Identifying and Developing

Online Language Teaching Skills: A Case Study

by

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A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Spanish

Approved April 2015 by the
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May 2015

ABSTRACT

Online language learning is becoming increasingly popular with advances in technology

that facilitate the acquisition of language in virtual environments (Duensing et al., 2006).

Much of the recent literature on online foreign language instruction has focused on the

possibilities presented by online technologies but has failed to examine the practical side

of how and by whom online language courses are delivered. Several authors have

published articles on the skills needed to be a successful online language teacher using

empirical approaches (Comas-Quinn, 2011; Ernest et al., 2013; Shelly et al., 2006) and

some focus more on the theoretical discussions (Compton, 2009; Hampel & Stickler,

2005). The current study drew on the existing frameworks in the previous literature to

operationalize and measure the participants' online language teaching skills while they

taught a class online. These participants were graduate student instructors of Spanish at a

large public university (n = 3). Using a case study approach to data analysis (Duff, 2008),

and gathering data through a background questionnaire, pre-and post assessments, bi-

monthly teaching journals, self- and researcher observations, an exit survey and a semi-

structured post-interview, this study investigated how the participants online language

teaching skills, proposed by Hampel and Stickler (2005) and Compton (2009), changed

over the course of them teaching an online language course and the factors that seemed to

influence more or less development in each skill area. Additionally, it compares the main

findings from this study with those found in previous literature and offers

recommendations of how to promote the development and sustainability of these online

language teachers' skills. This study serves as one of the few empirical studies conducted

in the United States that concretely operationalizes and measures through carefully

designed instruments the prescribed online language teaching skills in an effort to gain

insights into what contributes to their development and how to sustain their continued

growth.

To Jorge quien siempre me apoya a seguir mis sueños. Te amo.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Reaching this milestone would not have been possible without the help of many extraordinary people. I wish to acknowledge these individuals here.

First, I must acknowledge my wonderful committee. I would like to thank Dr. Barbara Lafford for her continual support and encouragement throughout this entire process (from the first *semillas* of my thesis to the actual defense) and for having taught me so many things along the way. I would also like to thank Dr. Carla Ghanem for always making time for the big things and the little things and for being such an excellent mentor and role model. Words will never be able to express how thankful I am for your time and dedication. I would also like to thank Dr. Verónica González-López for her feedback and support.

Second, it is of utmost importance that I acknowledge my amazing case study participants. Please know that this could not have been possible without the many hours of volunteered time you gave to me. I appreciate you taking the time to reflect and openly share all of your insights and experiences. I hope that in helping me you have also learned more about yourselves as teachers and individuals. I sincerely thank you for your contributions.

Next, I would like to thank my many supportive colleagues (to name a few: Dr. Andrew Ross, David Parks, Dr. Dulce Estevez, Carmen Scales, Magy, Tanya, Steven, Sergio, Paul) and my wonderful family (Mom, Scott, Ben and Tom) and husband (Jorge). Thank you for your patience and support, for listening to me go on and on about my research even when it did not make sense or you were uninterested, and mostly for believing in me. Your love and support mean more than you know.

Last, I would like to acknowledge several of my undergraduate professors, Dr. Fàtima Cornwall, Dr. Maria Alicia Garza, Dr. Adrian Kane, Dr. Mariah Devereux-Herbeck, Dr. Jason Herbeck, Prof. Luis Eduardo Gómez, Prof. Izaskun Kortazar, Dr. Will Browning, and Dr. David Rubí. Thank you for all being such amazing teachers and, more importantly, human beings. If it had not been for your encouragement, I never would have considered attending graduate school.

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Identifying and Developing Online Language Teaching Skills:

A Case Study

The move towards online language learning is one that has gained prominence in recent years (Duensing et al., 2006). Copious articles have been published attempting to explore this new area of research and to define the "best practices" of online teaching of languages. As with all new fields of research, the studies start out as heuristic and exploratory work before more specific areas of interest can be designated. One of the clearly designated areas of interest emerging in recent literature pertains to the training of online language teachers and the skills that online language teachers need in order to be effective (White, 2006). Many authors have attempted to create theoretical models that delineate the skills necessary to be an effective online language teacher (Compton, 2009; Hampel & Stickler, 2005). However, although these authors offer useful recommendations, few studies have empirically investigated the actual growth of online language teachers by evaluating their skills and the teacher's perception of her skills before and after having been subjected to one of the proposed training models and teaching an online course. Therefore, this study will investigate the development of several online language teacher's skills before and after having attended an online language teacher training program formed by theoretical recommendations found in the current literature regarding the necessary skills to be an effective online language teacher and teaching a language course online.

First, the theoretical framework for this study will be discussed. Second, the specific phenomena of this study will be defined and operationalized. Third, a critical review of several empirical studies related to the current research will be supplied in

order to provide justification for the study at hand. After the research questions for this study have been presented, the methodology of the study will be discussed. Following the methodology will be a presentation of the results and a discussion of their meaning and implications. Lastly, this paper will conclude with a summary of the findings, a discussion of the limitations and pedagogical implications of this study, and suggestions for future research.

Theoretical Framework

Previous studies exploring the necessary skills that an effective online language teacher must possess are widely available with regards to non-language related as well as language-related online courses. More specifically, Bennett and Marsh (2002), McPherson and Nunes (2004) and Wilcoxon (2011) delineated how online language teachers shape the perceptions of students towards learning online and provided interesting observations to be used in the development of an effective online teacher training program.

Additionally, several researchers in the field of language teaching and learning have published articles detailing the differences between teaching a language online and teaching any other type of course online (Comas-Quinn, 2011; Compton, 2009; Ernest et al., 2013; Hampel & Stickler, 2005; Sun, 2011). Hampel and Stickler's (2005) proposed skills pyramid served as a clear basis for the more detailed and developed framework for online language teaching skills created by Compton (2009) – both of which were further critiqued by Sun (2011). This original proposed framework by Hampel & Stickler (2005), in addition to its critiqued and elaborated versions by other authors, will serve an

essential function in the current study and, furthermore, each of the skills prescribed by this framework will be used as the main constructs in the current study.

The skills framework proposed by Hampel and Stickler (2005) refers to a set of skills that each online language teacher must possess in order to be effective. Hampel and Stickler listed generally the skills and illustrated how they build on one another by presenting them in a pyramid (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Skills pyramid (Hampel & Stickler, 2005)
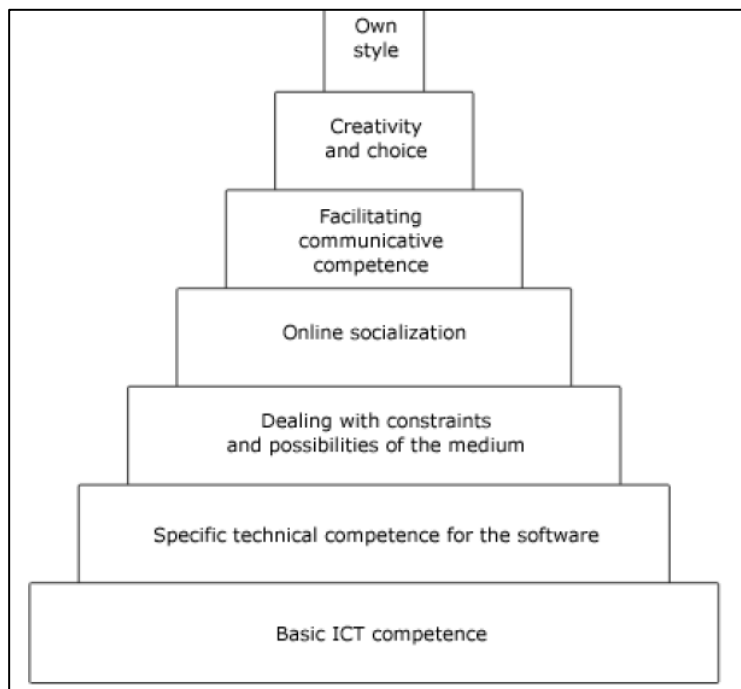
This model proposes that in order to reach development of the higher level skills (online socialization, facilitating communicative competence etc.) the lower level skills must be mastered: "The lower levels are necessary before a higher level skill can come to fruition –the most wonderful creativity would be wasted if the tutor lacks the skill to connect with the students" (Hampel & Stickler, 2005, p. 316). In their explanation of the skills pyramid, Hampel and Stickler (2005) point out that previous studies related to this same

topic fail to acknowledge the need for instructor skills above and beyond those related to technical and software-specific skills. Furthermore, although some studies do touch on the third tier of skills – dealing with the constraints and possibilities of the medium – even fewer advance to other skills of utmost pedagogical importance such as that of creating online learning communities, which these authors refer to as online socialization. The authors go on to explain that, although many instructors may not understand the importance of developing a trusting and respectful online learning community, this community is integral to the successful interaction and collaboration between learners. This is a notion held similarly by other authors such as Sun (2011) and Wilcoxon (2011) both of whom emphasize that instructors must be explicitly aware of the need to create this community as well as the evolving role of the instructor and students in the development of a cohesive learning community. This idea is best summarized by Hampel and Stickler (2005):

> Since socialization and community building in an online environment takes different skills than for the face-to-face classroom, there is no guarantee that even the most jovial and well-liked tutor of face-to-face courses can become a successful online teacher at this level. (p. 318)

It should be noted also that although Hampel and Stickler (2005) attempt to operationalize the skills included in their pyramid, they never do so in a measurable way. The authors do provide examples of what evidence of these skills might look like in a certain context (pp. 319-320) however, given their descriptions, it would be very difficult to measure these skills as evidenced by language instructors on a larger scale. (For an

additional summary of these skills, see Compton (2009, pp. 77-80) and Hampton (2009, pp. 7-9).

Compton (2009) critiqued the skills pyramid as presented by Hampel and Stickler (2005) by stating that although the skills presented are relevant and important, they do not necessarily develop in a linear fashion. For example, learning the constraints and possibilities of the medium may go hand in hand, and be learned simultaneously with, skills to facilitate communicative competence. Additionally, Compton noted that the skills pyramid "does not provide any indication of when an online language tutor is ready to teach" (p. 81). Yet another critique that Compton proposed was that Hampel & Stickler's (2005) skills pyramid does not consider the teacher within the context of the entire course rather it focuses on what skills teachers need while in the virtual classroom.

Therefore, taking into account all of these deficiencies, she proposed an alternate framework deemed to be broader than Hampel & Stickler's (2005). Unlike Hampel and Stickler's (2005) skills pyramid, Compton (2009) presents online language teaching skills as divided into three different categories: technology in online language teaching, pedagogy of online language teaching, and evaluation of online language teaching. These new categories help to provide a more global consideration of the teacher's role within the online learning experience and does not limit the skills needed to only those used in a virtual classroom: "[t]his approach will allow us to understand how different components work together, with whom online language teachers have to work and the scope of assistance other stakeholders can provide" (pp. 86-87). Furthermore, each category is organized into a continuum of expertise with three specified levels - novice, proficient and expert – thereby eliminating the issue of knowing when an instructor is ready to

teach. In her description of the different levels of proficiency in the three different categories, Compton attempts to operationalize the skills. However, similar to Hampel and Stickler's (2005) operationalizations, actually measuring quantitatively whether or not a teacher evidenced the skills in question is not facilitated by Compton's (2009) proposed framework (see Appendix A for image of full framework).

Additionally, both Compton & Hampel & Stickler delineate skills applicable to different kinds of teachers or different roles they may hold. Although not explicitly mentioned in any of Hampel & Stickler's publications, Compton (2009) claims that the skills proposed by those authors pertain more to the interaction that takes place between the teacher and the students in the virtual classroom. However, as an introduction to their skills pyramid, Hampel & Stickler state the following which does not seem so limited as Compton claims but rather ambiguous nonetheless: "The next two sections of this article are therefore concerned with outlining the skills needed for teaching in online environments in more detail and examining how this can inform a training programme for tutors" (p. 315). On the other hand, Compton (2009) argues that only one of the skills in the pyramid proposed by Hampel & Stickler – that of facilitating communicative competence – applies specifically to online language teaching whereas the rest are generally applicable to any kind of language teaching. She therefore includes other skills specifically different in this medium such as "knowledge of course evaluation, knowledge of curriculum design frameworks for online language learning, knowledge of strategies for online language assessment" (p. 81). Citing Chapelle's (2001) criteria for Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) task appropriateness, Compton (2009) incorporates elements of successful task, software and complete course evaluation into

her framework of skills. She argues that in order for a teacher to create tasks that enable learners to reach the desired outcomes, teachers need to be able to appropriately evaluate the tools (tasks, software, assessments) being used to aid learners in reaching those outcomes. Adequate evaluation skills will ensure that teachers are able to use the most effective tools and modify their usage appropriately in order to reach the projected outcomes.

Another publication of interest regarding online language teaching skills is one by Sun (2011) in which the author critiques the two frameworks by Hampel and Stickler (2005) and Compton (2009). Although Sun (2011) does not propose a separate framework, she analyzes the applicability of the already developed frameworks and examines the pedagogical challenges and issues that arise in the process. One strong claim made my Sun (2011) concerning Hampel & Stickler's (2005) article is that in general, the descriptions of the skills provided by these authors are quite vague and are missing much of the necessary details that would facilitate their application. The author goes on to critique Compton's (2009) framework in saying that "[t]hese kind of superficial talks, while it may be theoretically sound, practically it offers little help to the struggling online teachers" (p. 430) and "falls short in providing much needed details for action" (p. 431). Essentially, Sun (2011) finds the previous frameworks to be lacking in details for direct applicability in the lives of online language teachers. She sums up this claim very frankly by stating that:

> Despite pedagogical frameworks by both Hampel and Stickler; and
> Compton are results of rather extensive research in the field of online
> language teaching over many years, and their literature reviews are

meticulous and substantial, what they have painstakingly drawn up for

online teachers is, nevertheless, very much lacking in details. A frustrated

overnight-classroom-turned-online-teacher could find very few practical

guidelines or immediate help in their proposals. The answers as to what to

do and how to do it, or what *not to do* are still anyone's guess. (p. 431)

Due to her dissatisfaction with the applicability of materials published in previous

articles, Sun (2011) set out to close the gap between theory and practice through the

exploration of issues and challenges that presented themselves during two semester-long

successive Introduction to Chinese courses in an effort to provide readers with practical

applications to their own online language teaching.

Similar to Sun's (2011) critique of the vague nature of the proposed skills

framework for online language teachers as proposed by Hampel & Stickler (2005) and

Compton (2009), results from a pilot study confirm this issue. The ambiguity, which

favors keeping the proposed skills more general, causes many challenges when trying to

actually measure those skills. One of the goals of the current study was to be able to

measure each participant's skills before and after teaching a course online – a challenge

that would require more specific operationalization of each of the proposed skills.

The above mentioned frameworks are complementary and together provide a

more ample perspective of the complex skills and processes involved in the successful

delivery of an online course. For the current study, the researcher decided that although

Compton's (2009) framework does include broader skills than that of Hampel and

Stickler's (2005) pyramid (such as knowledge of course evaluation, curriculum design

frameworks, and strategies for online language assessment), the participant population

being studied (Graduate Student Teaching Assistant Instructors) and the context within which they teach (a heavily structured course with little room for individual instructor innovation) did not necessarily lend itself to Compton's framework. Participants in this study are neither trained in nor expected to have knowledge of online course evaluation, curriculum design frameworks or strategies for online assessment and therefore it seemed inappropriate to measure their skills in these areas. Thus, the main constructs of online language teaching skills presented in Hampel and Stickler's (2005) skills pyramid were used as a basis for the current framework given that the first five levels of skills are ones that all participants would need to possess in order to effectively do their job as an online language teacher in the current institution where they teach (The last two levels of skills – 'creativity and choice' and 'own style' were left out of this study due to their extreme ambiguity and difficulty to effectively operationalize. Furthermore, the participants in this study were fairly new to online teaching and thus the study intended to examine the more basic of online language teaching skills. However, the author acknowledges that the constructs proposed by Hampel and Stickler (2005) that were left out of this study are very important and encourages others to persist in operationalizing these constructs so that they can be studied and measured by others in future studies). Nonetheless, one of the strengths of Compton's framework was the categorization of teachers according to their skills level – novice, proficient or expert. This is an important classification that addresses the issue of when and whether or not an individual is equipped with sufficient knowledge to proficiently be able to teach a language online or not. Therefore, the author of the current study combined elements from the previously proposed frameworks that were appropriate to the context of the participants in order to create a rubric and

corresponding assessment methods to be able to successfully measure and classify

participants as novice, developing, proficient or advanced in each of the skill areas. The

operationalization of each of the skills at the proficient level and according to the context

where these instructors teach are summarized in the table below. The operationalizations

were based on explanations of these skills in the original article written my Hampel and

Stickler (2005), the critique article written by Compton (2009) and other later articles

written or coauthored by Hampel and/or Stickler (such as Hampel, 2009). These

explanations were then adapted to fit the teaching context of the participants in this study

and were intended to be as specific as possible so as to eliminate ambiguities when

classifying each of the participant's skills (For a full rubric please see Appendix B).

Table 1

Operationalization of online language teaching skills at proficient level

Skill	Proficient level operationalization[1]
Basic Information and Communications Technology Skills	Is comfortable using programs such as *Microsoft Word*, *PowerPoint*, and comfortable navigating the Internet, listening to audio, etc.
Specific Technical Competence of Course Specific Software/ Programs	Demonstrates ability to navigate easily and efficiently using *Blackboard* and *Adobe Connect* and is comfortable using these programs; feels comfortable posting announcements and effectively communicating with students via course website; feels consistently comfortable troubleshooting and resolving common technical issues that students may encounter while using course specific programs and website.
Dealing with constraints and possibilities of the medium	(1) Demonstrates basic knowledge of the challenges and affordances of the medium – virtual classroom etc. and consistently is able to articulate those challenges and affordances = knows that teaching online is different and is able to consistently articulate and adapt to these differences; (2) demonstrates consistent knowledge of types of activities/

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[1] All of these operationalizations are originally derived from references to these skills in previous literature (Compton, 2009; Duensing et al., 2006; Hampel, 2009; Hampel & Stickler, 2005; Hauck & Stickler, 1999) and were adapted to fit the teaching context of the participants in this study.

	interactions that can and cannot take place successfully in this environment; - consistently demonstrates ability to adapt activities for in-person courses to achieve same learning objectives in the online environment (for example, a short conversation activity between students where normally the teacher would not interject at all during their discussion but perhaps follow-up with them at the end (in the classroom) occurs the same way online – where the teacher is not interrupting students just because he/she has an equal presence in the virtual classroom as the students, etc.); (3) demonstrates consistent knowledge of ability to use course programs/software to achieve desired learning objectives (for example, taking advantage of specific features the software has to offer to make learning more effective for students – using a 'share my screen' function to provide visual support to the conversation, using the 'chat box' to write out words or phrases that are new to students or that they are having difficulty figuring out how to spell, etc.); (4) demonstrates ability to adjust classroom discourse so that it is appropriate to the online medium and is effective in informing/teaching students how best to interact in this environment (asking specific people questions instead of open-ended ones which may lead to overlapping turns, frustration, awkwardness, wasted time, etc.; ability to guide students to also directly address one another with questions, etc. instead of addressing everyone generally; consistent ability to facilitate direct back and forth interaction between students that is not often mediated/interrupted by the instructor)
Online socialization	Consistently demonstrates/articulates knowledge of the concept and importance of a learning community; consistently and effectively shows evidence of motivating students to participate and interact and minimizes student anxiety; strong evidence present of positive rapport between students and between teacher and students; demonstrates consistent knowledge of instructor role in creating and maintaining a learning community and is able to articulate that knowledge; demonstrates consistent knowledge of tools that can be used to foster and maintain a learning community and can consistently articulate that knowledge
Facilitating Communicative Competence	Consistently shows emphasis on student-centered approach to teaching; effectively designs tasks to promote meaningful communication between students (examples of appropriate tasks might include Role-plays, dialogues, information gap exercises, simulations); demonstrates knowledge of tools that can be used to facilitate synchronous and asynchronous interaction between students

In the following section, several previous empirical studies pertaining to beginning online

language teachers will be presented followed by the justification for this study and the

research questions it intends to answer.

<div align="center">**Review of Literature**</div>

Previous Empirical Studies

Many investigators have published articles related to the ideal traits that online

language teachers should possess; however, the majority of these are highly theoretical

and are based on past experience as opposed to an empirical experiment (Compton, 2009;

Hampel & Stickler, 2005). Nevertheless, Shelly et al. (2006) took an interesting

perspective in their study, which is based on the reflections and input of actual language

tutors teaching for the Open University UK (OUUK). The authors pointed out that most

literature related to the "roles and competencies required to teach programmes at a

distance" (p. 3) come from the point of view of those conducting the research or from an

institution-wide prescription. Furthermore, the authors suggested that those individuals

most closely related to the day-to-day development and success of the course – mainly

the tutors and other supporting staff – often fail to have their input acknowledged or even

inquired about by superiors or researchers, which may leave the teachers feeling that they

have no voice.

Therefore, Shelley et al. (2006) designed a project to define more concretely the

attributes and expertise necessary for language tutors who teach at a distance, as

determined by the tutors themselves. Subsequently, the participants in their study were

language tutors from one region of the OOUK with native or near-native fluency in the

target language who taught German, French or Spanish. Each of the participants took part in four stages of data collection and the number of participants varied throughout the stages (from n=17 to n = 32). In the first stage of data collection, while at a Staff Development Day, the participants engaged in a focus group activity where they first individually, and then in groups, responded to prompts and later discussed their views as to the necessary skills required in order for them to be successful in their roles as distance language tutors. Upon review of the data from the first stage, the researchers compiled the results and in stage two asked the participants to reflect upon their original feedback in an open-ended questionnaire. They were also asked to describe the desired qualities for a distance language tutor as if they were talking to a new teacher in their same position. This last part was referred to as a *yoked subject technique* and was intended to gain further insight into how the tutors view their work. The third stage consisted of a group discussion regarding the reoccurring themes from the previous stages specifically related to the necessary *attributes and expertise* of distance language tutors. The fourth stage involved an expansion of the discussion to include as participants language tutors in other regions of the United Kingdom (outside of the original region of study). Lastly, in the fifth stage, the researchers interviewed staff at the Open University responsible for the development of teaching materials for the distance language courses. This qualitative data collection yielded interesting results and a new perspective on how language tutors view their attributes and expertise.

Shelly et al. (2006) felt successful in their research, as they were able to achieve the goal of giving their language tutors a voice and role in the ongoing development of the distance language education programs at their university. Although the authors

highlighted the value of their data for improvements in professional development, the actual state of the implementation of these changes is unknown. The study by Shelly et al. (2006) provided interesting insights and much food for thought regarding the importance of collaboration among teachers and developers of course material and how each unique perspective is valuable. However, this article was not able to go beyond its heuristic approach and provide more concrete evidence of the effects of the tutor participation on the actual execution of their courses after the fact and/or the tutors' proficiency level in fulfilling each of these roles.

A more recent article by Comas-Quinn (2011) explored the experience of teachers participating for the first time in an online language teacher training program. The main goal of the author was to explore the perceptions of the teachers regarding the new online teaching and learning experience in relation to the type of training they received and the development of a new online teacher identity. The author, having no defined research questions or hypothesis at the outset, conducted a more synthetic and heuristic study, which yielded mainly qualitative data. The participants in Comas-Quinn's study were teachers of intermediate Spanish courses offered by the Open University in the United Kingdom.

Although the original survey for data collection in Comas-Quinn (2011) was made available to all teachers of the above specified course, there was only a 49% response rate, resulting in a total of 20 participants. Many of the teachers involved in the study had experience teaching in a face-to-face environment prior to participating in the study; however, the majority was new to the online aspects of teaching and therefore "faced a steep learning curve" (p. 223). Comas-Quinn first conducted a participant

observation to identify important issues and then created a survey based on her findings. After piloting the survey, which consisted of a closed questionnaire section (with questions regarding background information, attitudes about teaching and working online, view of student participation and technical problems encountered) and an open questionnaire section (with questions allowing participants to express more about their views and suggestions), it was then made available to all teachers of the intermediate Spanish course. As previously mentioned, only 20 of the 41 teachers chose to complete the survey. Based on the data collected through the surveys, the researcher designed a semi-structured interview, which was conducted with three participants selected through a quota sampling method and deemed to be representative of the whole group. Lastly, the participants attended an online debriefing session and the emerging themes were triangulated with the data from the surveys and interviews to reinforce the most commonly discussed themes.

The principal findings of Comas-Quinn (2011) were that teachers struggled with technical issues, lack of integration of the online materials into the course design, and lack of time to successfully incorporate the use of all the online resources into the course. The authors concluded that the problems that arose were a result of 1) the teachers not fully understanding the true potential of the use of the online asynchronous tools and therefore viewing them as not useful, poorly integrated, or too time consuming; 2) the teachers and learners experienced somewhat of an identity crisis when it came to teaching and learning online in that their expectations developed from past experiences did not necessarily match up with the reality of the online teaching/learning experience, and therefore created frustration for those who were less susceptible to adapting to the new

environment and creating a new identity; 3) the training received by the teachers focused too much on the technical aspects of the technology used and not enough on the pedagogical possibilities and affordances which hindered their ability to use the tools effectively.

Although this study by Comas-Quinn (2011) provided interesting insights into the experience of new online language teachers as well as helpful advice for future training programs, these are the only insights it provides. It appears as though the author was trying to generally identify issues as opposed to subjecting participants to a training program of her design and measuring the outcomes and skills of those teachers. Additionally, by only measuring the teachers' ideas/views at the end of the semester, as opposed to completing a pre- and post-survey, it is difficult to measure any sort of change in identity or progress in general. The data obtained serve as an invaluable starting point for a more focused and deductive measurement of the success of future training programs and development of online language teaching skills, but do not provide any concrete quantitative measurement tools of the participants' actual online language teaching skills.

Of the empirical studies mentioned up until this point, only Ernest et al. (2013) conducted a study having specific objectives instead of taking on the exploratory nature of the others. However, by stepping away from the synthetic perspective of training language teachers to teach online, the authors shifted to a more analytic approach to focus on the development of their participants' skills in creating and successfully moderating online collaborative activities. The authors did have an end objective of identifying any possible needs for professional development that may present themselves as a result of the study; however, this was not a main focus of the work.

The participants in the study were teachers of level 2 French, German and Spanish from the Open University (n = 8) and English teachers of levels I, II, and III from the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (n = 12), all selected on a volunteer basis. A website was created using Moodle where the participants were able to communicate and form groups for the collaborative activities. Each week a specific collaborative activity was assigned (i.e., "Welcome reception, debate about collaboration, software training, organization of participants into small groups" etc. [p. 315]). The participants were given minimal guidance so that they were free to decide which tools they wanted to incorporate at different times to achieve completion of the assigned tasks. Logs of when and how often participants logged in and accessed specific parts of the website were used to collect quantitative data that was analyzed using SPSS.

All of the input from participants put on the website in the debates and various written activities were used for qualitative data analysis in addition to a post-project questionnaire and six interviews (3 participants from each university). The qualitative data was analyzed by identifying key themes that emerged most often and the quantitative data was analyzed to assess the active participation of the subjects. The authors concluded that their results showed the need for the inclusion of a "hands-on experience of online collaboration" (p. 329) in online teacher training programs so that teachers are prepared for the upcoming challenges and affordances of the virtual environment.

Although the Ernest et al. (2013) did show the benefits of including a hands-on experience of online collaboration in a teacher training program, the study does not explore how this training affected the participants' actual teaching after training nor did it

provide any measurement of the online language teaching skills of the participants before or after the training. Their study, like many before it, provided very useful information about the types of elements to be included in such a training program yet it failed to quantify the findings by comparing them with a control group or measuring the development over time of the skills of the trainees. However, their study made an effort to do more than explore and observe and created a clear transition to the more deductive studies to come in relation to the topic of online language teacher training and skills.

Justification of the Current Study

Thus, to date, very few empirical studies have been carried out using a non-heuristic approach on the measurement of online language teaching skills and growth over time while teaching an online language course (especially in the United States). This study intends to combine the constructs and operationalizations of online language teaching skills as defined in previous literature in order to measure the development of the participants' online language teaching skills while they teach an online course and compare these outcomes. Additionally, the previous empirical studies as well as the theoretical articles fail to provide very concrete operationalizations of how a researcher can measure the skills of an online language teacher and categorize individuals as being ready or not to successfully teach online. A secondary goal, then, of this study is to further the development of instruments that accurately measure the online language teaching skills required of teachers as prescribed by previous researchers (Compton, 2009; Hampel & Stickler, 2005, 2009; Sun, 2011). Finally, this study aims to shed light on strategies for more effective development of these skills in areas where the participants in this study did not reach proficiency.

Research Questions

This study will address the following research questions: (1) How do the participants' online language teaching skills (as defined in the theoretical framework) change over the course of them teaching an online class? (2) What factors seem to influence more or less development? (3) Based on recommendations in previous literature and insights from this study, how could the participants increase their online language teaching skills' proficiency?

Methodology

This section will address the details of the current study including the subjects who participated, the instruments they completed, the procedures of the experiment and how the data were analyzed.

Subjects

The participants in this study were Graduate Teaching Assistants [TAs] of Spanish at a large public university in the western United States (n = 6). Three males and three females participated in this study and their ages ranged from 22 to 30. All TAs who were planning to teach a language online in the Fall 2014 semester and who were present at a training session for online language teaching prior to the semester starting were made aware of the possibility to participate via an in-person announcement by the researcher who helped to facilitate the training. Participants were selected on a voluntary basis. All participants had between zero and seven semesters of lower-division, university level online language teaching experience. Given the small number of participants, the completeness of their instruments and the varying experience levels, only those participants who completed thoroughly all instruments and had less than 4 semesters of

online language teaching experience were selected for further analysis in this study. Each of the participants selected for a case study was assigned a pseudonym to keep his/her identity anonymous.

Online language course setup and TA responsibilities. In general, TAs have different responsibilities regarding teaching and grading depending on the program they are involved in and what institution they teach at. The particular institution where the TAs for this experiment teach gives them full responsibility of the course (teaching, grading, etc.), however, the curriculum, course calendar, assessments and most major assignments are created at the program level and implemented by the TAs without modification.

The online language courses at this institution have up to 22 students per class and the online classes taught by the subjects in this experiment lasted seven and a half weeks total. Each week, the instructors (TAs) met groups of two or three students online for twenty to thirty minutes of conversation practice in a synchronous videoconferencing session [SVCS] via *Adobe Connect* (i.e. between three and four hours of SVCSs per week). The seven and a half week course covers six textbook chapters so, essentially, students are covering one chapter per week. In a typical seven and a half week class, students have a general technology practice session the first week which is followed by two weeks of conversation practice. Then, students have an oral exam which takes the place of their online session during the fourth week. During the fifth and sixth weeks, students continue with their regular conversation practice sessions and on the seventh week students have their final oral exam. Therefore, of the seven SVCSs, two are oral exams, one is a general technology check and four focus specifically on conversation

practice and developing speaking skills in the target language (these four meetings are supposed to include practice activities pertaining to grammar and vocabulary studied in the six chapters covered in the course).

The SVCSs are the only course required opportunity for students to interact with one another. Although during the semester of this study students did participate in discussion board posts, these tasks did not generate much true interaction between participants. Students were required to make one original post and then to comment on one of their classmates' posts. However, if students received a comment they were not required to respond and therefore the majority of them would not. This resulted in a very individualized and one-sided task although the original intent may have been otherwise.

The main responsibilities of the instructors (TAs) leading these online courses is as follows: (1) Planning 20 to 30 minute SVCS tasks that are intended to be communicative and student-centered and also incorporate material from the chapter(s) currently being studied by the students, (2) responding to student emails at least two times a day, five to six days a week, (3) scheduling virtual office hours whenever students need additional assistance, (4) posting weekly (or more often) announcements related to important upcoming deadlines and reminders, (5) grading and providing feedback on a weekly basis for online homework assignments completed via the publisher website, (6) grading and providing feedback on writing assignments (compositions) due four times during the seven and a half week course, (7) grading and providing feedback on written exams taken via the course management system, *Blackboard*, three times during the course, (8) grading and providing feedback on discussion board assignments completed three times during the seven and a half week

course, (9) grading and providing feedback on oral exams completed twice during the course, and (10) grading and providing feedback about the students' participation grade based on their performance during the SVCSs. For some of the graded assignments, TAs have access to rubrics for guidance in evaluating the tasks (e.g. for the compositions, oral exams, participation and exams) however on other assignments, each individual TA grades as he/she sees fit and there is no guidance provided from the program coordinators about how to do so (e.g. homework activities via the publisher website and discussion boards). Furthermore, in the online courses, students do not have access to any recorded lectures or explanations provided by the actual instructor (as this is not a current requirement of the position) however, they do have access to grammar videos and tutorials via the textbook publisher website.

Instruments

The data collected and analyzed in this study come from various instruments. First, each participant completed a detailed background questionnaire via surveymonkey.com (Appendix C). The background questionnaire addressed: the participant's demographic and education information (see Freed et al., 2004), the participant's personal language learning experience (format, teaching methods used, country of instruction, etc.) as well as his/her attitudes towards that experience, the participant's teaching experience and reflection concerning that experience, the participant's attitudes towards teaching in general as well as specific to his/her current position, the participant's attitudes towards teaching online in general as well as specific to his/her current position, the participant's motivation level towards teaching (classroom and online), and the participant's career goals with regards to teaching. Due to the

qualitative nature of the data collected for this study, the researcher recognizes the importance of collecting detailed information about each individual in order to accurately analyze the data in light of each participant's characteristics (American Psychological Association, 2009).

Second, each participant completed a pre-assessment of their online language teaching skills (Appendix D). Although initially created from the frameworks for online language teaching skills developed by Hampel and Stickler (2005) and further expanded upon by Compton (2009) as well as the critique provided by Sun (2011), the assessment touches on some of the constructs from those frameworks but expands in other ways to best assess the participants in light of their current teaching context (with regards to certain course management systems and tools, course design and learning objectives in the synchronous videoconferencing sessions, etc.). The assessment begins with several 6-point Likert scale questions pertaining to the participant's comfort level with certain basic and software specific technology programs. Then, it continues with several open-ended questions requiring just a few words as a response and continues on to more broad questions requiring a several sentence elaboration of ideas. Lastly, the assessment aims to measure the ability of the participant to create a lesson plan for an online class using pedagogically appropriate tools while also taking into account the fundamental concepts of Second Language Acquisition [SLA] and the types of contexts in which students are most likely to develop their target language [TL] skills. A rubric was developed by the researcher for use in quantifying the participant responses on the assessment in an effort to categorize them as either novice, developing, proficient, advanced or expert in each of the five skills sets examined. These categories were modeled after those used in

Compton's (2009) framework however a few more categories were added (developing and advanced) so as to show the nuanced development of the participants in this study. Furthermore, these additional categories were added to create a space on the rubric for these newer online teachers that probably do not fall into the novice category but may not have quite reached the proficient level either. This same assessment was used again at the end of the semester to measure changes and developments of the participants' online language teaching skills throughout the semester.

Although using the same instrument in the exact same format as a pre- and post-assessment may call into question problems of internal validity, the purpose of the assessment is two-fold: first, it serves as a means to measure a change or development in the knowledge of the participants regarding fundamental concepts of language learning/teaching in face-to-face and in online environments as presented during the training sessions and; second, it serves as an awareness tool by pointing out to participants that the questions being asked are ones that an effective online language teacher should be able to answer with ease.

The third instrument used to collect data was an observation form created to take note of the participant's online language teaching skills as observed in a SVCS between the teacher and a small group of students (Appendix E). The observation form was created based on several different sources: the Online Course Assessment Tool (OCAT) developed by eLearning Faculty Fellows at Western Carolina University (2007), the Language Classroom Observation Form used by University of Pennsylvania language classes (Schiffman, 2001) and the Classroom Observation Report developed by Dr. Carla Ghanem at Arizona State University (n.d.).

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The observation form is intended to be filled out by 1) the researcher while observing a recorded SVCS between the participant and his/her students and 2) the participant while completing a self-evaluation of that same recording. In addition to requesting basic information about the class session being recorded (instructor name, course name, date, etc.) and a timeline of the different activities and events that took place during the observation, the observer is also asked to indicate whether the teacher showed evidence or not of the skills being inquired about during the recording and is asked to explain his/her response. Focused on specifically throughout the observation form are skills related to the instructor's use of technology, lesson and activities, virtual classroom atmosphere, and target language use. The results of the two observations were used to triangulate the data and inform the instructor's pre- and post-experiment measurement of online language teaching skills.

In order to further understand the personal experience of each participant, all participants completed a bi-monthly semi-guided teaching journal entry of one to two pages reflecting on the successes and challenges of teaching online during the past two weeks as well as the ways in which the participant had applied any of the concepts/ideas introduced in the training sessions to his/her personal teaching (Appendix F). Subjects were required to respond to some specific questions; however, they were also encouraged to expand as they saw fit to encourage the open-endedness of the questions. These teaching journal entries were completed and submitted to the researcher electronically and furthermore were only accessible to the researcher and the participant who authored the entry.

At the end of the semester, all participants were asked to complete an exit survey reflecting upon their experiences throughout the semester, the challenges they were able to overcome, and the challenges that still remain to work on in the future (Appendix G). Lastly, each participant took part in a semi-structured post-interview with the researcher during the semester following the experiment. The interviews were video and/or audio recorded and the questions were intended to seek elaboration from participants about topics that came up in the data for which the researcher wanted further clarification (Appendices H-J). Additionally, the researcher asked questions pertaining to the usefulness of the training the participants received, the major challenges he/she experienced and their ideas for solutions to these challenges, and how/if the participant is currently incorporating anything they learned while participating in the experiment into their current online teaching. .

Procedures/Tasks

The participants in this study were recruited during a training for online language teachers of various target languages who were all employed by the same university (Details about the training will be provided in the sub-section below). Before the training began, all attendees of the training filled out a pre-assessment of their online language teaching skills. The training took place in three consecutive days of four-hour long training sessions and on the first and last day of training, everyone was notified by the researcher and a colleague about the opportunity to participate in this study. After agreeing to participate and signing the consent form, the participants were added to a shell in blackboard, created for this study, which contained instructions and procedures for completing each of the instruments throughout their semester of teaching. Participants

were free to complete the instruments for this study at their own convenience and were able to spend as much time as they wanted to complete them as long as they were submitted by the proposed deadlines.

First, participants completed the detailed background questionnaire. Next, during the first two weeks of their courses, participants recorded an online SVCS via Adobe Connect with their students. Then, each of the participants watched their recording and completed the observation form. The observation form and link to the recording were submitted by the participants via blackboard or email to the researcher for review. Every two weeks, the participants turned in a teaching journal written based on the prompts provided via blackboard. During the last two weeks of their course, each participant recorded another online SVCS via Adobe Connect with their students, completed the observation form, and submitted it, along with the link to the recording, to the researcher. After the participants had finished teaching their courses, they completed the post-assessment and later the exit survey. Lastly, each of the participants was interviewed during the following semester to clarify points that came up in their data and also see how each person was applying what they had learned in the past semester (or not) to their teaching currently.

Training for online language teachers. The training program that the participants in this study attended was designed by a team of four individuals from the university where the participants teach, one of which was the researcher. When the training took place in Fall 2014, it was the first time it had been conducted. The training was designed specifically for the needs of the teachers at the institution where they were employed. It was intended to touch on specific and important concepts related to online

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language teaching but also stay general enough to be applicable to different language programs and course designs. Furthermore, the training was intended to be hands-on and to fully integrate the pedagogical instruction with the technology instruction – essentially, participants were encouraged to consider pedagogical objectives and then assay which technological tools (software programs, apps, tools within *Blackboard*/*Adobe Connect*, etc.) would most effectively lead to the successful reaching of those objectives (a structure for training that is recommended in previous works. See Hampel, 2009; Hampel & Hauck, 2004). Moreover, participants were encouraged to not only consider technological tools that they had extensive experience with but also other tools that perhaps they may not be as familiar with but might work well to achieve the objectives. This training was a crash-course in online language teaching and was not intended to be a one-time event that would produce experts or even proficient online language teachers. Instead, it was intended to be a general introduction to some of the fundamentals of teaching a language online. A brief summary of each of the three training sessions (4 hours each) is presented below.

On the first day of training, the main focus was on learning communities in online language courses. An article by Wilcoxon (2011) was used as the basis of content for discussion due to its accessible explanations of the essential elements of a learning community (teaching presence, social presence and cognitive presence). Furthermore, each participant was given a copy of the article to read at their own leisure. On this day, the participants first took part in an ice breaker activity with other attendees. They were then asked to work in small groups to discuss their ideas of how they could possibly modify the ice breaker activity they had just participated in so that it might work and

have the same outcomes in the online environment. This activity was used to fuel a discussion among the whole group about the best way to go about translating this activity to the online environment as well as the best tools (i.e. computer programs or applications) that would be most efficient in facilitating it. Then, after a short break, a discussion was held with participants about the purpose of conducting ice breakers in language courses specifically. This was used to transition into a discussion about learning communities and the purpose they serve in online language courses, specifically.

After this, participants were asked to work in small groups to create a definition of a learning community and to discuss its importance. Attendees were then given a short (10-15 minute) informal presentation by the researcher about what the literature says regarding learning communities, the instructor role in creating and maintaining thriving learning communities, and the way that learning communities develop over time (based mainly on content from Wilcoxon, 2011). This presentation was then used to prompt a discussion about the differences between learning communities in face-to-face versus online language courses. Participants first worked in pairs, then groups of four and lastly, presented their ideas to the whole group. After the discussion, the trainers transitioned the conversation to what kinds of tools can be used in creating and maintaining vibrant learning communities. Once more, participants were divided into small groups to look at different synchronous and asynchronous tools that would work for creating and maintaining learning communities in their own courses. These ideas were then presented and discussed with all attendees as a means of sharing and exploring new ideas. Then, the first day of training finished off with a general question and answer session.

The second day of training centered around task design and *can do* statement objectives while always keeping in mind theories of SLA (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2015). Furthermore, this more pedagogical discussion was broadened to look at the tools which could help facilitate tasks created based in principles of SLA. The first hour of training on this day was dedicated to exploring strategies for effectively translating in-person activities to achieve the same learning objectives in an online course. Participants were encouraged to present ideas in small groups related to activities that they love to do in face-to-face classes that they thought were impossible or, at least, not easily realizable online. Then, the group members were asked to work together, keeping in mind the objectives of the activities and the potential tools, to come up with an idea about how to effectively conduct the original activity online (with modifications, of course). During the small group discussions, each of the four individuals who helped to create the training circulated among the groups offering advice, answering questions and stimulating further ideas and exploration. After this, a larger group discussion was held about the general challenges of converting activities from face-to-face to online and some of the groups reported on what they had discussed, the online activities they had come up with and/or the challenges they experienced in trying to translate their activity for use in an online course. Having received some concrete examples of activities from the attendees, a new discussion was sparked regarding the objectives of these activities and what the activities were actually intended to accomplish. This then led to a short presentation about the IIO (Input, Interaction, Output) model of SLA (Gass & Mackey, 2007) which ended with the challenge for participants to think about all of these elements in their own language courses: What

types of input will learners receive? What types of interaction should occur? Where and when will students have opportunities for output? Next, participants were divided into groups and were assigned to think of technology tools that could be used to help with either input, interaction or output in an online language course. The expected and actual end result of this discussion was that participants came to the conclusion that many of the tools they had discussed work well for all of these important elements that lead to SLA but that the difference would be in how they decide to use those tools to best facilitate the reaching of learning objectives. Attendees were then transitioned into an activity pertaining to *can do* statements in writing learning objectives where they were given the opportunity to create their own *can do* statements based on a learning objective and then compare what they wrote with other participants (for information on *can do* statements, see American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2015). Lastly, participants were asked to work in small groups to create a lesson plan for an online class where they could achieve this objective. Then, the lesson plans were shared all around, questions were asked, and constructive criticism was offered. During the very last part of this session, an organizational tool was presented to participants for use in their online courses (Appendix K). This was intended to help guide the online lesson plan design of participants, especially those who would be teaching online for the very first time and were less familiar with how to approach this challenge. Once again, the session was wrapped up with a general question and answer session.

On the last day of training, attendees were supposed to have brought a lesson plan (or several) and/or materials they were currently working on or had created for their online class. The first twenty minutes of the session were dedicated to allowing the

director and assistant director of Learning Support Services (similar to language laboratories in universities across the nation) at this institution present themselves and the resources and support that they offer for online language teachers. Then, participants were broken up into language-specific groups so they could work with their colleagues on comparing and further developing their online course materials. The trainers circulated during this time to answer questions, provide support and generally assist the attendees as much as possible with the challenges they were having while creating effective tasks for their students and organizing the online course. During the last part of this session, the director and assistant director from the language laboratory, conducted a hands-on training session pertaining to the course management system, *Blackboard* and the synchronous videoconferencing platform used in the courses of many (but not all) of the attendees, *Adobe Connect*. Participants were then given time to break into smaller groups and learn about other specific tools of interest for their online language courses (such as *Camtasia relay, Youtube*, *Voice Thread* etc.). Then, participants had a short time for general questions and answers before the training came to a close. No follow-up workshops/professional development/collaboration/discussion were required of the participants.

Data Analysis

The data collected for this experiment were analyzed in various ways to best respond to the research questions. Given the highly qualitative nature of the data and the very small number of eligible participants with a complete instrument profile (i.e. participants who diligently completed all instruments throughout the entire experiment) it was decided that a case study approach to present the data would be most effective. The

multiple case study approach was chosen for this study because case studies allow for thick description of the individuals skills and experiences as well as triangulation of data through various methods of data collection (Duff, 2008). Furthermore, in addition to just measuring the participants' competency in each skill area, a case study approach allows for detailed descriptions of each individual as well as the factors that may have contributed to the individual developing at a typical or atypical rate given the context (Duff, 2008). Although a common critique of case studies is that they are not generalizable, and therefore the findings are not transferable to other contexts or individuals outside of the ones studied (Duff, 2008), this intent of this case study is not to proclaim how online language teachers skills develop in general across contexts, rather it intends to provide a detailed study of a few individuals to use as a basis and comparison for future case studies and/or larger scale studies of the same kind. Given the above reasoning for the case study method of analysis, the data chosen and how it was used to provide the results will now be presented.

Information from the detailed background questionnaires as well as the post-interviews was used to create each participants profile and provide more specific insight about each individual's motivations and attitudes towards teaching language online so as to paint a full picture of the context and perspective within which the participant is operating.

In order to respond to the first research question, each participant's skills were measured at the beginning and end of the experiment. The classification of each of the participants online language teaching skills according to the operationalizations in the rubric is based on the responses given on the pre- and post-assessments and evidence

observed during the class recordings submitted by the participants as well as the information reflected on the observation reports which were completed by the participant(self-observation) and the researcher (researcher observation) in an effort to triangulate this data. The beginning of experiment classification is based on the participants' responses on the pre-assessment and behaviors observed during a SVCS with students during the first two weeks of the course and subsequent participant and researcher observation reports. The end of experiment classification is based on the participants' responses on the post-assessment and behaviors observed during a SVCS with students during the last two weeks of the course and subsequent participant and researcher observation reports.

Each participant's online language teaching skills proficiency categorization was determined using a rubric, which, through careful operationalization of each construct, allowed for a consistent classification of each of the participants abilities in each skill area as either novice (1-1.9), developing (2-2.9), proficient (3-3.9) or advanced (4-4+). Furthermore, each classification received a nominal rating (e.g. novice, developing, etc.) and an ordinal rating (1-4); the latter was invoked to better compare the quantitative growth of each of the participants from the beginning to the end of the experiment. The focus of the analysis will be on the participants reaching the proficient level as this would indicate that they are fully equipped to effectively and successfully teach their online language course. The operationalizations for each of the constructs at the proficient level can be found in the Theoretical Framework (p. 2) and the full rubric can be found in Appendix B.

Addressing the second research question, a qualitative analysis was carried out while examining the teacher and researcher observation reports, the weekly teaching journals, the exit interview and the post-interview. While analyzing the written instruments, the researcher intended to further contextualize the growth or decline in each of the participants' proficiency in each skill area in an effort to explain what factors may have influenced or played a part in the observed results.

Finally, following the case studies in the general discussion section, answers to the third research question will be explored. All of the data will be examined in light of recommendations in previous research in order to propose strategies that would lead to these participants increasing their competency at least to the proficient level in the areas where they fell short.

In the sections below, each of the three participants is presented in a case study format. First, their profile is presented followed by a detailed presentation of the results of their online language teaching skills before and after the experiment. Each skill is presented individually along with the participants' level of proficiency pre- and post-experiment. This is followed by a discussion regarding the development of that skill and if the skill did not reach the proficiency level, reasoning as to why this occurred will be provided. After each of the case studies, a more general discussion section explores the similarities and differences in how each of the three participants skills developed as well as the overarching reasons as to why the participants did not reach proficiency in certain skill areas. The researcher will discuss what steps need to be taken in order for these individuals to reach proficiency based on recommendations from previous literature in the Implications section of this paper.

Results and Discussion: Three Case Studies

Case Study 1: Christina

Christina is a twenty-three year old native speaker of English who was teaching Spanish online for the first time in the Fall 2014 semester. At the time the experiment took place, Christina was starting her second year of graduate studies related to Spanish sociolinguistics and her second year of teaching face-to-face Spanish courses at her institution. She reported having had eight years and nine weeks of formal study of the language (nine weeks during middle school, four years during her high school education, and four years during the completion of her Bachelor's degree) and had never studied abroad or visited a Spanish-speaking country. Christina had never taught before starting graduate school and thus was not only new to teaching online but also fairly new to teaching a language in a traditional classroom environment. At the time of the experiment, the only formal instruction she had received regarding teaching in general was a one week long orientation provided to new TAs at her institution which took place exactly a year before the start of the current study. This training focused mainly on teaching in-person classes. Furthermore, during her first semester as a TA, she attended a teaching methods course for TAs of various target languages at her institution. Therefore, although she had received some formal training with regards to teaching, overall she was quite a novice classroom teacher.

Christina reported subscribing to a communicative style of teaching due to the fact that students will deal with native speakers face to face and thus "Conversation is Key" (Christina, Background Questionnaire). When asked about her personal attitudes/

motivations/ opinions towards teaching languages on the background questionnaire, she responded with the following:

> I feel it is important to teach a language since the world is multicultural and we have such a blend of culture in the United States. I also feel that when you learn another language it lets other people know that their culture is known and it creates a sense of pride for others; it's pretty cool to see others accept others by learning a language. For example, if someone were to learn Arabic and met a person who could speak Arabic, it would let that person know that someone isn't ignorant and is interested in learning more of the culture and be helpful. (Christina, Background Questionnaire)

However, even though she felt that teaching and learning a language is important, she was very open in expressing that teaching is not something she sees herself doing in the long run nor is it something she particularly enjoys doing: "I do not wish to be a teacher. I feel that this experience will help further down the road (public speaking, planning), but teaching is not what I want." (Christina, Background Questionnaire).

Christina was assigned to teach an online class during the Fall 2014 semester despite her inexperience and despite her disinterest in doing so: "I am a teacher because as a grad student in the Spanish program we must be a teaching assistant/teacher." (Christina, Background Questionnaire). It is important to point out here that being a teaching assistant is actually not a requirement of the program she is in; it is an additional appointment that each graduate student must apply for separately from his/her application

to be a graduate student. Nevertheless, it brings to light an important attitude which is that Christina was not teaching because it is something she is passionate about but rather, she was teaching because in her mind it was obligatory.

Although never having taught online before, it was clear from Christina's background questionnaire that even prior to teaching online for the first time she already had a jaded perspective with regards to the effectiveness of online language teaching and more specifically the effectiveness of these courses at her current institution: "I am still forming an opinion for online teaching, but as of right now, I do not feel it is effective, or at least the way we teach here." (Christina, Background Questionnaire). This may partly be due to her past experiences as an online student of Spanish and other subjects in the past. She reported having positive experiences in non-language related classes such as courses on Health and Humanities which she took during online high school. However, her experiences taking Spanish courses at the institution where she now teaches were not as positive. Christina reported having previously taken three online Spanish courses and being quite dissatisfied with their quality. Her comments, among others, include: "The teaching was uninformative and confusing. When asked for help, the teacher would reply to look in the book or *PowerPoints* for the answers. Everything could have been improved." (Christina, Background Questionnaire).

During the Fall 2014 semester, Christina taught one sixteen-week in-person course and one seven and a half week online course during the second half of the semester (mid-October through early December). Therefore, she attended training in August but did not actually start to teach online until October. Thus, her pre-experiment classification of skills are a combination of her pre-assessment responses (from August)

and evidence gleaned from a class recording during the first two weeks of her course in October. Given this participant profile, her measured level of competency in each of the five skill areas prior to and at the end of the experiment will now be explored and discussed. A summary of the results can be seen in the following figure.

Figure 2

Christina's pre- and post-assessment online language teaching skill levels.
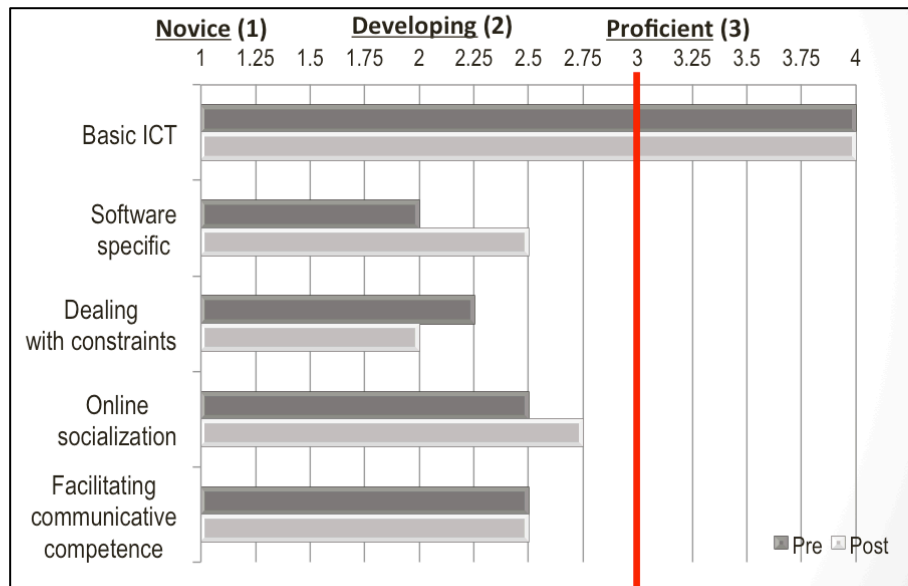
In figure 2, Christina's pre-experiment proficiency level is in the darker gray colored horizontal bar whereas her post-experiment proficiency level is in the light gray colored horizontal bar. The vertical red line represents the proficient level of competence which is the threshold it was hoped instructors would reach prior to teaching a language course online. In brief, Christina entered into the experiment and maintained an advanced level of proficiency in her *Basic ICT competence* skills. However, in all the other skill areas, Christina did not reach proficiency by the end of the experiment even though she did still show some growth in the areas of *course specific programs/software* and *online*

socialization. Christina's proficiency level had no change in the area of *facilitating communicative competence* and decreased in the area of *dealing with the constraints and possibilities of the medium*. A detailed discussion of her pre- and post-experimental proficiency classifications continues below.

Basic ICT competence. Even before beginning the experiment, Christina expressed an advanced level of comfort with regards to *basic information and communications technology* skills (navigating/using programs such as *Microsoft Word*, *PowerPoint*, navigating the internet via browsers, listening to audio, etc. – see Appendix B for further operationalization). Given this advanced level, nuanced elements of these skills were not examined any further to see if there was growth beyond the advanced level (e.g. to the expert level) throughout the experiment. The importance of recognizing her advanced level in this area is only in showing that she had a strong basis regarding fundamental technological skills required of online language teachers. As Hampel and Stickler (2005) point out, "skills on this level might nowadays be a prerequisite for selecting tutors to teach online" (p. 317).

Specific technical competence for the software. With regards to the second skills area, *specific technical competence of course specific software/programs*, participants were asked to report on their comfort level with various aspects of *Blackboard*, the course management system used, and *Adobe Connect*, the virtual classroom platform where all SVCSs between the teacher and students took place. Christina did increase her competency in this skill area, however by the end of the experiment she had still not reached proficiency (Pre-experiment score: 2; post-experiment score: 2.5). On the pre-assessment, Christina professed to be very

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comfortable or comfortable with most aspects of the course management system,

Blackboard. However, even after attending the three-day training which incorporated

some instruction with the videoconferencing platform, *Adobe Connect*, Christina felt only

slightly comfortable or slightly uncomfortable with many of the basic uses/features

which, importantly, were features she would need to use on a regular basis while

conducting her online course. The training was intended to be hands-on, however, given

Christina's first journal entry, it seems that completely new users could have used a bit

more practice: "It was really helpful for being a first timer, but I felt that maybe if we had

practiced using Adobe Connect with a small group just to get a feel, that this would have

helped me a little more." (Christina, Teaching Journal 1). Indeed, many authors have

stressed the importance of hands-on experiences in testing out tools, not only alone but

also in constructive activities that put the instructor in the role of the learner while

navigating the programs (e.g. Ernest et al., 2013; Hampel & Hauck, 2004).

On the post-assessment, although Christina's comfort level had greatly improved

regarding all aspects of *Adobe Connect* and a few aspects of *Blackboard*, she still

reported being only slightly comfortable and/or still slightly uncomfortable with many of

the basic uses/features of *Adobe Connect* even after having used the program and

teaching with it for seven and a half weeks. Due to her sustained level of discomfort with

many features of the course specific program, Christina never reached full proficiency in

this skill area.

As just mentioned, Christina's proficiency did increase in the area of *specific*

technical competence of course specific software/programs. This is clear evidence that

some of these skills can be developed on their own and grow even without a conscious

effort thus, they can improve simply by increasing hands-on experience with the programs. Lewis (2006) reports similar findings of development in reaching comfort levels with the new programs and tools by the sixth week of his very first online course. However, especially given that Christina is a graduate student and not a seasoned classroom teacher nor an individual with much interest in being a teacher later on, more than likely the only way to truly develop these skills to reach the proficient level and more advanced levels is through continued training and professional development opportunities (Comas-Quinn, 2011). Many of Christina's continued areas of discomfort with certain features of the course specific programs could have been remedied simply by a more in-depth and personalized training session where she had a chance to ask some specific questions about issues she was having or procedures she was uncomfortable performing. Also it is important to keep in mind that this training should be a required condition of employment (see Comas-Quinn, 2011). Christina's progress in dealing with the constraints and possibilities of the medium are examined and discussed in the next section.

Dealing with the constraints and possibilities of the medium. Christina's pre-experiment classification in this category was developing (2.25). This particular category of skills spans across a wide-range of knowledge and behaviors therefore, each of the four specific operationalizations of this construct will be looked at in detail and in light of Christina's results. The first aspect of dealing with the constraints and possibilities of the medium has to do with recognizing that teaching online is different than face-to-face and being able to articulate those differences and adapt to them. The overwhelming trend in Christina's responses tended to lean towards a view of seeing the online virtual classroom

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(i.e. the synchronous small-group meetings between the instructor and students) as the new replacement of the face-to-face classroom and as such, she viewed the virtual classroom as the space where most of the learning, teaching and interacting would take place. Viewing online teaching and learning this way created many challenges for Christina because she felt pressured to deliver the same amount and type of information in the thirty-minute weekly meeting online as she would during three hours of weekly face-to-face time with students in a traditional course, a feat which is essentially impossible. Furthermore, given that Christina frequently expressed throughout the experiment and even at the end of the experiment feeling rushed, not having enough time to do everything that needed to get done and generally not having enough time with students, it was concluded that she in fact is not consistently adapting to the differences of the online medium and therefore remained even at the end of the experiment with developing skills in this category.

The second aspect of dealing with the constraints and possibilities of the medium relates to demonstrating knowledge of the types of activities that can and cannot take place in the online medium and also being able to show evidence of consistent adaptation of in-person activities to successful online activities where the same learning objectives are achieved. On the pre-assessment, although Christina did show evidence of recognizing certain activities that cannot take place in the online environment (such as students working in small groups and then switching up their small groups to change partners – this is not possible in this course environment since students meet in groups of three at the most) and even suggests a possible modification to make this type of activity possible, she showed no evidence of applying this type of innovation or creativity to the

activities she carried out during the SVCSs. Therefore, although she demonstrated knowledge of what kinds of activities are and are not possible, this knowledge was deemed to be inconsistent due to her not always implementing activities that were fully appropriate to this medium (as evidenced in the class recordings and observation reports). More discussion of the types of activities implemented in the virtual meeting sessions will take place when addressing her skill of *facilitating communicative competence*.

The third area of this skill pertains to using course software/programs so as to best achieve the desired learning outcomes. Further operationalized, this could be evidenced by taking advantage of the multimodal tools available to best facilitate student-student communication that is not constantly interrupted by the instructor for purposes of providing feedback, assistance, etc. Christina showed evidence of skills in this area a bit beyond the developing level but not quite to proficiency. This evidence comes from her continued use of the presentation tools within the *Adobe Connect* classroom and also her choice at times to use the discussion notes or chat function during the meetings to give information to students to help maintain the flow of conversation without dominating the floor with teacher-talk. Also, by using the presentation tools as a way to share information visually with students that may also be discussed orally, she was taking advantage of one of the possibilities of the medium.

Additionally, at one point during her first class recording, she used the chat box to provide assistance to students when they were having difficulty coming up with a certain vocabulary word. This proved to be very effective and allowed the students to continue their conversation without having to stop for two minutes or so to engage in an exchange with the instructor about how to form numbers in the target language – a conversation

that could have potentially de-railed the focus and development of the activity. Conversely, although evidence is presented of Christina's developing ability to take advantage of the tools available to her, she was not given a proficient categorization in this part of the skill due to the fact that she took advantage of these tools inconsistently. The majority of the class recording was still dominated by teacher-talk in which Christina took a lot of time to explain activity instructions to students – a struggle that could be facilitated through more efficient use of the multimodal tools (e.g., more explicit instructions and/or examples on the presentation to clarify activity procedures). In sum, in this area, Christina showed tendencies towards being proficient but was still categorized as developing.

The fourth and last area pertaining to this skill deals with the ability to adapt the classroom discourse to be appropriate to the online environment. In a medium where body language and gestures are limited due to each interlocutor's separation in time and space, complications in turn-taking and general anxiety about interacting in this medium abound (Hampel, 2009). It is, therefore, a responsibility of the instructor to mediate these challenges by adjusting discourse appropriately (e.g., designating new techniques to facilitate turn-taking, learning to step back and allow students to directly interact without constant interruptions from the instructor)(Hauck & Haezewindt, 1999) and also by informing/teaching students about how to best interact in this environment in order to minimize anxiety (e.g., patience with delays, explicit turn-taking through direct questions, etc.). Although Christina showed developing tendencies in the pre-experiment classification, she did not consistently apply any of the above mentioned principles in her SVCSs. In her first SVCS recording, there were very few moments of actual sustained

student-to-student interaction that went uninterrupted by the instructor. However, Christina was not totally oblivious to this as was evidenced on her self-observation report in response the statement 'The amount of teacher-talk and student-talk was appropriate': "I feel like I did most of the talking while the students listened [...] I need to work on getting the students to talk more and [to] dominate the conversation" (Christina, Self-Observation Report 1). Moreover, with regards to the instructions that she was giving to students, Christina mentioned being uncertain as to whether or not they were effective:

> I think the activities corresponded with the chapter concepts, however I do think I could have chosen some different activities or could have given more direct instructions so that way the students knew to converse with one another rather than tell me about their nights [...] I think I gave clear instructions, but when I would hear pauses or hesitations I would repeat them or give them in English. I am not sure then if the instructions were clear. (Christina, Self-Observation Report 1)

It is evident from these recollections that Christina was still working on developing and finding an appropriate and efficient virtual classroom discourse that facilitates the type of interaction she plans for in these meetings.

On the post-experiment classification, Christina showed no growth or progress in this overall skill category. In fact, she was actually given a lower numerical score (2 instead of 2.25) due to the increased amount of teacher-talk in the second course observation and the fact that students did not directly interact at all during that SVCS. Christina commented on this in her second Self-Observation Report: "I still talk too much in my lessons. The students did talk, but I feel that they are talking more to me,

explaining things to me rather than talking amongst themselves about a particular activity." Her classifications in each of the four parts of this skill area remained the same as the pre-experiment score for the same reasons. In other words, she showed no change in knowledge or ability to implement that knowledge regarding the constraints and possibilities of the medium from the time of the pre-experiment evaluation to the post-experiment evaluation.

The lack of growth in being able to consistently deal with the constraints and possibilities of the medium can be attributed mainly to a lack of training and follow-up professional development. Perhaps one main reason that Christina did not grow in this area is related to there not being a specific part of the formal training at the beginning of the semester that focused on these strategies. Given that the training was attended by teachers of various languages and levels with differing course designs (e.g. some requiring weekly SVCSs, others requiring individual student-teacher monthly SVCSs, while others not having any synchronous meeting requirements), the synchronous interaction that did take place in some courses was not an area of focus. If it was mentioned, these SVCSs were talked about in a general way and therefore specific techniques of facilitating student-to-student interaction or adjusting classroom discourse, for example, were never discussed. Other authors have found, similarly, that when instructors were not given enough time to develop a deep understanding of the pedagogical considerations when considering how one uses certain tools (i.e. *Adobe Connect*) or enough time to really understand how teaching online is different, teachers struggle when teaching their own online language courses (Comas-Quinn, 2011).

Furthermore, in the program where Christina teaches, this is simply not a topic discussed by coordinators and/or teachers of these online language courses in a formal manner where instructors can actually receive direct instruction on how to deal with and overcome the challenges associated with the constraints and possibilities of the online medium. During the post-interview, when Christina was asked if she felt supported as an online language teacher and by whom, she mentioned that she definitely felt supported by colleagues (who were other fairly inexperienced online language teachers). When she was prompted to provide more specific information about who she reaches out to in different situations and specifically when she would reach out to her supervisor or coordinator, she said she would do so when she had issues with the course management system (i.e. technical issues) or when there happened to be an incident with a student. Additionally she reported that she had not thought of reaching out to her coordinator for help, even though the coordinator was currently teaching an online course. Given that Christina had never considered the idea of reaching out to her coordinator regarding day-to-day course related procedures that she was having trouble with (such as task design and implementation), it seems evident that instructors in this program are not given the impression that the coordinator would be the one to go to for these types of issues. Therefore, they are left to rely upon advice from colleagues, however good or bad it may be.

Lastly, when asked about having attended any workshops or continued training for help, she said that she was unable to due to scheduling issues but that she was going to attend one soon, although she admitted that it was partially due to it being a service requirement as a TA. Unfortunately, this is an issue commonly cited in literature

regarding online language teachers and their pre- and in-service training (Blake, 2013; Ernest et al., 2013; Hauck & Stickler, 2006; Lewis, 2006). The recommendations made by many authors regarding opportunities for continued training and development will be discussed in more detail in the conclusions and implications of this study. Now Christina's proficiency in the fourth skill area will be explored.

Online socialization. In the area of *Online Socialization* skills, a continued trend is observable in which Christina's skill level increases but not quite to the level of proficiency. For the pre-experiment classification Christina demonstrated a skill level mainly in the developing category concerning her knowledge of and the importance of a learning community and her role in creating and maintaining the learning community within her course although she showed some signs of proficiency with regards to her knowledge of tools that could be used to foster and maintain the community. Furthermore, she showed strong evidence of a positive rapport between herself and students and there was evidence of positive rapport between the students in her recorded SVCS. This resulted in a pre-experiment classification of developing but moving towards proficiency (2.5). For the post-experiment classification, her proficiency level increased a small amount due to her increasing awareness of the importance of a learning community within the course, a concept she was not necessarily sold on prior to teaching online. Evidence of this change can be seen in the following pre- and post-assessment responses to the question "Is a learning community necessary in order for students to acquire/learn listening, reading, speaking and writing skills in a foreign language? Please elaborate:"

I don't think a learning community is necessary but it does help. Students

can learn on their own, but in a learning community students can practice

speaking, reading, writing with others so that they can help each other

perfect their abilities. (Christina, Pre-Assessment)

 I believe so since the learning community needs to interact with one

another. If they are learning a language, it would definitely help to practice

speaking with another person as well as listening to another and peer

editing papers/writing. Even though the others in the community are not

masters yet, it still helps since one person might have knowledge of a

specific concept and can help others who have issues with it (Christina,

Post-Assessment)

The main reason that Christina was not categorized as proficient but still considered to be

developing (2.75) in this skill area pertains to the ability to demonstrate consistent

knowledge of the instructor role in creating and maintaining a learning community. On

the assessment, when asked about the role that the instructor plays in creating a learning

community in a language course, she only referred to what an instructor might do within

the classroom setting (virtual and in-person) but never mentioned what other types of

efforts a teacher should make to create and foster that community outside of the

classroom.

As was similarly observed with the development of Christina's proficiency in the

software specific skills, it seems evident again that her proficiency in the area of online

socialization improved simply as a result of her having taught online for the first time and

witnessing the value of the learning community in facilitating interaction between

students which helps lead to the development of their language skills. One of the areas

that continued to hold Christina back with regards to development of this skill pertained to her tendency to only view her role in creating/maintaining the learning community as limited to the interactions that took place during SVCS interactions. However, it seems important to mention that perhaps this view is reinforced by the course design which in and of itself does not include any sort of required asynchronous activities with a main goal being that of creating community among learners in the course.

Furthermore, due to the rigid course structure, graduate student instructors, even if they deemed it appropriate or necessary, do not have the freedom to create and incorporate additional activities into the course that would actually count towards the students' final grades, a situation common to many language tutors/instructors (see White, 2006). Therefore, even though the topic of creating and maintaining community was a fundamental component of the teacher training program that Christina attended, and a great emphasis was placed not only on what could be done during synchronous interaction but also during asynchronous interaction between students to facilitate the learning community, this was a concept she was introduced to but was unable to try out or apply at all when she actually taught due to constraints of the course design. Again, Christina showed knowledge of tools that could be used to help create a learning community among online students in her course but since she was never given the opportunity to apply those concepts and really try out what did and did not work, her growth in this skill area was stunted. As Hampel and Stickler (2005) point out, the *online socialization* skill is not an easy one to master in the online environment (p. 318).

Facilitating communicative competence. In the last skill area considered in this study, that of *facilitating communicative competence*, Christina showed no change in her

skill level between the pre- and post-experiment classifications (Pre- and post-experiment scores, 2.5). Although on both assessments she was able to consistently give many examples of tools that could be used to facilitate synchronous and asynchronous interaction among students, the evidence pertaining to a consistent student-centered approach to teaching and effective task design that promoted meaningful communication between students was in fact, inconsistent. More specifically, the SVCS recordings observed both at the beginning and the end of the course showed a teacher-dominated interaction with only moments of purely student-to-student interaction, that is to say that the students may have been instructed to converse with one another but the teacher often intervened for reasons of providing feedback, assistance, etc. and this frequent intervention disrupted the flow of communication between students.

Furthermore, although many tasks were designed with the intent for students to engage in meaningful communication, the lack of explicit instructions and/or lack of student motivation/preparation impeded sustained successful communication between students. It is estimated that during the pre-assessment SVCS recording that, out of 30 minutes, the two students only truly interacted directly with each other (i.e. more than just one simple question and one simple response but an actual back-and-forth exchange of information in the TL) for no more than 6 minutes total. Equally important is the complete lack of student-to-student interaction that took place in the post-assessment SVCS recording. Interestingly, Christina was completely aware and moreover frustrated by the fact that she had difficulty getting students to engage directly with one another during the meetings. She commented in her last teaching journal:

The execution of activities was a little more challenging. It was obvious most of

the students had not studied the material thoroughly. It seems they would show up

just to be taught instead of using the material in a meaningful way.

I am not sure if my methods work and/or were successful. I had trouble

translating in-person class activities to online activities. (Christina, Teaching

Journal 4)

When asked to comment on this during the post-interview, Christina was very adamant

about how the time constraints (only thirty minutes once a week) were making it difficult

to allow students enough time to develop their answers and work through some of the

interactions – everyone is different, need different practice, explanations, etc. Time

constraints were also a common issue reported in several other previous studies (Comas-

Quinn, 2011; Shelley et al., 2006).

Although a large portion of the training at the beginning of the semester did focus

on exploring ways to adapt in-person activities to online activities, it again, was a rather

general discussion aimed at a very diverse audience of teachers of different languages

and levels. Christina's lack of growth in this skill area is most likely due to several

factors. First, throughout the entire course that she taught online, Christina was never

contacted by a supervisor neither did she reach out to receive feedback about the types of

tasks she was implementing during the SVCSs. She mentions several times in the

teaching journals that she reached out to colleagues (i.e. other beginning online language

teachers with very limited amounts of formal training) for advice and ideas. However, the

lack of infrastructure within the coordination and program where Christina teaches to

provide support for new teachers was obviously detrimental to her success (Ernest &

Hopkins, 2014).

Second, Christina was never given explicit instruction about what type of

activities should be taking place during these sessions other than that students needed to

practice speaking. Given the lack of direction, when designing tasks in this course

Christina was essentially shooting in the dark and hoping to hit the target:

> So far in my online course it hasn't been too bad with planning activities.
> It is difficult to decide which activities to do that will best incorporate
> most of the concepts for the chapter. I was provided some *powerpoints*
> from fellow colleagues that I could use and tweak to my preferences. I
> found this extremely helpful as I was still unsure of how to incorporate in-
> person class activities into an online environment. I would find that the
> *powerpoints* provided were sufficient enough for what I would plan and
> wouldn't change much.

> I did have some trouble with the execution of the activities. Most
> of the students, you could tell they had not looked over the book pages
> assigned or any of the pages for chapter of the week. It was extremely
> difficult to conduct one class where it took most of the virtual session for a
> few of the students to produce one complete thought. There are some
> students who are more experienced with Spanish and try to help those
> students who struggle, but at the same time, it still takes the students who
> are struggling time to comprehend the material.

I am becoming frustrated with the online class since it is such a

short amount of time to meet with the students and try to incorporate all of

the chapter concepts, allowing the students to practice. *I feel like in my*

online class I am doing a bad job since I don't get to cover as much

material and help the students effectively [emphasis added]. (Christina,

Teaching Journal 2)

Third, Christina seemed to be completely overwhelmed and almost defeated by

the fact that students continually attended her sessions unprepared:

I have still been having issues with students not coming prepared to their

virtual meetings. I have told them in various sessions that they need to

study the book, come to my office hours, practice with iLrn

(flashcards/grammar videos), but I still feel that my students are not

utilizing all the available tools of the course. […] I am just becoming more

and more frustrated. I am definitely not for online teaching. (Teaching

Journal 3)

She commented several times throughout her teaching journals that she had

reached out to colleagues for assistance and ideas of different activities to try out

during the sessions but that she always ended up unsuccessful: "I have asked my

fellow colleagues for help, but when I try to implement them in my sessions, they

aren't effective and I have to change them again." (Christina, Teaching Journal 3).

Other studies have also reported online language teachers, especially new

ones, having difficulty learning how to direct and implement tasks in the online

environment and thus having issues with producing appropriate interaction

patterns among students (Duensing et al., 2006; Stickler et al., 2005). It seems plausible, then, that given the lack of direction Christina received, her difficulty in this area is partly a result of her still learning to develop a comfort level and style of teaching in the online medium, findings which are similarly reported by Stickler et al. (2005): "To a lesser degree, maybe, the relative newness of the course, of the tasks, and of the medium to some of our tutors can be held responsible for tutor-centered interaction patterns" (p. 7).

Summary. The above sections have provided a detailed profile of Christina as a language teacher and also closely examined her proficiency level in each of the five skill areas. In sum, Christina entered the experiment with an advanced skill level in *basic ICT competence*. This skill area was not explored in further detail as it did not greatly influence any challenges or difficulties in developing any of the other skills. Christina's proficiency level in the second skill area, *specific technical competence for the software*, did increase slightly (from 2 to 2.5) but still did not quite reach proficiency due to her continuing discomfort with several important features of the specific course programs. In short, the growth was deemed to be due to simply having more contact hours with the programs (Lewis, 2006) whereas the lack of reaching proficiency is mainly due to a lack of specific training and/or professional development opportunities (Comas-Quinn, 2012).

In the third skill area, *dealing with the possibilities and constraints of the medium,* Christina actually showed a decrease in proficiency (from 2.25 to 2) and therefore evidenced a firm classification at the developing level. This lack of

growth is attributed to having received very little explicit and hands-on instruction

(i.e. formal training and/or department/program policies, orientations, etc.)

regarding this skill (Hampel & Hauck, 2004).

With regards to the fourth skill area, *online socialization*, Christina again

showed a small increase in proficiency however still does not reach a proficient

post-experiment classification (2.5 to 2.75). Similar to the second skill area,

Christina's level of proficiency slightly increased simply due to her increased

exposure to teaching online which created a heightened awareness of the

importance of learning communities for the students' successful development of

language skills. However, she failed to meet proficiency because of a lack of

motivation and/or opportunities to participate in the creation and sustaining of that

community outside of the thirty minute weekly SVCSs.

In the fifth and last skill area, that of *facilitating communicative*

competence, Christina showed a firm placement in the developing category but

demonstrated some progression towards reaching proficiency. Nevertheless, no

growth occurred in this area while she participated in this experiment (pre- and

post-experiment classification, 2.5) for several reasons. Mainly, Christina did not

receive clear direction at the beginning of the course regarding the expectations of

the activities to be carried out during the SVCSs and furthermore, she did not

receive any ongoing support and/or feedback from supervisors or colleagues

throughout the semester leading to a trial-and-error approach to designing

activities which was ultimately unsuccessful (Ernest & Hopkins, 2014; Stickler et

al., 2005).

By the end of this study, Christina did not reach proficiency in any of the skill areas she had not already been proficient in prior to starting the experiment. The main reasons for this generally pertain to a lack of initial hands-on formal training in specific skill areas and a lack of continued opportunities for training or professional development in specific areas of need personalized to the instructor. Further discussion of possible solutions and recommendations to improving instructor's proficiency levels in all skills areas are developed in the General Discussion section after the case studies and in the section on implications.

Case Study 2: John

John is a twenty-seven year old native speaker of English who had already taught one online Spanish course before the Fall 2014 semester. At the time the experiment took place, John was starting his second year of graduate studies related to Spanish Second Language Acquisition [SLA] and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages [TESOL]. Additionally, he was assigned to teach an in-person Spanish course during the Fall 2014 semester and it would be his fourth semester doing so. John reported having studied Spanish in four courses in high school, for four years during college and for one year in Spain. Furthermore, he reported having spent three years in Spain where he worked teaching English and studied the language formally and informally. Similar to Christina, prior to participating in this experiment he had attended a one week long orientation provided to new TAs at the institution where he currently works/studies that took place exactly a year before starting this study and focused mainly on teaching in a traditional classroom setting. Additionally, during his first semester as a TA, he attended a teaching methods course for TAs teaching various target languages at his institution,

which also focused mainly on face-to-face language teaching. Therefore, although John did not have extensive classroom teaching experience prior to the experiment, he was not a complete beginner to teaching online or in-person language courses.

When asked to give an abbreviated version of his teaching philosophy, John provided a much more developed response than any of the other two participants in these case studies. He expressed the following in response to the question "What is your general (in brief format) teaching philosophy/style? EXAMPLE: I mainly teach with a communicative method because…" (Background Questionnaire):

What does it mean to be a teacher? Many definitions exist, with even more examples represented all over the world. A teacher for some is a lecturer, a presenter, and a "giver" of knowledge, however, a great friend of mine, and respected teacher, once told me: "Un maestro no es un mero transmisor de conocimientos sino un medio para alcanzar el desarrollo integral de tus alumnos (en lo afectivo, lo social, lo cognitivo, y lo motor)." [A teacher is not a mere transmitter of knowledge, but rather, a means to achieve the development of your students (In emotional, social, cognitive, and motor ways)]. Based on this idea, I believe that the role of the teacher is to act as a guide, and work with the students to help them discover their path, while at the same time, instilling in them the fire inside to continue to explore beyond the classroom. As a foreign language teacher specifically, I believe it is even more important to interact with students in an engaging manner, which allows them to foster their communication skills. *Communication, is of course, the end result of any foreign language instruction, in that, the goal of any serious language learner is to be able to express their*

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thoughts and feelings effectively with others [emphasis added]. (John, Background Questionnaire)

According to the responses given, it is clear that he subscribes to a communicative teaching method and strives to prepare his students to be able to express themselves as best they can to one another and any other interlocutor they come across in the TL.

In line with his thoughtful response regarding his teaching philosophy, John also expressed deep motivations for being a language teacher currently and when asked why he is a teacher he replied: "I teach…therefore I am. Why not? 'I am not a teacher, but an awakener' –R. Frost." (John, Background Questionnaire). Furthermore, in response to a question aimed at identifying his personal attitudes, motivations and/or opinions towards teaching, John responded: "LANGUAGE IS AWESOME. Learning and teaching foreign languages are what truly makes me happy, and I feel with the right motivation, anyone can be successful." (John, Background Questionnaire). In contrast with Christina regarding plans to pursue this avenue as a main focus in his later career after graduate school, John was very enthusiastic and expressed deep interest in continuing to be a language teacher: "I would like to teach as my main focus, although in today's world, it is becoming increasingly difficult to only teach or only do research (although I think both are important, I would like to focus on teaching)." (John, Background Questionnaire). Overwhelmingly, the impression created based on the responses to the background questionnaire was that of a passionate, motivated graduate student and language teacher deeply invested in student success and learning more about how to be an effective language teacher.

As mentioned previously, John had one semester of online teaching experience

prior to the Fall 2014 semester and generally was open-minded regarding the possibilities of learning a language in this medium: "[Teaching languages online] can be difficult, but it is not impossible, and even though we do not see it as an equal, it has its possibilities." (John, Background Questionnaire). John did not have extensive experience as an online student however he did report having taken a beginning German course online and assessed it as a positive experience overall: "It was a good experience. I needed to have more contact time with the language, but it was well done." (John, Background Questionnaire). In sum, at the outset of his journey to teach his second online language course, John seemed positive and open to the possibilities that this medium of instruction had to offer.

During the Fall 2014, John was assigned to teach a seven and a half week online class in addition to a traditional fifteen-week in-person course. His online course started immediately after his attendance to the online language teacher training sessions at the beginning of the semester. John's pre-experiment classification of online language teaching skills were measured based on the responses he gave on the pre-assessment and evidence observed during a recording of one SVCS made during the first two weeks of his course in August and subsequent self and researcher observation reports. Therefore, his post-experiment classification of skills reflects his responses on the post-assessment (completed in mid-October) and a recording of one SVCS made during the last two weeks of his course and corresponding self and researcher observation reports. Given John's participant profile, his measured proficiency level in each of the five skill areas pre- and post-experiment will now be explored and discussed. A summary of the results can be seen in the following figure.

Figure 3

John's pre- and post-assessment online language teaching skill levels.
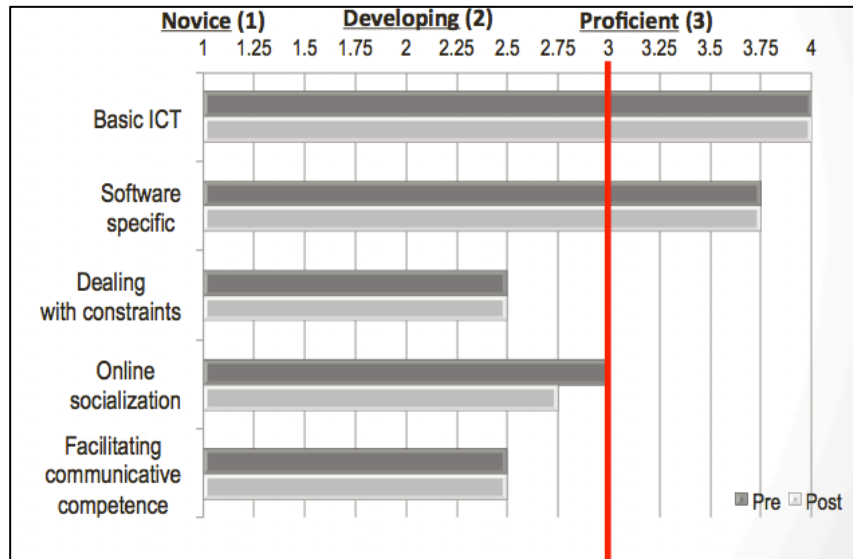
In the figure 3, John's pre-experiment proficiency level is in the darker gray colored horizontal bar whereas his post-experiment proficiency level is in the light gray colored horizontal bar. The vertical red line represents the proficient level of competence which is the threshold it is hoped instructors reach prior to teaching a language course online. In brief, John was above advanced in the first two skill areas before and after participating in this experiment. In the third skill area, John never reached the proficiency level and did not see growth in this skill area. In the fourth skill area, John actually decreased his proficiency from proficient on the pre-experiment classification to developing on the post-experiment classification. Finally, in the last skill area John did not show any change in proficiency and remained firmly at the developing level. John's detailed results in each of the skill areas for the pre- and post-experiment proficiency classifications are discussed in detail in the following sections.

Basic ICT competence. In this first basic skill area, John, similar to Christina,

entered into the experiment with a very advanced level of comfort. His pre- and post-experiment classifications in the area of *basic ICT competence* were both rated as advanced (4) given his self-professed high level of comfort with basic computer applications such as *Microsoft Word*, *PowerPoint*, navigating the internet with a browser, etc. This skill area was not examined any further to investigate proficiency beyond the advanced level (e.g. as expert) given that reaching proficiency was the main focus of this study. Identifying John's advanced skill level in this area helps to contextualize him as an individual with a strong grasp of the fundamental technological skills required of online language teachers.

Specific technical competence for the software. In this second area of skills, John was rated as beyond proficient in both the pre- (3.75) and post-experiment assessments (3.5). On the pre-assessment, John expressed being comfortable or very comfortable with all aspects of the course management system, *Blackboard*, and the SVCS platform, *Adobe Connect*. Furthermore, he showed evidence of being able to provide troubleshooting advice to students regarding various aspects of *Adobe Connect* and reported feeling very comfortable doing so. On the post-assessment, John continued to show high levels of comfort with all aspects of both course programs however he received a lower score due to his growing discomfort in helping students troubleshoot issues within *Adobe Connect*; he expressed only feeling slightly comfortable in this area. During the course that John taught, he experienced many technical difficulties that he attributed to issues with the SVCS platform, *Adobe Connect*, and, over time was unable to help certain students with their issues which resulted in great frustration on his behalf:

Technology issues yet again have destroyed another lesson. I am becoming more

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and more disheartened by the amount of issues I am having with this platform. I

wish I knew what I could do to make it better. I had one student who kept cutting

in and out and another who could only connect to listen. It is very frustrating.

(John, Teaching Journal 3)

These ongoing challenges most definitely influenced his waning confidence level in this

skill area leading to a reduction in his overall proficiency score. Nonetheless, John did

show extensive knowledge and comfort in this area and also showed knowledge of the

basic and some even more advanced troubleshooting techniques with the *Adobe Connect*

platform – techniques that would normally suffice to solve any typical issues. However,

John's experience exemplifies the importance of instructors having access to continued

technological support throughout their time teaching online (Ernest & Hopkins, 2014).

In the example from John's third teaching journal above, it is evident that he was

frustrated and had reached the limit of what he could do to help remedy some of these

issues. In order to sustain his original high level of proficiency in this category John

would need access to a more in-depth and personalized training/professional development

opportunity or simply a conversation with a technical guru about the problems he was

having and the possible solutions. None of the other participants in this study reported

having any technical issues to the degree that John experienced which emphasizes the

perhaps unique nature of the problems he had and also that John's opinions about the

faulty capabilities of the SVCS platform may be false. This is not to say that the SVCS

platform does not have any issues or that John was experiencing them due to

incompetency in operating within the platform. However, this does show that individuals

experience personalized and unique issues which can cause frustration and impede their

growth and progress. In order to remedy these issues, the individual instructors need to be provided with opportunities for personalized assistance and training (i.e. support) that is readily available to them and easily accessible right away.

Dealing with the constraints and possibilities of the medium. In this third skill area, John showed no change in his proficiency level from the beginning to the end of the experiment and remained firmly classified as developing (2.5) in this category. The skill of *dealing with the constraints and possibilities of the medium* covers a wide range of knowledge and behaviors thus, each of the four operationalizations for this skill are examined individually in light of John's results to fully understand his proficiency level in this category.

The first area of this skill pertains to recognizing that teaching online is different than face-to-face, being able to articulate those differences and also being able to adapt to them. As evidenced by his pre-assessment responses, John clearly knew that teaching and learning a language online is different however, he was inconsistently able to articulate those differences. Similar to Christina, John often referred to the learning that takes place as being a result of the synchronous interaction between students and with the teacher. He mentioned that the only difference between teaching a language online and face-to-face is that the contact time is reduced. Although this shows that he recognized some differences, the brevity of his responses and lack of detail regarding the varied aspects of learning and acquiring a language in either the face-to-face or online environment shows an inconsistent ability to articulate those differences.

The next aspect of this skill area has to do with knowing what types of activities/interactions can and cannot take place successfully in the online medium and

also being able to successfully adapt activities to the online environment so students reach the desired learning outcomes. For the pre-experiment classification, although John did not attempt to present activities during the SVCSs that were impossible in this environment, the underlying objective of many of his activities was for students to engage in back-and-forth dialogue amongst themselves without extensive support from the teacher. Unfortunately, although this may have been the objective, the students rarely engaged in sustained student-to-student communication that was not being frequently interrupted by the instructor. Although the instructor feedback given was sometimes useful, it greatly limited the opportunity for students to interact in the reduced contact time available to them in this course. So, although John recognized that there is reduced contact time and that in order for students to learn they need to interact with one another, he was inconsistent in providing them with opportunities to do so even when presenting pedagogically relevant tasks geared towards promoting meaningful communication among students.

The third operationalization of this skill has to do with the instructor's ability to use course programs/software to achieve desired learning objectives. This includes taking advantage of different tools available within the SVCS platform to provide visual support, feedback, comments, etc., which are all geared towards helping students reach the desired learning outcomes. On the pre-experiment classification, John showed promising capabilities in this area. During the SVCS, John successfully incorporated the use of presentation materials to keep the students focused within the virtual classroom on all of the tasks they worked on. Furthermore, John frequently used the chat box as a way to provide the students with new or unfamiliar vocabulary words and/or structures they

needed to continue conversing amongst themselves. However, again, if the desired learning outcome of these SVCSs involved students engaging directly with one another for a sustained period of time in the target language, then the tools could have been used more effectively to help this happen. Although John presented many tasks aimed at direct student-to-student communication, he was constantly peppering their discussion with comments, questions, and feedback which led to a teacher-centered SVCS. The more frequent use of the chat box and/or the discussion notes would have provided a less intrusive way to take part in the conversation without completely interrupting the flow and impeding the successful achievement of the desired learning outcomes.

The last area of this skill pertains to the instructor's ability to adapt the virtual classroom discourse to the online medium and also the ability to instruct students on how best to adapt their own discourse for better interaction in this environment (i.e. explicit turn-taking to avoid overlapping talk, etc.). On the pre-experiment classification, John showed inconsistent application of skills in this area. On the one hand, he often addressed open-ended questions to the group of students which frequently caused an overlap in their turn-taking, awkward pauses and silences while each one waited for the other to go ahead which then caused a repeat of overlapping turns when both students decided to speak up again. Although this provided a chance for humor and rapport building, by simply directing the question to a specific student, much time could have been saved and much awkwardness could have been eliminated. However, in some activities he would directly call on students to answer specific questions therefore he was inconsistent in that respect.

On the other hand, at one point during the beginning of course SVCS recording, John stopped and took time to discuss with the students that one of them has a delay so it

would be important for them to be patient in waiting for the other student to respond. Nevertheless, after instructing the students to be patient, he seemed to completely ignore his own advice and did not continue modeling this behavior for his students. On the contrary, he often would interrupt or simply talk over the student who had the delay which resulted in the student not being heard and not speaking up again to try to repeat what he had said. Along the same lines, John frequently interrupted the student-to-student discourse with follow-up questions and comments which impeded their successful communication back and forth directly with one another. John does acknowledge this issue but reports feeling that these interruptions were necessary:

> I would have liked to reduce the amount of time that I talked, however I many times feel the students do not interact unless you give them an impulse. I tried to explain to the students the importance of student-student interaction, however I still feel I talked a bit too much. (John, Observation Report 1)

John's observation of his own behavior shows that he felt students needed an impulse to interact. Interestingly, it seems that John had informed students of the importance of them talking to one another yet he repeatedly failed to allow them to practice this communication style. If the students are not given opportunities to successfully interact with one another (which the instructor told them is important) they will not be able to practice and/or develop this skill. Furthermore, telling them they should interact together but not allowing them to do so projects a very mixed message for the students regarding the expectations the instructor has for them during these SVCSs. Accordingly, Wilcoxon (2011) addresses the issue of teaching presence and the importance of instructor modeling: "Teaching presence involves the elements we might normally think of when

we consider teaching: design and organization, direct instruction, and facilitating discourse. Modeling of expected behavior and form, and their enforcement are integral to teaching presence" (p. 3).

Given the above explanations, although John had a higher proficiency level in certain areas of this skill and lower proficiency levels in other areas, the average level for the pre-experiment classification places him firmly within the developing category (2.5). On the post-experiment classification, John did not show any change regarding his proficiency level. He continued to inconsistently articulate his knowledge about the differences of teaching and learning language online versus face-to-face, he continued to present activities that seem to be designed to facilitate interaction between students and the successful achievement of learning outcomes but still dominated the meetings with teacher-centered discourse. Although he continued to use presentation tools and other tools within the SVCS platform, again, he did not show evidence of helping students reach the learning outcomes facilitated by the use of these tools because there were frequent teacher interruptions that disrupted the flow of communication between students. Finally, regarding the virtual classroom discourse, John continued to show evidence of addressing general questions to the whole group which resulted in overlapping conversation. Specifically in this SVCS, the stronger student often overpowered the weaker students when all students spoke up at the same time to answer a question and thus, the teacher and one student dominated the communication during the meeting leaving the two weaker students as almost passive participants with occasional short contributions to the activities. Additionally, John continued to be inconsistent in his modeling of appropriate discourse in the SVCS. Both SVCS recordings show that John

made a great effort to maintain a high percentage of TL interaction (95+% of the time) and in the first recording he was very consistent in doing this. However, in the second recording during one of the activities, John asked the students about a certain vocabulary word and asked them what it meant. Several times during this discussion he kindly reprimanded students for using English when trying to participate in the discussion of what the word meant. Although this is not an issue in and of itself, the issue arises when, in the end, he explained the vocabulary word to the students in English. This example illustrates the issue of broadcasting mixed messages to students about what is expected of them in the meetings through inconsistent instructor modeling and enforcement of appropriate behaviors.

Therefore, in the skill area of *dealing with the constraints and possibilities of the medium*, John does now show any growth or improvement from the beginning to the end of the experiment. This failure to meet the level of proficient is surely due to several different factors. As mentioned in the previous case study, this skill area was not one specifically focused on in the formal training for online language teachers at the beginning of the semester. The type of instruction that John and the other Spanish graduate instructors would have needed in this area would most likely not have been an appropriate element to include in a general training for teachers of many languages at many different levels. The types of skills needed to be proficient in this area are highly dependent upon the course structure and desired learning outcomes for the SVCS as well as the platform being used to connect students. A specific training session or professional development opportunity geared towards dealing with the constraints and possibilities posed by the medium of instruction in these beginning level Spanish courses would have

been immensely beneficial to John as he would have been informed of certain techniques to help reach the desired learning outcome (regarding appropriate discourse, use of tools, moderation of activities), which in this case was sustained meaningful communication between students without constant prompting or comments from the instructor.

An additional reason for the lack of development in this area is most likely due to the fact that the coordinators and/or teachers of these online language courses never in any organized or formal way discuss these challenges and techniques. As previously alluded to in Christina's case study, the need for space (physical or virtual) for teachers of online language courses to collaborate and seek guidance from those who are more experienced or considered to be experts is paramount to the teachers' success in teaching their language courses effectively (Ernest & Hopkins, 2006). The need for a collaborative space will be explored in more detail in the discussion following the case studies and in the conclusions and implications of the study.

Online socialization. This skill area is concerned with the instructors awareness and ability to articulate what a learning community is, what the instructors role is in the learning community, what tools can be used to foster that learning community and also the ability to demonstrate a positive rapport between students and with the teacher which leads to a virtual classroom environment where students are motivated and engaged in participating with low levels of anxiety. John's level in this area was proficient (3) in his pre-experiment classification but fell below the proficiency mark to the developing category (2.75) for the post-experiment classification. The reasons for these classifications will be discussed below.

On both the pre- and post-assessments John was able to easily articulate the

concept and importance of a learning community, his role in creating and maintaining a successful learning community and also a variety of tools that could be used to help foster the learning community in his online language course. Furthermore, in the first SVCS recording, John showed exemplary skills of taking the time to comfort a student that was feeling particularly overwhelmed while trying to perform a language task. Due to the instructors encouragement the student was able to successfully continue and productively contribute to the session. John mentions this on his first self-observation report:

> I believe I did my best to reduce anxiety and other affective filters to the class. This is shown by asking the students to relax (breathing in and out) and supporting them to create with the language and not to worry about mistakes.
> (John, Self-Observation Report 1)

The SVCS recording also shows great evidence of not only a positive rapport between the teacher and the students but also between students. Although this was only the second week of courses and only the second time everyone had interacted together synchronously, there was evidence of laughter and jokes being made and the virtual classroom environment was warm, welcoming and accepting. John also made reference to this rapport in his first self-observation report: "I believe that this class in particular functions very well together. There was a lot of chuckling and laughter, and the students very much so stayed on task." (John, Self-Observation Report 1).

   On the contrary, in John's second SVCS recording, no such level of rapport between students and with the teacher was evident. Students in this session never directly interacted with one another and there seemed to be little positive rapport between the

teacher and the students. In one instance, a stronger student mentioned to the instructor that she and one of the other students had gotten together before the class to study and practice but those two students were never given an opportunity to directly interact and show what they knew and/or had practiced. The stronger student spoke up frequently during this session but the one she had practiced with seemed lost throughout the lesson and even at one point expressed in English that he understood what was going on but could not respond due to his lack of vocabulary. John made reference to this moment in his second self-observation report:

> At one point a student said in English that they understood, but they just didn't have the right vocabulary to speak. At this point, I was at a loss for words, but I tried to reassure the student that everything was going to be ok. (John, Self-Observation Report 2)

In response to the student's utterance, John decided to call on a different student to get the answer and never followed up with the original student to help him find the vocabulary to respond. Although this may have been the most efficient way to continue on with the activity, given that this student repeatedly struggled throughout the lesson with understanding what was going on and being able to contribute in the TL, John's behavior does not lend itself towards a warm, open and accepting virtual classroom atmosphere where students are motivated to participate and interact with low anxiety levels.

Moreover, regarding the virtual classroom environment in the second observation, John seemed to have a rising frustration level as the session progressed and each time a student was confused or lost he seemed to become more and more disappointed. This

emotional factor also appeared to influence the development of the session in that the transitions between activities became more abrupt, students were rarely able to engage directly and the activities were subject to constant teacher intervention. When asked on the self-observation report about the rapport between the teacher and the students, John commented: "I believe I did my best to reduce anxiety and other affective filters to the class. I also feel that I maintained my composure and patience throughout the class." (John, Observation Report 2). Given that John had to comment on maintaining his composure and patience during this session, it appears that he was dealing with frustrations. When asked to talk a little bit about this particular group of students during the post interview, John confirmed his frustrations:

> The second group was always like that […] It's one of those groups where you're giving them all the tools and they're not taking advantage of it and they're just coming to class and they're not prepared, you can't go through any of the activities […] you can't even modify the activity in the moment to make it more accessible to the student because […] they have very weak skills and it seems like they're not willing to work with you and so, you know, as an instructor you try to not be frustrated but it's difficult sometimes. (John, Post-Interview)

Furthermore, on the observation report when asked about the rapport between students and also the sense of community among the students and with the teacher he reported the following: "The students did nothing to indicate any ill will towards one another" and "I do not think there was very much communication therefore it was hard to judge [if there was a sense of community]" (John, Observation Report 2). During the post interview, when asked about whether or not he thought the students would have interacted more

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with each other if they had built more of a sense of community during the course he responded positively and added:

> I think that any time you are comfortable with the people with whom you are interacting you do a much better job interacting, but, creating that affective environment, once again, can be difficult when you're not getting anything from the students, when they're not completing their work, they're not listening to the feedback that you give them, they're not trying to incorporate techniques. For me learning a language is not just learning that *bolígrafo* means *pen*. It's about the process, and about learning ways to communicate effectively and when the students don't do that, you, you can't control their motivation, you can only try and help them push it in the right direction. It's a difficult thing. There are too many factors that go in to something like that but yeah. I feel like there are ways that we can try and do better. (John, Post-Interview)

John's mixed results make it difficult to determine whether or not there was a sense of community among the students. One student did mention that she and another student had studied together before the SVCS (this would be a voluntary meeting given that students are not required to meet synchronously outside of their 30 minute weekly SVCS) which would show positive evidence of community. However, during the actual session the students never directly interacted with one another and only one student seemed consistently comfortable speaking up and participating which would indicate negative evidence of a sense of community. Lastly, the second recording took place during the last regular SVCS of the course and therefore, this would have been the point in the course where the strongest evidence could have been observed of the community

that had developed among the students during the previous four or five weeks of the course. Given that the evidence was inconsistent in this aspect of the skill area, John was classified and developing (2.75) on the post-experiment classification of this skill.

Some of the possible reasons for John's failure to reach and maintain proficiency in the area of online socialization will now be discussed. First, as mentioned in Christina's case study, graduate student instructors at this institution teach within a rigid course structure that does not make room for additional assignments/activities that could be considered in the students' final grades. One of the reasons John may not have been successful in promoting direct interaction among his students in the second observation (during the sixth week of courses) may be due to the lack of comfort the students experienced interacting with one another in the target language, an observation also echoed by Compton (2009), "A sense of trust is particularly relevant in beginners' language courses because learners often feel very insecure and unable to express themselves" (p. 78). Since the course design does not incorporate any activities outside of the thirty minute weekly SVCSs that focus on building community among students in the course (and the focus of the SVCSs is not on creating community although this may be a byproduct), students would have to be proactive in getting to know their classmates on their own time. This was a topic discussed with John during the post-interview with specific consideration of what his role in creating community among the students in that course had been. He asserted the following:

> Well, I guess my role wasn't that big of a role. The only thing that I could do was
> to try to get them to interact outside of class, which is not a requirement, direct
> them to hallway conversations, which was not a requirement, expand upon

discussion boards, which was not a requirement, […] anything that I suggest, and I would often suggest speaking outside of class, speaking with friends, speaking with other classmates. There's only so much you can do when your hands are tied. (John, Post-Interview)

It is clear that John is aware of different techniques to promote the creation of a learning community among students in addition to ways to sustain that community. However, given the context within which he must operate, he is unable to apply and try out that knowledge.

A second and main reason that John was categorized as not proficient in this skill in the post-experiment evaluation can be attributed to the frustration he exemplified during the class recording and the resulting effects of a virtual classroom environment. Clearly his frustration reached a very high level in this meeting and unfortunately may have had an effect on the virtual classroom ambience. John was asked to comment on this session specifically but also in general with regards to his frustration level and typical emotions during virtual meetings:

If I remember correctly, this particular session was near the end of the course, and I also think that weighs into it. You know, after you've gone through weeks and weeks and weeks of the same thing and also trying to get that same thing corrected, it weighs on you so, I would say that it was not typical of me but the only way to know that would be to look at every single session that I've done. I feel like I usually control my emotions pretty well and I'm a pretty patient person but you know we all are human so I can't say yes or no. (John, Post-Interview)

Therefore, although John may have been particularly challenged during this SVCS, in general he felt that he would usually maintain composure and patience during the meetings.

In sum, in order to reach and maintain proficiency in this category, John would need to be provided with a course structure that either allowed him to incorporate well-designed community building activities that would count for a grade or a course structure that already had these elements built in. Moreover, it would be in his best interests to attempt to maintain full composure even at the most frustrating of moments, which is perhaps something he generally is capable of doing but did not exemplify in the data presented for this study. At the same time, certainly these frustrations would be reduced if the students felt comfortable speaking to one another in the target language, a task that would be facilitated by required precursory activities aimed at building that level of comfort. In the next section, John's proficiency level regarding the last skill area will be analyzed.

Facilitating communicative competence. This fifth skill area pertains to an instructor's ability to emphasize a student-centered teaching approach, the ability and consistent implementation of effective tasks that promote meaningful student-to-student communication and knowledge of the tools that can be used to facilitate meaningful interaction between students. While John was able to show some evidence of proficiency in some of these aspects, he was categorized as developing (2.5) on both the pre- and post-experimental classifications. On both assessments, John was easily able to articulate the different kinds of tools that could be used to promote student-to-student interaction as well as provide examples of how to use those tools. Similarly, on both assessments, he

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was easily able to express what a student-centered approach to teaching would entail however he seemed to have difficulty applying these concepts while implementing tasks with his students during the SVCSs. While John did attempt to implement meaningful and communicative tasks, students were very rarely given the floor to directly communicate for sustained periods of time (over a few minutes) without being interrupted, prompted or re-directed by the instructor. On both the beginning and end of course self-observation reports, John mentioned having struggled with speaking too much during the virtual meetings. In both instances he mentioned feeling pressure to constantly prompt his students to speak up: "I many times feel the students do not interact unless you give them an impulse" (John, Observation Report 1) and, "I had to work as a constant initiator." (John, Observation Report 2). Additionally, even though John showed great promise in implementing tasks geared towards stimulating meaningful student-to-student communication, he often spent long moments clarifying instructions for students and/or intervening in the middle of an activity because students were not on the right track as far as the vocabulary or structures they were supposed to be practicing with.

Moreover, in an attempt to fit several activities into one session, often the students were not given long enough of an opportunity to truly develop their interaction before being rushed on to the next activity. For example, in the first class recording, John implemented one activity where the students were supposed to speak directly to one another and discuss what they had done over the weekend. This activity lasted a total of three minutes and one of those minutes involved the teacher intervening to help comfort one student who was feeling overwhelmed. Directly after this activity, John implemented another task that was aimed at the students asking and answering questions back and

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forth related to important dates in their past in order to practice using dates and the preterit tense. This activity lasted six minutes total however after three minutes (of which the students directly interacted for about two minutes and the instructor talked for one minute) one student asked the instructor if they were supposed to be using the preterit tense (which they had not been using up until that point in time). This resulted in a little mini-praise/intervention from John which eventually led to his continued involvement in the conversation for the rest of the activity. Additionally, the implementation of both tasks referenced above and observed in the first SVCS recording seemed to be quite confusing because at the beginning of each of these activities, John explicitly emphasized that the students needed to talk to one another and have a conversation together however, as the activity played out, John involved himself more and more in the conversation to the point where it was no longer a student-to-student conversation. These examples provide a small illustration of the inconsistent ability of John to execute tasks that promoted meaningful communication between students and allowed them to have a sustained conversation without constant instructor intervention. In the second SVCS recording, there were no examples of direct student-to-student sustained interaction beyond one question and one answer and thus, that SVCS was dominated by teacher-talk. Accordingly, John remained classified as developing in this skill area throughout the duration of the course he taught online.

A large portion of the training sessions at the beginning of the semester were dedicated to learning how to translate in-person activities to become effective online tasks for learners all while working towards achieving the same learning outcomes. However, John did not seem to be having trouble designing activities, rather he had

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difficulty implementing and executing them effectively and presenting them in a way that made it explicitly clear to students (though instructions and follow-up modeling of behavior) what was expected of them in the activities. In some cases it seemed that students were more than willing to participate but they were not quite sure how to approach the activity (even after receiving instructions from John) and could have used a bit more guidance. During the post-interview when discussing John's frustration with the lack of participation and preparedness of the students he mentioned that it seemed as if students came to the meetings expecting him to talk and to guide the interaction when in reality he wanted them to talk to one another and he did not want to be the center of attention. When the researcher asked him if he made a habit of explicitly telling students what he expects of them in the interactions, John said that he tells all of them in the SVCS during the first week but that this is not particularly effective because some students do not attend class the first week. Therefore, although the topic of task-design was breached during the training sessions, more advanced training regarding techniques to facilitate student-to-student interaction during SVCSs as well as best practices in the presentation of activity instructions were not touched upon. Given that John received no training in this area, it is not surprising that he experienced these challenges.

Another reason that John may not have been able to grow in this skills area is that he did not have a designated place or person with which to discuss these challenges in a more formal setting. John commented in the post interview that when he would experience challenges or frustrations his main outlet and source of advice was limited to informal interactions with colleagues who were also graduate student online language instructors with minimal training and/or experience. Furthermore, when John was asked

if he felt that there was an expert on online language teaching that he could go to and ask for advice he responded the following:

> I don't think there's an expert. I do have colleagues that I respect that have taught online but I feel that, me personally, I am one of the probably most experienced people when it comes to teaching online. Even though I haven't taught online that long, I do have good technology skills while some of my colleagues do not. And actually, a lot of my colleagues actually come to me to ask for help, what would I do in this situation. And I know this sounds a bit conceited but that's not where I'm going. I just feel like, you know, my support structure and what I have learned has come more from colleagues rather than support structures and supervisors in my program. There have been some online sessions and things that have helped me but, I feel like there needs to also be some more advanced sessions or maybe a group design to help tackle these issues on a more global level. (John, Post-Interview)

Thus, although John expresses interest in resolving some of these issues, there is not a clearly existing resource within his program where he feels he can go and seek advanced guidance.

In order to reach proficiency in this skill area, John would need more advanced training or professional development opportunities geared not just towards creating pedagogically informed tasks aimed at promoting meaningful communication between students but even more so opportunities that focused on specific techniques of executing these tasks with students from beginning to end.

Summary. The above sections have provided a detailed profile of John as an

online language teacher and also closely examined his proficiency level in each of the five skill areas. In sum, John started and ended the experiment with an advanced level of competence concerning his *basic ICT skills* (4+). Growth in this skill area was not examined in detail given John's high level of competence before starting the study. In the second skill area, *specific technical competence of course programs/software*, John was also above the proficiency level at the time the experiment began and his skills in this area neither improved nor worsened throughout the experiment (3.75). Although John did show a decreased level of comfort with his ability to help students troubleshoot within the course SVCS platform due to encountering many technical difficulties while he taught, he still exemplified a more than proficient capability to articulate many different troubleshooting resources for students given their specific situation.

In the third area of skills, *dealing with the constraints and possibilities of the medium*, John also experienced no change in his skill level from the beginning to the end of the experiment but still remained below the proficiency level (2.5). This lack of growth is attributed to John's inconsistent ability to articulate the differences between teaching and learning in face-to-face versus online mediums, inconsistent evidence of his ability to adapt to this medium demonstrated by a sometimes inappropriate classroom discourse, and failure to implement tools allowing for more student-to-student sustained interactions (i.e. which would lead towards achievement of the learning outcomes). It was determined that John was not able to reach proficiency in this area due to insufficient training related to this skill in his specific teaching context and lack of collaborative structure for discussing these challenges and working on solutions.

With regards to the fourth skill area, *online socialization*, John actually showed a

decrease from his pre-experiment classification (3) to his post-experiment classification (2.75). This decrease in proficiency is mainly attributed to his inability to foster community among the students in his class and the consequent difficulty in successfully motivating students to participate and interact with one another during the second SVCS recording. Nevertheless, the issues experienced by John are not ones for which he was completely responsible. The lack of synchronous and/or asynchronous activities built into the course that actually count for points are mainly lacking and thus, there are no purposeful chances for students to get to know one another and grow a sense of community outside of the thirty minute weekly SVCSs. Although John can focus on maintaining a positive, warm and welcoming classroom atmosphere as a means to reach proficiency in this area, it may not be possible to be proficient all the time in this skill area given the current course design and subsequent lack of community between students in the class that do not seek out opportunities to foster community on their own.

Finally, in the fifth and last skill area, *facilitating communicative competence*, John showed no growth in his skills and remained below the proficiency level from the beginning to the end of the experiment. The main reasons he did not reach proficiency are due to his inconsistent ability to demonstrate a student-centered virtual classroom environment and his inconsistent ability to execute tasks that effectively promoted meaningful communication between students as evidenced by mainly teacher-talk dominated SVCS recordings. In order to reach a proficient classification in this skill area, John would need advanced training in techniques for effectively executing tasks that resulted in sustained student-to-student communication with limited teacher interruption.

Therefore, by the end of the experiment, John had not reached proficiency in the

last three skill areas and although he was proficient in the first two skill areas, he started the experiment at that level and thus did not show growth in those areas during the experiment. The main reasons for which John did not reach proficiency are attributed to course design, and lack of specific training and support related to developing techniques in dealing with the constraints and possibilities of the medium in support of facilitating communicative competence through well-designed and well-executed learner activities. Further exploration of possible solutions and recommendations to improving instructors' proficiency levels in all skill areas will be discussed after the conclusion of the case studies.

Case Study 3: Francis

Francis is a twenty-nine year old non-native speaker of English or Spanish who had four semesters experience teaching online and face-to-face language courses at her institution before the Fall 2014 semester. When the experiment began, Francis was starting her third year of graduate studies in Spanish SLA. Francis reported having studied the target language extensively prior to entering graduate school – she referred to several year-long courses related to grammar, stylistics, lexicology and history of the language in addition to a semester long translation course. Furthermore, she reported participating in Spanish conversation practice for five hours a week during a five year period of time. Lastly, Francis had spent nine months working in Spain where she taught English as a Second Language [ESL] courses.

Regarding Francis' training to teach language courses, she reported having attended a one year class about pedagogy for elementary and high school teachers in her native country. Just like Christina and John, Francis also attended a week long orientation

offered by her institution before beginning her graduate studies and additionally, participated in a semester long teaching methods course during her first semester as a graduate student which was a course for TAs of various target languages at her institution. Therefore, although Francis did not have extensive experience teaching online or in the classroom, she was not a complete beginner and furthermore, had been exposed to language teaching in some form for a number of years before beginning her graduate studies and later participating in this study.

Francis professed to have a teaching style aimed at differentiated instruction where she focuses on "applying a variety of methods to target different types of users (e.g. visual, audio, etc)" (Francis, Background Questionnaire). Additionally, she expressed deep motivations towards being a teacher now and in the future: "I wanted to be a teacher since elementary school, enjoy interaction with students and opportunity to always learn myself." (Francis, Background Questionnaire). Regarding her plans to continue teaching she showed great enthusiasm: "Definitely, I would like to develop a course on Hispanic culture that would include tellecollaboration." (Francis, Background Questionnaire). She also mentioned that her motivations towards teaching language are that she "enjoy[s] interaction with students, especially seeing those "aha" moments" and that her motivations towards teaching online are that it is "convenient when you have a little kid, you stay involved with teaching and continue enjoying it, and at the same time spend time with your little one." (Francis, Background Questionnaire). She expands upon the flexibility that online learning has to offer in her first teaching journal:

I think teaching online has big potential. Too often we get caught in tight schedules and don't have time to take classes with face to face format. For this

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reason, I believe online learning comes handy, since it provides an opportunity to

learn, interact, ask questions and get involved in the discussion while being

outside of the conventional classroom. (Francis, Teaching Journal 1A)

Francis mentioned how an online course format can be convenient for students who

might not have opportunities to learn otherwise but that it was also convenient for her to

teach due to her personal commitments. Francis seemed to not only be very open to, but

also, certain of the possibilities that online language courses have to offer, unlike the

other two participants studied who although were somewhat open to it, seemed more

critical of this type of instruction. Additionally, Francis reported never having taken an

online course of any kind in the past.

During the Fall 2014 semester, Francis was assigned to teach two consecutive

seven and a half week online courses and no face-to-face courses. Therefore, in contrast

with both Christina and John's cases, Francis participated in this experiment during both

of her online courses for a total of fifteen weeks – twice as long as the other two

participants. Her first course of the semester started immediately following her

attendance to the online language teacher training sessions. Even though she took part in

this study for twice as long as the other participants, her data were analyzed in a similar

manner to the others. Francis completed only one background questionnaire, one exit

survey, one post-interview and in addition to the pre- and post-assessments, she also

completed a mid-assessment at the end of her first course and before starting to teach her

second course (although this mid-assessment will not be used in the current analysis of

skills). Furthermore, she completed the other instruments – teaching journals, SVCS

recordings/observations – just like the other participants during both of the courses she

taught. Instruments referred to from the first course will have an 'A' after them while as those coming from her second course will have a 'B' (e.g., Teaching Journal 1A or Teaching Journal 1B). However, her pre-experiment measurement of online language teaching skills is still based on the pre-assessment taken at the beginning of the semester and the first SVCS recording from the first course she taught. Accordingly, her post-experiment measurements of skills are based on her final post-assessment and the last SVCS recording made during her second course.

Figure 4

Francis' pre- and post-assessment online language teaching skill levels.
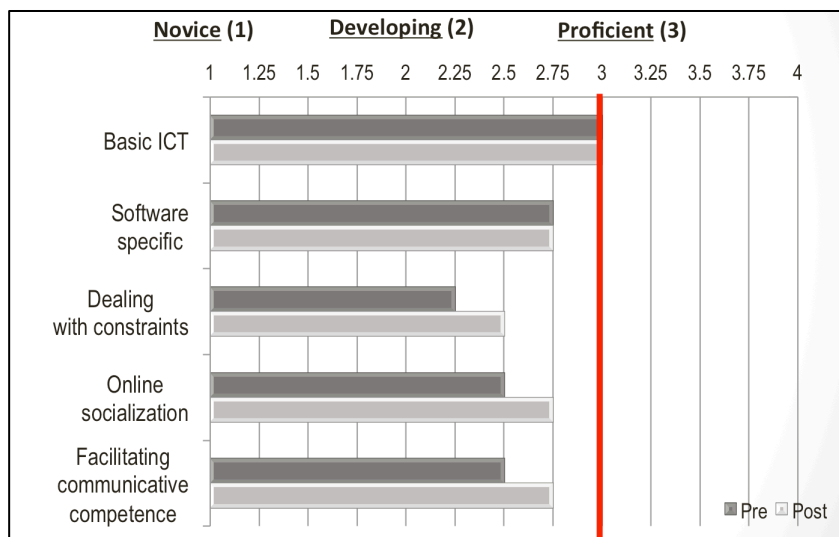
In figure 4, Francis' pre-experiment proficiency level is in the darker gray colored horizontal bar whereas her post-experiment proficiency level is in the light gray colored horizontal bar. The vertical red line represents the proficient level of competence which is the threshold it was hoped instructors would reach prior to teaching a language course online. In brief, for the first skill area, Francis was at proficiency level before and after completing this experiment. In the second skill area, Francis showed no growth and

remained just below proficiency level. In the third, fourth and fifth skill areas, Francis did show growth but still remained in the developing category. Francis' detailed results in each of the skill areas for the pre- and post-experiment proficiency classifications are discussed in detail in the following sections.

Basic ICT competence. This first skill area is concerned with the instructor's ability to use basic computer applications, such as *Microsoft Word* and *PowerPoint* in addition to being able to navigate the internet, listen to audio, etc. Francis professed to be comfortable in this area on the pre-assessment and was therefore classified as proficient (3) in this skill area. On the post-assessment, she, again, reported being comfortable in this area and thus continued with her proficient classification. Given that these skills are considered fundamental in being able to teach online (Hampel & Stickler, 2005), and Francis showed a proficiency in this category even before starting the experiment, the development or growth of these skills was not examined further in this study.

Specific technical competence for the software. Although Francis was comfortable performing many tasks within the course management system, *Blackboard*, and also within the SVCS platform, *Adobe Connect*, she did not feel comfortable troubleshooting with students when they experienced problems or even when she experienced her own problems. Additionally, on the pre-assessment she was able to provide some basic guidance for students having issue within *Adobe Connect* but these troubleshooting techniques only demonstrated some rudimentary options. A proficient online language instructor would be capable of comfortably assisting students with troubleshooting problems in the course specific programs beyond simply logging in and logging out of the system (Hauck & Haezewindt, 1999; McPherson & Nunes, 2004).

Therefore, given these data, for the pre-experiment classification in this skill area, Francis was categorized as developing (2.75).

On the post-experiment classification of skills, Francis showed no growth in this category. In fact, she reported even lower levels of comfort in helping students troubleshoot within the course management system and the SVCS platform. On the post-assessment, in response to a question that asked what instructions she would give to a student having issues with audio or video in *Adobe Connect*, she provided a few troubleshooting ideas and then expressed discomfort in this area overall: "Honestly, I am not a big helper when it comes to Adobe Connect. Had audio issues myself a lot during the last semester, and was not able to figure them out, needed to restart a computer, then it worked." (Francis, Post-Assessment). This sustained level of discomfort in the area of troubleshooting was the reason that Francis never reached proficiency in this category by the end of the experiment.

The lack of growth in this skill area is most likely attributable to a lack of training with this specific course program and Francis never reaching out to seek help with her challenges. In Hampel & Hauck's (2004) article about the use of synchronous audio conferencing in distance language courses, they mentioned that instructors as well as students experienced many technical issues but that through a "continuing communication process" (p. 75) with their technical support helpdesk, many solutions were provided to the problems being experienced and improvements were made so that all instructors could benefit. Francis was not part of any communication process regarding her troubleshooting issues in this problem which certainly stunted her growth of knowledge in this area. As Hampel and Stickler (2005) state, it is the responsibility of

the institution to make sure that instructors are trained properly to teach in these online environments – even if that training simply involves teaching instructors how to reach out for further support: "If institutions want to offer quality online courses, they have to ensure that they train their tutors in basic ICT use, software-specific application, and the affordances of the medium" (p. 323).

Dealing with the constraints and possibilities of the medium. This construct deals with the instructor's ability to demonstrate an awareness of the differences of teaching online versus in a face-to-face environment, the ability to consistently adapt in-person activities to online activities and implement them using the appropriate course tools in order for students to reach the same learning outcomes, and the ability to effectively communicate with students during the SVCS and teach them to communicate with each other while keeping in mind the constraints of the medium. On the pre-experiment classification, Francis was scored as developing (2.25) in this skill area. As this construct includes many different types of skills, each of the four specific operationalizations will be discussed in detail in light of Francis' results.

With regards to the first operationalization, Francis did not provide an answer to the following question: "In order for students to be able to learn and acquire new language skills in a completely online course, they must be provided with opportunities to:" (Assessment), which would show that although she may know the differences between learning a language face-to-face versus online, she was not able to articulate those differences. Moreover, she mentioned that the difference in teaching a face-to-face versus an online class is that online students are only able to learn from their small group members' comments during SVCSs and not from all of their peers as they would in a

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face-to-face class. Again, Francis showed that she understands a constraint of this online medium but has not been able to adapt to it fully or to overcome this issue. She provided more insight into her opinions on this topic in her very first teaching journal:

> I strongly believe that face-to-face interaction is a great learning environment and myself learn a lot from comments of my classmates during face to face classes. The more students you have in the class, the more likely you will hear lots of comments during the class. With online classes this component is missing, and while discussion boards can keep students engaged and help to have a fruitful discussion, being in the same classroom with your classmates brings conversations up to another energetic level, where body language and voice tone, as well as facial expression come into play and the expressed verbal comment is perceived in a different level than a comment on a discussion board. (Francis, Teaching Journal 1A)

In this teaching journal entry, it is evident that Francis had imagined one way to compensate for the lack of discussion among the whole class, that is, through the use of discussion boards. However, it is also clear that she did not see discussion boards as a truly comparable alternative to the lively discussion and still felt that students online are missing out on this interaction since they only see each other for a short synchronous meeting once a week. Therefore, in this area of the skill, although she was able to provide some responses about this topic, Francis is still firmly in the developing category of proficiency as she is inconsistent in her ability to articulate the differences in teaching a language online compared with teaching language face-to-face.

Next, the second operationalization is concerned with the instructor being able to

recognize the types of activities that can and cannot take place online as well as being able to show evidence of successful adaptation of in-person activities to be effective activities in the online medium. On the pre-assessment, Francis was able to provide an example of an activity that is possible in-person but that would not work online: "Passing a ball while music playing, when the music stops, student who has a ball responds the questions." (Francis, Pre-Assessment). The next question requested that the participant provide an example of how that activity could possibly be adapted to the online environment (i.e. adapted/modified so as to still aid students in reaching the same learning objectives). To this question, however, she responded that she was "not sure at this time" how to do so (Francis, Pre-Assessment). Therefore, there was evidence that Francis recognized what is and is not possible concerning online activities, however she was inconsistent in demonstrating her ability to adapt activities to the constraints of the online environment while still achieving the same learning objectives and therefore, she was still developing in this area.

The third operationalization concerns the instructor's use of the course program/software tools available in order to achieve desired learning outcomes. During the SVCS recordings that Francis submitted, she never used the presentation materials and rarely made use of additional tools available within the *Adobe Connect* virtual classroom besides the basic use of speakers, microphones and webcams. Occasionally she would use the chat box to type in an unfamiliar word or phrase for students but this was not a resource used frequently unless there were issues with the audio that impeded oral communication. Additionally, at one point during the first SVCS recording Francis did use the chat to give several examples in a row and although it was effective, with the

chat function, participants in the SVCS can only see what is typed after it is complete. An alternative option within the *Adobe Connect* classroom is to use the discussion notes field where participants can see the typing as it occurs along with backspaces and edits that are made. Although in general these two features of the virtual classroom (chat box and discussion notes) are quite similar in their function, the discussion notes tend to be more engaging for students because they can follow along as the utterance is being formed. This example is simply provided to show the additional features available within the virtual classroom of which Francis decided not to take advantage of even though they could potentially be effective in her teaching.

During the post interview, Francis was asked about her decision to not use many of the features within the *Adobe Connect* classroom and more specifically why she did not use any of the presentation features. Francis mentioned not having a very strong command of how to integrate PowerPoint with the SVCS platform as being one of the reasons. However, she also mentioned that she often chose to do activities from the textbook and that the textbook was a tool that the students were comfortable using. Francis mentioned her concern in presenting materials that the students were completely unfamiliar with because this could confuse them and possibly make the execution of activities more complicated than necessary. Thus, although Francis does make use of some of the tools available to her, she does not do so consistently and once again was classified as developing in this category.

Finally, the fourth area of this skill set pertains to the use of appropriate virtual classroom discourse and the ability to instruct and model for students how to most effectively communicate in this environment. During the first SCVS recording, Francis

led the entire interaction and even directly facilitated the student-to-student interaction. For example, during the activities that aimed to have students speak directly back and forth to one another, Francis would tell the first student to ask question number one of the second student. The first student would ask the question and the second student would respond. Francis would then provide some sort of positive and/or corrective feedback and then direct the second student to ask the third student the next question. The activities continued on like this. On the one hand, Francis was very successful in telling specific students when to start an activity or answer a question. This created an environment where expectations were very clear and students were never confused as to who was supposed to be speaking. Additionally, this helped to eliminate wasted time due to confusion about turn-taking, overlapping turns and frustration or anxiety due to this confusion. Furthermore, this served as a good model for students about what the expectation was in these activities (each of them taking turns asking and answering questions and then continuing with the rotation). On the other hand, Francis did not seem to be acting this way as a means of modeling for students the appropriate behavior which they would then be expected to demonstrate in the future, rather this was her style of delivering the SVCS and that style involved constant involvement of the instructor. Although her intervention and guidance in the conversation was not necessarily distracting, it did ensure that the activities developed in a very controlled manner which did not provide the students with a chance to elaborate their ideas, ask follow-up questions to get more information, etc., which are all skills students are assessed on in the course. Therefore, since a main learning objective of the SVCSs is for students to be able to interact directly back and forth in the TL and sustain a conversation amongst

themselves, Francis did intervene in these interactions more than necessary and thus she demonstrates inconsistent ability to mediate a direct back and forth conversation between students without constant teacher intervention.

On the post-experiment classification, Francis showed some growth in this category of skills but still did not reach proficiency – she was still classified as developing (2.5). For this classification, Francis showed improvement in the two first areas of this skill – those pertaining to recognizing and articulating differences between teaching online and face-to-face as well as skills related to the implementation of tasks appropriate to the medium that facilitate the achievement of the learning objectives. First, whereas on the pre-assessment, Francis was unable to answer the question about what opportunities students need to be provided with in order to learn and acquire new language skills in an online course, on the post-assessment, she did provide an answer. She said that students need to "stay engaged [and], stay on track by constant reminders from the teacher" (Francis, Post-Assessment). Although her response does not necessarily indicate all aspects of what students may need to learn successfully, this response does provide evidence that by the end of the experiment Francis had started to come to some conclusions about how teaching online is different and furthermore shows that she had made an effort to adapt to this medium by developing a teaching style in which she serves to keep students engaged and on track through reminders.

Concerning the second operationalization of this skill which pertains to the instructor's ability to recognize the types of activities that can and cannot take place online as well as the ability to show evidence of successful adaptation of in-person activities to be effective activities in the online medium, Francis also showed

improvement. On the pre-assessment, when asked to give an example of an activity that facilitates communication between students in face-to-face classes but would not work if directly implemented without modification into an online course, Francis did provide a response but was unable to provide an example of how to modify that activity to work online. In contrast, on the post-assessment, Francis was not only able to still provide an example of an activity, but this time she was also able to provide a possible modification to that activity to make it feasible in an online course. This shows that Francis did develop her skills as far as her knowledge of what is and is not possible and how to adapt activities appropriately. However, although she was able to provide written evidence of this development, no change is observed within the course itself of her trying out any of these creative activity adaptations. Furthermore, even though she does show growth, it is still not to a proficient level given that the activities she did choose to implement in her last SVCS showed extreme amounts of instructor involvement which limited students being able to practice tasks that would lead them to achievement of the learning objectives – mainly, sustained and meaningful student-to-student interaction in the TL.

In the last two areas of this skill, which pertain to the instructor's use of the multimodal tools and the instructor's use of appropriate classroom discourse, Francis showed no change. Her tool use (or lack there of) remained consistent throughout all SVCS recordings and her classroom discourse continued to be successful in directing students in their interactions while at the same time interfering too much in the intended student-to-student interactions. Thus, although still firmly in the developing category of this skill, Francis did show improvement from 2.25 to 2.5 in her pre- and post-experiment classification of skills.

There are many indications as to why Francis never reached proficiency in the skill of *dealing with the constraints and possibilities of the medium*. First, as mentioned in the previous case studies, this skill was not a main area of focus in the online language teacher training at the beginning of the experiment. While there was some discussion of adaptation of in-person activities to be appropriate in the online medium, it was quite general and intended to be relevant to instructors of various target languages and diverse course designs. Although Francis was able to articulate her ideas of the opportunities students need in order to learn a new language online, her response – "stay engaged, stay on track by constant reminders from the teacher" (Francis, Post-Assessment) – merely shows her personally developed conclusions of how to operate in this medium, or rather, a personal online teaching style, which is commonly observed in new online language teachers (Duensing et al., 2006). However, just because these are the conclusions she has reached does not mean this is always the most effective way to go about delivering the course and may in fact lead to a significant reduction in the student produced utterances during the SVCSs (Duensing et al., 2006). More discussion of Francis' task implementation and involvement will be explored in the analysis of the fifth skill, *facilitating communicative competence*.

A second reason for why Francis did not meet proficiency in this area, specifically with regards to her scant use of the tools available within the SVCS platform, *Adobe Connect*, is also an issue of training. Although during the online language teacher training, the attendees were prompted to consider the pedagogical advantages of the tools they were learning about instead of just focusing on the effective operation of those tools, this was a more general discussion aimed at wider tool use within the entire online

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course. There was not, however, any time spent directly focusing on the pedagogical

affordances of the different features available within the SVCS platform, *Adobe Connect*,

since not all attendees used this program in their course and therefore only a general

overview was provided. Although Francis may have been aware of the different

features/tools available in *Adobe Connect*, since she had not been informed of or trained

in investigating the pedagogical affordances of the tools, she did not use them frequently.

This was a finding also reported in a study by Comas-Quinn (2011) in which the teachers

showed a lack of enthusiasm for using many of the tools with great pedagogic potential.

Comas-Quinn (2011) concluded that although the teachers did receive training intended

to help them understand the pedagogical functions of many of the online tools available,

that they were not given enough time to truly develop that knowledge: "The third tenet of

this paper is that the training offered to teachers in this course did not provide them with

sufficient opportunities to deepen their understanding of the pedagogical possibilities of

the online tools available or to construct their own personal understanding of what online

teaching was" (p. 229). It seems that in the current study, and with regards to Francis

particularly, this may have been a similar issue.

Yet a third reason why Francis did not progress more in this category concerning

specifically the tight hold that she kept on the student interactions within her SVCSs as

well as her adoption of an online teaching style in which she must constantly remind

students about staying engaged, is most attributable to her relative isolation from

colleagues and supervisors throughout her teaching these two courses. Since Francis

received little to no instruction regarding the implementation of SVCSs concerning tasks,

effective virtual classroom discourse, etc., she was forced to form her own opinion about

what was most effective. When she figured this out, she consistently exhibited behavior

geared towards accomplishing what she thought was most effective and never received

any outside stimulus to motivate further reflection about the conclusions she had reached.

In Lewis (2006) study which relates his trials and tribulations in learning how to teach

online with very little or a complete lack of formal training or institutional support, he

comments that the technique most effective in helping him improve his online language

teaching skills was that of having a "critical friend"(p. 593) observe him and provide him

with subsequent feedback. These feedback sessions not only helped him to develop his

pedagogical skills but also his technical skills. Ernest and Hopkins (2006), in their article

about teacher development and coordination of online language courses, also avidly

supported "class visits"(p. 556) from supervisors as well as peers. Concerning peer

observations, they delineate some of important benefits for teacher development and

growth: "teachers can thus benefit from being exposed to diverse examples of online

teaching practice, have the opportunity to acquire new ideas for their own classes, and

can also provide each other with feedback and mutual support" (Ernest & Hopkins, 2006,

p. 557). Therefore, had Francis been provided with support and feedback not only from

colleagues but also from supervisors, she may have been able to improve more in this

area than she did due to her relative isolation.

      Online socialization. This skill area deals with the instructor's knowledge of the

concept and importance of a learning community, the knowledge of one's own role as an

instructor in the building of that learning community, knowledge of tools that can be used

to foster a learning community, evidence of consistent and effective behavior that

motivates students to interact with one another and also evidence of positive rapport

between students and with the instructor. On the pre-experiment classification, Francis was categorized as developing (2.5) due to showing consistent ability in some of the aspects related to this skill and inconsistent ability regarding others. First, one of Francis' strengths was her ability to create a virtual classroom environment that was warm and welcoming where students felt comfortable interacting and asking questions. This was partly due to her extremely patient demeanor when working on activities with students and also her constant praise of their work. Often Francis would praise students simply for asking good questions, a gesture that was reassuring to students that their questions were welcome as evidenced by the students' comfort in frequently inquiring about varied topics when it was appropriate. Furthermore, although there was not much direct student-to-student interaction that was not facilitated directly by the instructor, she was still very effective in motivating the students in the session to participate and be engaged in the session even if it was not through direct student-to-student engagement. Along the same lines, the rapport evident in the first SVCS recording was very positive, not only between the students and the teacher, but also between students. Everyone was friendly and respectful and there were even occasional jokes and laughter. In these two areas of the skill, Francis did show proficiency.

In the other areas of this skill, regarding the knowledge and importance of a learning community, tools that can be used to foster learning community growth, as well as knowledge of the instructor role in the learning community, Francis was still well within the developing level. Although she was able to demonstrate some knowledge with regards to these ideas, her responses were very brief and only glossed the surface of the topic. Furthermore, Francis mentioned on the pre-assessment that the learning community

is limited in the online environment because there are "less opportunities for direct interaction (students "see" only those peers who are in the same virtual group)" (Francis, Pre-Assessment). Her response highlights the synchronous, face-to-face aspect of a learning community even though, in theory, a learning community can and should extend beyond the weekly thirty minute SVCSs and in to other aspects of the course. However, as previously discussed in John's case study, due to course design, the activities geared towards creating and maintaining a learning community in the course taught by these participants does not extend outside of the weekly SVCSs unless students make an independent effort to connect with one another. Francis' perception, then, was due in part to the structure of the course which truly limits to the SVCSs the interaction and consequent community building between students.

On the post-experiment classification, Francis showed no improvement in this category and was still classified as developing (2.5). She continued to show positive characteristics of proficiency concerning the rapport between students and herself with the students. Additionally, although she exhibited a strong presence in all activities through directing the interaction, she was still effective in motivating students to participate and in minimizing their anxiety. Yet, Francis continued to show similar tendencies as on the pre-assessment in the other areas of this skill. Many of her responses were quite brief and showed evidence of only some knowledge in this area. Furthermore, with regards to her responses about how a learning community is different online and also about why it is necessary, although she changed the wording of her responses, she essentially was only referring to a learning community insofar as its benefit of providing students with partners to practice interacting with. She also commented that a difference

is the lack of body language that can be used to express oneself face-to-face but cannot in the online medium. Although this is certainly an important benefit of a thriving learning community, it is only one part of the picture and thus, again, only shows evidence that she has some knowledge of how learning communities online are different from their face-to-face counterparts.

In sum, the main reasons that Francis did not reach proficiency in this category are due to her inability to demonstrate consistent knowledge of the concept and importance of a learning community. This insufficient knowledge is most likely due to two reasons. First, although Francis reported having four semesters of experience teaching online, she had not received extensive training. In fact, the only formal training she had received was the three sessions prior to starting this experiment. Although learning communities were a main focus of that training (so much so that she commented on this aspect of the training on the background questionnaire), instructors need follow-up reinforcement to the training they receive because often times crash-course training sessions create an "information overload" (Ernest & Hopkins, 2006, p. 556) for participants. Ernest and Hopkins (2006) discussed how they help to accommodate this challenge and reinforce with follow-up information after training sessions: "To avoid information overload in this initial session, further training for new teachers takes place via email at various key points throughout their first term in a 'just in time' approach" (p. 556). Therefore, it is possible that Francis did not show growth in this area since she did not have any follow-up training regarding learning communities in online language courses.

Another reason for her lack of progress in this area is one previously mentioned in

the other case studies – course design. As this course has no explicitly incorporated activities aimed at creating and maintaining a thriving learning community beyond the weekly thirty minute SVCSs, it makes sense that Francis never refers to a learning community outside of this setting and furthermore only refers to the importance of this community as being related to the opportunities for synchronous interaction it creates for students.

Facilitating communicative competence. In this last skill area, which pertains to the instructor's ability to show evidence of a consistently student-centered approach to teaching, the ability to consistently implement tasks that promote meaningful student-to-student communication, and the ability to demonstrate knowledge of the tools that can be used to facilitate this interaction between students, Francis was also categorized as developing (2.5) on the pre-experiment classification of skills. On the pre-assessment, Francis was able to demonstrate a clear understanding of what at student-centered approach to teaching consists of and was also able to provide a few examples of tools that could be used to facilitate asynchronous and synchronous communication between students. Nevertheless, during the SVCS recording, although students were engaged and participated, the tasks implemented that were intended to promote direct student-to-student communication were heavily moderated by Francis and thus students did not engage in any sustained back-and-forth communication that was not prompted directly by the instructor. Although Francis was constantly involved in the student conversations resulting in quite a bit of teacher-talk, what she had to say was totally centered around providing students with feedback and praise or answering their specific questions, giving them examples and then getting students to create their own examples in the TL.

Additionally, Francis showed an emphasis on a student-centered teaching style by frequently engaging each of the students present in the session with direct questions and personalized feedback. All of this to say that, despite the elevated amount of teacher talk and that Francis could improve the task implementation by allowing students to directly engage with one another in a more sustained conversation, overall she showed strong evidence of a student-centered SVCS. Thus, in this category, due to her developing skills with regards to the tasks implemented and also the brevity of her examples of tools that could be used to facilitate communication between students, although Francis shows proficiency in other areas of this skill, she was still categorized as developing (2.5).

Francis' post-experiment classification in this area showed some growth but she still did not reach proficiency and was categorized as developing (2.75). The main reason for her improvement in this category can be attributed to her growing ability to demonstrate knowledge of the tools that an instructor can use to facilitate synchronous and asynchronous communication between students. On the pre-assessment she was only able to list one or two tools however on the post-assessment she listed many more tools and also provided more detailed explanations of how those tools could be used effectively which showed evidence of her growing knowledge in this area.

Francis still did not reach proficiency in this area because the tasks that she chose to implement failed to stimulate sustained and relatively uninterrupted meaningful communication between students. Furthermore the last SVCS recording showed a continuing trend for constant oral teacher involvement in all activities and tasks and thus, large amounts of teacher-talk characterized these sessions. One of the main reasons that Francis did not reach proficiency in this area is due to there being no examples in the

SVCSs of activities where students engaged directly with one another beyond asking a question and providing a simple answer. Additionally, even in the few activities where students did ask another student a question and received a response, these tasks were heavily moderated by the instructor at every moment. This style of teaching in the online environment is one also observed in other studies (Duensing et al., 2006; Stickler et al., 2005). Duensing et al. (2006) mentioned that when instructors keep such a tight hold on the communication taking place in the virtual classroom, that students may miss out on valuable opportunities to growth their skills in initiating student-to-student communication and self-determination, all of which are skills that these students are assessed on in the oral exams for this course.

Additionally, Francis mentioned on the post-assessment that in order for students to be able to learn a language online they have to "stay engaged [and] stay on track by constant reminders from the teacher" (Francis, Post-Assessment). Clearly she has arrived at this conclusion given that this style of teaching has led to SVCSs that are productive and in which she felt her students were really learning. However, the task design may play a part in why she has adapted this style of implementing activities. Similar to Christina, Francis mentions in her teaching journal how she ended up designing the SVCS tasks and that at first, she did not know how to approach the design:

> At first I was struggling with an issue of outlining virtual meetings with students. I would meet once a week for 30 minutes with a group of 2-3 students. […] Eventually, I came up with a following design for the virtual meetings with students and it seems to work well. For each meeting students have assigned activities from the chapters that we are supposed to cover that week. They meet in

groups before meeting with me and go over those activities and prepare them.

When we meet online, I ask them to perform those activities. Depending on their

performance, we either go over grammar and vocab again, or I challenge them

with additional questions. (Francis, Teaching Journal 1A)

Although Francis mentioned in this journal entry that she asked students to perform the

tasks which makes one think that students would be interacting with the teacher feedback

and comments coming at the end of the activity, that is not how these activities played

out. Therefore there is concrete evidence of some inconsistency in the learning objective

she was aiming for and the reality of the SVCS interaction.

Along the same lines, although Francis seemed to have found an efficient way to

design the SVCSs, she still expressed some surprise when certain activities did not go as

well as planned. In the following journal entry, Francis discussed an activity she

implemented that was intended to prompt the students use of the subjunctive or indicative

within a compound sentence (e.g. I am looking for a car that is…) however, the

development of the activity did not go as planned:

What seemed as a clear guidance for me, turned out to be not as clear for the

students. During the sessions, here is what their reply was "Busco un coche rojo"

[*I'm looking for a red car*]. This answer was common for all groups, which made

me realize the instructions were not as straight forward as I thought (The expected

replies were "Busco un coche que sea de lujo"[*I am looking for a car that is

luxurious*], or "Busco un coche que es grande y rapido" [*I am looking for a car

that is big and fast*]). For some groups, I drew attention to the book discussion

about where to use Subjunctive and where Indicative. However, it brought up an

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issue of detailed explanation of what Subjunctive is and how it is formed, and where "sea" comes from. I still think it is a great exercise to practice, however, for session B I will choose a different activity that would focus more on the Subjunctive itself, and then, if opportunity arises, we will touch on Indicative vs Subjunctive topic. (Francis, Teaching Journal 4A)

There are several parts of this journal entry that merit further examination. First, the activity in and of itself is not designed to be particularly communicative. Although students were supposed to follow-up with their classmates and say something along the lines of 'I hope you get a red car', this was the limit of how far the communication was expected to go. This type of exchange is not particularly meaningful nor does it truly require students to negotiate for meaning which is a central component of communicative language teaching firmly based on theories of second language acquisition as well as socio-cultural learning (Duensing et al., 2006). Francis mentioned towards the end of her entry that she thought it was a great practice activity which could be interpreted as her thinking this was an appropriate communicative task to implement in SVCS to promote student-to-student communication. This activity is intended to prompt students to use a target structure within a context however, the task design is very rigid and it does not appear that the instructor planned for additional development of dialogue between students beyond a simple question or answer. Thus, this shows evidence that Francis inconsistently implemented well-designed tasks that promoted meaningful communication between students and the tasks may have been inconsistent because she had not been well trained in the formation of these types of tasks.

Moreover, in the study that Duensing et al. (2006) completed, the authors mentioned that the tasks they used in the tutorial session were all "designed for maximum interactivity and communicative learning situations" (p. 44) and despite this, there were still varying levels of success between different instructors in their ability to foster direct student-to-student communication and engagement of all participants due to their style of involvement during the meeting with students. In Francis' case, she had to design the tasks completely on her own without any guidance or support from an expert and thus it is quite possible that her tasks were not designed for maximum interactivity and communicative learning situations. Due to the perhaps not optimal nature of the tasks she implemented, it is possible that she felt it necessary to adapt to a stronger teaching presence during the sessions where she would continuously direct the interaction that was to take place. This may be partly the case but, as Duensing et al. (2006) conclude with regards to the varying levels of control that instructors (tutors) demonstrated in their study, their "analysis still exhibits considerable variations in the approaches adopted by the tutors, and the quality and amount of student interaction these approaches generate (e.g. use of target language, amount of independence given to students)" (p. 44). Furthermore, they conclude that, given the current state of research, it is not possible to know without a doubt why they have observed so many instances of increased instructor control during SVCSs: "Our study also seems to confirm the Lyceum tutors' preference for tighter group control […], which we had observed previously. Whether this is necessitated by the medium or simply perceived thus by the tutors remains to be established." (Duensing et al., 2006, p. 44).

A second aspect of this journal entry that will be explored is Francis' decision to not implement this activity in the future and her reasoning for doing so. Francis mentioned that in her next online course, during the second half of the semester, she would choose an activity that would not prompt so much discussion about the difference between the subjunctive and the indicative and instead choose an activity that focuses on the subjunctive. Her intent with this task then was not only to have students interact but perhaps, primarily, for students to practice the subjunctive forms. Since there was so much confusion and consequently a long discussion regarding the difference between the indicative and subjunctive (which is an important conversation to have), it seems that Francis decided to avoid the teacher-centered lecture in English about this grammar topic simply by replacing the task with a different one.

This decision provides some evidence about Francis' motivations for choosing the activities she implements and evidence from the SVCS recordings confirms that Francis tends to choose to implement activities that focus on the production of a particular grammatical form. Furthermore, in her last SVCS recording, the students and teacher spent the first half of the meeting reviewing a grammatical explanation of certain verb forms before actually producing the forms in an activity aimed at getting students to interact. However, even during the production activity, Francis often intervened in order to provide feedback about the correct form which interrupted the flow of student communication. Also, even if she had not interrupted, the task itself would not have prompted sustained communication between students beyond a simple question and answer. Thus, the evidence provided in the SVCS recordings and supported by the teaching journal entries shows that Francis does need additional training on designing

tasks such as those reported in Duensing et al. (2006) that maximize interaction and provide communicative learning situations for students.

Summary. The above sections have provided a detailed profile of Francis as a language teacher and also closely examined her proficiency level in each of the five skill areas. In sum, Francis began and finished this study with a proficient level (3) of competence in the area of *basic ICT* related skills. Further analysis was not conducted in this skill area since Francis was and remained proficient in this skill. In the second skill area, *specific technical competence for the software,* Francis showed no growth throughout the experiment and remained continually classified as developing (2.75). Her results are attributed to a continued discomfort with troubleshooting technological problems in the course specific programs (*Blackboard* and *Adobe Connect*) which is a fundamental component of proficiency in this skill area. It was concluded that Francis did not develop in this area due to a lack of training and proactive pursuit of support with the issues she experienced.

The third area of skills, *dealing with the constraints and possibilities of the medium*, Francis' pre-experiment classification was developing (2.5) and, although she did show some growth, her post-experiment classification was still developing (2.75). Francis showed improvement in her ability to articulate the differences between teaching face-to-face and online and also in her ability to modify in-person activities to be more appropriate for the online medium yet still achieve the same learning objectives. However, Francis continued to show a very low prevalence of use of multimodal tools available within the SVCS platform as well as a very tightly controlled discourse during SVCSs which led to less student-talk in general. Her failure to meet proficiency in this

category was attributed to three factors: (1) a lack of training about adapting in-person tasks to be appropriate to the online medium within the specific context of the course Francis would be teaching, (2) alack of training about the pedagogical affordances of the features/tools available within the SVCS platform, *Adobe Connect*, and (3) a lack of exposure to other styles/methods of SVCS delivery and a lack of input from colleagues or supervisors about her online teaching.

Concerning the fourth skill area, *online socialization*, Francis showed no growth from the beginning to the end of the semester and consistently remained classified as developing in this category (2.5). This lack of change was mainly attributed to her only having attended a "crash course" training course for online language teachers where this topic was only one of many discussed and the fact that she was never given an opportunity after that training for further professional development or training. Also, the lack of growth in this area was partly attributed to the course design which does not require any interaction of students outside of the weekly thirty minute SVCSs and thus Francis was unable to practice and develop her skills of *online socialization* in other components of the course.

Lastly, in the fifth skill area, *facilitating communicative competence*, Francis, again, showed some growth but not to the proficiency level. It was concluded that she did not reach proficiency in this area due to having developed a tutor style in contradiction with a truly student-to-student interaction during SVCSs and she was not able to adjust or change because she was not provided with opportunities to observe her colleagues or to receive feedback from her supervisors about her teaching. Additionally, she did not reach

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proficiency due to not having received sufficient training regarding the creating SVCS

tasks that would facilitate meaningful and direct interaction between students.

Thus, by the end of the experiment, Francis did not reach proficiency in any of the

skill areas except with regards to her *basic ICT* skills which were already proficient upon

starting this experiment. The main reasons overall that Francis did not reach proficiency

are attributed mainly to a lack of training and follow-up professional

development/support with the aim of helping her further develop these online language

teaching skills. Further exploration of possible solutions and recommendations for

improving instructors' proficiency levels in all of these skill areas are discussed in the

following section.

General Discussion

This section is intended to discuss the common skill areas with which the

participants in the above case studies struggled as well as propose strategies based on

recommendations and evidence in previous literature of how best to increase their skills

to at least the proficient level.

In the area of software specific skills, only one of the participants reached

proficiency in this category and that is because he was already proficient coming into the

experiment. A common factor among all participants was their lack of comfort in

troubleshooting within the course programs for their own problems or for those of their

students, a fundamental skill in successfully teaching in this environment (Hauck &

Haezewindt, 2004). Although John's discomfort with troubleshooting did not affect his

skill categorization as proficient since he showed evidence of extensive troubleshooting

techniques, he did struggle throughout the entire experiment with technological issues

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and this was a main topic of many of his teaching journals. Francis, on the other hand, would have reached proficiency in this category if she had had a higher level of comfort troubleshooting within these programs. Christina, being a completely new online teacher, had wider discomforts in this category in general, some of which related to troubleshooting.

Specifically with regards to troubleshooting, it seems that a simple solution to much of the discomfort could have come in the form of some sort of standardized technology support document with troubleshooting techniques ranging from basic to more advanced. A support document such as this would have at least been a starting point for resolving some of these issues at the individual level however, currently, and at the time of the experiment, a document such as this does and did not exist (or if it does, the researcher and participants in this experiment are unaware of it).

In previous empirical studies related to this same topic, there are reports of instructors having technical issues however these issues did not continue unresolved (see Comas-Quinn, 2011; Hampel & Hauck, 2004). What studies such as the one by Hampel and Hauck (2004) do report is that a majority of the instructors contacted the "helpdesk"(p. 73) – technical support – frequently for assistance with a variety of issues and furthermore, many also accessed an online user guide that was available to them for reference. Therefore, in teaching contexts similar to the one at the institution where the participants in this current study are employed, their programs have provided the teachers and students with personalized help via technical support as well as given them access to a user guide. Although teachers at the institution referenced in this current study do have access to technical support for the course management system, *Blackboard*, technical

support for *Adobe Connect* is more limited. Technical support for the SVCS platform is

facilitated through Learning Support Services (similar to language laboratories at other

institutions) housed on the campus of the institution. Although the helpful individuals

have made themselves available to discuss any technological issues online instructors are

having, and even announced their services during the training sessions offered at the

beginning of the semester, the participants in this study never reached out for support.

And since they never reached out and did not have access to any sort of online user guide,

such as the participants in Hampel and Hauck's (2004) study, their technical problems

persisted without resolution and therefore these participants were never able to grow their

skills in this area. Not only did their technical problems persist but they continued to exist

in relative isolation and without anyone besides the researcher ever being aware of them.

Although in some respects, the participants in this study may be at fault for not

proactively reaching out for help, the institution also holds a certain amount of

responsibility if they wish to offer online language courses of high quality: "Institutions

offering online courses would be in serious error if they underestimated the investment

that needs to be made into training and continuing development as well as research into

online teaching" (Hampel & Stickler, 2005, p. 323).

Another skill area that seemed to pose difficulties for all of the participants in this

experiment was that of *online socialization*. Christina almost reached proficiency in this

category but continued to be classified as developing due to her inability to articulate or

show knowledge of her role in the learning community outside of the interactions taking

place during the SVCS. Similar to Christina, Francis showed these same tendencies and

therefore did not reach proficiency or show any growth in this category. John, seemingly

was proficient in this category prior to starting the experiment but received a developing categorization at the end of the experiment due to inconsistent evidence encountered in the last SVCS recording in which he exhibited a high level of frustration with, in his perception, the unwillingness of the group of students to participate more actively in the conversation and come prepared. All of the participants in this study commented more than once throughout the various instruments about their frustrations with students who did not come prepared to meetings which is a finding also reported by Hampel and Hauck (2004). In the cases of Christina and John, this led to increased amounts of teacher talk which they both reported feeling was necessary to stimulate interaction. Francis did also comment on how some students did tend to come unprepared. However, during the SVCS recordings, she directed all interaction and in doing this, she made sure that all students interacted. If the students were less prepared, she would accommodate them by skipping their turn and giving the other students a chance to talk before coming back to the original student. Although this technique worked for Francis, it also led to large amounts of teacher talk and very little if any direct interaction between students. Unfortunately, by incorporating higher levels of instructor control and facilitation of tasks within the SVCS, the instructors may have actually contributed to the inability for students to get to know one another better. In their study about interaction patterns in SVCSs, Duensing et al. (2006) reported that a group of students allowed to practice a role play dialogue on their own (in a break out room within the virtual classroom) without constant tutor intervention exemplified more instances of students opening up to one another and getting "some important 'bonding time', which is impossible when they are closely monitored by the tutor" (p. 42). Thus, on the one hand, in Duensing et al.'s (2006)

study, the group of students interacted without the instructor closely monitoring their activities whereas the participants in this study not only closely monitored the students activities but interjected in those activities quite frequently thus interrupting the flow of conversation between students.

Although all of these instructors made their best effort to succeed in creating a welcoming classroom atmosphere and to build rapport with students and between students, this occurred with varied levels of success. One of the most probable reasons for the instructor's categorizations below proficient in this skill area can be directly attributed to the course design. As mentioned previously, in the courses these instructors taught, there were no assignments built in with the specific intent of creating and later maintaining a learning community among the individuals in the course. That is, there were no well-designed required elements of the course other than the thirty minute weekly SVCS that served to promote interaction among students. During this particular semester, one of the required course assignments involved the students writing a discussion board entry and then one reply to a classmate two times during the course (this element has since been removed from the course design and replaced with another individual activity). It is anyone's guess what the original intent of this course assignment was as this was never made explicitly clear to the instructors or the researcher, however, if one of the goals was to help students get to know one another, it was not implemented appropriately. Each discussion board had a stand-alone topic (personal presentation, favorite place to go on vacation, your interpretation/opinion of a common target culture celebration, etc.) and, when following the instructions given, may help one or two students learn something personal about some of the others. However, the task in its

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original design rarely manages to promote a continued interaction among students beyond the two required posts except by more motivated students who are particularly interested in getting to know their classmates. As Wilcoxon (2011) points out, it takes time for learning communities to develop in online courses and therefore, creation of these communities should be purposeful and integrated into the course. Moreover, he concludes that if students are not given ample opportunities to develop rapport with one another, cooperation and collaboration tasks will never be successful since students do not have fundamental feelings of trust with one another and therefore are less willing to take risks.

Accordingly, Sun (2011) reports findings that confirm this. In her study of an online language course, Sun discovered that as a result of the students having difficulty adapting to interaction in this new environment, the creation and evolution of a successful learning community took much longer than she would have originally expected. Compton (2009) also makes reference specifically to the skill of *online socialization* and notes that in beginning language courses a sense of trust among students is of particular importance in order for them to become active participants in the class. Thus, the perceived ongoing issue of students coming to meetings unprepared might actually have been partially an issue of poor levels of trust among students, unfamiliarity with the environment and thus low levels of participation further promoted by the teacher taking over whenever students did not speak up right away. Additionally, the lack of integration of purposeful community building activities into these online language courses impeded the instructor's from developing some areas of the *online socialization* skill.

The other two skill areas that were problematic for the participants in this study were *dealing with the constraints and possibilities of the medium* and *facilitating communicative competence*. The issues experienced with these skill areas as well as some possible solutions to helping build these skills more effectively will be discussed together as these two skills are closely related and in fact, overlap and/or directly influence one another in many respects.

To begin, all three participants in this study either struggled with task design and/or implementation (issues that have elements which fall in both skill areas). Creating well-designed tasks that promote interaction between students and ultimately opportunities for the negotiation for meaning between students is not an easy feat (Duensing et al., 2006; Hampel & Hauck, 2004; Salmon, 2013; Stickler et al., 2005). Furthermore, in all of the articles referenced in this current study in which the instructors participated in SVCSs with their students, the new online language teachers were always provided with already vetted online collaborative tasks and/or access to a community of other online language instructors who could provide example tasks they had used, techniques that worked for them, etc. In fact, Ernest and Hopkins (2006) discuss the "online staff room" (p. 558) in which one of the many available resources is that of a "bank of past activities" (p. 560) that is updated every semester and to which coordinators send selected useful classroom materials collected throughout the semester so they are available for all to reference. Thus, the participants in this current study faced a steep challenge in having to essentially develop activities from scratch without being provided with any models or direction from coordinators about how to do so.

Furthermore, all of the participants in this study also struggled to some degree with effective task implementation or execution given that none of them showed consistent evidence of being able to promote a sustained student-to-student interaction lasting longer than a few utterances before being interrupted with some sort of teacher-talk (feedback, comment, question, etc.). The task implementation issues were unique to each individual and furthermore, were greatly impacted by each instructor's ability to deal with the constraints and possibilities of the medium appropriately.

For example, in the case of Christina, although she always incorporated presentational tools and occasionally used the chat box to communicate with students (thereby showing evidence of skills in *dealing with the constraints and possibilities of the medium*), even towards the end of her course she reported having great difficulty actually getting students to interact with one another and to not speak directly to her. Evidence from the SVCSs suggest that although Christina may have been hoping for the students to interact with one another, most of the time during meetings was spent by the teacher giving grammatical explanations (essentially lecturing on what contexts require certain verb forms) or explaining instructions to activities for long periods of time (2-3 minutes) but then, when handing over the reigns to the students to get started, they were completely confused and did not know how to move forward/begin without more prompting from the instructor. This trend of task implementation, although Christina realized from the very first SVCS recording that she was doing too much of the talking, endured throughout the entire course. At the end, as evidenced in her case study, she was still very unsure of the effectiveness of her task design and implementation.

Another example comes from John who also showed difficulty in getting students to directly interact with one another. In his first SVCS recording, although his instructions were clear and the students came prepared, there was never a sustained student-to-student interaction involving negotiation of meaning because John inserted himself into almost every interaction either with comments, feedback or further questions. Essentially, instead of teaching students how to ask follow-up questions of their group members or make comments on what they just said, he assumed this role. Although this might have eliminated awkward silences and kept the pace of the meeting moving forward, it also eliminated any chance for the students to negotiate for meaning together without heavy moderation from the instructor.

As mentioned in the case studies, the characteristics of highly involved instructors have been observed in earlier studies (Duensing et al., 2006; Stickler et al., 2005). Results from Duensing et al.'s (2006) study showed that whenever instructors exhibited "tight control" (p. 40) of the interaction among students, this either prevented student-to-student interaction altogether and/or resulted in students taking on passive roles unless being directly engaged by the instructor thus limiting the amount of practice they could obtain during the session. They conclude that the individual style of the tutor is an extremely important determining factor in the types of interaction patterns that will take place in the SVCSs regardless of the well-designed tasks they are given to implement. They also conclude that their "observations suggest that it may be possible to maximise student interaction through careful task design and further tutor training while the online teaching medium becomes more established" (Duensing et al., 2006, p. 44).

Both of the above examples of difficulty with task implementation or execution are also closely related to *dealing with the constraints and possibilities of the medium* with regards to virtual classroom discourse, use of multimodal tools, and overall effective task adaptation from face-to-face tasks to online tasks. First, one part of using appropriate virtual classroom discourse has to do with what the instructor says and how s/he directs the interaction but the other part has to do with the ability of the instructor to teach/inform students of the appropriate ways to interact in this environment. Either the expectations of how the interaction would take place were unclear to the students or the instructors failed to explain those expectations. Part of explaining the expectations would include informing students in techniques to keep the interaction going between themselves, such as follow-up questions, positive comments, etc. Instead, the teachers were taking over this role, students were not able to learn or practice doing these things, and the cycle continued throughout all the SVCSs in the course. Hauck and Haezewindt (1999) report that in order for successful communication to take place between students during their interactions, instructors need to "develop strategies that require students to take a more active role in the learning process, e.g. to stay deliberately out of the students' rooms' so that they have to work on their own. In this way we tried to help the students to progress towards autonomous learning by encouraging them to take risks in using the target language in the tutor's absence" (p.50).

The researcher in this current study would argue that similar strategies could be developed and acted upon in the context of the online language courses in this institution, e.g. instructors giving students a role-play activity or other structured task geared towards stimulating interaction and negotiation of meaning and, in an effort to consciously not

interrupt students, the instructor mutes his/her microphone and/or webcam and just listens in to the interaction. In order to make the most of the affordances of the multimodal tools available in this medium, the instructor could pepper the student-to-student interaction with appropriate feedback or assistance via a text chat or discussion notes feature but in a moderate amount so as not to interrupt the interaction. In this way, students who are able to follow along with the feedback will do so and have an additional learning opportunity while students who are cognitively overloaded by the communication task already can simply focus on the task and ignore the non-intrusive feedback. Simply put, there are ways to overcome the challenges these instructors experienced regarding task implementation or execution and in dealing with the constraints and affordances of the online medium of instruction but this is not knowledge that is inherently obvious to a beginning online language teacher or something they will come across without further training or development opportunities (Comas-Quinn, 2011).

Overall, a general problem that most certainly caused issues of development in all of the skill areas has to do with the ongoing support that the instructors' had access to concerning any and all aspects of the online language course they taught. As mentioned previously, in the program where these instructors teach, there is no infrastructure in place for the specific purpose of connecting online language teachers with one another in an effort to build community, exchange ideas, discuss common issues or anything else. Although instructors of both face-to-face and online courses meet four times a semester, these meetings are reserved for general issues of announcements, reminders, and some questions. Sometimes problems are discussed but generally a quick solution is not provided regarding larger pedagogical or course design issues. This creates a situation

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where the instructors are essentially isolated from one another unless they proactively seek out support from their supervisors or colleagues. John and Christina both discussed having reached out to their colleagues (who were also new online language teachers) for support however, none of the participants ever reached out to their supervisors even though they were clearly facing many challenges. Suggestions for providing support to online language teachers as they continue to develop professionally and gain more experience as well as to support them in overcoming unforeseen challenges to teaching in this new medium will be discussed in the section on implications of this study.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings from this study indicate that despite attending an initial training session for beginning online language teachers, the participants were unable to reach a proficient categorization of the online language teaching skills dealing with pedagogy (e.g., *dealing with the constraints and the possibilities of the medium, online socialization, facilitating communicative competence*). Additionally, although each of them showed proficient skills in the area of *basic ICT*, they still struggled in varying degrees with their skills related to the *specific technical competence for the software*. Although the differing levels of skills growth are due to many individual factors, several commonalities were observed regarding the reasons for which the participants continued to struggle in certain areas.

First, in the skill area of *specific technical competence for the software*, it was determined that participants struggled with troubleshooting due to a lack of institutional infrastructure which provided them with easy access to online user guides and support with troubleshooting techniques. Furthermore, although the participants were not

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proactive in seeking help with their technical issues, ultimately it is up to the language program to make those resources readily available and offer a space for instructors to share and find solutions together to the issues they are having (Ernest & Hopkins, 2006; Hampel & Stickler, 2005).

Second, concerning the *online socialization* skill, this study concludes that the common issue preventing the participants from reaching proficiency in this area pertained to the course design and, more specifically, it's failure to integrate purposeful community building activities outside of the thirty minute weekly virtual meetings where students could interact with one another outside of the instructor's watchful eye. The lack of community building activities influenced the interactions that took place during the SVCSs as well as prevented the instructors from developing important community building skills outside of the SVCSs.

Third, it was concluded that within the skill areas of *dealing with the constraints and the possibilities of the medium* and *facilitating communicative competence* the participants struggled to reach proficiency mainly due to issues with task design and/or implementation or execution. Elements from both of those skill areas contribute to an instructor's ability to effectively design and implement tasks during the SVCSs. It was concluded that instructors must be provided with sufficient training in this area, but almost more importantly, they must be provided with opportunities for continued support and development. In fact, not having sufficient training or continuing support was determined to be a highly contributing factor in all of the participants not reaching proficiency in any and all of the skill areas.

Although the context of this study restricts itself to the investigation of online language teaching skills in language courses with a synchronous videoconferencing component geared towards practicing communication, the findings as well as the instruments used provide points from which to branch out, modify and test in other contexts as well. Furthermore, given that there were only three participants included in the analysis of this study, the findings related to each individual's behavior cannot be directly generalized to others in a similar context. Nevertheless, the characteristics exhibited by the participants and subsequent findings in this study show many consistent similarities with other studies related to online language instructors teaching in various types of courses and contexts. Thus, this study does confirm some of the already reported findings in previous literature and could therefore provide many detailed insights due to the case study method of data analysis employed.

Implications

This study is one of very few empirical studies that has been carried out using a non-heuristic approach and that was intended to measure the participants online language teaching skills and growth of these skills while they taught an online language course. Furthermore, through close analysis of previously published articles, this study provides detailed operationalizations of rather vague original constructs pertaining to online language teaching skills which could serve as a basis for future research aimed at measuring those skills. Lastly, this study finished by shedding light on many of the institutional as well as individual strategies that can be incorporated for more effective promotion and development of online language teaching skills. Thus, this study served to add to the current body of research pertaining to online language teaching skills

definitions and development and to inform future theoretical and empirical research regarding online language teaching skills.

Furthermore, the findings in this study point to important implications for training and assisting online language teachers to continue honing these important teaching skills. The ways to provide support to online language teachers as they continue to develop professionally and gain more experience are explored in many different articles. One method mentioned in various publications is the establishment of a virtual space where online language instructors can access materials for sharing and receive support from colleagues and technical specialists (Ernest & Hopkins, 2006; Hampel & Stickler, 2005; Lewis, 2006). Not only do these spaces allow for less experienced teachers to view examples of tasks and ideas created by more proficient instructors, it also creates a place where colleagues can form a community among themselves (Lewis, 2006). Furthermore, Ernest and Hopkins (2006) argue that this space should also include an area to critique and suggest changes to the course design or organization concerning aspects that are not working as planned or perhaps were never thought of to begin with and need to be accounted for on a larger scale (e.g., in the program policies/standards). An area such as this would create a space for instructors to bring up issues they are struggling with and explore possible solutions in a collaborative way.

Another means of providing support for online language teachers in their continued development of skills that is mentioned in previous literature is observations. Ernest and Hopkins (2006) suggest that supervisor/coordinator observations and subsequent feedback sessions are important in order to keep an open dialogue between instructors and their organizers and also provide motivation for teachers to constantly

seek improvement in their online language teaching skills and methods. Peer observation and feedback also come highly recommended from various authors as a means of continued training/support (Ernest & Hopkins, 2006; Hampel & Stickler, 2005; Lewis, 2006). Similar to the online sharing space, these observations provide the opportunity for teachers to be exposed to new ideas and teaching styles, foster a sense of community among colleagues, and keep an open dialogue (Ernest & Hopkins, 2006). Lewis (2006) reported that having a critical friend observe his sessions with students and provide feedback later on was the "most productive of strategies used for professional development" (p. 593). He lamented that in some cases it was quite difficult to incorporate the feedback proposed to him by a colleague, especially when it concerned pedagogic advice. Overall, Lewis (2006) concluded that although the advice was not always easily implemented, it caused him to reflect more and pay attention to certain aspects of his teaching that he might not have otherwise noticed.

A third and more sustainable way of providing support for online language teacher development is through promotion of self-awareness through self-evaluation and self-observation (Hampel, 2009; Hampel & Stickler, 2005; Lewis, 2006). This is a particularly valuable option as it does not require individuals to coordinate with one another thereby providing a practical and flexible means of sustained personal growth in online teaching. Self-observation and self-evaluation "can be used by tutors to help them understand their own teaching and to share this understanding with others in order to identify and implement changes" (Hampel & Stickler, 2005, p. 322). These authors also indicate that this type of undertaking does require time and training but that it can be

particularly fruitful when implemented jointly with other forms of awareness tasks such as peer-observations and action research.

Although many teachers may pursue opportunities to grow their online language teaching skills independently, many also will not and thus, institutions that hope to continue to deliver quality online language courses should promote the growth of these skills through well-planned continuing training/workshops (Hampel, 2009; Hampel & Stickler, 2005), mentor/mentee formation to encourage individualized growth (Comas-Quinn, 2011), and the development of an online idea/concern sharing space for open dialogue between colleagues and their coordinators/supervisors (Ernest & Hopkins, 2006; Lewis, 2006). As Hampel and Stickler (2005) candidly state "[i]nstitutions offering online courses would be in serious error if they underestimated the investment that needs to be made into training and continuing development as well as research into online teaching" (p. 323). Given that the development of online language courses is fairly new and not heavily researched, the need to continue developing online language teaching skills is crucial in this ever changing environment: "Over and above the 'normal' necessities of staff development in technical skills, however, online tutors must also be prepared to change and adapt their teaching style according to new developments and findings in the pedagogy of online language teaching" (Hampel & Stickler, 2005, p. 323).

Limitations

Certainly all research can be bettered in the future and it is hoped that this study will be expanded upon in greater detail. Due to the small number of participants, the findings pertaining to individual characteristics and challenges cannot be directly generalized. A further limitation of this study pertains to the operationalization of the

skills created for this research. The operationalization of the constructs was an extreme challenge prior to implementing the experiment and while analyzing the data. The categorizations of the participants skill levels was intended to be kept as uniform as possible however, given that the researcher was unable to observe more SVCS recordings, her impression of what was going on and subsequent categorization of the participants skills was based on a limited sample of their teaching. Although efforts were made to ensure that these recordings were representative samples of the participants' typical teaching interactions, more data would have been better. An additional limitation pertains to some of the constructs being very context specific. Therefore, although the operationalizations created for the participants in this study may have been appropriate, simply taking those operationalizations and applying them in a different context without any modification (e.g. not all institutions will use *Blackboard* and *Adobe Connect*, etc.) would most likely be unsuccessful. Furthermore, given the high sensitivity to context of these operationalizations, this contributed to the challenge of creating them in the first place and thus leaves room for possible inconsistencies and errors.

In the future it will be crucial to replicate studies such as this one on a larger scale and with a larger, more representative, sample of participants. Not only will this serve to better inform the theoretical framework used in this study but it will also help to develop more valid instruments. Well-vetted instruments will create uniformity in the measuring of these skills across contexts and institutions and therefore allow for more valid comparisons and generalizations in this area of investigation.

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APPENDIX A

COMPTON'S (2009) FRAMEWORK OF ONLINE LANGUAGE TEACHING SKILLS

Online language teaching skills

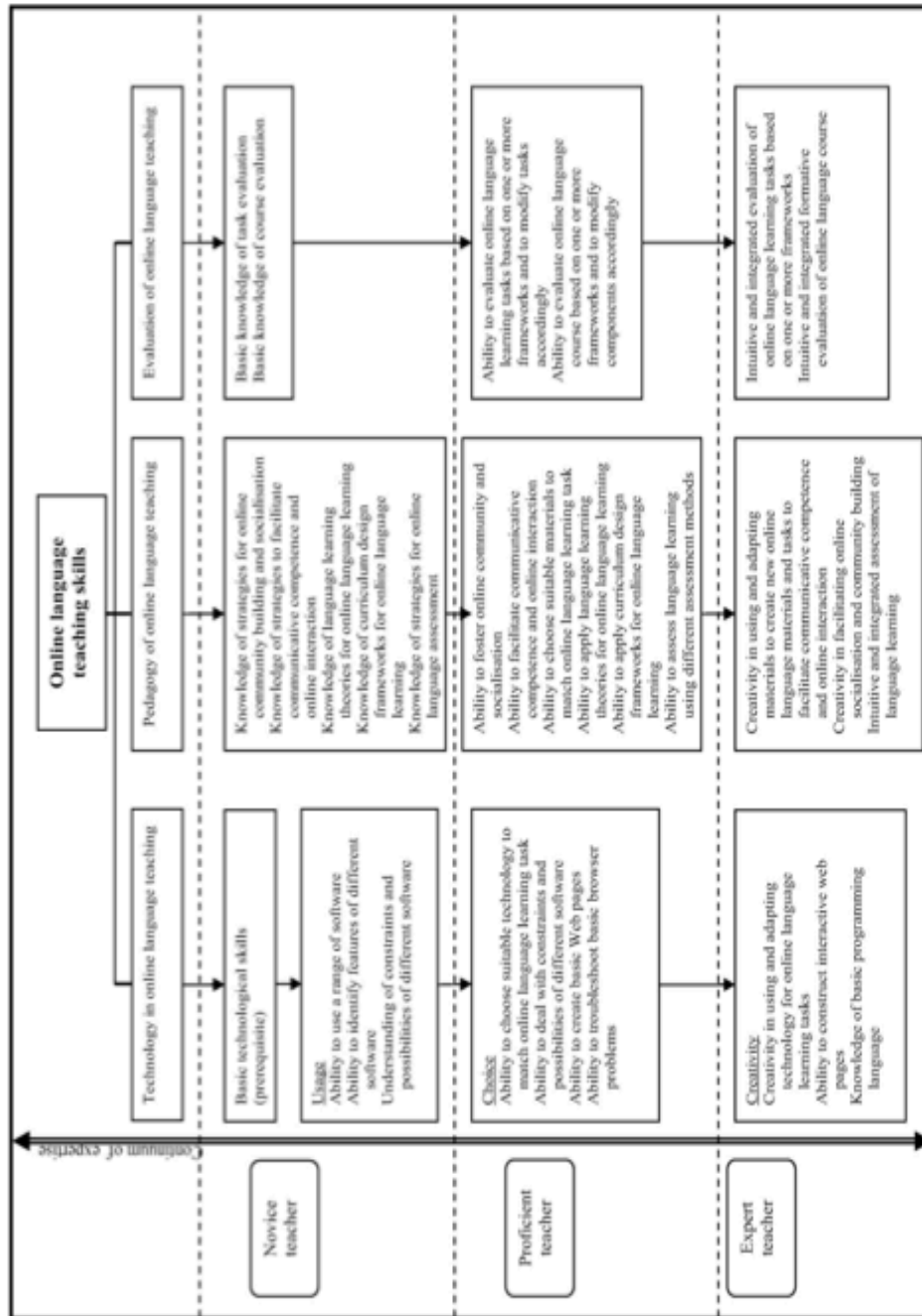|	Technology in online language teaching	Pedagogy of online language teaching	Evaluation of online language teaching
Novice teacher	Basic technological skills (prerequisite) Usage Ability to use a range of software Ability to identify features of different software Understanding of constraints and possibilities of different software	Knowledge of strategies for online community building and socialisation Knowledge of strategies to facilitate communicative competence and online interaction Knowledge of language learning theories for online language learning Knowledge of curriculum design frameworks for online language learning Knowledge of strategies for online language assessment	Basic knowledge of task evaluation Basic knowledge of course evaluation
Proficient teacher	Choice Ability to choose suitable technology to match online language learning task Ability to deal with constraints and possibilities of different software Ability to create basic Web pages Ability to troubleshoot basic browser problems	Ability to foster online community and socialisation Ability to facilitate communicative competence and online interaction Ability to choose suitable materials to match online language learning task Ability to apply language learning theories for online language learning Ability to apply curriculum design frameworks for online language learning Ability to assess language learning using different assessment methods	Ability to evaluate online language learning tasks based on one or more frameworks and to modify tasks accordingly Ability to evaluate online language course based on one or more frameworks and to modify components accordingly
Expert teacher	Creativity Creativity in using and adapting technology for online language learning tasks Ability to construct interactive web pages Knowledge of basic programming language	Creativity in using and adapting materials to create new online language materials and tasks to facilitate communicative competence and online interaction Creativity in facilitating online socialisation and community building Intuitive and integrated assessment of language learning	Intuitive and integrated evaluation of online language learning tasks based on one or more frameworks Intuitive and integrated formative evaluation of online language course

Continuum of expertise

Figure 2. Proposed framework for online language teaching skills.

APPENDIX B

RUBRIC FOR PRE AND POST ASSESSMENT OF ONLINE LANGUAGE
TEACHING SKILLS

Rubric for evaluating online language teaching skills
(operationalizations created based on: Compton, 2009; Hampel, 2009; Hampel & Stickler, 2005; Sun, 2011)

	Novice (1)	Developing (2)	Proficient (3)	Advanced (4)	Expert (+)	TOTAL
Basic Information and Communications Technology Skills (*Assessment question Q2 – part 1*)	Is very uncomfortable or uncomfortable using programs such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, to navigate the internet or to listen to audio, etc.	Is slightly uncomfortable or slightly comfortable using programs such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, to navigate the internet or to listen to audio, etc.	**Is comfortable using programs such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and navigating the Internet, listening to audio, etc.**	Is very comfortable using programs such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and navigating the Internet, listening to audio, etc.	Is very comfortable using programs such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and navigating the Internet, listening to audio, etc.	
Specific Technical Competence of Course Specific Software/Programs (*Assessment questions Q2, Q3 & Q9*)	Does not demonstrate any ability to navigate using Blackboard/ Learning Studio and Adobe Connect, may be completely unfamiliar with these programs and feels slightly uncomfortable, uncomfortable or very uncomfortable using them; feels slightly uncomfortable, uncomfortable or very uncomfortable posting announcements and effectively communicating with students via course website; feels slightly uncomfortable, uncomfortable or very uncomfortable helping students in troubleshooting or resolving common technical issues encountered while using course specific programs and website.	Demonstrates some but not consistent ability to navigate using Blackboard/ Learning Studio and Adobe Connect and may only feel slightly comfortable using these programs; feels slightly comfortable posting announcements and communicating with students via the course website; feels slightly comfortable troubleshooting and resolving *only some* common technical issues that students may encounter while using course specific programs and website but may not do so consistently.	**Demonstrates ability to navigate easily and efficiently using Blackboard and Adobe Connect and is comfortable using these programs; feels consistently comfortable posting announcements and effectively communicating with students via course website; feels consistently comfortable troubleshooting and resolving common technical issues that students may encounter while using course specific programs and website.**	Demonstrates ability to navigate easily and efficiently using Blackboard/Learning Studio and Adobe Connect and is very comfortable using these programs; feels very comfortable posting announcements and effectively communicating with students via course website; feels very comfortable consistently troubleshooting and resolving common and some more advanced technical issues that students may encounter while using course specific programs and website.	Demonstrates ability to navigate easily and efficiently using Blackboard/Learning Studio and Adobe Connect and is very comfortable using these programs; feels very comfortable posting announcements and effectively communicating with students via course website; feels very comfortable consistently troubleshooting and resolving common and some more advanced technical issues that students may encounter while using course specific programs and website.	

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Dealing with constraints and possibilities of the medium (Assessment questions Q4, Q5, Q6, Q18, Q19)					
	Is unable to demonstrate ability to recognize the challenges and affordances of the medium – virtual classroom etc. and is unable to articulate the challenges and affordances = thinks teaching online is the same as teaching in-person and therefore does not adapt to the differences and cannot articulate those differences; is unable to differentiate between types of activities/ interactions that can and cannot take place successfully in this environment and is unable to adapt activities for in-person courses to achieve same learning objectives in the online environment; is unable to demonstrate ability to use course programs/software to achieve desired learning objectives; is unable to adjust virtual classroom discourse so that it is appropriate to the online medium and is ineffective or does not make an attempt at all to inform/teach students how to best interact in this environment	(1)Demonstrates recognition of the challenges and affordances of the medium - virtual classroom, etc. but is inconsistent in being able to articulate those challenges and affordances = recognizes teaching online is different but is inconsistently able to articulate and adapt to those differences; (2) inconsistently demonstrates knowledge of types of activities/ interactions that can and cannot take place in this environment; demonstrates some ability to adapt activities for in-person courses to achieve same learning objectives in the online environment but does so inconsistently; (3) inconsistently demonstrates knowledge of ability to use course programs/software to achieve desired learning objectives; (4) inconsistently demonstrates ability to adjust virtual classroom discourse so that it is appropriate to the online medium and is sometimes but not always effective in informing/teaching students how best to interact in this environment	(1)Demonstrates basic knowledge of the challenges and affordances of the medium – virtual classroom etc. and consistently is able to articulate those challenges and affordances = knows that teaching online is different and is able to consistently articulate and adapt to these differences; (2)demonstrates consistent knowledge of types of activities/ interactions that can and cannot take place successfully in this environment - consistently demonstrates ability to adapt activities for in-person courses to achieve same learning objectives in the online environment (for example, a short conversation activity between students where normally the teacher would not interject at all during their discussion but perhaps follow-up with them at the end (in the classroom) occurs the same way online – where the teacher is not interrupting students just because he/she has an equal presence in the virtual classroom as the students, etc.); (3) demonstrates consistent knowledge of ability to use course programs/software to achieve desired learning objectives (for example, taking advantage of specific features the software has to offer to make learning more effective for students – using a 'share my screen' function to provide visual support to the conversation, using the 'chat box' to write out words or phrases that are new to students or that they are having difficulty figuring out how to spell, etc.); (4)demonstrates ability to adjust classroom discourse so that it is appropriate to the online medium and is effective in informing/teaching students how best to interact in this environment (asking specific people questions instead of open-ended ones which may lead to overlapping turns, frustration, awkwardness, wasted time, etc.; ability to guide students to also directly address one another with questions, etc. instead of addressing everyone generally; consistent ability to facilitate direct back and forth interaction between students that is not often mediated/interrupted by the instructor)	Demonstrates wide knowledge of the challenges and affordances of the medium – virtual classroom etc. and is easily and consistently able to articulate those differences = knows that teaching online is different and is able to consistently adapt to these differences and articulate how to adapt; demonstrates consistent knowledge of types of activities/ interactions that can and cannot take place successfully in this environment; demonstrates consistent knowledge of ability to use course programs/software to achieve desired learning objectives; consistently demonstrates ability to adapt activities for in-person courses to achieve same learning objectives in the online environment; consistently demonstrates ability to adjust virtual classroom discourse so that it is appropriate to the online medium and is always effective in informing/teaching students how to best interact in this environment.	Demonstrates vast knowledge of the challenges and affordances of the medium – virtual classroom etc. and is easily and consistently able to articulate those differences = knows that teaching online is different and is able to consistently adapt to these differences and articulate how to adapt;; demonstrates consistent knowledge of types of activities/ interactions that can and cannot take place successfully in this environment; demonstrates consistent knowledge of ability to use course programs/software to achieve desired learning objectives; consistently demonstrates ability to adapt activities for in-person courses to achieve same learning objectives in the online; consistently demonstrates ability to adjust virtual classroom discourse so that it is appropriate to the online medium and is always effective in informing/teaching students how to best interact in this environment.

Online socialization (Assessment questions *Q11, Q12, Q13, Q14, Q15*)	Does not demonstrate any knowledge of the concept of an online learning community or its importance for second language acquisition and therefore is unable to create or maintain a learning community online among students; is unable to motivate students to participate and interact nor able to minimize student anxiety – may increase student anxiety; no evidence of rapport between students or teacher and students OR evidence of a negative rapport; is unable to demonstrate knowledge of the instructor's role in creating and maintaining a learning community; does not demonstrate knowledge of how or which tools can be used to foster and maintain a learning community	Demonstrates/articulates some but inconsistent knowledge of the concept and importance of a learning community; demonstrates ability to motivates students to participate and interact and minimize student anxiety but may do so inconsistently; some evidence present of positive rapport between students and between teacher and students; demonstrates/articulates some but inconsistent knowledge of instructor role in creating and maintaining a learning community; demonstrates/articulates some but inconsistent knowledge of tools that can be used to foster and maintain a learning community	**Consistently demonstrates/articulates knowledge of the concept and importance of a learning community; consistently and effectively shows evidence of motivating students to participate and interact and minimizes student anxiety; strong evidence present of positive rapport between students and between teacher and students; demonstrates consistent knowledge of instructor role in creating and maintaining a learning community and is able to articulate that knowledge; demonstrates consistent knowledge of tools that can be used to foster and maintain a learning community and can consistently articulate that knowledge**	Consistently demonstrates/articulates knowledge of the concept and importance of a learning community; consistently and effectively shows evidence of motivating students to participate and interact and minimizes student anxiety; strong evidence present of positive rapport between students and between teacher and students; demonstrates/articulates consistent knowledge of instructor role in creating and maintaining a learning community; demonstrates/articulates consistent knowledge of tools that can be used to foster and maintain a learning community and demonstrates interest in finding new and better ways to maintain a vibrant learning community	Consistently demonstrates/articulates knowledge of the concept and importance of a learning community; consistently and effectively shows evidence of motivating students to participate and interact and minimizes student anxiety; strong evidence present of positive rapport between students and between teacher and students; demonstrates/articulates consistent knowledge of instructor role in creating and maintaining a learning community; demonstrates consistent knowledge of tools that can be used to foster and maintain a learning community and demonstrates interest in finding new and better ways to maintain a vibrant learning community

Facilitating Communicative Competence (*Assessment questions Q10, Q16, Q17*)	Shows no emphasis on student-centered approach to teaching OR demonstrates only teacher-centered approaches; is unable to show ability to design tasks that promote communication between students; demonstrates no knowledge of tools that can be used to facilitate synchronous and asynchronous interaction between students	Shows emphasis on student-centered approach to teaching but may be inconsistent; effectively designs some tasks to promote meaningful communication between students but may still implement other tasks that do not achieve this goal; demonstrates some or inconsistent knowledge of tools that can be used to facilitate synchronous and asynchronous interaction between students	**Consistently shows emphasis on student-centered approach to teaching; effectively designs tasks to promote meaningful communication between students (examples of appropriate tasks might include Role-plays, dialogues, information gap exercises, simulations); demonstrates knowledge of tools that can be used to facilitate synchronous and asynchronous interaction between students**	Consistently shows emphasis on student-centered approach to teaching; effectively and creatively designs tasks to promote meaningful communication between students; demonstrates wide knowledge of tools that can be used to facilitate synchronous and asynchronous interaction between students; demonstrates interest in learning more about these and other tools	Consistently shows emphasis on student-centered approach to teaching; effectively and creatively designs tasks to promote meaningful communication between students; demonstrates vast knowledge of tools that can be used to facilitate synchronous and asynchronous interaction between students; demonstrates interest in learning more about these and other tools	
TOTAL						

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APPENDIX C

BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE

Background Questionnaire - ONLINE TEACHING

* 2. What is your gender?

◯ Female

◯ Male

◯ Other

* 3. What is your age?

[ ]

* 4. What is your country of birth?

[ ]

* 5. What is(are) your native language(s)?

[ ]

* 6. What language(s) do you speak at home?
If more than one, with whom do you speak each of these languages?
Example:
Spanish - with husband 50% of time
English - with parents and kids

Language 1   [ ]

Language 2   [ ]

Language 3   [ ]

Language 4   [ ]

7. What language(s) do you speak at work/school? If more than one, in which contexts and with whom do you speak them?
Example:
English - 50% of time. Mainly used with other students
Spanish - 30% of time. Mainly with professors
Etc.

Language 1   [ ]

Language 2   [ ]

Language 3   [ ]

Language 4   [ ]

* 8. In what language(s) did you receive the majority of your pre-college education? If more than one, please give the approximate number of years for each language.

9. Have you ever visited (for the purpose of studying the language) a country or region where the language you teach is spoken?
*For visits unrelated to studying, please see question #9

○ Yes

○ No

10. If your answer to the previous question was 'yes', when? Where? For how long? Purpose (study abroad, vacation, internship etc.)

Experience 1: Where	
When & how long	
Purpose	
Experience 2: Where	
When & how long	
Purpose	
Experience 3: Where	
When & how long	
Purpose	

11. Other than the experience mentioned in the previous question, have you ever lived in a situation where you were exposed to a language other than your native language (e.g., by living in a multilingual community; visiting a community for purposes of study abroad or work; exposure through family members, etc.)?

○ Yes

○ No

12. If you responded 'yes' to the previous question, please give details below.

Experience 1: Country/region	
Language	
Purpose	
From when to when	
Experience 2: Country/region	

* 13. Have you had formal training (language classes) in the language that you teach currently? Please list below:
the type of training
the country where you received training
the duration of the training

For example:
Spanish(1, 2, 3, 4) classes in high school, US, 4 years
Etc.

[ ]

* 14. Have you ever taken a course online? If so, please critique that experience (What was done well? What could have been improved? Etc.)

[ ]

* 15. Have you ever taken a language course online? If so, please critique that experience (What was done well? What could have been improved? Etc.).

[ ]

16. How much experience do you have teaching a foreign language in a face-to-face/hybrid setting?

○ Less than one semester

○ One semester

○ Two semesters

○ Three semesters

○ Four semesters

Other (please specify)

[ ]

* 17. How much experience do you have teaching a foreign language online (Not hybrid or face-to-face)?

○ Less than one semester

○ one semester

○ two semesters

○ three semesters

○ four semesters

Other (please specify)

[ ]

* 18. Have you received any prior training for face-to-face language teaching? If so, when and how much? Describe briefly:
-What the training entailed
-Who conducted it
-The medium it was conducted in (face-to-face, online, webinar, etc.)
-Your opinion of its usefulness

[   ]

* 19. Have you received any prior training for online language teaching? If so, when and how much? Describe briefly:
-What the training entailed
-Who conducted it
-The medium it was conducted in (face-to-face, online, webinar, etc.)
-Your opinion of its usefulness

[   ]

* 20. Are you currently participating in any online or face-to-face language teaching training? If so, please describe.

[   ]

* 21. What do you think are the five most important things a language teacher must do in order for students to have a productive learning experience in an in-class setting?

[   ]

* 22. With reference to your response to the previous question, how would your response differ (or not) when applied to teaching a language online?

[   ]

[Prev] [Next]

Background Questionnaire - ONLINE TEACHING

* 23. What is your general (in a brief format) teaching philosophy/style?
EXAMPLE:
I mainly teach with a communicative method because...

24. What is your general opinion toward providing feedback to students? Comment specifically on: implicit (rephrasing student's utterance in the correct way) vs. explicit feedback (directly telling student what they said was incorrect)
oral vs. written
Etc.

* 25. What types of methods, theories and/or styles were used to teach YOU the foreign language(s) in the classroom? (ex. METHODS: Grammar-translation, audio-lingual, direct method, task-based learning, communicative language teaching etc.; student-centered, lecture style etc.; types of feedback and error correction etc.)

* 26. With regards to the previous question, please expand upon your opinions toward the methods, theories and/or styles used to teach you the foreign language(s)?

* 27. What are your personal attitudes/motivations/opinions toward teaching languages?

* 28. What are your personal attitudes/motivations/opinions towards teaching languages online?

* 29. Why are you a teacher?

[ ]

* 30. Do you plan to continue teaching as part of your career path? Will teaching be the main focus? Please explain.

[ ]

* 31. Do you feel you have room to improve as an online language teacher? How so?

[ ]

* 32. Would you attend more online training if offered? What do you need help with most (be specific)? For example:
Planning virtual meetings
Using Adobe Connect
etc.

[ ]

[Prev] [Done]

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Check out our sample surveys and create your own now!

APPENDIX D

PRE AND POST ASSESSMENT OF ONLINE LANGUAGE TEACHING SKILLS

How comfortable do you feel...

	very uncomfortable	uncomfortable	slightly uncomfortable	slightly comfortable	comfortable	very comfortable
using basic computer applications such as word, power point and browsing the internet?	○	○	○	○	○	○
posting announcements on blackboard?	○	○	○	○	○	○
creating a gradebook in blackboard?	○	○	○	○	○	○
creating a discussion board in blackboard?	○	○	○	○	○	○
uploading exams to blackboard?	○	○	○	○	○	○
editing information in your blackboard course shell?	○	○	○	○	○	○
helping students navigate blackboard?	○	○	○	○	○	○
grading assignments in blackboard?	○	○	○	○	○	○
creating Safe Assignments in blackboard?	○	○	○	○	○	○
creating videos within blackboard to share with your students?	○	○	○	○	○	○
resolving problems encountered when using blackboard?	○	○	○	○	○	○

Prev Next

How comfortable do you feel...

	very uncomfortable	uncomfortable	slightly uncomfortable	slightly comfortable	comfortable	very comfortable
teaching a class in Adobe Connect?	○	○	○	○	○	○
uploading documents/presentations to Adobe Connect?	○	○	○	○	○	○
sharing your screen with students in Adobe Connect?	○	○	○	○	○	○
creating new virtual classroom layouts within Adobe Connect?	○	○	○	○	○	○
recording sessions within Adobe Connect?	○	○	○	○	○	○
retrieving and/or sharing recordings made in Adobe Connect?	○	○	○	○	○	○
helping students with issues they encounter while using Adobe Connect?	○	○	○	○	○	○
resolving your own problems encountered when using Adobe Connect?	○	○	○	○	○	○

[Prev] [Next]

Complete the following sentences with your own words/ideas:

* 4. Complete the following sentence with your own words/ideas:

In order for students to be able to learn and acquire new language skills in a traditional face-to-face or hybrid language course, they must be provided with opportunities to:

[text box]

5. Complete the following sentence with your own words/ideas:

In order for students to be able to learn and acquire new language skills in a completely online course, they must be provided with opportunities to:

[text box]

* 6. Complete the following sentence with your own words/ideas:

Teaching a language online is different than teaching a language in a face-to-face/hybrid course because:

[text box]

7. Complete the following sentence with your own words/ideas:

Learners/students should be told explicitly WHY they are being assigned or asked to do certain activities and exercises because:

[text box]

8. Complete the following sentence with your own words/ideas:

The role of the instructor in an online language course and a face-to-face/hybrid language course is different/the same(choose one) because:

[text box]

[Prev] [Next]

* 9. Please respond to the following short-answer/essay question.

What instructions would you give to an online student having trouble with audio/video in Adobe Connect? Please be as detailed as you would be with the student.

[   ]

* 10. Please respond to the following short-answer/essay question.

In your own words, how would you define a student-centered learning environment. (Discuss the general concept as well as provide examples of what this would 'look' like in an actual class)

[   ]

* 11. Please respond to the following short-answer/essay question.

In your own words, how would you define a learning community? (Discuss amount of people, purpose, importance etc.)

[   ]

* 12. Please respond to the following short-answer/essay question.

Is a learning community in a face-to-face language course different from one in a completely online language course? How so or why not?

[   ]

* 13. Please respond to the following short-answer/essay question.

What role does the instructor play in creating a learning community in a language course?

[   ]

* 14. Please respond to the following short-answer/essay question.

Is a learning community necessary in order for students to acquire/learn listening, reading, speaking and writing skills in a foreign language? Please elaborate.

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* 15. Please respond to the following short-answer/essay question.

What tools (technology) can be used to create and maintain a learning community in an online language course? Please be specific and provide examples of how the tools can be used.

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* 16. Please respond to the following short-answer/essay question.

What tools can be used to facilitate synchronous (in real time) interaction in the target language (TL) between students in an online language course? Please be specific and provide at least two examples.

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* 17. Please respond to the following short-answer/essay question.

What tools can be used to facilitate asynchronous (delayed/not synchronous) interaction in the target language (TL) between students in an online language course? Please be specific and provide at least two examples.

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* 18. Please respond to the following short-answer/essay question.

Please give an example of an activity designed to facilitate interaction between students that could be used in a face-to-face/hybrid foreign language classroom that would NOT work in a completely online course.

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* 19. Please expand upon your last example and explore possible ways to modify the above mentioned activity so that it would facilitate interaction between students in a completely online course.

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[Prev] [Next]

TAKE-HOME SAMPLE LESSON PLAN ACTIVITY

Please complete a lesson plan or activity outline for an online course you are/will be teaching. Be sure to include the following elements:

1. Instructor & Student objectives
2. Instructions that a student would receive in blackboard/via email
3. Outline of activity (if asynchronous) or lesson plan (if synchronous) including
    a. Details as to how many students will participate and who they will interact with (instructor or other student(s), etc.)
4. Visual organization –
    a. If asynchronous: how would the instructions and activity be presented within blackboard.
    b. If synchronous: how would the virtual classroom (adobe connect room) be laid out to best suit this activity?

APPENDIX E

OBSERVATION FORM

ONLINE LANGUAGE COURSE OBSERVATION FORM[2]

1.	Instructor being observed	
2.	Course being observed	
3.	Peer Assessor/ or self-assessment *(if you are assessing yourself, write* **self-assessment**. *If you are assessing a peer, write* **your name***)*	
4.	Date & time of recording	
5.	Number of students in attendance	

INSTRUCTIONS:

Part A:
Take note of each of the activities that takes place throughout the session.
Summarize the sequence of activities that occur during the observation, the
duration, and the format (student to student (*St-St*) or teacher to student (*T-St*)).

Part B:
Respond to specific questions regarding the skills exhibited *DURING* this
observation.

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[2] Observation formed based on OCAT Version 2.0; 25 April 2007; eLearning Faculty Fellows, CFC , Western Carolina University; Language Classroom Observation Form used by University of Pennsylvania language classes, & Classroom Observation Report developed by Dr. Carla Ghanem, ASU.

***OBSERVATION NOTES*:**

Part A. Learning activities and time.
Look for warm-up, meaningful and communicative practice, culture, four-skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), wrap-up etc.

Time	Activities	Minutes	Format (*St-St, T-St*)

Part B: Based on what you *observed in the recorded virtual meeting session* please respond to the following statements and explain as needed. The statements are in third person *on purpose*. If you are completing a SELF-ASSESSMENT try to critically and honestly analyze your teaching during the recording.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

The teacher appeared to have a confident command of Adobe Connect and was able to solve problems when necessary.

Yes   No   NA
Explain:

The teacher used presentation tools (screen share, document share, whiteboard, discussion notes, chat box etc.) effectively.
Yes   No   NA
Explain:

The teacher used technology in a creative and effective way that promoted successful interaction in the target language between students.
Yes   No   NA
Explain:

LESSON AND ACTIVITIES

The teacher presented pedagogically relevant activities that promoted meaningful communication between students.
Yes   No   NA
Explain:

The teacher gave clear instructions.
Yes   No   NA
Explain:

The students were engaged in the activities and stayed on-task.
Yes   No   NA
Explain:

The amount of time provided for activities was appropriate.
Yes   No   NA
Explain:

The teacher transitioned smoothly throughout the lesson.
Yes   No   NA
Explain:

The amount of teacher-talk and student-talk was appropriate.

Yes   No   NA
Explain:

The type and amount of teacher feedback was effective.
Yes   No   NA
Explain:

Cultural instruction was integrated into class activities that incorporated the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence (i.e. critical analysis of ones own culture as well as comparison of similarities and differences between cultures; appreciation of cultural values that may differ; etc.)
Yes   No   NA
Explain:

VIRTUAL CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE
The teacher demonstrated a positive rapport with students (*appropriate evidence may include but is not limited to: friendly atmosphere, evidence of humor, small talk, respectful interactions, appropriate netiquette*).
Yes   No   NA
Explain:

The students demonstrated a positive rapport with one another (*appropriate evidence may include but is not limited to: friendly atmosphere, evidence of humor, small talk, respectful interactions, appropriate netiquette*).
Yes   No   NA
Explain:

There was a sense of community among students and with the teacher (i.e. it was evident that students and felt comfortable interacting with one another and the teacher, they were not afraid to make mistakes, everyone worked together as a community/family, etc.).
Yes   No   NA
Explain:

The virtual classroom atmosphere was warm, open and accepting.
Yes   No   NA
Explain:

The teacher was sensitive to students' difficulties and abilities,
Yes   No   NA
Explain:

LANGUAGE USE:
The teacher's use of the target language was appropriate to the level and effective (i.e. students were able to comprehend the teachers use of the TL and the TL was effectively used to negotiate for meaning).

Yes   No   NA
Explain:

The use of English was appropriate to student needs (i.e. only used in situations dealing with technology issues and/or specific course information).
Yes   No   NA
Explain:

The students' use of target language was on-task and appropriate (i.e. students made an attempt to use the TL during activities and did not persistently use English when it was not appropriate, etc.).
Yes   No   NA
Explain:

APPENDIX F

TEACHING JOURNAL PROMPTS

TEACHING JOURNAL PROMPT 1

In a 1-2 page entry (double-spaced), please state your experience with online teaching or learning. Elaborate on any training you have attended, your feelings, your preparation, etc. for/towards online language courses (or any online courses). Please feel free to address anything you like.

TEACHING JOURNAL PROMPT 2

In a 1-2 page entry (double-spaced), please elaborate on some of the successes and challenges you faced thus far with regards to teaching your online language course (preparation of materials, execution of activities etc.). Please feel free to address anything that has been helpful or not so helpful throughout your experience.

TEACHING JOURNAL PROMPT 3

In a 1-2 page entry, please elaborate on some of the successes and challenges you faced thus far with regards to teaching your online language course (preparation of materials, execution of activities etc.). If some previous challenges have been solved, please talk about them and how they were solved; if not, why do you think they are still a challenge. Please elaborate also on any successes you had and why you think they were successful. Please feel free to address anything that has been helpful or not so helpful throughout your experience.

TEACHING JOURNAL PROMPT 4

In a 1-2 page entry, please address any of the successes and challenges you faced thus far with regards to teaching your online language course (preparation of materials, execution of activities etc.). Please elaborate on any of the previous challenges and their improvements or continuation of them being challenges.   Please feel free to address anything that has been helpful or not so helpful throughout your experience.

APPENDIX G

EXIT SURVEY

* 2. Had you received any training prior to teaching online this session? If so, please comment on how helpful (or not) the training was. If not, would you have liked to receive training? In what areas specifically would you have liked to receive training?

* 3. Please comment on the helpfulness/usefulness or not of completing a weekly teaching journal. Be sure to mention specifically how this impacted your performance as an online language teacher and if this task facilitated any type of learning.

* 4. Please comment on the helpfulness/usefulness or not of collaborating with your colleagues virtually (via discussion boards, blogs etc,) and face-to-face throughout this semester. Be sure to mention specifically how this impacted your performance as an online language teacher and if this task facilitated any type of learning.

* 5. Please comment on the helpfulness/usefulness or not of completing a self-observation of your teaching at the beginning and end of the session. Be sure to mention specifically how this impacted your performance as an online language teacher and if this task facilitated any type of learning.

* 6. Please comment on how you plan to incorporate what you learned this semester into your future teaching of languages?

* 7. Do you feel like you have improved as an online language teacher since the beginning of the semester? How so (please be specific)?

* 8. What areas of teaching language online do you feel that you still need help with? Please comment on how you would like to learn about this (through formal training, independent research, a class, speaking with a more experienced online language teacher, professional development workshops, etc.)

APPENDIX H

CHRISTINA'S POST-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS - CHRISTINA

1. What were some of your biggest challenges teaching online this past semester?

2. Are you still having these challenges this semester?

3. What do you think would be helpful in getting you to move past and overcome some of these challenges?

4. In your teaching journals, you seemed to mention several times struggling with task design/ the activities you did during the virtual meetings throughout the semester (which activities to do during the meeting). Why was this so challenging for you, do you think? What could have helped you?
    a. 4a. Do/have you made any changes to the activities you are using this semester? If so, how did you change them? If not, why not & do you plan to change in the future?

5. You mentioned on your background questionnaire that you don't have plans to be a teacher in the long run. Have you enjoyed teaching so far as a TA? Has the experience teaching changed your mind at all about teaching in the long run?

6. What is the biggest challenge for you in your face-to-face classes?

7. You mentioned on the background questionnaire that you are still forming an opinion for online teaching, but as of right now, you do not feel that it is effective the way it is done. What do you think could be changed to make it more effective for students?

8. You mentioned that going into online teaching you already had a bad attitude so to speak due to what you had heard from colleagues. Do you think this perception had an affect on your teaching and your semester? How so? Or why not?

9. Did you feel like there was a sense of community among students in the class that you taught last semester? Why or why not?

10. On the pre-assessment you mentioned that you did not think that a learning community was necessary for students to learn all the skills (listening/speaking/reading/writing) but on the pre-assessment you said that you did think it was due to the importance of interaction. What provoked this change in opinion for you?

11. Do you think there are benefits to students having a sense of community with one another? /What do you think could be done to improve the sense of community among students in these short 7.5 week classes?

12. On the pre-assessment you seemed to really still be quite uncomfortable using Adobe Connect. However, on the post-assessment, your comfort level increased although you still remained uncomfortable or only slightly comfortable with some of the features within this program. Was using Adobe Connect ever a challenge/frustration for you? Did you encounter many issues or did the program work well for you?

13. Do you/have you attended professional development workshops/opportunities related to teaching f2f or online very often? Have you found them to be helpful? Why not?

14. Do you feel like you have support as an online teacher? From who? (Do you feel like you have support as a hybrid teacher? From who?)

    a. When you had challenges or frustrations about teaching online, who did you reach out to? Who did you express these frustrations with? Who did you discuss solutions with?

15. I wanted to chat a little bit now about the sense of community among your students. In the first observation (two students) they seemed to be interacting really well and have a good rapport. In the second observation, it seemed to be a bit more strained – you seemed really stressed out, too. Was this group typically like this? What do you think caused the difference in the virtual classroom environment between these two groups?
    b. What do you actively do to help foster the community among students? Do you think that the 'lack' of community impedes the interaction?

16. Overall, what would make the online language teaching experience more rewarding for you and your students?

APPENDIX I

JOHN'S POST-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUETSIONS - JOHN

1. What were some of your biggest challenges teaching online this past semester?
2. Are you still having these challenges this semester?
3. In your teaching journals, you seemed to mention several times technology issues, time constraints and students being unprepared and/or not at an appropriate level.
   a. Why do you think the technology was such an issue? What could have helped make this better?
   b. Why were time constraints an issue? What could have helped to make this better?
   c. Why do you think students were so unprepared? Is it possible they just needed a bit more guidance (advanced organizers of their thoughts?) What do you think could have helped this?
   d. Are you still having these issues this semester? Why do you think that is?
4. What do you think would be helpful in getting you to move past and overcome some of these challenges?
5. I wanted to chat with you a little about the activities that you chose to do during the virtual meetings. How did you go about picking out the activities that you wanted to do during the meetings?
   a. Did you adjust them based on successes/failures in past meetings?
   b. Were there any challenges to successfully executing these activities?
6. When you had challenges or frustrations about teaching online, who did you reach out to? Who did you express these frustrations with? Who did you discuss solutions with?
7. I wanted to chat a little bit now about the sense of community among your students. In the first observation (two students) they seemed to be interacting really well and have a good rapport. In the second observation, it seemed to be a bit more strained – you seemed really stressed out, too. Was this group typically like this? What do you think caused the difference in the virtual classroom environment between these two groups?
   a. What do you actively do to help foster the community among students? Do you think that the 'lack' of community impedes the interaction?
8. What do you feel like the role of the instructor is in a learning community –
9. On your assessments, you seemed to be really clear on what it means to have a student-centered environment and also on the tools you can use to create a student-centered environment. But, when I viewed your observation reports, and watched your recordings, it seems that you were very present in almost every moment of the interaction between students (or rather, they were mostly interacting with each other through you). I know that you mentioned this on your observation reports – that you would have liked to have talked less. But, I do not see that change happening from the beginning to the end of the semester. Is this a challenge for you? Why? What do you think could be done to make the virtual meetings more student-centered? Have you discussed this with anyone (colleagues? Supervisors?) to try and learn different techniques?

10. Several times you mentioned (in teaching journals, etc.) that you think the course design needs to be improved. How would you go about doing so? Or, what aspects specifically need to be improved?
11. Do you feel like you have support as an online teacher? From who? (Do you feel like you have support as a hybrid teacher? From who?)
12. Do you/have you attended professional development workshops/opportunities related to teaching f2f or online very often? Have you found them to be helpful? Why not?
13. Did you feel like the training at the beginning of the semester was helpful? Why or why not?
14. If you could request specific training (tech or pedagogical) with an expert, what do you still feel like you need training on?
15. Overall, what would make the online language teaching experience more rewarding for you and your students and for you to teach?

APPENDIX J

FRANCIS' POST-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – FRANCIS

1. What were some of your biggest challenges teaching online this past semester?
2. I know you are not teaching this semester but, do you think you would have continued to have those challenges? Why or why not?
3. What do you think would be helpful in getting you to move past and overcome some of these challenges?
4. You mention more than once that students online miss out because they don't get to learn from 20 plus students but only from their small group. DO you think this alone greatly impacts their learning? (For example, how much do you think all students in a face-to-face classroom get from learning from <u>everyone</u>).
   - Do you think there is a way to diffuse the special questions and knowledge learned in each individual session with the entire class?
   - What is this lack of interaction due to? (course design?) (time constraints?) Do you think there are ways the course could be modified that would allow for more direct (either synchronous or asynchronous) interaction among students?

5. One thing I wanted to touch on was an issue that I think a lot of online language teachers have and that has to do with the types of activities that we choose to do during the virtual meetings.

In your very first teaching journal your wrote:

At first I was struggling with an issue of outlining virtual meetings with students. I would meet once a week for 30 minutes with a group of 2-3 students. Virtual meetings are different because you have shorter time span, but each student gets more personal attention. Another challenge is that there is a lot to be covered in general, and if you have only 30 min per week, it makes it even more challenging. Eventually, I came up with a following design for the virtual meetings with students and it seems to work well. For each meeting students have assigned activities from the chapters that we are supposed to cover that week. They meet in groups before meeting with me and go over those activities and prepare them. When we meet online, I ask them to perform those activities. Depending on their performance, we either go over grammar and vocab again, or I challenge them with additional questions.

You also mention this again in your third TJ during session B – you say "

The activity assigned for that week was an activity that incorporates vocabulary from the topic "Airport" and grammar which is Imperfect Subjunctive. The challenge became apparent when we realized how they struggled with understanding what the instructions for the activity were and why do we use Imperfect Subjunctive in the situation "era necesario que..." . We ended up spending all time talking what Subjunctive is in general (talking in English), and after trying to understand how to use it in the past. I have chosen that activity over more situation oriented (e.g. at the airport) because I believed it would be more beneficial for the students to look at that tense together with me and ask questions. However, as it was revealed during the speaking session, grammar like

Imperfect Subjunctive requires more than just half and hour with students once a week. In order to bring students closer to its understanding, per-activities that are to be completed before the session would are also needed. I intend to start developing those for next time I am teaching online. <u>That particular session made me realize that for a type of set up I have this course (choosing one activity for one speaking session), it would be more beneficial if students prepare situation-oriented topic.</u> So, I went to the assignments and changed the next week activity from Past Perfect Subjunctive to "At the hotel" conversation."

I specifically wanted to ask you about this part. What do you mean about situation-oriented? And why did you determine that this would be most useful?

Also, in the very last observation – you were covering 'present perfect' with your students, you had a different layout. A lot of the meeting was in English, you went over the grammar point and then practiced it with each student. It was mainly T-St interaction. What made you decide on that activity and format?

6. I would just like you to talk me through this a little bit. Why did you end up choosing to outline the meetings like this? Why do you feel that the structure and activities you picked were most effective? Also, are you happy with this structure or do you think you might modify it somehow in the future and why?

7. During session A, in your last teaching journal, you talked about one activity that you presented that was supposed to prompt students use of the subjunctive but that they weren't using it at all and it just turned into a big mess where you had to explain the subjunctive to everyone and describe the forms etc. You mentioned that in the future you will just pick a different activity so you can avoid having that huge discussion in the middle of the meeting. Again, I want to say that this is an issue that others have expressed having – students need explanations about certain grammar topics but there just isn't time to have that discussion. So, do you think a simple grammar video can solve this problem? Or is it more complicated? What would you recommend as a solution?

8. I noticed that in all of the virtual meetings I observed, you never really used any presentation tools. Why is that?

9. So, one of the challenges that I face as an online teacher personally is incorporating culture into the virtual meetings but still making sure students practice key concepts they will need for the oral exam. Do you experience this too? Why do you think this was a challenge for you? What do you think could be done to make this easier or to incorporate culture more into the course?

10. Do you think that your experience with this study would have been different if you only taught for 7.5 weeks and not the whole semester? How so?

11. Do you/have you attended professional development workshops/opportunities related to teaching f2f or online very often? Have you found them to be helpful? Why not?

12. Do you feel like you have support as an online teacher? From who? (Do you feel like you have support as a hybrid teacher? From who?)

13. Overall, what would make the online language teaching experience more rewarding for you and your students?

14. On the assessments there is a question that asked about the difference between a learning community in a face-to-face class and in an online class. When you answer this question you always talk about interaction and how there is less interaction online. Also, it seems as though you are referring mainly to the face-to-face interaction. Do you think the learning community and interaction can extend outside of those synchronous videoconferencing intearactions? Do you try to make this happen in your course? Is it difficult? Does the coures design impede the building of community outside of Adobe Connect?

15. Did you feel like the training at the beginning of the semester was helpful? Why or why not? (If you could have your own personalized training now – as in they will go over whatever you want help with – what kind of training would you request?)

APPENDIX K

HUMAN SUBJECTS IRB APPLICATION

Instructions and Notes:
- Depending on the nature of what you are doing, some sections may not be applicable to your research. If so, mark as "NA".
- When you write a protocol, keep an electronic copy. You will need a copy if it is necessary to make changes.

1 Protocol Title

Include the full protocol title: Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages Online: A Comparative Study

2 Background and Objectives

Provide the scientific or scholarly background for, rationale for, and significance of the research based on the existing literature and how will it add to existing knowledge.
- Describe the purpose of the study.
- Describe any relevant preliminary data.

The purpose of this study is to examine the possible outcomes of learning foreign languages (FL) online. The trend to take and teach FLs online is increasing (e.g. Felix, 2003; Hubbard & Levy, 2006). Teaching FLs online is indeed a little different than face-2-face (f2f) classes. Researchers have been discussing new models for online teachers (e.g. Compton, 2009); others have suggested some ideas of activities to use online (e.g. Salmon, 2013). No empirical studies have been conducted yet. To examine the success of teachers and students alike, this study would like to compare different set ups of FL online courses, specifically, Italian, French, German, and Spanish. The current study will draw on the recommendations in the previous literature to create an effective online language teacher training program, which will hopefully lead to better students' outcomes. Student participants will take a pre- and post-survey and write five journal entries throughout the semester. Furthermore, teacher participants will complete a background questionnaire, a pre- and post-assessment of skills, bi-monthly teaching journal, periodic online discussion groups, and peer observations with feedback. Semi-structured interviews with select teacher participants will be conducted at the end of each semester. Throughout the semesters the progress and impact of the teacher training program will be illustrated and will allow to see whether or not this training program has been effective as well as allow for changes to be implemented in the future to improve online teaching.

3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Describe the criteria that define who will be included or excluded in your final study sample. If you are conducting data analysis only describe what is included in the dataset you propose to use.
Indicate specifically whether you will target or exclude each of the following special populations:
- Minors (individuals who are under the age of 18)
- Adults who are unable to consent
- Pregnant women
- Prisoners
- Native Americans
- Undocumented individuals

This study seeks to include learners and teachers of Italian, French, German, and Spanish who are currently 18 years or older.

This study will exclude the vulnerable populations of minors, adults unable to consent, pregnant women, prisoners, Native Americans, and undocumented individuals.

4 Number of Participant

Indicate the total number of participants to be recruited and enrolled:

There will be a maximum of 500 participants in this study.

5 Recruitment Methods

- Describe when, where, and how potential participants will be identified and recruited.
- Describe materials that will be used to recruit participants. (Attach copies of these documents with the application.)

Potential participants will be recruited from ITA, FRE, GER, SPA online classes at ASU. Please see attached Recruitment Script.

6 Procedures Involved

Describe all research procedures being performed and when they are performed. Describe procedures including:

- Surveys or questionnaires that will be administered. (Attach all surveys, interview questions, scripts, data collection forms, and instructions for participants.)
- What data will be collected including long-term follow-up?
- Lab procedure and tests and related instructions to participants
- The period of time for the collection of data.
- Describe the amount and timing of any compensation or credit to participants.
- If the research involves conducting data analysis only, describe the data that that will be analyzed.

Please see the attached documents for the data collection procedures that will be used with participants. Student participants will take an online pre-survey at the beginning of the semesters and an online post-survey at the end of the semester. Each survey will take approximately 15 minutes. Additionally, they will submit their five journal entries electronically throughout the semester to the PI. Student participants will spend from 5-10 minutes writing each journal entry. Teacher participants will complete an online background questionnaire and an online pre-assessment before the semester starts. These two tasks will take the participant between 30-45 minutes. They will also submit electronically bi-monthly teaching journal entries, which will require about 15-20 minutes of the participants' time, as well as participate monthly in online discussions. Teacher participants should spend anywhere from 10-15 minutes on the online discussions. As these classes take place online, students meet at least once a week synchronously (in real time) with the teacher. Each teacher participant will record an online session at the beginning, middle and end of the semester. The recording will then be observed by the teacher in the recording (for self-evaluation), by a peer (another teacher participant in the study), and the researchers. Each teacher participant will spend about 30-45 minutes completing his/her self-observation (this includes the viewing of the recording). At the end of the semester, all teacher participants will complete an online post-assessment, which will take about 10-15 minutes and willing participants will partake in a semi-guided interview. Lastly, all willing teacher participants will complete a delayed online-survey, which will take approximately 10-15 minutes and take place during the semester following their participation in the study. Teacher participants all work together in the same program and will participate in collaborative exercises such as the online discussions and the course observations. As a result, they will be able to identify each other as also participating in this study.

The data collection will take place from Fall 2014 though Summer 2015. There will be no compensation for participants.

7 Risks to Participants

List the reasonably foreseeable risks, discomforts, or inconveniences related to participation in the research. Consider physical, psychological, social, legal, and economic risks.

There are no reasonably foreseeable risks, discomforts or inconveniences related to participation in this research.

8 Potential Benefits to Participants

Realistically describe the potential benefits that individual participants may experience from taking part in the research. Indicate if there is no direct benefit. Do not include benefits to society or others.

There is no direct benefit to the participants of the study, other than having the opportunity to voice the issues with online teaching/learning.

9 Prior Approvals

Describe any approvals – other than the IRB - that will be obtained prior to commencing the research. (e.g., school, external site, or funding agency approval.)

n/a

10 Privacy and Confidentiality

Describe the steps that will be taken to protect subjects' privacy interests. "Privacy interest" refers to a person's desire to place limits on with whom they interact or to whom they provide personal information.

Describe the following measures to ensure the confidentiality of data:

- Where and how data will be stored?
- How long the data will be stored?
- Who will have access to the data?
- Describe the steps that will be taken to secure the data (e.g., training, authorization of access, password protection, encryption, physical controls, certificates of confidentiality, and separation of identifiers and data) during storage, use, and transmission.

SOCIAL BEHAVIORAL INSTRUCTIONS AND TEMPLATE		
NUMBER	DATE	PAGE
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In order to protect the privacy of our subjects, we will assign each participant a number so that there will be no way of identifying participants as all personal identifiers will have been removed. Data will be stored in a secure location on password-protected computers. Only the research team will have access to the data. The data will be stored no more than 2 years.

11 Consent Process

Indicate the process you will use to obtain consent. Include a description of:
- Where will the consent process take place
- How will consent be obtained

Non-English Speaking Participants
- Indicate what language(s) other than English are understood by prospective participants or representatives.
- If participants who do not speak English will be enrolled, describe the process to ensure that the oral and/or written information provided to those participants will be in that language. Indicate the language that will be used by those obtaining consent.

Waiver or Alteration of Consent Process (written consent will not be obtained, required information will not be disclosed, or the research involves deception)
- Review the "CHECKLIST: Waiver or Alteration of Consent Process (HRP-410)" to ensure you have provided sufficient information for the IRB to make these determinations.

Participants who are minors (individuals who are under 18)
- Describe the criteria that will be used to determine whether a prospective participant has not attained the legal age for consent to treatments or procedures involved in the research under the applicable law of the jurisdiction in which the research will be conducted.

Prior to starting the online background questionnaire (teacher participants) and online pre-survey (student participants), a consent statement will be provided and participants will be asked to consent in order to continue on to the background questionnaire. Because we are recruiting participants who live in the United States, all communication (both written and oral) will be in English.

12 Process to Document Consent in Writing

If your research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to participants and involves no procedures for which written documentation of consent is normally required outside of the research context, the IRB will consider a waiver of the requirement to obtain written documentation of consent.

(If you will document consent in writing, attach a consent document. If you will obtain consent, but not document consent in writing, attach the short form consent template or describe the procedure for obtaining and documenting consent orally.)

13 Training

Provide the date(s) the members of the research team have completed the CITI training for human participants. This training must be taken within the last 3 years. Additional information can be found at: http://researchintegrity.asu.edu/training/humans

Carla Ghanem – Completed 12/16/2013
Rebecca Foster – Completed 8/31/2012
Andrew Ross – Completed 1/14/2014
David Parks – Completed 7/8/2014
Barbara Lafford – Completed 4/23/2013