CONVERGING A GRADUATE TESOL CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

INTO AN ONLINE ENVIRONMENT:

AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

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in
Teaching International Languages

by
Susana Mercedes Murillo León

Summer 2009
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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, Victor Murillo and Nelly León and to my fiancé Alexander Montero, for their absolute love, support, guidance and faith.

Also, I would love to dedicate this thesis to future generations and who those that believe in the enrichment of learning.
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Susana Mercedes Murillo León
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E-learning is a popular educational tool used by students throughout the world. It provides students online access to traditional face-to-face course offerings. This thesis addresses how to converge face-to-face courses into effective online courses. It examines a variety of components, such as the use of tools in Blackboard (WebCT) Vista, the roles of instructors and students in a computer-based setting, the use of different strategies and techniques for special need students using the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) paradigm, and the pros and cons of online and face-to-face courses. This study also offers guidelines for a five-hour training session for faculty based on e-learning design, evaluation and netiquette. Twenty-five students in a graduate course participated in an online learning module that included individual and group tasks. A survey was used to evaluate their responses to the module. A Technology and Learning
Program (TLP) expert extensively evaluated the online course. He offered suggestions for improving the application of e-learning design, and use of the UDL. Results from the survey, the IT’s evaluation, and theory analysis, provided insights and revealed how diverse students react differently to an online setting. Overall, this study presents a framework on how online learning affects students socially, economically and culturally, and how this educational approach enables faculty, students, and institutions to remain competitive.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

Globalization has brought changes to societies around the world. The Internet has affected all aspects of social life, economically, and educationally. It has given people opportunities to easily communicate with each other around the globe. Universities and colleges in different countries have found that online courses are a very good way to teach students.

Online courses offer many advantages for universities; going from a “traditional” classroom to a virtual classroom is seen as a new way for students to experience a different kind of education. However, some programs do not put courses online. For example, the Graduate TESOL Certificate program of California State University, Chico (CSUC), does not offer its courses online. Putting the courses online will help more English teachers to get this certification in an accessible and economical way. Rovai and Jordan (2004) observe that, “in implementing, one reality seems clear. Universities will face more competition to attract quality-conscious students and thus cannot afford to underestimate the depth and speed of the changes required to remain competitive” (¶ 6). Although change is not easy and people reject it, this kind of change can benefit not only students, but institutions as well.
Statement of the Problem

As research shows, millions of users use the World Wide Web daily. People from different backgrounds, ethnicities, sex, age, and disabilities can learn about a variety of topics with just a click of their mouse. At the same time, Lawless and Schrader (2008) remark that “individuals vary in their aptitudes for learning, their willingness to learn, and the styles or preferences for how they learn if they choose to do so” (p. 273).

Distance education via the Internet has been a rapidly growing area for universities and other institutions. With continual advances in technology, e-learning is becoming more and more competitive. For these reasons, there is a need to change the view and paradigms of majors, graduate programs, and doctorates to better achieve goals through technology and Learning Management Systems (LMS). As Ruhe and Zumbo (2009) observe, “in 2005, 62% of academic leaders rated the learning outcomes in online education as the same as or superior to those in face-to-face education, compared with 57% in 2003” (p. 4). This means that it will be essential for CSUC to promote its Graduate TESOL Certificate courses in an e-learning environment. “According to Gene Wihoit (2007) …online learning and virtual schools are solutions to the most important issues in American education today” (as cited in Ruhe & Zumbo, 2009, p. 5). These facts show that it is important to make changes in the Graduate TESOL program so it can be accessed online and, become more competitive.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to converge face-to-face traditional courses into courses that can be easily taught online. Each course from the CSUC Graduate TESOL
Certificate Program will be reviewed. In an online course, it is extremely important to offer students a sense of community. Students who feel they do not “fit in” and have a low sense of community tend to feel isolated and are at risk of becoming dropouts. Rovai and Jordan (2004) state that,

…online courses that suffer more dropouts are less related to the course delivery medium and more related to the online course design and pedagogy employed by some online faculty who have limited skills in using CMC (text-based computer-mediated communication) to facilitate learning and to nurture sense of community. (¶ 12)

The process that best fits this kind of program will be analyzed. The analysis of the process of converging face-to-face courses into an online environment will be examined using McKay’s (2006) definition of action research that includes four main factors:

1. Action research is contextual, small-scale, and localized—it identifies and investigates problems within a specific situation.
2. It is evaluative and reflective, as it aims to bring about change and improvement in practice.
3. It is participatory, as it provides for collaborative investigation by teams of colleagues, practitioners, and researchers.
4. Changes in practice are based on the collection of information or data which provides the impetus for change. (p. 30)

This study provides a unique perspective on new technological concepts, practices, methodologies, and techniques in an online setting, and benefit the CSUC Graduate TESOL Certificate Program. It explores the resources available and offers suggestions for the successful design of an online course with emphasis on interactions and evaluations between professor/student and student/student. The results of this study may also be applicable to other face-to-face programs that are not converted into online courses.
Theoretical Bases and Organization

This action research study addresses the following questions:

1. What does the process of converging, designing, and evaluating a face-to-face course into an e-learning environment entail?

2. To what extent can online courses be designed to provide individuals with disabilities access to information, resources, and technologies?

3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of face-to-face courses and online courses?

4. How do students respond to a teaching module taught online?

5. What e-learning content should be included in a five-hour training session for faculty in the Graduate TESOL Certificate Program?

The answers to all of these questions will be provided throughout the study. The final results are described in the final chapter.

Limitations of the Study

Since online courses are quite different than traditional classes, there will be limitations. Changing paradigms for professors who are used to teaching with lectures, discussions, and group activities, will be quite difficult. In an online environment, students will mostly be in charge of their own learning and sometimes teach each other; the role of the professor will be more of a facilitator. However, students who take online courses might not have computer skills. At the same time, disabilities (e.g., color blindness, deafness or others) have to be considered, especially for audio-visual materials. Since these courses might be offered in different countries, time zone
differences between the professor and students can be a factor when logging into class chat rooms or forums. Other limitations that might be a factor include low Internet connection speed, budget, and restrictions using copyrighted materials such as videos, audio, or visuals.

One of the roles that we need to perform as educators, then, is to teach students to find and learn information on their own or in concert with their colleagues. The online environment fosters self-motivated education. Students direct their own use of Internet links, search engines, discussion boards, chat, e-mail, and other media. While such resources cannot guarantee student initiative, they establish a framework that gives precedence to the autonomy of the learner. (Kassop, 2003, ¶ 9)

Summary and Overview of the Chapters

This thesis contains eight chapters that focus on effective e-learning implementation. This first chapter contains an overview of the background and reasons why the Graduate TESOL Certificate Program from CSUC needs to offer courses on the Web. In general, researchers have found that e-learning is an efficient tool in promoting access to education and enhancing the competitiveness of professionals and educational institutions. This action research study also identifies strategies, tools, and insights to help converge face-to-face courses to the Web. This thesis is structured to provide a holistic view of the process.

Chapter II provides a background for the study and answers questions such as:

- Why are some students opting for e-learning rather than traditional face-to-face education in higher academic levels?
- Why is the Graduate TESOL Certificate important for English teachers?
- How is distance education reflected in e-learning?
To what extent can technological strategies, resources, and assistive tools used in face-to-face instruction be implemented in an online course?

What elements are necessary to converge a face-to-face course into web-based instruction?

At the end of Chapter II, the advantages and disadvantages of both e-learning and face-to-face instruction are compared, contrasted, and discussed.

Chapter III presents how electronic learning is affecting societies, students, and educational institutions. An exhaustive discussion of how web-based design and evaluation are important in the development of successful online courses is also presented in this chapter. In addition, this chapter highlights the following areas:

- The role of the instructor and students.
- The process of converging a face-to-face course to an online course using Learning Management System’s (LMS) tools.
- Use and recognition of contextualized tools, asynchronous or synchronous, in the design of authentic and meaningful tasks.
- Use of problem-solving and experience-based assessments and tasks so students can feel challenged and actively engaged in the field of study.
- Use of feedback applications for student activities and evaluation of instruction.

The chapter concludes with recommendations to instructors on how to create and scaffold learning using design and evaluation strategies and tools. These recognize the importance of students developing a sense of community and comfort in an
environment where they can reflect, analyze, discover, critique, interact, create, and share with others.

Chapter IV describes the methodology used to evaluate implementation of the tools. This study has two main instruments. First, a survey (see Appendix A) was conducted to evaluate an online learning module. Twenty-five students in one course participated in all the online module’s activities, but only twenty-one (16 females and 5 males) took the thirteen question survey. The results were compiled and analyzed. The students responding represented diverse cultures, languages, and levels of computer skills. The second instrument is a rubric provided by the Technology and Learning Program (TLP) that helps CSUC faculty evaluate their online courses. The rubric is divided in the following criteria:

1. Learner Support and Resource
2. Online Organization and Design
3. Instructional Design and Delivery
4. Assessment and Evaluation of Student Learning
5. Innovative Teaching with Technology
6. Faculty Use of Student Feedback (see Appendix B).

The results were analyzed and contrasted with theory and research on e-learning and effective implementation of tools in an online course.

Chapter V highlights the advantages and disadvantages of online instruction, as opposed to face-to-face instruction. This chapter emphasizes how important it is for instructors to recognize the pros and cons of both online instruction and face-to-face instruction, because each has strengths and weaknesses. Some participants may or may
not be comfortable enrolling in an online course because they miss human interaction. Others, however, can easily manage this, using resources such as discussion forums, video conferencing, or other synchronous tools. People whose work schedules are not flexible and those who live far from campus may prefer taking an online course from the comfort of their homes. Additional benefits and drawbacks are discussed so that instructors, participants, and educational institutions are aware of them.

Chapter VI shows how e-learning can provide a sense of equality among students. Federal mandates such as Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and California Government Code 11135 are explained and exemplified. This chapter also mentions the importance of using assistive resources for people with disabilities to not only help them, but to also help the other students taking the course. To best benefit this group, the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) paradigm is built on a set of principles instructors can implement in their design of instructional resources so that no student is excluded. Some of the principles explained in this chapter are:

1. Class climate
2. Interaction
3. Physical environment, accommodations and products
4. Delivery methods
5. Others

Chapter VI concludes by showing how important it is to promote inclusion, and respect the individual circumstances of all students, such as, learning styles, diversity of backgrounds, cultures, and age. It also stresses the use of the Learning Management System and Web 2.0.
Chapter VII offers a training workshop for facilitators who want to converge face-to-face courses into web-based courses. Specifically, this chapter focuses on helping instructors in the Graduate TESOL Certificate Program. However, this training workshop can be used by any instructor or trainer who wants to manage or teach how to manage an online course. Aspects such as design, Blackboard (WebCT) Vista tools, instructor and students roles, asynchronous or synchronous resources, evaluation, feedback, and netiquette guidelines are explained in this 5 hour training workshop using different activities. This chapter concludes by summarizing the main aspects that instructors must be aware of when managing an online course.

Finally, Chapter VIII pulls together the key issues raised in this project. It answers the main research questions, and offers recommendations emerging from the study.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Teaching foreign languages has become an essential part of the education curriculum in many countries. The Internet not only provides teachers with instant information about any subject, but it also enables them to improve their professional growth by taking online classes, receiving training or teaching courses.

Online distance education is used by many students from different universities and institutions. These online course offerings give students greater access to education and provide benefits in terms of time and money. The purpose of this literature review is to analyze existing face-to-face courses from the Graduate TESOL Certificate Program in order to converge them into online courses. While there are not many studies that show how to teach courses online successfully, there is research that mentions how to approach it.

Critical Review

Most students are proficient in the use of technology, not only as a tool for entertainment, but also as a tool for learning. This is especially true with the World Wide Web. Not only can students easily search for what they want, but they can also be involved in different tasks at the same time while they learn. Teachers can use this media
as a very dynamic learning tool. Online courses can help students to solve problems faster in a more relevant way. However, online courses are not designed for everyone. Teachers need to know how technology affects learning, how online courses can help them improve their professional growth, and how to be more skillful with the Internet and digital media in general. Hence, e-learning is suitable for some people, but for others, it can be a source of frustration and even failure. Knowing how to navigate the Web, being computer literate, and managing time effectively are characteristics that a successful online learner needs to have. The lack of one or two skills can cause students to drop out. For these reasons, it is important that graduate programs offer both face-to-face and online courses. It is important that they offer different alternatives for students who want to acquire the same content, but have different learning preferences.

✓ Why is the Graduate TESOL Certificate Program important for English teachers?

English is widely spoken in many countries. Warschauer (2000) remarks that,

...economic and employment trends will change the way English is used. Increasingly, nonnative speakers will need to use the language daily for presentation of complex ideas, international collaboration and negotiation, and location and critical interpretation of rapidly changing information. (p. 511)

With these rapid changes in technology, English teachers are needed in many countries. Through the Internet and with globalization, the English language is a “universal” language that has become a tool for socialization, business, sharing, critiquing, teaching, learning and other situated functions.

The Graduate TESOL Certificate from the California State University, Chico (CSUC) provides specialist certification for teachers who want to teach English to
speakers of other languages. The courses provide qualifications for those with little or no experience in teaching English as a second or foreign language. In addition, experienced teachers have an opportunity to be interns in various ESL language programs. The professional field experience offers classroom and administrative placements appropriate for students at different points in their careers.

As described on the website for the Graduate TESOL Certificate Program from the CSUC Department of Education (n.d), this certificate:

…is intended for students in the M.A degree program in Teaching International Languages; students interested in expanding the professional applications of other degrees and credentials by preparing for positions teaching English in the U.S and abroad; international students interested in teaching English as a Foreign Language in other countries; foreign/second language teachers at the secondary level; individuals who already hold graduate degrees; but seek specialized professional preparation in the field; individual pursuing a Designated Subjects Adult Education Credential; and individuals in related business enterprises. (¶ 3)

The Graduate TESOL Certificate opens new doors to the world economy, extends academic skills, offers supervised field experience, and fosters cultural and professional growth. Consequently, the certificate helps teachers to become assets to educational institutions where the English language is a necessary or essential tool for communication or success.

✓ Distance Education through Internet.

One of the greatest English naturalists in history, Charles Darwin (1859) said, “It’s not the strongest species that survives, nor the most intelligent but the ones most responsive to change” (¶ 1). Distance education has changed since the advent of the World Wide Web. The Internet is used by many educational institutions around the
Different countries and cultures are communicating with each other, and there is easier information access from a variety of sources. In education, there is a wide range of courses, depending on the institution. Language teachers have opportunities to take workshops or online courses in order to improve their knowledge of their target language or their teaching practices.

Nunan (2002) observes that “through online courses, teachers are able to keep their jobs while they study. There is the added advantage that they can apply ideas from the course immediately to their current teaching context” (p. 618). Online courses are designed so that students and professors can take part in interactive activities and authentic didactic materials in which the role of the student is to be as self-independent as possible. Therefore, as in traditional distance education, not all students display the characteristics required for success. Because of age, acceptance of the Internet, or lack of computer skills, some students are not likely to do well in an online environment.

However, certain features lacking in distance education are present in online courses. For example,

…the ability to provide immediate feedback and clarify areas of concern for students is another area when on-line interaction is similar to what happens in regular classrooms, and marks this form of interaction as different from traditional distance learning, in which feedback is delayed, even with the deployment of other electronic media such as fax and e-mail. (Nunan, 1999, p. 60)

Online courses are sometimes seen as substitute for teachers and distance education. Depending on the design of an online course and the learners’ profile, students may or may not choose to take computer-based courses. Hiltz and Turoff (2005) state that:
We are in the process of moving:

**From**: face-to-face courses using objectivist, teacher-centered pedagogy and offered by tens of thousands of local, regional, and national universities;

**To**: online and hybrid courses using digital technologies to support constructivist, collaborative, student-centered pedagogy, offered by few hundred “mega-universities” that operate on a global scale. (p. 59)

Online courses offer students many ways to interact with others, give immediate feedback and assessment, and provide authentic materials for students to utilize with their computers. On the other hand, because the Internet provides information so quickly, this can result in a lack of reflection and critical thinking. However, this can be addressed if teachers are able to facilitate and design the curriculum in a way that provides time for reflection.

Online courses offer many advantages, but these depend on where students live, what kind of Internet connection they have and how computer literate they are. Personal factors such as good study habits and time management skills are also important. It can sometimes take an hour or more before students are able to log on to a course. This delay can cause students to miss several classes and result in poor performance. Unfortunately, for students lacking basic computer skills, online courses can be challenging, as they offer limited support. In addition, if the professor has a low-speed connection, he or she can only cover minimal content or feedback, depending on the time allotted for his or her course. Adding chat rooms or forums to the online course may be beneficial because it “is relatively easy to capture tutorials and archive them on the Web site. This has proved particularly beneficial to students who are L2 speakers of English” (Nunan, 2002, p. 619). In addition, Nunan (2002) describes a potential frustration that e-moderators may have during a live tutorial using webcams:
Although the technology is improving rapidly, there are still great frustrations in online teaching when the information superhighway slows to a crawl or even stops completely. This is particularly annoying when one has gotten up at 4:00 a.m on a Sunday to conduct a class with students half a world away. I run accounts with two different service providers so that if one system goes down, I can switch to another. I always have the home telephone number of at least one of the students in a class so that, if the Internet fails completely, at least I can get word to my students that they have not been abandoned. (p. 620)

Despite the advantages and disadvantages of online courses, people need to acquire skills quickly so they can work more effectively in their chosen fields in order to stay competitive. A five hour training workshop for professors in charge of the Graduate TESOL Program courses has been created in this study to train and familiarize them with web-based instruction. This training will be explained in chapter VII.

✓ Strategies or Techniques That Can Be Implemented in Designing Online Courses

Developing an online course requires time for designing and evaluating its performance. The courses have to be diverse to include people with disabilities. They also have to show how important each topic is and why certain elements or techniques can be used to approach learning and assimilation in a practical and meaningful way.

Online education has to be well designed so students can have similar facilities as if they were in a face-to-face classroom. The following steps are crucial for the design of a successful online environment and should be carefully considered:

a) Which topics and objectives are going to be taught?

b) What kind of Learning Management System (LMS) does the university provide to the professors?
c) Where and how will the students have accessibility to the course?

d) What kind of assessment (formal and informal) will be implemented?

e) What policies will the institution or university have regarding audio-visual artifacts?

f) How well trained are the faculty members in web-based instruction?

g) To what extent does the course offer tools so that all students are included?

Interactivity between the teacher, students, and technology assistants is essential, as well as, providing students with the software and equipment they will need for the course. The designer has to consider how students will be accessing certain audio-visual aids such as videos or pictures. Koszalka and Ganesan (2004) mention that “packaged course management system (CMS) [for example, Blackboard (WebCT) Vista] for distance education have made it easier for members of education communities to create and facilitate online courses” (p. 243). However, institutions still need to make sure that facilitators are familiar with the LMS or CMS by offering training to ensure that students receive quality instruction and equal access.

Collins (as cited in Koszalka & Ganesan, 2004) suggested:

Well-designed online instruction must provide opportunities to appropriately (a) engage with multiple types of resources based on individual preferences, (b) improve the flexibility of instruction by integrating multiple types of interactions, and (c) integrate forms of communication among instructors, learners, and others beyond that might normally occur in a classroom. Such interactions should be designed to help the learners meet learning expectations. (p. 244)

Grabowski and Small (as cited in Koszalka & Ganesan, 2004) assert,
that there are three types of design elements in hypermedia applications, such as information (which is the basic unit of facts or data that can be used to present a flow of messages), instruction (or information specifically selected, organized, and sequenced with the deliberate intent of direction procedures or learning activities) and learning (elements which engage participants in active cognitive processing to support the development of knowledge). (p. 245)

Instructors must also think about students with disabilities. The National Center for Education Statistics 2004 (as cited in Keeler & Horney, 2007) observed that “the lack of accommodations for a segment of the population comprising 13.8% of all students means that a substantial subset of the total population is being potentially excluded from full participation in online education” (p. 61). A later chapter in this study will address the paradigm of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The UDL ensures that all students, including those with special needs, are treated equitably by the facilitators and the design of the online course.

Online courses must motivate and provide an appealing environment for students and their professors. Schoffer (2002) remarks that teachers must “seduce students with something they feel familiar with and want” (p. 89). Teachers must design activities and use tools in online courses that catch their students’ attention by targeting their needs, learning styles, skills and interests.

Armstrong (1994) affirms that “all cultures in the world possess and make use of the seven intelligences in Multiple Intelligences theory; however, the ways in which they do so, and the manner in which individual intelligences are valued, vary considerably” (p. 161). The Graduate TESOL Certificate Program offers a variety of face-to-face courses, from culture to field experience, which draw upon a variety of materials posted online (videos, chat room’s conversations, pictures, music, etc). The professors appreciate the
cultural backgrounds of their students, and students also learn how to be sensitive to and aware of others’ cultural and professional viewpoints.

Plana (2005) mentions that “it is important to design online courses that are accessible” (p. 7). Accessibility can take many forms, for example, explicit and straightforward instructions; “links” where students can access help by clicking a mouse button; telephone numbers or e-mail, assistive devices (e.g. screen readers), organized content by using text and icons, captions in a video, and many others (see chapter VI). Finally, Hutchins (2003) suggests that,

…programming the computer to issue personal greetings when a user logs on, issuing quirky or helpful error messages rather than the ‘404 not found’ when problems arise, and customizing a personal tutor that can help students with navigating the course site are ways to enhance student perceptions of verbal immediate behaviors in web-based classes. (¶ 13)

Good online courses are accessible to everyone, regardless of students’ background, age, culture, or learning style. Offering e-learning instruction is not a way out of “cutting budgets” in education, but an alternative for students to achieve their professional goals through web-based instruction. At the same time, this chapter has emphasized that well designed computer-based instruction should have certain elements. These include the features identified by Hutchins (2003). To successfully simulate face-to-face traditional instruction in the Web, online courses must “encourage students to think and learn, give prompt feedback, provide guidance and support, and consider what new and different ways technology may add support to current strategies and help to induct new ones” (¶ 26).
Summary and Interpretation

Overall, this literature review showed how important the Graduate TESOL Certificate is and how distance education has become more possible for students because of web-based instruction. It is important to emphasize that if a professor wants to design an online course, he or she must think about tools and strategies in which he or she can motivate and promote interest in a cyber environment. Nonetheless, online courses must provide interactivity between students, teachers, and technology assistants.

Teaching online is an important tool for people around the world but it is important to integrate cultural aspects, address special needs, and become a skillful facilitator of learning rather than a dictator. This chapter examines how online courses benefit students. While face-to-face courses have definite advantages over online courses, it is essential that instructors be aware of how the benefits of e-learning can outweigh its limitations.

In face-to-face courses, instructors are more aware of what students are expressing socially and physically when interacting in the learning activities. In addition, time expended during discussion or group work between students in real-time can be assessed immediately. Aspects such as creating material and planning for the lesson in a face-to-face course is less time consuming than creating learning modules for online courses or browsing for technological resources online. Other benefits will be described in Chapter V.

The reason that many universities and colleges are opting for online instruction is because more people have atypical work schedules. Students may also prefer online courses because face-to-face traditional offerings have non-flexible schedules. It can also
require a long commute or relocating to get a degree. Online learning can benefit institutions by lowering infrastructure costs and limiting the use of facilities and resources (e.g., smart classrooms, slide projectors, photocopies, markers, erasers, etc).

Another reason why students might choose online learning is because web-based instruction provides more ways for professors and participants to interact outside the classroom (e.g., e-mail, chat sessions, bulletin boards, and others). Therefore, students who are taking the class may live in other areas of the country or even abroad. As with face-to-face instruction, this aspect can bring together a diversity of cultures, life experiences, and perspectives to class discussions and activities. At the same time, being on the Web enables them to interact with experts around the globe by reading articles, watching videos, accessing online workshops, video conferencing, learning from virtual tours, etc.

The transition from face-to-face to online is not for everyone. For example, there are students who lack the discipline and time management skills that are important when taking an online course. In addition, some people just do not feel the need to learn basic technological skills or become computer literate and comfortable with technology.

This chapter has provided an overview of why and how an instructor can converge existing face-to-face courses into online courses. Success will depend on the vision of the instructor and his or her creativity in adapting traditional classroom practices on the Web; taking into consideration the learning styles and diversity of students. Success for a student will depend on personal qualities such as motivation, curiosity, a positive attitude towards change, the ability to do independent research, time management and analytical skills. The creation of an online course is the product of the
interaction and creativity of a teacher who facilitates learning through a variety of technological tools for his or her learners. Hence, students taking online classes will become more independent, proactive, skillful, and be better prepared to succeed in the competitive world.
CHAPTER III

E-LEARNING DESIGN AND EVALUATION

Introduction

Once a company gains a knowledge-based competitive edge, it becomes ever easier for it to maintain its lead and ever harder for its competitors to catch up.

Quinn, Anderson, and Finkelstein (as cited in Rosenberg, 2001, p. 19)

Trends in education are rapidly changing. Students are looking for more opportunities to learn and gain a degree using the Web. “The Web represents the latest restructuring technology, expanding and a unique ability for anyone to participate and contribute” (Rosenberg, 2001, p. 20). E-learning is a new way of distance learning. For instance, universities and colleges are offering more programs and courses online. Nevertheless, the challenge is converging traditional courses into online courses. In addition, Wilson (1998) mentions that “in response to political and market-place pressures, institutions must find a way to train and encourage more faculty to develop web-based courses” (¶ 4). Therefore, it is important to make sure that faculty have a clear understanding that their role in an online setting will be “shifted from “dispenser of knowledge” to “facilitator of learning” (Grabe & Grabe, 2004, p. 10) On the other hand, students or “digital natives” (Downes, 2005, ¶ 10) will be in charge of their own learning.
This chapter provides a framework for the design and evaluation of the process of converging a face-to-face course into an online course.

**Conversion to the Web**

Centuries ago, our education was based on a very personalized relationship: expert and apprentice. As time passed, teachers and students formed a wider and less personalized relationship. Web-based learning was introduced and because of advances in technologies (e.g. computers, video, telecommunication, and Internet), e-learning has become a new approach in which the relationship between the experts (technologies) and apprentice (student) has been resurrected. Rosenberg (2001) observes that “there’s no one who at one time or another hasn’t wished to simply be alone with a master, to have his or her undivided attention, to learn from the best there is” (p. 42). In order to meet pupils’ needs successfully, it is essential that facilitators plan learning goals and provide a variety of online tools and activities that will benefit their pupils’ learning potential.

**Setting Learning Goals**

The term *converge* is “to come together from different directions so as eventually to meet” (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2000) Thus, in converging a traditional course into an online course, the components must be linked to each other (e.g. course content, similar activities, similar interaction and others) instead of being separate units. An online course has to be designed so that it will meet the students’ expectations and goals, as if it were taught face-to-face. Rosenberg (2001) provides an example from an online course in which students are to resolve hotel guest problems:
Learners are far more concerned about what they’ll be able to do on the job rather than what they’ll be able to do after the course. And they want to go further, to know why they have to do it and how it will benefit them. They want to know the impact that their new capabilities will have on the business, on profitability, and on the success of the unit. (p. 49)

As in traditional courses, learning objectives must be planned from the students’ standpoint or perspective. They also have to be challenging, contextualized, meaningful, and appropriate for the students’ cognitive level.

Navigating Blackboard (WebCT) Vista

Blackboard (WebCT) Vista is “a suite of enterprise software products and services that power a total “e-learning infrastructure” for schools, colleges, universities, etc” (South Central Regional Library Council Distance Learning Glossary, 2002, p. 1). This is the Learning Management System (LMS) that California State University, Chico, uses for all campus courses. The system is designed to serve and provide a better quality of education to students and faculty. The LMS “is largely an administrator’s [CSUC] tool for registering learners for e-learning and classroom training and tracking the results” (Perry, 2009, ¶ 2).

In order to manage and be able to converge a traditional course into an online environment, it is essential to understand that LMS is currently used by more people than ever. “The real challenge for e-learning systems is to deliver a VLE [Virtual Learning Environment]/LMS whose use will be inspired rather than patterned, proactive rather than reactive, and creative rather than reproductive” (Baskin & Anderson, 2008, p. 975). Therefore, faculty have the opportunity to be trained by the Technology and Learning Program (TLP) experts whose mission is “to provide a collaborative and supportive
environment that empowers faculty to utilize technology to enhance learning outcomes” (TLP, n.d., ¶ 1).

Blackboard Vista offers a variety of functions in order to enhance not only face-to-face courses but also online courses. However, before getting started with the tools from Blackboard Vista, the term “learning architecture” needs to be introduced. “A learning architecture is the design, sequencing, and integration of all electronic and nonelectronic components of learning to deliver optimum improvement in competence and performance” (Rosenberg, 2001, p. 118). In addition, Rosenberg (2001) remarks that “a learning architecture is not the same as a curriculum, which generally refers to the organization and relationship of courses to create the appropriate learning sequence” (p. 118). In other words, when planning the learning architecture of online courses, facilitators have to make sure that the content and activities in the face-to-face courses are interrelated when converging them to the Web. With this in mind, facilitators will have better results when they know which materials are going to be moved to the Web and which ones have to be updated or presented in a different way. Rosenberg (2001) recommends that if instructors have already “developed tools or other resources that will be useful significantly beyond the learning event, consider integrating them into [their] firm’s mainstream intranet resources and direct [their] students there” (p. 126). As a result, the conversion of face-to-face courses to the Web will be used as a “unifying portal in a database [e.g., CSUC campus] for the [instructors] learning architecture” (Rosenberg, 2001, p. 126).

To approach a high quality e-learning design Boud and Prosser (as cited in Bennett et al., 2006) argue that high quality learning design must:
Engage learners by considering their prior knowledge and desires, and build on their expectations;
• Acknowledge the learning context by considering how the implementation of the learning design is located within the broader program of study;
• Challenge learners through active participation, encouraging them to be self-critical and to go beyond what is provided; and
• Provide practice by encouraging learners to articulate and demonstrate to themselves and their peers what they are learning. (p. 109)

Using these principles, instructors will set basis in order to be ready to use the tools provided by Blackboard Vista and create the e-learning environment for their courses.

As in traditional courses, an online course must have a very descriptive syllabus. Therefore, instructors must create a feature set. A feature set not only contains the syllabus but also “includes types of lessons and materials. Lectures, discussions, videotapes, audiotapes, or other activities may be use singly or combined.” (Brooks, Nolan, & Gallagher, 2001, p. 41) In contrast, web-based teaching also needs a feature set that is similar to a course taught in a classroom.

Online courses have asynchronous and synchronous communications. Asynchronous activities or materials (such as messages posted in a discussion board, e-mails, videos, etc.) are set in the course so students can access them as many times as they want. Synchronous communications are the functions (chat room and videoconferencing) that a LMS provides so that students can communicate with each other, with the instructor, or other Web experts in real time. Both types of communications can be printed or non-printed. However, facilitators must have a balance between these two types of communications on the Web. Rosengber (2001) emphasizes that “building an infrastructure for e-learning is primarily about creating an environment...
where users can easily access the learning products (instructional or informational) they need, when and where they need them” (p. 173). He also mentions that “to the instructor/facilitator, knowledge will come from a greater variety of sources, including the corporate intranet, the learners themselves (as they form knowledge communities), and outside experts (either live or via technology) (p. 121). One unique factor in converging a face-to-face course to the Web is that “with Web access, learning can begging prior to the class and continues long after the class is over.” (Rosengber, 2001, p. 121)

Authenticity

The implementation of synchronous or asynchronous online course activities and other contextualized materials (e.g. video conferencing, virtual tours, and others) are not often used in a face-to-face course. “There are pedagogical (task-based, intellectual), social (human relationship in the learning community), managerial (administrative, organizational, procedural), and technical (ease in use of hardware and software) roles to be played by each online instructor.” (Panda & Juwah, 2006, p. 209) Being a designer can be quite inspiring if the instructor has the basis and guidelines to successfully plan activities and develop material for courses. Brooks et al. (2001), propose that designers consider the following questions:

Think of the teacher as the server: what will the server do in response to a client (student) question or request? What should the student see (and hear)? What options should the student have? Should you empower them in a particular instance, or should you insist that they come to you for information and service? You need to decide where to put your programming efforts, if any, on the server side, or the client side. (p. 30)
In traditional classrooms, the material presented is frequently passive. On the other hand, online courses have to be created in a way that the learner is the protagonist of his or her own learning. In other words, the material and tools offered must be authentic. Herrington and Oliver (as cited in Herrington, Reeves, & Oliver, 2006) define nine design principles for developing and evaluating authentic online learning tasks or activities:

1. Authentic activities have real-world relevance: The facilitators should provide material or tools that are contextualized into real-world situations for relevance and meaning.

2. Authentic activities are ill-defined, requiring students to define the tasks and subtasks needed to complete the activity: The instructors create problem-based tasks which allow for more than one interpretation. This gives students a challenge, as they do the tasks and sub-tasks required to complete the main task.

3. Authentic activities comprise complex tasks to be investigated by students over a sustained period of time: Activities are completed in days, weeks, and months rather than minutes or hours, requiring significant investment of time and intellectual resources.

4. Authentic activities provide an opportunity for students to examine the task from different perspectives, using a variety of resources: The task affords learners the opportunity to examine the problem from a variety of theoretical and practical perspectives, rather than a single perspective that learners must imitate to be successful. These activities also help students to learn how to detect relevant from irrelevant information.

5. Authentic activities provide the opportunity to collaborate: Collaboration is integral to the task, both within the course and in the real world. It is not achievable by an individual learner working in isolation.

6. Authentic activities provide the opportunity to reflect: Activities need to enable learners to make choices and reflect on their learning both individually and socially.

7. Authentic activities can be integrated and applied across different subject areas and lead beyond domain-specific outcomes: Activities encourage interdisciplinary perspectives by emphasizing diverse roles and expertise rather than a single well-defined field or domain.

8. Authentic activities are seamlessly integrated with assessment: The assessment of activities is seamlessly integrated with the major task in a manner that reflects real-world assessment, rather than separate artificial assessment removed from the nature of the task.

9. Authentic activities allow competing solutions and diversity of outcome: Activities allow a range and diversity of outcomes open to multiple solutions of an
original nature, rather than a single correct response obtained by the application of rules and procedures. (pp. 93-94)

Planning based on these ten principles help students to be more interactive and proactive in dealing with the content of the course. An exemplary new tool used in implementation is Wimba. Wimba is the latest acquisition supported by the CSUC.

This software is generally used by faculty who are teaching from an origination room on campus to students at a distance. During class, students are able to hear the instructor lecture, view notes and other visuals and see the instructor as he/she is teaching. Additionally, every class session is archived and available for students to view on an as needed basis. This synchronous teaching software also enables instructors to hold classes, virtual office hours, guest lectures, webcasts, and meetings. Faculty and students can talk to each other and feel as if there’re part of a single community. (TLP², (n.d.) ¶ 1-2)

Therefore, learning in an environment where the activities are situated or based on real-world situations make it more challenging and meaningful for the learners. In addition, this situated learning environment “can also be examined with a framework of the roles and responsibilities of three mutually constitutive elements of the learning process: the learner, the implementation and the interactive multimedia program.” (Herrington, & Oliver, 1995, ¶ 13) The learner is engaged in collaborative, analytic, and reflective activities. Multimedia tools such as, chat rooms, discussions, videos, broadcasting, virtual tours or conferences, Wimba, and many others, provide students with multiple perspectives of the content selected by the facilitator. With implementation, the instructor becomes a “coach” for learning, scaffolding student’s input and output, and integrating assessment in a more dynamic way.
A module is a content-unit or a personal topic (i.e., introduces the instructor and objectives in the course) that is previously selected by the instructor of an online course. It is composed of multiple tasks so that students can navigate and learn from the Web and other multimedia elements. Blackboard offers a variety of tools: organizational (e.g., calendar); communicative (e.g., announcements, chat room, discussions, mail, roster, and “who is online”); learning activities (e.g., assessments, assignments and goals); content (e.g., learning modules, media library, and web links); and student personal archives or important information (e.g., my files, my grades, my progress, and notes). The organizational tool helps students track when activities are scheduled and assignments are due. It also helps students manage their time in a more contextualized way. Communication tools have both synchronous and asynchronous functions; they enable students to access information, analyze, reflect, produce, and interact in proactive ways to facilitate learning. The tools for content are interactive, enabling students to complete tasks, share ideas, opinions or information, and reflect on their learning. In addition, these tools encourage facilitators to look for and create challenging tasks, which will help motivate learners. Finally, the tool for students’ personal archives or important information lets them manage their outcomes and reflect on their own progress.

When creating a module, facilitators need to create learning goals that they want their students to achieve. Afterwards, instructors must think of activities and other resources that are synchronous or asynchronous in order to provide scaffolding so that students can achieve their learning goals. Herrington et al. (2006) recommends that,
when designing a webpage for a course, it is more appropriate to use non-linear structure based on the tasks rather than a linear structure based upon weekly content, and if possible to use metaphors for navigation to links and resources, such as a picture of a workplace environment related to the subject area. (p. 98)

This recommendation is also applicable for learning modules using Blackboard Vista’s tools. It is essential to know that synchronous or asynchronous resources, “should be open-ended, with students encouraged to seek out and share new ideas and resources, rather than being provided with specific, bounded resources and a reference lists.” (Herrington, Reeves, & Oliver, 2006, p. 98) Regarding time of accomplishment, it is good to set time limits, so that students can be organized. However, Herrington et al. (2006) propose that “ideally, the pace of a course should be determined by the student rather than the teacher, and the teacher’s perspective should be one of many, rather than the only one” (p. 98). In an online module, Herrington et al. (2006), describe the new role of the instructor:

The teacher should plan to take a lesser but more significant role, that of providing ‘scaffolding’, attending to students’ inquiries, and stimulating discussion. Consideration of such aspects will help to ensure that potential learning outcomes will not be restricted to memorization of information and factual recall, but expanded to one of understanding, higher order learning, and transfer of skills and knowledge to real problems and situations in appropriate circumstances. (p. 98)

Therefore, as a facilitator, it is important to provide clear and straightforward instructions when planning tasks for the modules. This facilitates the student’s understanding of the tasks. It is also practical because it encourages students to stay motivated and knowing “why” and “what” they are going to do. It is also important for facilitators to have a hierarchy order (from simple to difficult) of tasks, so that learners can achieve a higher level and engage in critical thinking.
Consistency is another important aspect when creating an online course. The tools for organizing resources provide easy and “smooth” access for facilitators and students. Instructors have a better idea of what they are presenting, and students enjoy better organization and consistency while navigating the course. In addition, it is essential for facilitators to use communication tools (e.g., announcements, chat room, mail, discussion forums and calendar) in order to be visible to students. Using these tools, students will perceive the facilitator as another participant as well. Sending e-mails, posting announcements, or writing important activities in the calendar enable students to organize themselves better throughout the course, while at the same time, the facilitator encourages a sense of community. Since online courses can be taught more than once, documentation is very important. The instructor’s course materials can be saved in the LMS (Blackboard Vista) to be reused and updated for the next semester. This is very beneficial for facilitators, because they can archive and revise their work. Consequently, if a different facilitator is assigned to teach the course in the future, teaching materials can be reused, updated, or further improved by other faculty.

Sense of community and interaction are key points in online-based teaching. Interactive resources, tasks, or activities are developed so that students not only interact with each other and other experts (web-links, videos, virtual tours, power point presentations, etc.), but also with their previous knowledge. Mayes (2006) states that “the learning cycle, the interaction between the learner’s prior understanding and the primary exposition produces only an initial interpretation. Subsequent work must be done to build the new concept into the existing framework” (p. 11). Promoting discussions, e-mailing, web-links and synchronous activities such as chatting or video conferencing, “will allow
a concrete representation of the teacher’s conception to be better interpreted by the learner’s own underlying knowledge, and a tentative modification of the learner’s understanding to be formed for testing through subsequent use” (Mayes, 2006, p. 12). Since reflective thinking is ideal in online teaching and learning environments, promoting dialogue is important: “during discussion a learner will come into contact with other people’s conceptualizations, will try to apply his or her current understanding by constructing a new argument, and will elaborate current understanding by reflection” (Mayes, 2006, p. 17).

Salmon (2002) provides e-facilitators with a model that will benefit them and participants towards a successful e-learning experience. “The model describes how to motivate online participants, to build online tasks (e-tivities), and to pace e-learners through stages of training and development” (Mayes, 2006, p. 18). The following are the stages described by Salmon (2002):

Stage 1 involves essential prerequisite individual access and the induction of participants into online learning. Stage 2 involves individuals establishing their online identities, and locating others with whom to interact. At stage 3 participants exchange information and start to support other participants’ goals. Course-related group discussions develop at stage 4 and the interaction becomes more collaborative. Finally, at stage 5, participants look for more benefits from the system to help them achieve personal goals and reflect on the learning processes (p. 11).

In addition, Salmon (2002) mentions that “given technical support, good human intervention from an e-moderator, and appropriate e-tivities to promote action and interaction, nearly all participants will progress through these stages of use of asynchronous [and synchronous] networking opportunities” (p. 12). As a result, successful modules for an online course must not only be challenging for students, but
also experience-based. A structured developmental process can provide learners with long lasting and continuous learning after the module or course is over.

E-evaluation

“With the expansion of distance education and e-learning, increasingly complex and blended course designs, increasing global competitiveness and the need for continuous improvement, distance and e-learning course design is a complex, problem-solving process” (Ruhe, & Zumbo, 2009, p. 9). Online course evaluation covers planning the assessment tasks that are provided to participants and the evaluation of the whole course.

Assessment tasks for learners in an online course are often designed to be interactive, reflective, and analytical. They are situated and problem-solving based. Assessment tasks can be quizzes or tests, assignments, projects, discussions reports, or web-research analysis. Thus, assessment is based on interactivity. It must also reflect the learning goals, scaffold the course’s teaching values, and show flexibility in content. At the same time, feedback must be provided by both facilitators and peers. Varying the assignments and developing other methods of assessment will decrease students’ attempts to cheat or plagiarize, while making the subject matter more challenging, motivating, and meaningful. At Caledonian Business School (as cited in Salmon, 2003, p. 114), for example, the assessment criteria for online learning is based on the five-stage model of online learning, explained previously. Therefore, the assessment criteria issued to students (at the same school) show the clear influence of the model:
Assessment criteria:
1. Motivation and online socialization skills demonstrated through regular and frequent contributions.
2. Knowledge and understanding demonstrated through sharing of relevant information.
3. Ability to draw out, compare and reflect on applications of knowledge in a variety of contexts, demonstrated by the quality of message contributions.
4. Ability to evaluate and synthesize other’s contributions on the discussion board, and post messages accordingly, hence demonstrating personal development and learning. (Salmon, 2003, p. 114)

Online course instructors have to provide dynamic assessment tools so students feel “inspired to produce quality work and the engagement itself [will bring] a depth of understanding to topics.” (Young, 2008, p. 347)

Evaluation of an Online Course

It is essential for instructors to evaluate their courses in order to improve their teaching practices. The main purpose of evaluation for the Graduate TESOL Certificate Program, or for any program, is to demonstrate that face-to-face and online courses provide an equivalent learning architecture even though students’ experiences may be very different. Lorenzo and Moore (2002) propose a quality framework consisting of five overlapping principles that can improve the quality of an online course:

1) Learning effectiveness;
2) Student satisfaction;
3) Faculty satisfaction;
4) Cost-effectiveness;

For the first principle (learning effectiveness), facilitators are encouraged to observe and evaluate whether e-tivities (tasks) promote interaction, higher-order learning, and learning goals achievement from students. The second principle on student satisfaction evaluates whether “online learners, like customers, are satisfied when they
receive responsive, timely, and personalized services and support, along with high-quality learning outcomes” (Humber as cited in Lorenzo, & Moore, 2002, p. 4). Two ways to determine if online learners are satisfied would be to collect data on online learning graduation and retention rates and to use a “survey instrument that asks students whether or not they would take another online course or recommend online learning to their friends.” (Lorenzo, & Moore, 2002, p. 4)

The third principle addresses faculty satisfaction. Faculty needs moral support from their colleagues or experts in the e-learning field. Director of quality and planning for Penn State World Campus, Thompson (as cited in Lorenzo, & Moore, 2002) expresses that “at some institutions, there is a need for the development of increased levels of moral and administrative support, as well as mutual respect between who participate in online learning and those who do not participate” (p. 5). One of the ways that CSUC responds to this need is by offering support from technology experts and staff from the Technology and Learning Program (TLP) team.

The fourth principle (cost effectiveness) evaluates competition regarding e-learning and the use of educational technology to enhance face-to-face classes. Lorenzo and Moore (2002) express that,

as more and more business require that their employees be ‘web savvy’ and have a working knowledge of learning online, the responsibility of preparing students to be technologically astute now falls on the nation’s educational institutions. Building the right education technology infrastructure is an expensive undertaking, and with already constrained budgets, it can become a daunting challenge. (p. 6)

The goal is for “colleges and universities to find ways to increase learning effectiveness, achieve lower dropout rates, decrease the use of over-crowded buildings and ultimately
decrease labor costs through creative development of technology-enhance and fully online courses” (Lorenzo, & Moore, 2002, p. 6).

Finally, the fifth principle evaluates accessibility and determines whether online courses are affordable and can be accessed anywhere at any time. (See Chapter VI for discussion of accessibility in online courses.)

A few years ago, the CSUC Technology and Learning Program (TLP) established an online rubric to help faculty, teaching assistants (TAs), and designers. The rubric offers a framework for instructors to self-assess their courses based on University expectations and exemplary models. The rubric is divided into six categories:

1) Learner support and resources
2) Online organization and design
3) Instructional design and delivery
4) Assessment and evaluation of student learning
5) Innovative teaching with technology
6) Faculty use of student feedback (see Appendix B for more details).

This rubric offers an overall view of the performance, not only of the students’ work, but also of the instructor and Web resources. It also promotes the quality of e-learning and supports the efforts of instructors who want to improve their courses.

Conclusions

While incredible advances in technology are occurring every day, new ways of presenting knowledge are being offered to students too. Students can navigate the Web and have endless opportunities to interact, reflect, analyze, create, and build information
anywhere and anytime. One of the most competitive options for universities and colleges are online courses.

Converging face-to-face courses into the online environment is a step that can improve learners’ social, economical and educational competitiveness. Nevertheless, facilitators need to carefully comprehend and analyze the different design functions that an online course can offer. It is important that the institution provide support to current e-moderators or future facilitators with a clear image of what they are offering online.

Important aspects in converging a face-to-face course into an online course are:

1. Maintaining one-on-one relationships: student-instructor, student-student, student-expert (Web-resources) promotes a personalized way of teaching and learning.

2. Converging from face-to-face into the Web is based on keeping the same content and similar learning goals, while using different tools to promote students’ performance and achievement.

3. Using LMS (Blackboard (WebCT) Vista) tools help facilitators create tasks that promote a sense of community. At the same time, students become protagonists in control of their own progress and success.

4. Contextualizing resources (asynchronous or synchronous) enhance students’ motivation towards the subject matter and promote interactivity and higher-order thinking.

5. Offering a variety of assessment tasks engage and challenged the students. Therefore, it is recommended that these tasks involve problem-solving or be experienced-based so that facilitators can promote long lasting learning and critical thinking even after the course is over.
Another essential aspect is the independence of the student; he or she is the “owner” of his or her own learning progress. The learner follows the facilitator’s lead, but is responsible for interacting, building, transforming, and using his or her own new and prior knowledge. Since a sense of community is essential in any learning environment and in real-life situations, providing contextualized learning using asynchronous and synchronous materials is very important.

As a non-traditional course, online-based instruction must have methods of evaluation. Tests and quizzes must still be given, but they should not be the main tools used in assessing students. Facilitators need to design a variety of assignments (e.g., projects, lab-reports, web-links reports) or other kinds of interactive and experience-based assessments to challenge, motivate, and inspire students to master the content. Variety is always beneficial, because it discourages cheating and plagiarism. In addition, the “gradebook tool” from Blackboard Vista enables instructors to see the grades and track the progress of each student. At the same time, the “assessment tool” allows students to go back to review quizzes or other assessments. Finally, peer-feedback or instructor’s feedback is essential in this kind of learning situation. CSUC e-facilitators can apply the rubric provided by TLP to help organize, enhance, and revitalized subject matter, learning modules, resources, and content.

Successful online courses implement the principles of e-learning design and evaluation discussed in this chapter. Such courses can help students from a variety of backgrounds who are eager to experiment, create, reflect, and manipulate knowledge delivered in a non-traditional face-to-face way. As a result, since this delivery
incorporates elements from the face-to-face approach, content and outcomes can be situated, functional, affordable and meaningful for the learners.
CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As with face-to-face courses, designing e-learning instruction requires time, planning, and effort. Chapter III described the design and evaluation guidelines that determine what features an online course should have in order to provide content as if it was a face-to-face course. Students have unique needs, which can make it challenging for facilitators designing an online course, and these courses are not suitable for everyone. Online learners have certain characteristics that make them different from students who prefer, or are used to, taking only face-to-face courses. That is why this study uses two different instruments for evaluation: to reflect what theory offers and what practitioners do or do not do when converging face-to-face courses into online courses.

For this study, students from a face-to-face course that is required not only in the Graduate TESOL Certificate Program but also in other programs, such as the M.A in Education (Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Learners Option) and the M.A in Teaching International Languages, were selected to evaluate an online learning module. A learning module is a compilation of tasks and materials from a specific topic used by instructors to teach their students. Online modules present the learning goals, general instructions, and software or equipment necessary for the learning process. While working with the section instructor of the course, I designed an online learning module to
complement the content the students were being taught. For this evaluation, the instructor gave me the opportunity to be the facilitator for that specific part of the course. Students had to solve, reflect, analyze, and work individually or in groups to accomplish different tasks. At the end of the module, these graduate students responded to a survey in order to evaluate and give suggestions regarding their experiences.

As in face-to-face lessons, learning modules have benefits and drawbacks when implementing them. The results of the survey (see Appendix A) showed that while face-to-face lessons and online learning modules can be similar in design, the experience among participants can range from satisfactory to unsatisfactory.

The Graduate TESOL Certificate Program from the CSUC is an 18 unit face-to-face instructional program that contains 600-level courses such as: a) EDSL 610 Foreign/Second Language Teaching Methods, b) EDSL 633 Foreign/Second Language Teaching: The Cultural Dimension, c) EDSL 637 Curriculum Development: Foreign Languages/ English as a Second Language (ESL), d) EDSL 635 Current Research and Developments in Foreign/Second Language Education, e) EDSL 636 Foreign/Second Language Education: Testing and Assessment Practices, and f) EDCI 689 Professional Field Experience. These are currently offered to students as face-to-face courses, but all include the application of online material through the use of the Learning Management System, Blackboard (WebCT) Vista. For this study, one of the courses from this program was selected and evaluated by an e-learning instruction expert from the Technology and Learning Program (TLP) from the CSUC. The Technology and Learning Program (TLP) team offers e-learning training to faculty for professional self-improvement, updates, and help in the quality of instruction and learning given by the university to thousands of
students. The TLP team has created a rubric (see Appendix B) that covers all the elemental features an online course must have. The expert provided qualitative feedback that will be analyzed for this study with the theory on e-learning design and evaluation. Both instruments will help provide some of the answers to the main research questions.

Design of the Investigation

As mentioned previously, the research questions were investigated using two main instruments. The first instrument was a survey created for students enrolled in one of the courses required in the Graduate TESOL Certificate Program, the M.A in Education, and the M.A in Teaching International Languages at CSU, Chico. Students in EDSL636 Foreign/Second Language Education: Testing and Assessment Practices completed a series of tasks in an online learning module. After students completed the online module, they had the opportunity to evaluate it and provide feedback.

The design of this survey was based on the principles for e-learning design and evaluation described in Chapter III. The learning module was built with content from the face-to-face course, but the tasks were approached in a different way. Students used asynchronous and synchronous tools to enhance their understanding of the topic. The tasks were designed to promote a sense of community and cooperative learning. The students used the following tools from the LMS Blackboard Vista:

- web-links: for websites on assessment strategies, videos, and others
- discussion forums: to interact with each other; to post answers to comprehensive questions; to post group organization and written reports; and to create, analyze, and reflect
• chat rooms with whiteboards: These enhanced synchronous communication between students and promoted cooperative learning and peer-feedback. The whiteboard enabled students to view visuals while they were talking.

The survey examined an online module, its tasks, and interactivity to determine if it offered feedback and promoted a self-, peer-, and experience-based assessment. The survey consisted of 13 multiple-choice questions and one open ended question that gave students an opportunity to offer suggestions as to how the learning module could be improved. The questions were divided into six sections:

1. Background of the student: gender, ethnicity, age rank, disability (if applicable), and prior experience in an online learning module.

2. Organization of the tasks, instructions and overall presentation: clear instructions and tasks, organization of the tasks in an ascending level of difficulty, presentation of the module as esthetic and appealing to the student.

3. Integration of asynchronous and synchronous resources related to the learning goals: opportunities for interaction between students, sense of community, promotion of technological, visual, and auditory resources, opportunities for students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

4. Assessment and feedback: self-assessment, feedback from instructor and peers.

5. Technical support: information and access for help if technical difficulties are encountered.

6. Overall evaluation and improvement: from poor to excellent, students have the opportunity to write suggestions for improvement of the module. (See Appendix A for more details on this survey.)
The second instrument used for this study was the rubric provided by the CSUC Technology and Learning Program (TLP) (see Appendix B). One of the face-to-face courses from the Graduate TESOL Certificate Program, which had been converged into an online course, was evaluated by an expert from the TLP team. This individual applied the rubric for a holistic evaluation of the computer-based course to determine whether the course was well designed, to see how it might be improved, and to identify features that would be applied to other courses in the same program. These courses are currently in a hybrid state waiting to be completed by the instructors and launched as online courses. The results could encourage faculty to continue with the online-design model evaluated by the Instructional Technologist (IT) expert and support future efforts to offer CSUC’s Graduate TESOL Certificate Program online.

These two instruments complemented each other to produce the most relevant and pertinent results possible for this action research study.

Sample Population

The target population for the survey was selected from one of the courses of the Graduate TESOL Certificate Program from the CSUC. All of the students were enrolled in EDSL 636 Foreign/Second Language Education: Testing and Assessment Practices. Students represented different ethnicities, nationalities, genders, ages, and levels of professional experience. The participants represented a good sample of how different people approach, interpret, and experience an online learning module. The sample consisted of 18 females and 7 males. In order to obtain the highest response rate possible, a week before the survey, the students in the classroom were told about this
research, the purpose of the survey, and asked for their participation. The survey was conducted electronically and was posted approximately for two weeks. To make sure that the response rates were high (from 25 students), the survey was posted at the end of the module, as an announcement, and in the calendar as a reminder for students. At the end, 21 participants took the survey (16 females and 5 males).

For the second instrument, a face-to-face course was converged into an online course from the Graduate TESOL Program. The same course (EDSL 636) was selected for evaluation. The course was duplicated as a Prep-course, so as not to generate confusion for students or faculty. Using the rubric for online-based instruction for design and evaluation an expert from the CSUC’s Technology and Learning Program (TLP) evaluated the course.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data collected from the student survey was analyzed in two different ways. First, some of the responses of the multiple choice questions were analyzed using a Likert scale. Second, the written suggestions and recommendations from the participants were analyzed by comparing them with relevant research and theory. Participant responses were divided into the six categories described previously. Eight days before the students started working on the tasks of the learning module, they were informed about the purpose of the study. After two weeks of interaction and familiarity with the materials and tasks, students completed the survey. Their responses are represented in graphs and reflect important features of online learning modules as well as characteristics of online learners.
The second analysis was a holistic evaluation of the same course done by an expert from the Technology and Learning Program (TLP). The expert used a rubric made by the TLP team, which has a scoring criterion ranging from baseline to effective to exemplary (see Appendix B). This evaluation was done in a one-on-one meeting. The expert analyzed six categories: 1) Learner Support and Resources, 2) Online Organization and Design, 3) Instructional Design and Delivery, 4) Assessment and Evaluation of Student Learning, 5) Innovative Teaching with Technology, and 6) Faculty Use of Student Feedback. The expert shared his insights and offered an evaluation of the online course. This session lasted around one hour and thirty minutes. The expert is an Instructional Technologist (IT) who has worked for the Technology and Learning Program since 2005. He has a degree in Media Arts from CSU, Chico, and has ten years experience developing online education programs in both the private sector and higher education. This IT specializes in online learning environments, rich multimedia creation and collaborative technologies like wikis and blogs. He is also the Technology and Learning Program’s expert in making instructional material and online activities accessible to students with disabilities and diverse learning styles.

Presentation and Discussion of the Findings:
Survey

Figure 1 summarizes the results for the multiple choice questions of the survey. They reflect the students’ evaluation of the online learning module.

As indicated in Figure 1, the graduate students represent a variety of characteristics that enrich the study. Sixteen respondents were females and five were males. There were variety of ethnicities, although most were Caucasian or Asian.
Slightly more than half had experience participating in an online learning module (12 out of 21 had previous experience). In addition, only one person claimed to have a disability, which was anxiety.

On the survey, students were asked to evaluate the organization of the tasks, instructions and if the presentation of the module was appealing or esthetic to them (see Figure 2). Since more than 50% (see Figure 2), had previous experience navigating in an online environment, the responses to the questions regarding instructions were insightful. As mentioned in chapter III, instructions must be clear and straightforward. During the process, some students used asynchronous tools such as e-mail, and other students used synchronous tools, such as the chat room to ask for help with instructions and tasks. Some of the students did not know how to navigate the module and did not communicate through e-mail. They expressed their feelings of anxiety in the last question of the survey,
when they offered suggestions. In addition, 3 students asked questions that were addressed in the written instructions. These reactions made me realize that all students do not have the same characteristics and that online modules are not suitable for everyone. At the same time, as I am not their regular instructor, some students did not have the confidence to ask me for help if needed. Furthermore, 2 students encountered frustrations along the way, because they did not understand the instructions or did not know how to use the basic tools of the LMS, Blackboard (WebCT) Vista.

Figure 2 addresses the students’ responses to the following questions: a) Does the learning module offer clear instructions to smoothly navigate through the components? b) Are the tasks clearly explained? c) Are the tasks organized in an
ascending level of difficulty? and d) Is the presentation of the module esthetic and appealing to you?

For questions 1 and 2, more than 50% of the respondents (see figure 2) agreed that the learning module was easy to navigate and that the tasks were clearly explained. In the last two questions, more than 55% of students’ responses agreed that the tasks were organized in an ascending level of difficulty and that the presentation of the module was appealing.

Juwah (2006) asserts that, “for online education (e-learning) to be meaningful and purposeful, it must integrate the cognitive, affective and systemic, and be underpinned by relevant interactions” (p. 2). During the participation of the students in the online learning module, they had to interact not only with asynchronous resources (e.g. video, Microsoft Word document handouts, grid of variety of web links on formative assessment strategies, e-mail, discussion forums, etc), but also with synchronous resources, such as the chat room to organize their time with the group. Figure 3 shows how the students reacted to the asynchronous and synchronous tools of interaction related to the learning goals of the online module. Fourteen people agreed that they had the opportunity to interact; the students could interact with each other, with the instructor and with other experts (web links about the topic). Therefore, students agreed (see Figure 3) that the activities were connected and interrelated with the learning goals. At the same time, eight students strongly agreed with the fact that they had opportunities using variety of materials (e.g. audio-visual aids). Moreover, since I had the opportunity to take this course face-to-face, I knew the dynamic of the instructor. As students, we engaged in many problem-solving and experience-based activities. For these reasons, the
Related to the Learning Goals, participants responded positively to the last question in that category (“Does the module provide opportunities to develop critical thinking and problem-solving?”) 66% agreed and 14% strongly agreed.

The elements in this category are essential in order for the students to maintain their motivation, to feel challenged and engaged in the topic.

For the self-assessment piece, 33% of the students were undecided (see Figure 4). This means that they could not identify the different activities used for self-assessment in the module. However, the activities designed for self-assessment were not identified explicitly in the instructions. For this reason, facilitators must specifically write what they want their students to assess, so that students are more conscious of what they are doing. On the other hand, even though there were many undecided students, 3 students (or 14%) strongly agreed and 10 (or 47%) agreed that there were self-assessment opportunities.
This might have happened because they knew that what they were doing was assessing themselves. Some of the activities that the students did for assessment included: answering comprehensive questions on required readings; commenting on other colleagues’ insights; and replying to the comments they received. In this example, students had to reflect on what they read and on other colleagues’ answers. In another example, students had to work individually on a handout based on a previous video. After doing the handout and before posting it with comments for other students to respond, participants had to compare their answers with the solution to the handout. Even though only 14% of the students (see Figure 4) strongly agreed with the fact that they had opportunities for self-assessment, others did not know or did not realize it. Everyone has different ways of interpreting information, thus it is important to give straightforward instructions, so that participants know what they need to do, what to expect, what goals to achieve and what LMS tools they will use. As Juwah (2006) mentions “learners must
have evidence to draw on to ensure that their learning is meaningful, effective and that they have achieved the intended learning outcomes” (p. 175).

Figure 5 presents the data on students’ perceptions of feedback opportunities during the online learning module. While students received feedback from their colleagues and the instructor, most feedback was from their peers. As a positive result, 5 people strongly agreed and 11 people agreed that there were feedback opportunities. Juwah (2006) states that “for example, modeling good practices of providing support and feedback through giving reassurance, encouragement, praise, insights or alternative perspectives to issues provides sources of learning” (p. 185). To maintain students’ motivation, it is essential for facilitators to constantly monitor and communicate with students so that they feel a sense of support and guidance through the process. On the other hand, balance is always important. Instructors must create activities so that students get feedback from them, and also from experts (e.g. contacting an author of an online article) and their peers. This fosters self-independence in the students.

Online learning modules and online courses must offer contact information to address technical difficulties or content-based concerns or questions arise. Figure 6 indicates that twelve people (or 57%) strongly agreed about the availability of contact information for technical support. This aspect of e-learning is very helpful for students, who need to be aware of the facilities and support that the university offers, in case their computer “freezes” or an LMS tool is not working properly. One important functional aspect is to provide students with different ways to contact technicians (e.g. by telephone, meeting face-to-face, asking for help in a chat room session, or by e-mail). In addition to the contacts, it is important to provide schedules with contact information for specialists
so that students know how long it will take to get a response or find a solution. It is also important to establish a good relationship (sense of community) with students so that they feel confident asking the facilitator questions via e-mail or other tools.

Overall, the students evaluated this module as ‘Very Good’ (see Figure 6). This is positive, because 41% of the students (see figure 1) have not had any prior experience participating in an online module. At the same time, when students were participating in the module, some of them showed dependency on the instructor’s guidance and this aspect can affect them in future online courses, because these courses are designed for students that are more self-independent. Around 9% of the students (specifically 2), did not have many computer skills. This was a limitation for them in doing the group work that they had to do and using LMS tools. Some students just felt frustrated because they needed constant guidance or felt that the time constraint (three weeks) was too short.
These results showed that the participants vary in opinions and reactions to the same online experience. Based on the suggestions and reactions expressed in the last open-ended question of the survey, I believe there were students who missed the human interaction, who are not used to working on a team in an online environment, who do not have time management skills (e.g. there were people that contacted me during very late hours at night looking for answers), and who are not used to Learning Management System tools. On the other hand, I think that overall, the students put forth effort, and those who were really motivated contributed with many insights to the activities. This process reinforced the importance of creating a sense of community so that learners feel confident and comfortable learning online. Because I was not the instructor for the class, I think that a few students did not communicate with me when they needed help. As a result, they became frustrated or reported that their experience was unsatisfactory. I also
observed that very explicit instructions are indeed essential for students to succeed and achieve their learning goals.

It is important for facilitators to accept suggestions from students to improve online instruction. The students gave me feedback and I fixed the instructions. With these changes, learners felt that they were not ignored, and that their ideas were heard and important to the facilitator. E-learning modules and face-to-face lessons are taught to different groups of participants. For this reason, facilitators will encounter different reactions from their learners on the same topics. Instructors need to have an open minded attitude and accept that all the learning activities must be designed based on students’ backgrounds and personal differences such as culture, age, etc. With this in mind, instructors will approach different learning styles that will help students to achieve their learning goals effectively.

Presentation and Discussion of the Findings:
Overall Online Course Evaluation

For this study, a rubric (see appendix B) developed by the TLP was used by an IT specialist to evaluate one of the courses converged to an online format (i.e., EDSL 636). The rubric was designed so that faculty can evaluate their own online or hybrid courses. In detail, the expert evaluated each of the scoring criteria that an exemplary online course must have. The session with him lasted around an hour and thirty minutes. The following is a description of his evaluation for each of the criteria on the rubric. The TLP expert’s suggestions for improvement are also indicated.

1. Learner Support and Resources:
A. Course contains extensive information about being an online learner and links to campus resources. The expert found that the online course needed more student information and resources on how to be an effective online learner. However, the links provided for campus resources were very user friendly and important for the participants.

B. Course provides a variety of course-specific resources, contact information for instructor, department, and program. The expert reported that the options for technical or content-based support are delivered in a consistent way. Students were provided with schedules and hours when they can ask for help. He also suggested that the instructor decide if he/she wants to receive content-based concerns or questions via regular e-mail or through the mailing tool of the LMS. This recommendation will help the instructor to have better communication with and provide a faster response to the students.

C. Course offers access to a wide range of resources supporting course content and different learning abilities. The expert remarked that many different styles were addressed through the use of a variety of resources. This also contributes to student motivation and engagement.

2. Online Organization and Design:

A. Course is well-organized and easy to navigate. Students can clearly understand all components and the structure of the course. The expert stated that the organization and use of icons to convey main ideas helps the students to navigate smoothly and fosters a clear understanding of the structure of the course.
B. Course Syllabus identifies and clearly delineates the role the online environment will play in the total course. For this aspect, the course did not clearly indicate if it was going to be delivered in an asynchronous or synchronous way (e.g. using Camtasia or Wimba for the instructors’ lectures). Students must clearly know how the instructor will be delivering the content so that they understand what to expect and do to achieve the learning goals.

C. Aesthetic design presents and communicates course information clearly throughout the course. The expert found that the design was easy to navigate, and attractive. He mentioned that it was welcoming, which is important creating a sense of community among students and instructors.

D. All web pages are visually and functionally consistent throughout the course. The web pages were designed with a consistent pattern that makes it user friendly and functional for participants.

E. Accessibility issues are addressed throughout the course. (Including: sight, mobility, hearing, cognition, ESL, and technical). In general, the content was accessible for the disabilities mentioned. However, the expert mentioned that videos would need to have captions so that ESL learners better understand their content.

3. Instructional Design and Delivery: The expert stated that the online course was exemplary. The interactivity in the online course was clearly demonstrated in the different learning modules and communicative tools that the students can use in order to analyze, share, critique, discover, convey meaning, and make connections with their peers, instructors and experts on the Web. The expert observed that each of the learning modules had an introductory web page that clearly defined the learning goals with the
course goals, content and tasks. As a result, this will help students to know what they are going to be learning, why they need to learn the content, and what they will be doing in order to achieve those goals. Consequently, the students will be motivated and challenged. The expert mentioned that the course provides with multiple sources (e.g. clear organization, adapted syllabus in Microsoft Word, etc), which help all of the students, including those with disabilities, to access content in a user friendly way. This is a vivid application of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which helps students by providing a variety of tools in order to achieve the same goal. It is done without emphasizing disability, and no one is excluded (see Chapter VI for more information about UDL).

As a face-to-face course, EDSL 636 offers a variety of opportunities for peer interaction. Students develop critical thinking by discussing and sharing their insights, experiences and reflections. Problem-solving activities are often used in the course so that learning is meaningful and applied in practice. The online course version also encourages students to develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This is clearly seen in the different tasks created by the instructor and in the ‘Open’ discussion forums. As the expert remarked, students are challenged and motivated to continue in the course and achieve the learning goals.

4. Assessment and Evaluation of Student Learning: The expert mentioned that the online course offers variety of assessment and evaluation tasks that makes the course more challenging for the students, with the opportunity for participants to analyze their progress. Offering these varied tasks allows the students to have different views and
insights from their peers, instructor and experts. At the same time, the instructor can monitor their progress.

5. Innovative Teaching with Technology: As in category 2, the expert recommends that the instructor use Camtasia or Wimba software to enrich the online course.

6. Faculty Use of Student Feedback: This category was exemplary from the experts’ point of view. The online course presents multiple opportunities for students to give feedback on course content. At the same time, students can have the opportunity to receive feedback from peers and other experts.

Overall the expert’s suggestions and overall evaluation are remarkable. He mentioned recommendations that are doable and can be fixed easily. His insights will help to improve other courses in the Graduate TESOL Certificate Program that have the same patterns that he evaluated.

Conclusions

The results from the survey reflect a vivid example of how students’ opinions and reactions will vary. It highlights the multiple characteristics that students must have in order to be successful online learners. Thus, not every student should be enrolled in an online course. This is why it is important to offer students with both alternatives, face-to-face and online courses, so that they are able to achieve the same goals by different delivery systems. Boud and Prosser (as cited in Bennet et al., 2006) argued that,

A high quality learning design must: …c) challenge learners through active participation, encouraging them to be self-critical and to go beyond what is provided; and d) provide practice by encouraging learners to articulate and demonstrate to themselves and their peers what they are learning. (p. 109)
As evaluated by the expert, the converged course (EDSL 636) reflects exemplary aspects necessary in the design of an online course. In addition, faculty who want to improve and revise their online courses are also encouraged to meet with an expert for this evaluation process.

Overall, the process of helping students and reflecting on their reactions and suggestions has made me realize how important it is for facilitators to create a welcoming environment in which students feel comfortable. At the same time, facilitators need to know that listening to students’ suggestions can improve teaching practices. For example, the instructions were not clear for some students. Editing the instructions in response to student feedback made a remarkable change in their performance and attitude towards the learning module. Finally, it is important that instructors model an open minded attitude towards teaching practices. This is because every time facilitators teach a course, it will be unique experience. Instructors will have different participants, discussions and reactions towards the target content, regardless of the delivery mode (online, face-to-face or hybrid).
CHAPTER V

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

OF ONLINE COURSES

Introduction

E-learning is a way to gain knowledge using a variety of Web resources. However, while digital learning can be considered innovative, it can never be a substitute for human contact. Keller and Cernerud (2002) state that,

...students’ perceptions of e-learning in university education may be influenced by specific individual variables. In addition to the variables age and gender there are at least three such characteristics: previous experience of computers, technology acceptance and individual learning style. (p. 56)

As a result, addressing the variety of backgrounds and differences among students is quite challenging. It is important for institutions, facilitators, and students to be aware of the e-learning benefits that exist in order to balance the limitations of the medium.

A variety of factors affect how individuals react and adapt to face-to-face or online-based instruction. Keller and Cernerud (2002) remark that,

Learning styles could, according to the American psychologist Kolb (Kolb & Fry, 1975) be classified in four dimensions: abstract [people comprehend information conceptually and symbolically], reflective [individuals exhibit intention by internal reflection on the external world], active [individuals extend the environment by external manipulation] and concrete [individuals apprehend by the tangible, felt qualities of immediate experience]. (p. 57)

These learning styles combine with attitudes, cultures, gender, religion, and values, cause face-to-face instruction and e-learning to be perceived in different ways. For example,
young students enrolled in an online course may use technological resources differently than older students in the same course. In addition, “research has indicated that men’s technology usage decisions are more strongly influenced by perceptions of usefulness. In contrast, women are more influenced by perceptions of ease of use” (Keller & Cernerud, 2002, p. 56).

This chapter presents the advantages and disadvantages of online-based courses compared to face-to-face courses.

Advantages of Online Courses

The World Wide Web is considered as an enriching tool for people to navigate, discover, explore, share, interact and learn. E-learning has become a global tool, and students have been experimenting for years. This new way of delivering instruction is becoming popular and even more accepted culturally. As a result, face-to-face courses in many universities have been converged to the Web so that students who are interested and have special characteristics (e.g., literate in computer usage, time management skills and others), have another option for achieving a degree or certificate.

The following highlight some of the benefits of e-learning courses from students’ and instructors’ perspectives:

1. Online-based instruction is cost effective. Participants and facilitators save on traveling expenses. Students can enjoy learning at their own pace while facilitators can also be in the comfort of their homes or offices. Rosenberg (2001) adds that, “e-learning reduces the time it takes to train people and eliminates or significantly reduces the need for a classroom/instructor infrastructure” (p. 30).
2. “Learning is 24/7” (Rosenberg 2001, p. 30). E-learning can be done anywhere at anytime; the only thing people need is a computer and access to the Internet. As compared to face-to-face courses, students can access the information from learning modules or other resources online whenever they need to. Faculty can track students’ progress and can also communicate using LMSs asynchronous or synchronous tools at anytime.

3. Access to resources in order to stay updated. Depending on the facilitator, e-learning can offer students a variety of resources that can be easily updated and revisited. However, the instructor needs to make sure that the information or materials posted in the learning modules are useful over a long period of time. Often, in face-to-face courses, some textbooks are not useful after the course is over. On the other hand, from the students’ standpoint, they can access infinite Web resources currently updated by experts. It is also important that facilitators must teach critical thinking skills so that students are able to determine which information is valuable to read and access.

4. “Messages are consistent or customized depending on the need” (Rosenberg 2001, p. 30). Facilitators create structural and organized ways of presenting content for different learning styles, so that all students can access content consistently. In some face-to-face courses, a variety of learning styles may not be addressed, some students may feel their special needs are disregarded, and others may not understand the content that is being presented.

5. Sense of community. “The Web enables people to build enduring communities of practice where they can come together to share knowledge and insight long after a training program ends.” (Rosenberg 2001, p. 30) Students can communicate with experts
(in different websites) or between themselves in asynchronous or synchronous ways. This interchange can help learners enrich their knowledge and experiences. Moreover, the opportunity to join discussion forums, use chat rooms, or access video conferencing enables slower learners to be less anxious, and faster learners to achieve greater satisfaction. On the other hand, instructors in online courses are constantly communicating, asynchronously, one-on-one so that they have the opportunity to get to know better their students.

6. Learning at the students’ own pace. In contrast with face-to-face courses, online instruction offer students the resources which “advanced learners are allowed to speed through or bypass instruction that is redundant while novices slow their own progress through content, eliminating frustration with themselves, their fellow learners and the course” (Kruse, 2004, ¶ 4). In addition, even though an instructor sets a time limit for achieving learning goals, the time factor can be adjusted to meet student’s own criteria. For example, a student can organize class work around personal and professional work schedules. At the same time, the facilitator adjusts so that he or she can offer help, feedback or recommendations to the students.

7. Multiple resources. By offering multiple resources or topics, learners can select learning materials from the Web that are appropriate to their level, knowledge, or interests. This enables students to create better and more critical points of view, to discuss and remember the new knowledge for a longer period of time.

8. Provides valuable personalized instruction. For participants, it is easier to ask questions and receive responses from diverse mediums. Students can ask the instructor directly as well as their colleagues or other experts in the Web. As a result, a student can
benefit from different points of view and build a better understanding of their subject. When selecting materials for the online modules, facilitators can be in contact with experts for personalized sharing and growth.

Finally, there are personal benefits to be gained in online courses. Generally, e-learning promotes self-confidence, because students are able to accept greater responsibility for their own learning and time management. In other words, students become more independent. In addition, taking computer-based courses can improve “students’ development of computer and Internet skills that are transferable in other facets of the learners’ lives” (About-elearning.com, 2009, ¶3).

Disadvantages of Online Courses

While e-learning is seen as an innovation, it also has drawbacks that facilitators, institutions, and learners must recognize in order to balance the benefits with the limitations to decide if e-learning will meet their expectations. Some e-learning disadvantages are:

1. Unmotivated learners. For students with poor study habits, e-learning instruction can have negative impact, because e-learning requires a degree of self-independence and effective time management skills to achieve learning goals. Students with poor study habits may fall behind the rest and fail.

2. Unfamiliarity. E-learning requires a computer, access to Internet, and computer skills, such as the ability to use Internet browsers, different software, e-mail, and/or assistive devices for students with disabilities. Students who lack these tools and abilities
may get frustrated and give up. Another issue is cultural acceptance—some people are disinclined to use computers at all, thus, e-learning is not an option for them.

3. Time of preparation. Dabbagh (as cited in Basking & Anderson, 2008) mentions that,

…the preparation time for face-to-face teaching requires 6 to 7 hours per week, compared to its LMS counterpart requiring 18 to 19 hours per week. Not only are teaching staff doing more, but they are required to do it differently and often in dual or multiple delivery modes. (p. 982)

However, even though it may initially take a long time (18-19 hours) to design an online course’s tasks, browse for resources, build learning modules, design discussion forums, assignments, formative assessments and rubrics, at the end, all these efforts are saved and filed. Then the only work necessary will be to update the sources, add or delete elements, interact freely with students, give feedback, and promote a sense of community among all participants.

4. “Instructor may not be always available on demand.”(About-elearning.com, 2009, ¶ 4)

5. In face-to-face instruction, facilitators are always there to answer questions immediately, and there is one-on-one communication. In contrast, e-learning instructors may not always be available for students. As a result, if students lack the initiative to browse for their own answers or if the instructor is unavailable, these participants will lag behind in an environment which relies on independent learning.

6. Unreliable Internet Connections. Participants in an online course must have access to the Internet and software. Sometimes, Internet connections are poor and
frustrating for users, especially if they are using synchronous communication or need to
download large programs or materials such as videos.

7. Up-front Investment. Budgets and cash flow must be negotiated if a program or
institution wants to converge face-to-face courses into online courses. Some instructors
must be trained in this new way of teaching, so that they can deliver excellent courses to
students. As a result, institutions will gain more students and money to train more
instructors and develop resources to continue the cycle of competitiveness.

8. Missing social interaction. Basking and Anderson (2008) remark that,

Given the absence of nonverbal cues in the LMS setting, it follows that where
digital communication suites are involved we are less able to make subtle
differentiations among communication stimuli, and therefore less able to exert
control over ourselves in order to meet social expectations and to perform important
social roles. (p. 987)

Therefore, for facilitators, the non-verbal cues that students express during the face-to-
face sessions are important in order to assess whether students understand what they are
hearing or viewing. However, since e-learning is self-paced, students can go back to the
course material if they are unsure about something. Still, some people might miss the
social contact and interaction that a face-to-face course offers.

9. Hands-on-courses can be difficult to simulate. Even though the Web provides
innumerable and diverse resources, some traditional hands-on courses will be difficult to
simulate, such as a cuisine course for nutrition majors and many others.

10. High motivation. Digital instruction also requires that time be devoted to
complete course work, especially in classes that have assignments and interactive
collaborations (peer work, discussion forums, and group work). This means that students
have to be highly motivated and responsible, because all of the work they do is on their
own. Learners with low motivation may not complete the modules and fail to make progress.

Conclusions

It is essential to mention that, “the pros and cons of e-learning vary depending on program goals, target audience and organizational infrastructure and culture” (Kruse, 2004, ¶ 26). This chapter outlined the advantages and disadvantages of e-learning. What is important is to know if benefits far outweigh the limitations. Educational institutions, programs, and instructors need to consider the requirements and interests of the population they will be targeting. Baskin and Anderson (2008) assert that an outstanding e-learning design must include structure and dialogue. “‘Structure’ relates to the rigidity/flexibility of the course of study, including its objectives, strategies, and its capacity to accommodate learner diversity. ‘Dialogue’ refers to purposeful, constructive and valued interaction” (p. 989). If the digital course does not achieve these expectations, then it is better not to offer it. The Web can be a beneficial way of delivering education and training to many users, since it is a productive, alternative strategy for learning. This does not mean that online-based instruction is the “appropriate” teaching and learning alternative for everyone.

It is essential to know that while e-learning is becoming popular, it is not yet culturally acceptable everywhere. This is why institutions must ask themselves certain questions in deciding whether face-to-face programs should be computer-based and whether it is worth designing and implementing them. The following questions may help institutions: Do other recognized universities offer the targeted program online? Do
people often ask the department if the targeted program is offered online? Are there faculty who need training? To answer these questions, institutions can create an electronic survey on the program’s main website to determine if people are or are not interested in a computer-based offering. Faculty can also ask current students to provide insights as to how they would feel if they had to take courses on the Web. These students may provide useful information for decisions involving the conversion of courses.

Students may vary in their opinions regarding online and face-to-face instruction. Each individual is different, and it is best for institutions to offer both online and face-to-face courses so that students have alternatives to achieve the same goal. For instance, online courses are neither better nor worse than face-to-face courses. As described earlier in this chapter, it depends on important factors such as participants (e.g. gender, culture, age, computer skills, personal circumstances, etc.), instructors (e.g. familiarity with e-learning, being able to create a sense of community in an online environment, etc.), Learning Management Systems (e.g. use of synchronous and asynchronous tools, creation of learning modules, assignments, etc.), institution regulations (e.g. budget for training, etc.), and many others. Consequently, if students have the characteristics that they need to be successful in an online course, then a computer-based course can be very suitable for them. Students who do not present those characteristics are more likely to succeed in a face-to-face course.
CHAPTER VI

ACCESSIBILITY IN ONLINE COURSES

Introduction

“Every individual is unique and as a group, the human species is quite diverse.”

(Story et al., 1998, p. 11)

“Worldwide electronic learning is becoming more and more popular. However, there is at least one specific group of higher education students for whom the digital divide is unfortunately very real and might even be expanding” (Steyaert, 2005, p. 68). “Students with disabilities (including those with cognitive, physical, or sensory limitations), English language learners (ELL), and gifted learners can all benefit from online learning environments” (Keeler, 2007, p. 125). However, the problem of inequality arises when institutions and instructors fail to transpose “the basic accessibility notions from the physical to the digital environment” (Steyaert, 2005, p. 68). Online tools cannot benefit all populations if the instructor is unfamiliar with them. However, if institutions offer training, online courses can be equitable, as well as more socially, economically, and culturally competitive.

This chapter provides an overview of factors that are particularly relevant for exceptional learners or students with disabilities in an e-learning environment. The two topics that are going to be covered are:
1. Federal mandates for accessibility to the same curriculum and opportunities for students with disabilities in online-based instruction.

2. Tools and strategies that facilitators can implement so that all students are treated equally in an electronic learning environment.

**United States’ Law and Standards Regarding Accessibility**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) states that a person with a disability is:

... a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005, p. ¶ 2)

Therefore, it is important to emphasize that the U.S Department of Education (as cited in Steyaert, 2005, p. 126) recognizes several types of disabilities:

- specific learning disabilities
- speech and language impairments
- mental retardation (also referred to as developmentally delayed)
- emotional disturbance (also called behavior disorders)
- orthopedic impairments
- visual impairments
- hearing impairments

Specifically, California state universities have to provide equal access based on “Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended” (Accessible Electronic and
Information Technology Procurement Plan, 2007, p. 1). Section 508 provides standards for various technologies including:

- software applications and operating systems
- web-based information or applications
- telecommunication products
- video and multimedia products
- self-contained, closed products (e.g., information kiosks, calculators, and fax machines)
- desktops and portable computers (Summary of Section 508 Standards, n.d., ¶ 4)

Moreover, “Section 508 established requirements for electronic and information technology developed, maintained, procured, or used by the Federal government and stipulates such technology to be accessible to people with disabilities, including employees and members of the public” (Disability Laws and Regulations, n.d., ¶ 45). In addition to these standards, California state universities have to base their online learning actions on California Government Code 11135 which establishes the following:

No person in the State of California shall, on the basis of race, national origin, ethnic group identification, religion, age, sex, color, or disability, be unlawfully denied full and equal access to the benefits of, or be unlawfully subjected to discrimination under, any program or activity that is conducted, operated, or administered by the state or by any state agency, is funded directly by the state, or receives any financial assistance from the state. (California Codes Government Code Section 11135-11139.8, n.d., ¶ 1)

Therefore, the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) has provided access guidelines that address the needs of this exceptional population. The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) is primarily intended for:
• Web content developers (page authors, site designers, etc.)
• Web authoring tool developers
• Web accessibility evaluation tool developers
• Others who want or need a technical standard for Web accessibility. (W3C, 2008, ¶ 3)

These guidelines are encompassed in four main principles: perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust. These principles will help instructors or section designers give access to their students.

Users must be able to perceive the information being presented (it cannot be invisible to all of their senses.), users must be able to operate the interface (the interface cannot require interaction that a user cannot perform), users must be able to understand the information as well as the operation of the user interface (the content or operation cannot be beyond their understanding), and finally users must be able to access the content as technologies advance (as technologies and user agents evolve, the content should remain accessible). (W3C², 2008, ¶ 10)

As a result, the main purpose of WCAG is to “make content accessible to a wider range of people with disabilities, including blindness and low vision, deafness and hearing loss, learning disabilities, cognitive limitation, limited movement, speech disabilities, photosensitivity and combinations of these” (W3C, 2008, ¶ 1).

Implementation of Tools and Strategies

When there is a diversity of learners in an online setting, providing instruction becomes more challenging. Story et al. (1998) remark that “disability is a common condition, and more pervasive than many people realize. Most likely, everyone will experience disability in his or her on lifetime, even if only temporarily” (p.12). In addition, researchers have proven that disability is a common and normal part of life. However, it is also known that a lot of people, when they get older, “deny having a disability because of the perceived social stigma identified with being disabled” (Story et
Fortunately, technological tools and strategies are being developed that can bridge diverse learning styles and physical or cognitive disabilities. One way to improve and provide access in e-learning settings is by using the Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) is “a nonprofit research and development organization that has created this method on Universal Design for Learning to expand learning opportunities for all individuals, especially those with disabilities” (CAST, n.d., ¶1).

Steyaert (2005) reports that “the goal of UDL is to create learning opportunities that provide the greatest possible accommodation to the greatest number of students, without a focus on the learning needs of any specific population” (p.127). In other words, the UDL method was developed so all students are treated equally, and they have multiple options to use in the instructional environment “without the need of adaptation or specialized design.” (Center for Universal Design, n.d., ¶2) Moreover, “to apply universal design, instructors should consider the potential variation in individual skills, learning styles and preferences, age, gender, culture, abilities, and disabilities as they select instructional strategies” (Burgstahler, 2007, p. 1).

California State University, Chico, is a participant in EnACT (Ensuring Access through Collaboration and Technology), a grant sponsored by CSU, Sonoma. This grant helps CSUC faculty with necessary support and training to learn tools and strategies so students with disabilities are well integrated to the rest of the population. EnACT also focus on the Universal Design for Learning paradigm, so that instructors develop flexible learning environments for all individuals.
Disability can take many forms. For example, many illnesses, conditions and injuries can temporarily affect our sensory, cognitive, and physical abilities. Therefore, people with permanent disabilities (e.g., blindness) are not the only individuals that have to be accommodated. For these reasons, the UDL paradigm is a great way to include everyone in order to improve education and socio-cultural life.

The UDL paradigm started in the 1970s, after the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s inspiring the Disability Rights Movement. Consequently, “new laws prohibited discrimination against people with disabilities and provided access to education, places of public accommodation, telecommunication and transportation” (Story et al., 1998, p. 16). This movement was established “in response to demands by disabled veterans and advocates for people with disabilities to create opportunities in education and employment rather than institutionalized health care and maintenance” Story et al. (1998, p. 16). In recent years, new technologies and more researchers started improved the paradigm, and more institutions are now enjoying its values and benefits.

“According to the U.S Census, there are 51 million Americans with some form of disability. This group makes up approximately 30 percent of the online population” (IBM, 2007, p. 2). There is a big need to implement the seven principles of Universal Design for Learning in e-learning environments Connell et al. (as cited in Burgstahler, 2007). noted that “at the Center for Universal Design (CUD) at North Carolina State University a group of architects, product designers, engineers and environmental design researchers established seven principles of UD to provide guidance in the design of products and environments” (p. 1). The following are the seven Universal Design principles from the CUD with examples and suggestions dream from this research study:
1. “Equitable use. The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities” (Burgstahler, 2007, p. 1). Example: The reading material provided in the online course is designed so that it is accessible to everyone, including students who are blind and using text-to-speech software.

2. “Flexibility in use. The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities” (Burgstahler, 2007, p. 1). Example: A virtual tour project activity on an interactive website (e.g., National Geographic, Discovery Channel, other broadcasting websites, or virtual museums) enables students to read and listen to a description of the content in display cases.

3. “Simple and intuitive use. Use of the design is easy to understand regardless of the user’s experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level” (Burgstahler, 2007, p. 2). Example: Learning modules and other materials presented in a linearly structured way and with illustrative icons and correspondent texts on the course website will make organization of the course and tasks easier and more intuitive for participants to navigate.

4. “Perceptible information. The design communicates necessary information effectively, regardless of ambient conditions or the user’s sensory abilities” (Burgstahler, 2007, p. 2). Example: A video in a learning module that displays captions enables English language learners or people hard of hearing to understand the material better.

5. “Tolerance for error. The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions” (Burgstahler, 2007, p. 1). Example: When designing study guides for students with sample practice exercises, it is important that the instructors create responses with sufficient information for learners to better
understand why incorrect responses are wrong. At the same time, facilitators must encourage students to analyze and learn from errors rather than ignoring them.

6. “Low physical effort. The design can be used efficiently, comfortably, and with a minimum of fatigue” (Burgstahler, 2007, p. 2). Suggestion: When designing tasks, facilitators should use very straightforward and concrete instructions to provide a more efficient and comfortable way to navigate around the site for students.

7. “Size and space for approach and use. Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use, regardless of the user’s body size, posture, or mobility” (Burgstahler, 2007, p. 2). Example: Before having a video conference or using another kind of synchronous activity, instructors must provide explicit instructions on how the activity will be set up, what software they will be using, and specifically what kind of equipment the students will need for the activity, so that they will be prepared with the appropriate tools.

Working these principles, instructors can develop a better understanding of how to design instructional resources and adapt them so that no one is excluded. A comfortable environment must be created for all students, so that they do not feel overly anxious or emotional while taking the course. The following are some “practices that reflect high values with respect to both diversity and inclusiveness” promoted by Burgstahler (2007, p. 2).

1. Class climate. Instructors must design a welcoming environment for all students using illustrative pictures, clear instructions, a variety of assessments, and/or an explicit set of guidelines in case a student needs technical support or an answer to a concern. Facilitators have to make sure they are visible to their learners, and they can do so using
tools such as e-mail, announcements, and calendar. In this way, the students feel that their questions are welcomed and that they have assistance if necessary. Use of diverse and motivating materials and tasks will connect with different learning styles and students’ characteristics, such as age, gender, and culture. Addressing individual needs in an inclusive manner (such as in an online course syllabus or other learning tasks) will avoid segregation. In addition, instructors must remind students of their role in making requests early and contributing to a positive relationship.

2. Interaction. Effective communication can help promote successful interactive class relationships. For example, in an online setting, it is important to set clear objectives regarding how the interaction among participants will be structured. Facilitators must write explicit instructions regarding the tools for interaction (such as chat rooms, discussion forums, group work, e-mail, Wimba, and others) so that students get accustomed to them and do not feel anxious during the course. When using digital equipment, facilitators have to make sure that all students are aware of the event by using e-mail, other announcement tools, or calendar tools, and have the equipment necessary to interact visually, audibly, or in writing. In addition, when talking, it is important to use straightforward language and avoid unnecessary jargon and complexity. Encouraging the use of names in electronic, written, audio, or in-person communications will promote a more effective relationship between students and facilitators. Finally, encouraging group work and cooperative learning with a variety of assignments or content-based tasks and encouraging students to use the Blackboard Vista tools will assure full participation and provide a better understanding of the content related to the course.
3. Physical Environment, accommodations and products. Before the course starts, facilitators must make sure they have created explicit guidelines for the software, material, activities, and other equipment. This includes safety considerations related to students who present special needs. For example, different assistive aids can be recommended. Depending on the student’s disability, these may include screen readers (e.g., JAWS and DECTalk), Braille or alternative design keyboards, special software for the cursor or screen magnification.

4. Delivery Methods. Having a variety of accessible instructional methods is important in order to provide access to all learners. Facilitators must promote and provide students with multiple options for learning, resources, and activities that will encourage and motivate them to work collaboratively while including their diverse characteristics. Instructors must consider the design of group activities, taking into account students’ different learning styles. The goal is to encourage constructive discussions with different points of view and experiences.

5. Information resources and technology. Instructors have to ensure that course materials, notes, and other information resources are engaging, flexible, and accessible. Allowing adequate time (in the syllabus program, calendar, announcements, e-mail reminders, etc.) for students to prepare for what they need to do will help them be aware of the need to organize themselves effectively in order to accomplish tasks on time. Therefore, it is recommended that instructors convert their textbooks or audio-visual aids to alternative formats before students with permanent disabilities attend the course. For example, a student, who is blind, may need an electronic version of the textbook, so that he or she can use screen reader software to study the material easily. Thus, e-moderators
6. Feedback. It is important for instructors to provide regular feedback and corrective opportunities. Instructors can allow students to turn in parts of a large project for feedback before the final project is due, create group activities in which students can give each other feedback when appropriate, develop surveys so that students can provide feedback on course effectiveness, and/or allows students to resubmit specific tasks or formal assessments.

7. Assessment. Instructors have to integrate formative assessment into online courses. These must have clear specifications and instructions, be well organized, and linked to the learning goals of the course content. It is important for students to have different ways to demonstrate their knowledge: in groups, through cooperative performances, or as individual achievements; through tests with different formats (e.g., multiple choice, essay, short answer, etc); and/or in papers, reports, demonstrations, applications of theories, portfolios, videos, etc. Frequent monitoring by reading discussion forums or giving short exams will provide necessary feedback and allow the instructor to adjust the content and methods of the course if needed. Facilitators must establish deadlines too. However, deadlines should be announced well in advance of the due dates, so that students can organize and structure their time. Flexibility in some cases should be allowed, too (e.g., extending time on tests or projects).

If facilitators provide resources based on the principles and strategies discussed in this section, it will benefit all students and not just those who need it most. The materials and tasks created by the facilitator make online instruction accessible. These
can also be re-used and updated for other faculty teaching the same course to implement in the future.

Conclusions

“Each of us is unique in age, abilities, talents and preferences. Any human characteristic that can be measured spans a broad range in any population” (Story et al., 1998, p. 25).

This chapter has provided an overview on how all students are important, no matter what their abilities. Institutions all over the United States are aware of how to eliminate exclusion in online settings. The W3C created guidelines for Web designers, and CASTA developed the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) paradigm to improve online instruction.

Story et al. (1998) observe that seeking “an understanding of human diversity is critical to design effectively. Successful application of Universal Design principles requires an understanding on how abilities vary with age, disability, the environment, or the circumstances” (p. 25). Although UDL is beneficial to everyone, it is most needed by those who have limitations. While people do not always value changes when first proposed, this may change if they or their loved ones develop limitations later in life. Taira and Carlson (1999) emphasize that, “all of us benefit from accessible places and products at many stages in the passage from childhood to old age” (p. 5).

The UDL paradigm lets instructors of online courses promote better planning, and gives students multiple tools from Learning Management Systems to accomplish the learning goals of the course for maximum benefit. Implementations of the tools,
strategies, and awareness of the law and UDL in general promote inclusion, awareness, and respect for diversity among students in instructional settings.
CHAPTER VII

A TRAINING WORKSHOP FOR

PROFESSORS: MANAGING

A WEB-BASED COURSE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a training workshop that will help professors who teach courses for the Graduate TESOL Certificate Program at CSU, Chico, acquire skills on how to convert their courses into computer-based ones. This training workshop will be focusing in these aspects: a) technological concepts, b) using tools from Blackboard, c) providing access to people with disabilities in a web-based environment and d) students’ and instructors’ roles in an online setting. These four aspects are very important skills that professors need to acquire in order to successfully teach electronic courses.

Applied Literature

“Learning is held to be a matter of grand generalizations, principles, rules, abstractions, and logical computations” (Gee, 2003, p. 73). Learning happens by interaction and participation. Lave (as cited in Brown et al., 1994) mentioned that “‘cognition’ observed in everyday practice is distribute–stretched over, not divided among–mind, body, activity and culturally organized settings (which include other
actors)” (p. 188). Based on this last statement, it is important that the training not only offer techniques that professors can use for their courses, but also opportunities for professors to work together, since “knowledge is situated in activity” (Brown et al., 1993, p. 188). Wenger (as cited in Brown et al., 1993) “argued that participation in practice is the main activity through which learning occurs.”

Conceiving of learning in terms of participation focuses attention on ways in which it is an evolving, continuously renewed set of relations… Participation… can be neither fully internalized as knowledge structure nor fully externalized as instrumental artifacts or overarching activity structures. Participation is always based on situated negotiation and renegotiation of meaning in the world. This implies that understanding and experience are in constant interaction –indeed, are mutually constitutive. (p. 189)

The main focus of this training is to show professors how to use tools that can help create a “zone of proximal development, or region of activity, [in which], learners can navigate with aid from a supporting context, including but not limited to people” (Vigotsky, 1978, as cited in Brown et al., 1993). These four qualities are the focus for the workshop:

1. First, the atmosphere has to promote “individual responsibility coupled with communal sharing.” (Brown et al., 1993, p. 199) For instance, “students [in this case the professors] and the trainer] will have ‘ownership’ of certain forms of expertise but no one has it all.” (Brown et al., 1993, p. 199)

2. Second, classroom dialogues must enable students to listen to one another: “respect is earned by responsible participation in a genuine knowledge-building community.” (Scardamalia & Bereiter, as cited in Brown et al., 1993, p. 199). “Concomitant with this development is the emergence of students who become experts in social facilitation and dispute reconciliation” (Brown et al., 1993, p. 200).
3. Third, “a sense of community. (Fish, as cited in Brown et at., 1993) “Meaning is negotiated and renegotiated as members of the community develop and share expertise. (Brown et al., 1993, p. 200)

4. Fourth, creating “participating frameworks (Goodwin, as cited in Brown et at., 1993, p. 200) will help students “tell immediately what format the class is operating under at any one period of time. (Brown et al., 1993, pp. 200)

“Because many faculty members at institutions of higher education have been asked to teach online, it is important to consider their perspectives on teaching adults in a computer-mediated environment” (Conceição, 2006, p. 27). However, in this case, participants do not have prior experience teaching an online course. This lack of experience is not a disadvantage for the professors; on the contrary, it could be a benefit. As Lave (1989) mentions, “people’s social relationships give structure to their activities. People experience ‘problems’ subjectively in the form or dilemmas and, so motivated, ‘problem-solving’ activity often leads to more or less enduring resolutions rather than precise solutions” (p. 124). For instance, when developing the workshop, “structuring resources” such as the professors’ prior knowledge and experience will help them to scaffold and look for solutions for their “problems.”

Role of the Instructor in an Online Setting

One of the main challenges with this workshop is explaining the role of the instructor in an online setting. Sometimes faculty can be attached to their teaching paradigms and can become reluctant to change. In order to succeed in this aspect, dialogue and practice will be used so professors see how important their new role will be
in online instruction. Coppola et al.(as cited in Conceição, 2006) “identified three faculty roles: cognitive, affective, and managerial. The cognitive role is connected with the mental processes of learning, information storage, and thinking. The affective role is influenced by the relationships between students, faculty, and the classroom environment. The managerial role relates to class and course management” (p. 24). Conceição (2006) explains that “the instructor is not only the facilitator but also the instructional designer, subject-matter expert, and course manager. The challenge is for faculty members to modify conventional teaching behaviors and to gain the skills necessary to become effective online instructors” (p. 29). For instance, the assumption that the instructor will not have any authority in an online setting is not true. On the contrary, the authority will be distributed so that students can become experts and learn from each other as well as their professor. The instructor becomes a facilitator and an active model for his or her students.

Tasks that Instructors Need to Know when Teaching an Online Course

The majority of the techniques that professors need to gain from this training workshop are:

1. “Cognitive tasks: responding to questions; editing questions and responses to questions, thinking, reasoning, and analyzing information; and helping students to engage in rehearsing and retrieving information” (Coppola et al., as cited in Conceição, 2006, p. 29).
2. “Affective tasks: behavior related to influencing students’ relationships with
the instructor and with other students in the virtual classroom environment” (Coppola et al.,
as cited in Conceição, 2006, p. 29).

3. “Managerial tasks: getting students into the conference as well as interactions
with other support staff, motivating and coordinating students to participate in the course,
and monitoring and evaluating student learning outcomes” (Coppola et al., as cited in
Conceição, 2006, p. 29).

Other techniques that professors must know are:

facilitating discourse, which means regularly reading and commenting on student
postings; establishing and maintaining the discourse that creates and sustains social
presence; encouraging, acknowledging, or reinforcing student contributions; setting
the climate for learning; sharing responsibility with each student; attaining agreed-on
learning objectives; supporting and encouraging student responses; drawing in
less active participants; and assessing the efficacy of the process. (Anderson et al.,
as cited in Conceição, 2006, p. 30)

These theories form an excellent base for this training which will enable
professors from the Graduate TESOL Certificate Program to gain skills and knowledge
about how to use the online tools into their computer-based courses.

Workshop

Justification

This training workshop was designed for professors that want to gain skills on
how to conduct an online course. The principles this training is based on were written by
Learning and Literacy*. These thirteen principles were used to create a comfortable
atmosphere between the participants of the training (in this case, the facilitators) as well
as to model how these principles are essential for them when managing an e-learning environment.

1. “Active, Critical Learning Principle. All aspects of the learning environment (including the ways in which the semiotic domain is designed and presented) are set up to encourage active and critical, not passive, learning” (Gee, 2003, p. 207).

2. “Semiotic Principle. Learning about and coming to appreciate interrelations within and across multiple sign systems (images, words, actions, symbols, artifacts, etc.) as a complex system is core to the learning experience” (Gee, 2003, p. 207).

3. “Committed Learning Principle. Learners participate in extended engagement (lots of effort and practice) as extensions of their real-world identities in relation to a virtual identity to which they feel some commitment and a virtual world that they find compelling” (Gee, 2003, p. 208).

4. “Self-Knowledge Principle. The virtual world is constructed in such a way that learners learn not only about the domain but about themselves and their current and potential capacities” (Gee, 2003, p. 208).

5. “Regime of Competence” Principle. The learner gets ample opportunity to operate within, but at the outer edge of his or her resources, so that, at those points, things are felt as challenging but not ‘undoable’ ” (Gee, 2003, p. 209).

6. “Situated Meaning Principle. The meanings of signs (words, actions, objects, artifacts, symbols, texts, etc.) are situated in embodied experience. Meanings are not general or decontextualized. Whatever generality meanings may have is discovered bottom up via embodied experiences” (Gee, 2003, p. 209).
7. “Multimodal Principle. Meaning and knowledge are built up through various modalities (images texts, symbols, interactions, abstract design, sound, etc.), not just words.” (Gee, 2003, p. 210)

8. “‘Material Intelligence’ Principle. Thinking, problem solving, and knowledge are ‘stored’ in material objects and the environments. This frees learners to engage their minds with other things while combining the results of their own thinking with the knowledge stored in material objects and the environment to achieve yet more powerful effects” (Gee, 2003, p. 210).

9. “Discovery Principle. Overt telling is kept to a well-thought-out minimum, allowing ample opportunity for the learner to experiment and make discoveries.” (Gee, 2003, p. 211)

10. “Cultural Models about Learning Principle. Learning is set up in such a way that learners come to think consciously and reflectively about their cultural models of learning and themselves as learners, without denigration of their identities, abilities, or social affiliations, and juxtapose them to new models of learning and themselves as learners” (Gee, 2003, p. 211).

11. “Dispersed Principle. Meaning/knowledge is dispersed in the sense that the learner shares it with others outside the domain/game, some of whom the learner may rarely or never see face-to-face” (Gee, 2003, p. 212).

12. “Affinity Group Principle. Learners constitute an ‘affinity group,’ that is, a group that is bonded primarily through shared endeavors, goals, and practices and not shared race, gender, nation, ethnicity, or culture” (Gee, 2003, p. 212).
13. “Insider Principle. The learner is an ‘insider,’ ‘teacher,’ and ‘producer’ (not just a ‘consumer’) able to customize the learning experience and domain/game from the beginning and throughout the experience” (Gee, 2003, p. 212).

The content of this training workshop is based on a book written by Mark and Cindy Grabe, called *Integrating Technology for Meaningful Learning* (2004). The guidelines from the book help guide professors in managing a web-based course successfully. However, it is the responsibility of each professor to put into practice, interact, and ask as many questions as necessary during the workshop. See the Training Workshop description in Appendix C.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter describes the technological tools, both asynchronous and synchronous, that can be used by instructors when converging a face-to-face course into the Web. This training offers participants an understanding of the importance of Vygotsky’s theory, “zone of proximal development”, and how it can be applied to the creation of an online environment to promote student-student and student-expert interaction (through reading or interacting with web sites, videos and other technological resources). Consequently, professors who appreciate the importance of this theory can help the students to develop a sense of community and a feeling of ownership of the process of acquiring the new knowledge.

Several ideas mentioned in this chapter will help professors of the Graduate TESOL Certificate Program from the California State University, Chico. They will be aware of important features of e-learning instruction such as:
- Acknowledging students’ abilities, limitations in relation to e-learning. Hence, this can help professors know how and where to go in order to succeed in applying tools and techniques in online courses.

- Recognizing that their role as instructors in the online environment will change to that of facilitators. This role will be divided into three functions: “cognitive, affective, and managerial” (Coppola et al. as cited in Conceição, 2006, p. 24) In addition, the challenge will be for them to be able to convert traditional practices from face-to-face courses into computer-based courses.

- Knowing Gee’s principles (2003). These can help instructors to enrich students’ performance, motivation, attitude, practice, self-satisfaction and goal realization. They can also foster creativity, facilitate development of topics, enhance choice of technological resources and use of assisting tools.

- Recognizing how and when to use asynchronous and synchronous tools for learning modules or for the online course in general. Nonetheless, other designing tips and techniques are explained in this chapter so instructors can apply them to promote an active participation of the students throughout the semester.

Overall, this chapter provides a series of strategies on the use of tools and “tips” that instructors will be able to recognize and implement in web-based courses. However, it is important to emphasize that this basic training is only an overview of what instructors can use in an online course. To go further in depth, they will need to sign up for the training workshops that the Technology and Learning Program (TLP) provides to
all faculty in the CSU, Chico. These workshops enable faculty to improve their skills in developing technological resources and their practices on e-learning.
Summary of the Study

“With e-learning, we’re not just introducing new technology for learning—we are introducing a new way to think about learning.” (Rosenberg, 2001, p.31)

Five research questions were asked in this study, and their respective findings are summarized in this chapter:

1. What does the process of converging, designing, and evaluating a face-to-face course into an e-learning environment entail?

2. To what extent can online courses be designed to provide individuals with disabilities access to information, resources, and technologies?

3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of face-to-face courses and online courses?

4. How do students respond to a teaching module taught online?

5. What e-learning content should be included in a five-hour training session for faculty in the Graduate TESOL Certificate Program?

Question 1

For the first question: “What does the process of converging, designing, and evaluating a face-to-face course into an e-learning environment entail?” research has
shown that more universities, colleges, and businesses are opting for online learning for a variety of reasons. E-learning is more learner-oriented and self-managed by the participants compared to the face-to-face instruction. However, there are drawbacks that can affect individuals unfamiliar with this new way of instruction.

Chapter II showed that it is important for people and institutions to understand what e-learning can offer and who benefits from online instruction. Siemens (as cited in Baskin & Anderson, 2008) explains that “moving learning into the digital age requires us [instructors or institutions] to derive our competence from forming connections, in turn assembling meaning and mediating chaos as we go” (p. 979). This forming of connections will only be achieved by acknowledging the pros and cons of e-learning and face-to-face instruction, especially how to accommodate and simulate real-life face-to-face tasks and interactions in a Web environment.

When converging a face-to-face course into an online course, it is important to know what Learning Management System will be used. Chapter III provided a discussion of the range of LMS tools and design strategies available to instructors. In online courses, facilitators must design contextualized, experience-based, problem-solving tasks so that students can become protagonists of their own learning. Therefore, instructors must create a welcoming environment by offering organized web pages that provide clear course goals. Students need to know what to expect from the course and have fluent navigation in a clear instruction-based environment. Vail (as cited in Baskin and Anderson, 2008) demonstrates that “learning is about the attitudes and actions of individuals, as they transform groups in order to deal with novel, messy, obtrusive and recurring events” (p. 978). For students to transform, create, share, analyze, and reflect
using technological resources, they must be engaged in communicative activities between peers and/or experts on the Web. Online participants can use asynchronous and synchronous communication tools. Using these tools, students will become more comfortable working on their own (self-independent). However, Min (2008) emphasizes that “it is essential to provide some form of coaching or instruction. This will guarantee the teacher that all possible outcomes of the programme will actually appear” (p. 126). Coaching can be given in the form of clear instructions, variety of assignments and assessments, and in asynchronous or synchronous communication between student-instructor, student-student, or student-expert. Another component that it is essential in the process of conversion from face-to-face to online is the creation of a sense of community. “The Web can serve as a ‘community wrapper’ of sorts, keeping those in the knowledge community in touch with each other and with the content, either after the formal learning is concluded or between learning events” (Rosenberg, 2001, p. 119). On the other hand, the importance of feedback from peers, instructor/expert, plus a variety of assessments will help students build, transform, and make connections between their prior and new knowledge. In addition, facilitators must ask periodically for feedback from students, experts or colleagues, so that they can draw upon their insights to make improvements to the courses.

Question 2

The second research question: “To what extent can online courses be designed to provide individuals with disabilities access to information, resources, and technologies?” was answered in Chapter VI. Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 states that all electronic and technological material must be accessible to people
with disabilities. California Government Code 11135 states that any type of
discrimination is prohibited. It is important, that when designing an online course, every
participant, regardless of his or her gender, culture, religion, disability or other personal
characteristics, is included in the learning activities. For this reason, considering the
principles of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) paradigm will benefit all students,
but especially those with disabilities. The UDL paradigm was developed to make sure all
students are treated equally and have multiple options to use in the instructional
environment “without the need of adaptation or specialized design” (Mace, as cited in the
Center for Universal Design, n.d., ¶ 1). It is recommended that facilitators create a variety
of tasks and assessments so that all learning styles and disabilities are accommodated. For
example, structuring a syllabus so a text-to-speech software can read it out loud from a
computer screen will help blind learners, and also provide user friendly access to students
who do not have a disability. Another UDL application of principles can be seen in the
use of captions in videos, so that people who are hard of hearing, English language
learners, or even distracted students can be accommodated. By applying the principles of
the UDL paradigm, facilitators are not only including everyone in activities; they are but
also designing a user friendly course that can be archived and updated in the future.

Questions 3

The third question of this study: “What are the advantages and disadvantages
of face-to-face courses and online courses?” was answered in Chapter V. Online courses
present unique features over conventional, face-to-face courses. For example, students
enrolled in an online course can learn at their own pace; they only need a computer and
Internet connection, and learning can be done anywhere at anytime. Also, online
instruction is cost effective: people can save money in travel expenses, daycare, etc. Resources on the Web are constantly being updated, so that instructors and students can select from a wide range of materials that will help them to stay current. Since online instruction offers technological opportunities for asynchronous and synchronous communication among participants, students can enjoy one-on-one contact with experts on the Web and learn in a more personalized way.

On the other hand, there are some instances where computer-based instruction probably would not be advantageous for certain types of students. Online courses are not suitable for people who are uncomfortable with this new way of learning. Their unwillingness to adopt new technology can cause frustration and lead to failure during an online course. Another problem would be for students who have poor study habits: online courses can become a “nightmare” for them, because this type of instruction requires time management skills. Internet connections, failures in software or resources can also cause frustration among participants and facilitators. Additionally, some people may miss the physical interaction that face-to-face courses offer, thus, online courses would not be suitable for them. Institutions need to be aware of and balance these advantages and disadvantages, so that they can offer both online and face-to-face courses for students that need alternative paths.

**Question 4**

Chapter IV answered the fourth research question: “How do students respond to a teaching module taught online?” A group of twenty-five graduate students from a course that is required in the Graduate TESOL Certificate Program, as well as in the M.A in Education (Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Learners Option) and the M.A in
Teaching International Languages, participated in an online learning module and provided feedback by completing a survey. The results of this study showed that opinions and reactions among students will vary towards learning resources and tasks. These results also confirmed the relevant characteristics of successful online learners described in the literature: being independent, computer literate, highly motivated, open and accepting of online instruction, and possessing good time management skills. Overall, 66% of the students evaluated the module as ‘very good’, and this is very positive coming from a scale of excellent, very good, good, fair to poor. During this experience, 41% of the students indicated that they did not have any prior experience with online instruction. Despite this “limitation,” they graded the module positively and provided useful feedback. Some important insights from students and from the evaluation process are the following:

1. Course goals, resources, and tasks must be interrelated. In addition, facilitators must create instructions that are clear and expressed in straightforward language.

2. Consistent structure and organization is important for students’ organization and smooth navigation during the course (e.g., giving them timelines in the learning modules).

3. It is important that facilitators implement asynchronous and synchronous materials and communication tools to create a sense of community among students, experts, and instructors. In this way, students can not only learn from the instructor, but also from their peers and experts on the Web.

4. The presentation of tasks must be appealing to engage students’ attention. The same resources must be adaptable to accommodate the special needs of students with
disabilities and different learning styles (e.g., captions in a video will help individuals who are hard of hearing people and ESL learners as well).

5. The variety of students’ tasks, assignments, and assessments will help keep them engaged in the course and discourage them from unwanted acts such as cheating.

6. Knowing the students’ backgrounds, age, culture, technological skills, and other important features, will help facilitators to create activities based on these characteristics. This is instrumental in promoting inclusion, sense of community and respect.

7. Listening to students’ suggestions is important for the improvement of the course and for students to know that they are not being ignored. In addition, it is also important to periodically assess the online modules and courses by eliciting feedback from students, colleagues and specialists in the field (e.g., TLP team).

Overall, even though the participants had different reactions, they indeed offered useful feedback for improvement and demonstrated that the components of e-learning design identified throughout this thesis are essential.

Question 5

Chapter VII provided the answer to the last research question: “What e-learning content should be included in a five-hour training session for faculty in the Graduate TESOL Certificate Program?” This five-hour training workshop was designed to provide facilitators from the Graduate TESOL Certificate Program with an introduction to important components of e-learning design and suggestions on how to manage their future online courses better. The content for the training includes:

a) Technological concepts.

b) Tools from Blackboard (WebCT) Vista.
c) Access to people with disabilities in a web-based environment.

d) Student and instructor roles in an online setting.

e) Netiquette

This content was chosen, so that participants would be able to identify and apply Internet tools of communication, inquiry, and adapt technology for students with disabilities by implementing the UDL paradigm. First, technological concepts are important because they represent the technical language that participants in the workshop and their future learners will be using throughout the course. Second, fostering the use of tools from Blackboard (WebCT) Vista is essential for instructors, since this is the LMS that they will be using to design the online course. Third, knowing and applying the principles from the UDL paradigm will help facilitators to include all students in their online tasks as well as helping them in their hybrid or face-to-face courses. Fourth, instructors in the training will be learning about their new roles as facilitators. They will also learn about the important characteristics that successful online learners need to have. This will help instructors to understand how to deliver online instruction as well as to identify how and what to offer students. The last topic of the training is netiquette, which encompasses proper ways to use language and communicate with others on the Web. However, it is recommended that facilitators participate in other in-depth training workshops from the Technology and Learning Program (TLP) team in order to improve their e-learning skills.
Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided to improve the effectiveness of online learning instruction. These five recommendations were developed based on the analyses and conclusions reached in previous chapters.

1. Constant, clear and positive communication. Students are unique, and because of this, they react differently to online instruction tasks. For example, some students agree to work as a team in face-to-face lessons, but in online modules, they prefer to work individually. For this reason, positive and clear communication between students and instructors (e.g., giving clear objectives and instructions) is extremely important so that facilitators can improve the course, and students can feel comfortable and motivated in the learning environment.

2. Receiving training and feedback for improvement. This study provided an evaluation done by an IT expert. This evaluation was valuable because the expert offered suggestions and constructive criticism. At the same time, students in graduate course suggestions to improve an online module (see Chapter IV) and help the facilitator deliver content to learners more effectively. To teach an online course, an instructor has to have confidence in the LMS tools and e-learning strategies he or she is using. It is recommended that facilitators be trained, and training is offered by the TLP team. At the same time, periodically surveying students for feedback will improve online instruction. Additionally, implementation of the TLP rubric (see Appendix B) to self-assess online courses will help facilitators develop a high level of e-learning management skills. This benefits faculty, students, and the institution.
3. Application of the UDL in online instruction. The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) paradigm offers instructors a set of principles that will help them enhance online activities and resources. Applying the UDL in online instruction gives students multiple ways to comfortably achieve the learning goals of the course. Implementation of the tools, strategies, and UDL promotes inclusion, awareness, and respect for diversity among students in instructional settings. As a result, UDL can positively affect the learning process of students with disabilities in face-to-face courses while providing access to online and hybrid courses for all students.

4. Offering both face-to-face and online courses. E-learning is transforming our world educationally and culturally. However, offering face-to-face, hybrid, and online courses is increasingly necessary, so that students have more alternatives, regardless of their preferences, learning styles, or unique characteristics. For this reason, it is important for students to be aware of the relative advantages and disadvantages of online and face-to-face instruction in order to decide which is more beneficial for them.

5. Providing a sense of community. Since online instruction does not provide the face-to-face interaction some students need, it is important to promote a sense of community using different LMS tools. This sense of community helps online learners to lower their affective filters and organize their time more effectively.

Conclusions

Online instruction is now an important educational element of our culture. It is essential for facilitators to know that, no matter what course they teach, there will always be variety of student reactions and interpretations towards tasks and guidelines.
Therefore, it is important to ensure open communication, constant improvement, and monitoring of students’ progress. What works satisfactorily for some can be frustrating to others and lead to failure. As a result, institutions, instructors, and students must analyze and balance the pros and cons of e-learning to decide what works best for them.

This study offered an exhaustive investigation of the process of converging face-to-face courses to online courses. Thus, this study can help not only the Graduate TESOL Certificate Program at the CSU, Chico. It can also improve the teaching and learning practices of other instructors and educational programs, and serve as a resource for students who are interested in learning about and using electronic instruction.
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


it_is_not_the_strongest_of_the_species_that/7533.html


RAW14009USEN.PDF


1. **What is your gender?**
   - Male
   - Female

2. **What is your ethnicity?**
   - Caucasian
   - African American
   - Latin
   - Asian
   - Middle Eastern
   - Other

3. **What is your age rank?**
   - 22-30
   - 31-40
   - 41-50
   - 51-60
   - 61-70
4. **Do you have a disability?**
   - Yes
   - No
   - If yes, indicate in the space provided: 

5. **Is this your first time participating in an online module for a course?**
   - Yes
   - No

6. **Does the learning module offer clear instructions to smoothly navigate through the components?**
   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - undecided
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree

7. **Are the tasks clearly explained?**
   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - undecided
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree
8. Are the tasks organized in an ascending level of difficulty?
   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - undecided
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree

9. Is the presentation of the module esthetic and appealing to you?
   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - undecided
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree

10. Does the module offer communicative opportunities to interact with your classmates?
    - strongly agree
    - agree
    - undecided
    - disagree
    - strongly disagree

11. Are the learning objectives and activities integrated?
    - strongly agree
    - agree
    - undecided
    - disagree
    - strongly disagree
12. Does the module provide technological, visual and auditory aids to enhance your learning?

- strongly agree
- agree
- undecided
- disagree
- strongly disagree

13. Does the module provide opportunities to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills?

- strongly agree
- agree
- undecided
- disagree
- strongly disagree

14. Does the module provide opportunities for self-assessment?

- strongly agree
- agree
- undecided
- disagree
- strongly disagree
15. Does the module provide feedback opportunities from the professor and other classmates?

- strongly agree
- agree
- undecided
- disagree
- strongly disagree

16. Does the module offer contact information for technical support?

- strongly agree
- agree
- undecided
- disagree
- strongly disagree

17. Overall how would you grade this learning module?

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

18. In what ways could this module be improved?
APPENDIX B
Rubric for Online Instruction

Rationale
California State University, Chico's first strategic priority is to create and enhance high quality learning environments. Academic technologies, especially online or web-enhanced courses, have a significant role in the creation of those learning environments. The University's Strategic Priorities challenge faculty and staff to use academic technologies to create and enhance high quality learning environments in a demonstrable manner.

What should a quality online course look like? This rubric offers a framework for addressing this question. Use of this rubric represents a developmental process for online course design and delivery, and provides a means for an instructor to self-assess course(s) based on University expectations. Furthermore, the rubric provides a means for supporting and recognizing a faculty member's effort in developing expertise in online instruction as part of our commitment to high quality learning environments.

The Rubric for Online Instruction can be used in one of three ways.

1. As a course "self-evaluation" tool - advising instructors how to revise an existing course to the Rubric for Online Instruction. (Workshops may be offered for faculty to learn how to address each category in the rubric, demonstrating with examples.)
2. As a way to design a new course for the online environment, following the rubric as a road map.
3. As a means for getting public recognition for exemplary online instruction - going through a nomination/recognition process on a campus. Faculty can receive recognition to go in their RTP file.

Historical Perspective
The process by which faculty and staff came together to write this rubric is available for your review, at http://www.csuchico.edu/celt/roi/history.shtml. This describes the history and work of a dedicated committee.

The Rubric for Online Instruction initiated the Exemplary Online Instruction Awards, a recognition made public at the annual CELT Conference in Chico, CA. The Web site demonstrating examples of exemplary online instruction is available for viewing, from the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching web site, http://www.csuchico.edu/celt/.

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TECHNOLOGY AND LEARNING PROGRAM (TLP): RUBRIC FOR ONLINE INSTRUCTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 1</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Effective</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learner Support &amp; Resources</strong></td>
<td>A. Course contains limited information for online learner support and links to campus resources.</td>
<td>A. Course contains adequate information for online learner support and links to campus resources.</td>
<td>A. Course contains extensive information about being an online learner and links to campus resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Course provides limited course-specific resources, limited contact information for instructor, department, and/or program.</td>
<td>B. Course provides adequate course-specific resources, some contact information for instructor, department, and program.</td>
<td>B. Course provides a variety of course-specific resources, contact information for instructor, department, and program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Course offers limited resources supporting course content and different learning abilities.</td>
<td>C. Course offers access to adequate resources supporting course content and different learning abilities.</td>
<td>C. Course offers access to a wide range of resources supporting course content and different learning abilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rubric for Online Instruction, CSU, Chico. Copyright 2003 / Revised 2009


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### Rubric for Online Instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 2</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Effective</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Online Organization &amp; Design</strong></td>
<td>A. Much of the course is under construction, with some key components identified such as the syllabus.</td>
<td>A. Course is organized and navigable. Students can understand the key components and structure of the course.</td>
<td>A. Course is well-organized and easy to navigate. Students can clearly understand all components and structure of the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Course syllabus is unclear about what is expected of students.</td>
<td>B. Course syllabus identifies and delineates the role the online environment will play in the course.</td>
<td>B. Course syllabus identifies and clearly delineates the role the online environment will play in the total course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Aesthetic design does not present and communicate course information clearly.</td>
<td>C. Aesthetic design presents and communicates course information clearly.</td>
<td>C. Aesthetic design presents and communicates course information clearly throughout the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D. Web pages are inconsistent both visually and functionally.</td>
<td>D. Most web pages are visually and functionally consistent.</td>
<td>D. All web pages are visually and functionally consistent throughout the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E. Accessibility issues are not addressed. (Including: sight, mobility, hearing, cognition, ESL, and technical.)</td>
<td>E. Accessibility issues are briefly addressed. (Including: sight, mobility, hearing, cognition, ESL, and technical.)</td>
<td>E. Accessibility issues are addressed throughout the course. (Including: sight, mobility, hearing, cognition, ESL, and technical.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 3</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Effective</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Design &amp; Delivery</td>
<td>A. Course offers limited opportunity for interaction and communication student to student, student to instructor and student to content.</td>
<td>A. Course offers adequate opportunities for interaction and communication student to student, student to instructor and student to content.</td>
<td>A. Course offers ample opportunities for interaction and communication student to student, student to instructor and student to content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Course goals are not clearly defined and do not align to learning objectives.</td>
<td>B. Course goals are adequately defined but may not align to learning objectives.</td>
<td>B. Course goals are clearly defined and aligned to learning objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Learning objectives are vague or incomplete and learning activities are absent or unclear.</td>
<td>C. Learning objectives are identified and learning activities are implied.</td>
<td>C. Learning objectives are identified and learning activities are clearly integrated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D. Course provides limited visual, textual, kinesthetic and/or auditory activities to enhance student learning and accessibility.</td>
<td>D. Course provides adequate visual, textual, kinesthetic and/or auditory activities to enhance student learning and accessibility.</td>
<td>D. Course provides multiple visual, textual, kinesthetic and/or auditory activities to enhance student learning and accessibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E. Course provides limited activities to help students develop critical thinking and/or problem-solving skills.</td>
<td>E. Course provides adequate activities to help students develop critical thinking and/or problem-solving skills.</td>
<td>E. Course provides multiple activities that help students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 4</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Effective</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment &amp; Evaluation of Student Learning</strong></td>
<td>A. Course has limited activities to assess student readiness for course content and mode of delivery.</td>
<td>A. Course has adequate activities to assess student readiness for course content and mode of delivery.</td>
<td>A. Course has multiple timely and appropriate activities to assess student readiness for course content and mode of delivery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Learning objectives, instructional and assessment activities are not aligned.</td>
<td>B. Learning objectives, instructional and assessment activities are adequately aligned.</td>
<td>B. Learning objectives, instructional and assessment activities are closely aligned.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Assessment strategies are limited in use to measure content knowledge, attitudes, and skills.</td>
<td>C. Ongoing strategies are used to measure content knowledge, attitudes, and skills.</td>
<td>C. Ongoing multiple assessment strategies are used to measure content knowledge, attitudes, and skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Opportunities for students to receive feedback about their own performance are infrequent and sporadic.</td>
<td>D. Opportunities for students to receive feedback about their own performance are provided.</td>
<td>D. Regular feedback about student performance is provided in a timely manner throughout the course.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Students' self-assessments and/or peer feedback opportunities are limited.</td>
<td>E. Students' self-assessments and/or peer feedback opportunities exist.</td>
<td>E. Students' self-assessments and peer feedback opportunities exist throughout the course.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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| Category 5 |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| **Innovative Teaching with Technology** | **Baseline** | **Effective** | **Exemplary** |
| A. Course uses limited technology tools to facilitate communication and learning. | A. Course uses adequate technology tools to facilitate communication and learning. | A. Course uses a variety of technology tools to appropriately facilitate communication and learning. |
| B. New teaching methods applied to enhance student learning are limited. | B. New teaching methods are adequately applied to innovatively enhance student learning. | B. New teaching methods are applied and innovatively enhance student learning, and interactively engage students. |
| C. There are limited multimedia elements and/or learning objects for accommodating different learning styles. | C. Multimedia elements and/or learning objects are used and are relevant to accommodate different learning styles. | C. A variety of multimedia elements and/or learning objects are used and are relevant to accommodate different learning styles throughout the course. |
| D. Course uses Internet access and engages students in the learning process in a very limited way. | D. Course optimizes Internet access and effectively engages students in the learning process. | D. Course optimizes Internet access and effectively engages students in the learning process in a variety of ways throughout the course. |


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### Category 6

#### Faculty Use of Student Feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Effective</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Instructor offers limited opportunity for students to give feedback to faculty on course content.</td>
<td>A. Instructor offers adequate opportunities for students to give feedback on course content.</td>
<td>A. Instructor offers multiple opportunities for students to give feedback on course content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Instructor offers limited opportunity for students to give feedback on ease of online technology and accessibility of course.</td>
<td>B. Instructor offers adequate opportunities for students to give feedback on ease of online technology and accessibility of course.</td>
<td>B. Instructor offers multiple opportunities for students to give feedback on ease of online technology and accessibility of course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Instructor uses student feedback to help plan instruction and assessment of student learning for the next semester in a limited way.</td>
<td>C. Instructor requests and uses student feedback a couple times during the semester to help plan instruction and assessment of student learning for the rest of the semester.</td>
<td>C. Instructor uses formal and informal student feedback in an ongoing basis to help plan instruction and assessment of student learning throughout the semester.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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TRAINING WORKSHOP’S DESCRIPTION

Title: Managing a Web-Based Course.

Participants: Professors teaching the courses:


2. **EDSL 633 Foreign/Second Language Teaching: The Cultural Dimension**: “This course provides language professionals with an opportunity to examine the cultural dimensions of language teaching and learning. Students investigate context and culture in language teaching, explore ways of addressing culture-related standards, and engage in an in-depth review of research in this area. They also apply their knowledge and skills to enhance interaction and instruction in language classrooms for all learners” (Hernández, 2007, p. 1).

3. **EDSL 637 Curriculum Development: Foreign Languages/ English as a Second Language (ESL)**: “This course focuses on curriculum and materials development for high quality language programs for all students” (Hernandez, 2007, p. 1). Topics
such as the examination of the elements in a language curriculum, analysis, evaluation and development of instructional materials, task-based instructional units, state and national foreign language standards and many others are also taught in this course (Hernandez, 2007).

4. **EDSL 635 Current Research and Developments in Foreign/Second Language Education:** “This emphasis in this course is on (a) research in foreign/second language education; (b) professional writing (e.g., proposal, literature review, portfolio, and research report); (c) classroom inquiry; and (d) reflective professional practice. Theory, research and practice are integrated in experiences that contribute meaningfully to students’ development academically and professionally. The development of a portfolio offers students an opportunity to reflect upon professional standards and engage in self-assessment of achieved competencies” (Hernandez, 2009, p. 1).

5. **EDSL 636 Foreign/Second Language Education: Testing and Assessment Practices:**

This course focuses on testing, assessment and evaluation from the perspective of foreign and second language education. More specifically, this encompasses

- principles of language assessment and the assessment process;
- foreign language and ESL/ELD standards;
- assessment of specific language skills and evaluation of overall language proficiency;
- selection and appropriate use of various techniques and formats in language testing and assessment;
- test design, construction, and evaluation; and
- social and cultural issues related to assessment and evaluation. (Hernandez, 2009, p. 1)
6. **EDCI 689 Professional Field Experience**: “This course is divided in face-to-face theory and discussion and supervised field experience activities through coaching or mentoring outside the classroom and appropriate to the level of expertise and profession of each of the students” (Hernandez, 2009). Participants enhance competencies related to instruction, curriculum, assessment, and management in ESL and/or administrative skills of managing a language program.

**Training Workshop Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to identify and apply Internet tools of communication, inquiry, and construction.

2. Students will be able to recall suggestions for adapting technology to students with disabilities.

**Setting:** Computer Lab (with a projector)

**Material:** - Powerpoint presentations

- World Wide Web access

**Time:** 5 hours approximately

**Content:**

1. Internet Tools of Communication. *(Efficient methods for exchanging information and communicating with others)*

   a. Mailing List (Listservs)

   b. Conferences
c. Chat and Instant Messaging

d. Video conferencing

2. Internet Tools for Inquiry *(Methods for solving information problems)*

   a. Bookmarks (Important URLs)

   b. Scaffolding Web Exploration using the WebQuest Model

3. Internet Tools for Construction *(Refers to the Internet as a vehicle for presenting products that students create to summarize a learning activity)*

4. Adapting Technology to Equal Access

5. Netiquette

**Procedures:**

I. By using a slide show, the trainer presents the thirteen principles that the workshop will focus on. In pairs, the students will write down examples of how they can use the technology in order to achieve these principles. The trainer will ask the students to say the examples out loud, and he or she types them on a new slide for all the students to see.

II. After this activity, the trainer tells the students about the content they will learn from the workshop and at the end of the workshop, they will come back to the principles they developed and listed on the slides for further reflection.

III. The professors log onto their university portal accounts (in this case, CSUC), and access their courses. After choosing a course, the trainer explains the first topic on “Internet Tools of Communication.” The professors learn about the use of Listservs (how to create an e-mail and send attachments to a specific list of people), how to
create a discussion using the tools available, and how to use the chat or instant messaging. In addition, they will use Skype and see how video conferences work. All these activities will be done by cooperating and reflecting with each other.

*Possible activities for this section:*

**Mailing list (Listservs):** Using the Powerpoint projector, the trainer shows the professors how they can create e-mail for their students, colleagues, or others. They will practice sending, receiving and inserting enclosures in e-mails to their colleagues.

**Conferences:** The trainer explains that conferences or discussions are intended to be designed so that students are encouraged “to start relevant new discussions with a question or comment, respond to a posted comment, or just read the existing comments to glean whatever useful information might be available” (Grabe & Grabe, 2003, p. 194). The trainer encourages the professors to design discussions to scaffold their students’ learning.

**Chat and Instant Messaging:** The professors will learn chat/instant messaging by using different functions presented in the chat room, such as: 1) whiteboard, 2) handraise mode, and 3) slide show mode. The whiteboard enables participants in a chat room to draw diagrams, formulas or specific symbols, upload files, type directly on the board and even print the whiteboard if necessary, as a support of their conversations. The handraise mode enables students to force themselves to “raise their hands” before typing their comments or ideas. The slide show mode, is a function offered in the whiteboard that enables the professor and students to create a slide show using images to support a specific topic during a conversation.
**Video conferencing:** The professors will create an account on Skype, and they will talk to each other using the webcam and chat room. They will also learn about another synchronous program that can be implemented in the course such as Wimba. On the other hand, the software “Camtasia” which is an asynchronous tool is introduced to the professors as an option to record their lectures or other presentations so students can access at their own pace as well as to catch up if student missed the class.

**IV.** After practicing with all these tools, the trainer will explain “Internet Tools for Inquiry.” With the help of the trainer, the professors will create a module and insert Web links or URLs with descriptions, so that their students are able to link to topics that they are learning with URLs. In pairs, the participants will find a Web link (video, audio, 3D tour, trivia games, etc.), add it to the course module they created previously, and then show it to their colleagues explaining how and why that link is related to the topic of the module. Using these sources in groups of two or three, students learn how to make a WebQuest, a document (usually prepared as a webpage) which consists of: 1) a brief introduction to a topic, 2) a description of an inquiry task related to that topic, 3) a set of primary Web resources students can use in performing the task, and 4) suggestions for how students might use the Web resources in performing the task.

**V.** After these tasks are completed, the trainer will introduce the third topic, “Internet tools for Construction,” which refers to the Internet as a vehicle for presenting products that students create to summarize a learning activity. Using WebQuests that the professors created previously, they will find ways to incorporate tools (web links, conferences, chat conversations, and others), so their students are able to succeed in
projects and find solutions for tasks without giving them the answers right away. Pairs present their WebQuests so that all participants can solve one or two tasks, and receive feedback from each other.

VI. At the end of the slide show, the trainer will have an interactive trivia game of questions that review what has just been learned. The trainer can offer some tips that the professors can use when assisting students with disabilities. The following “tips” were taken from Grabe and Grabe (2004):

**Adaptations for Mobility Impairments**

- A power strip that can be used to turn all equipment on and off with a single switch.
- Alternative keyboards that position the keys farther apart and disable “repeat” keys so users with slower and less precise movements have less difficulty.
- Special software that causes the cursor to scan across a screen representation or across program choice buttons allows individuals with the capacity to control a switch (using a knee, the mouth, or the head) to make selections. (Grabe & Grabe, 2004, p. 401-402)

**Adaptations for Visual Impairments:**

- Blind individuals can use a standard keyboard. Braille key labels may be helpful to some of these students.
- Special screen reader software “reads” the screen to the learner (earphones can be used to reduce the distraction to others). Basic speech synthesis from text is fairly
standard, but screen reader software can also “describe” menus, windows, and screen icons.

- Special software can magnify screen images for learners with limited vision. Some programs allow screen content to be enlarged sixteen-fold. (Grabe & Grabe, 2004, p. 402)


- Consider offering alternative sources of information. For example, an image map should be accompanied by text links that can be used as alternatives to the map’s hot spots. A link to a separate page containing a text segment can be offered as an alternative to an explanatory illustration. Video can be supplemented with an audio track to provide descriptive information (Grabe & Grabe, 2004).

- “Tables can be used as a way to construct webpages, but tables with side-by-side columns of lengthy text are problematic for users dependent on a screen reader. The best solution would be to insert a link at the top of the page to provide access to a single-column, alternative version of the page” (Grabe & Grabe, 2004, p. 404).

- “Remember to use punctuation. Screen readers identify punctuation marks, and these can be critical for a user’s understanding of the content” (Grabe & Grabe, 2004, p. 404).

- Be aware of the colors used on important titles, especially for color blind people.

The trainer at the end of each adaptation shows an example using the course demo. At the same time, reminds that implementing these strategies can help students
who do not present disabilities, and for instance promote Universal Design (previously explained in Chapter 5 of this thesis) in this environment. During the presentation, students watch videos of screen readers or other software so they see how these tools work and what they look like.

VII. To conclude the workshop, the trainer teaches Netiquette guidelines by giving them the following as a handout:

**Netiquette guidelines**

- “*Monitor your e-mail account.* Monitor your account on a regular basis and respond to messages promptly. Responding promptly is courteous and lets the sender know the message has been received” (Grabe & Grabe, 2004, p. 204).

- “*Watch Grammar and Spelling*” (Grabe & Grabe, 2004, p. 204).

- “*Create a Context for your comments.* Establish a context for a reply is to connect your reply to the original message” (Grabe & Grabe, 2004, p. 204).

- “*Compose the subject line carefully.* If the subject or your e-mail address does not attract attention, the recipient may delay reading the message or even delete it” (Grabe & Grabe, 2004, p. 205).

- “*Ask Yourself: Would You Say It Face to Face?* One way to evaluate messages for appropriateness is to consider whether you could make the same comments in a face-to-face setting” (Grabe & Grabe, 2004, p. 205).

- “*Be Careful with Sarcasm and Humor.* Without the benefit of the cues present in face-to-face communication, sarcasm and poking fun at another person can easily be misinterpreted as criticism” (Grabe & Grabe, 2004, p. 205).
• “Remember that CMC Messages Can Be Permanent. You should recognize that almost anyone might see what you have written. If you would not be willing to make your comments public, carefully consider sending them over the Internet” (Grabe & Grabe, 2004, p. 205).

• “Reply to the Proper Person. Often mailing list participants forget that an e-mail message came from the list and not from the person authoring the message. Attempting to reply to the author results in a message sent to all members of the list. A similar problem can be created by accidentally “responding to all” in response to a message that was sent to some people as a cc” (Grabe & Grabe, 2004, p. 205).

VIII. At the close of the workshop, the trainer shows the slide show from the first activity in which the students gave examples for the thirteen principles of learning. The students will reflect and discuss about what they have learned in the training.

Evaluation:

The evaluation of this workshop will be done informally. During each activity, the professors will be monitored by the trainer. They will also engage in peer and self-correction. Small tasks and trivia games will help the professors monitor their progress and help the trainer decide when to start the next activity. In order for the learners to succeed, the trainer must design all of the activities so that they meet the two main objectives of the training workshop.
GLOSSARY

- **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** An amended act that gives civil rights protection to individuals with disabilities similar to those provided to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion. It guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, State and local government services, and telecommunications. (U.S. Department of Justice. Civil Rights Division, 2008, ¶ 2)

- **Asynchronous (communication):** “Communication in which a message is sent at one time and received or read at a later time (for instance, e-mail)” (Grabe & Grabe, 2004, p. 437).

- **Blackboard (WebCT) Vista:** “A suite of enterprise software products and services that power a total “e-education infrastructure” for schools, colleges, universities, etc.” (South Central Regional Library Council Distance Learning Glossary, 2002, p. 1).

- **Blog (or Weblog):** A website created by an individual or individuals where other users can comment and reply to a particular topic(s).

- **Bookmark:** A technique “to mark an Internet location so one can remember it and return to it later; or the place so marked” (Roblyer & Edwards, 2000, p. 329).

- **Camtasia:** Screen video capture software for Microsoft Windows that can, for example, allow instructors to record their lectures using a PowerPoint presentation.
• **Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST):** “A nonprofit research and development organization that has created [the] Universal Design for Learning to expand learning opportunities for all individuals, especially those with disabilities” (CAST, n.d., ¶ 1)

• **Center for Universal Design (CUD):**

A National Information, technical assistance, and research center that evaluates, develops, and promotes accessible and universal design in housing, commercial and public facilities, outdoor environments, and products. Our mission is to improve environments and products through design innovation, research, education and design assistance. (Center for Universal Design, n.d., ¶ 1)

• **Chat rooms:** “A location on the Internet set up to allow people to converse in real time by typing in messages or allowing their avatars to meet and talk to each other” (Roblyer & Edwards, 2000, p. 330).

• **Computer Management Instructions (CMC):** “A computer software systems designed to keep track of student performance data, either as part of Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) programs or by themselves” (Roblyer & Edwards, 2000, p. 330).

• **Cursor:** “A symbol, usually a line or square, displayed on the computer screen indicating where the next symbol entered will appear” (Grabe & Grabe, 2004, p. 438).

• **Cyber environment:** A virtual community in the Internet where people can interact with each other through their computers.

• **DECtalk:** Screen reader software developed by Digital Equipment Corporation that allows people who are visually impaired to access information on their computers.
• **Digital natives**: People who have grown up using technology in general and electronic devices in particular as a way to communicate, record, educate, and understand society.

• **Digital technologies**: “Devices that store and manipulate numbers. These devices can translate words and pictures into numbers and then process them to produce a replica on a screen” (101 Scientific Names, 2001, ¶ 25).

• **Discussion boards**: Asynchronous communication forums in which two or more users can post and reply to messages related to a topic or topics.

• **Distance education**: “A generic, all-inclusive term used to refer to the physical separation of teachers and learners” (Scholosser & Simonson as cited in Ruhe & Zumbo, 2009, p. 253).

• **E-learning**: “Any learning that uses a network [e.g. Internet] for delivery, interaction, or facilitation” (Ruhe & Zumbo, 2009, p. 253).

• **e-moderators**: Instructors/Facilitators who teach an online course.

• **EnACT (Ensuring Access through Collaboration and Technology)**: A project funded by the U.S. Department of Education. It ensures that students with disabilities receive a quality higher education. At the same time it supports students with disabilities within the California State University in attaining their postsecondary educational goals (Center for Distributed Learning, CSU, n.d.).

• **Gradebook tool**: “Software designed to maintain and calculate student grades” (Roblyer & Edwards, 2000, p. 331).
• **Hardware**: “The devices or equipment in a computer system (in contrast with software or computer programs)” (Roblyer & Edwards, 2000, p. 332).

• **Hybrid courses**: Face-to-face courses that include web-based components the students can access using a Learning Management System (LMS).

• **Hypermedia**: (applications) “Multimedia that a user can examine in a flexible, nonlinear fashion. The user can typically move from one information source to several others and can control which of these options to take” (Grabe & Grabe, 2004, p. 439).

• **Icon**: “A small image often used consistently to represent a specific program action or category of information” (Grabe & Grabe, 2004, p. 440).

• **Instant messaging**: Real time communication between two participants through the Internet.

• **Instructional Technologist (IT)**: A person who specializes in Instructional Technology or in the use and implementation of technological learning tools that can be used to improve teaching and learning in education (for example, software and technology devices, DVD, cameras, etc.).

• **Interactive Media**: “A new technology such as CD-ROM and online systems that allow users to interact with other users or to choose their own path through the material” (Helicon Publishing as cited in Ruhe & Zumbo, 2009, p. 254).

• **Interface**: “Name given to the computer screen or screens that enable a user to interact with a computer program” (Brooks & Nolan, 2001, p. 306).
- **Internet**: “A worldwide network that connects many smaller networks with a common set of procedures (protocols) for sending and receiving information” (Roblyer & Edwards, 2000, p. 333).

- **Intranet**: “A web designed for use within an institution rather than for general access” (Grabe & Grabe, 2004, p. 440).

- **Job Access for Windows and Speech (JAWS)**: Screen reader software created by Freedom Scientific that allows people who are visually impaired to access information on their computers.

- **Learning architecture**: “The design, sequencing, and integration of all electronic and nonelectronic components of learning to deliver optimum improvement in competence and performance” (Rosenberg, 2001, p. 118).

- **Learning Management System (LMS)**: “Integrated software products that track learner progress, beginning with an inventory of learning preferences and goals and tracking progress both within and among courses” (South Central Regional Library Council Distance Learning Glossary, 2002).

- **Listserv**: “An alternative term for a mailing list” (Grabe & Grabe, 2004, p. 440).

- **Multimedia**: Any kind of resource that uses multiple forms of communication such as audio, visual, and text.

- **Netiquette**: “Etiquette guidelines for posting messages to online services, especially on the Internet” (Roblyer & Edwards, 2000, p. 334).

- **Online courses**: Courses offer to students via the Internet.
- **Online learning module**: A content-unit or a personal topic that is previously selected by the instructor of an online course. It is composed of multiple tasks so that students can navigate and learn from the Web and other multimedia elements.

- **Online learning**: “A learning environment that uses the Internet as the delivery vehicle, synonymous with e-learning (South Central Regional Library Council Distance Learning Glossary, 2002).

- **Operating system**: Software that controls the hardware and resources of a computer system (for example, Microsoft Windows).

- **Portal (account)**: “A Web site or service that offers a broad array of resources and services, such as e-mail, news, weather, forums, search engines, and online shopping malls. Most of the traditional search engines, such as Yahoo, have transformed themselves into Web portals. Courseware providers are seeking to establish themselves as portal sites. They have interests in two portal strategies: one for students, and the other for faculty as researchers” (Brooks & Nolan, 2001, p. 310).

- **QuickPlace**: A synchronous software used by many for online collaboration.

- **Screen reader**: See text-to-speech software.

- **Search engine**: “A program, used by a search service that checks a user’s request against the database of web pages maintained by the service and returns a list of matches.” (Grabe & Grabe, 2004, p. 441).

- **Skype**: A telephone service available to Internet users. It enables file transfers, instant messaging, and video conferencing.
• **Software**: “Programs written in a computer language (in contrast with hardware)” (Roblyer & Edwards, 2000, p. 334).

• **Synchronous (communication)**: Communication that happens in real time; for example, sending instant messages to a chat room.

• **Text-to-speech software**: An assistive device software used by visually impaired users that can read text out loud from a computer screen (e.g. menu options).

• **Universal Design for Learning (ULD)**: “The design of products and environments to be usable to the greatest extent possible by people of all ages and abilities. Universal design respects human diversity and promotes inclusion of all people in all activities of life.” (Story et al., 1998, p. 2)

• **Uniform Resource Locator (URL)**: “The address of a document on the Web. For example, [http://www.lakenet.org/training/dlglossary.html](http://www.lakenet.org/training/dlglossary.html)” (South Central Regional Library Council Distance Learning Glossary, 2002).

• **Virtual world**: “An online learning community; a cooperative learning group that uses the Internet for communication among members” (Grabe & Grabe, 2000, p. 314).

• **Virtual/3D tours**: Tours delivered on the Internet using video or three-dimensional images.

• **Web 1.0**: “Learners find information on the web and download it without changing anything at the website. Characterized by an architecture of presentation” (Sinclair, McClaren, & Griffin as cited in Ruhe & Zumbo, 2009, p. 258).
• **Web 2.0:** Internet users contribute to different websites by becoming editors, publishers, and producers (for example, Wikipedia and MySpace).

• **Web-links:** See URL.

• **Web-cam:** Camera used to capture video that can be viewed in real time over the Internet (for example, video conferencing).

• **Webpage:** “A hypertext file transmitted from server to client using the Web” (Brooks & Nolan, 2001, p. 313).

• **WebQuest:** “A type of structured Internet problem-solving activity developed by Bernie Dodge” (Roblyer & Edwards, 2000, p. 315).

• **Whiteboard:** Chat room’s synchronous tool, where two or more users can share a screen and independently draw, make graphics, insert images, or documents while messaging each other.

• **Wiki:** A collaborative writing tool used in Wikipedia. In a “wiki” a user can edit, add, or delete information. Wikipedia is a Web 2.0 collaborative website that works as a free global encyclopedia presented in many languages.

• **Wimba:** Synchronous software that “gives instructors the ability to teach and meet with students live online. It supports audio, video, application sharing, and content display” (TLP², n.d, ¶ 2).

• **Windows:** A computer operating system created by Microsoft.

• **World Wide Web (WWW):** “A graphical hypertext-based Internet tool that provides access to homepages created by individuals, businesses, and other
organizations” (Willis & University of Idaho Engineering Outreach Staff as cited in Ruhe and Zumbo, 2009, p. 259).

- **World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)**: A group “of organizations around the world [that] develop specifications, guidelines, software, and tools to maximize the potential of the worldwide web (Ruhe and Zumbo, 2009, p. 264).
APPENDIX E
APPENDIX REFERENCES

http://www.weizmann-usa.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5059&news_iv_ctrl=-1


Center for Distributed Learning, California State University, CSU., (n.d.). *EnACT. Mission statement.* Retrieved February 22, 2009 from
http://enact.sonoma.edu/home


APPENDIX F
February 12, 2009

Susana Murillo Leon
458 Nord Ave. #1
Chico, CA 95926

Dear Susana Murillo Leon,

As the Chair of the Campus Institutional Review Board, I have determined that your research proposal entitled "CONVERGING A GRADUATE TESOL CERTIFICATE PROGRAM INTO AN ONLINE ENVIRONMENT: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY" is exempt from full committee review. This clearance allows you to proceed with your study.

I do ask that you notify our office should there be any further modifications to, or complications arising from or within, the study. In addition, should this project continue longer than the authorized date, you will need to apply for an extension from our office. When your data collection is complete, you will need to turn in the attached Post Data Collection Report for final approval. Students should be aware that failure to comply with any HSRC requirements will delay graduation. If you should have any questions regarding this clearance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

John Mahoney, Ph.D., Chair
Human Subjects in Research Committee

Attachment: Post Data Collection Report

cc: Hilda Hernandez (222)
HUMAN SUBJECTS IN REVIEW COMMITTEE
Post Data Collection Form

Under Federal law relating to the protection of Human Subjects, this report is to be completed by each Principal Investigator at the end of data collection.

Please return to: Diane Smith, HSRC Assistant
Graduate & International Programs
Student Services Center 440
CSU, Chico
Chico, CA 95929-0875

Or Fax it: 530-898-6889

Name: Susana M. Murillo Leon Chico State Portal ID #: 004660020

Phone(s) (530) 321-3827 Email: silpt1@csuchico.edu

Faculty Advisor/Thesis Chair (if student): Dr. Hilda Hernandez Phone: 898-6258

College/Department: Department of Education

Title of Project: Converging a Graduate TESOL Certificate Program into an online environment: An Action Research Study

Date application was approved (mo/yr.): 02/09 Date collection complete (mo/yr.): 04/09

How many subjects were recruited? 25 How many subjects actually completed the project? 21

*HARM—Did any subject have a severe reactions or extreme emotional response? No

If yes, please attach a detailed explanation:

Your signature: __________________________ Date: 04/15/09

*Final clearance will not be granted without a complete answer to this question.

Approved By: John Mahoney, Chair

John Mahoney, Chair

********************************************

VERY IMPORTANT: If you will or have used this research in your project or thesis you are required to provide a copy of this form (with John Mahoney’s signature in place) to your graduate committee.

Do you want a photo copy of this form mailed to you? ______________

If yes, provide address:

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________