentionally contains a *double entendre*. As in Neil Postman's famous (1995) book, *The End of Education*, the term "end" in the title has two meanings. First, it signifies an ultimate goal or purpose, and second, it indicates the finish or completion of a task. In this paper I connect those two meanings to argue that CALL as a field should and will end if we meet its goal successfully. The purpose of this argument is to stimulate discussion, but more, to encourage those of us in this field to reflect on what we believe and do.

The goal of education

To talk about the goal of CALL we need first to look briefly at the goal of education in general. Defining this goal is a more difficult task than it sounds as the definition varies depending on who is asked. From preparing students to successfully join the workforce to helping form "whole" human beings, different economic, political, and humanistic ends have vied for focus, attention, and funding in education for over a hundred years in the US and for much longer in other places. Although many educational stakeholders share the goal that learners be functional citizens (in the past of their nation, now of the world), disagreement between behaviorist followers, cognitive sympathizers, and constructivist supporters on how to produce such citizens has been in part responsible for a continuous stream of educational paradigm shifts and reform efforts. The current goal of education, as indicated by its outcomes, appears to be to help as many students as possible pass standardized tests. However, the ultimate goal, in order to support all learners and work for all stakeholders, must be a balance between humanistic and more pragmatic ends.

What *is* typically agreed upon is that we must change the way schools work in order to help all students achieve the end of education. The role assigned to technology is to effect this change. However, Sizer's seminal work, *Horace's Compromise* (1992), first published in 1984, and other more recent studies of public schools show that, in spite of changing ideas and tools, schools in the USA have not changed much in 20 years. Traditional teacher-as-sage education is alive and well from preschool through university not only in the USA but around the globe. This is true *despite* incredible growth in the ratio of computers to students in the US and other countries. The notion, espoused by many politicians and educators, that merely putting technology in classrooms would change teaching and learning in some important and dramatic ways, has been thoroughly discredited. We know why – teachers have insufficient training, the technology is not accessible to everyone in the forms and types it should be, and the expectation that use of technology would be a catalyst for new kinds of teaching and learning has not yet been realized.

The goal of CALL

These debates and changes in the wider field of education, along with advances in knowledge and fluctuations in economic and social pressures, have influenced the field of language learning, and so too the area of CALL. We have moved from audio-lingual to communicative methods to many other incarnations of language teaching, and sometimes back again. Despite what we know about how students learn, observation in language classrooms still finds most historical methods in use somewhere, with the majority based on a drill/ behavioral paradigm. Although practice does have its place, in a field predicated on diversity we seem to ignore the fact that individual and cultural differences impact learning. A more important oversight is that the general patterns of how learning occurs within the brain appear to be the same for every human (although, as Prensky [2001] notes, thinking patterns can change as a result of input). Steven Johnson (2005) explains how far we are from integrating this knowledge into teaching and learning. The *authentic, emotionally significant, content-based, differentiated* experiences that will have a lasting impact on learners are all too absent from regular and language classrooms even though the technologies to make them real might be present. With the foci of

language education on discrete points of language, passing tests such as the TOEFL and the LAS, and the push to use technology for *anything* as long as it is used for *something*, the bigger picture of the end of education is often ignored.

In *CALL Essentials* (2005), I laid out what many leading educators believe are the skills needed to survive and make one's way in the 21st century (It should be noted that Papert, Kays, and other educational leaders have expressed similar views for many years). Certainly language literacy is one skill, and computer literacy another, but as or more important are the thinking skills that help learners become literate and encourage them to keep learning and striving after their language class is over. Standards for both child and adult language learning indicate that we expect individuals to become more effective thinkers. Without critical and creative thinking, and the ability to produce, to communicate, to inquire, and to solve problems, language learners may have control over aspects of the language but not be able to do anything important with language to *change their lives* and the lives of those around them. This ability to have an impact, for me, is not only the goal of education, but also the goal of CALL.

Reasons

Some language teachers certainly do address these 21st century skills, but a review of program structures from K-adult shows that in spite of more communicative or interactionist intentions, our narrow focus on skills and the traditional set-up that divides curricula by language skill keeps us from truly addressing this goal. There are surely a host of reasons why this might be so. However, that computers are being used to support, in a great number of classrooms, the same old traditions of teaching and learning indicates that we have yet also to figure out how to reach the end of CALL and work on learning and individual needs. It also implies that the powerful potential of the computer as a learning tool is yet to be realized in "CALL" classrooms. It might therefore be more effective to build the expectation that technology will be employed where effective, rather than regard it as a special feature of certain classrooms that only some teachers use.

Some educators claim that by being a discrete entity, the field or area of CALL attracts more focus and garners more awareness than if it were not set apart. However, that focus seems to be creating the false idea of CALL as a "method" and to give the

technology unwarranted emphasis as a crucial component of any language program. It has led to the notion that teachers must master a standard set of skills; this even though effective technology use, like any tool use, is contextual. The focus on teacher skills is underscored by the technology standards currently in development by TESOL *separate from* learner and teacher standards. Another claim for emphasizing CALL as a specialization is that researchers spend time studying it, and therefore it needs a label. However, if that argument were applied consistently, we'd have "fields" or "areas" such as "Learner-Centered Teaching" and "Women's Strategies in Language Learning" and possibly "Pencil Supported Writing." Perhaps it makes sense to look at CALL as something different until we understand more about it. In the long run, it just does not make sense to single out integral parts of teaching, learning, and research as fields or areas rather than address them as integrated, important parts of a whole.

The end

Ironically enough, by using technology to provide language learners with relevant experiences and working toward helping learners change their lives, we will put an end to the notion of CALL as a field in and of itself, and perhaps as well to the field of language learning per se. Instead of our students being recognized as "language learners," which in so many ways limits what is expected of them, we'll be talking about the education of people on a continuum of literacies and, as Johnstone (2003) and others advocate, "computers will disappear" (metaphorically speaking, of course). In the end, every teacher will be a computer teacher, and all teachers will be language teachers (or rather realize that they already are). We won't be investigating the impact of a specific technology on the acquisition of a specific grammar point, but rather the whole learning environment that creates fluent, knowledgeable people that can do something with the language and ideas that are presented to them. Even adults at beginning language proficiency levels need more than language skills; simply reading the newspaper isn't enough – adults need to be able to consider and evaluate what they read. Going to the grocery store and making purchases isn't enough – learners need to be able to understand what they are buying and predict what the impact on their health and pocketbooks will be. If we do not work toward this end, and use technology to help us realize it, we are

neither crediting language learners with the intelligence and skills to direct their own learning, to discover on their own, nor to achieve extraordinary accomplishments.

The benefits of marginalization

This is not to suggest that reaching the end of CALL, in both senses, will be easy. In fact, at the moment it helps that language learners are often left outside of formal standards in that curriculum or programs may not be tied to them. Happily, so many of the language programs throughout the world, particularly in US public schools, are so marginalized in these and other ways that teachers and learners can make changes and experiment and no one will notice. In fact, we have opportunities that few other education programs might have for change. As we have before, CALL educators can lead the way.

How will the end of CALL be achieved? In each context the specific steps and the barriers to overcome will be different. Funding, enthusiasm, time, and training will all play a role in the pace and extent of change. But if we don't get started, there is little hope for change at all. There are things can be done now. For example:

- For teachers who lack training in using technology effectively and/or teaching thinking skills, Sizer suggested long ago that schools could be reorganized so that some time during the school day is spent for teachers to participate in professional development. The remaining school hours will be, at least potentially, much more effective for learners.
- Funding in many countries is available - educators just need to find it. Even $200 buys a lot of computing power these days and makes learning connections possible. Students can call the other side of the world free using Skype and obtain first hand information and raw data to transform into understanding – that alone is worth the price of the hardware.
- Papert and his colleagues have proposed (and shown the benefits) for years that students should program in the *Logo/ LogoWriter* tradition – we have *Dreamweaver*, *Animation Master, Flash*, *Microworlds EX*, html, and a host of other (often free) platforms available. Not only does the act of formatting/ programming contribute to the development of problem-solving skills, but the

give and take and community developed by learners accomplishing real tasks with real tools makes language paramount.

- Classes, programs, and schools can work on integrative learning – making sure that the small boxes that we assign subjects and topics flow into one another naturally. We can cut out horizontal divisions between skills and vertical ones between language, technology use, and content. Not only does removing arbitrary boundaries address the need for better thinkers, it addresses content and language in ways that make them memorable for learners. This change can mean more work for teachers, but it also means that teachers can work both more efficiently and effectively and in teams with colleagues who have different skills and knowledge.
- Most important, perhaps, for achieving the end of CALL, is new arrangements of technology. Computers in classrooms need to be truly ubiquitous, not something that some people use at specific times, and virtually invisible, in that they are accessible the moment they are needed and do not hamper the learning process when they are not. This idea seems like a hard sell, but the Australian laptop schools that Johnstone describes present compelling evidence of its necessity.

Getting there

The specific how-tos for getting to the end of CALL are not as important as the *want to*. Until parents and teachers demand it, teachers understand and support it, and other stakeholders see the tremendous advantages of changing the way we think about language, technology, and learning, we will continue to wonder why some students don't learn or learn what we want them to, why students get stuck at certain levels of doing and thinking, and why technology isn't making a difference.

If our goal for our language learners is to help them impact their owns lives and the lives of others in positive ways, we must look at technology as integral to providing learning experiences that focus on authentic and applicable language and content, that are differentiated according to learner needs, and that support learners in developing literacies across situations. In this broad goal, learning can and should happen in contexts both inside and outside of classrooms with teachers and with facilitators other than

teachers. Moving toward this end means that language teaching per se and CALL for certain will be integrated into a larger vision of education in general. Personally, I'm rather excited about talking myself out of a job as a "language teacher" and a "CALL educator," because I know that what follows the end of CALL will be more meaningful and more effective learning and teaching.

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Editor's notes:

This presentation was made as a keynote session at theWebheads in Action Online Convergence on November 18, 2005.

- The 'visual' for the presentation was an earlier version of this paper.
- The session took place in the Elluminate presentation room at Learning Times. A recording was made and can be heard at http://home.learningtimes.net/learningtimes?go=1043435.

ARTICLES

TEACHING CULTURE!
A MULTI-NATIONAL BLENDED COURSE FOR TEACHERS OF ADULTS IN EUROPE

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Abstract

The Teaching Culture! project develops inter-cultural awareness in adult educators through blended-learning teacher training courses. The main question was whether inter-cultural awareness could develop through a course which was largely online. We experimented in monitoring the progress of inter-cultural awareness, a set of skills which are notoriously difficult to define. We used learning diaries and portfolios over two rounds of the pilot course, the first round with language teachers and the second for teachers in all subject areas. The results of our study suggest that our approach succeeds in raising inter-cultural awareness.

Introduction

'To know another's language and not his culture is a very good way to make a fluent fool of one's self.' (Brembeck, 1997)

In an increasingly mobile and multi-cultural Europe you don't even have to travel to come across other cultures. School teachers are increasingly well prepared for inter-cultural encounters but adult education teachers do not have access to so many training opportunities. The Teaching Culture! project, supported by the Grundtvig strand of the European Union's Socrates programme, sought to remedy this by experimenting with developing a blended learning teacher training course to enable adult education teachers to develop their inter-cultural awareness. One of the greatest uncertainties was whether inter-cultural awareness could be nurtured through a course which was largely online. The project also experimented with how to monitor the development of cultural awareness.

Inter-cultural issues which may arise in the adult education classroom include:

1. Dealing with different attitudes to learning;
2. Dealing with different attitudes to teaching; eg. the teacher as 'sage on the stage' or 'guide on the side'.
3. Building cultural perspectives into teaching materials and activities.

4. Overcoming stereotypes and prejudice in learners, their families and other teachers.
5. Communicating across cultures.

These issues arise to a greater or lesser extent across the whole of adult education. The obvious starting point is language teachers, who were targeted in the first round of the pilot course. However the second round of the pilot course was opened to teachers of all subjects so that the general applicability of the course could be tested. In both pilots there were strict limits on the numbers from each country to ensure a mixture of cultural backgrounds. The group size was 11 in both pilots.

The project partners came from Sweden, Denmark, Lithuania, Austria, Germany, Spain, Ireland and the UK and included professionals from universities, research institutes, teacher training institutions, adult education institutions and cultural associations. There was, therefore, a broad inter-cultural representation from various relevant professions. In addition to technical and administrative support, required roles included personal tutors for each participant, unit tutors to prepare and monitor the use of materials for both the online and face to face units, and a course director to ensure curriculum cohesion.

Often inter-cultural training takes place in mono-cultural groups, so one of the aims with this project was to make the experience inter-cultural right from the start. One common problem for adults taking part in training events is lack of time. Therefore, taking a culturally mixed group of adults for an intensive face-to-face course over several weeks was simply not feasible especially since this would involve long periods in another country for most, if not all, of the participants. The solution proposed was therefore a blended learning course in three modules. The first module is an extended period of collaborative online study followed by the second module, an intensive week of face-to-face activities, with the whole rounded off by a third module, a second online period in which participants devise and try out each other's ideas in the classroom. See the course structure in Table 1 below.

Module	**Mode and content**
Module 1 (5 months)	Online – inter-cultural basics

Module 2 (1 week)	Residential face to face – experiencing culture
Module 3 (3 months)	Online – applying in the classroom

Table 1: The three module structure.

The project faced two major challenges:

1. Is it possible to develop inter-cultural awareness online?
2. Is it possible to chart the development of inter-cultural awareness online?

Module One

1. Developing inter-cultural awareness online

There are two approaches to inter-cultural training, culture specific and culture general. Culture specific refers to the do's and don'ts guidelines one often gets just prior to a business trip, foreign work placement, or internship to a specific country. This gives information without stressing understanding. Culture general refers to the acquisition of an understanding of what culture means and how it can lead to different behaviours and perceptions. Whilst not of immediate use to a forthcoming visit to a specific culture, it may help to make one more tolerant of ambiguity and differences, which in the long run may be more useful. It was this latter approach which we tried to promote in the Teaching Culture course.

The first module provides an introduction to the major features of inter-cultural considerations by reference to both the basic theory of inter-cultural communication and the participants' own personal experiences. The second module was the face to face component designed to provide inter-cultural experiences by bringing the multi-cultural group together in an unfamiliar location where they would get to know each other. They would also take part in inter-cultural activities which test their ability to operate in a different culture. The third and final module is where participants get the opportunity to combine theory and personal experience in planning activities for their own classroom as well as trying out their colleagues' ideas to judge how well the ideas travel across cultural boundaries and how to adapt them for use in different cultural contexts.

In adopting the culture-general approach, it is usual to lead participants to recognise their own cultural background before going on to examine features of other

cultures and their own reactions to these. However, this was not explicit enough for the participants of the first pilot round, and therefore in the second round the project group devised a story metaphor to chart this learning journey. The story was based around the idea of the group coming together in the virtual campus. The resulting story and corresponding modules are shown in Table 2 below.

Module and title	**Mode and content**
1. International campus: Think of your experience as a treasure chest.	Online: Grounding in inter-cultural communication
2. Intercultural encounters: Think of your learning as a journey.	Face-to-face: Inter-cultural experiences
3. Intercultural classroom: Think of your lesson as an experiment.	Online: Trial of inter-cultural materials in the classroom through online collaboration.

Table 2: The story metaphor across the three modules

The story metaphor was most strongly developed in the units of Module 1 as shown below in Table 3.

Unit title	**Unit aim**
1. Welcome to the Moodle campus	Familiarisation with the online learning environment
2. This is how we do things at home	Exploring your own and others' cultures
3. Do you really only use Windows around here?	Exploring the metaphor of culture as the software of the mind.
4. Is there method behind this madness?	Theoretical background to inter-cultural communication
5. What would they say back home?	Cultures as depicted in the mass media
6. You'll never believe what happened!	Role play: A critical incident in Cologne
7. Don't forget your toothbrush	Preparation for the residential

Table 3: Units in Module 1 – Intercultural campus

Attempts were made to vary the activities as much as possible during the online sections and to avoid the tendency to make online courses heavily text-based. The exercises in Module 1 therefore included reports on the participants' own culture, exploration of metaphors, choosing representative pictures, collecting evidence from media, and individual interviews and role plays. This achieved two goals, the first being to make the course accessible to those whose skills in English are not so high and the second being to make the course as experiential as possible since this is deemed most effective in inter-cultural training.

2. Monitoring the development of inter-cultural awareness online

Inter-cultural awareness is manifest in the reactions of an individual when faced with an inter-cultural situation. Those reactions are based mainly on an individual's innermost beliefs and values and can be tempered to some extent by training and awareness-raising. These deeply personal attributes are largely hidden from view and difficult to make explicit. There are also important ethical questions relating to the extent to which we can aim to tamper with and change these beliefs as described by Byram (2000). Another indication of the sensitivity of the issue is that the promoters of the Common European Framework of Reference for languages have considered and failed to come up with indicators of inter-cultural skills.

Learning diary and portfolio

The project team therefore concluded that the most effective approach to charting inter-cultural awareness development was through self-reporting and self-assessment. The approach adopted was to encourage reflective learning through the compilation of (1) a learning diary, in which participants recorded their progress, feelings, triumphs and difficulties; and (2) a portfolio in which participants could collect their work, notes and other material of interest. These two items were shared periodically with the personal tutor which each participant was allocated. This was usually the project partner in the country where the participant was based. In most cases this ensured the participant had face to face meetings throughout the duration of the course but in a couple of cases the

distances involved meant that these tutorial sessions were also online or at least by telephone. Table 4 below shows where the tutors fit in to the overall course structure.

Personal tutor	In the same country, monitors progress
Unit tutors	Plan and present course material
Course director	Ensures continuity and cohesion
Background IT (instructional technology), financial and administrative support	

Table 4: Support structure

Collaborative activities

Another important part of the strategy was to create opportunities for reflection by promoting collaborative activities across cultures as the main method of content delivery. Many of the activities across the whole course required working in small groups with participants from different cultures. Participants were also required to use their immediate circle of family, friends and colleagues as cultural informants for finding out about their own cultural background. During the face to face residential period one of the tasks is for participants to form small inter-cultural working groups for the final teaching activity in which group members try out and evaluate each other's tasks as well as their own, once back in their own home environment.

Module 2

The residential

The residential in the first pilot took place in Lithuania, a country unknown by most of our participants except our one Lithuanian participant, and therefore a really inter-cultural experience for all. An important element of the residential was an exercise designed to reveal the participants' values with respect to their teaching. This was the subject of a useful plenary on the last day about the implications of participants' bringing different sets of values to their classrooms. In addition to purely pedagogical and team building exercises, various inter-cultural experiences were timetabled in. One was a tutorial in the Lithuanian language and another was a city-wide treasure hunt through

Vilnius which required our participants to solicit information from passers-by thereby initiating contact with local people.

In Lithuania, our hosts organised dancing classes so that our participants could learn one or two traditional Lithuanian dances. The dances are a much more important part of Lithuanian culture than in many other European cultures partly because they were suppressed or discouraged during the Soviet era. The school children assigned to the task did a very good job of coaching our participants. The biggest challenge was for our participants to perform, in front of the mainly local Lithuanian audience, the two dances they had learned at a folk dance evening organised especially for our benefit. The performance was followed by a buffet reception which in fact turned out to be more of a challenge for the project partners than the participants who had had the benefit of getting to know the Lithuanians all afternoon. This demonstrated the value of personal contact quite forcibly and the lesson was not lost on the project partners. A basic theme running throughout the project is ‘from virtual to real´ but sometimes it was the other way round as when the participants created an online travelogue of the residential period which can be seen at http://www.teaching-culture.de/en/events/litauen/travelogue/travelogue_start.htm.

Module 3

The lesson exchange

For some participants this was the most anticipated part of the course. During the residential week they came together in small inter-cultural groups of three to four persons to create inter-cultural lessons around a common theme. The themes which emerged during the residential were

- non-verbal communication
- the use of pictures
- developing empathy or tolerance.

Groups formed easily during the residential prior to creating, trialling and exchanging teaching ideas. The biggest problem in this final module was the staggered summer holiday across Europe which made regular online communication difficult since the project partners had naturally insisted on inter-cultural working groups. It also affected

the participants' ability to trial the lesson plans with exam or induction periods intervening.

Challenges

The project organizers were able to learn a great deal from the first round, and lessons learned were implemented in the second pilot which at the time of writing is still in session. The second pilot invited participants from any subject area and this attracted a very wide range of participants including art and dance teachers, online learning consultants, multimedia teachers and economics lecturers, which will create a challenge in forming groups for the exchange of teaching ideas in Module 3.

Two of the problems encountered have already been mentioned namely staggered holidays and the need for a more explicit thread running through the course. These have both been addressed; the first by re-scheduling the course and the second by the development of the story metaphor. Another problem was that a common language had to be chosen for the course. One of the main aims was to foster communication between the participants, thus facility in English was a requirement, and it then became a question of what level was sufficient. We decided on B1[1] according to the Common European Framework of Reference. Even so there is a delicate balance to be struck between the amount of background theory to be considered as a basic minimum and over-burdening participants with language which is above their level.

In some cases this problem can be overcome by ensuring that all rubrics, guidance, and instructions generated by the project developers are at an appropriate level. For example, an article was specially written for one of the units and this was explicitly simplified for the second pilot. This was done using online tools such as The Compleat Lexical Tutor (http://www.lextutor.ca/), which analyzes texts to show which word lists the vocabulary used belongs to. It was therefore possible to substitute uncommon words with more common words in many but not all cases. The readability analysis contained within the text processing program was also used to reduce average sentence length and number of passive sentences.

The other major problem unsurprisingly was misunderstandings. To a certain extent, an inter-cultural communication course thrives on misunderstandings in that they

provide a rich fund of critical incidents which serve both to illustrate problems and which can be used as exercises for deepening understanding later on. The potential for misunderstanding was all the greater because we were working mostly online. The main example from the first round occurred when we invited participants to post pictures representing their culture.

When one of the participants posted a picture of the Virgin Mary, some of the other participants assumed that this meant that she was fervently religious. However, such assumptions were not voiced openly through the course website. Rather they were voiced privately between participants or to tutors by email. It was not until the residential week when a session on the use of pictures was scheduled that an explanation of the picture was finally forthcoming. The participant had posted the picture to represent the differences she had experienced moving from a Protestant part of Germany to a Catholic region where religious icons are much more common. This incident illustrates two points. First was the need to define tasks carefully when working online. The problem arose when the participant did not realise she was meant to comment on her choices after allowing an initial period for reaction by the rest of the group. The second point is that while the course was carefully planned, there was also a need and a willingness to amend the programme when the necessity arose.

Benefits

There were many benefits to running two pilot rounds, one of these being that we could use the participants from the first round as consultants to the round 2 participants when they come to planning their inter-cultural classroom activities. By sharing their newly gained expertise and further experience gained since the end of the course it is hoped that this will be an important additional benefit of the course.

Results

What sort of reflections does the learning diary give rise to? The following extracts are quoted as evidence that the online section of the course does give rise to real increases in inter-cultural awareness. They are taken from the pilot 2 participants, who have yet to meet face to face at the time of writing.

1. “It was my first chat and I liked it. Talking, communicating, replying, listening, disclosing - that way we may get to know our own stereotypes as well as the more hidden ones in the media. Knowing my dialogue partners leads to the wish to understand them.” Birgit
2. “I've enjoyed this lively expression and exchange of messages and reflections, and I find the asynchronous online format useful for such discussions. I like the pause to stimulate my own thinking before I write back to you, and sometimes I may have an inner dialogue for a while before I answer, and maybe even not, when I'm too busy elsewhere.” Susanne
3. “I really enjoyed this unit because of its really practical and everyday-life implications. Unit 5 was a very important step for my intercultural understanding.” Magdalena
4. “I would like to tell you that I was really enjoyed about the last unit and the chat was a very new and interesting experience for me. All your contributions made me think a lot about the influence of mass media and my own stereotypical views and their origins.” Brigitte

There is greater interaction in the second round, and this has made for a richer experience for all. It is difficult to know whether this is due to the individuals involved or whether it can be attributed to the improved presentation and structure of the course. The quotes below from current participants reflect this:

1. “And until now all my expectations have [been] fulfilled and every day I am looking forward to the news from all the other participants.” Brigitte
2. “I like working in multicultural settings and thought this course would be interesting [and so] it proves to be.” Birgit

It must be admitted that using this devolved system of recording inter-cultural awareness development means that the results are very personal, known sometimes only to the participant’s personal tutor apart from the participant. Indicators of progress emerge by proxy through evaluations undertaken at key points of the course such as half way through Module 1, at the end of Module 2, and at the end of Module 3. Since the inception of the project, the project team has been working on producing a set of can-do statements regarding cultural awareness for participants to assess themselves against. We are making progress on such a list but have yet to test it out on any of the pilot groups.

Conclusion

The hope is that the course developed by the project can be adapted and used by others once the project is over. The blend of online and face-to-face contributes to its success, with online Module 1 providing a solid basis from which to work in the face-to-face Module 2. The residential is an important transformative event which builds on the awareness set in train during the online period and helps to build the trust necessary for the participants to work more closely together in developing and sharing teaching ideas. The two pilot rounds have been invaluable in fine-tuning the course. As we enter the read-write era of the Internet, the so-called Web 2.0, more interactivity could be built into the online section of the course thereby making this part even more inter-cultural.

Notes

1. Level B is an independent user; B1 is defined as 'Threshold'. Find out more at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_European_Framework_of_Reference_for_Languages#Levels

2. Readers interested in finding out more about the project are invited to request a video DVD about the first round from the author or see a reduced-quality version on the project website (http://www.teaching-culture.de/en/events/litauen/travelogue/video.htm).

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Editor's notes:

This presentation was made as a regular session at theWebheads in Action Online Convergence on November 19, 2005.

- The session took place in the Elluminate presentation room at Learning Times. A recording was made and can be heard at http://home.learningtimes.net/learningtimes?go=1042139.

NEGOTIATING FOR MEANING ACROSS BORDERS WITH CMC

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Abstract

In our Tandem Language Learning (TLL) project experience using Computer Mediated Communication, fifty students of Spanish at a university in the USA exchanged e-mail and participated in synchronous conversations using Instant Messaging with fifty students of English at a university in Argentina. An analysis of the discourse produced with these two methods of CMC showed that a variety of functions were used by the students to negotiate for meaning. The investigators will refer to the importance of TLL and negotiating for meaning in Second Language Acquisition as well as the students´ opinions after the experience. We will also include examples of the learners' cultural exchange, post study observations, and recommend possibilities for future investigation.

Introduction

As language educators we all know that learning a language is more than just memorizing a vocabulary list and grammar rules. Language learners need communicative competence which has as a feature the ability to use the target language to communicate in a spontaneous situation. Computer technology has created the opportunity to include computer mediated communication (CMC) in our language teaching. Recently, second language (L2) researchers have found that using e-mail and chat rooms is an effective use of technology for a communicative approach to teaching languages (Blake 2000, Lee 2004, Patterson 2001, Toyoda & Harrison 2002, Tudini

2003, Schwienhorst 1997 and 1998, Sotillo 2000, Smith 2003). The increased use of and familiarity with CMC have provided us with the prospect of incorporating computer mediated Tandem Language Learning (TLL) into the classroom.

Tandem Language Learning

TLL involves the interaction of two individuals with different native languages that are learning each other's language. They meet and talk, speaking one language for half the time and the other language the other half. In this way both participants benefit from the exchange.

Schwienhorst (1998) and Little et al (1999) refer to the three principles of tandem learning presented in the Tandem Guide by Little & Brammerts (1996), which have been respected in this project:

- **Bilingualism:** Learners were instructed to use both target languages equally throughout the project.
- **Reciprocity:** Because the learners alternated languages in both forms of CMC, both groups benefited from the interaction.
- **Autonomy:** Rather than switch to their native language students often negotiated for meaning in the target language when they did not understand something. They took the initiative for their own learning and took advantage of the opportunity to learn both language and culture from a native speaker without the guidance of a teacher.

In TLL the learners assume the responsibility for improving their own language skills, facilitating clear communication with native speakers of their target language by asking questions and negotiating for meaning, and helping their tandem partners to understand their native language. The learners have an opportunity to not only practice the target language but also to be exposed to a different culture, first-hand from a native speaker. Each learner takes on the role of teacher or as Donaldson and Kötter explain it, "the partners become in effect 'resident experts' of their own linguistic and cultural community and support the learning process of the other" (1999: 537).

Appel (1999), Lee (2004), and Schwienhorst (1998b) liken the concept of learner autonomy to the social-interactive nature of language presented by the psychologist

Vygotsky. As Lee puts it, language is a tool that the individual uses to socialize with others and through this socialization, learners can help each other in performing a shared task. Vygotsky (1978) states that this social interaction promotes learning through the "zone of proximal development" which he explains as the difference in what an individual can achieve solving problems by himself and what he can achieve with the help of an adult or more capable peers. Thus, through social interaction during the course of this investigation, using CMC, the tandem partners enter this 'zone of proximal development' as they interact and negotiate meaning, helping each other comprehend each other's language and learn about their culture under one another's guidance.

We provided our students with the opportunity to participate in this TLL project hoping that as they interacted with native speakers of the target language they would improve their language skills, increase their vocabulary in the target language (TL), learn more about the culture found in their tandem partner's country, and of course increase their language acquisition.

Negotiation for meaning

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research has shown that interaction and especially negotiation for meaning are essential elements of language acquisition (Gass and Varonis 1994, Gass 1997, Long 1985, Pica 1994, Swain 1998).

Pica (1994: 494) defines negotiation as "the modification and restructuring of interaction that occurs when learners and their interlocutors anticipate, perceive, or experience difficulties in message comprehensibility." As the learners negotiate for meaning they modify their speech linguistically to produce comprehensible TL. They accomplish this task by repeating a message, adjusting its syntax, changing the vocabulary, or modifying its form and meaning.

Long and Robinson (1998) classified the process of negotiation for meaning under the Interaction Hypothesis. This hypothesis states that the conditions for second language acquisition are improved when learners negotiate meaning with other speakers. These negotiations tend to increase input comprehensibility through language modifications such as simplifications, confirmation or clarification requests, elaborations,

and recasts. Thus, activities that promote negotiation for meaning create a quality environment for SLA to occur.

Design and methodology of study

The subjects of this study included 50 learners of Spanish from Rice University in Houston, Texas and 50 learners of English from Universidad Tecnológica Nacional (UTN) in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The two groups of 50 learners at the two universities were randomly paired as tandem partners. Throughout one semester, from September to December, the pairs of students communicated with each other by sending e-mails and participating in Instant Message (IM) online chats. In addition, some Rice students created video letters to be viewed by the Buenos Aires students and Buenos Aires students posted digital photographs on-line for Rice students to see.

In September and October the learners exchanged two e-mails every week: one e-mail in Spanish and one e-mail in English. There were, however, no controls or limits on the topics or the amount of language they should write in each e-mail. Because of this there was no consistency in the length of e-mails that were sent. Throughout the month of November, the pairs of learners participated in four IM chats online using the MSN Instant Messaging system. They were told to participate in each chat for a minimum of 15 to 20 minutes, twice in Spanish and twice in English. At the end of the investigation, the learners were given a questionnaire to provide the investigators with feedback and the learners' opinion of the study and its benefits if any.

Data and Discourse Functions

Data were collected in the form of e-mails and saved IM chats. Each written utterance produced by the 50 pairs of learners was analyzed and classified according to its function within the discourse. The categories used to classify the different functions of each utterance in both the asynchronous e-mails and synchronous computer discussions are based on those used by Patterson (2001) in her research on Computer Assisted Class Discussions (CACD). A list of the functions used in the discourse analysis which are considered to reflect negotiation for meaning can be found in the table in Appendix I.

E-mails

After completing the discourse analysis of all e-mails, we totaled the number of times each pair used the specific discourse functions that were previously noted to be associated with negotiation for meaning. These data are located in the following table (Table 1).

FUNCTION	E-Mail
Confirmation check	200
Elicit clarification	106
Elicit vocabulary	40
Comprehension check	9
Reply clarification / definition	104
Reply confirmation	26
Reply vocabulary	30
Reply comprehension	2
State elaboration	352
State correction/self correction	155
Total	**1024**

Table 1: Total Discourse Functions associated with negotiation used in all e-mail

Due to the nature of this TLL project it was not possible to separate the two languages in the e-mail portion. The students often wrote a question in an e-mail written in one language and received a response in the next e-mail in the other language, as can be seen in the examples below. Therefore, the data for e-mails are for both languages combined and there is no distinction between the negotiations found in native or foreign languages.

The following examples are excerpts from e-mail exchanges. Negotiation functions in the examples are written in bold letters and labeled. The Spanish discourse is followed by an English translation.

This first example is taken from e-mails written in English. Student D from Argentina is unsure about some of her phrases in English and asks for confirmation of her

wording in one e-mail (“I’m down with flue”). Then in the next e-mail Student H responds by correcting the wording and spelling. Also by repeating the phrase “runny nose” the Rice student is indirectly correcting the expression “running nose”. She also confirms that the word “salsa” is also used in the USA.

Example 1:

- D-UTN says**:** I wanted to tell you that I also know how to dance salsa **(do you say salsa in inglish too????)** *[confirmation check]*
  I'm down with flue, **(is this expression ok?)** *[confirmation check]* so I have a running nose and a headacke.
- H-Rice says To answer your question, **it's probably better to say you're sick with the flu or you have the flu.** *[reply:correction]* **(Isn't 'a runny nose' the strangest expression in English?** *[confirmation check]* I've always thought it's funny.) The health services on campus is offering flu shots and I should probably get one so I don't get sick. **We do say salsa in English.** *[reply:confirmation]* I'm having so much fun learning.

In the second example student D from Argentina uses the comprehension check function to ask if the Rice student understands the word *copado* because it is a word commonly used in Argentina but possibly not in other countries. Rice student H does not understand and asks for clarification. Then student D answers in English in the next e-mail and gives a definition of the word “copado”.

Example 2:

- D-UTN says: ojalá que conozcas algún chico lindo y ¨copado¨ **(conocías esta palabra?** *[comprehension check]* acá se usa mucho) (*Hopefully you meet a nice cool boy. Did you know this word? It is used a lot here.)*
- H-Rice says: **¿Qué es esto de un chico lindo y copado?** *[elicit: clarification]* No se que es copado, pero pienso que puedo entenderte. Ahora mismo, no tengo novio. *(What is that about a good looking guy and “copado”? I don’t know what “copado” is, but I think I can understand you. I don’t have a boyfriend right now.)*
- D-UTN says: Thanks for your whishes and pieces of advise. **When I said "copado" I meant cool, you know, I hope you will find a cool and handsome boy.** *[reply:clarification]*

Instant Messaging chats

The ability to communicate in English for the UTN students was more advanced than the ability to communicate in Spanish for most of the Rice students because the UTN students had been studying English for a few years longer than most of the Rice students had been studying Spanish. After analyzing the discourse in the IM chats, rather than separate the data by learners of a specific language, we listed the negotiation data separately for Spanish and English chats in order to see if this difference in language ability affected the amount of negotiation.

For reasons unknown to the investigators, six pairs of learners did not complete the chat portion of the study. Some did not chat at all and some chatted once or twice but only in Spanish. Therefore, the data collected from these 12 learners were deleted from the results. The overall total number of negotiation for meaning functions found through analysis of the English and Spanish chats of 44 pairs can be seen in Table 2 below.

FUNCTION	English	Spanish
Confirmation check	199	249
Elicit clarification	124	175
Elicit vocabulary	25	22
Comprehension check	12	19
Reply clarification / definition	157	180
Reply confirmation	153	167
Reply vocabulary	28	64
Reply comprehension	35	57
State elaboration	129	157
State correction/self correction	66	103
Total	**938**	**1193**

Table 2: Total negotiation for meaning functions in English and Spanish chats

The following excerpts from the chats contain some examples of negotiation for meaning. In example 1 Rice student L is talking about the weather and describes it as

"weird". Student M from Argentina interrupts her tandem partner to ask what "weird" is. Rice student L is not sure whether M wants a definition of the word "weird" or clarification of what she thought was weird and immediately clarifies both: "*I was refering to the weather. Weird means unusual*."

Example 1:

- M-UTN dice: **sorry but what is weird?** *[elicit clarification]*
- L-Rice dice: **the word weird?** *[elicit confirmation]* **Or what I was refering to?** *[elicit clarification]*
- M-UTN dice: and did you have important things inside the car?
- L-Rice dice: no, just some junk, thankfully
- M-UTN dice: **yes,** *[reply confirmation]* **you said It´s weird!** *[reply clarification]*
- M-UTN dice: **I don't understand** *[elicit clarification]*
- L-Rice dice: **I was refering to the weather.** [*reply clarification*] **Weird means unusual.** [*reply definition/clarification*]
- M-UTN dice: **Ah!** *[reply comprehension]*

In the second example the chat is in Spanish. We can see that student L from Argentina uses the expression "*me voy al sobre*" and Rice student J infers the meaning but wants to make sure she is right by saying "*te entiendo*?" (do I understand you?). Then L provides the correct meaning and J confirms she now understands that "me voy al sobre" means "I am going to bed".

Example 2

- L-UTN says: aca aveces decimos, "me voy al sobre" *(Here at times we say, " I am going to the envelope")*
- J-Rice says: bueno,hablaríamos solo quince minutos. **me voy al sobre por no voy a dormir mucho?** *[elicit confirm*] **te entiendo?** *[elicit:comprehension*] *(Well, we would talk only 15 minutes. I am going to the envelope for I am not going to sleep a lot? Do I understand you?)*
- L-UTN says: **n me voy al sobre significa, me voy a la cama** [*reply definition*] *(no, I am going to the envelope means I am going to the bed.)*
- J-Rice says: ah! **ahora yo entiendo**. *[reply comprehension*] (*Ah. Now I understand.)*

Results

Looking at the data in Table 2 above we see that the numbers of the different functions associated with negotiation for meaning are very similar for the two different languages. The overall number of times that learners used negotiation functions was 938 in English chats and 1193 in Spanish chats. However, there was no control over the length of time for each chat so the chat lengths differed (see Appendix II). Thus, it was not possible to compare numbers of functions related to negotiation between the two languages without finding a common component. Although the number of utterances and length of utterance as well as the length of chat varied from chat to chat, the common feature for both chats is the word. We therefore counted the number of words per tandem partner for each chat and calculated the number of negotiation functions per 100 words. Of the 44 pairs of students completing all four chats, two were done in English and two in Spanish. The results of the calculations for the four chats of each pair of students can be found in Appendix II. The overall average numbers of negotiations and words for chats are listed below in Table 3 along with the results for all e-mails together.

CMC	Words	Average negotiations in each CMC	Negotiations per 100 words
All e-mails	170,914	963	.51
Span chat	43,247	1193	2.99
Eng chat	53,975	938	2.00
All chats	97,222	2131	2.28

Table 3: Average negotiation functions per 100 words in e-mail and chats

We found an average of 2.00 negotiations per 100 words in the English chats and 2.99 negotiations per 100 words in the Spanish chats. This indicates that, even though it appears in Table 2 that the numbers of negotiations were very close, the tandem partners actually negotiated more often in the Spanish chats than in the English chats. As previously indicated, we believe this is due to the fact that the Spanish language skills of

the Rice students were not as advanced as the English languages skills of the UTN students. We did find a greater number of Confirmation Checks and Clarification Requests in Spanish chats. A possible indication of the weaker language abilities of the Rice students can also be seen in the more than double vocabulary requests and high number of correction functions in Spanish chats.

In addition to comparing the two languages in the chats, we also wanted to look at the number of negotiations used in e-mail compared to chats. Table 4 below contains the numbers of the individual negotiation functions that were found through an analysis of all discourse in the chats vs. all e-mails of the 44 tandem partners. Looking at the numbers we found twice as many instances of negotiation in the chats than in e-mail. We noted that confirmation and comprehension check, clarification request and the replies to these requests were more common in chats; while e-mails had a slightly higher number of elaborations.

FUNCTION	**Chat**	**E-Mail**
Confirmation check	448	200
Clarification request	309	106
Elicit vocabulary	47	40
Comprehension check	31	9
Reply clarification / definition	339	104
Reply confirmation	320	26
Reply vocabulary	92	30
Reply comprehension	92	2
Elaboration	286	352
State correction/self correction	169	155
Total	2131	1024

Table 4: Number of negotiation functions for all chats and e-mails

With this data, we are considering 176 chats (4 chats for all the tandem pairs-2 in Spanish and 2 in English) and 1084 e-mails in Spanish and English. Even though the number of asynchronous e-mails outnumbers the number of chats and the number of words in these e-mails (186,251) was almost double the number of words in the chats

(99,115) we found over twice as many negotiation functions in the chats. Again, in order to make a valid comparison, we calculated the ratio of negotiations per 100 words used in the e-mail for each of the same 44 pairs of students and the data per pair are given in Appendix III. The averages found in Table 3 above show that the ratio of negotiation for meaning to words is greater in the chats (2.28 per 100 words) than in e-mail (0.51 per 100 words).

We expected to see more negotiation in the synchronous CMC than in the asynchronous e-mails and our data support this theory. Considering the amount of negotiation we found in e-mails and the amount found in chats, our data support this theory. We found over four times as many negotiation functions in the chats (2.28) than in the e-mails (.51) for every 100 words produced. Thus, in a language class where face-to-face partners are not readily available to carry out a TLL communication project with native speakers, the language teacher might consider organizing a similar TLL project using CMC. In this way learners of both languages would have the opportunity to communicate with native speakers of their target language through synchronous chats.

Videos and photos and a cultural exchange

Some of the Rice students made video letters, which were digitized by the Language Resource Center at Rice. They were then placed on the LRC server to be viewed as streaming video so that the students in Buenos Aires could see them using RealPlayer. The Rice students were divided into groups and each group videotaped and described in Spanish a different aspect of university life at Rice including dorm life, sports activities, shopping, nightlife and eating in the cafeteria. These videos are located online at: http://lang.rice.edu/ppatters/301/SPANVIDEOS_new.htm.

At UTN in Buenos Aires, digital photographs were taken of groups of students in different areas of the building: the computing lab, the Office of Student Services, and the entrance to the building. The photos were then placed on the Net-Learning website so that the Rice students could see pictures of their e-pals and view a little university life at UTN. You will find the photos at the following site address: http://www.net-learning.com.ar/utnphotos.

Although the Spanish language videos and photos were neither bilingual nor interactive they provided our students with a great deal of information about each other's universities which was then discussed in chats and e-mail. They commented on differences in the campuses and compared various aspects of university life in the different countries.

This CMC project along with the videos and photos provided our students with a great opportunity for a cultural exchange along with the language interaction. In addition to the university differences, we found examples of an exchange of other cultural issues in the e-mails and IM chats. Some of the cultural issues dealt with were: university life, nightlife, jobs, families, holidays, food, music, war, basic characteristics of each country, and the most important traditions celebrated there.

Due to limited space we will include only a few examples of the cultural exchange. In the following excerpt from a Spanish chat, the Argentine student M is talking about the Argentine tradition of the 15th birthday party called "la fiesta de quince". She compares it to the tradition of a sweet sixteen party in the USA.

- M-UTN says: Por acá no tengo nada nuevo para contar, salvo que mañana es el cumpleaños de 15 de mi prima. Acá se estila hacer una fiesta que dure toda la noche para cuando las chicas cumplen los 15 años, igual que en Estados Unidos festejan 'sweet sixteen' *(No news to tell you only that tomorrow is my cousin's 15th birthday. Here it is customary to have a party that lasts all night long when girls turn 15, the same as celebrating "sweet sixteen" in the US.)*
- A-Rice says: Tuviste una grande fiesta? El cumpleaños para quince años es muy especial. Sí, aquí, tuvimos grandes fiestas para dieciséis años. Tuvo un "Sweet Sixteen," pero hace tres años pasado. *(Did you have a big party? The 15th birthday is very special. Yes, here we had big parties when we turn 16. I had a "Sweet Sixteen" but it was three years ago past)*

In the next example from an English chat, the US student is surprised when she realizes that her partner from Buenos Aires will eat dinner at about 9:00 pm (the time when most Argentineans eat dinner) whereas in the USA most people have dinner around 6:00 pm.

- J-Rice says: so when will you eat dinner
- J-UTN says: At nine or some minutes later, as always.
- J-UTN says: You'll have it now, won't you? [confirmation check] What a strange thing. (As well as it is strange for you my dinner time) [state:elaboration]
- J-Rice says: I am going to eat in about 2 hours [reply:confirmation]

- J-Rice says: at 6 [elaboration]
- J-Rice says: Yes, it's odd to me that you eat so late.
- J-Rice says: My stomach would have eaten itself by then! Although the major focus of our investigation was the interaction and negotiation that took place while learners communicated with the various forms of CMC, we assumed that an intercultural exchange would also be a part of the tandem interchange. Both O'Dowd (2003) and Kramsch & Thorne (2002) agree that TLL exchanges through CMC contribute to intercultural learning and point out that the language instructor plays an important role in the development of this intercultural learning. As the TLL interchange progressed over the semester and we analyzed the discourse produced by our students we became aware of many examples of a cultural exchange between them. Class discussions about the tandem project and what they learned provided more information about their cultural exchange. We are interested in evaluating the cross cultural learning but due to limited space here and the amount and types of cultural exchange between the tandem partners, we must consider the intercultural learning that took place in this study in more detail at a later date for future investigation and discussion.

Questionnaire results

At the end of the study the learners filled out a short questionnaire to provide the investigators with feedback about their TLL project. The learners' comments provided us with their opinion of the project and the two methods of CMC that were used. The learners were also asked how much they thought they benefited from the TLL exchange of information. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix IV and comments by Rice and UTN students taken from the questionnaires are in Appendix V.

Of the Rice students that answered the questionnaire, 20 said they preferred IM for a variety of reasons. These students thought that IM was more enjoyable and they liked the immediate feedback they got. They thought it was more communicative and more like a real conversation and they believed they learned more. Eighteen Rice students wrote that they preferred e-mail because it was easy to include it in their busy schedules. They liked having more time to compose their messages and it was more

flexible. With IM the students had to find time to meet on-line with each other and had to take into account that the time in Argentina was 3 hours later than in Texas.

Of the UTN students that filled out the questionnaire, 32 said they preferred IM for various reasons and 14 UTN students wrote that they liked e-mail best. The reasons mentioned by UTN students are similar to those for Rice students. IM gave more immediate feedback and was more like a conversation. They also liked the informal nature of the IM chat. They had the same to say about e-mail, mentioning that it was easier to fit into their busy schedules. They also believed they learned useful expressions in English. Also, some students in Buenos Aires did not have Internet access at home making IM chats more difficult for them. Not only did they have to match the appropriate time schedule with their Texas partners but they also had to deal with Internet access availability, often using Cyber cafes and paying by the minute.

Conclusion

We found that both e-mail and IM chats provided an environment conducive to negotiation with approximately twice as many functions of negotiation found in the IM chats. This is possibly due to the synchronous nature of chats, which provided the opportunity for learners to receive immediate responses to their questions and requests for clarification.

Learners negotiated for meaning 2131 times in chats and 1024 times in e-mail, requesting clarification and vocabulary, checking confirmation and comprehension, providing clarifications, definitions, and vocabulary and affirming comprehension of their tandem partners. To validate the comparison between these two different methods of CMC we calculated the ratio of number of negotiation functions per 100 words both in e-mails and in chats. This confirmed the students´ responses in the questionnaires stating that they thought they had negotiated more when chatting.

According to our questionnaire and the results of this investigation, students preferred communicating with their partners through IM first and e-mail second. The asynchronous e-mail and particularly the synchronous IM chats provided learners with the opportunity to interact and negotiate with native speakers of their TL, which has been shown by SLA research to facilitate language acquisition.

There are, however, disadvantages to IM chats such as the need for both participants to be online at the same time and to have Internet access available at times which may be difficult for some learners. Another disadvantage is the pressure some non-native learners may feel to keep up with the conversation as they attempt to read, think, and type faster in the target language. By contrast, the advantage to e-mail is that the learners do not have to be on-line at the same time to communicate with each other and they can take their time composing the e-mail without pressure to rush.

We concentrated in this study on the functions related to negotiation for meaning between tandem partners while using two forms of CMC. Our study had several limitations and we see a need for further research. We agree that tandem partners in future exchanges should be more closely matched with regard to their proficiency in the target language, their age, and common interests. We would also like to separate the negotiation functions by native speaker of the language rather than by language spoken, in order to investigate differences and similarities between learners and compare this data with our previous research. In addition, we plan to look more carefully at the cultural exchanges in which these tandem partners engaged during CMC for future evaluation. We also hope to incorporate voice communication into future CMC projects.

Opportunities to interact with native speakers of the target language may be limited for some language learners. CMC provides a chance to communicate with native speakers of the target language outside the classroom which research has shown to be beneficial to language learners. A TLL project where learners communicate with native speakers in their native country also provides a tremendous resource for an authentic cross-cultural experience. Thus, we find that a tandem language learning project using CMC can be a valuable asset to the language learner and language class and beyond.

We typically study language learning in the context of the classroom. Communicating with native speakers through CMC provides the opportunity for developing language skills and exposure to the culture related to the target language that goes beyond the language class. TLL through CMC presents the potential for research in the context of life-long learning for the language learner outside the classroom. A longitudinal study of the long term effects of such an exchange would contribute important data to our current investigation.

Post study observation

When the semester ended in December the students were not required to participate in the CMC any longer. Many pairs of students, however, decided to continue the e-mail exchange and occasional IM chats. In their final chat many students ended with the agreement to remain in contact through e-mail and chats even though the project had ended. When several Rice students were questioned a few months later about their e-pals, they said that they still exchanged e-mail periodically with their e-pals in Buenos Aires.

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Editor's notes:

This presentation was made as a regular session at theWebheads in Action Online Convergence on November 19, 2005.

- The session took place in the Elluminate presentation room at Learning Times. A recording was made and can be heard at http://home.learningtimes.net/learningtimes?go=1042155.

APPENDIX I

Negotiation for meaning functions

FUNCTION	EXPLANATION AND DESCRIPTION OF FUNCTION
Confirmation check	The speaker asks for confirmation of a previously made statement to be sure s/he has understood correctly. The speaker may make the statement and then ask if it is right or not, using a tag question such as *Yes?, Right? or "Isn't it?" (¿sí? ¿no*? or *¿verdad?).*
Clarification request	Requesting clarification or meaning of a previous statement. Requesting a definition of a word or phrase in the target language (TL).
Vocabulary request	Requesting a vocabulary word or phrase in the TL.
Comprehension check	The speaker asks if the other person understood what was said or written and generally expects the person to acknowledge that he has understood.
Reply confirmation	Realized by "yes" (*sí*), OK (*está bien*) "you are right" (*tienes razón*) or a similar phrase. Used to confirm a statement when someone requests confirmation.
Reply clarification/ definition	Rewording or repeating a previous statement for clarification,or. explaining a statement in response to elicitation. Giving a definition of a word or phrase in the target language in response to an elicitation of meaning. Giving an English translation of a word as a response to request for the meaning of a word.
Reply vocabulary	Providing a vocabulary word in TL in response to elicitation.
Reply comprehension	Replying to comprehension check or indicating that the statement was understood.
Elaboration	Statement clarifying the meaning of a previous statement. This clarification is not solicited by someone else but rather is volunteered.

	(For example: explaining acronyms or proper names i.e. UTN: Universidad Tecnológica Nacional.)
Correction/self correction	Correcting an error made by another speaker or self-correction of one's own error.

APPENDIX II

CHAT - English			CHAT - Spanish		
Words	**Negotiations**	**Ratio of negotiation / 100 words**	**Words**	**Negotiations**	**Ratio of negotiation/ 100 words**
1527	17	1.11	396	10	2.53
1652	14	0.85	932	19	2.04
1271	14	1.10	867	31	3.58
1559	30	1.92	911	14	1.54
513	11	2.14	632	20	3.16
1021	22	2.15	1317	27	2.05
531	15	2.82	824	16	1.94
1276	45	3.53	1283	67	5.22
1291	35	2.71	1349	37	2.74
889	25	2.81	608	13	2.14
1310	49	3.74	1070	48	4.49
721	5	6.93	702	17	2.42
626	7	1.12	724	11	1.52
1319	37	2.81	1377	23	1.67
1087	6	0.55	612	10	1.63
1101	10	0.91	1174	28	2.39
1640	39	2.38	1225	26	2.12
1379	19	1.38	473	0	0.00
1150	19	1.65	1536	43	2.80
2957	26	0.88	1405	54	3.84
1279	6	0.47	755	26	3.44

1406	5	0.36	736	16	2.17
1381	19	1.38	1025	23	2.24
643	11	1.71	1408	19	1.35
1789	23	1.29	665	37	5.56
398	27	6.78	421	22	5.23
528	4	0.76	949	24	2.53
1621	67	4.13	1192	43	3.61
410	19	4.63	883	29	3.28
1157	18	1.56	1653	44	2.66
1988	19	0.96	1428	52	3.64
530	4	0.75	336	24	7.14
1707	28	1.64	1314	24	1.83
672	4	0.60	919	24	2.61
1735	40	2.31	784	21	2.68
3407	57	1.67	2646	57	2.15
1331	5	0.38	802	10	1.25
1106	36	3.25	578	25	4.33
1087	6	0.55	1124	26	2.31
882	16	1.81	263	22	8.37
1514	22	1.45	1596	30	1.88
530	12	2.26	473	24	5.07
670	9	1.34	1206	34	2.82
1384	36	2.60	674	23	3.41
53,975 Words	**Total negotiations = 938**	**Average ratio of negotiation / 100 words = 2.00**	**43,247 Words**	**Total negotiations = 1193**	**Average ratio of negotiation / 100 words = 2.99**
Chat in English			**Chat in Spanish**		

APPENDIX III

E-MAIL

Pairs of Students	**Words**	**Negotiations**	**Ratio of negotiation/100 words**
Adriana-Vipra	1671	4	0.24
Alberto -Sarah	3279	7	0.21
Anabel- Nicole	5367	38	0.71
Anabella-Melissa	2812	16	0.57
Ana- Emma	2205	9	0.41
Ana Paula- Marshall	6824	98	1.44
Josefina-Brian	1955	2	0.10
Jorge-Sarah	3555	22	0.62
Claudia- Amy	5195	21	0.40
Denise-Heather	1810	38	2.10
Eugenia- Casey	9723	85	0.87
Florencia-Amishi	2815	6	0.21
Gisela-Liz	4059	14	0.34
Gisela- Matt	4434	19	0.43
Graciela-Emily	1939	1	0.05
Guillermo-Virginia	4163	11	0.26
Ivana-Liz-Yian	4987	30	0.60
Laura- Mukil	3045	25	0.82
Lorena- Olga	3951	19	0.48
María Laura- Jessica	2215	6	0.27
María Laura- Lauren	3847	7	0.18
María Victoria-Anna	3338	22	0.66
Mariana - Ashwrini	2331	3	0.13
Mariana- Julia	1997	3	0.15
Mariana- Melissa	1786	18	1.01
Mariana- Theodore	6051	34	0.56
Mariela- David	8478	72	0.85
Mariela- Lauren	3849	19	0.49

Marisol- Stacey	4522	33	0.73
May- Jeremy	3797	21	0.55
Mercedes-Tiffani	4887	34	0.70
Nancy- David	2924	8	0.27
Noelia- Paul	7671	27	0.35
Romina-Emmy	2456	5	0.20
Romina- Gloria	6062	3	0.05
Romina- Marc	4042	2	0.05
Silvia- Alana	2663	17	0.64
Valeria-Rey	1710	1	0.06
Yanina-Kate	6349	65	1.02
Angeles- Gene	1504	6	0.40
Juan Pablo-Jenna	7645	62	0.81
Yanina- Paul	1104	6	0.54
M Paula - Zach	4199	14	0.33
Paola-Jonathan	1698	10	0.59
Totals for e-mail	**Words = 170,914**	**Negotiations = 963**	**Average ratio of negotiation/100 words= 0.51**

APPENDIX IV

E-Mail exchange project Questionnaire for learners of Spanish at Rice.

Thank you very much for participating in the e-mail project this semester. I appreciate your hard work in keeping up with the e-mail exchange and sending me all the correspondence. I hope your hard work was rewarded with an increased knowledge of Spanish language and Argentine culture, improvement on your ability to communicate in Spanish and possibly a new friend in Buenos Aires. And of course you will all receive a participation grade for the class. ☺ I hope to do this again and I would like some feedback from you to help me organize the project for future classes. Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions.

Throughout the fall semester you wrote e-mail to your e-pal and four IM conversations in both English and Spanish.

1. Rank these methods of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) from most favorite (1) to least favorite (4).

____ e-mail exchange in English
_____ e-mail exchange in Spanish
____ Instant Messaging conversation in English
____ Instant Messaging conversation in Spanish

2. Which of the two methods of communicating did you like best and why?

3. Which did you like least and why?

4. Do you think the CMC with B.A. students helped your Spanish? In what way?

5. Would you like to participate in a project like this again in another Spanish class?

6. Do you have any suggestions to improve the project? (Any aspect of the project.)

APPENDIX V

Some Rice students' answers to questionnaire:

Opinion of IM

- "It is much easier to get a real conversation going on IM than anywhere else."
- "I enjoyed the instant messaging because the feedback on my grammar was immediate. Also I was forced to think without a dictionary."
- "MSN (IM), we could talk more."
- "IM. It seems to be the most effective and challenging mode of communication." "I liked IM because it had by far the highest learning curve."
- "IM in Spanish because I picked up informal Spanish and really felt like we were communicating."

- "I liked the IM because it was like having an actual conversation and you had to think of what to say on a whim. E-mails also were good because you can take time to compose something, but IM was more fun."
- "The IM conversation was the best because it most closely replicated an actual conversation."
- "I liked both the e-mails and the IM. The e-mails were helpful, but I also liked IM because it was more personal and I liked talking to my e-pal."

Opinion of e-mail

- "E-mail allowed me to compose and look up words to make better sentences."
- "E-mail because it allowed me to practice my Spanish and learn about the Argentinean culture. It was also the most time effective".
- "E-mail. It was fun to talk to my partner and was easy because I could do it whenever I wanted to."
- "E-mail because I could do it when I had time and I could write about what I wanted to and take my time getting the grammar right."
- "E-mailing in Spanish because I could do it on my own time and it was great practice in grammar and vocabulary."

Some UTN students' answers to questionnaire:

Opinion of IM

- "I loved IM conversation in English because it provided me with a lot of opportunities to practise and improve my language learning."
- "IM because you can follow a talk without losing your idea."
- "IM because you get immediate feedback."
- "IM because I did not have to wait days for my e-pal to answer."
- "IM because it is like a face to face chat."
- "I found MSN best because I learnt colloquial language"
- " IM was very interesting because I could learn many new words and idiomatic expressions."
- " With IM you can interact directly, and you can change ideas, correct yourself as soon as the other person needs clarification."
- " I liked IM because it is fast and very realistic."

- "IM because very few times I have the chance to talk in an informal environment with informal expressions."

Opinion of E-mail

- "Because I could do it without an established timetable."
- "Because I could administer time. I answered the e-mails late at night."
- "Because I write when I do have the time to do so."
- "Because it helped me improve my writing."
- "Because it was profitable. I learned many useful expressions."
- "What I liked most was the e-mail exchange because we interacted every day.
- With chat it was difficult to arrange timetables."

THE INTERNET AND ESP

ENHANCING COLLABORATION THROUGH CHAT IN ESP: A CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Text and/or voice chat rooms are ideal spaces for interaction, collaboration and negotiation of meaning. However, they have not been fully exploited in language teaching. This study shows the results of a conversation analysis of 24 transcriptions of text chat sessions where architecture students were carrying out collaborative group work. The researchers wanted to discover the discourse patterns and conversational strategies used by the students in this online context to study their possible repercussions in English learning. The results suggest that the students were building the kind of discourse that is thought to lead to language learning.

Introduction

Have you thought about the benefits chats can offer our English teachers and language learners? Would you like to know how to include chats as one of your tools to share information with your students, have them work collaboratively and interact with one another, help them engage in real tasks, promote negotiation of meaning, focus on their own learning, and practice the target language? In this article, we will relate our experience using chats in our English for Architecture class at the Simón Bolívar University (USB) in Caracas, Venezuela, using data collected for the doctoral dissertation of one of the co-authors (González, 2004).

The aim was to incorporate an online unit in the last level of the English for Architecture courses at the USB with the intention of studying the ramifications of the use of different web tools in the learning of English. We decided to incorporate chats as part of the unit because they allow for group work, resemble regular face-to-face (f2f) conversations (González, 2003), and give students freedom to express themselves at their own pace. In addition, conversations can be automatically saved in the form of transcripts for further analysis in class and for research purposes.

During the implementation period, we noticed the online chat sessions were fundamental in the accomplishment of the course objectives, and the students also reported this in their self-evaluations and unit evaluation. Therefore, in this article, we will concentrate on the analysis of the chatlogs.

Context of the study

The online unit was designed for 56 students of architecture in their third year of studies at the university and their last English course (Level 6). Their level of English varied between lower and upper intermediate. One of the units of this last course is dedicated to the topic of Modernism and that made us think a focus on modernism in Valencia, Spain might interest our students. The aim of the unit was to describe the characteristics of Modern Architecture in Valencia, and the final task was to write an essay on the characteristics of the modernist architecture found in that city.

In this blended course (50% in the f2f classroom and 50% online), there was an online moderator in Spain, while two other teachers were the f2f facilitators in Venezuela.

The training of the f2f teachers was itself an example of e-learning, considering that it was delivered through chat and e-mail. Using these tools, the f2f teachers learned about the different programs and applications needed to run streaming videos, carry out chats, send voice messages, write summaries, share images and descriptions, and write journals and essays in online environments.

At the same time, we booked a computer lab with Internet access for our classes, and designed the 7-week online unit. The class activities, materials, and assessment procedures were very carefully planned by the e-instructor and later revised by the f2f teachers in Venezuela. A Yahoo Group (YG) was created to be the asynchronous communication center, and a web site (http://www.geocities.com/dygonza/unitindex.html) was designed as a portal.

Two international colleagues, from Argentina and Denmark respectively, were invited to observe our online classes. They joined our Yahoo Group, participated in some of the chat sessions in the YG, and had access to all the teacher-created material as well as to the students' work.

Implementation

The first activity in our online unit was a diagnostic survey to detect the students' skills in the use of web tools. The results showed that many students did not have Internet access and had no experience in the use of web tools for academic purposes. Fortunately, our students were able to overcome the technological barrier through clear instruction and systematic training in the computer lab.

In this preparatory week, the students got acquainted with the Yahoo Group and the procedures for the online unit, and expressed their expectations in a journal entry. The students also watched a video about Modernism in Barcelona, Spain, to activate their previous knowledge on the topic. (They already knew about Gaudi, the major representative of Modernism in Spain, from their Theory of Architecture content course). Pre-viewing and post-viewing interactive exercises and activities were designed using Hot Potatoes to introduce new vocabulary and structures presented in the video.

The use of chat, for collaborative learning, was carried out in weeks 2 to 5 through a jigsaw reading activity where each participant in a group had a piece of

information unknown to the others and fundamental to the final task. Each group was made up of 5 students with different levels of English and different levels in their knowledge of architecture. In the Yahoo Group we had posted a folder for each group with five different illustrated descriptions of buildings in Valencia (for example, the one at http://www.geocities.com/dyg_usb/id3126/group_5a.html). Each group participant had to choose one building, and write a summary highlighting the most typical characteristics as well as the architectural elements found in each.

With their summaries, the students got together in a chat conference, to share and discuss the elements and features identified in each of their buildings. At the end of the chat, each group was to start a collaborative summary about the characteristics of the 5 buildings discussed. They used e-mail to circulate their summaries until they were satisfied with the results.

The next step was to form other groups and participate in a second chat activity. These second groups comprised one student from each of the previous groups. Each member came to the new groups with all the data they had gathered in the collaborative summary. As a whole, each group had information on the 25 buildings selected for the unit, which had to be discussed to get at the general characteristics of Valencia Modernist architecture as expressed in those buildings. An illustration of the group formation will probably make the process easier to understand: http://daf4.free.fr/wiaoc/groupformation.html .

Using the information obtained in the chat, and as an individual assignment, students had to write a final essay describing the characteristics of Modernism in Valencia. (See this example: http://daf4.free.fr/wiaoc/IndEssay-Sandra.doc).

Week 6 was dedicated to overall assessment, since each activity had been evaluated during its implementation, with the use of different rubrics and checklists. Students filled in an online questionnaire to evaluate their learning gains in each of the completed activities: journals, chat, summaries, online consulting hours, etc. They also evaluated their participation in group work: http://dafnegonzalez.com/id3-124-05/content/teamwork-eval.htm. The whole unit was evaluated with a journal entry where students answered questions such as:

- What did you like about the online unit?

- What problems did you find?
- Did you find enough help from the face-to-face and the online teachers? Explain.
- Was this unit helpful to practice your English? Why?
- What do you think about the content of the unit?
- What else would you like to say about this unit?

Finally, the students completed a poll about the characteristics of Modernist architecture in Valencia in the Yahoo Group. It was a checklist where they had to select those characteristics present in the buildings they had been discussing. In a nutshell, the chats were the core tasks of the unit, but it is important to note that they were leading up to the final task and not just isolated activities.

The methodology

The research as a whole was a combination of Case Study (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) and Action Research (Burns, 1999). The case study was the unit with all of its components (students, teachers, materials, external observers, web tools, political, social and economical contextual variables, etc), and the action research was the implementation of the online unit per se. It was carried out in a natural context: the classroom environment with intact groups. It was collaboratively oriented since the design involved different people, and the research approach was mainly qualitative with some quantitative information in the form of percentages to reinforce the results of the qualitative analysis.

The study included the analysis of all the activities completed during the unit, f2f teachers' reports, the reports sent by the two external observers, and a conversational analysis of the chatlogs The objectives of the chatlogs analysis were in the first place, to discover the patterns and conversational strategies used by students while chatting online; and secondly, to examine any possible effects on English language learning. In this article we will focus on the conversation analysis of the chatlogs.

Analyzing

The conversations in a chat session, where students meet to carry out a structured task, are not very different from regular f2f conversations which had originally been the

target of Conversation Analysis (CA). Given the nature of the chat as a social interactive space, and since CA is a method used to analyze different discourse exchange systems (Schegloff et al., 2002), we thought it would be an appropriate method to analyze our transcripts.

CA describes the speech exchange system, the distribution of power, and the structure and sequence of the conversation. There are different speech-exchange systems such as regular f2f conversations, interviews, business meetings, classroom speech, and others; and among those, each system has different structures for the organization of turn-taking while taking part in a conversation (Markee, 2000). Other authors state that ordinary conversation is considered the basic form of exchange since it provides space for equalitarian distribution of power among the speakers, and, according to Markee, this kind of situation would be the ideal context for language learning to take place, since this equalitarian context tends to promote negotiation of meaning which is a paramount element in language learning. Markee adds that in the classroom we can only observe this happen in group work, so we thought the chat would be a suitable medium to observe how discourse was used by students in this environment, and if there had been the four kinds of negotiation of meaning described by Markee. In other words, we wanted to study the discourse in this new virtual environment.

Data Analysis

We checked that our transcripts met the requirements needed for CA (Heritage 1989): **structure** (given by the tasks assigned), **context,** and **naturalness** (this is the kind of task our students usually accomplish in the f2f classes). They also met the requirements of heuristic research (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989): **data validity** (saved in the form of transcripts that would be available and accessible to the researchers at any moment), and. **reliability** since they are used in their original form with no editions or changes, and we used all the transcripts for our analysis.

To analyze the transcripts, we first read all the chatlogs to find common patterns and differences in the structure of the group work carried out by the students. Then, we analyzed the sequence of the transactions, negotiation of meaning, turn taking, topic initiation and termination, and other aspects that we found could be relevant for the study.

At the same time, we were paying attention to how our findings in this new media could be related to regular f2f conversations regarding the distribution of power, which is ultimately the aim of conversation analysis.

Aspects highlighted by the analysis:

General structure and sequence of the interaction

- Most of the typical principles of a speech exchange system of an ordinary conversation were used. The students used strategies to overcome the restrictions imposed by the medium.
- The structure of the interaction is characterized by defined sequences; i.e. an opening of social actions (welcome and greetings), work logistics, and discussion of the content topic, sprinkled by social and technological threads, or logistics of the work, but always returning to the topic in discussion. Finally, the farewells are direct, and, on very few occasions, students anticipate they are leaving the chat (pre-farewells), for example: "*I need to go*".

Power and autonomy

- There was an equal distribution of power among the participants. We think this was so because they needed the information that others had in order to complete their task. When one student was not contributing, the others asked him or her to share the information needed.
- Students exhibited autonomy in solving the technological and academic problems they confronted. The last resource was the teacher.
- When the teachers intervened in the conversation without having been asked for help, they were ignored. The students let them know directly or indirectly that they had everything under control, and in some cases the teachers were informed that their intervention was interrupting the thread of the discussion.

Turn taking distribution

- The turn-taking was free. The students did not have a sequence nor a predetermined extension.
- Turns were not pre-assigned, so strategies of assignment of turns were used. Students indicated the name of the person to whom a comment or question was

directed; otherwise, the comment or question went to the complete group, so that anyone could take the floor.

- The distribution of turns was equitably distributed, and organized through a natural process of passing the turn to others, or individuals taking their turns as they thought necessary.
- No student participated more than the others, and the teacher-student rate of talk shows that students held the power of the conversation. For a total of 4,798 turns, students took 88.04% (4,224 turns), while teachers participated only 11.96% (574 turns; see the table and pie chart at http://dafnegonzalez.com/pics/turns-table.jpg and http://dafnegonzalez.com/pics/turns-pie.jpg).

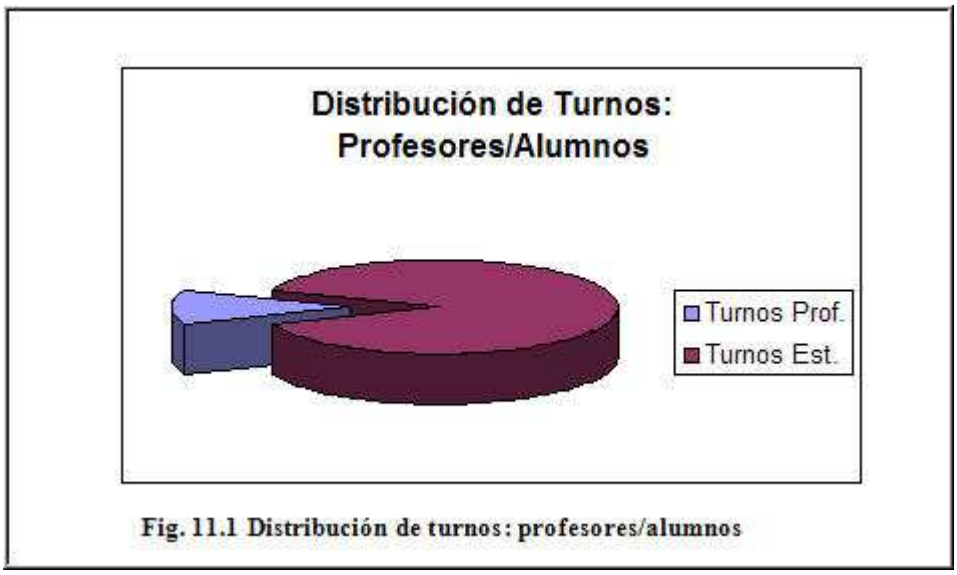

Fig. 11.1 Distribución de turnos: profesores/alumnos

Coherence and Cohesion

- Different strategies were used to establish and maintain the coherence and cohesion of the discourse. (Extracts taken from the chatlogs can be found at http://daf4.free.fr//wiaoc/extracts-chatlogs.html).
- There was the presence of the regular structure of an ordinary conversation in adjacency pairs (Sacks, 1995), but not with the regularity that would have been observed between two people in an f2f conversation. The nature of parallel and not serial interaction observed in chats often prevents adjacency pairs from being

observed from one turn to another.

- Participants made use of different paralinguistic strategies to overcome the restrictions of the medium. We saw the use of uppercase letters, punctuation signs, onomatopoeias, icons and emoticons to express diverse feelings and moods, as well as to stress or emphasize their discourse.

Negotiation of meaning

- Students negotiated meaning regarding: *language* (unknown words), *technology* (how to go about the use of the tools), *content* (architectural content) and *logistics* (the processes to carry out the tasks).
- Markee (2000) mentions 4 levels of negotiation of meaning, depending on how many turns away from the problem the repair occurs. First position repair (a self correction), is not essential for language learning, according to Markee. Second position repair is where the communication problem is solved in the turn immediately after it was presented. Third position repair is resolved in the third turn of a repair sequence, fourth position repair in the fourth, and so on. Markee says that fourth position repair is almost never found in classroom situations. In contrast, we found all 4 levels of negotiation of meaning to be present in our transcripts, those of second and third position being the most frequent.
- Students made very little use of the mother tongue. It was used only to translate a term, or to call the attention of a participant who was not, according to the group, following the norms that they had implicitly set.

Content, language and technology

- The topic under discussion and the task to carry out were the central axes of the interactions. Participants concentrated on the architectural content, and English was the means to do it. They only concentrated on the language when there was a communication breakdown, and they immediately looked for a solution. Grammatical errors or misspellings were not taken into consideration in most of the cases. The students' interest in the message was paramount; thus, they behaved like authentic audiences as characterized by the literature in language acquisition.
- When students considered one topic had been sufficiently discussed, they

introduced a new one, as opposed to in an f2f classroom setting where the teacher is the one who introduces new topics.

- The chat as a technological support was the most appropriate medium to carry out online collaborative group work because of the immediacy of the feedback which allowed for negotiation of meaning to take place in a natural way and for the ease with which transcripts could be later analyzed without losing any detail of the transactions.

In general, we can say that students collaboratively built up their vocabulary and their knowledge of architecture as if trying to solve a big puzzle in which each student had a piece needed to complete the whole and the chat was the space where the pieces were laid. Students showed in all the transcripts that they spontaneously learned how to interact using the discourse in this new medium.

Conclusions

Through this CA of the chatlogs, we observed how our students took advantage of the structure of the conversations as a resource that allowed them to describe, discuss and understand the characteristics of Valencia modernist architecture using the target language in a chat.

We realized how, with little teacher participation, students could start a sound discussion and complete their tasks solving each problem they found through the use of the target language and technology. The students final compositions evidenced how group discussions through chat contributed to vocabulary building and the acquisition of new knowledge.

We interpret the results of this study to suggest that student interaction based on the performance of small-group tasks through chat sessions is quite close to the open organization and characteristics of regular f2f conversations. The students' previous knowledge was activated and negotiation of meaning took place throughout our data. Our observations could be of great interest not only to those specialized in language teaching but also to researchers interested in the development of theories of learning

since the data analyzed presupposes the construction of the kind of balanced discourse that is thought to promote language learning.

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Editor's notes:

This presentation was made as a regular session at theWebheads in Action Online Convergence on November 18, 2005.

- The URL for the presentation is here: http://daf4.free.fr/wiaoc/chatpres.html.
- The session took place in the Elluminate presentation room at Learning Times. A recording was made and can be heard at http://home.learningtimes.net/learningtimes?go=1042112.

INTERNET LESSON PLAN

LIVE INTERVIEWS IN VOICE CHAT WITH INTERMEDIATE ESL STUDENTS

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Introduction

Some ESL students have little experience in using the Internet, but as this article will show, this need not be a deterrent if the students wish to use the Internet to practice listening and speaking in real situations.Tapping into a community of practice of language educators, the author found partners from around the world, and her students interviewed them using Yahoo Messenger voice chat. This article explains the equipment needed and the step-by-step process in each lesson building up to the interviews and the follow up.

The voice chat partners were all Webheads (http://webheads.info/), a group with over 400 members who are mostly ESL/EFL professionals teaching in various parts of the world. The Webheads are a community of practice that meets informally throughout the year both synchronously and asynchronously to practice using free Internet applications and to develop pedagogically sound techniques to further their students' English skills by using these applications. Interested professionals are welcome to join the group at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/evonline2002_webheads/.

Rationale: This instructor chose to teach Internet skills in such a way as to enable her students to practice oral language on the Internet. The purpose was to make practical use of the learning processes involved in order to provide more meaningful activities for the students. Using the Internet to connect students live to other people elsewhere in the world was deemed beneficial because of the difficulty in arranging for partners to come into the classroom to speak with students face to face.

Level: intermediate level adult students
Time: 5 classes of 75 minutes

Aims: The students

- learn how to sign up for a Yahoo ID
- use voice and text chat in Yahoo Messenger
- use voice chat to ask an interviewee a list of predetermined questions.
- write down the responses to the questions
- share individual responses in a class discussion

Resources/materials:

- A classroom where every student has a computer connected to the Internet
- Data projector and web camera connected to the instructor's computer
- Students all have computer headsets
- All computers need to have Yahoo Messenger set up on them, free from: http://messenger.yahoo.com/messenger/download/.
- Instructions about using Yahoo Messenger:
    1. Getting a Yahoo ID - http://www.geocities.com/edtec2002/tesol-2004/ym-id.htm
    2. Logging in and adding contacts - http://www.geocities.com/edtec2002/tesol-2004/ym.htm
    3. Using voice chat - http://www.geocities.com/edtec2002/tesol-2004/ym3.htm

Possible problems:

- The Internet could be down on the day scheduled for the interviews.
- Sometimes not everyone can hear and/or speak in voice chat, and some participants have to use only text chat.

Procedure:

I. First 75-minute class – set up Yahoo IDs

1. Prior to class, print out the instructions for **Getting a Yahoo ID** - http://www.geocities.com/edtec2002/tesol-2004/ym-id.htm.
2. During class, have one student come to the instructor's computer station and go through the steps of getting a Yahoo ID while the other students follow along on

the handout. One difficulty that often arises is choosing an ID since Yahoo rarely accepts the first one a student chooses, and it's good for students to be aware of this. Emphasize that students must **write down their username and password**. I encourage students to use the same password for everything, but explain that they often don't have the same username. Usually, I provide a blank chart, where students can list all the usernames and passwords they need during the course.

Web page	**Username**	**password**
ACCL & WebMail http://webmail.azwestern.edu/	(initials and number)	
Student blog at http://www.blogger.com	username: URL:	
Yahoo Messenger	I.D. =	
Web Advisor for grades http://webadvlive.azwestern.edu:8080/WebAdvisor/WebAdvisor		

3. After this, all the students work at their computers to set up their usernames and passwords.
4. After they fill in their username in the chart above, they also type it into a chart on the instructor's computer, so she will have a list of usernames to provide to the class later. Because the screen from this computer is projected onto a large screen at the front of the room, the students can see the usernames of the other students as they finish.
5. When several students have finished, I show them how to **add contacts** - http://www.geocities.com/edtec2002/tesol-2004/ym.htm and **start chatting** - http://www.geocities.com/edtec2002/tesol-2004/ym3.htm with another student.
6. Thus, students who finish more quickly can practice voice or text messaging with anyone else who also has a username set up.
7. This normally takes the whole 75-minute class for everyone in a class of 16 students to finish setting up a Yahoo ID and begin practicing with one another.

II. Second 75-minute class – add contacts and practice with voice chat

1. Prior to class, photocopy the list of Yahoo IDs and the pair-work questions and answers described below, and hand them out during the class.
2. Using the instructor computer, again show students how to add contacts and assign them to add everyone in the class including the instructor.
3. Discuss the meaning of "Accepting" and "Denying" a contact since students will receive a message from every student asking to add him or her to the list of contacts. I emphasize "Denying" anyone who is not on our class list unless it is someone the student knows personally outside of class.
4. After this, the students participate in in-class practice with an assigned partner on the opposite side of the room.
    - Students on the left get a pink paper with questions 1-5 and answers 6-10.
    - Students on the right get a green paper with answers 1-5 and questions 6-10.
    - Students first adjust their headsets to hear each other well and then negotiate questions and answers using voice chat. (See **Practice 1A** at http://geocities.com/edtec2002/publications/ym-practice1a.htm and **Practice 1B** at http://geocities.com/edtec2002/publications/ym-practice1b.htm.)
    - The students write down their responses and turn them in.
5. Usually, it's best to provide another unrelated activity for those who finish early.

Between 2nd & 3rd class – Instructor sets up partners for the students to interview

1. At least a week in advance of the date when students will interview their online partners, make definite plans to determine who exactly will be available at your class time. In the case of the Webheads, **send a message** (http://geocities.com/edtec2002/publications/w-message.htm) to their Yahoo group including date, time, and description of the interviews as well as asking those who will be available to respond. Expect responses in 2-3 days, and accept as many as you need to make groups of 2-4 students in your class.
2. Make up groups of 2-4 students, including students with strong and weak Internet skills in each group. Make a seating chart, so that students within a group sit close together on the day of the interviews.

3. Make up a list of the groups showing which students are grouped together and their interviewees, as in the example below. (All names and IDs in the chart below are fake.)

Group	**Student name**	**Yahoo ID**	**online guest name**	**Yahoo ID**
1	Josephina Jose	josephina278 jdrodrig	Robert	rr263
2	Maria Maribel	meperez703 mb7868	Andrea	andrea2006
3	Luisa Jaime	llxi21 jav200915	Harold	harrybt301

4. Send this information to the participating online guests, and make copies for your students.
5. Ask the online guests to:
   - add their student partners as contacts prior to day of the interviews
   - wait for all student partners to arrive in class and login before inviting them to a voice conference
   - show their web cameras if available
   - contact the moderator by text chat if there are problems
   - email the moderator their comments about the interviews afterwards
   - save the log of any text chat, take a few screenshots, and send these to the moderator afterwards

III. Third 75-minute class – practice with voice conferences

1. Prior to class, photocopy a list of open-ended personal questions such as What's your name? Where are you from, What high school did you go to, What's your favorite food, etc. Provide space for A, B, C, and D answers. (See **Practice 2** - http://geocities.com/edtec2002/publications/ym-practice2.htm.)
2. Divide the class into groups of 3-4 students, where half sit at computers on one side of the room, and the other(s) sit on the opposite side.

3. Demonstrate how to start a **voice conference** (http://www.geocities.com/edtec2002/tesol-2004/ym3.htm) as opposed to a one-on-one chat. Emphasize choosing one person as a leader to invite the others. Otherwise group members might end up in different voice conferences. The students must then take turns asking and answering questions till they have all the information about each person in their group. For example, A is always Maria's responses, B is Jose's, C is Martha's, and D is Javier's.
4. Students write down all the responses and turn them in when finished.
5. Hand out the **list of interview questions** (http://geocities.com/edtec2002/publications/ym-int-questions.htm) for the online guests, and have students practice reading them out loud to each other. (It's also possible to have students spend a class making up their own questions).
6. Advise students about the interviews in the upcoming class. (If they are absent, there will not be an opportunity to make it up.) When they arrive in class, they need to:
    - go to their assigned seats and login to Yahoo Messenger.
    - accept any new contact.
    - wait for a an online guest to invite them to a voice conference.

IV. Fourth 75-minute class – interview with online guest

1. The instructor arrives to class as early as possible and logs in to Yahoo Messenger, so the online guests can see that she is ready to start. She sets the instructor computer to show on the screen in front of the class, so she can see any text messages that the online guests send her asking for assistance.
2. Students come in, take assigned seats, login in, accept new contacts, and wait till all their partners arrive.
3. Each online guest invites his/her student partners to a voice conference.
4. During the first 10 minutes, the instructor may need to:
    - make adjustments in groups because of absentees.
    - help students adjust the sound on their headsets
    - get all members of one group into the same voice conference

5. The instructor can now watch the joy on students' faces as they listen and speak online *in English* with people from all over the world.
6. Students turn in the responses to the interview questions at the end of class.

V. Fifth 75-minute class – Follow-up

1. Put up a large world map if one is not already in the room, or show one from the Internet.
2. Return the students' responses and have the students mark the locations of their interviewee on the map.
3. Share information from the interviews, especially concerning the time of day and weather.
4. Show the students examples of text chat logs and screenshots—either saved by the instructor or participating online guests. **Screenshots and photos of students participating** are shown at http://www.azwestern.edu/modern_lang/esl/cjones/esl_internet/screenshot.htm, and an example of a **text chat log** is shown at

http://geocities.com/edtec2002/publications/chatlog-s05.htm.

5. Share individual experiences in connecting with the online guests. For example:
   - How easy or difficult was it to get everyone in your group in the same voice conference?
   - Could you hear everyone well? If not, what did you do about it?
   - Did you have to do any part of the interview in text chat?
6. Have students write blog entries or short compositions about how they felt about the experience; for example: http://www.azwestern.edu/modern_lang/esl/cjones/esl_internet/st-comments3.htm:

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2005

Interviewing a Webhead

I talked with Sasa in Slovenia. In the interview, I liked to know about Sasa who live in other country. Also, I liked to learn about other county. My partner and I didn't have problem getting connected, but I asked many times for spelling. Every one in my group got to ask questions. When she described interesting places to visit in her country, it was the most interesting part of the interview.

POSTED BY LIZBET AT 7:57 AM 0 COMMENTS

7. Show them the comments taken from email messages from the participating online guests. http://www.azwestern.edu/modern_lang/esl/cjones/esl_internet/w-comments3.htm

Benefits

The students benefit from these lessons when using language authentically and communicatively with genuine English-speaking partners.

- Students are thrilled.
- They use real communication.
- They don't feel shy or inhibited.

Conclusion

Voice chat interviews between ESL students and online guests are very rewarding experiences for everyone involved when they are well organized. Students learn new Internet skills as well as practice speaking and listening in English. Online guests may acquire new ideas for the use of voice chat in their classrooms or professions. Students experience the thrill of communicating with other people outside their physical location while online guests enjoy the pleasure of providing that experience. Over the course of

four semesters, everyone involved has provided highly positive feedback in spite of minor setbacks with sound and/or voice technology.

Editor's notes:

This presentation was made as a regular session at theWebheads in Action Online Convergence on November 18 and then repeated on November 19, 2005.

- The URL for the presentation is: http://www.azwestern.edu/modern_lang/esl/cjones/esl_internet/interviews2.htm.
- The first session took place in the Elluminate presentation room at Learning Times. A recording was made and can be heard at http://home.learningtimes.net/learningtimes?go=1042104.
- The session was repeated in the same venue and the recording of the repeat session can be found at http://home.learningtimes.net/learningtimes?go=1042161.

A WORD FROM A TECHIE

VIDEO ONLINE

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and

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Abstract

As media on the Internet becomes cheaper, faster, and easier to use, teachers are increasingly turning to video as a means to enhance the experience of the language classroom. This paper focuses in particular on two important areas of video-based teaching and learning: authentic content and student productions, and the approaches that

work with collaborative multimedia projects. The convergence of technology and pedagogy is producing highly motivated students who can express their creativity and stretch their higher cognitive abilities.

Introduction

Language teachers are increasingly finding video of importance in language instruction, both as a resource for authentic input and as a technology to foster interaction. As video recording has gone digital, it has become ever cheaper and ever simpler to operate cameras, create movies, and mount them on the Internet for easy access by learners. Although video is still largely thought of as the viewing of major motion pictures by the whole class (which is relatively passive input), teachers are discovering a wealth of readily accessible authentic materials on the Internet, often in very short recordings, that may be repurposed for language learning, and even created by students themselves through collaborative learning projects, thus providing significant interaction with and through language. (On the need for interaction and output, see Long, 1983; Pica & Doughty, 1985; van Lier, 1998; etc.; for more on input and interaction in multimedia distance learning, see Ariza & Hancock, 2003.) The convergence of tools, technologies, and pedagogies is producing highly motivated students who find themselves stretching their cognitive abilities. This presentation will consider some of the many ways that teachers are using Web tools and software to bring video to their students.

Among the many advantages of video online are:

- *Authenticity:* Learners may observe and listen to native speaker input with genuine accents, posture, and gestures, talking about situations, emotions, and activities that interest them.
- *Individualization:* As tagging of audio and video objects develops, thus allowing a means to more easily find multimedia content, learners may search video databases for subjects that appeal to them personally.
- *Autonomy:* Learners may access videos online at any time and as frequently as they wish, obviating the necessity for teachers to cart equipment around and take up time for viewing only once by the whole class.

- *Culture:* Learners can learn to understand others' cultural assumptions and question their own as they are revealed visually through authentic, and in the best instances, spontaneous, activities.
- *Collaborative communication:* With the addition of student productions, interaction can be encouraged both formally (for example in script-writing and project presentation) and informally (team work within project groups)

It should be made clear from the outset that *authentic materials* are those where interlocutors are talking as they would in true settings about ideas that genuinely interest them, thus representing how speakers of a language would communicate with each other naturally or spontaneously. *Semi-authentic materials* would include those prepared in Special English, that is, slower and simpler than native speaker usage (as for example, in a VOA radio broadcast), or professional films, where actors pretend to speak and behave in an authentic manner, even though the language and behavior observed may not be totally true to life. Both authentic and semi-authentic materials have value, of course, for language practice.

Among the ways language teachers generally use videos for classroom or independent practice are the following:

1. Showing videos in class, perhaps trailers or small segments of a major motion picture, with accompanying grammar and comprehension activities. In most instances, teachers will have to prepare the lesson plans and exercises themselves. However, some archives of ready-made lessons related to feature films may be found by Googling "movie lesson plan" and/or searching for "lesson plan" plus the name of the specific film. (See *English-Trailers* for a site with pre-made lessons.)
2. Asking students to go online to watch content news or informative shows on the Internet, for example at:
    - *VOANews.com* (Voice of America)
    - PBS's *Video Search* (Public Broadcasting Service, with related help in lesson creation at *TeacherSource*)
    - *BBC Home* (British Broadcasting Corp)

- the Discovery Channel's many content branches, which include natural science (*Discovery School*) and culture (*Global Education Partnership*)
- The History Channel's *History.com*, which includes links to other sites for biography and the entertainment arts
- Major national TV channels in other countries also provide a good source of video for learning a wide variety of foreign languages, and many news stations (for example, CNN San Francisco's *Learning Resources*) prepare lessons based on their broadcasts. Most news and information stations will have a searchable archive.
- Travel sites are another content source, as many have video travelogues, for example, *Tourism Australia*.

3. Using "canned" online lessons with video support, e.g., with actors and scripted content (for example, at *English Bites* or *Living English*), which are based on TV series broadcast on the Asia Pacific Australian Broadcasting Corporation.
4. Using authentic content video online, e.g., real people talking about themselves in video blogs (vlogs), where students may interact with the authors by commenting in writing on their productions; or in reality videos, e.g., the BBC's *Video Nation*, whose archived high quality contents have been created by amateur videographers. However, only a very few sites offer authentic video with prepared lessons, e.g., Marzio's (2006) *Real English*.
5. Assisting students in creating and editing their own videos for class and community presentations or vlogs. The online community *Real English Online* participates annually in a workshop during the Electronic Village Online in order to help teachers with various aspects of video technology; the group also serves during the year as a place for students and teachers to access video on the Internet and discuss its uses. (See Figure 1).

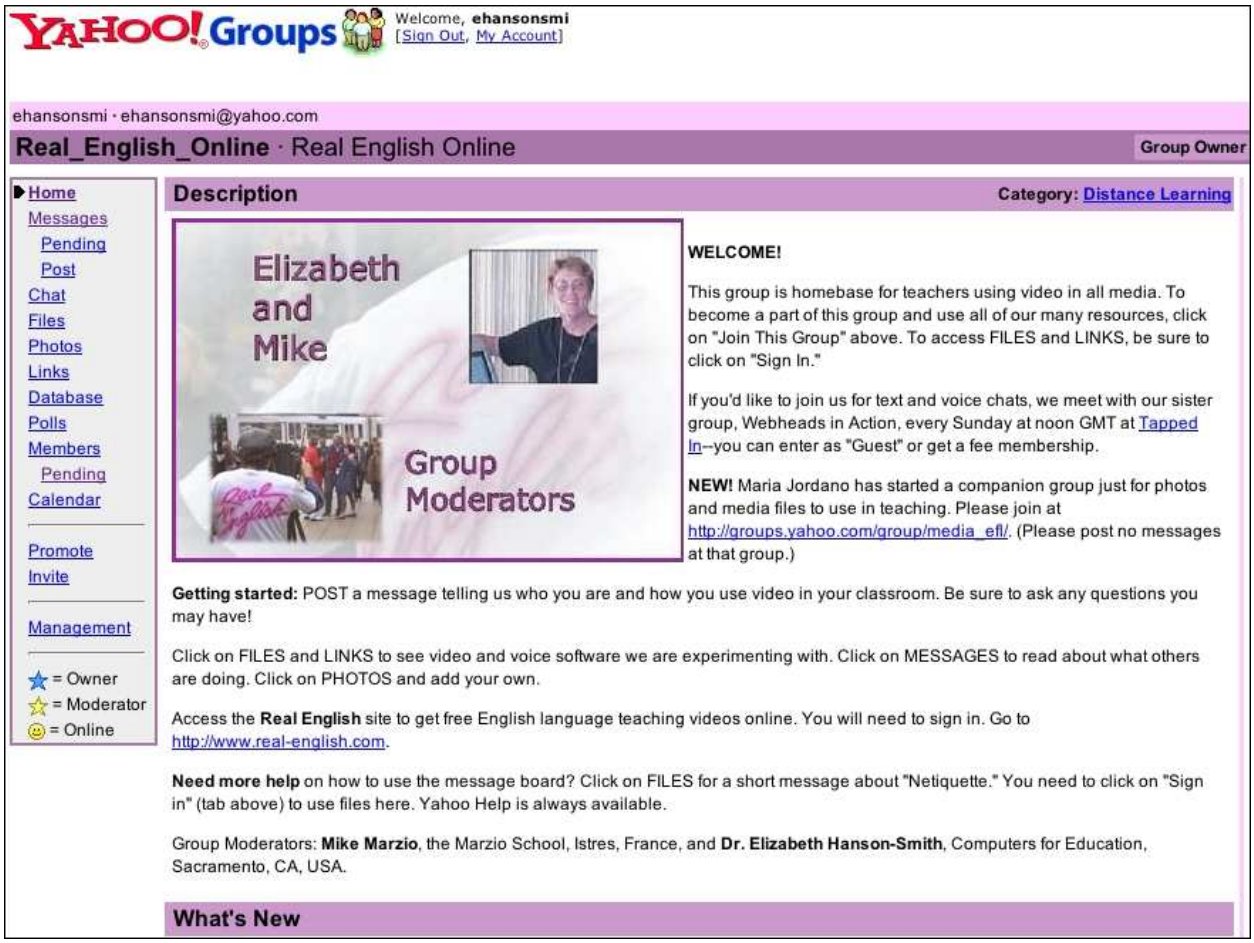

Figure 1. The *Real English Online* Yahoo! Group offers help to teachers and students using video (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Real_English_Online).

The last two of these approaches are of the most interest: *Authentic content video* accurately presents how people speak and manage discourse and social interactions in a variety of dialects and idiolects, and has the additional fascination of "reality television," that is, hearing real people talk about themselves and their lives. Students require a wide variety of input beyond "teacher talk" in the classroom to form the underlying associations that lead to language acquisition and ultimately mastery. Conversely, the last item on the list, *student video production*, offers the opportunity for output well beyond the stilted practice sentences of typical grammar drills. Scripting, storyboarding, rehearsing, filming, editing, and presenting videos all offer students the opportunity to interact verbally and practice a wide variety of cognitive as well as language skills. This type of task-based or project-based learning appeals to a range of learning preferences,

presents the necessity for collaboration (and thus further communicative practice), and replicates the kinds of skills—social, cognitive, linguistic, and technological—that students in the digital age will need. In the following two sections, this paper will concentrate in further detail on these two approaches to using video online.

Authentic video content online

As with feature films, authentic video content online needs to be parsed for its pedagogical usefulness and applicability to the curriculum.

- One very interesting archive of authentic video is the BBC's *Video Nation*, which is searchable by content areas. Videos in the archive are produced by amateurs on such topics as quitting smoking or mountain boarding as a hobby, but the quality is high because the videos are submitted to an editorial staff who make suggestions for revision and regarding appropriateness.
- The *Internet Archive* (IA) and its related vlog, *Ourmedia.org*, accepts contributions from all registered users and allows free use of their searchable archive under Creative Commons copyrights.

Other important sources of authentic video are the hundreds of thousands of vlogs being developed by private individuals around the globe. Among the commercial vlogs and archives (in addition to IA) that provide free storage space are

- *YouTube*, which has important blog features, such as RSS feed, commenting, and searchable tagging;
- *Revver*, which takes a direct advertising approach, attaching commercials to the end of each video;
- *vBlog Central*, an educational non-profit site;
- *filmedworld.com* (see Figure 2), hosted by Nicolas Gromik (a member of *Real English Online* and moderator of a recent Electronic Village Online offering in *Video & Editing 4 ESOL*, which has now become a teachers users group), also offers space to store student-produced video as well as online tutorials and training for video-using teachers and students. Gromik holds an annual contest for the best student videos.

Figure 2. *filmedworld.com* hosts student videos commercial-free and offers an annual contest. http://www.filmedworld.com/. (by permission of N. Gromik.)

As server space becomes cheaper, however, we can expect to see a proliferation of such free resources, and tagging conventions are gradually being established that will allow video searches by content across the Internet. Use of RSS (Really Simple Syndication) with vlogs means that once a good source is found, teachers and students can be updated when new videos appear. At present, searches for video often turn up primarily commercial feature-film Web sites, pornography, advertising of various sorts, or home video so experimental that it has little language learning value, so it is best for teachers to examine sites carefully before deciding to use them with their students.

Naturally, the problem with using authentic video is that teachers will need to develop a set of lesson plans and exercises to make students aware of the semantic and grammatical elements they need to acquire. One relatively easy solution to this problem is to learn how to create Hot Potatoes exercises, which can embed video as the prompt for a variety of quizzes, crossword puzzles, cloze passages, etc. (see Martin [2005] for a good example of a Hot Potatoes cloze exercise using an online trailer for *Lord of the*

Rings). The relatively expensive Dreamweaver program also has a course extension that provides a similar utility, but Hot Potatoes is free if the teacher shares the product, and a large community of language teachers uses this resource (see the *Hot Potatoes Users* group). Marzio has used both software programs extensively and has examples of them at his *Real English* site (see Figure 3). His videos are mainly interviews with native English speakers from all over the world and are a delight to watch for their freshness and spontaneity, even for such simple activities as reciting the alphabet. He has developed a progression of exercises that include vocabulary flashcards, video cloze, and prediction activities. In addition to beginner level social expressions (for example, "Hello. How are you?" and "What's your name?" see Figure 3), the videos include food for thought, such as "What is the best decision you ever made?" Marzio invites teachers to download and use his videos if they share the lessons they have created. In addition, one user group, *Real English Online*, provides teachers with help on lesson plan creation, use of Hot Potatoes, pedagogical questions, and other materials and resources online, as well as advice and assistance for students using video.

Figure 3. Video, "What's your name?" from *Real English*, which offers Hot Potatoes and Dreamweaver vocabulary and grammar exercises based on video interviews on the street with real people. Materials are free, share-and-share-alike. Authentic language and gesture help the learner acquire language. http://www.real-english.com/. (By permission of M. Marzio.)

For a very simple use of authentic content, students may also be asked to view videos without dialogue and write their own or to transcribe dialogue they hear and see. However, authentic content may require a variety of supplemental tools to assist learners in accessing oral texts that are, at least some of the time, beyond their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky's term, 1978); or *i* + 1 (Krashen's terminology characterising linguistic acquisition, 1982). Luckily, such tools are readily available on the Web. *VoyCabulary*, for example, will open a URL as a new page in which all the words are hyperlinked to a dictionary pre-selected by the user, while *Babel Fish Translation* will translate individual words or a block of text pasted into a Web form, an effective way to get a rough idea in one's native language. These tools are helpful at vlog sites where a transcript is available. In addition, as closed captioning of Web-based video becomes more prevalent, we will see a further need for such support tools.

Producing student video

Almost any higher-end digital "still" camera on the market today offers a digital movie feature with recorded sound. Some cell phones are even able to record short movies and transmit them to the Internet wirelessly. Most computers come with software to edit movies (e.g., Windows Movie Maker for PCs and iMovie for Macs), or the software may readily be downloaded from the Internet. Thus, the technological tools are available to make mini-movies easily. For more extensive projects, digital or tape camcorders are preferable, but in starting with smaller, more familiar tools, teachers can begin the process of project-based learning with their students. (See *Project-Based Learning with Multimedia* for examples of how to set up projects, combine curriculum with technology, and assess projects, as well as find links to other PBL sites.) Teachers should always experiment with the technology beforehand, even if technical staff are expected to help. Generally, the following pedagogical model is employed, with each step entailing class and/or group discussion and review by the teacher in order to maximize language learning:

- Viewing a model, e.g., a scene from a film or a news program (*iMovie Examples*, created by students in Illinois, provides excellent models for learners at all levels to examine.)
- Assigning roles (e.g., editor, production manager, sound engineer, etc.) within the project team
- Writing and revising a script
- Creating a storyboard to clear up production problems before taping (see Schulman, 1999, for an online storyboard, to help students get the idea)
- Building a set, collecting props, arranging costumes, etc.
- Rehearsing and taping (without an audience is usually best, and technology is discussed during the process of taping)
- Editing (arranging and cutting scenes and adding transition effects, subtitles, music, voice-over, etc., and editing software is explored during the process)
- Presenting the finished product to an audience of peers and/or community (for example, saving the video to CD or DVD and/or mounting the video at a website or vlog for the purpose of creating an archive for future productions)
- Creating a rubric for formative as well as summative assessment for self, peer, and teacher evaluation

As can be seen from the variety of tasks, video making speaks to many different learning preferences: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, etc. However, productions can start very small, so that both students and teachers can become accustomed to the types of tasks involved. Roger Drury (2006) describes the process in an intermediate oral skills intensive English class where he has pairs of students write and film a 30-second script that "dramatically defines a phrasal verb":

> I start the activity by showing them a conversation from The Godfather [the feature film] to demonstrate editing, they write their script, and I then I check the script for accuracy. I let them film and edit it as they wish; some use [Windows] Movie Maker and some use [Visual] Studio, depending on whether they use their own little cameras or our digi-cam. (Drury, 2006, ¶5, see Figure 4 and the *Phrasal Verb Video Dictionary*)

Figure 4. “Pick up the Tab” (http://web.li.gatech.edu/~rdrury/600/oral/video/pick-up-the-tab.mpg), a student skit to explain the expression, from the *Phrasal Verb Video Dictionary*. http://web.li.gatech.edu/~rdrury/600/oral/video/dictionary.html. (By permission of R. Drury).

The films are then published on Drury’s Website as part of the *Phrasal Verb Video Dictionary*, thus reaching an authentic audience who can repeatedly access the reuseable learning objects. Follow-up and self-evaluation are very important parts of video production. At the end of the course, Drury creates an Academy-Awards-style ceremony in which students vote on the best video production and prepare speeches to present and accept the awards, all of which is also filmed. Watching each other’s videos is further practice in the target items, and all participants receive a CD record (Drury, 2006). Other teachers mount student productions to a Web page (using a free HTML editor such as Mozilla’s Composer), or to vlogs (such as those mentioned above), where others can view and make comments on them. As with other creative projects, it is important to develop - with student input - a rubric to detail desired assessment criteria. (See, e.g., *RubiStar* for online rubric makers for creative projects of various types.)

Screencasts (videos of the mouse movements and other activities on a computer monitor), can also present the opportunity for small-scale student productions that are beneficial both for oral skills and technological or other content development. In one semester, student teachers at the University of Ontario produced 114 *Math Educational Miniclips* to instruct in mathematical principles while learning the screencast technology.

Free tools, such as the multiplatform Screen Recorder, can be easily downloaded and learned through accompanying help files.

For more elaborate kinds of productions, students may want to spend time exploring the features of digital editing software such as Windows Movie Maker or iMovie. However, the process of creating the project is far more important than either total mastery of software tools or even the final product. While the list might be endless, possibilities for productions include, for example:

- Reporting on special events or creating a newscast
- Interviewing a local "celebrity"
- Describing and touring a famous location or tourist attraction in the neighborhood
- Putting on a skit based on familiar social discourse
- Taping the dramatic storytelling of traditional tales (see *Miwok Legend Storytelling*)
- Presenting findings of research in a content/curriculum area
- Instructing in various kinds of technology or other processes, e.g. art work
- Investigating a social or environmental issue

For descriptions of several kinds of audio and video projects and links to their sites, please see Hanson-Smith & al-Othman (2006). A detailed description of video and editing as an interactive language-learning process appears in Gromik (2006, forthcoming).

Help is a click away

Teachers may assume they might be overwhelmed at undertaking a technology-rich project such as video. However, online communities of practice can offer free expertise and a "just-in-time" helping hand as one works through the technology and the processes. Among these communities are the *Hot Potatoes Users* and *Real English Online* groups mentioned earlier, the *Video & Editing 4 ESOL* group for teachers learning the technology of digital video, and the *videoblogging* users' group for those new to vlogs. However, teachers should never underestimate their students' ability to explore technology and use it

creatively. Most teachers report that students are highly motivated to complete projects of real imagination and creativity - and learn language as they use higher order cognitive skills with technology.

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While the above references are to citations in this paper, a more extensive list of references and resource materials may be found at Hanson-Smith (2006) and Hanson-Smith & al-Othman (2006). Marzio continues to expand his Real English site (2006), which holds dozens of free authentic videos (a number of them with prepared exercises), based on interviews with natives from all of the major English-speaking countries.

Editor's notes:

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- The session took place in the Elluminate presentation room at Learning Times. A recording was made and can be heard at http://home.learningtimes.net/learningtimes?go=1042176.