# UNIVERSITAT POLITÈCNICA DE VALÈNCIA
## Departamento de Lingüística Aplicada

# Towards the Development of an Effective Online Language Learning Model in a University Environment

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# ABSTRACT AND KEYWORDS

This thesis documents the progress towards a model of online language learning. Despite the recent innovations in online learning, greater in-depth knowledge of what it means to learn online is needed to ensure a better language learning experience for everyone. Learners are often overwhelmed with technology at the expense of proper pedagogy. This thesis explores the nature of learning a language online. My research investigates how recent technological advances have meant that learning a language is transforming from being a face-to-face classroom activity to an online activity. In the process of changing to an online environment, teachers are having to learn new ways of interacting with students and sharing knowledge. This means that we need to re-think how a learner is going to acquire a language. This thesis holds the view that an analysis of learner opinions is an essential step towards the design and development of a model of online language learning.

The thesis begins by reviewing the existing literature related to online language learning and technology (multimedia technologies, computer assisted language learning, the relationship between corpus linguistics and online language learning, the use of mobile technologies, the use of gaming, simulation and virtual reality, the impact of social networking).

For the methodology, we used a mixed quasi-experimental design. We collected data from various sources and analysed it to provide us with the necessary information to be able to design a model of online language learning. Firstly, we carried out some initial classroom research to discover and analyse some basic ideas that students have about the use of tools for online language learning. The objective of this initial classroom research was to try to become familiar with the type of tools they used and what language skills they thought they would develop with these tools. Secondly, we examined the contents and structure of e-textbooks as representative of a kind of halfway house to an online language learning course as many of these e-textbooks come accompanied by an online platform. Thirdly, we analysed Massive Open Online Courses: their impact on online learning and online language learning. Fourthly, we provide a discussion about appropriate and suitable questionnaire design. This includes discussion of the questionnaire design process. Then, we present the thinking behind the three questionnaires used in our research. The first questionnaire focussed mostly on the role of the internet as a language learning tool. It tried to elicit from students what they know about online learning in general and, more particularly, online language learning. Our second questionnaire was a questionnaire where students had to evaluate language learning websites. Our third questionnaire covered the issue of language learning activities, where the questionnaire aimed to discover student opinions about different kinds of language learning activities, which ranged from formal, traditional, short activities to longer project type activities.

Chapter IV is mainly concerned with discussing results from the analysis of our initial classroom research, analysis of e-textbooks and their associated online platforms, analysis

of MOOCs for language learning and analysis of learner responses to three questionnaires. Chapter V presents a model of online language learning.

This research contributes to enhancing the online language learning experience by making explicit the steps that need to be taken to construct an online language course which is driven by pedagogy and informed by the latest technologies. The model can become a decision-making tool (a guide and checklist for designing online language courses). Furthermore, it contributes to the discussion of how best to combine tools, tasks and language acquisition, a fundamental part of the online learning process.

*Keywords*: online language learning model, learning tools and technologies, computer assisted language learning, questionnaire design, MOOCs, e-textbooks

# RESUMEN Y PALABRAS CLAVE

Esta tesis documenta el progreso hacia un modelo de aprendizaje de lenguas online. A pesar de las recientes innovaciones en el aprendizaje online, se necesita un conocimiento más profundo de lo que significa aprender online para poder garantizar que la experiencia del aprendizaje de lenguas sea mejor para todos. Los estudiantes a menudo se sienten abrumados con la tecnología a expensas de una pedagogía adecuada. Esta tesis explora la naturaleza de aprender una lengua online. El estudio investiga cómo los recientes avances tecnológicos han propiciado que el aprendizaje de una lengua se esté transformando, pasando de ser una actividad presencial a ser una actividad online. En el proceso de cambio a un entorno online, los profesores deben aprender nuevas formas de interactuar con los alumnos y compartir conocimientos. Esto significa que debemos volver a pensar cómo adquirirá el alumno las competencias lingüísticas. Esta tesis sostiene que analizar las opiniones de los estudiantes es un paso esencial hacia el diseño y desarrollo de un modelo de aprendizaje de idiomas online.

La tesis comienza con la revisión de la literatura existente relacionada con el aprendizaje y la tecnología online (tecnologías multimedia, aprendizaje asistido por ordenador, la relación entre la lingüística de corpus y el aprendizaje de lenguas online, el uso de tecnologías móviles, el uso de juegos, la simulación y la realidad virtual, el impacto de las redes sociales).

Para la metodología, hemos utilizado un diseño mixto cuasi experimental. Hemos recogido datos de varias fuentes y los hemos analizado para disponer de la información necesaria para así poder diseñar un modelo de aprendizaje de lenguas online. En primer lugar, se ha llevado a cabo una investigación inicial en el aula para descubrir y analizar algunas ideas básicas que los estudiantes tienen sobre el uso de herramientas para el aprendizaje de idiomas online. El objetivo de esta investigación inicial en el aula era tratar de familiarizarse con el tipo de herramientas que utilizaban y con las habilidades lingüísticas que pensaban que desarrollarían con estas herramientas. En segundo lugar, hemos examinado los contenidos y la estructura de los libros de texto electrónicos como representativos de una especie de paso intermedio hacia un curso de aprendizaje de idiomas online, ya que muchos de estos libros de texto vienen acompañados de una plataforma online. En tercer lugar, hemos analizado *Massive Open Online Courses*: su impacto en el aprendizaje online y en el aprendizaje de lenguas online. En cuarto lugar, ofrecemos un análisis sobre el diseño adecuado y apropiado de cuestionarios. Se incluye una discusión sobre el proceso de diseño del cuestionario. A continuación, presentamos el razonamiento en el que basamos los tres cuestionarios utilizados en nuestra investigación. El primer cuestionario se centraba principalmente en el papel de Internet como herramienta de aprendizaje de idiomas. Tratamos de recabar información sobre lo que nuestros alumnos saben sobre el aprendizaje online en general y, en particular, sobre el aprendizaje de lenguas online. En el segundo cuestionario los alumnos tuvieron que evaluar sitios web para el aprendizaje de idiomas. En nuestro tercer cuestionario abordamos la cuestión de las actividades de aprendizaje de idiomas. El cuestionario pretendía descubrir las opiniones de los estudiantes sobre diferentes tipos de actividades de aprendizaje de idiomas, que iban desde actividades cortas, tradicionales, formales a actividades de mayor duración tipo proyecto.

El Capítulo IV está dedicado principalmente a valorar los resultados del análisis de nuestra investigación inicial en el aula, el análisis de los libros de texto electrónicos y sus correspondientes plataformas online, el análisis de los MOOC para el aprendizaje de idiomas y el análisis de las respuestas de los alumnos a los tres cuestionarios. El Capítulo V presenta un modelo de aprendizaje de idiomas online.

Esta investigación contribuye a mejorar la experiencia de aprendizaje de idiomas online al hacer explícitos los pasos que se deben seguir para desarrollar un curso de idiomas online impulsado por la pedagogía y fundamentado en las tecnologías más recientes. El modelo puede convertirse en una herramienta de toma de decisiones (una guía y lista de verificación para el diseño de cursos de idiomas online). Además, contribuye a la discusión sobre la mejor manera de integrar herramientas, tareas y aprendizaje de lenguas, una parte fundamental del proceso de aprendizaje online.

*Palabras Clave*: modelo de aprendizaje de lenguas online, herramientas y tecnologías de aprendizaje, aprendizaje de lenguas asistido por ordenador, diseño de cuestionarios, MOOC, libros de texto electrónicos

# RESUM I PARAULES CLAUS

Esta tesi documenta el progrés cap a un model d'aprenentatge del llengües en línia. A pesar de les recents innovacions en l'aprenentatge en línia, és necessari un coneixement més profund del que significa aprendre en línia per tal de poder garantir que l'experiència de l'aprenentatge de llengües siga millor per a tots. Els estudiants sovint se senten desbordats davant la tecnologia a falta d'una pedagogia adequada. Esta tesi explora la naturalesa d'aprendre una llengua en línia. L'estudi investiga com els recents avanços tecnològics han propiciat que l'aprenentatge d'una llengua passe de ser una activitat presencial a ser una activitat en línia. En el procés de canvi a un entorn en línia, els professors han d'aprendre noves formes d'interactuar amb els alumnes i compartir coneixements. Açò significa que hem de tornar a pensar com adquirirà l'alumne les competències lingüístiques. Esta tesi sosté que una anàlisi de les opinions dels estudiants és un pas essencial cap al disseny i desenvolupament d'un model d'aprenentatge d'idiomes en línia.

La tesi comença amb la revisió de la literatura existent relacionada amb l'aprenentatge i la tecnologia en línia (tecnologies multimèdia, aprenentatge assistit per ordinador, la relació entre la lingüística de corpus i l'aprenentatge de llengües en línia, l'ús de tecnologies mòbils, l'ús de jocs, la simulació i la realitat virtual, l'impacte de les xarxes socials).

Per a la metodologia, s'ha usat un disseny mixt quasi experimental. S'han recollit dades de fonts diverses i les hem analitzat per tal de disposar de la informació necessària per poder dissenyar un model d'aprenentatge de llengües en línia. En primer lloc, hem dut a terme una investigació inicial en l'aula per tal de descobrir i analitzar algunes idees bàsiques que els estudiants tenen sobre l'ús de ferramentes per a l'aprenentatge d'idiomes en línia. L'objectiu d'esta investigació inicial en l'aula era tractar de familiaritzar-se amb el tipus de ferramentes emprades i amb les habilitats lingüístiques que pensaven que desenvoluparien amb estes ferramentes. En segon lloc, hem examinat els continguts i l'estructura dels llibres de text electrònics com representatius d'una espècie de pas intermedi cap a un curs d'aprenentatge d'idiomes en línia, ja que molts d'estos llibres de text vénen acompanyats d'una plataforma en línia. En tercer lloc, hem analitzat *Massive Open Online Courses*: el seu impacte en l'aprenentatge en línia i el propi aprenentatge de llengües en línia. En quart lloc, fem una anàlisi sobre quin és el disseny adequat per als qüestionaris. S'inclou una discussió sobre el procés de disseny del qüestionari. A continuació, presentem el raonament en què basem els tres qüestionaris emprats en la nostra investigació. El primer qüestionari se centrava principalment en el paper d'Internet com a ferramenta d'aprenentatge d'idiomes. Tractàvem d'obtenir informació sobre el que els nostres alumnes saben sobre l'aprenentatge en línia en general i, en particular, sobre l'aprenentatge en línia de llengües. En el segon qüestionari els alumnes havien d'avaluar llocs web per a l'aprenentatge d'idiomes. En el nostre tercer qüestionari abordàvem la qüestió de les activitats de l'aprenentatge d'idiomes. El qüestionari pretenia descobrir les opinions dels estudiants sobre diferents tipus d'activitats d'aprenentatge d'idiomes, que anaven des d'activitats curtes, tradicionals, formals a activitats de major duració tipus projecte.

El Capítol IV està dedicat principalment a valorar els resultats de l'anàlisi de la nostra investigació inicial en l'aula, l'anàlisi dels llibres de text electrònics i les seues corresponents plataformes en línia, l'anàlisi dels MOOC per a l'aprenentatge d'idiomes i l'anàlisi de les

respostes dels alumnes als tres qüestionaris. El Capítol V presenta un model d'aprenentatge d'idiomes en línia.

Esta investigació contribueix a millorar l'experiència d'aprenentatge d'idiomes en línia en fer explícits els passos que s'han de seguir per a desenvolupar un curs d'idiomes en línia impulsat per la pedagogia i fonamentat en les tecnologies més recents. El model pot convertir-se en una ferramenta de presa de decisions (una guia i llista de verificació per al disseny de cursos d'idiomes en línia). A més a més, contribueix al debat sobre la millor forma d'integrar ferramentes, tasques i aprenentatge de llengües, una part fonamental del procés d'aprenentatge en línia.

*Paraules clau*: model d'aprenentatge de llengües en línia, ferramentes i tecnologies d'aprenentatge, aprenentatge de llengües assistit per ordinador, disseny de qüestionaris, MOOC, llibres de text electrònics

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# LIST OF ABREVIATIONS

AES = Automated Essay Scoring

BNC = British National Corpus

CALL = Computer Assisted Language Learning

CEFR = Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

CLIL = Content and Language Integrated Learning

COCA = Corpus of Contemporary American

COTS = Commercial off-the-shelf games

EAP = English for Academic Purposes

EFL = English as a Foreign Language

ESL = English as a Second Language

ESP = English for Specific Purposes

FC = Functional Connectivities

FL = Foreign Language Learning

HOTS = Higher Order Thinking Skills

IELTS = International English Language Testing System

LMS = Learning Management System

LOTS = Lower Order Thinking Skills

LLSNS = Language Learning Social Network Sites

L2 = Second Language

MALL = Mobile Assisted Language Learning

MMORPG = Massive Multiple Online Role-Playing Games

MOOC = Massive Open Online Courses (LMOOCs = Language MOOCs)

PLE = Personalised Learning Environment (PLLE = Personal Language Learning Environment)

SLA = Second Language Acquisition

SN = Social Networking

SNS = Social Networking Sites

TEFL = Teaching English as a Foreign Language

UDL = Universal Design for Learning

# CHAPTER 1
## Introduction

# CHAPTER 1: Introduction

## 1.1    Introduction

Can you successfully learn a language solely using online tools? What kind of learning needs to take place to learn a language online? These are two of the questions that this thesis tries to answer.

Technology has changed the way people learn and access education. The rapid development of online technology has encouraged us to rethink the delivery of university education. Traditional teaching and learning forms have been strongly impacted on by the integration of ICT to deliver information to learners and convert that information into applicable knowledge and critical life skills. One of those important skills is language learning. Online technologies have improved in quality and power at an incredible rate, but one cannot say the same of online pedagogies. I share the conviction that technology is there to enhance the quality of the learning experience, so a language student may gain greater knowledge, control and fluency in the target language. Ultimately, this thesis intends to contribute to a best practice model for online language learning.

## 1.2 Motivation

This study has been inspired by my own personal experience of online foreign language teaching in the Polytechnic University of Valencia (UPV) and CEU Cardenal Herrera (Valencia). When I was offered the post of Teacher Trainer for the blended learning Teachers' Training Course with the CEU Cardenal Herrera in 2013 and a year later the same course but to be delivered online with the UPV (Polytechnic University of Valencia), little did I know that it would result in the proposal for this PhD. Prior to those jobs, my experience of using ICT or educational technologies in English Language Teaching was quite limited. I first started using computers in English Language Teaching when I was hired by the Department of Applied Linguistics of the UPV in 2011 to provide extension activities to complement my face-to-face sessions by offering the students of

two faculties (Business Management and Industrial Design) with additional controlled practice of grammar or vocabulary that had just been presented or for extra practice out of class.

This experience and my lack of knowledge piqued my motivation to read books and articles on online and blended learning to compensate my limited experience and find practical suggestions for their integration into my lessons. With time, I felt myself becoming frustrated since those books were providing me with more theoretical rather than practical applications of online or blended learning course design.

One of my primary tasks in the role of Teacher Trainer at the CEU Cardenal Herrera was to introduce and verse in CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) methodology Primary and Secondary school teachers. The task itself was somewhat challenging since I had to design the course material and divide it up into face-to-face and online sessions. In addition, the age and educational background of my students varied a great deal, which created an additional drawback. Some of them were not used to learning online and felt somewhat sceptical about the course. I have to say they were wrong.

The formal name of the course which I teach at the CEU Cardenal Herrera and the UPV is *Capacitación en Inglés* which is organised by the Ministry of Education of the Valencian Region and forms part of the plurilingual program of the region. In fact, it is closely related to CLIL methodology.

Although the course content was standardised, from the very beginning I began to question how to distribute it between face-to-face and online classes. The online platform that is used in this university is called Blackboard and has several sections such as a teaching guide, content, activities, chat, forum, messages, and evaluation. The same tools are available on PoliformaT, the official online platform used by the UPV.

Soon, I understood the complexity of designing blended or online courses. It was not just enough to provide and deliver course content in a virtual environment and then evaluate it, which was very similar to a face-to-face format of learning but to involve students in a process

where they would develop their LOTS (Lower Order Thinking Skills) and HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) and thus convert information into knowledge.

Throughout this time, I kept reading articles about online or blended learning, but my frustration was growing because of the lack of any advice either for instructors or the students. Unwittingly, my practical teaching experience with online courses turned out to be a three-year long investigation to address a perceived deficit in the way these courses are delivered and to find a way through research which would satisfy the educational needs of my digital native students and assist other teachers in selecting the right design to provide incentives to their own students.

## 1.3 Online Learning

A university student, who is involved in a scientific-educational environment, has an acute need to acquire skills and knowledge of both an intellectual and cultural nature required by the globalised labour market. The development of information technologies in all spheres of science has contributed to the constant change in education and educational technologies. There is a need for dynamic systems, which will allow us to modify content, methods and technology at any time. Online learning is a type of distance education, based on the use of web-technologies.

### 1.3.1 Types of Online Learning

Although online learning is a relatively new form of education, distance learning has been around for over a hundred years. The most remote distance learning was mainly based on sending materials back and forth by ordinary mail and was popular in the United States in the late 1880s. By the end of 1970s, some universities started using cable and satellite television for distance courses, which were mainly offered in the morning before people went to work.

With the growth of the Internet in the 1990s, online learning started to gain pace and at the same time met resistance from traditional educators. Many claimed that online classes lacked an instructor and, due to that fact, the online format was inferior.  Since mid-2000s, this notion

has changed since many people's familiarity with personal computers and modern technologies have increased.

Taking an online course is in many ways like taking a course in a traditional face-to-face classroom setting. Several similarities between these two types of education can be highlighted: there is an instructor, a syllabus, objectives to cover, class participation through chats and forums in the case of the online learning format, writing tasks and examinations. However, there is one main difference: students can complete the entire course from home and at their own pace in the case of online learning.

Class Central (https://www.class-central.com/) is a website that acts as a giant curated catalogue of MOOCs spread across different online course providers. They focus on manually categorizing and tagging every MOOC. According to data collected by Class Central, the total number of students who signed up for at least one course in 2015 was over 35 million—up from an estimated 16-18 million in 2014. They state that, in 2015, there were 4,200 MOOCs and more than 500 universities involved. More interestingly, for this thesis, the world's largest single session of a MOOC was an English Language course on Future learn: 440,000 students signed up for one session of the Understanding IELTS: Techniques for English Language Tests course, which was taught by the British Council. This clearly demonstrates the staggering demand for the English Language.

Some online courses are synchronous, which means that teachers and students log in to a web site at the same time wherever they might be. Students participate in real time tasks, discussions and projects. This type of online instruction is similar to face-to-face or traditional education format by incorporating chat rooms or virtual classrooms. Synchronous learning has some advantages and disadvantages. Although it takes place in real time, which allows the student to give and receive instant feedback and feel party of a learning community, synchronous learning does not allow the student to establish their own rhythm of work and might become demotivating.

Nevertheless, online courses that are synchronous offer many benefits both to students and instructors: they provide immediate teacher and student feedback; they replicate the physical classroom model; they reduce the feeling of isolation; they provide a forum where students can collaborate at any time; they foster a sense of community among learners; they may motivate students and help them structure their time.

Many asynchronous online learning environments encourage students to create, synthesise, explain and apply the content that has been delivered (Harris, Mishra, and Koehler, 2009) providing students with more time to reflect, collaborate and interact with their virtual peers (Meloni, 2010). Meloni (2010) states that asynchronous learning is the most popular learning type because most of the learning tools are free, require minimal hardware and can be tailored to the students' pace. According to Alonso Díaz and Blázquez Entonado (2009), the teacher's role in both traditional and online learning environment is about developing and facilitating a student's learning experience and this facilitation can be provided by asynchronous learning. One of the benefits of an asynchronous learning environment is that it facilitates customised learning tools (Lorenzo and Ittelson, 2005) and creates an opportunity for learners to become self-reflective (Bonk and Zhang, 2006).

We can state that synchronous and asynchronous learning technologies foster student motivation and engagement. Some students prefer the synchronous modality, since it provides an immediate feedback, while the asynchronous mode allows students to pace their learning.

Researchers have long acknowledged the need for language teachers to receive special training for new online teaching and learning environments in the face of rapid technological developments to provide effective learning (Ernest, Heiser, and Murphy, 2013). This thesis investigates what kind of model of online learning should a language course take given these rapid technological developments

## 1.4 Primary and Secondary sources of investigation

### 1.4.1 The essence of scientific information

It is important to distinguish "information" from "data". Data - these are facts, ideas, information represented in a symbolic form, allowing them to be transmitted, processed and interpreted. Information is the meaning that a person attributes to data on the basis of rules or representations of facts, ideas, and messages that are known to him. Structured information may constitute knowledge.

### 1.4.2 Primary and secondary research

Research is the art of scientific investigation. It is a methodical search for relevant information or facts on a particular topic. It aims at discovering the answers to questions by applying scientific procedures. The collection of authentic data is very helpful when it comes to doing serious research. There are two kinds of research, i.e. primary research and secondary research. Primary research is one that involves the gathering of fresh data. On the contrary, secondary research is a research method which involves the use of data, already collected through primary research. The main difference between primary and secondary research lies in the sources of data collection.

### 1.4.2.1 Definition of Primary Research

Primary research aims at acquiring new and original data, for example, by directly asking people questions or carrying out experiments/tests in a laboratory. It means an in-depth exploration of facts by the researcher and often will involve direct communication with the people, who know about the subject.

Primary research can be complex because it may require a lot of time, money, resources and prior information about the subject. With a view to getting the data needed, the researcher has to start from scratch. Primary research can be performed through interviews, questionnaires, experimental observations, tests and other similar techniques.

**1.4.2.2 Definition of Secondary Research**

Secondary research involves analysis, interpretation and summaries of primary research. The research in which data is obtained from readily available sources is secondary, for example, databases, statistics from different organisations, literature review. As the data available is already analysed and interpreted, the researcher only needs to work out the data of her choice, i.e. the relevant information for the project.

In this type of research, the researcher uses information gathered by official and governmental institutions, non-profit associations, and media sources. The data assembled is published on the internet, in books, journals, magazines, newspapers, reports, and other formats.

In this thesis, we have worked intensively collecting primary data from the end user: the language learner. We have designed several questionnaires to elicit data so that we can form an idea of a best practice model for online language learning.

**1.5 The relevance of research (qualitative research and quantitative research)**

In this section, we discuss the relevance of research for the improvement of professional language education in universities of applied sciences where there is an emphasis on engineering and professional practice. We discuss three arguments that have been used in our thinking in this thesis: (1) Teaching will improve if staff (such as myself as a doctoral student) engage in research (research-based teaching), (2) students will learn more if they come into contact with research (research-based learning), (3) professional practice will improve if students who are learning a language at university learn how to improve their language skills through research-based knowledge. The first two arguments are fairly obvious and clear, whereas the third argument is about the importance of doing research to enhance 'evidence-based' knowledge.

When you are conducting research, you are trying to gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter in question. Research obviously depends on the goals of the project but, in any research

project, you have to decide on methods and data collection techniques. Most collection methods are either qualitative or quantitative.

Quantitative research often focuses on statistical analysis. It tries to count and measure something. In other words, quantitative research is about counting and what counts. With quantitative studies, each respondent taking part in the research is usually asked to respond to the same questions. Surveys and questionnaires are the most common technique for collecting quantitative data. With online survey tools becoming more available with advanced features, more researchers are adopting web-based survey collection for quantitative research. In this thesis, we have taken a mainly quantitative approach using online survey tools to investigate our research questions.

Qualitative Research is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. It is also used to uncover trends and patterns in thought and opinions. Qualitative data collection methods vary using unstructured or semi-structured techniques. Some common methods include focus groups (group discussions), individual interviews, and participation/observations (for example, observation of a classroom). In our case, we have used text analysis as our qualitative research technique. Text, as unstructured data, offers the respondent greater freedom to express their opinion.

## 1.6 Aims and objectives

The aim of this doctoral thesis is to develop a model of online language learning that will ultimately help English language learners to make use of a web-based methodology and web-based resources that provide them with specific learning modules and activities, a collaborative environment and innovative ways to learn the English language.

This thesis is based on the following premises:
1. Recent technological advances mean that learning a language is transforming from being a face-to-face classroom activity to an online activity.
2. In the process of changing to an online environment, teachers are having to learn new ways of interacting with students and sharing knowledge.

3. This means that we need to re-think how a learner is going to acquire a language online.

4. There are several models that are available such as MOOCs, but they lack the necessary resources, structures and systems for the complex process of second language teaching and learning. MOOCs are niche models of second language learning because they teach learners, for example, how to pass an IELTS test.

5. Nevertheless, the analysis of different MOOCs will help us to understand the nature of online learning and how online learning is currently developing.

6. There are other ways of approaching the transition to online language learning, for example, analysing e-textbooks but, most importantly, for this thesis it is the end user who should inform how we might make this transition.

7. This thesis therefore holds the view that an analysis of learner opinions is an essential step towards the design and development of a model of online language learning.


**GENERAL OBJECTIVE**

- The objective of this thesis is to work towards the design and development of a model of online language learning.


Any model of online language learning will imply a multitude of factors. In this thesis, there are several specific objectives that have guided us in our research towards a model of online language learning. Our main focus has been on finding out what language learners think about learning a language online, as learners are at the centre of the learning process. We have also looked at how publishing houses through e-textbooks are making the transition to online language learning and how universities through MOOCs are likewise making this transition. Therefore, our **specific objectives** are the following:

1. To identify and review the current state of the literature

2. To design the methodological processes for the research

3. To collect and analyse all the data from the methodological processes carried out

4. To derive and present the results of the study from the data collected from the Initial Classroom research

5. To analyse e-textbooks and their online platforms

6. To analyse MOOCs for language learning (do MOOCs offer relevant course structures and evaluation techniques to cover the demands of modern language learners?)

7. To present the results of the study from the data collected from three student surveys:

    - Questionnaire 1: The internet as a Learning Tool

    - Questionnaire 2: Evaluation Sheet Language Learning Web Sites

    - Questionnaire 2: Taxonomy of Language Learning Activities

8. To analyse the results of the study in the light of prior knowledge

9. To draw conclusions about the contribution to knowledge made by the study

10. To provide a complete and accurate record of the material used in the study, cited consistently according to a recognised system.

## 1.7 Structure of the thesis

Chapter I has been devoted to providing an overview of the impact of technology on language teaching and learning, providing a general vision on new instructional modalities of online learning. The chapter has covered some basic aspects of research, the nature of research, the nature and collection of data. Finally, we have set out our general objective alongside our specific objectives which are further developed in the methodology chapter of this research project.

Chapter II reviews existing literature related to online learning and technology. The literature review in any doctoral research project is important so that we may become familiar with the state-of-the-art of the subject being investigated. To carry out this investigation, several preliminary steps have been taken so that more will be known about:

- Types of online learning
- Online learning technologies

Special emphasis in the literature review has been given to the following topics to explore their relevance for online language learning:

- Multimedia technologies
- Computer Assisted Language Learning
- The relationship between corpus linguistics and online language learning
- Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and online language learning

- The use of mobile technologies
- The use of gaming, simulation and virtual reality
- The impact of social networking

Chapter III describes and justifies the methodological design. In this thesis, we collected data from various sources and analysed it to provide us with the necessary information to be able to design a model of online language learning.

Firstly, we carried out some initial classroom research to discover and analyse some basic ideas that students have about the use of tools for online language learning. The objective of this initial classroom research was to try to become familiar with the type of tools they used and what language skills they thought they would develop with these tools.

Secondly, we examined the contents and structure of e-textbooks as representative of a kind of halfway house to an online language learning course as many of these e-textbooks come accompanied by an online platform.

Thirdly, we analysed Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs): their impact on online learning and online language learning.

Fourthly, in this methodology chapter, we provide a discussion about appropriate and suitable questionnaire design. This includes discussion of the questionnaire design process.

Then, we present the thinking behind the three questionnaires used in our research. The first questionnaire focusses mostly on the role of the internet as a language learning tool. It tried to elicit from students what they know about online learning in general and online language learning in particular. Our second questionnaire was a questionnaire where students had to evaluate language learning websites, which would give us valuable insight into designing a model of online language learning. Our third questionnaire covered the issue of language learning activities, where the questionnaire aimed to discover student opinions about different kinds of language learning activities, which ranged from formal, traditional, short activities to longer project type activities.

Chapter IV is mainly concerned with discussing results from the analysis of our initial classroom research, analysis of e-textbooks and their associated online platforms, analysis of MOOCs for language learning and our analysis of learner responses to three questionnaires. The chapter reports on key findings and provides a summary of key findings.

Chapter V presents a model of online language learning. The thesis will be aimed at designing and developing a model of online language learning. A summary of the model is presented in figure 1.1 below. A more elaborate version is presented in chapter 5 which is the most important chapter of this thesis.
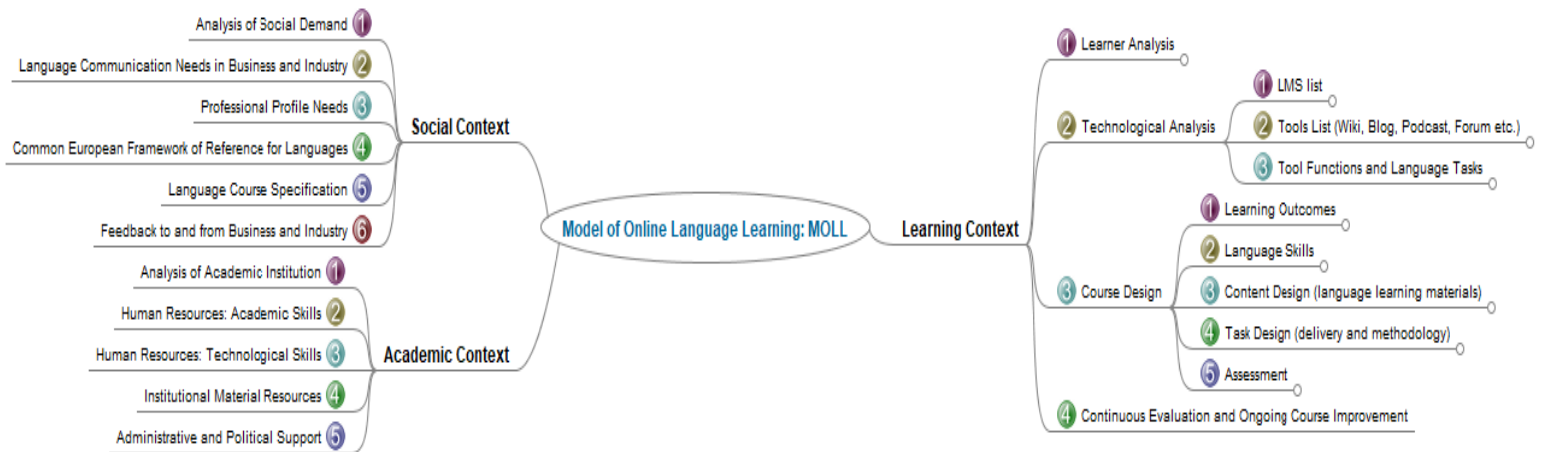


Figure 1.1: Model of Online Language Learning

The model will be made up of three different contexts, the first one being the *Social Context*. The social context will involve conducting an analysis of the social demands related to linguistic competence (effective communication), which may include but not limited to professional profile demands, language and communication requirements in industry as well as business, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and language course specification.

The *Academic Context* will also be included in the model where an analysis of academic institutions will be carried out. One needs to know the human resources available with the necessary know-how: academic skills and technological skills. Material resources that are

available to ensure that they support the online language learning experience. There should be administrative and political support provided to support the online model.

The *Learning Context* is the most important component of the model.  Course design is vital in the model as it is the means to an end which is how language skills are to be taught to the students, design of the content which is language learning materials, task design which involves the delivery and methodology of specific language learning activities and, finally, assessment, to evaluate language comprehension and production of the learner. Learning outcomes will involve establishing what language objectives should have been achieved by the end of the course, ensuring the success of the learning materials and methods used, and analysing if the needs of the learner have been met.

The final chapter will contain conclusions, limitations and possible future lines of research.

# CHAPTER 2
# Literature Review

# CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

As the demand for online learning grows, teachers are being asked to teach or create online

courses, but many teachers have little or no experience with online learning, either as teachers

or as online learners themselves. So, it is no surprise that there is a lack of knowledge on the

part of many teachers of what shape or form best practices should take in an online language

learning environment. The figure below tries to summarise the situation.
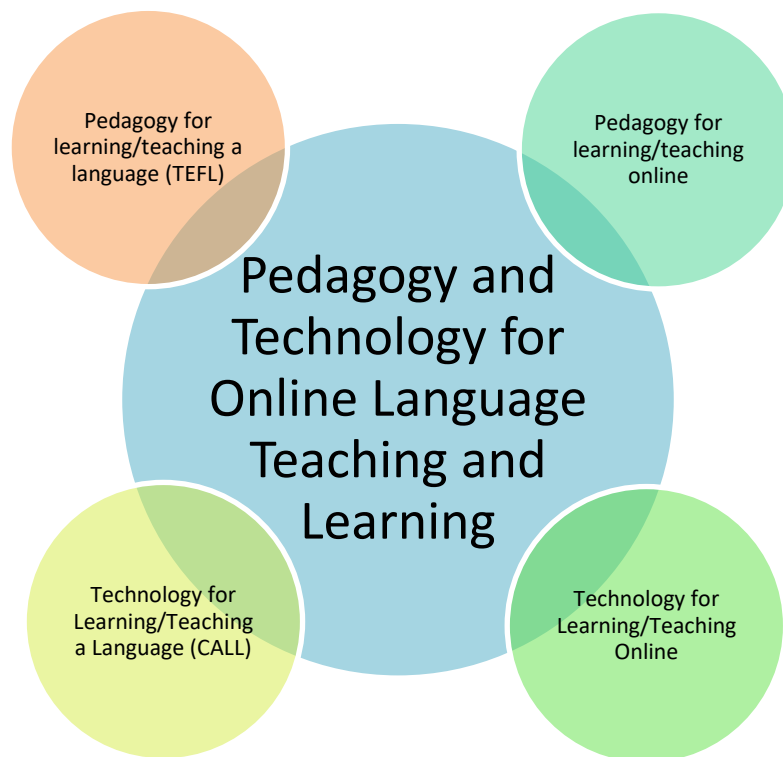


Figure 2.1: Pedagogy and Technology for Online Language Teaching and Learning

This diagram suggests that a language teacher who is going to design and develop an online

language course needs to know about TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language), CALL

(Computer Assisted Language Learning), online learning pedagogy (in other words, being

knowledgeable about learner theories that are applicable to an online environment) and be

competent in the use/management of various of the tools and technologies involved in online learning. This chapter reviews the literature on online language learning. We will also be analysing online learning in general along with the tools and technologies involved. We will start by focusing on the kind of pedagogical thinking that in principle seems most appropriate in an online learning context.

## 2.1 Pedagogy for Online Language Teaching and Learning

During recent years, there has been a growing trend in higher education whereby pedagogical approaches have transitioned from lecture-oriented learning to a model where the focus of teaching and learning is placed on the students. This kind of pedagogy has generally been referred to as student-centred learning but using the term can have wide implications. The term may refer to educational methods that recognize the dissimilarity and diversity of individual students and their specific learning needs, especially in western European higher education where multilingualism and multiculturalism are becoming the norm. Student-centred learning is an overarching term, which encompasses a variety of potential teaching strategies and learning activities. Student-centred learning is broadly related to a constructivist theory of learning in which learning is seen as an active process, where students construct their own knowledge based on previously known information and reflection. Information does not transfer directly from a knowledgeable lecturer to students, but rather the students construct the information themselves. Student-centred learning is also supported by various other intersecting pedagogies, such as active learning, self-directed learning, cooperative learning and inquiry-based learning.

Advocates of the concept of student-centred learning usually highlight similar common features of what makes a learning environment student-centred. Principles of a student-centred classroom usually include the following four attributes:

- Authentic learning: learning activities should be relatable and relevant for the students. Learning activities are tied to real world contexts through meaningful project-based work in order to foment student motivation. Inquiry-based learning encourages students to ask their own questions, collect data and generate research hypotheses (Woolf, 2009: 299).

- Collaborative learning: this method highlights a learning process, which emphasises student interaction and the idea that students work together collaboratively to achieve their aims. Students take part in directing projects and learning tasks, as well as giving feed-back and carrying out peer assessment.
- Construction of learning: teachers design and develop learning activities that allow students to understand and make connections to new ideas and shape new information based on their current skill set, their abilities and previous knowledge.
- Goal-oriented learning: students are aware of and pursue their own learning objectives and goals. Students play an active role in promoting their learning and take responsibility for their own learning. Reflective practice, where you reflect on your learning processes and metacognitive skills, also relates to goal-orientation, as it is based on understanding and being aware of one's own learning and internal habits (McCombs & Vakili, 2005; Attard et al., 2010).

Rogers (1994) describes the student-centred approach as being based on the hypothesis that students who are granted the freedom to explore and study the areas of their interests and who are accompanied by a supportive facilitator, not only achieve higher academic results, but also become more mature students in the process, while developing personal values such as flexibility and self-confidence.

Modern web technology can be used to create flexible services for educational use, containing versatile multimedia contents, such as animations, video, voice and augmented reality. Consequently, information technology can be used to promote student-centred learning and give students greater autonomy and control of their learning. Higher education curricula are becoming more flexible and interactive. An increasing number of students are using mobile devices to access materials from courses though online platforms such as Sakai and Moodle. As current technologies enable faster wireless connections and applications require less processor power from the end device, new opportunities for mobile oriented learning (m-learning) have opened up and, in the short time period of the existence of smartphones, mobile technology has become one of the main mediums for academic and knowledge content production (Miller & Doering, 2014). Both mobile and web-based learning activities offer the possibility to extend learning opportunities into new settings. It is not just a question of shifting online learning courses onto a smartphone, but also about enhancing the learning experience and increasing what is learnt. In online learning platforms, one of the negative aspects of the technology is that value has been given to system modularity. Course materials are based on smaller, singular

learning chunks that make up likewise shorter modules. These services have the advantage that they can be used by people almost anywhere at any time and knowledge becomes relatively easy to acquire. The tools of social media connect formal and out-of-class learning. However, online learning platforms have greater difficulties with longer modules and in-depth learning. The solution has been strings of shorter modules that combined create specializations.

A relatively new theory of learning or epistemology within the field of online learning is connectivism. Downes (2014) has spelled out some of the relationships between individual learning, the contribution of individuals to knowledge and its flow, and networks of learners, within a broad interpretation of connectivist theory. Downes (2014) sets out some design principles for connectivist 'courses' or cMOOCs, such as:

- learner autonomy: in terms of choice of content and how a learner chooses to learn openness: in terms of access to the course, content, activities and methods of assessment (peer assessment)
- diversity: varied content, multiple tools, especially for networking learners and creating opportunities for dialogue and discussion
- interactivity: communication between learners and co-operative learning, resulting in emergent knowledge

Some of the criticisms levied at connectivism are that there is no control on the quality of content, or on contributions from participants. Laurillard (2014) questions a model based on unsupervised learning and peer-to-peer support and peer-to-peer assessment strategies, which are primitive and unreliable, thus making reliable or valid recognition of achievement more difficult. Atiaja and Segundo (2016) points to problems of credibility, quality, assessment, learning outcomes and high dropout rates. The implication is that the kind of learning that take place in connectivist MOOCs are not necessarily academic, in the sense of meeting the requirements for academic knowledge. The downgrading of the role of the teacher, the lack of explicit support in learning from an 'expert' teacher is questioned by Bayne and Ross (2014), Biesta (2013) and Dillenbourg et al. (2014) who all consider teachers to be of critical importance. It could be deduced that participation in this type of learning requires learners already to have at least some level of more formal or traditional education to be able to fully benefit from this kind of learning experience and, therefore, this kind of learning is more appropriate for non-formal learning or communities of practice rather than for formal education. Connectivism

might be more of an account of how learning occurs in a digital and networked global environment (the modes and technologies involved). Nevertheless, connectivism is the first serious theoretical attempt to radically re-examine the implications for learning of the Internet and the explosion of new communications technologies. For this reason alone, it is important and its ideas (although they may need refining) have to be taken on board in our current socio-educational context.

To conclude this section, it seems obvious that the concept of student-centred learning should be at the heart of our pedagogy because it is the learner who has to go through the learning process. Connectivism fits in well with a learner-centred model because it offers greater independence and autonomy to the learner through, as we mentioned above, unsupervised learning, peer-to-peer support and peer-to-peer assessment strategies. However, there are perhaps other models such as Universal Design for Learning that offer a more rigorous and complete analysis of how teachers can help people learn (Rose and Meyer, 2006). The philosophy behind UDL is based on three principles[1]:

- Principle I: Provide Multiple Means of Representation (the "what" of learning)
- Principle II: Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression (the "how" of learning)
- Principle III: Provide Multiple Means of Engagement (the "why" of learning)

It is easy to see how these principles might work for online learning. With regards principle 1, we know that learners differ in the ways that they perceive and comprehend information that is presented to them. Transfer of learning occurs when multiple representations (images, text, sound, video, graphs etc.) are used, because it allows students to make connections between concepts. In short, there is not one means of representation that will be optimal for all learners; providing options for representation is essential. We are living in a multimodal world that offers unique opportunities for multiple representations.

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[1] See http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/whatisudl/3principles

With regards principle 2, action and expression require a great deal of strategy, practice, and organization, and this is another area in which learners can differ. There is not one means of action and expression that will be optimal for all learners; providing options for action and expression is essential. So, exercises like multiple choice are not always useful. Some people may be better orally than at written expression. Some might like to do project work. Some might like mechanical exercises. Some learners may like short or longer tasks. Some may enjoy designing figures, pie charts, tables etc. The kind of tasks we give learners, so they may learn to do things and express themselves must be varied.

With regards principle 3, learners differ markedly in the ways in which they can be engaged or motivated to learn. Some learners might like to work alone (not everybody likes pairwork or groupwork), while many like working with their peers and learn from their peers. There is not one means of engagement that will be optimal for all learners in all contexts; providing multiple options for engagement is essential.

## 2.2 Online Learning Technologies

In this section, we analyse the impact of various kinds of technology on learning: how they have been integrated into online learning in general and, more particularly, into online language learning. We define online learning as the use of technologies to deliver solutions that enhance student knowledge and performance. More particularly, online learning uses an established network that allows for instant distribution of learning materials and activities. Internet technology has now been standardized and network distribution of information is regulated and made to happen by using standard compliant technologies. A user only needs to have an internet connection to access online learning courses and the materials provided as course content.

Online learning content is traditionally managed and distributed by using learning management systems (LMS). LMS platforms are large application environments, which are typically aimed at university and enterprise use. A basic LMS platform includes properties such as enrolling students on courses, monitoring learning progress and organizing tests, as well as granting students access to course materials and an opportunity to be in contact with the learning

instructor. Moodle or Sakai are typical examples of an LMS platform. Quintessentially, an LMS platform is a learning dissemination tool.

Online learning platforms can still end up following relatively linear approaches in learning and teaching, but nevertheless can be adapted to promoting creativity, collaboration and interaction between students. LMS platforms often give the image that learning is based on just going through courses. Course-oriented learning is usually based on formal learning and the idea that learning is a passive activity and often does not support student-centred ideology. However, LMS platforms do offer students individual and shared spaces in the form of drop boxes and forums, where personal and group learning can be managed. So, although LMS platforms often work as a kind of extension of the information exported by the teacher from the classroom, the technology does have aspects that seemingly encourage student-centred learning, such as discussion boards, tests and surveys (Shore, 2016).

### 2.2.1 Computer Assisted Language Learning

Over the last few decades, online learning methods have become of interest for language learning and teaching, since the emergence of an interactive, participatory and socially connected web. The wealth of information available on the web offers access to diverse language learning resources. When incorporating information technologies in language learning, it is not uncommon to encounter different types of theories and acronyms established by different groups of practitioners, with each party representing their own views and philosophies. One of the most common terms is computer-assisted language learning or CALL, which describes the research and study of applying computers in language learning and teaching (Hubbard, 2016). Within the scope of this thesis, language learning incorporating information technology is explicitly referred to as CALL.

CALL has been present for many years and has gone through different typologies, which can be characterized as behaviourist, communicative and integrative CALL. These phases of CALL equate to a certain level of technology and pedagogical theories at a given time. Early adaptations of CALL were initially leaning towards behaviourism and systematic repetition, or

"drill and practice". These courses could incorporate quizzes, flashcards and basic answer-response methods, where the computer is acting as a primitive tutor (Yang, 2010: 911).

CALL has since widened its scope to more communicative approaches, thus supporting ideologies of constructivism. The nature of the modern web has expanded the power of CALL. The current philosophy of CALL puts emphasis on student-centred materials, leaning towards principles of integrative CALL. New approaches seek to integrate several language related skills, such as speaking, listening, reading and writing as well as technology into the process of language learning more thoroughly. Integrative methods encourage students to use technological tools as a continuous process of language learning and to discover the most suitable learning paths for them. Teacher tend to take a facilitating role by helping students to find and use complementary CALL materials and resources, or act as a manager of computer-mediated interaction among students inside and outside of class (Hubbard, 2016). Drills and similar repetitive tasks still have a place in language learning, especially in the initial phases of vocabulary acquisition. Some research has shown that providing the same information in various modes, such as audio, visual and textual content, enhances recognition and recall (Yang, 2010: 911).

A study conducted at the Middle East Technical University suggests that CALL may be an effective tool in language learning and promoting learner autonomy in the acquisition of English as a second language. The results of the study found that students improved their language learning strategies, were highly motivated and with the aid of CALL, were willing to take responsibility for individual learning outside of formal tuition situations (Mutlu & Eröz-Tuga, 2013). Although many studies do suggest that CALL is an effective method, evaluating the influence on the quality of language learning itself is difficult. This is due to the complexity of interacting variables involved in any environment for teaching and learning languages. Some researchers argue that CALL has not stabilized its place in language learning, because it has not gone through the normalization process of technology, a stage of becoming invisible and embedded in everyday practice. This nowadays may not be true as computing and mobile devices have become ubiquitous. Bax (2003), in an earlier study, states there is an element of

fear and exaggerated expectations surrounding CALL. Mahdi (2013: 193-194) classifies the issues of CALL normalization into five categories:

- Institutional issues: successful integration of CALL depends on the level of administrative support given to language teachers and plays a major role in the success of CALL implementation.
- Pedagogical issues: teachers and students are often tied to traditional textbooks. Some teachers may use e-textbooks and online platforms that are part of an e-textbook. Therefore, teachers tend to neglect using purely CALL materials. Traditional textbooks do not require the use of CALL. CALL and the use of internet technologies may seem to be an extra burden for some teachers but less so for learners, who are digital natives.
- Personal issues: according to Mahdi (2013: 193), lack of time, support and resources prohibits the use of CALL in language classroom activities.
- Socio-cultural issues: some teachers refuse to integrate CALL into their teaching, because cultural influences might seem intimidating. Al-Oteawi (2002) finds that teachers refrain from using the internet in the classroom for fear of ethically inappropriate material on the internet.
- Technical issues: language labs are not well exploited by language teachers and learners, despite universities paying out consider sums of money to establish these language laboratories.

Hubbard (2016) states that education has seen changes in the roles of teachers and students, as well as growth in learner autonomy. However, despite this increase in learner autonomy and learner digital skills, it cannot be assumed that students have the necessary skills and strategies to use software applications in the most effective way in their language learning activities. Just because there are multiple opportunities for self-study is not a definitive guarantee of autonomy. CALL certainly does not eliminate the need for teachers, as learners do not readily accept personal responsibility for learning if no encouragement is received from teaching staff. There are studies that have demonstrated that students are highly teacher-dependent before receiving training for effective learning strategies (Mutlu & Eröz-Tuga, 2013). Facilitative teachers should be aware of how students use computers and mobile devices and what type of content is the most beneficial to them. As many universities use student questionnaires to evaluate teachers (as is the case in our university), student satisfaction can be a good indicator of whether the technologies we are using are helpful and there is general user acceptance or not.

### 2.2.2 Language Learning and Technology

In 1997, the journal *Language Learning and Technology* was launched. One of the sections of this journal is called "Emerging Technologies". If we analyse the articles written in this section of the journal (principally by Robert Godwin-Jones), we have an outline of the last twenty years of online learning technologies.

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Real-time Audio and Video Playback on the Web" (V1N1, 1997)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Dynamic Web Page Creation" (V1N2, 1997)

Godwin-Jones, Robert " New Developments in Digital Video" (V2N1, 1998)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Mobile Computing and Language Learning" (V2N2, 1998)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Web Metadata: More Efficient Resource Cataloging and Retrieving" (V3N1, 1999)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Speech Technologies for Language Learning" (V3N2, 1999)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Web Browser Trends and Technologies" (V4N1, 2000)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Literacies and Technology Tools/Trends" (V4N2, 2000)

Godwin-Jones, Robert" Accessibility and Web Design, Why Does It Matter?" (V5N1, 2001)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Language Testing Tools and Technologies" (V5N2, 2001)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Tools and Trends in Corpora Use for Teaching and Learning" (V5N3, 2001)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Wireless Networks" (V6N1, 2002)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Multilingual Computing" (V6N2, 2002)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Technology for Prospective Language Teachers" (V6N3, 2002)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "E-Books and the Tablet PC" (V7N1, 2003)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Blogs and Wikis: Environments for On-line Collaboration" (V7N2, 2003)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Tools for Distance Education: Towards Convergence and Integration" (V7N3, 2003)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Making the Web Dynamic: DOM and DAV" (V8N1, 2004)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Learning Objects: Scorn or SCORM?" (V8N2, 2004)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Language in Action: From Webquests to Virtual Realities" (V8N3, 2004)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Messaging, Gaming, Peer-to-Peer Sharing: Language Learning Strategies & Tools for the Millennial Generation" (V9N1, 2005)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Ajax and Firefox: New Web Applications and Browsers" (V9N2, 2005)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Skype and Podcasting: Disruptive Technologies for Language Learning" (V9N3, 2005)

Chinnery, George M. "Going to the MALL: Mobile Assisted Language Learning" (V10N1, 2006)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Tag Clouds in the Blogosphere: Electronic Literacy and Social Networking" (V10N2, 2006)

Fryer, Luke & Rollo Carpenter "Bots as Language Learning Tools" (V10N3, 2006)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Digital Video Update: YouTube, Flash, High-Definition" (V11N1, 2007)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Tools and Trends in Self-Paced Language Instruction" (V11N2, 2007)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "E-Texts, Mobile Browsing, and Rich Internet Applications" (V11N3, 2007)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Of Elastic Clouds and Treebanks: New Opprtunities for Content-Based and Data-Driven Language Learning" (V12N1, 2008)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Web-Writing 2.0: Enabling, Documenting, and Assessing Writing Online" (V12N2, 2008)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Mobile-Computing Trends: Lighter, Faster, Smarter" (V12N3, 2008)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Focusing on Form: Tools and Strategies" (V13N1, 2009)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Personal Learning Environments" (V13N2, 2009)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Speech Tools and Technologies" (V13N3, 2009)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "New Developments in Web Browsing and Authoring" (V14N1, 2010)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "From Memory Palaces to Spacing Algorithms: Approaches to Second-Language Vocabulary Learning" (V14N2, 2010)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Literacies and Technologies Revisited" (V14N3, 2010)

Terantino, Joseph M. " YouTube for Foreign Languages: You Have to See This Video " (V15N1, 2011)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Mobile Apps for Language Learning " (V15N2, 2011)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Autonomous Language Learning" (V15N3, 2011)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Digital Video Revisted: Storytelling, Conferencing, Remixing" (V16N1, 2012)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Challenging Hegemonies in Online Learning" (V16N2, 2012)

Han, Jeonghye "Robot Assisted Language Learning" (V16N3, 2012)

Godwin-Jones, Robert " The Technological Imperative in Teaching and Learning Less Commonly Taught Languages" (V17N1, 2013)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Integrating Intercultural Competence into Language Learning through Technology" (V17N2, 2013)

Lee, Hansol & Jang Ho Lee "Implementing Glossing in Mobile-Assisted Language Learning Environments: Directions and Outlook" (V17N3, 2013)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Towards Transparent Computing: Content Authoring Using Open Standards" (V18N1, 2014)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Games in Language Learning: Opportunities and Challenges" (V18N2, 2014)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Global Reach and Local Practice:  The Promise of MOOCs" (V18N3, 2014)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "The Evolving Roles of Language Teachers: Trained Coders, Local Researchers, Global Citizens" (V19N1, 2015)

Lee, Jang Ho, Hansol Lee, & Cetin Sert "A Corpus Approach for Autonomous Teachers and Learners: Implementing an On-line Concordancer on Teachers' Laptops" (V19N2, 2015)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Contributing, Creating, Curating: Digital Literacies for Language Learners" (V19N3, 2015)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Integrating Technology into Study Abroad" (V20N1, 2016)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Looking Back and Ahead: 20 Years of Technologies for Language Learning" (V20N2, 2016)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Augmented Reality and Language Learning: From Annotated Vocabulary to Place-based Mobile Games" (V20N3, 2016)

Godwin-Jones, Rober, "Scaling Up and Zooming In: Big Data and Personalization in Language Learning" (V21N1, 2017)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Smartphones and Language Learning" (V21N2, 2017)

Godwin-Jones, Robert "Data-Informed Language Learning" (V21N3, 2017)

Table 2.1: Technology specific articles in the journal *Language Learning and Technology*

In what follows are some of the most frequently used words (80 in total) in these articles:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *annotated,* | *corpus,* | *language,* | *peer,* | *technology,* |
| *apps,* | *curating,* | *languages,* | *personalizatio* | *testing,* |
| *applications,* | *data,* | *laptops,* | *n, podcasting,* | *tools,* |
| *assessing,* | *design,* | *learners,* | *resource,* | *video,* |
| *audio,* | *digital,* | *learning,* | *robot,* | *virtual,* |
| *augmented,* | *disruptive,* | *literacies,* | *skype,* | *vocabulary,* |
| *authoring,* | *distance,* | *literacy,* | *smarter,* | *web,* |
| *autonomous,* | *documenting,* | *mall,* | *smartphones,* | *webquests,* |
| *blogosphere,* | *electronic,* | *messaging,* | *social media,* | *wikis,* |
| *blogs,* | *environments,* | *metadata,* | *speech,* | *wireless,* |
| *bots,* | *facebook,* | *mobile,* | *standards,* | *writing,* |
| *browsing,* | *games,* | *moocs,* | *tablet,* | *youtube* |
| *clouds,* | *gaming,* | *multilingual,* | *tag,* | |
| *computing,* | *glossing,* | *networking,* | *teaching,* | |
| *concordance,* | *intercultural,* | *networks,* | *teachers,* | |
| *conferencing,* | *internet,* | *objects,* | *technological,* | |
| *corpora,* | | *online,* | *technologies,* | |

We can see this from a different visual perspective using a word cloud (where the most frequent words are larger).

Figure 2.2: Word cloud of most frequently used words in technology specific articles in the journal
*Language Learning and Technology*

Godwin-Jones (2016: 5) suggests that these articles can be categorized into three major themes: "*the fundamental affordances of technology for language learning* (skills or components of language acquisition, digital literacy, learner autonomy), *teaching and learning contexts and approaches* (online learning, social media, tutorial CALL), and *delivery and design considerations* (technology standards, web design, mobile devices, multimedia)."

I would like to briefly analyse the first of these three themes: *the fundamental affordances of technology for language learning*. There are two related concepts which are *digital literacy* and *learner autonomy* that I want to highlight within this category. The importance of *digital literacy* has been growing because, on the one hand, there has been an increasing number of online resources and services and, on the other hand, a strong conviction among language teachers that we should be preparing students for a globalized economy and a multilingual, multicultural world. In a global, diverse and highly connected society, knowing how to use online tools and services for learning a new language is of crucial importance. This includes understanding and

being able to use the multifarious forms of online communication in use today. The proliferation of digital media, with its ease of use and ease of access (thankfully, often free), means that the kind of literacy needed goes far beyond traditional forms of reading and writing and means that students need to be able to able to use and manipulate graphics (Photoshop, Paint), audio (podcasts), and video (YouTube), as well as how and when they are combined in different ways to create novel learning objects whether for simple activities/exercises or larger projects (Godwin-Jones, 2016: 5). Nowadays, digital activities may include varied task-based online interactions through an application such as Skype where learners are encouraged to develop interactional skills. Or they might be asked to use digital tools such as open educational resources, concordances, text-to-speech tools, pronunciation activities to foster the autonomous development of the basic skills required to engage in interactions. To benefit from the opportunities that technology presents for participating in language acquisition, language students need to develop digital literacy skills. This includes the ability to create and communicate digital information, the ability to find and evaluate information online, and the ability to solve problems in technology-rich environments and, more importantly to be able to do all this autonomously so that, as students, they can exploit the communicative riches of the online world.

According to an early definition of autonomy by Holec (1981: 3), autonomy is characterized as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning". This is a concise definition of autonomy but there have been many nuances added to our understanding of what autonomy involves and how it impacts on learners who may or may not develop this ability. According to Little (1991: 4), one way of looking at autonomy is that it is a learner's capacity "for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action". Autonomy means that the learner will develop their own personal psychological relation to the process and content of their learning. Their capacity for autonomy will be displayed by the way the learner learns and how he or she transfers what has been learned to wider contexts (Little, 1991: 4).

Benson (2011) has reconceptualised autonomy as a multifaceted construct that operates on several dimensions. He proposes four modalities: (a) location, or the physical setting for learning; (b) formality, or "the degree to which learning is independent of organized courses

leading to formal qualifications"; (c) pedagogy, or the type of learning or instruction; and (d) locus of control, or who makes decisions about the learning (Benson, 2011: 10). Table 2.2 below summarizes these modalities.

| Dimension | Definition | Opposition |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Location** | Physical setting or virtual environment for learning | In-class versus Outside class |
| **Formality** | Institutional learning dependent on organized courses leading to formal qualifications or non-structured independent learning | Formal versus informal |
| **Pedagogy** | Type of learning (directed by a teacher or self-instruction) | Taught versus self-taught |
| **Locus of control** | Decision-making about the learning process | Teacher-directed versus self-directed |

Table 2.2: Dimensions of Autonomy (adapted from Benson, 2011; Reinders and White, 2016)

This more nuanced definition of autonomy has resulted directly from a deeper understanding about the wide range of settings in which learning can take place and, more importantly, how technology (online learning) has impacted on how we perceive autonomy and how necessary it is that students learn to be autonomous. Autonomous learning is clearly more effective than non-autonomous learning. The development of autonomy implies better language learning.

### 2.2.3 Specific technologies for online learning

There are a wide range of technologies for online learning. Some are specifically designed learning technologies, but the majority are technologies adapted and/or adopted for use in learning activities. These technologies can be used for both face-to-face and online learning, but

they have a more central and fundamental role in an online learning environment. These technologies can be divided into 4 general categories[2]:

1. Presentation and multimedia technologies
2. Social networking technologies
3. Mobile technologies
4. Gaming, simulations and virtual reality technologies

### 2.2.3.1 Presentation and multimedia technologies

Presentation software is used to deliver lectures, demonstrations, or other materials in online learning environments. Live sessions can be recorded to give students the opportunity to revisit content if the live session is missed, or when revision is being carried out. The recording can be placed online, so that students can interact with it at anytime, anywhere. These technologies have the important basic function of any class, which is the transmission of course information and content to students (PowerPoint slides, video conferences, podcasts). Of course, knowledge in teaching is not always reliably transferrable precisely because some of these presentation technologies tend to encourage the traditional approach of the teacher as a fountain of knowledge or 'expert' providing the content and being in control of when and how things are presented even if it is being delivered in an online context.  It is often the case that students prefer not to ask the teacher when they have a difficulty or a query, they would rather first turn to Google or to YouTube to solve it rather than go find a teacher and ask him or her. It is therefore ironical that we are using technology to support a pedagogy that is outdated. Nonetheless, Microsoft's PowerPoint and Apple Keynote although they do not aim to be collaborative, they can be used by students to work collaboratively. As is normally the case, it is the pedagogical use one makes of technologies that will either motivate students or bore them to the extent that there is no knowledge transmission or assimilation.

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[2] In this section, we base our discussion on a document that offers a guide for getting the best from digital technologies where an in-depth study of the technologies and tools used for online learning is carried out. The document can be found at the following URL: https://www.jisc.ac.uk/full-guide/technology-and-tools-for-online-learning.

There are other presentation tools that are more dynamic such as Prezi or emaze. Presentations in different formats can be shared through social networking services like SlideShare and blogs, and you can upload video and audio to YouTube and Vimeo. There are open source products like Xerte, which allow you to produce presentational slides along with quizzes, videos or embedded collaboration tools like Padlet and Google documents.

### 2.2.3.2 Social networking technologies

Online social networking tools are ubiquitous, impacting on how we interact with family, friends, colleagues at work, in all business areas and governmental spheres. They have had a significant impact on learning and teaching. Social networking sites have offered new ways of sharing information and content and have helped to democratise ownership of information and knowledge. This is especially true because of the way connected mobile devices have given people access to, and even some control over these networks, through peer-to-peer collaborations. Peer-to-peer knowledge exchange is a powerful form of learning. It recognises that ultimately learning takes place between individuals and it facilitates interpersonal interchanges. Social networking technologies support this kind of learning through the use of wikis, blogs and services such as Twitter, Facebook, and Google+, and through content sharing sites such as Flickr and Pinterest. These tools support a 'connectivist' approach to teaching and learning, where social networking and connecting form an integral part of student interactions. The central idea in connectivism is that learners connect to a learning community (a social networking site) and benefit from it while also feeding it with information. The learning community is a group of people learning together through continuous dialogue because of a mutual interest in exchanging knowledge about a subject (Siemens, 2011).

### 2.2.3.3 Mobile technologies

Mobile devices such as smart phones, tablets, and laptops have become very widespread, permitting flexible access to online learning for students on the move, although it may be difficult to know how much students will really use their devices to access learning, or whether learning really happens in practice. There is also the problem of knowing what functions

(applications) students may have access to. Students will probably use a range of devices depending on where they are or what work they are doing. At the very least, mobile devices can be used by students to manage their learning with calendars or planning apps and to receive and send emails. Students may download learning content (streaming videos) onto mobile devices to engage with while travelling, in work breaks, during leisure time or anywhere they choose. Students are increasingly using mobiles to play games and even play educational and language games (for example, Kahoot).

### 2.2.3.4 Gaming, simulation and virtual reality technologies

In games, players need to solve problems, practise skills and respond to feedback. Pedagogically, gaming and other immersive technologies can offer exciting opportunities for engagement, allowing students to test hypotheses and actions through simulations and accrue credits and feedback along the way.

The term "immersive technologies" often refers to virtual reality, where participants are mentally, emotionally or physically immersed in an artificial environment.  With immersive technologies, users develop a sense of presence. In educational contexts, examples include Second Life and Minecraft.

Online courses can adopt or incorporate aspects of gaming, for example by emulating points, badges and leader boards through 'open badging.' This is where online courses offer badges as learners progress through a course and allow them to display these as achievements.

Developing communities and opportunities for collaborative play is another example of a gaming approach to online learning that can be incorporated into learning through social networking technologies.

A key aspect of using gaming and immersive technologies in online learning is to make sure students can access them on their own devices. More and more services and tools are becoming available that enable teachers or learners to create their own games, and they are likely to

continue to gain traction as educational devices. For example, Aris (http://arisgames.org/) creates mobile learning games using an open-source platform.

We shall talk further about gaming, simulation and virtual reality technologies in section 2.5 in relation to their application to online language learning.

### 2.2.3.5 Summary of Online Learning Technologies

Below I offer a summary of tools that are potentially useful for learners participating on online learning courses.

| Educational Tool | Top 100 | Brief description |
|---|---|---|
| Google Drive | 1 | Cloud-based office suite & document storage |
| Word | 2 | Word processing software |
| PowerPoint | 3 | Presentation tool |
| YouTube | 4 | Video sharing platform |
| Google Search | 5 | Web search engine |
| Excel | 6 | Spreadsheeting tool |
| Wikipedia | 7 | Collaborative encyclopaedia |
| Prezi | 8 | Presentation tool |
| Twitter | 9 | Public social network |
| Kahoot | 10 | Classroom response tool |
| WordPress | 11 | Blogging and website tool |
| Facebook | 12 | Public social network |
| Dropbox | 13 | Cloud-based document storage |
| WhatsApp | 14 | Messaging app |
| OneNote | 15 | Personal information system |
| Audacity | 16 | Audio editing software |
| Moodle | 17 | Course management system |
| Padlet | 18 | Online discussion board |
| Canva | 19 | Graphic design tool |
| Google Scholar | 20 | Scholarly search engine |
| Google Forms | 21 | Forms & survey tool |
| Vimeo | 22 | Video sharing platform |
| Quizlet | 23 | Quizzing tool |
| TED Talks & TED Ed | 24 | Inspirational videos & video mixing app |
| Google Suite | 25 | Customisable Google tools |
| Skype | 26 | Messaging app (text and video) |
| Evernote | 27 | Personal information system |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Camtasia | 28 | Screencasting tool |
| Pinterest | 29 | Visual bookmarking tool |
| Zoom | 30 | Video meeting tool |
| EasyGenerator | 31 | E-learning authoring tool |
| Gmail | 32 | Cloud based email |
| Diigo | 33 | Social bookmarking tool |
| Sway | 34 | Web presentation tool |
| Office Mix | 35 | PowerPoint enhancement tool |
| Google Classroom | 36 | Classroom management tool |
| Screencast-O-matic | 37 | Screencasting tool |
| Outlook | 38 | Email client |
| Google Sites | 39 | Website tool |
| Google Chrome | 40 | Web browser |
| Edmodo | 41 | Learning platform for schools |
| Screenflow | 42 | Screencasting tool |
| Canvas | 43 | Course management system for schools |
| Socrative | 44 | Student response system |
| Wix | 45 | Website tool |
| Firefox | 46 | Web browser |
| Quizizz | 47 | Quizzing tool |
| Blackboard Learn | 48 | Course management system |
| Cite This For Me | 49 | Citation generator |
| Flipgrid | 50 | Video discussion platform |
| Snagit | 51 | Screen capture tool |
| Slideshare | 52 | Presentation sharing platform |
| Powtoon | 53 | Animated explainer tool |
| Google Maps | 54 | Online mapping tool |
| Adobe Photoshop | 55 | Image editing software |
| iSpring | 56 | E-learning authoring tool |
| SurveyMonkey | 57 | Survey tool |
| Google Hangouts | 58 | Video meeting tool |
| Scoopit | 59 | Curation tool |
| Typeform | 60 | Forms and survey tool |
| Adobe Connect | 61 | Web conferencing platform |
| Blogger | 62 | Blogging tool |
| iPad & Apps | 63 | Apple tablet and apps |
| Piktochart | 64 | Infographic tool |
| Unsplash | 65 | Photo image collection |
| Moovly | 66 | Animated explainer tool |
| Explain Everything | 67 | Animated explainer tool |

| Jing | 68 | Screen capture and screencasting tool |
|---|---|---|
| Wordle | 69 | Word cloud generator |
| Weebly | 70 | Website/Blogging tool |
| Office Lens | 71 | Makes photos of whiteboards readable |
| Go Conqr | 72 | Learning environment |
| Slack | 73 | Team collaboration tool |
| Trello | 74 | Team project tracker |
| Adobe Acrobat Pro | 75 | PDF converter |
| Grammarly | 76 | Grammar checker & plagiarism checker |
| Microsoft Teams | 77 | Team collaboration tool |
| Khan Academy | 78 | Online courses |
| Adobe InDesign | 79 | Interactive PDF editor |
| Infogram | 80 | Infographic tool |
| Animoto | 81 | Video slideshow maker |
| Desire2Learn (D2L) | 82 | Course management system |
| PebblePad | 83 | Personal learning space |
| Appear.In | 84 | Video meeting tool |
| TodaysMeet | 85 | Private backchannel service |
| Viddyoze | 86 | Animation software |
| OneDrive | 87 | Cloud-based document storage |
| Join.Me | 88 | Video meeting tool |
| WeVideo | 89 | Video editing software |
| Mentimeter | 90 | Audience response tool |
| BigBlueButton | 91 | Web conferencing platform |
| H5P | 92 | HTML5 content creator |
| Remind | 93 | Messaging app for schools |
| Typorama | 94 | Typographic design editor |
| Schoology | 95 | Course management system |
| Citavi | 96 | Reference management & task planning |
| LICEcap | 97 | Screen capture tool |
| Voicethread | 98 | Collaborative presentation tool |
| Ultra Hal Assistant | 99 | Chatbot system |
| Mozello | 100 | Website tool |

Table 2.3: Adapted from Jane Hart's Top 200 Tools for Learning 2017 (http://c4lpt.co.uk/top100tools/)

There are of course many more tools that are not on this list which could be added. It is not the technology *per se* that is important but how we apply it in facilitating learning. Below I offer some general pedagogical applications through the purposeful use of technology:

- Students read, listen to, and view authentic, engaging, and timely materials from the target culture.
- Students practice interpersonal skills as they interact via video, audio, or text in real-time with other speakers of the target language.
- Students collaborate on presentational tasks with their peers or teacher, anytime, anywhere.
- Students work at their own pace as they access online content and/or utilize computer adaptive programs managed by their teacher.
- Students practice discrete skills with engaging online games and applications.
- Students benefit from differentiated instruction where multiple applications can be used to assess students, assign varied tasks, track data, give real-time feedback, and manage classrooms and lessons.

### 2.2.4 Corpus linguistics and online language learning

Corpus linguistics is not a technology but rather a methodology although technology plays an important role in the methodology. In principle, corpus linguistics could inform an online language course through specifying linguistic items to be learnt and through examples of usage.

Corpus Linguistics has changed the way we conceptualize and describe language through its empirical, data-driven approach. In relation to grammar, corpus investigations have allowed us to differentiate the grammar of spoken English from that of written English (Carter & McCarthy, 2006) as well as to identify the grammatical features of specific registers such as academic and newspaper discourse (Biber et al., 1999). Corpus Linguistics has been fruitfully applied to several areas such as forensic linguistics, lexicography, stylistics and translation (Lüdeling & Kytö, 2008, 2009; O'Keeffe & McCarthy, 2010).

Our interest is in the application of Corpus Linguistics to language learning and teaching. Corpora, with the help of the tools and techniques of corpus linguistics, have been used as primary data for developing dictionaries and grammars. Corpora have informed textbooks and other language teaching materials (books with practical exercises). They help textbooks writers to determine what is the usual way of saying things in English and how frequent a word is. This means that language is presented better to a learner so that they can become more proficient in the language. It also helps the textbook writer to provide a more faithful description of that language for the language learner. Corpora can be used as a reservoir of material from which to

derive classroom exercises. Corpora have been used for preparing materials for classes (concordances, collocations, lexis teaching in general). This approach draws on Johns' (1990) concept of data-driven learning and some positive research evidence for its use has been presented (Boulton & Cobb, 2017).

Language testers have viewed corpora as very large, unstructured item banks, so that they can draw examples from them for their tests. Corpora are very helpful for language testers. All they need to do is look in the corpus and find the right type of language item in order to construct a test.

Learner corpora can be very helpful to be able to characterize the types of issues that, for example, Spanish learners of English have. In this way, you can tailor materials for these types of language learners in order to take the difficulties they are likely to have into account. An interesting study using learner corpora has been the English Profile project. As stated on their website (http://www.englishprofile.org/), this project has developed two extremely helpful databases about the use of Grammar and Vocabulary for each Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) level. We would suggest that these kinds of tools could directly inform the contents that are to be taught in an online language learning course.

> English Profile helps teachers and educationalists understand what the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) means for English.  It describes what aspects of English are typically learned at each CEFR level.  This tells teachers, curriculum developers, course-book authors and test writers what is suitable for learning at each level.
>
> This site contains a wealth of information about English Profile, including two innovative online tools:  English Vocabulary Profile Online and English Grammar Profile Online.  These are searchable databases that give you free access to the research findings on what English vocabulary and grammar is suitable for teaching at each CEFR level.
>
> This work has been carried out as part of a ground-breaking collaborative project – supported by the Council of Europe.  It collected data from learners all over the world to inform the research.  The research was led by two departments of the University of Cambridge, UK:  Cambridge University Press and Cambridge English Language Assessment.

Although a corpus, in principle, might be a great resource for deciding on and delivering language contents in an online language learning environment, there has been very little research on the use of corpora in online language learning environments (Guichon, 2017).

## 2.2.5 Informal language learning and online technologies

Due to the ready availability of new online technologies, opportunities for incidental and informal learning of English have multiplied and may now exceed what can be done in more formal classroom environments.  We know that there is an increased classroom use of specific digital resources and online technologies. However, it is much more difficult to understand how students learn through these same digital resources and online technologies outside the classroom (Trinder, 2017: 401).

Through the Internet, language learners are morphing into matter-of-course language users, with language development a welcome by-product of online practices such as social networking, emailing, and downloading. The question of how learners assess the potential of such informal learning opportunities - and whether they deliberately exploit it - has received little attention. Informal learning is learner-controlled, not linked to any course or institution, and takes place outside the classroom. Informal learning may be intentional but, in most cases, it is non-intentional. With the normalization of online applications and the concomitant frequent exposure of non-native English speakers to English-language media and communities, the question arises of whether informal learning is still mainly random and non-intentional (Trinder, 2017: 401-402). In her discussion of the concepts, Rieder (2003: 28) clarifies that incidental learning can involve both explicit and implicit processes; incidental explicit learning is distinguished from its counterpart by the learner's awareness of both process and product of learning. Technology pervades so many aspects of modern life that the division between face-to-face and technologically mediated learning environments is becoming blurred. Formal, institutional learning spaces now exist in a variety of hybrid forms such as blended or flipped classrooms which combine face-to-face and online instruction (Gruba, Hinkelman, and Cárdenas-Claros, 2016). Despite the preponderance of technology-enhanced input and communication, it is still not sufficiently clear how often student-initiated online activities take place in English, whether their potential is realized and deliberately exploited by learners, and in what way the easy access to technology outside affects students' views on the desirability of in-class use of technology.

Technology use in informal settings is primarily driven by the intention to communicate rather than the intention to learn. Informal learning is understood to have the following characteristics: it is learner-initiated rather than teacher-initiated, takes place outside class, and combines other goals with language acquisition.

Technology might enable teachers to tap into the motivating potential of preferred technologies and assist learners in making more informed choices. These include discussing, validating, and encouraging informal language learning, raising awareness about the benefits of underused resources, exploring reasons for use and rejection, and fostering strategies to better exploit digital tools.

## 2.3 MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses)

Liyanagunawardena, Adams & Williams (2013) conducted a systematic study of the literature on MOOCs which covered the period from 2008 to 2012. They concluded that most articles about MOOCs were concerned with:

   i. Educational models linked to MOOCs
   ii. Empirical evidence from case studies
   iii. The impact on the structure of higher education

The first MOOC literature emerged from early MOOCs, often described as connectivist MOOCs, or cMOOCs and are often contrasted with MOOCs which have come to be referred to as xMOOCs. The categorization of MOOCs into two categories (cMOOCs and xMOOCs) is based on the different pedagogical foundations of these courses. xMOOCs consist of predominantly cognitive-behaviourist models. A tutor-centric model that establishes a one-to-many relationship to reach a massive number of students and a cognitive behaviourist teaching method are the essential features of x-MOOCs which try to reach the maximum number of learners as possible. cMOOCs, on the other hand, rely on connectivist models. cMOOCs support the explicit principles of connectivism, peer-to-peer learning, social networking, diversity, openness, emergent knowledge and interactivity (Rodriguez, 2013:67-73).

According to Clark (2013), there may exist a greater range of MOOC types. Clark (2013) provided the following eight types for classifying MOOCs:

1. adaptiveMOOCs: the model provides individualised learning, which relies on gathering of data and dynamic assessment through employing adaptive algorithms. The model also delivers linear, flat and structured knowledge. However, learning depends on back-end algorithms.
2. asynchMOOCs: the approach lacks a fixed start and end date. They also exhibit flexible assignment deadlines. Their educational pros are that learners can work on them anywhere, anytime. They are also active in distinct time zones.
3. connectivistMOOCs: their main point of emphasis is the linkage across a network of peers. The classification depends on harvesting and sharing knowledge which participants contribute and fail to perceive the learning model as a diet of fixed knowledge.
4. groupMOOCs: the primary focus is facilitating collaboration within small groups.
5. madeMOOCs: these are more innovative, making effective use of video, offering a more quality driven approach to the creation of material, more crafted and challenging assignments, problem solving and various levels of sophisticated software-driven interactive experiences along with peer work and peer-assessment.
6. mini-MOOCs: the model exhibits more intense experiences which may last hours or days. Their primary focus is on a precise knowledge domain.
7. synchMOOCs: these contain a fixed start and end date. They work on fixed deadlines for assessments and assignments and are essential in motivating and aligning the availability of the student's and the teacher's work.
8. transferMOOCs: this is where an existing course is transferred to a MOOC. In language learning, this is quite common as can be seen by the transfer/uploading of entire coursebooks and workbooks onto an LMS, i.e., MyEnglishLab. Clark (2013) ironically states that these are at the cutting edge of tradition which replicates a traditional academic course in a digital format.

Conole (2013:10) asserts that an appropriate classification of MOOCs should rely on a set of twelve dimensions (high, medium or low) as discussed below:

1. Amount of reflection: the extent to which the learning model encourages reflection
2. Autonomy: amount of Autonomy
3. Certification: level of assessment
4. Degree of Collaboration: the extent of collaboration
5. Degree of Communication: the amount of communication
6. Diversity: amount of diversity
7. Formal learning: the extent of formality or informality of the process of learning
8. Learner pathway: depending on how teacher-centred or learner-centred is the learning pathway
9. Massive: scale of participation, level of "massification"
10. Open: the extent of openness
11. Quality Assurance: the level of quality assurance
12. Use of Multimedia: depending on the amount of multimedia use

Conole (2013: 13) applies these criteria to characterise a Continuing Professional Development course for Medics. The course is informal and is aimed at Medics in a local authority in the UK. Therefore, on the dimension of formal learning, the dimension is low because the course is informal and optional. On the dimension of diversity, it is also low because the course is specialized for UK medics in one local authority. On the dimension of massive, it would also be low as the course is aimed at a reduced professional group whereas, on the dimension of autonomy, it would be high as participants are expected to work individually, take control of their learning and there is little in the way of tutor support.

Conole (2013: 13-14) has shown that the MOOC-realm has more nuanced options and is not simply a c- or x-MOOC dichotomy. Conole suggests that participation in MOOCs can range from informal non-accredited participation through to engagement as part of a formal course offering, but their real value will lie in the fact that both MOOCs and traditional educational offerings begin to make more informed design decisions that are pedagogically effective, leading to an enhanced learner experience and ensuring quality assurance. She concludes that if MOOCs result in better quality education and an enhanced learner experience that must be positive.

Veletsianos and Shepherdson (2016) conducted a survey of articles on MOOCs from 2013 through 2015. Their work was a continuation of Liyanagunawardena, Adams, and Wiliams (2013). Veletsianos and Shepherdson (2016) managed to identify a form of study which focused on students as one of the most effective research threads in line with empirical MOOC research. The interesting thing about these studies is that, while focussing on students, they particularly focused on analysing retention and completion rates. The methodology also looked at subpopulations of learners (Veletsianos and Shepherdson, 2016). However, Veletsianos and Shepherdson (2016: 17) noticed that "even though their results suggest that research on MOOCs focuses on student-related topics, learners' voices were mostly absent in the literature."

Most higher learning institutions integrated MOOCs into their systems from 2012 onwards (with the AI-Stanford course as the xMOOC pioneer). A research shift in publications took place in favour of a growing amount of xMOOC oriented research (Veletsianos & Shepherdson, 2016; Breslow, 2016). Due to its disruptive perception on higher education, early xMOOC literature has focused on research involving institutional experiences in setting up MOOCs, and MOOC

studies examining higher education students (Skiba, 2012; Yuan, Powell & Cetis, 2013; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2016). Kizilcec, Piech and Schneider (2013: 171) investigated three computer science MOOCs and concluded that "the vast majority of active learners are employed full-time" which could point to a conscious relation between the learner and a professional reason for following MOOCs. This adds to the strand within recent MOOC literature which is related to professional learning with MOOCs (Milligan & Littlejohn, 2014; Mori & Ratcliffe, 2016). Research looking at MOOC demographics shows that most MOOC learners are already employed, well educated, from developed countries and have higher levels of formal education (Morris, 2014; Liyanagunawardena, Lundqvist, & Williams, 2015, Breslow, 2016). But this contrasts with the target groups of most of the research investigating MOOC experiences, which looks at MOOC experiences of students enrolled in Higher Education. Remarkably, not much literature is found about the actual learning experience of the biggest target groups of MOOCs, namely adult learners not necessarily enrolled in college or university. Morris (2014: 3) states that there are many types of diverse adult learners (not just students at university): "MOOCs attract an audience which is often not predefined, from 16-year-old school students, current undergraduate and postgraduate students, through to professionals and leisure learners. MOOC participants are all at different levels trying to reach a clear learning goal from the same materials within a defined learner journey".

However, there seems to be strong evidence of the relationship between age and rate of MOOC completion (Morris, Hotchkiss, and Swinnerton, 2015). While researching the demographic backgrounds of MOOC learners enrolled in five FutureLearn MOOCs offered by the University of Leeds to predict learner outcomes, they saw that 'completers' (i.e. those learners who obtained a certificate) had the highest median age at 43 years (n=132), whereas those who drop out in the first week are the youngest group with a median age of 34 years (n=1035). Those who drop out in the first week have the least prior online experience with 39%, (n=402) whilst 'completers' had the most experience with 49% (n=63) having studied online before. If learners with prior online experience complete courses more frequently, their learning experience might offer some light on which learning strategies can result in successful MOOC experiences. However, learning has manifold variables often related to the learner's needs and there may not be a direct relationship between individual learning success and completion of courses.

From the above-mentioned research, a literature gap emerges related to the actual MOOC learning experience of adult learners engaged in MOOCs. A holistic overview of the kind of learning experience of the "good" MOOC learner needs to be established, we need to understand "student motivation, metacognitive skills, learning strategies, and attitudes" all of which are "of paramount importance for research and practice of learning and teaching in MOOCs" (Gasevic, Kovanovic, Joksimovic & Siemens, 2014: 168). To fully research the learner experience, it is important to look at the full scope of what and how the learner learns while participating in a MOOC. As the learner in MOOCs is seen as an active learning agent who chooses which course to take, what content to engage with and which peers to interact with, it is important to investigate the learners' experience as we shall be doing later in this thesis.

### 2.3.1 MOOCs and Online Language Learning

It is very difficult to put an actual figure on how many people are learning languages online across the world. After all, aside from the people using MOOC portals (such as Coursera, edX, Future Learn etc.) that provide online education where there are courses specifically designed to teach languages, there is probably thousands or even millions more who are going it alone. People use all kinds of setups, like online forums, Whatsapp groups, and Skype calls, among other things. There is no real data to account for how many people are using online services specifically for the purpose of learning a language. Some people are probably learning a language by watching videos online independently. So, the question of how many people are learning a language online is pretty irrelevant.  However, what is not irrelevant is the fact that there are figures[3] for three English courses which illustrate the huge demand for this kind of learning.

The MOOC "Understanding IELTS: Techniques for English Language Tests" is offered by FutureLearn, the UK's premier quality MOOC platform. The course focuses on preparing students for IELTS (International English Language Testing System) tests, the most popular

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[3] https://www.onlinecoursereport.com/the-50-most-popular-moocs-of-all-time/

English language test for higher education and global migration. The course centers around familiarizing students with all portions of the test, understanding the assessment process, and getting feedback from other students on written and spoken English skills. The course has received almost 700,000 students in its two runs.

A very similar MOOC "IELTSx: IELTS Academic Test Preparation" is offered by the University of Queensland. The course centers around the core skills tested in the IELTS test, reading, listening, writing, and talking in English. The enrollment figures (355, 026) are no less staggering. The platform used is edX. On the same platform, the University of Queensland offers an even more popular (total enrollment: 414,432) MOOC called English Grammar and Style.

What is interesting for us is to know how course programming is organised. These courses are focussed around multimedia, and includes video interviews, mini-lectures, readings, quizzes, writing activities, and writing assignments. I would suggest that MOOCs for a general English language course might encounter some problems. The face-to face, language classroom course experience is challenging to replicate online, and most MOOC platforms are not ready to teach languages, for the following reasons:

- To learn a language, students should do thousands of exercises, not dozens.
- Videos should be offered in the target language (for both practice and explanations, as well as listening comprehension). One is going to need a lot of video production.
- Conversation practice with peers online is challenging and may re-inforce learner errors.
- Feedback and assessment (both oral and written) has to come from people who know the language, not peers (so although one needs to use a connectionist model for language learning, a connectionist approach may not always be appropriate when wanting accuracy and correct use of English).

It seems that MOOCs are going to have a struggle with conversation practice and scalable feedback / assessment.

## 2.4 Mobile Learning (mLearning) and Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL)

Shuler et al. (2013) and Traxler (2013) define mLearning as learning which involves using mobile technologies such as mobile phones, smartphones, e-readers and tablets, and argue that

these devices are now offering users unparalleled access to communication and information. Shuler et al. (2013) suggest that the increased affordability and functionality of mobile technology compared to traditional technologies means that they can support learning in new ways within and outside the classroom, at home and in any public area where there is a Wi-Fi connection.

According to Tossell et al. (2015), by 2013, there were as many mobile subscriptions as people in the world, identifying the potential reach and growth of mobile technology and, therefore, potential reach and growth of mLearning. Eagle (2005) has suggested that mobile technologies have infiltrated developing countries at an equal if not faster rate than the developed world. Mobile devices are said to be different from portable devices. A laptop, which is commonly shut down after it has been used, is portable. However, a smartphone can be continually used between different points in time and space and is therefore mobile; once more, as long as we have a mobile connection (Reinders and Pegrum, 2015).

There are two basic ways of engaging in mLearning: 1) downloading a single purpose software application referred to as an app or 2) through a web-based application. Mobile applications (apps) provide a simplified, streamlined approach. However, users enjoy less control, freedom, and collaboration than when they use web-based programs.

The advent and success of Mass Online Open courses (MOOC), which rely on reaching a population beyond the environmental constraints of a classroom has increased both student and staff awareness of mLearning resources. The users, through mobile devices, really can access MOOCs anywhere and anytime. It is, therefore, a marketing ploy which the creators of mLearning content have adopted (De Waard et al., 2012). A MOOC can be delivered using any online platform and, therefore, is not always an mLearning application, but many use an app for delivery to increase accessibility and usability and social interaction within a course (De Waard et al., 2012). mLearning via social media facilitates learner communities and self-regulation of learning via the provision of bite sized chunks (Welch & Bonnan-White, 2012). mLearning supports, heightens and improves accessibility to education without the conventional environmental restraints of a traditional educational institution. Most of the research into mLearning has been conducted among school-aged learners. However, Nguyeen et al. (2014)

observe that there have been challenges in integrating mLearning into HE as a result of inconsistent use by HE academics.

mLearning provides learners with an opportunity to ascertain where and how they can learn best, thereby possibly facilitating a learner's self-sufficiency and autonomy. According to Clarke and Svaneas (2014), personalisation of learning is also essential in facilitating engagement, and mobile technologies are critical in providing students with an opportunity to take ownership and contextualise their learning. They also fill the void between informal and formal learning, transcending environmental limitations.

Pegrum (2014) suggests that mLearning devices have three major affordances relevant to learning. Firstly, they allow for the linking of the local with the global: we interact in and with our local environments while simultaneously remaining connected to global networks of resources and people, from whom we can learn about our own and their local contexts and with whom we can share learning generated in our and their local contexts. This means that mobile devices can give support for distributed learning, situated learning and networked learning. Secondly, they allow for a linking of the episodic and the extended: we can engage in bite-sized learning whenever and wherever we find ourselves with moments of downtime, but we can connect those bite-sized chunks into extended learning by simply taking up our learning where we left it off the next time a free moment arises. This means that mobile devices can give support for autonomous learning. Thirdly, they allow for a linking of the personal and the social: we make individual choices about our hardware and our software and can tailor our learning journeys to our own needs and preferences. We can hook into global, social networks and learning communities anytime and anywhere we please. This means that support is provided for autonomous and networked learning, as well as for specific Second Language Acquisition (SLA) principles such as comprehensible input and output (Reinders and Pegrum, 2015: 116-141).

Smartphone and tablet devices have also been highlighted as being influential in improving the feedback process between staff and students allowing greater understanding of the wider learning process. Mobile applications such as Skype, FaceTime and other social media and communication portals have been identified in the feedback process and, therefore, increase

students' ability to achieve their potential (Cochrane, 2014). iPads were released by Apple in 2010 as the first tablet style device. Windows and Android have since released alternative tablets. The tablet device has forced communication and technological changes in business, entertainment and for education. The iPad has been adopted especially by the younger generation and professionals with males under 35 initially dominating the market but gender no longer is a significant factor. Immersion in technology at a young age has been suggested by some to result in a future fundamental difference in the way people learn (Lai and Hong, 2015). This is already having implications for HE and, soon, the tablet generation will be graduating. Demographics of ownership vary by income, age and ethnicity but the data suggests that integrating iPads or tablets into HE is sensible (Zickhur, 2013).

The iPad or tablet device has been found to help engagement and potentially enhance students' learning experience (Brand et al, 2011; Diemer, Fernandez & Streepey, 2012; Perez et al, 2011). The definition of engagement has been contested as to how it can be measured, and it cannot be considered a reliable outcome. Although students perceived tablet devices to be positive to learning, they had no measurable effect on achievement of learning outcomes in final module results (Perez et al, 2011). Most research agrees on the fact that iPads and tablets create a positive reaction and impact on students, but they cannot, as would be expected, be directly linked to impact on their results. Positive areas identified are deeper learning material resources from YouTube, Google Scholar and Blackboard (Alyahya & Gall, 2012; Fontelo et al, 2012). In addition, students often used iPads for information seeking (Alyahya & Gall, 2012; Geist, 2011; Wakefield & Smith, 2012) notetaking and presentations within classes. Photos and videos (Alyahya & Gall, 2012; Sloan, 2012) were seen to be a positive and generally seen to increase efficiency in group work (Geist, 2011). A consistent finding across several studies was that the iPad could potentially be a distraction because students often use them for non-educational purposes (Kinash et al, 2012; Robinson, 2012; Wakefield & Smith, 2012). This kind of scepticism is found in many academics in the research (Hargis et al, 2013; Link et al, 2012; Rossing et al, 2012) who see its role as a potential distraction. However, this may highlight questions of behavioural management and pedagogical limitations rather than a direct association with the tablet device itself. The proportion of academics using tablet devices in classes ranges from 20% (Yeung & Chung, 2011) to 37% (Lindsey, 2011) but many more reported using it for administrative tasks and meetings.

Many functions of the tablet highlighted as positives can also be accessed and used on the smartphone. This may suggest that smartphones may take over from tablets in the educational market in the future. Nevertheless, mLearning (whether with a smartphone or a tablet) allows students to access education in a flexible and seamless manner, at any time and any place, which substantially increases their access to learning. Moreover, m-learning offers the potential for significant innovation in the delivery of even more flexible education by allowing for the personalisation and customisation of the student learning experience (Johnson et al. 2011).

Tossell et al. (2015) studied a naturalistic cohort of 24 students who had never owned a tablet or smartphone for a semester at University. The most commonly accessed applications were games (Angry Birds, words with friends) at 48%, YouTube (8%) and the Utilities (torch, calculator) (6%). Only 3% used an educational application, however, they were not informed of educational potential or given apps to use. They were primarily used as an iPod, for text messaging, Facebook and email agreeing with other studies of this nature. Although the games were not educational, they were small, easy to use, repetitive and cheap apps suggesting that if an educational game could infiltrate this area of usage the potential for learning could be extensive.

Understanding trends in mLearning is not sufficient to decide on whether one should adopt and/or adapt mobile applications for mobile assisted language learning (MALL). It is essential to understand that the focus of research should also cover pedagogic aspects of the way learning is delivered in mobile settings and across telecommunications gadgets used by learners. According to Schuck et al. (2010) their work with a community of learners and their experiences with mLearning led to the term 'mobagogy'. The project that was referred to as the Mobagogy Community of Learners was based on interventions including regular meetings, immersion through participation in mobile learning projects, interviews with experts in the mobile learning field, and individual plans of actions and reflection. One of the questions that Schuck et al. (2010: 69) tried to answer was: How can mobile technologies be used in higher education for learning? Below are some of the areas of interest that emerged from their research.

> 'Areas of interest' emerging from our group activities included the use of mobile conversational spaces (e.g. using micro-blogging) to support peer and staff mentoring in practicum-based settings, field trips and museum excursions in science and social science education; iTunesU and

new podcast communities in English Education; and student generated podcasts and vodcasts in research education. Also of interest were the use of selected mobile devices to enhance interactivity and dialogue in lectures and classrooms; to facilitate media capture and to provide dissemination tools in student-generated media projects (e.g. digital narratives); and support communication processes during project-based learning tasks in science education (e.g. using geolocation capabilities).

In our own experience, we have found that university students using mobile phones to record presentations or dialogues are useful exercises to help them in their speaking and interpersonal skills and gaining greater fluency in the English language. So, we have had students making YouTube videos with their phones where they present Business Plans (Business Management students) or describe how to build a computer (Computer Science students).

Mobile assisted language learning (MALL) can be broadly defined as the integration of mobile devices into language learning. MALL can be any type of language learning using portable devices such as the following: PDAs, mobile phones, smartphones, pads, pods and other handheld devices which are used for: voice calling, short messages, video chat, listening to audio MP3, MP4, Mpeg, web surfing, electronic dictionaries etc. This includes the use of multiple kinds of apps such as Skype, Face Time to name just two very well-known examples. It is perhaps the issue of motivation that makes mobile language learning of interest.

Mobile language learning may have two different connotations which will inevitably affect our understanding of MALL. On the one hand, it may refer to "mobile technologies" which are portable and accessible anytime and anywhere. On the other hand, "mobility" may also refer to the "mobility of the learner", in which case the focus is not on the technology used, but on the learner, who accesses information in different places, at different times (Kukulska-Hulme, 2009). A learner, who is mobile while learning, may be on a train, in a pub, in a library or at home.

Results from research into mobile language learning indicate that affordances such as flexible use, continuity of use, timely feedback, personalisation, socialisation, self-evaluation, active participation, peer coaching are elements of the mobile language learning experience that should be emphasized (Kukulska-Hulme and Viberg, 2018: 207). They found that, with regards to SLA principles, negotiation of meaning and opportunities for feedback are highlighted and that affective aspects such as motivation, engagement and enjoyment, mutual encouragement,

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reduction in nervousness and embarrassment are increased. In their research, there were a few negative reports of risk of distraction, safety concerns, feelings of uncertainty and technical problems. They noted that various pedagogical approaches such as task-based, situated and communicative language learning, as well as game-based learning were used. They suggest that there are clear benefits for the use of collaborative learning in a MALL context.

The authors (Kukulska-Hulme and Viberg, 2018: 215) conclude their study by offering some aspects where emphasis has been placed in the MALL research papers they have read:

- learner agency and self-direction under the guidance of a teacher;
- learners' construction of knowledge;
- authentic communication and the integration of language skills;
- problem-solving and game-playing as popular approaches in task design;
- a desire to facilitate learning in and across multiple contexts and beyond the classroom.

Sarhandi, Asghar and Abidi (2018: 2-8) carried out an extremely interesting and very specific study on the use of WhatsApp in and beyond the language classroom as an interactive pedagogical tool between teacher and students and among students in a Saudi Arabian university to answer three major questions:

1. What was the nature of interaction made via the application (nature of interaction)?
2. How far the interaction made via the application was effective in terms of real life communication in L2 for academic purposes (quality of interaction)?
3. What was the quality of the language used in the exchanges made via the application (quality of language)?

Analyzing the nature of interaction (frequency counts of different categories of turn taking and exchanges), the following categories emerged from their data:

a. Instructions (What to do? How to do a task? Explanation of tasks)
b. Content delivery (Explaining actual lesson content/grammatical concepts, addressing individual and/or group queries related to concepts/content)
c. Clarifications (Student questions for any type of explanation)

d. Exchange of ideas (Student and/or Teacher sharing information related to study, exams etc.)
e. Socializing (Greetings, courtesy messages, small talk etc.)
f. Administrative (Asking/giving information e.g. holiday, absence, lateness etc.)
g. Academic reminders (Deadlines, assigning homework etc.)

They also offer interesting percentages of the turn taking that took place:

| Category | Percentage |
|---|---|
| *Instructions* | 9% |
| *Content delivery* | 1% |
| *Clarifications* | 35% |
| *Exchange of ideas* | 12% |
| *Socializing* | 9% |
| *Administrative* | 30% |
| *Academic reminders* | 4% |

Table 2.4: Turn taking in a WhatsApp university student group

This kind of study is useful as it shows how language is used in a MALL context where the focus is on the use of WhatsApp as a means of communication in and outside of the classroom for academic purposes.

One thing that is clear and emerges from the literature is that MALL engages learners in communication with peers or other target language speakers, which can stimulate better performance, reinforce a focus on communicative purpose, put a premium on sociocultural competence, and emphasize the feedback received (Pegrum, 2014).

## 2.5 Gaming and Language Learning

Online games can be considered useful tools for language practice because they provide language learners with opportunities for communicating in their target languages. In online games, players can live, learn, and act through the new identities that they have selected through interactions with other players. Especially in multiplayer online games, lots of people can access the cyberspace simultaneously and interact with each other and collaborate to build new scenarios. While playing games, players need to build alliances through chatting, discuss game strategies with other team members and contribute their distinctive skills to the team so

that they can accomplish game quests, which they cannot do by themselves (Bryant, 2006; Thorne, 2008). Therefore, while playing games, language learners have opportunities to communicate in their target language with many, unspecified individuals in real contexts of dialogue (Gee, 2008). Also, online gaming can provide L2 learners with opportunities to try out their target languages more confidently, adapting new, different identities from their real-world ones while their private selves are not being threatened by using cyberspace characters like avatars (Ushioda, 2011). Thanks to the game characters, in online games, players are not judged by their race, class, ethnicity, or gender.

In research on learner social interaction in Second Life, the participants who chose conspicuous avatars whose appearance reflected something different from their real-life personality said that the appearance of the avatar helped them to have more confidence in communicating with their interlocutors using their target languages. Because the avatar's name and appearance can act as a mask, players can have a sense of freedom and take more linguistic risks (Blasing, 2010).

Furthermore, there are additional factors which can help people feel safer and braver when using their target languages. Because players can play again and again, not being seriously affected by the consequences of failures in their previous games, they do not fear making mistakes. Rather, they can find ways to progress and find solutions to previous mistakes. Therefore, players do not fear making linguistic errors, taking risks, exploring, and trying out new things in an online game (Gee, 2003). In addition, many studies have indicated that communication in virtual space creates a non-threatening, less-stressful, democratic learning environment compared to traditional language learning environments (Hudson & Bruckman, 2002; Schwienhorst, 2002; Satar & Özdener, 2008). Researchers analyzed communications in online games and found that online game players felt solidarity with other players and experienced encouraging emotional responses. This is more noticeable among more experienced players, even though their games' ostensible goal is to fight against other players (Peña & Hancock, 2006; Thorne et al., 2009; Peterson, 2011). In this regard, it is certain that online games provide language learners a situation which connects affect and cognition, providing learners with opportunities of active participation and ownership (Benson & Reinders, 2011). Therefore, online game players can develop their motivation for learning a second/foreign language and improve their linguistic competence which comes not merely from

cognitive process as passive receivers of knowledge but from interpersonal and interactive communication which requires participation and autonomy as active generators of knowledge (Benson & Reinders, 2011).

## 2.5.1 Massive Multiple Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs)

MMORPGs are distinguished by "real-time ongoing interactions with other players from around the world" (Van Loon, 2008: 4). This makes them very different from other genres of computer games. "Most people are strangers to each other, but that does not stop them interacting and trading with each other" (Van Loon, 2008: 4). They can compete, trade and communicate with other players, although they may be many thousands of miles apart in different locations across the globe they can play at the same time in an online virtual world. Players may not have English as a first language and may communicate through other languages in daily life, in the virtual environment of MMORPGs online they can use English to chat or text.

MMORPGs have the potential to be useful tools for English language learning because they provide:

      1) platforms for communication and socialisation,

      2) immersive virtual worlds.

Firstly, MMORPGs can lead to players being immersed in virtual worlds. Players can find themselves experiencing substitute situations via the virtual world of MMORPGs even though they may not be using English as a first language in their native settings. MMORPGs can potentially be a type of supportive situated learning. Rankin et al. (2006: 2) state factors such as an "immersive learning environment" and "social interaction among players" among other factors in the following:

> An immersive learning environment that promotes the development of deep, conceptual knowledge of a particular domain by allowing players to experience the virtual world through sight, sound, participation and imagination, social interaction among players in support of reflective learning as players consider the consequences of their decisions and game outcomes, active learners who assume the role of the characters they have created and consciously commit to the advancement of these characters in the virtual world.

Secondly, MMORPGs mainly consist of English based platforms, which unite game players for "challenging real-time gaming and role-play within network-based simulations" (Peterson 2010: 83). MMORPGs provide players with rich environments for using English where they can communicate with one another, and "apprentice themselves to relative experts, accomplish shared goals and take on increasingly central roles of participation in order to solve complex problems" (Schrader et al., 2006: 1). Suh et al. (2010: 371) suggest that in the context of MMORPGs "students need to learn the knowledge and skills of English and practice them in authentic ways; to make game playing effective in language learning and to extend its impact, more sophisticated experimental games may be necessary".

Thirdly, communication among participants in MMORPGs provides potential for language learning (Maver and Stanley, 2011). Inside the game, players can use text chat to communicate with other players, whilst outside the game they can visit forums and websites and share their interests, tips and strategies with other players. Bryant (2007: 2) suggests that "a MMORPG would seem to be the ideal solution, allowing students to play in the same environment and interact with players from other countries". In my view, MMORPGs can be useful in providing language learners with immersive virtual environments for learning English. In these environments, they can chat and communicate with players in many other countries simultaneously.

There has been considerable research on examining the application of MMORPGs to second language learning (L2). Motivation seems to be enhanced when learners are absorbed in MMORPGs. They also appear more relaxed and keener to interact with other gamers and with gaming instructions (Bytheway, 2004). Compared to learners within a traditional classroom context, the gamers clearly outperform them in language skills (Suh et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2013). The main benefits of MMORPGs are the opportunities they provide for participating in authentic interaction across all four language skills, reading, writing, listening and speaking within a completely immersive experience (Roma et al., 2012). Besides using commercially produced games some researchers have focused on the development of specific educational MMORPGs for use in L2 learning. These have also been dubbed serious games which "include an identifiable teaching presence specifically for improving some aspect of language proficiency" (Hubbard & Bradin Siskin, 2004: 457).

The main feature of MMORPGs that facilitates both the first stages of acquiring an L2 and its further development appears to be the opportunities for interaction, as found in studies by Rankin et al. (2008), Zheng et al. (2009, 2012) and Rama et al. (2012). The opportunity to participate in a virtual world with more informal relationships and organisation seems to be a key factor in aiding learning English (Zheng et al., 2012).  A study by Peterson (2012) emphasised the importance of online working together, through both language and social interaction, which contributed to positive attitudes towards both language learning and gaming. Besides increasing appropriate language use, including the use of polite expressions online interactions may also improve learner's sociocultural competence which can contribute positively to L2 development. Studies have shown that communication skills, both linguistic and social, acquired online in the virtual world can be transferred across to the real world Kongmeet et al. (2012). It seems evident that gamers working at their own pace can acquire skills which may then be employed in other non-gaming contexts Scholz (2015). Thorne, Fisher & Lu (2012) employed semiotic ecology theory to indicate that game-embedded texts, player-to-player interaction, and game-external websites resources constitute gamers/learners' complex semiotic ecologies, which are significant for L2 development.

Among the many studies looking at the impact of MMORPGs on the gamers acquisition of L2 skills, some have examined vocabulary learning (Bytheway, 2014; Yudintseva, 2015; Zhenget al., 2015) arguing that it can be enhanced through online interaction. A study by Huang and Yang (2014) noted that lexical items were more likely to be picked up by both learners with more experience with gaming and learners with greater proficiency in English. However, Milton et al. (2012) do not agree and suggest that unless there is some teacher control of the game then MMORG-based learning activities do not really provide much vocabulary enhancement. Various studies demonstrate that several other skills can be developed including reading skills (Dourda et al., 2014), sentence construction (Yang anHsu, 2013) and communicative competence (Peterson, 2010) through learners interacting in MMORPG-based instruction. Yet more studies have concentrated on the development of other basic language skills through MMORPGs, for example, L2 listening skills (Hu and Chang, 2007), speaking ability (Lai and Wen, 2012), listening, reading and writing skills (Suh et al., 2010), communicative competence (Wu and Richards,

2012; Berns et al., 2013) and the production of narratives (Colby and Colby, 2018; Neville, 2010, 2015). In addition, learners' performance on standardised language tests can be impacted by the effects that MMORPGs have in helping learners to build their general level of intelligence through the application and hard work (Hsu, 2015).

So far, most research on MMORPGs has concentrated on interactions between gamers. It is these interactions which provide the chance to communicate with other players and hence are the basis for MMORPGs' benefits in terms of L2 learning. In short, MMORPGs can contribute to the development of language skills (Bytheway, 2011, Rama et al., 2012). As well as this interaction, gamers have to study and interpret instructions and narratives embedded within the game, if they follow these correctly, they can then move on, and this provides positive feedback or reward. Where players struggle to understand embedded texts, they may ask for assistance from fellow gamers (Dourda et al., 2014). Language learning in this way has been seen from a sociocultural angle (Thorne, 2008; Peterson, 2012; Sundqvist and Sylvén, 2012). Using Vygotsky's perspective this may be described as proximal development, that is "the distance between actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978: 86). In this way less skilled or less experienced gamers can get assistance from more capable peers online or during playing and this is a clear avenue for L2 learning.

Research has shown that the processing of language within the brain can be linked with specific functional connectivities (FC) which may be termed the language network (Wie et al., 2012; Chai et al., 2016). It is interesting to note that both language learning and online gaming can activate similar areas within the brain network (Khatibi and Cowie, 2013). Clearly, it may be possible to conclude that repeated gaming activity may actually enhance or strengthen those FC which are related to language processing. Success during gaming provides a positive reward effect which provides motivation for further interaction in L2 (Peterson, 2012; Howard-Jones and Jay, 2016). This reward circuit in the brain may itself further increase FC which in turn may facilitate language learning capabilities.

Several language skills are involved and developed during gaming. Gamers/learners must carry out several tasks simultaneously, recalling vocabulary items, reading embedded texts together with the incoming speech from fellow gamers whilst scrolling down the screen to continue. Playing MMORPGs provides ample opportunities to develop both vocabulary and reading skills (Peterson, 2011) and, more particularly, two key skills involved in language processing, namely lexical retrieval and reading speed (Chai et al., 2016).

Though the players may have the intention of gaming in order to facilitate L2 learning, it seems clear that this informal immersive experience facilitates incidental L2 learning. A study by Sylvén and Sundqvist (2012) suggests that it is the reading of in-game texts that is a key factor. Other aspects of gaming are emphasised by Roma, Black, Van Es and Warschauer (2012), they argue that immersed in games like World of Warcraft (WoW) players use in-game chat to develop communicative competence, collaborate and cooperate with players who are both novices or more expert and overall find a safe and even supportive space for informal language learning.

An analysis of all the in-game texts of WoW reveals "a high degree of lexical sophistication, lexical diversity, and syntactic complexity" (Thorne, Fisher and Lee, 2012: 290). Learners seem to be able to cope with all this because the words are placed and understood in context, or as articulated by Gee (2012) "gamers associate words with images, actions, goals and dialogue not just with definitions or other words".

There are many varieties of texts closely associated with gamers, for instance, fan fiction, fan art, video tutorials and walkthroughs. Collectively these have been described as "paratexts" (Apperley & Walsh, 2012; Consalvo 2007) or "attendant discourse" (Sykes & Reinhart, 2013). Some of these are strategy training or instructional texts with practical use, others are creative and imaginative texts produced by gamers themselves and circulated in online communities. These texts are of different genres and some are very sophisticated with complex syntax and rich vocabulary (Thorne, Fisher & Lu, 2012). By creating these paratexts and reading those produced by fellow gamers, the players get a wider and deeper literary experience that may have an essential role in future academic or career development (Gee & Hayes, 2011).

The concepts of autonomy and community can both be applied to gaming and L2 learning. Gamers make their own decisions on what games to play and what choices to make within the game. At the same time, the overall gaming experience crucially involves the use of websites outside the game and other resources available to the online community of gamers (Thorne, Fisher & Lu, 2012). When digital gaming is a community-based activity, the autonomous learning involved will inevitably be community-based as well.

Research on language learning autonomy often uses the following terms: self-directed (*locus of control*), none-instructed (*pedagogy*), informal learning (*formality*), and out-of-class/school (*location*). This framework has been applied by Benson and Chik (2011: 5) to evaluate L2 gaming which they describe as "naturalistic computer-assisted language learning" where "computer-based activities that are carried out on the student's initiative, outside school, and mainly for the purpose of pursuing some interest through a foreign language rather than for the direct purpose of learning a language".

Game locations can be virtual and physical. Physical L2 gaming locations include game arcades, university campuses, private households, internet cafes, and fast food chains. The choice of gaming location depended on the video game console – handheld (e.g. NDS and PSP), home video game (e.g. Wii, PS3, Xbox), personal computer (PC) or smart phone – and the game. Different locations provide affordances for different types of interactions.

Games played outside the classroom setting makes L2 learning informal. However, according to Hustijn (2008), the explicit intention of learning and use of learning strategies are essential elements for L2 acquisition whether in informal or formal settings. In other words, frequent practicing in informal settings can turn into intentional learning engagements.

Sykes & Reinhardt (2012: 33) have developed a framework for understanding research and practice involving digital games as game-enhanced, game-based, or game-informed, roughly based on functional characteristics of the game under study. Each dimension seeks to answer distinct questions about learning and teaching (see Table 2.5).

| | Characteristics | L2 Learning Questions | L2 Teaching Questions |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Game-enhanced** | Use of vernacular, off- the-shelf games (i.e., games designed for entertainment purposes) | How does game-mediated L2 learning occur 'in the wild'? | How can vernacular games be pedagogically-mediated for L2 learning and teaching? |
| **Game-based** | Use of educational or learning-purposed games (i.e., synthetic immersive environments) | How do specific game designs afford particular L2 learner behaviors? | How can game-based environments be designed to incorporate and/or complement L2 pedagogical uses? |
| **Game-informed** | Game and play principles applied in digital and non-digital contexts outside the confines of what one might typically consider a game | How can insights from the study of games and play inform our understanding of L2 learning? | How can insights from the study of games and play inform our understanding of L2 teaching and the design of all L2 learning environments? |

Table 2.5: A Framework for Examining Research and Practice in Digital Games (adapted from Sykes & Reinhardt, 2012: 33)

Game-enhanced research seeks to investigate how commercial games not purposed for learning (i.e. 'vernacular') can afford L2 learning and how those affordances might be realized in formal pedagogical environments. Game-based perspectives investigate the application of digital games that are explicitly designed for pedagogical purposes, and game-informed perspectives apply insights from the study of games and play to teaching and learning outside of traditional game spaces, that is, the phenomenon of 'gamification' (Kapp, 2012). While notable work has been done in each of these areas, there remain significant gaps in our understanding of game and play perspectives on L2 learning and teaching.

Incorporating gaming into instructed language learning comes up against many practical and pedagogical drawbacks and issues. Some of the issues encountered are the kind of games that must be chosen or created; language learning opportunities to be found within a gameplay; and the integration of the gameplay and its associated language learning activities into the curriculum. The integration of gaming into language learning raises a complex set of issues and to simply say that the technology is beneficial or that it is just a case of implementing technology properly renders the argument meaningless. There is a great amount of variety in approach and scope where games are concerned; the benefits of gameplay must be tied closely to the type of game and its use. The difference, between a simple drill and practice vocabulary game that can be completed in five minutes and in an immersive 3D multiplayer setting that can continue and

develop over a long term, is huge. Similarly, there is an immense difference between playing an educational game as a class assignment and devoting many hours of your free time to a multiplayer game and making it an essential component of your everyday life and personal identity. The fact that digital gaming plays a major role in the lives of many young people today provides a great opportunity to connect and engage with populations who may have limited interest in formal education or language learning. If language learning can be tied to popular forms of gaming in a manner that does not detract from the enjoyment of the game, this turns it into a winning situation both for students and educators.

Because of the great differences in the scope and purpose of these games, the most that can be claimed about the utility of games is that, in ideal conditions, with a carefully selected and trained group of users, playing a well-designed game, several positive and effective language learning experiences are possible. Peterson's (2010) meta-analysis of games and second language learning points to a number of these outcomes. Games can offer an immersive environment in which extensive use is made of the target language. A player must make repeated active use of the target language, interacting fully with game objectives and other players, to progress in a game. This means that they must use language in real and meaningful ways to accomplish a task. It also means that they use the target language in socially appropriate ways; in the context of the game, pragmatic appropriateness is more important than grammatical accuracy. This process exposes the gamers to cultural and linguistic knowledge they are unlikely to have encountered in a textbook or in the classroom. Gamers will, typically, encounter a variety of situations calling for different kinds of language use, including requests for help, giving explanations, coordinating planned activities, reporting an action, or asking for alternative solutions (Zheng, Newgarden & Young, 2012). Such language use comes about naturally and organically from the game and can involve interactions with players from many different backgrounds, with linguistic knowledge ranging from novice to expert. Players receive a constant stream of feedback in response to game events, player interactions and language input. The player can then respond to that feedback by engaging in repeating, revising and/or reformulating statements. Gameplay is based on a set of repeated actions in different contexts with a growing level of difficulty and complexity. This helps in providing revision and reinforcement of vocabulary and language structures introduced earlier. These activities occur in a safe and secure inviting which leads to an enjoyment of the game and a sense of

achievement and accomplishment. The progress through the game is recognised and rewarded; motivating the gamer/learner to greater participation.

These benefits are by no means automatic or universal, which are impacted on by many variables, including the nature and use of the game itself and the presence or absence of game-related activities. These game related activities may be generated by an instructor or might take place at the initiative of the game player. This will lead gamers to not only engage in gameplay but is also likely to encourage them to consult websites about the game. This has the benefit of giving them hints and help, at the same time providing the gamers with background information, or an informal chat about the game. In the case of this being used as a class assignment, an instructor could devise "wrap-around" activities for a game (Sykes, 2013). These activities can include oral reports on game experiences, class discussions, compiling game journals, vocabulary-based exercises and quizzes, or skits based on characters or content from the games.  Examples of such related activities are provided in a recent monograph of Sykes & Reinhardt (2013).

Game playing, because of the strong motivational factors involved, can lead to powerful learner autonomy.  Potentially, it can be a resource for long-term language maintenance. For gamers, it can also generate interest in learning new languages. The degree of engagement that players have in gameplay and its related activities is considerably stronger and more personal than it is for school-related activities. Together, players create what has been called an "affinity space" (Gee, 2003) in which interpersonal and intercultural barriers can be overcome and an open and tolerant collaborative environment can be created. Collaboration and a "give and take" attitude lead to a mutual benefit of players and, together, they can create a shared space in which language is co-constructed. This creates optimum conditions for learning, as described in the editorial accompanying ReCALL's special issue on gaming: "Games are evoking a shift away from models of learning based on information delivery toward theories of human development rooted in experiential problem solving and spatially distributed forms of collaboration" (Coenillie, Thorne & Desmet, 2012: 245). In this respect, gaming becomes part of a learning constellation encompassing other informal online activities such as taking part in social networks, posting to online forums or adding commentary to posted media or texts (Sykes, Oskoz & Thorne, 2008)

There are many ways in which language learning through gameplay can take place. It can be a planned learning activity in an instructional environment or an incidental by-product of a gamer's interaction with the game and its associated online activities. With an increase in the popularity of digital gaming, we have witnessed a huge increase in the types of games available. Most of these games are, of course, commercial products, and they are designed for entertainment and not education. These games still have an educational value and, in most cases, do lead to an enhancement of digital literacy and an increase in socialisation and of the building of self-confidence (Arnseth, 2006; Steinkueler, 2007). However, the integration of these commercial, off-the-shelf (COTS) games into teaching curricula can present challenges. Linguistic characteristics of the language such as syntactic structures and vocabulary cannot be determined in advance. Games explicitly created for educational use, in contrast, can be designed for specific learning and curricular needs. Educational games often lack the sophistication of COTS games, because the educational games have not had the same sort of investment as COTS games concerning expense, teams of graphics experts, designers and programmers. While the pedagogical intent, in educational games, is all too obvious leading to an interruption in the all-important "game flow" (Belloti et al., 2013). If the game is perceived solely as an assignment, a good part of the benefit is lost, especially the affective elements.

Virtual worlds where users must accomplish specific goals have been particularly amenable to use in language learning. Of interest in recent years has been Blizzard's World of Warcraft (WoW), with a number of studies examining its potential in language learning (Nardi, Ly & Harris, 2007; Rama, Black, Van Es, & Warschauer, 2012; Thorne, 2008; Thorne & Fisher, 2012; Thorne, Fisher & Lu, 2012; Zheng, Neugarden, & Young, 2012). With over 12 million users, WoW is the most popular massively multiplayer online game on the market today and is available in multiple languages.

The hot trend in gaming today is mobile. With the wide use of smart phones, there is a huge installed base for game playing. Mobile devices also have features that are not usually present in personal computers nor in game consoles, such as GPS, accelerometers, compasses, and cameras.

Whatever the advantages are for game playing and learning a language, it has to be considered as an example of informal learning. Stevens (2010: 12) defines informal learning as learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and typically does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but, in most cases, it is non-intentional, incidental or random.  There is no doubt gaming helps language learning, but it is mostly carried out in informal contexts.

## 2.6 Social Networking and Language Learning

This section explores second language (L2) learning and teaching with technology, specifically in the area of social networking (SN).  Social networking sites (SNS), such as YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook, have become extremely popular among Internet users who wish to share their personalities, ideas, videos, photos, maintain friendships and generally carry out their social activities online. These sites can be accessed easily; they are free to users and are interesting tools for learners of English to express themselves in authentic ways. Teachers can create activities around an SNS and support students in their social networking activity by having them, for example, practice for a video that they want to record before sharing it with the rest of the online community. Popular social networking sites such as Facebook, Edmodo, and LinkedIn also provide opportunities for language learners to enhance digital and multiliteracy skills, interact in and through the target language, work collaboratively, and enhance their linguistic and pragmatic proficiency (Blattner and Fiori, 2011; Lomicka and Lord, 2012; Mills, 2011).

The popularity of SN tools has increased dramatically over the past few years. The upsurge of online social interaction may be attributed in part to a desire to connect with new people, to share opinions, to stay in touch with old friends and colleagues, and to share different types of information with a widespread community of followers. Simply put, there is a desire to develop and maintain online relationships that lead to community building, self-expression and interaction with others (Thorne, 2010). In situations that involve the L2, these types of relationships can be built or maintained in a language other than one's own within a shared community, which makes them appealing to language educators.

In terms of SNS, preliminary studies such as Stevenson and Liu's (2010) analysis of three SNS investigate how they are used for language learning and social purposes. Their 2010 study showed that learners initially showed a greater interest and motivation to learn.

Long's (1985, 1996) Interaction Hypothesis holds that language development is brought about by person-to-person communication and the linguistic interactions that take place. Such interactionist approaches seem to be ideally suited as a basis for exploring the role of SN tools in language learning, given their emphasis on connecting learners to provide increased input, engage in negotiation of meaning, and require output. Students can attend to the linguistic characteristics of the input from the speakers with whom they interact, reflect on their own language system and take note of their own errors, and use their computer-enhanced communication opportunities to improve their own production, whether it be oral or written (Lomicka and Lord, 2016). Language and social interaction play a role in human development and serve as cultural practices that can lead to the construction of knowledge shared by members of the community. In terms of how this might contribute to social networking, virtual connections with other learners and experts around the world can potentially offer a rich environment for socio-cultural language exchange (Harrison and Thomas, 2009; Harrison, 2013). Social networking spaces can also provide virtual spaces and offer promising opportunities to learn through observation, where students can observe others, interpret their behaviours, and adjust their own styles of interacting in SNS (Ryberg and Christiansen, 2008). This interaction can lead to developments in both identity and in relationships and can expose students to current, real and meaningful language use for specific tasks.

Karpati (2009) has argued that social web tools may facilitate educators in setting up collaborative learning, as they place students at the core of the learning experience while, at the same time, allowing the teacher to function as the mentor and guide of knowledge construction and sharing. He also highlighted the fact that such tools provide authentic language education settings, an important consideration for achieving high communicative competence in a foreign language. Likewise, Komatsu (2011) conducted a survey of SNSs and concluded that these networks are potential forums of learning because they can be learner-centred, active, and collaborative.

Some studies report increased motivation for learning (Clark and Gruba, 2010; Liu et al., 2013; Stevenson and Liu, 2010) and indicate that SNS can generate meaningful output and stimulate students' interest in language learning (Chartrand, 2012). Additionally, Mitchell (2012) suggests that creating and developing friendships in SNS can increase motivation. Blattner and Fiori (2009) considered the potential of Facebook to encourage positive student relationships, provide constructive educational outcomes and immediate, individualized opportunities to interact and collaborate with peers, instructors and native speakers of a variety of foreign languages (FL). They found that meaningful integration in Facebook in the language classroom can lead to a sense of community and impact the development of socio-pragmatic competence in language learners. Other studies have investigated socio-pragmatic competence (Blattner and Lomicka, 2012; Reinhardt and Zander, 2011) and the potential to develop and explore online relationships and identities (Chen, 2013; Klimanova and Dembovskaya, 2013; Mills, 2011; Thorne, 2010) where expression, interaction, and community building are all important factors in the language learning experience.

Mills (2011) conducted a study that highlighted the nature of student participation, knowledge acquisition, and relationship development within SN communities. Facebook was used as an interactive tool where students could share collective reflection and access resources that enhanced the various topics discussed in class. Mills (2011) noticed that students made connections to course content, developed identities through the enhancement of interpersonal, presentational, and interpretative modes of communication, engaged in meaningful learning experiences, and contextualized interactions within these social communities in the L2.

The table below displays a selection of current popular and freely available SNS that have promising potential for use in language classes.

| NAME | DESCRIPTION | URL |
|------|-------------|-----|
| EdModo | Education oriented site, shares layout of popular SNSs. Provides a safe and easy way for your class to connect and collaborate, share content, and access homework, grades and school notices. | www.edmodo.com |
| Facebook | Online social networking service, originally designed for college students but now extended to general population. | www.facebook.com |
| Google | Hangouts bring conversations to life with photos, emoji, and even group video calls for free. Connect | www.google.com/hangouts |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Hangout | with friends across computers, Android and Apple devices. | |
| Instagram | An online photo-sharing, video-sharing and social networking service that enables its users to take pictures and videos, apply digital filters to them, and share them on a variety of social networking services, such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and Flickr. | www.instagram.com |
| Pinterest | A visual discovery tool that people use to collect ideas for their different projects and interests. People create and share collections (called "boards") of visual bookmarks (called "Pins") that they use to do things like plan trips and projects, organize events or save articles and recipes. | www.pinterest.com |
| PodOMatic | A website specialized in the creation of tools and services that enable users to easily find, create, distribute, promote and listen to both audio and video podcasts. | www.podomatic.com |
| Second Life | An online virtual world where teachers and students can participate in creating engaging interactive 3D learning experiences. | https://secondlife.com/ |
| SnapChat | A mobile app that lets users take photos and short videos; users can decide how long data will be visible once opened, which can span of up to 10 seconds, and then supposedly disappears forever. | www.snapchat.com |
| Twitter | An online social networking and microblogging service that enables users to send and read short 140-character text messages, called "tweets". Registered users can read and post tweets. | www.twitter.com |
| VoiceThread | An interactive collaboration and sharing tool that enables users to add images, documents, and videos, and to which other users can add voice, text, audio file, or video comments. | www.voicethread.com |
| YouTube | YouTube allows users to upload, view, rate, share, report, comment on videos. Content includes video clips, TV show clips, music videos and documentary films, audio recordings, movie trailers, live streams, and other content such as video blogging, short original videos, and educational videos. There are thousands of English language videos explaining all aspects of the English language. | www.youtube.com |

Table 2.6: Representative SNS (adapted from Lomicka and Lord, 2016: 261)

The tools listed in Table 2.6, and other similar tools, offer language teachers unique opportunities to engage their students and simultaneously develop their cultural and linguistic awareness. The spectrum of skills and task types that teachers can incorporate through various social platforms is limitless and depends more on the teacher's imagination and aptitude for

designing and developing language tasks than on the SNS itself. SN tools can be exploited for a variety of proficiency levels by focusing on different linguistic elements, as the situation requires.

Despite the benefits discussed here, there continues to be some reluctance when it comes to using SNS in L2 learning. Teachers may be intimidated by the need to learn new tools, and both teachers and students may be reluctant to risk crossing inappropriate social boundaries or merging professional and personal social worlds (Schwartz, 2009). Careful planning and sound task design that takes maximum advantage of the SNS while also providing solid technological guidance and advice to learners can remedy these concerns. SNS have created a unique way to bring individuals, communities, and groups together to share information, engage in meaningful discussion, and reflection and learning.

Just as there are SNS so there are Language Learning Social Network Sites (LLSNSs), which have attracted millions of users around the world. These include iTalki, Lang-8, Hello-Hello, Duolingo, and Busuu. However, little is known about how people participate in these sites and what they learn from them. Lin, Warschauer and Blake (2016) investigated learners' attitudes, usage, and progress in a major LLSNS (Livemocha[4]) through a survey of 4,174 as well as 20 individual case studies. The study hints at the potential of LLSNSs, given the generally positive regard participants have for the site, but it also shows its limitations, since most learners drop out (like MOOCs, Livemocha suffers a very high attrition rate) or show only limited gains (the study found that it was not possible to attribute any improvement in language skills to the use of Livemocha). However, they do suggest that perceived progress in listening and speaking points to an important potential benefit of LLSNSs (progress not tested or verified in the research but reported by learners).  Regarding actual as distinct from perceived L2 progress, their findings

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[4] Livemocha closed in 2016. It was an online language learning community, providing instructional materials in 38 languages and a platform for speakers to interact with and help each other learn new languages. According to the site, it had approximately 12 million registered members from 196 countries around the globe.

suggest that using Livemocha may increase syntactic complexity, with the important caveat that errors appear to increase in tandem with this. Another positive aspect this study highlights are the improvements found in perceived self-confidence and motivation which seem to be attributable to the participants' access to and ability to communicate with native speakers of their target language (the online presence of numerous ready-to-chat native speakers makes LLSNSs more interactive than traditional classrooms).

The study suggests that if online education is to play a positive role in the teaching and learning of English, learners will need support, guidance, and well-structured activities to ensure the kinds of participation and linguistic interaction that can lead to success. The study also reveals possible problems, such as lack of long-term persistence and failure to contribute to learner accuracy.

While reading the literature on social networking sites (SNS) and language learning, the inescapable similarities between language learning via SNS communication and more traditional forms of language learning become apparent. Without investment or commitment, few measurable gains are seen; without clear guidelines or interested learners, peer assessment is of little value; lacking clear authority, a whole series of maladies can emerge. Given that the use of SNSs as a means to language learning is still relatively speaking in its infancy, issues are bound to arise. SNSs offer a wide range of promise to enhance language learning. For instance, even a relatively "unfocussed" SNS like Facebook offers language learners the opportunity to communicate in a less formal, non-academic register. However, relatively little empirical research exists on how (and if) social networking can facilitate language learning (Stevenson and Liu, 2010; Lamy and Zourou, 2013). This research makes clear that until more detailed forms of gatekeeping, transparency, and rigour from both teachers and language learners using SNSs are in place, the promise of SNSs in the service of language acquisition will remain largely unfulfilled.

To not end on a negative note, a recent study (Zheng, Yim and Warschauer, 2018) has found that social networking sites facilitate collaborative communication and the creation of multimodal texts, which can easily be shared in online spaces where readers and writers from around the world interact. SNS can provide opportunities for English learners to communicate with native English speakers and practice their written language in authentic and motivating

ways. Consequently, L2 writers' digital literacy practices become more interest-driven, purposeful, interactive, and embedded in authentic contexts.

On a personal note, it is logical to conclude that teachers who are well informed about these social sites and can develop creative, interesting and pedagogically sound activities for their students are in the best position to foster linguistic and cultural development in their classes. Likewise, students that have the necessary self-discipline and learning strategies in place are more likely to take a more rational approach to using a SNS as a tool for language learning rather than just as a place to socialize although through socializing there may be incidental language learning. Interestingly, Brick (2012) found in his study of Busuu (a language learning social network site) that teachers were more positive about using this social networking site than learners. This is important because it is the end user, the learner, which should be our focal point.

To finalize this section, I want to take a step back and analyse briefly the impact of social networking sites on education (not just language learning) in a very general manner. The impact of these technologies on education has come to be considered positive but also has some negative consequences. Some of the advantages cited by the literature are: increased student collaboration; improved participation; content rich resources; useful for team projects. Some of the disadvantages are: student distraction or lack of concentration (disruptive technologies); lack of control for inappropriate content; reliance on social media (Srivastava, 2012; Tess, 2013; Lavy and Sand, 2018). Tess (2013) concludes that there is a mix of opinion about whether social networking platforms should be integrated into learning processes. Teachers who support the integration of social media into the learning process are of the view that conversational processes ensuring maximum interaction and maximum expressions of opinions are more likely through social networking platforms. This is an especially important finding for language learners who need to interact to develop their language skills. Tess (2013) found that few studies come up with positive correlations but the negative correlations between SNS's usage and poor performance are associated with personality traits or other behavioural or psychological aspects rather than solely with the use of these networking sites.

**2.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have discussed some of the fundamental aspects of online language learning. The chapter began by proposing that a language teacher who is going to design and develop an online language course needs to know about TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language), CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning), online learning pedagogy (in other words, being knowledgeable about learner theories that are applicable to an online environment) and be competent in the use/management of various of the tools and technologies involved in online learning.

Then, we looked at the kind of pedagogical thinking that in principle seems most appropriate in an online learning context. We suggested that student-centred might be the most appropriate. Student-centred learning is broadly related to a constructivist theory of learning in which learning is an active process, where students construct their own knowledge based on previously known information and reflection. We indicated some of the attributes of student-centred learning: *Construction of Learning, Authentic Learning, Collaborative Learning and Goal-Oriented Learning*. We also noted that connectivism fits in well with a learner-centred model because it offers greater independence and autonomy to the learner through unsupervised learning, peer-to-peer support and peer-to-peer assessment strategies.

Having examined student-centred learning, the chapter focused on online learning technologies and how they have been integrated into online language learning. We started by examining CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning). Then, we traced technological developments through the journal *Language Learning and Technology*. At this point, we emphasized the twin concepts of digital literacy and autonomy if a learner is to learn a language successfully online. As Godwin-Jones (2016: 5) states, students need to be able to able to use and manipulate graphics (Photoshop, Paint), audio (podcasts), and video (YouTube), as well as how and when they are combined in different ways to create novel learning objects whether for simple activities/exercises or larger projects. Digital activities may include varied task-based online interactions through an application such as Skype where learners are encouraged to develop interactional skills. Or they might be asked to use digital tools such as open educational resources, concordances, text-to-speech tools, pronunciation activities to foster the

autonomous development of the basic skills required to engage in interactions. To benefit from the opportunities that technology presents for participating in language acquisition, language students need to develop digital literacy skills. This includes the ability to create and communicate digital information, the ability to find and evaluate information online, and the ability to solve problems in technology-rich environments and, more importantly to be able to do all this autonomously so that, as students, they can exploit the communicative riches of the online world.

We then moved on to give a general overview of four categories of technology in an online learning environment:

1. Presentation and multimedia technologies
2. Social networking technologies
3. Mobile technologies
4. Gaming, simulations and virtual reality technologies

Subsequently, I offered a summary of tools that are potentially useful for learners participating on online learning courses.

A very different type of technology (or rather methodology that employs computer technology) is Corpus Linguistics. I suggested that Corpus Linguistics might inform online language learning course design by describing the language to be acquired (particularly, the lexical and grammatical contents) through its empirical, data-driven approach.

The rest of the chapter was dedicated to a detailed analysis of the literature on MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), Mobile Learning (mLearning) and Mobile Assisted Language Learning, Gaming and Language Learning, Social Networking and Language Learning. All these areas of online learning are important to understanding how to model the design of an online language learning course.

At the heart of an online language learning course, there is a learner. Through the literature, we have gleaned some aspects of the learner, which should be taken into consideration when

designing an online language learning course. McGill, Beetham and Gray (2016: 8) state that successful online learners are:

1. Experienced, already successful learners (especially online)
2. Motivated, resilient and persistent
3. Autonomous, self-efficacious, self-regulating
4. Curious and inquiring
5. Well prepared and well organized
6. Digitally capable (ICT proficient)
7. Trusting - willing to share to learn
8. (At least 10%) likely to have a disability

They also describe what successful online learners do (McGill, Beetham and Gray, 2016: 9):

1. Set goals, make and monitor plans
2. View and review a wide range of course-related content
3. Be proactive in information finding, help-seeking, initiating communications
4. Manage time and attention
5. Focus on own motivations and progress
6. Integrate personal with course technologies and media
7. Interact, collaborate and share with other learners

If we examine these aspects of the successful online learner, we rapidly conclude that their characteristics are not very different from a successful classroom learner. Finally, they give advice on how teachers/facilitators can support online learners' success (McGill, Beetham and Gray, 2016: 9):

1. Teach responsively, confidently, with consideration to learners' different: motivations, interests, learning histories and resources
2. Prepare online learners to study online - norms, practices, expectations, good study habits, functional access
3. Enable learners to use their own devices, services and skills
4. Support access to rich and diverse learning content
5. Provide a digital environment that is accessible, social and personalisable

In the next chapter, we talk about the methodology we used to analyse our own tertiary level students.

# CHAPTER 3
# Methodology

# CHAPTER 3: Methodology

## 3.1 Aims and Objectives

The use of a foreign language (particularly, English as a Foreign Language) has gone from being for the privileged few to being a fundamental part of the development of the different productive sectors around the world, due to the globalization of the world's economy. This factor has been the main reason why English has gained worldwide importance. Our students know that they need English to get a job. At the same time, our students are totally immersed in a lifestyle where the management of computers, mobiles, video game consoles and the use of the Internet is part of their daily praxis. This chapter outlines the methodology used to investigate the needs of our learners with regard to online language learning.

The objective of this chapter is to see how we can analyse our learners' needs so that we can proceed to create a model of the considerations to be taken into account in designing an online language learning course. In section two, we comment the initial classroom research carried out to discover and analyse some basic ideas that students have about the use of tools for online language learning. The objective of this initial class research was to try and familiarize ourselves with the type of tools they used and what language skills they thought they would develop with these tools.

Section three provides a review of e-textbooks that many language teachers now use in their teaching. Our main objective was to examine the contents and structure of e-textbooks as representative of a kind of halfway house to an online language learning course as many of these e-textbooks come accompanied by an online platform. Furthermore, an analysis was carried out using Marczak's evaluation criteria for e-textbooks which included three basic categories pertaining to three different aspects of e-textbooks: (i) layout and design; (ii) content and functionalities; and (iii) device, format and distribution (Marczak, 2013: 37-38). The use of this review process was to learn about the different aspects of e-books and what purposes they served and as well as the general functions of a digital book with regards to language learning activities.

Section four provides an overview of Massive Online Courses (MOOCs) and their role in current digitized language teaching and learning processes. The section explores how MOOCs have gained popularity over the years, model types and teaching approaches adopted.

The objective of section 5 is to provide a discussion about appropriate and suitable questionnaire design. This section includes the questionnaire design process undertaken in this research.

Section 6 presents the thinking behind questionnaire 1 in our research. The questionnaire focusses mostly on the role of the internet as a language learning tool. It tried to elicit from students what they know about online learning in general and online language learning in particular. Section 6 also examines primary data collection through our second questionnaire, a questionnaire for students to evaluate language learning websites which would give us valuable insight into designing an online language learning model. Section 6 finally discusses our third questionnaire which covers the issue of language learning activities where the questionnaire aimed to discover student opinion about different categories of language learning activities, which ranged from formal, traditional, short activities to longer project type activities.

Section seven concludes the methodology chapter by providing a summary of the other sections.

## 3.2 Initial classroom research

At the beginning of this project, we decided to carry out some quick and easy research. This was a way of analysing some basic ideas with students about the use of tools for online language learning. The basic idea was to try and see which tools they use and what language skills they think they will develop with these tools. Before going into greater depth about the methodology used, I would like to make a preliminary analysis of the educational context.

Context

The context for this research is my university: Universidad Politécnica de Valencia. The classes chosen for this research were three B2 level English classes.

The first group of participants were students on a bachelor's degree (BEng) in Mechanical Engineering. They are doing their 3$^{rd}$ year.  There were 102 students in the group and 75 out of 102 students (74%) participated in this activity.

The second group of participants were students on a bachelor's degree (BSc) in Computer Science. They are their 2$^{nd}$ year. There were 43 in this group and 28 (65%) of them have participated in this activity.

The third group of participants were students on a bachelor's degree (BA) in Business Management. They are 4$^{th}$ year students. There were 57 students in that group and 32 students (56%) have participated in this activity.

| Degree course | Number of student participants | As a percentage of the class |
|---|---|---|
| Mechanical Engineering | 75 (102) | 74% |
| Computer Science | 28 (43) | 65% |
| Business Management | 32 (57) | 56% |

Table 3.1: Student participants

From figure 3.1 below, we can see that, in terms of numbers, the mechanical engineers were the largest group of students (55% of the total number of students participating in the task).
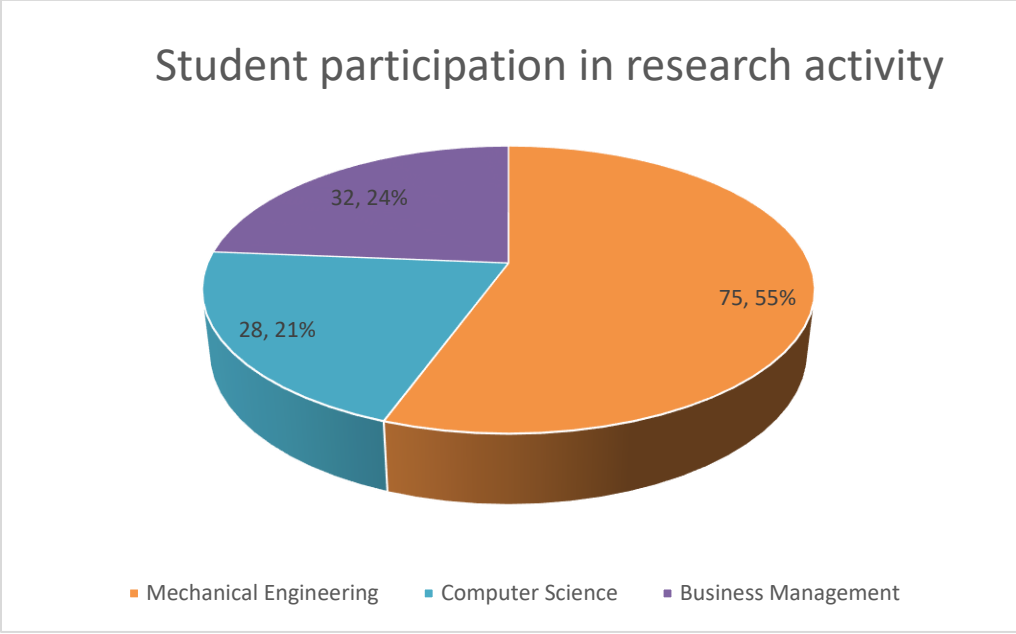
Figure 3.1: Student participation in research activity

Activity questions

To carry out this activity, the participants were asked to name three tools they might use to learn English online and what skills would be developed practised or improved with these tools.

| **Activity: 3 tools you might use to learn English online** |
|---|
| What skill/s would you learn/improve/practice with these tools? |
| <ul><li>Tool 1: _____.</li><li>Skill/s:</li><li>_____</li><li>_____</li><li>_____</li><li>Tool 2: _____.</li><li>Skill/s:</li><li>_____</li><li>_____</li><li>_____</li><li>Tool 3: _____.</li><li>Skill/s:</li><li>_____</li><li>_____</li><li>_____</li></ul> |

Table 3.2: Activity_3 tools you might use to learn English online

### 3.3 Analysing e-textbooks

Language teachers often use e-textbooks in their teaching. This is a kind of halfway house to teaching online. Most e-textbooks are like their analogical counterparts. There is a textbook online which you can project onto the screen in the classroom. This digital textbook is identical to the one the students have bought in paper (analogical) format. The teacher looks more professional by having all the textbook's resources available on a computer screen which is projected onto a larger classroom screen. There are hyperlinks to multimedia resources such as audio and video. There are also hyperlinks to answers to exercises that make it all much simpler for the teacher. But, more importantly, these e-textbooks are often accompanied by online platforms that behave like an online course. They are in fact Learning Management Systems but the materials and exercises are based on analogical coursebooks or workbooks. Therefore, it is a useful activity for our research to evaluate e-textbooks as they are practically an online language learning course. From these e-textbooks and the online platforms that accompany them, we can get a good idea what ingredients are necessary for designing an online language learning course. In this section of the methodology, the researcher talks about the criteria used in analysing the chosen e-textbooks for use in this research.

### 3.3.1 Reasons

The motivation for choosing these books are because the researcher is using them with English language students on an Industrial Design degree and a Business Management degree. Each of the two books chosen (for the two degree courses) has its own online platform that provides nearly 400 activities/exercises for language reinforcement which includes the four skills of listening, reading, speaking, and writing as well as having exercises on pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and discourse. The online platform is a fully functioning LMS which is easily accessible, very user friendly and practices the content of the e-textbook.

### 3.3.2 Steps that have been taken in analyzing the two e-textbooks

The methodology that was undertaken entailed an analysis of two e-textbooks. The first book was "Market Leader" while the second one was "New Language Leader". The evaluation criteria

for the e-textbooks entailed various steps. The researcher adopted Marczak's evaluation criteria in the analysis which included: (i) layout and design; (ii) content and functionalities; and (iii) device, format and distribution (Marczak, 2013: 37-38).

### 3.3.3 Layout and Design

Consideration of the layout and design of the e-textbooks was the first step that the researcher took. It was a useful criterion that would help in establishing particular features of the e-textbook. Such attributes of an e-textbook give a reader the notion of its relevance to the intention of use. As a teacher, it was necessary for the researcher to judge whether the layout and design of the e-textbooks were appropriate and attractive for the students. In this case, an informative and appealing layout and design will hold the interest of the students and satisfy their learning needs. It will be relevant and will keep the students involved.

### 3.3.4 Content and Functionalities

These two aspects were important considerations when analysing the e-textbooks to see whether they have the desired, expected and appropriate material as well as learning functionalities for students. Such an analysis would provide useful information of whether the e-textbook has the necessary communicative activities. A variety of available activities in the e-textbook would reveal that it serves the purposes and functions of a digital book including practicing the four skills and providing sufficient language input.

It was necessary to analyse the sequence of activities available for the students in the e-textbook. This would provide us with ideas about sequencing of activities for an online language learning course.

### 3.3.5 The Reading Device, Format of the File and Distribution

Easily accessible and manageable file formats of an e-textbook would be the most suitable for a useful e-book. Students will be able to use such an e-textbook in a variety of computer types.

Teachers must evaluate the availability of e-textbooks for students. It is important that a teacher checks when selecting an e-textbook for any limitations in accessibility by the students.

## 3.4 Analysing MOOCs

An obvious place to find about online language learning is to analyse how Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) are delivering second language (L2) learning courses. To obtain data with regards to MOOCs, a list of MOOCs was established. The selection was done by comparing the most used free and open access learning platforms on the one hand, and the facilities they offer on the other.

Udacity, Coursera, eDX and Udemy are the most commonly used platforms, and they belong to the xMOOC category and follow a traditional behaviourist model.  In this research, their aspects were analysed from a general perspective. The methodology applied to explore the capabilities of these online platforms to enhance L2 learning is based on my own experience as a user. Furthermore, in this study, MOOC platforms have also been analysed from a technical perspective to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

Ten language courses (language MOOCs) delivered by Coursera, eDX and Future Learn have been analysed considering the following characteristics:

1. Course content and structure (including evaluation methods)
2. Financial Accessibility
3. Certification
4. Language
5. Course time limit
6. University/Institution
7. Type of language course

## 3.5 Questionnaire design

Questionnaires are the most common data collecting instrument. Its purpose is to supply you with the data you need. A questionnaire is a document containing questions prepared by a researcher to elicit information that may provide statistical quantitative data or unstructured qualitative data which may be useful in analysing the object of one's investigation. It can help in collecting large and standardized data from participants. Statistical measures may be used in analysing that information. The methodology used in my dissertation entails the use of questionnaires for collecting useful statistical data that could answer our research questions. This section provides a detailed account of the questionnaire design process used in the dissertation.

### 3.5.1 Questionnaire Design Process

Below I present a schematic figure which tries to show the function of questionnaires in the research process.
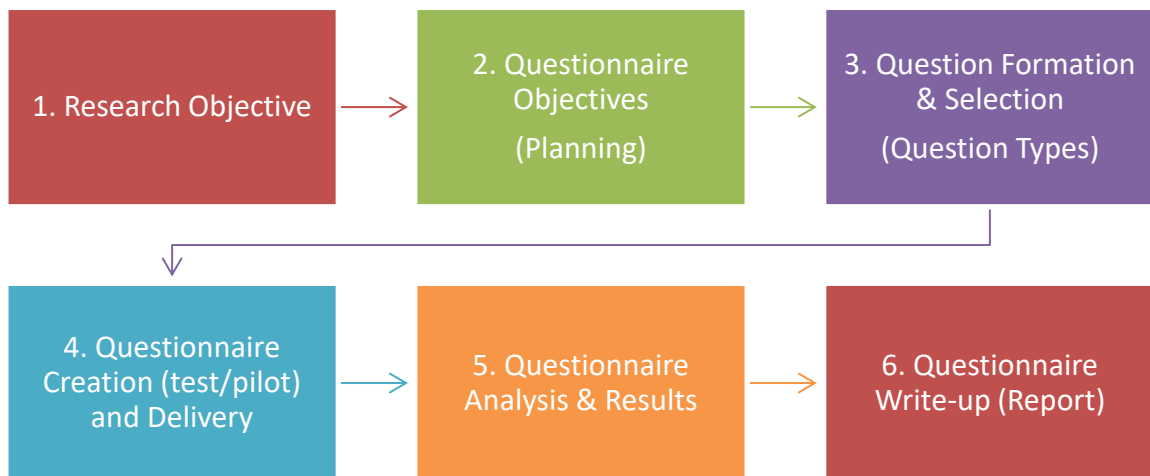


Figure 3.2: Questionnaires in the Research Process

### 3.5.2 Questionnaire Objectives

Our global research objective was to gather information about online language learning. The objectives of the three questionnaires in this study were the following:

1. To elicit information from university students about: a) online learning; b) online language learning (qualitative data, open-ended questions used)
2. To elicit information from university students about: the quality of 50 preselected language learning web sites (quantitative data, closed-ended questions used)
3. To elicit information from university students about: a taxonomy of 50 language learning activities (quantitative data, closed-ended questions used)

As can be seen, the three questionnaires go from a very general set of questions (questionnaire 1) that elicit student opinions about online learning and online language learning to asking students to evaluate (in questionnaire 2) the quality of language learning web sites (where aspects of teaching/learning were evaluated alongside aspects related to communications tools and technology). In questionnaire 3, students are asked about language learning activities (learning preferences). It consisted of a typology of 50 activities, which ranged from traditional to more innovative language learning activities.

### 3.5.3 Question Formation & Selection

What kind of questions can you ask in a questionnaire? There are two types of questionnaire questions: open-ended and closed-ended.

1. Open Format Questions

Open format questions or open-ended questions give your target audience an opportunity to express their opinions in a free-flowing manner. These questions don't have a predetermined set of responses and the respondent is free to answer whatever s/he feels right. By including open format questions in your questionnaire, you can get true, insightful and even unexpected suggestions. Open-ended questions are preferred when an individual or group wants to collect qualitative data. Qualitative data is non-numeric or does not require numerical quantification. Questions of this type often start with wh-words: *who, what, where, why, how*.

- *What advantages do you think an online course has over face-to-face instruction?*

However, they can also be in the form of the following:

- *State your opinion about the quality of activities in your online language learning course.*

Research conducted for this dissertation utilized open-ended questions in our first Questionnaire: Internet as a Learning Tool. The questions were designed in a way that allowed the respondents to provide an opinion or views regarding a particular aspect of language learning online. An example of such questions from questionnaire one is:

- *Do you think you could learn a second language online? Why/why not?*

2. Closed Format Questions

Multiple choice questions, where respondents are restricted to choose among any of the given multiple-choice answers, are known as closed format or closed-ended questions. There is no fixed limit as to how many multiple choices should be given; the number can be even or odd. One of the main advantages of including closed format questions in your questionnaire design is they are easy to analyse. These questions are ideal for calculating statistical data and percentages. Closed-ended questions can be classified into 5 types (there are many more types, but we shall not refer to them here).

i. **Likert Questions**

Likert questions can help you ascertain how strongly your respondents agree to a particular statement. Such types of questions also help you assess how your respondents feel about a certain issue.

*Learning vocabulary is more important than learning grammar*

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Indifferent | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
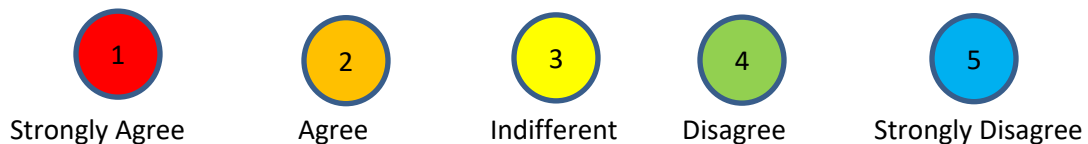
ii. **Importance Questions**

In importance questions, the respondents are usually asked to rate the importance of a particular issue, on a rating scale of 1 to 5.

*Learning to pronounce correctly is*

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Extremely Important | Very Important | Somewhat Important | Not Very Important | Not At All Important |

### iii. Dichotomous Questions

These are simple questions that ask respondents to answer in a yes or no. One major drawback with dichotomous questions is that it cannot analyze the answers between yes and no, there is no scope for a middle perspective.

*Is it possible to learn a language online?*

Yes ☐          No ☐

### iv. Bipolar Questions

Bipolar questions are the ones having two extreme answers written at the opposite ends of the scale. The respondents are asked to mark their responses between those two.

*In your opinion, this online language learning course has been*:

Effective _____     _____     ___X____     _____     _____Ineffective

Interesting _____     _____     ___X____     _____     _____Boring

Easy_____     _____     ___X____     _____     _____Difficult

### v. Rating Scale Questions

In rating scale questions, the respondents are asked to rate a particular issue on a scale that ranges between poor to good. Rating scale questions usually have an even number of choices, so that respondents are not given the choice of selecting a middle option.

*How would you rate this online language learning course?*

| (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Excellent | Good | Poor | Very Poor |

In closed-ended questions, respondents have restrictions when providing their opinions because they can only select one of the choices from the multiple answers given in the closed format. However, it is easy to analyse the information collected using closed-ended questions. Researchers use this format to obtain quantitative data which is ideal for analysis using

statistical tools where a researcher can calculate frequencies, percentages, and modes of central tendency.

Questionnaires two and three in the dissertation used close-ended questions that offered the researcher the opportunity to collect quantitative data. Questionnaire two focused on the evaluation of language learning websites which consisted of 50 preselected websites designed for the purpose of language learning. The intention was to gather data regarding the activities and resources provided in online pages, their accessibility, and availability.

Questionnaire three was primarily focused on collecting information on a typology/taxonomy of language learning activities. The objective of the questions was to gather quantitative data regarding the activities that are most attractive to students. The participants were asked to select one of the five options provided in Likert scale questions. Likert queries help the researcher in ascertaining ways in which the respondents agree to a particular phrase. In questionnaire three, when rating the taxonomy/typology of 50 language learning activities, the researcher included five choices for the students to select the most suitable answer for the question. The pattern was, 1-totally disagree, 2-disagree, 3-indifferent, 4-agree, and 5-totally agree.

### 3.5.4 Questionnaire Creation and Delivery

All three questionnaires were created using Google Forms which meant that they were available online and that data could be saved in Google Sheets (Google's equivalent to Excel). In Google Sheets, one can visualize data in the form of figures, graphs, pie charts and tables.

In what follows, we offer a brief technical description of how the questionnaires were created. One can make and manage forms at docs.google.com/forms, with templates and quick access to all one's forms in one place. Google Forms is a full-featured forms tool that comes free with a Google account. One can add standard question types, drag-and-drop questions in the order you like, customize the form with a simple photo or colour themes, and gather responses in Forms or save them to a Google Sheets spreadsheet.

The simplest way to start building a form (a questionnaire) is to go to docs.google.com/forms, then either choose a template or start a blank form. Or, in Google Sheets, click Tools -> Create a Form to start a blank new form that is automatically linked to that spreadsheet. This is the quickest way to get data into a spreadsheet, one opens the spreadsheet where one wants the data, start a form, and the form responses will automatically be saved there. Below in figure 3.3, you can see the default structure of a Google form with the kind of questions you can generate in a dropdown menu.
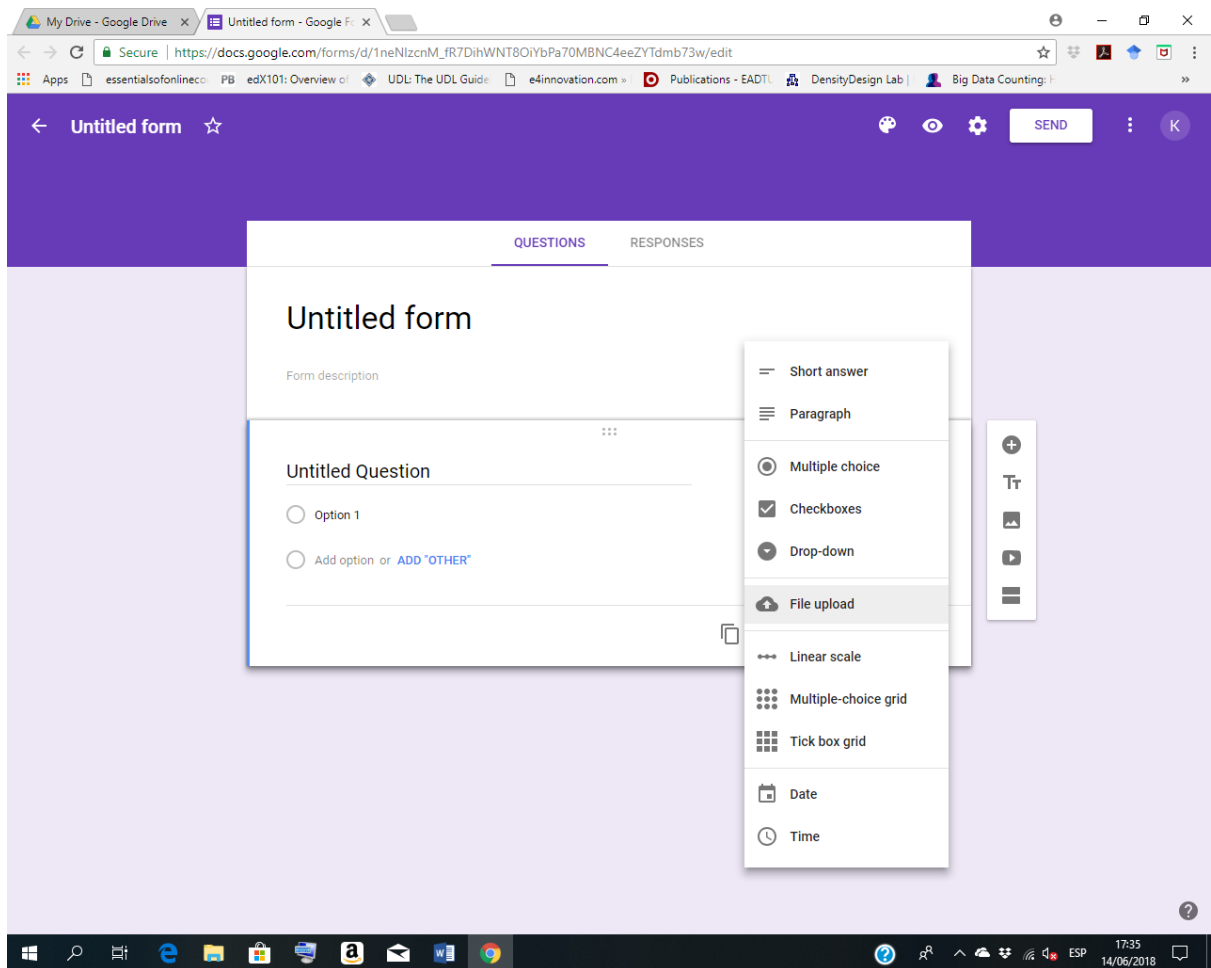


Figure 3.3: An Untitled Form with a dropdown menu of question types

The Forms editor is straightforward. Your form fills the centre of the screen, with space for a title and description followed by form fields. You click a form field to edit it and add a question. You use the dropdown box next to the field to choose the field type, such as multiple choice, checkboxes, and short answers. Google Forms includes 12 field types: 9 question types, along with text, photo, and video fields. One just has to click the + icon in the right sidebar to add a

new question, or click the text, photo, or video icons to add media to your form. Each field includes a copy button to duplicate the field, for a simple way to add similar questions to your form. There is also a delete button, options to make the field required, and a menu with extra options on the right side. You can switch question types at any time and quickly fill in questions in fields, by pressing enter to start adding another one. Below is a description of the different question types available in Google Forms to create your questionnaire.

**Short Answer**: This field is perfect when eliciting qualitative data but that it should be small amounts of information or text. You get one line of text to answer the question—though users could actually enter as much text as they want.

**Paragraph**: Much the same as the short answer field, this is a field for text and, therefore, qualitative data. You should only use this question type when you want detailed feedback or longer notes in the answer.

**Multiple Choice**: The default field for new questions in a Google Form, multiple choice lets you list options and have users select one.

**Checkboxes**: Similar to multiple choice, this field lets you list answers and have users select as many as they want.

**Dropdown**: All the answers are in a dropdown menu, from which the user must make their choice. This is useful for keeping your form compact when there are many answer options.

**Linear Scale**: The field to let people select a number in a range, linear scale lets you set a scale from 0 or 1 to 2-10 with labels for the lowest and highest options.

**Multiple Choice Grid**: This is perhaps the most confusing field, as the fields are displayed in a list rather than in the grid as they will appear to readers. Essentially, you will add questions as rows, and options about them as columns. You can include as many rows and columns as you want, though do note that readers will have to scroll right to see more than 6 columns on desktop browsers or just 3 columns on mobile. You might want to keep the form preview open while setting up grid questions—just tap the eye icon on the top right and refresh that page to see your changes.

As already stated, you can also include images and video.

**Image**: Google Forms lets you upload an image, insert one from a link or Google Drive. You can search Google Images for photos, including royalty free stock photo.

**Video**: Google Forms only supports YouTube videos, which you can add either through search or with a link.

Once the form has been created, you do not need to do anything extra to store respondents' answers in Google Forms. By default, it will save each answer in the Responses tab, showing summary graphs and lists of answers. An individual response view shows the live form along with the results from each respondent. For more tools to analyse answers, you can link your form to a Google Sheets spreadsheet. Just click the green Sheets icon in the Responses tab or click Select Response Destination in the menu, then create a new spreadsheet or select an existing one to store the answers. With form data in the spreadsheet, one can use Google Sheets' formulas to calculate values or make custom graphs to visualize one's data.

The questionnaires were also created on the basis of wanting to: 1) carry out a general brainstorm questionnaire on online learning and, more particularly, on online language learning; 2) evaluate 50 preselected language learning websites; before getting our students to evaluate these websites, we had already culled the original list of over 100 websites through our own investigation and previous cohorts of students had been introduced to these websites; 3) evaluate a taxonomy of language learning activities that had previously been researched and used in the classroom with similar students from our university. In other words, we had piloted the evaluation of websites and the evaluation of language learning activities with former students.

We did not have any significant delivery problems in that our target audience were students who were currently studying English with us. Our only mistake was that the first general brainstorm questionnaire was presented to our students (Business Management, Computer Science and Mechanical Engineering) as an optional activity outside class. The response rate was low (66 out of 202 students, 33%).

We outline the procedure carried out with questionnaires 2 and 3 which was much more rigorous and the response rate higher (176 out of 202, 87% and 134 out of 202, 66%). Below is the information presented to our three groups of B2 English students in a laboratory class practice session.

Questionnaire 2: Evaluation Sheet for Language Learning Web Sites

It consists of 50 preselected web sites for language learning. They are listed on a web page which has been specially prepared for this exercise.

The **objectives** of this questionnaire are:

- ☐ to have an overview of the quantity of activities / resources offered by the sites and their accessibility / availability from the point of view of students
- ☐ to collect quantitative data about your opinions after "visiting / working" with web sites for learning English based on pedagogical parameters
- ☐ to collect quantitative data about your opinions after "visiting / working" with web sites for learning English based on technological parameters

**Procedure:**

- ☐ Each student will be assigned a number/site to evaluate
- ☐ You are expected to evaluate the web sites according to both pedagogical and technological parameters. Pedagogical parameters are related to: *grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, texts - reading, audio / video - listening, writing, speaking, dictionaries / glossaries, resources*.
- ☐ The other section is intended to evaluate aspects related to the inclusion of activities which make use of more sophisticated technology, such as video-conferencing, social media, etc.
- ☐ You must provide a mark according to your preferences using a cline following this pattern:

| Poor | Sufficient | Good | Very Good | Excellent | N/A (not applicable) |
|------|-----------|------|-----------|-----------|----------------------|

Now, open your web site (document available at: PoliformaT: Recursos → Language Learning Strategies), follow the link below and provide your answers:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSesKEHLdJyPcOFI_QjHJiudmJZ_aIfbIDiOfWCMzbwv9Tex6A/viewform

Questionnaire 3: Taxonomy of Language Learning Activities

It consists of a typology of 50 activities, which range from traditional to more innovative language learning activities. Most of these activities can be realised either in a face-to-face or online environment. Each student must provide a mark according to his/her preferences using a cline following this pattern:

*1- Totally disagree 2- Disagree 3- Indifferent 4- Agree 5- Totally agree.*

The **objectives** of this questionnaire are:

- ☐ to obtain quantitative data about what type of activities are most attractive to students
- ☐ to obtain quantitative data about which type of activities students from different degree courses are most interested in
- ☐ to evaluate your degree of motivation from a typology of activities which involve different levels of competence with regards to pedagogical and technological aspects

Now, follow the link below and provide your answers:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdAh37-r7swrOzrlpvWUwRcF9C5u21_7fObc4Yn5cR9lbPJhQ/viewform

Now, we proceed to describe the questions asked in each questionnaire in more detail.

## 3.6 Questionnaires 1, 2 and 3

Questionnaire 1 is divided into two sections: section A and B. Section A asks 4 general questions related to Online Learning that expect a long text answer. Likewise, Section B asks 5 general questions related to Online Language Learning that also expect a long text answer.

Questionnaire one was designed using open-ended questions to help in eliciting information from the respondents about their knowledge, attitude as well as opinions on online learning. Open-ended questions are commonly used in qualitative questionnaires. The purpose of asking these types of questions is to enable the respondents to give answers using their own words. Participants have the freedom to respond as they wish. For example,

- *What advantages do you think an online course has over face-to-face instruction?*

was an open-ended question in questionnaire one that would result in being able to collect a variety of different answers with supporting ideas from the respondents.

Since it was a qualitative survey, the researcher designed questionnaire one in a less structured way. Data on participant's thinking, attitudes, and motivations do not require questions that are structured. Structured questionnaires limit the responses provided by participants. A less formal questionnaire would give the respondents freedom in expressing themselves. Therefore, questionnaire one with the open-ended and semi-closed-ended questions would provide an opportunity for the researcher to discover what respondents think about online learning and online language learning systems. The researcher did not want exact answers, or responses that can be quantified or are predictable. The purpose of designing these less structured questions was to elicit responses in the form of descriptions and explanations. The participants were free to answer the questions in their own words.

Using the form of questions asked in questionnaire one, it was easy for the researcher to establish trends and track personalized information by the students regarding their thoughts on online learning and online language learning systems. Semi-closed-ended questions were also used in questionnaire one to ensure the researcher could ask questions eliciting reasons for the answers respondents gave. Therefore, it was critical to add a 'why' notation at the end of such questions so that students would further explain their reasons for supporting a specific viewpoint regarding online learning and online language learning. For example, one of the semi-closed-ended question used in questionnaire one is:

- *Do you think you could learn a second language online? Why/why not?*

The respondents are prompted to provide more description and explanations of their answers. In fact, the data that was collected using the open-ended and semi-closed-ended questions in questionnaire one could not be gathered in any other way. Questionnaire 1 can be found at the following URL:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSesKEHLdJyPcOFI_QjHJiudmJZ_aIfbIDiOfWCMzbwv9Tex6A/viewform

Like Questionnaire 1, Questionnaire 2 is divided into two sections: Teaching/Learning (Pedagogy) and Communication Tools (Technology). The structure of the questionnaire is based on a multiple-choice grid and has the following format.

## Teaching/Learning (Pedagogy) *

| | Poor | Sufficient | Good | Very Good | Excellent | N/A (not applicable) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grammar | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Vocabulary | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Pronunciation | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Texts (Reading) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Audio (Listening) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Video (Listening) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Writing | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Speaking | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Dictionaries & Glossaries | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Other Language Resources | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Figure 3.4: Teaching/Learning

## Communication Tools (Technology) *

| | Poor | Sufficient | Good | Very Good | Excellent | N/A (not applicable) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chat | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Email | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Discussion Lists | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Newsletter | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Bulletin Board | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Video-Conferencing (Skype, Facetime etc.) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Map / Guide / Organization | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc.) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| External Links | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| SMS | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| WhatsApp | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Discussion Forum | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Dropbox | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Mind Maps | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Quizzes/Interactive Exercises (Hot Potatoes, Quizlet etc.) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Self-assessment systems (self-correction) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Figure 3.5: Communication Tools

In questionnaire 2, the data that the researcher wanted to gather was numerical. The questions that were asked in questionnaire two were to be answered by checking the provided boxes. It would also be easy to implement statistical analysis to ensure that the findings of the research are statistically significant as well as representative of the entire population.

Questionnaire two was designed using closed-ended questions. The answers to these types of questions are usually predetermined. After evaluating the web pages, the participants would use the scaled items to rate their views using a range of options. Since the data to be collected was quantitative, it would be easy to explore the relationship between and among the parameters that were being measured in the study.

Closed-ended questions are those whose answers are limited to the options provided by the researcher. They were used in questionnaire two to help in collecting data quickly. Closed-ended questions are time efficient, and it is easy to code and interpret the gathered data when compared to open-ended questions. That is why they were ideal for collecting quantitative data for this study. The answers to these questions were easy to compare from one respondent to another.

Questionnaire two was a continuation of the first questionnaire. After collecting qualitative data through explanatory and descriptive data of the respondents, it was necessary to set questions with predetermined answers in order to gather quantitative data to compare relationships among variables. The researcher intended to use statistical tools in the study and having questions that would provide numerical data would make the work easier for statistical analysis. It would be easier to code and analyse the data and visualize answers by using charts and graphs. Questionnaire 2 can be found at the following URL:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSesKEHLdJyPcOFI_QjHJiudmJZ_aIfbIDiOfWCMzbwv9Tex6A/viewform

Questionnaire 3 is based on a Likert Scale of five points ranging from "totally disagree" to "totally agree". Likert questions can help the researcher ascertain how strongly our students agree with a particular statement.

They were given a list of 50 language learning activities that went from more traditional types (of shorter duration) to more complex activities (of longer duration). So, the first ten activities the students had to evaluate were the following.

## Give a mark according to your preferences/interests: *

| | Totally disagree | Disagree | Indifferent | Agree | Totally agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Multiple choice | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 2. Jumbled sentences (word order) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 3. Gap fill | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 4. Sentence transformation | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 5. Sentence rewrite | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 6. Matching (definitions, pictures, words) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 7. Crosswords | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 8. Brainteasers | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 9. Word search | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 10. Paragraph ordering | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Figure 3.6: Language Learning Activities 1-10

While activities 32 to 42, they were longer and more creative.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 32. Web Search & Reporting (written & oral report) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 33. Graphs: Understanding, designing and describing graphs | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 34. Business meetings & discussions | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 35. Business presentations | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 36. Designing & Presenting web pages | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 37. Designing & Marketing a product | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 38. E-mail exchanges with foreign universities | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 39. Developing projects with foreign universities | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 40. Locating technical information in the Web | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 41. Developing group projects from the information gathered | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 42. Comparing different projects from different groups | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Figure 3.7: Language Learning Activities 32-42

Quantitative data will enable the researcher to perform statistical analyses for further evaluation of patterns found in the answers. Due to the nature of closed-ended questions, questionnaire three will provide data that will be analysed and presented using graphs and charts for comparative analysis. Statistical tools are applicable in analysing data collected using Likert-Scale questions. Therefore, when designing questionnaire three, the researcher had in mind the importance of applying the most suitable method of analysis for the type of data gathered. Questionnaire 3 can be found at the following URL:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdAh37-r7swrOzrlpvWUwRcF9C5u21_7fObc4Yn5cR9lbPJhQ/viewform

**3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has covered the selection of methodology and the process that was followed to design the research intervention. Based on my role as researcher, classroom teacher and online learning instructor, I found that using a mixed methodology to collect both quantitative and qualitative data allowed me to focus on the design of a research intervention in a real context (my university), which provided a sensed of validity and ensures that the results could be effectively used to inform the development of a model of online language learning which is the ultimate goal of this thesis.

The table below shows a summary of this study's research design.

| Research objective | Data Collection Instrument | Data Analysis Method | Unit of Analysis |
|---|---|---|---|
| Informal Classroom Research:<br>- To collect data about student preferences with regards tools/technologies for online language learning and what language skills these tools are useful for | Simple classroom questionnaire | Descriptive statistics (frequencies)<br>Content Analysis | Numerical data |
| E-textbook analysis | Evaluation criteria checklist e-textbook and online platform content analysis | Content Analysis | Content & Inductive analysis |
| MOOC analysis | Checklist<br>Analysis of Structure and Contents of MOOCs | Content Analysis | Content & Inductive analysis |
| Questionnaire 1:<br>- To find out about learner attitudes and prior knowledge of online learning and online language learning | Online Questionnaire (Google Forms) | Quantitative and qualitative analysis | Numerical data<br>Unstructured<br>Raw Text data |
| Questionnaire 2:<br>- To collect quantitative data about learner opinions of 50 language learning websites | Online Questionnaire (Google Forms) | Rating Scale: Poor to Excellent<br><br>Descriptive statistics (central tendencies) | Numerical data (percentages) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| - To have an overview of the quantity of activities / resources offered by the sites and their accessibility / availability from the point of view of learners<br>- To discover strengths and weaknesses of language learning websites | | | |
| Questionnaire 3:<br>- To obtain quantitative data about what type of language learning activities are most attractive to students | Online Questionnaire (Google Forms) | Likert Scale of five points ranging from "totally disagree" to "totally agree"<br><br>Descriptive statistics (central tendencies) | Numerical data (percentages) |

Table 3.3: Summary of Research Design

# CHAPTER 4
# Results

# CHAPTER 4: Results

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present results and their interpretation from the qualitative and quantitative data (frequencies and percentages) analysis relevant to our research objectives obtained through our mixed methodology. This mixed methodology has included collecting and analysing data through the following methods:

I. Classroom research into the online tools students use to learn English
II. Analysis of e-textbooks and their accompanying online platforms
III. Analysis of MOOCs, with particular attention to language MOOCs
IV. Questionnaire 1: to ascertain learner attitudes and prior knowledge of online learning and online language learning
V. Questionnaire 2: to collect data about learner opinions of 50 language learning websites
VI. Questionnaire 3: to obtain data about what type of language learning activities are most attractive to students

When interpreting the results, the researcher will explain different aspects that emerge from the findings. The interpretations will often be based on frequencies and percentages in the data findings. Explanations will be given regarding any set of supporting and refuting statements. These will form the justifications as for why the researcher interpreted the findings in such a manner.

## 4.2 Results of Initial Classroom Research

### 4.2.1 Mechanical Engineering Students

The data from our initial classroom research show various aspects that emerge from the analysis and representation of the results. These aspects can be classified based on the tools that the researcher identified as being used by students to learn a second language online. Tools emerging from the data analysis include the use of films/videos, online websites/web pages, social media, apps and others. Based on the findings, films/series/videos were found to be the most used tools by students in their effort to learn a second language on the internet. These videos entailed the use of Netflix, YouTube, video games, TED talks and TV programmes. Netflix

films on the internet was the most common audio-visual format that many of the students (22 out of 75 students, 29%) used to seek information on vocabulary, listening, pronunciation and speaking. Like Netflix, YouTube (21 out of 75 students, 28%) was a common tool that the students identified to have used in their language learning activities. It helped them develop similar skills (pronunciation and speaking) as those learned using Netflix movies. The number of students who used video games (5 out of 75 students) to learn language skills were few, while the use of TED talks and TV programs were the least used audio-visual tools by the students based on the initial classroom research.

Netflix enables students learning a language to change from one language to another. You can change both the audio and the subtitles. Students may be at different stages within the language learning process. This feature in Netflix is useful in enabling students to translate into a second language from the one that they can understand. Those learning the English language can change the film to the Spanish language that they know. With this feature in Netflix films, it makes it easier for students to acquire vocabulary and practice pronunciation and listening skills.

With videos, it is easier for the language learner to recognize the sounds and emerging rhythms of the second language. Students can select colloquial phrases and repeated words which are useful aspects of learning vocabulary quickly. When compared to Netflix and YouTube, video games, TV programmes, and TED talks do not seem to be as popular among mechanical engineering students for language learning. It may be that being able to turn on subtitles is one reason why they are not so popular. However, there are many TV programmes that you can change the language of the audio and many TV programmes have subtitles. There is more likely to be a sociological and economic explanation which is that these are among the two types of media most currently used by mechanical engineering students now.

Online tools such as online dictionaries, newspapers, courses, English learning web pages, tests, activities and Cambridge exams were valuable for students to learn a language online. However, these tools presented a lower frequency of use by mechanical engineering students when compared to audio-visual techniques. Among the online methods commonly used by the students (16 out of 75 students) were online newspapers for learning vocabulary: synonyms, and antonyms. It shows that students trust online publications. Online newspapers provide

students with information about current affairs that they may be seeking. While reading online newspapers, it is probable that mechanical engineering students improve their reading and writing skills. The field of mechanical engineering also entails critical thinking which means that students obtain skills of meaning-making from the language concepts they learn from the online newspapers. Those who used online newspapers explained that obtaining up-to-date information in the field of mechanical engineering was important for them. As they read the newspaper, students find ideas on how to improve their vocabulary, reading and writing skills. Mechanical engineering students also used online dictionaries such as Cambridge and WordReference. A few students said they used Cambridge practice exams and online test activities to improve their English.

From the initial classroom research results, I discovered that the use of apps such as smartphone apps and pronunciation apps also gave some students an opportunity to learn a second language on the internet. However, these apps were used by a minimum number of students. It seems that many students were not aware or did not have the knowledge that these apps could be useful tools for language learning. From the results, I can conclude that mechanical engineering students need to have further knowledge on how apps can be used to learn second language skills. Those who had used these tools explained that learning grammar, reading, listening, and vocabulary are the skills that apps can help second language learners acquire.

The introduction of mobile apps may revolutionize language learning. Even though many of the students had not used them, apps can be considered a sound development in the field of education. Language learning smartphone apps have speaking capabilities useful for students in honing their language skills. They are far more sophisticated than, for example, traditional CDs that taught language through listen and repeat exercises. Smartphone apps give students touch screens that are responsive, improve entry of text, higher quality of image, video and audio recording. Other language acquisition capabilities for smartphone apps entail voice recognition and storage, sharing, editing, GPS, and connectivity. All these may enhance the experience of students when learning second language skills online.

Students who have used social media in learning a second language seemed to be more conversant with Skype (16 out of 75 students mentioned the use of Skype as a language learning tool) than other social media tools such as Twitter, blogs, and chatrooms. Oral skills were what students most wanted to learn from using Skype. Oral interaction using Skype helps students in enhancing their communication skills. They can learn various verbal skills such as vocabulary, speaking, pronunciation, and grammar. It is easy to learn from using Skype as one acquires language through direct conversation and mutual understanding of the speakers. The student could also video record the talks for reviewing later their language skills. Blogs and chat rooms do not seem to give students these benefits of learning a language online, and that is why fewer learners have used these social media tools from what we have found out in our initial classroom research.

Exposure to techniques and tools is important. It forms part of their digital literacy. It is quite clear from our initial research that the students mentioned MyEnglishLab as a good tool for learning English simply because they are using it in their English classes. 20% of their final mark is work on this online platform so it is strange that not more students (30 out of 75 students, 40%) named this online platform in our research. Interestingly, books received a high usage rating by mechanical students probably because they understand them and how they can be used for learning purposes. It shows that, when students understand a particular technique or tool and are comfortable using it, then they will most likely use it.

| TOOLS | FREQUENCY |
|---|---|
| **MyEnglishLab** (online learning platform) | 30 |
| **Netflix** | 22 |
| **YouTube** | 21 |
| **Music (with lyrics: Spotify)** | 17 |
| **Books** | 16 |
| **Online newspapers** | 16 |
| **Skype** | 16 |
| **Online dictionaries (Cambridge,Wordreference)** | 9 |
| **Videogames** | 5 |
| **Forums** | 5 |
| **Playing games** | 5 |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Online English learning webpages (Saberingles, Busuu, Cambridge English, British Council)** | 4 |
| **Translators/Microsoft Translator** | 3 |
| **Smartphone apps** | 3 |
| **Duolinguo** | 2 |
| **Online courses** | 2 |
| **Blogs, writing a blog** | 2 |
| **Babbel** | 2 |
| **Grammar activities** | 1 |
| **Online test/activities** | 1 |
| **Twitter** | 1 |
| **FaceTime** | 1 |
| **Chatrooms** | 1 |
| **Cambridge Exams webpage** | 1 |
| **Kahoot** | 1 |
| **Quizlet** | 1 |
| **Writing emails** | 1 |
| **TED talks** | 1 |
| **TV programs** | 1 |
| **Online news** | 1 |
| **Pronunciation Apps** | 1 |

Table 4.1: Tools, Frequency (Mechanical Engineering Students)
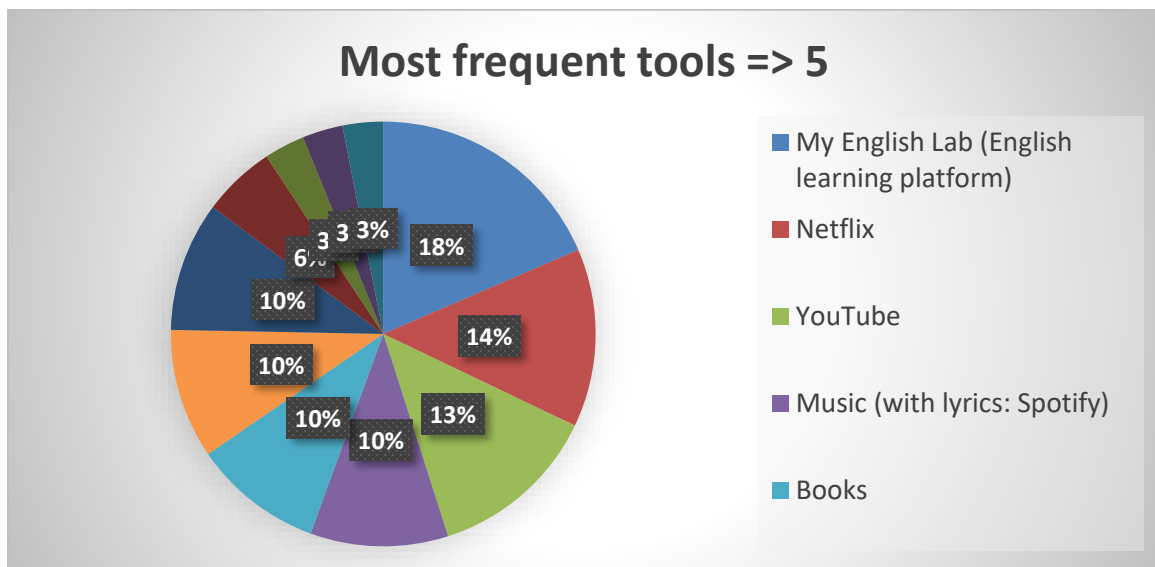


Figure 4.1: Most frequent tools (Mechanical Engineering Students)

### 4.2.2　Business Students

The research gave me different results for business students regarding their use of tools in learning a second language online. It shows that students from different degree courses will use online tools to learn a language differently.

Looking at the frequency of the use of different technological tools, YouTube was the most frequently used tool by the business students in learning a language. This differed from the fact that Netflix was frequently used by mechanical engineering students. Business students were more aware of YouTube than Netflix as a tool for the acquisition of language skills. Only a few business students used Netflix, and this can be attributed to the numerous possibilities YouTube offers. Because EFL/ESL teachers have been willing to turn the cameras on themselves, a language learner can find thousands of lessons to help them improve their English. For example, Learn English with English Class 101 is one of the best channels available on YouTube to learn English. This channel has nearly 1.5 million subscribers and is continuously increasing its audience. They offer grammar, vocabulary and listening practice as well as videos about the functional uses of language such as *checking in at a hotel*.

**Top channels to learn English on YouTube 2018**
1. British Council LearnEnglish: https://www.youtube.com/user/BritishCouncilLE
2. JenniferESL: https://www.youtube.com/user/JenniferESL
3. Anglo-Link: https://www.youtube.com/user/MinooAngloLink
4. Rachel's English: https://www.youtube.com/user/rachelsenglish
5. EnglishLessons4U: https://www.youtube.com/user/EnglishLessons4U
6. Let's Talk: https://www.youtube.com/user/learnexmumbai
7. Daily English Conversation: https://www.youtube.com/DailyEnglishConversationTV
8. Speak English with Steve Ford: https://www.youtube.com/user/PrivateEnglishPortal
9. ESL Basics: https://www.youtube.com/user/ESLbasics
10. BBC Learning English: https://www.youtube.com/user/bbclearningenglish

If we examine the last YouTube channel (BBC Learning English) on the list above, we will find that they provide videos covering areas such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and Business English. They also offer study skills tips. However, learning English on YouTube does not just have to be about watching videos. One can create one's own videos and that way students can practice their speaking skills as well. Furthermore, TubeQuizard lets you create interactive listening quizzes based on subtitled YouTube videos. Most students can rapidly find ways of

learning and practicing their language skills on YouTube. It is clearly an important online tool for
learning English.

| Tools | Frequency |
|---|---|
| YouTube | 10 |
| Duolingo | 8 |
| Linguee | 7 |
| Dictionaries | 6 |
| MyEnglishLab | 5 |
| Series | 5 |
| WordReference | 4 |
| Netflix | 3 |
| Music | 2 |
| Babbel | 2 |
| Lyricstraining | 2 |
| Aula Facil | 2 |
| Online Exercises | 2 |
| Google Translator | 1 |
| TED talks | 1 |
| Vaughan | 1 |
| Instagram | 1 |
| Spotify | 1 |
| Ibooks | 1 |
| British Council | 1 |

Table 4.2: Tools, Frequency (Business Management Students)

If we examine the table above, we can notice that Linguee, Dictionaries and WordReference are
all used fairly frequently amongst this group of students. If we now look at the skills that these
students mention most, we find that vocabulary acquisition is the most common.

| Skills | Frequency |
|---|---|
| Vocabulary | 60 |
| Listening | 52 |
| Grammar | 28 |
| Pronunciation | 21 |
| Speaking | 18 |
| Reading | 16 |
| Writing | 11 |

Table 4.3: Skills, Frequency (Business Management Students)

### 4.2.3   Computer Science Students

There are two activities online which Computer Science like most: watching series and playing videogames. They state that they use them to help them learn English, but I can imagine it is an informal way of learning and learning is implicit rather than explicit. Computer science students seem to prefer series for learning language skills as it is not boring, and a student can learn as one sits back on their couch. It is slightly strange that these students do not mention YouTube that much, unlike business management and mechanical engineering students. The importance given to videogames is probably due to the discipline they are studying.

| Tools | Frequency |
|---|---|
| Series | 16 |
| Videogames | 12 |
| Music | 5 |
| Wordreference | 4 |
| Duolingo | 4 |
| YouTube | 3 |
| TV shows | 3 |
| Google Translator | 3 |
| Games | 3 |
| Forums | 3 |
| Babbel | 2 |
| Netflix | 2 |
| Videos | 2 |
| Dictionaries | 2 |
| Films | 2 |
| TermBank | 2 |
| Online newspapers | 2 |
| Documentaries | 1 |
| Kahoot | 1 |
| Books | 1 |
| Skype | 1 |
| Radio | 1 |

Table 4.4: Tools, Frequency (Computer Science Students)

Like the Business Management students, the skills they practise most with these tools are receptive skills (listening and reading) and vocabulary and grammar. The productive skills are relegated to the last two positions in the table (see table 4.5 below). It seems therefore that their learning is passive rather than active production of the language. Both Business Management and Computer Science students give a lot of importance to vocabulary acquisition. They also gave importance to listening skills. Students use listening skills to learn and boost

vocabulary through engaging in interactive activities using the online tools. When learning skills of any language, listening is the fastest way to acquire extensive, effective, retained and larger vocabulary than other means. Both, in the business management and computer science students, listening and vocabulary were the most sought-after language skills that the students were interested in learning online.

| Skills | Frequency |
|---|---|
| Vocabulary | 50 |
| Listening | 31 |
| Reading | 23 |
| Grammar | 22 |
| Pronunciation | 17 |
| Speaking | 17 |
| Writing | 16 |

Table 4.5: Skills, Frequency (Computer Science Students)

## 4.3 A Review of e-Textbooks

### 4.3.1 Introduction

Books can be defined as the "the first teaching machine" and are very important in the process of teaching or learning. For hundreds of years, books have been the mechanism for spreading knowledge. Books paved the way for advancement, have evolved themselves, and have assisted in evolving humankind. The year 1971 was a landmark for e-books, as Michael Stern commenced a project to encourage the creation and distribution of e-books. Stern created the first digital adaptation of the Declaration of Independence as the first electronic book in history. Other developments of digital books followed. Personal computers, tablets, and smartphones in early 2000 triggered the evolution and acceptance of e-books on a mass scale. When comparing definitions, physical or conventional books are defined as a set of written and printed sheets of paper that include text and visuals (Bozkurt & Bozkaya, 2015). As a digital version of the conventional books, e-books are defined as an electronic file formatted to be displayed on e-book readers, an electronic file of words and images, a book in a computer file format, digital reading materials, a book converted into digital form, or as text in digital form. In 2011, the creation of the next generation digital books called for a new definition: interactive e-books, which are improved extensions of e-books (Ghaebi, Tajdaran & Fahimifar, 2010).

E-books are dependent on technology; therefore, the difference between interactive e-books and mobile applications and computer software is becoming unclear. Nevertheless, these unclear borders can become clear by applying design principles of interactive e-books and determining the rationale of the application as it refers to the e-reading experience of the reader. E-books personify various features, each of which could contribute to improving their user agreeability and attracting more users. In selecting an e-book best suited for their needs, users consider a set of criteria. The evaluation criteria are based on the standpoint of considering the characteristics of the electronic environment of the e-book, as well as maintaining the desired features of the conventional books in e-books. By reviewing the materials available in the field of e-books, suitable criteria have been solely devised for evaluation of e-books by considering their layout and design, content and functionalities, as well as device, format, and distribution (Marczak, 2013). This section will comment on evaluation results for two upper-intermediate level English books namely New Language Leader and Market Leader. While the two books are digitalized, there is no difference between them and their print versions. The two books were chosen to be analysed since they are being used to teach classes at my university. New Language Leader is being used to teach third year Engineering courses, while Market Leader is being used for third year Business Management students.

### 4.3.2    Discussion

By definition, electronic books come in a digital format that may involve various technologies. As e-books constitute a greater or a lesser departure from the printed media, they have a wide storage capacity, and portability because their content can easily be downloaded and even printed when the need arises. Because of their electronic delivery, e-books render course contents easily accessible. However, the fact that they require the use of e-readers does not seem to affect their accessibility. E-readers are devices which allow the reading of digital content, such as handhelds or mobile phones that are now being used far and wide. These devices have presently become so smart to the extent that they encourage the potential consumers to use e-books.

E-books also add to the variety of document formats via which content can be made available to readers, such as Flash animations (.swf) or text documents (.doc) and many more. Such a multiplicity of formats furthermore affects the array of channels of distribution available. E-books also render content linkable and searchable. That is, they allow the utilization of annotation and bookmarking tools. E-books are also a vibrant teaching aid that can be edited, re-edited as well as updated because they will enable the creation of numerous versions of content. Because of the fast improvement in technology, e-books are comparatively cheap.

E-books are portable teaching aids because they can be accessed at any convenient time irrespective of the place, which makes them appropriate from the learning perspective both inside and outside the classrooms. E-books may also provide textual content improved with selected multimedia, which includes visual cues, audio, and openings for the use of live broadcasts. These functions depend on the technical functionalities of the e-reader. Most importantly, e-books allow the reader to interact with the content through diverse methods of his or her choice. Therefore, the reader can as previously, move through the content without having to follow the linear structure of the printed media necessarily. This, in turn, encourages or promotes the individualization of the learning process, because it allows learners to utilize their preferred learning approaches (Marczak, 2013).

### 4.3.3   E-book evaluation criteria

An evaluation checklist for teachers to use while selecting a specific e-textbook has been developed. It is subdivided into three groups according to three aspects of e-textbooks. The three categories are layout and design, content and functionalities, and format and distribution. Layout and design have nine questions, while the second category has ten, while the last category has three questions for evaluating an e-textbook (Marczak, 2013). These criteria were used for evaluating the two English language learning e-textbooks mentioned above (New Language Leader and Market Leader). Results were recorded against the checklist.

| Evaluation criteria | |
|---|---|
| **Layout and design** | |
| 1. Does the layout of the e-book mimic the paper book or is it a cyberbook publication? | mimics the paper book |
| 2. Does the e-book contain an informative cover, featuring the name of author, the title, the date of publication, and the publisher's details? | Yes |
| 3. Does it have a clearly defined or user-friendly layout (sections, chapters)? | Yes |
| 4. Is it accompanied by a table of contents which provides an introduction to the content as well as the layout? | Yes |
| 5. Is the content laid out on pages or within scrollable areas? | Yes |
| 6. Are particular sections of the content (e.g. pages) labelled clearly through page numbering or any other system? | Yes |
| 7. Does the interface feature offer other navigation clues which make particular elements of content accessible? | No |
| 8. Are the fonts visible? | Yes |
| 9. Is the content indexed, so that necessary details, e.g. names or terminology, can be easily accessed? | Yes |
| **Content and functionalities** | |
| 1. Is the content delivered in manageable chunks, given the format of the e-book and the functionalities of the e-reading device? | Yes |
| 2. Are related elements of the content hyperlinked? | Yes |
| 3. Are multimedia/hypermedia part of the e-book? | Yes |
| 4. Do the multimedia/hypermedia enhance the content and constitute added value? | Yes |
| 5. Is the e-book equipped with an advanced search tool which permits the reader to take a variety of search routes and use a range of search queries? | No |
| 6. Can the reader customize elements of the e-book to his own liking/needs? | No |
| 7. Are bookmarking and annotation tools available to the reader? | Yes |
| 8. Is the content supplemented with extra online materials, e.g. multimedia or companion websites? | Yes |
| 9. Does the e-book feature usage data mining functionalities? | No |
| 10. Can the e-book function as: a database, a narrative, a set of learning objects, a package of viewable resources or as imagery? | Partially |
| **Device, format and distribution** | |
| 1. Does the e-book require an e-reader? | No |
| 2. Is the e-book file format open, i.e. will it be read by multiple brands of reading devices or a desktop computer? | Yes |
| 3. Is the retail distribution of the format restricted in any way? | No |

Table 4.6: Evaluation criteria (New Language Leader)

New Language Leader

The book was evaluated using the abovementioned e-book evaluation criteria. The three

aspects of the book were evaluated, and results recorded against the checklist. The results of

the evaluation are discussed in the following text, according to the different aspects of the e-book.

### 4.3.4    Layout and design (New Language Leader)

The first criterion is whether the layout of the e-book imitates the paper book or whether it is a cyberbook publication. In this case, the layout of the New Language Leader mimics its paper book. By definition, an e-book is believed to be a conversion of a printed textbook into the digital format. Therefore, an e-book should have a resemblance to its conventional, printed predecessor. The concept of the conventional book is integrated into the e-book with additional useful features provided electronically. The e-book also contains an informative cover, which features the name of the author, the publication date, as well as the details of the publisher. Similar to the paperback textbook, an e-book has an informative cover bearing valuable information about the book and the publisher.

New Language Leader as an e-textbook has a user-friendly layout, which is clearly defined into sections and chapters. This allows the learner to interact with the content at different levels. For instance, the book is accompanied by a table of contents that gives an introduction to the content of the layout as well as the content of the book. The reader can easily navigate through the content because it is laid out within scrollable areas or on pages. The particular sections of the content are labelled visibly through a numbering system. However, the interface of the book does not support other navigation clues that make specific elements of content accessible. The fonts used are visible; thus, makes the book easy to read. Lastly, with regards the layout of the New Language Leader, the content is indexed, such that essential details such as terminology or names can be accessed easily.

### 4.3.5    Content and functionalities (New Language Leader)

The content of the New Language Leader e-textbook is delivered in manageable portions, considering the format of the book. E-textbook functionalities offer advantages to learners. The related elements of the content are hyperlinked. Hyperlinks easily guide the needs of the readers, as it can help them decide on the relevance of a chapter at a glance. This book also has

hypermedia or multimedia. Multimedia capability is one of the most attractive features of e-textbooks.

This e-textbook does not have an advanced search tool that allows the reader to use an array of search queries and take a variety of search routes. Bookmarking and annotations tools are available to the user. The content of the book is supplemented with extra online materials on the publishing company's website. This e-textbook does not support usage of data mining functionalities. The most important feature of the New Language Leader e-textbook is that it can function as imagery, a package for viewing resources, a set of learning objects, a narrative, but not really as a database. So, this criterion is only partially fulfilled.

### 4.3.6    Device, format and distribution (New Language Leader)

This aspect of e-books is vital because it affects the distribution as well as the accessibility of the e-books. This e-textbook does not need any particular e-reader. It can be used with any kind of computer or mobile device as long as you have an internet connection. New Language Leader e-textbook file format is open, meaning that it can be read by numerous kinds of reading devices. The fact that the book can be read by multiple reading devices makes it attractive to potential readers. Computer and mobile devices have presently become so smart to the extent that they encourage potential consumers to use e-textbooks.  The retail distribution of this e-textbook format is not restricted in any way. The e-textbook is being published on various access models, and forms and various distribution bodies try to provide this e-book based on these different modes. This is possible because the retail distribution of the e-book is not limited or restricted in any way.

| Evaluation criteria | |
|---|---|
| **Layout and design** | |
| 1. Does the layout of the e-book mimic the paper book or is it a cyberbook publication? | mimics the paper book |
| 2. Does the e-book contain an informative cover, featuring the name of author, the title, the date of publication, and the publisher's details? | Yes |
| 3. Does it have a clearly defined or user-friendly layout (sections, chapters)? | Yes |
| 4. Is it accompanied by a table of contents which provides an introduction to the content as well as the layout? | Yes |
| 5. Is the content laid out on pages or within scrollable areas? | Yes |

| | |
|---|---|
| 6. Are particular sections of the content (e.g. pages) labelled clearly through page numbering or any other system? | Yes |
| 7. Does the interface feature offer other navigation clues which make particular elements of content accessible? | Yes |
| 8. Are the fonts visible? | Yes |
| 9. Is the content indexed, so that necessary details, e.g. names or terminology, can be easily accessed? | Yes |
| **Content and functionalities** | |
| 1. Is the content delivered in manageable chunks, given the format of the e-book and the functionalities of the e-reading device | Yes |
| 2. Are related elements of the content hyperlinked? | Yes |
| 3. Are multimedia/hypermedia part of the e-book? | Yes |
| 4. Do the multimedia/hypermedia enhance the content and constitute added value? | Yes |
| 5. Is the e-book equipped with an advanced search tool which permits the reader to take a variety of search routes and use a range of search queries? | No |
| 6. Can the reader customize elements of the e-book to his own liking/needs? | No |
| 7. Are bookmarking and annotation tools available to the reader? | Yes |
| 8. Is the content supplemented with extra online materials, e.g. multimedia or companion websites? | Yes |
| 9. Does the e-book feature usage data mining functionalities? | No |
| 10. Can the e-book function as: a database, a narrative, a set of learning objects, a package of viewable resources or as imagery? | Partially |
| **Device, format and distribution** | |
| 1. Does the e-book require an e-reader? | No |
| 2. Is the e-book file format open, i.e. will it be read by multiple brands of reading devices or a desktop computer? | Yes |
| 3. Is the retail distribution of the format restricted in any way? | No |

Table 4.7: Evaluation criteria (Market Leader)

Market Leader

The Market Leader e-textbook was also evaluated using the e-book evaluation criteria. The three aspects of the book were evaluated, and the results recorded against the checklist. The results of the evaluation are discussed in the following text, according to the three aspects of e-books.

### 4.3.7    Layout and design (Market Leader)

The first criterion for evaluation of an e-book is whether the layout of the e-book imitates the content design. The layout and design of the Market Leader mimics its printed media counterpart. This fact makes it a simple e-textbook because it is a digitalized, downloadable version of the printed book. Because it is a digitalized version of the conventional book, the

layout of this e-book should mimic that of the paperback book. Like New Language Leader, the Market Leader e-book also contains an informative cover, which features the name of the author, the publication date, as well as the details of the publisher. Since it is a digitalized version of the paperback textbook, an e-book has an informative cover bearing important information about the book as well as the publisher.

The layout of the Market Leader e-book is defined in sections and chapters and is easy to use. This function is an attractive feature of e-books because it renders the course materials easily accessible. This e-book also has a table of contents which provides an introduction to the layout of the book as well as the contents. This allows the reader to interact with the contents through various routes of his or her choice. The content of the e-book is also laid out in scrollable areas, which can allow the reader to navigate through the book without necessarily following the linear structure of the printed media. Also, the particular sections of the content are clearly labelled through a numbering system.

The interface of the book does not support other navigation clues that make specific elements of content accessible; therefore, the book does not have the benefits of search tools that go beyond the indexes and the table of contents. The fonts used in the book are visible; hence readable. Most importantly, the content is indexed, such that essential details such as terminology or names can be accessed with ease.

### 4.3.8    Content and functionalities (Market Leader)

The content of the Market Leader e-book is presented in manageable large volumes, due to its format as well as the functionalities of the e-reading device. This facilitates learning and course improvement. From the definition, e-books characteristically have in-use features such as interactive tools, hypertext links, cross reference and search functions, which makes the content easily manageable. Often, the manageable content comes from integrating the familiar concept of conventional books with features provided in an electric environment. In the case of Market Leader, the e-book contains hypermedia or multimedia. Also, the related elements of the content are hyperlinked. Hyperlinks easily guide the needs of the readers, as it can help them

decide on the relevance of a chapter at a glance. Because this e-textbook has multimedia, the content is enhanced which gives it added value.

Like New Language Leader, Market Leader does not have an advanced search tool that allows the reader to use an array of search queries and take a variety of search routes. Typical in e-textbooks, Market Leader permits the use of annotation and bookmarking tools. The content of the book is also enhanced with extra online materials on the publishing company's website. This e-textbook does not support data mining functionalities. Lastly, on content and functionalities of Market Leader, this e-textbook can function as imagery, a package for viewing resources, a set of learning objects, a narrative, but not as a database.

### 4.3.9    Device, format and distribution (Market Leader)

Market Leader, as an e-textbook, does not require an e-reader. The file format of the book is open, which means it can be read by numerous types of reading devices, as well as desktop computers. The readability feature of this e-book by many e-readers attracts more readers. Lastly, the retail distribution of Market Leader e-book is not restricted in any way; therefore, making it easily accessible to learners.

Having carried out a general analysis of these two e-textbooks, we are now going to analyse the contents and structure of the two e-textbooks in more detail along with the accompanying online platform *MyEnglishLab*.

### 4.3.10   Contents and Structure of Market Leader

Market Leader Upper-Intermediate has been developed in association with the Financial Times to introduce students to business issues to help them build professional language and communication skills required in the current business environment. Selected topics such as communication, international marketing or building relationships expose students to authentic language situations and practicalities of business. An essential role is assigned to the section case studies targeted to help students get involved in business practices while improving their

language skills. This e-textbook is used to teach a 3<sup>rd</sup> year Business English course to Business Management students at the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia.

The book consists of twelve units. Each unit is broken down into five sections:

- ✓ **Discussion,** which is targeted to develop speaking skills
- ✓ **Texts** to enhance reading from the Financial Times and authentic listening activities reflecting the global nature of business
- ✓ **Language work** to introduce and practice grammar issues
- ✓ **Skills** contains vocabulary development activities and regular focus on key business functions
- ✓ **Case study** allows students to practice speaking and writing skills with opinions from successful consultants who work in the real world of business. It also helps students practice language they have worked on during the unit.

| | DISCUSSION | TEXTS | LANGUAGE WORK | SKILLS | CASE STUDY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **UNIT 1 COMMUNICATION** ➡ page 6 | Talk about what makes a good communicator | Listening: An interview with an expert on communication<br><br>Reading: A quiet word beats sending e-mail – *Financial Times* | Good communicators<br><br>Idioms | Dealing with communication breakdown | The price of success: Make recommendations to improve communications within an electronics company<br><br>Writing: e-mail |
| **UNIT 2 INTERNATIONAL MARKETING** ➡ page 14 | Talk about international brands | Reading: Diego Della Valle: Italian atmosphere is central to Tod's global expansion – *Financial Times*<br><br>Listening: An interview with a professor of international marketing and the CEO of a training organisation | Marketing word partnerships<br><br>Noun compounds and noun phrases | Brainstorming | Henri-Claude Cosmetics – creating a global brand: Devise a TV commercial for a new eau-de-cologne<br><br>Writing: action minutes |
| **UNIT 3 BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS** ➡ page 22 | Talk about building relationships | Listening: An interview with the Head of Global Corporate Responsibility of a major company<br><br>Reading: How East is meeting West – *Business Week* | Describing relations<br><br>Multiword verbs<br><br>Lightshot Screenshot | Networking | Al-Munir Hotel and Spa Group: Come up with a plan for improving customer satisfaction and loyalty<br><br>Writing: letter |

Figure 4.2: Course book organisation

Market Leader Upper Intermediate consists of twelve units. Each unit has its clear aims in terms of four language skills, cross-curricular topics and basic competences.

Unit 1: Communication

Aims

- - To use idioms
- - To talk about what makes a good communicator

- To listen to an interview with an expert on communication
- To read an article from the *Financial Times* about a quiet word beats sending e-mail.
- To listen to skills dealing with communication breakdown
- To read a text about making recommendations to improve communications within an electronics company.
- To write a follow-up e-mail to the Head of Ward Associates.

Contents

I. Communication skills
- Talking about what makes a good communicator
- Listening to an interview with an expert on communication
- Reading an article from the *Financial Times* about a quiet word beats sending e-mail.
- Listening to skills dealing with communication breakdown
- Reading a text about making recommendations to improve communications within an electronics company.
- Writing a follow-up e-mail to the Head of Ward Associates.

II. Language reflections

A. Language and grammar functions
- Communicators
- Idioms

B. Vocabulary

- Collocations with *say*
- Collocations with *tell*

III. Sociocultural aspects

- To think about what makes a good communicator.
- To think about improving communications.

CROSS-CURRICULAR TOPICS

Moral and civic education
To think about good communication

Unit 2: Organisations
Aims

- To use compound nouns
- To use noun phrases
- To know words about marketing
- To know words about partnerships
- To talk about international brands
- To read an article from *The Financial Times* about the Italian atmosphere to Tod's global expansion
- To listen to an interview with a professor of international marketing
- To listen to a brainstorming meeting
- To read a text about Henri-Claude cosmetics and the creation of a new brand

-   To write the action minutes for a brainstorming session
-   To write a marketing letter

Contents

I. Communication skills
-   Talking about international brands
-   Reading an article from *The Financial Times* about the Italian atmosphere to Tod's global expansion
-   Listening to an interview with a professor of international marketing
-   Listening to a brainstorming meeting
-   Reading a text about Henri-Claude cosmetics and the creation of a new brand
-   Writing the action minutes for a brainstorming session
-   Writing a marketing letter

II. Language reflections

A. Language and grammar functions
-   Compound nouns
-   Compound phrases

B. Vocabulary

-   Compound nouns
-   Compound phrases
-   Marketing word partnerships
-   Cosmetics

III. Sociocultural aspects

-   To think about cosmetics
-   To think about markets
-   To think about Italian Luxury

CROSS-CURRICULAR TOPICS

Moral and civic education
To respect other cultures
Consumers education
To think about Italian luxury
To think about the use of cosmetics
Environmental Education
To think about the composition of cosmetics

Unit 3: Building relationships
Aims

-   To use multiword verbs
-   To know words to describe relations.
-   To talk about building relationships
-   To listen to an interview with the Head of a Global Corporate Responsibility of a major company.

- To read a text from *The Business Week* about how East is meeting West.
- To develop skills dealing with networking to stablish good business relationships.
- To know useful language
- To read a text about improving satisfaction and loyalty.
- To write a letter to describe a special offer.

Contents

I. Communication skills
- Talking about building relationships
- Listening to an interview with the Head of a Global Corporate Responsibility of a major company.
- Reading a text from *The Business Week* about how East is meeting West.
- To read a text about improving satisfaction and loyalty.
- Writing a letter to describe a special offer.

II. Language reflections

A. Language and grammar functions
- Multiword verbs

B. Vocabulary

- To describe relations

III. Sociocultural aspects

- To think about the best ways of building relationships
- To respect different cultures
- To establish relations with different cultures.

CROSS-CURRICULAR TOPICS

Moral and civic education
To respect different cultures
To establish relations with different cultures.
Education for peace
To respect different cultures
Consumer Education
To choose nice hotels

Unit 4: Success
Aims

- To use prefixes
- To use the present tense
- To use the past tense
- To discuss what makes people/companies successful
- To listen to an interview with the MD (Managing Director) of company.
- To read an article from *The Telegraph* about Carlos Slim
- To read a text about negotiating

- To read a text about the negotiation of a sponsorship deal for a football club.
- To write a press release
- To write a letter

Contents

I. Communication skills
- Speaking about what makes people/companies successful
- Listening to an interview with the MD of company.
- Reading an article from *The Telegraph* about Carlos Slim
- Reading a text about negotiating
- Reading a text about the negotiation of a sponsorship deal for a football club.
- Writing a press release
- Writing a letter

II. Language reflections

A. Language and grammar functions
- Present tense
- Past tense

B. Vocabulary

- Prefixes

III. Sociocultural aspects

- To think about sports
- To debate about success

CROSS-CURRICULAR TOPICS

Moral and civic education
To think about success
Health Education
To think about sports

Unit 5: Job satisfaction
Aims

- To use the passive voice
- To use synonyms
- To know word building
- To talk about motivational factors
- To listen to an interview with the Director of HR at a major company
- To read an article from *The Sunday Times* about Marriott Hotels
- To listen to a headhunter, a person who finds people with the right skills
- To read a text about how to deal with in-house personal relationships
- To write guidelines
- To respond to job applications

Contents

I. Communication skills

- Talking about motivational factors
- Listening to an interview with the Director of HR at a major company
- Reading an article from *The Sunday Times* about Marriott Hotels
- Listening to a headhunter, a person who finds people with the right skills
- Reading a text about how to deal with in-house personal relationships
- Writing guidelines

II. Language reflections

A. Language and grammar functions
- The passive voice

B. Vocabulary

- Synonyms
- Word-building

III. Sociocultural aspects

- To think about good ways to get motivated
- To think about good ways to motivate
- To debate about in-house personal relationships

CROSS-CURRICULAR TOPICS

Moral and civic education
To respect others
To think about in-house personal relationships
Consumer Education
To debate about Marriott Hotels

Unit 6:  Risk
Aims

- To use the adverbs of degree
- To know words to describe risk
- To discuss different aspects of risk
- To describe an event
- To listen to an interview with the MD of the Institute of Risk management
- To read an article from *The Financial Times* about internationalism, a risk or an opportunity
- To read a text about different skills to reach agreement
- To read a text about evaluating skills
- To write a report

Contents

I. Communication skills
- Talking about different aspects of risk
- Listening to an interview with the MD of the Institute of Risk management
- Reading an article from *The Financial Times* about internationalism, a risk or an opportunity
- Describing an event
- Reading a text about different skills to reach agreement

- Reading a text about evaluating skills
- Writing a report

II. Language reflections

A. Language and grammar functions
- Adverbs of degree

B. Vocabulary

- Describing risk

III. Sociocultural aspects

- To think about risks
- To debate about internationalization
- To learn to evaluate the risks of any situation

CROSS-CURRICULAR TOPICS

Moral and civic education
To evaluate risks

Unit 7:  Management styles
Aims

- To know how to find text references
- To manage qualities
- To discuss different aspects of management style
- To listen to an interview with the author of a management book
- To read an article from *The Times online/CBS.*
- To know skills to make presentations
- To read a text about a new project manager for a team
- To write a report
- To write letters of enquiry

Contents

I. Communication skills
- Talking different aspects of management style
- Listening to an interview with the author of a management book
- Reading an article from *The Times online/CBS.*
- Reading a text about a new project manager for a team
- Writing a report
- Writing letters of enquiry

II. Language reflections

A. Language and grammar functions
- Text reference

B. Vocabulary

- Management qualities

III. Sociocultural aspects

- To debate about management styles

CROSS-CURRICULAR TOPICS

Moral and civic education
To respect different management styles

<u>Unit 8: Team building</u>
Aims

- To use the modal verbs
- To use modal verb+present perfect.
- To know prefixes
- To talk about working in teams
- To listen to an interview with the founder of a team-building company
- To read an article from *The Financial Times* about recipes for team building
- To read a text about different skills to resolve a conflict
- To read a text about an action plan for improving the motivation of a sales team
- To write a letter
- To know diplomatic language

Contents

I. Communication skills
- Talking about working in teams
- Listening to an interview with the founder of a team-building company
- Reading an article from *The Financial Times* about recipes for team building
- Reading a text about different skills to resolve a conflict
- Reading a text about an action plan for improving the motivation of a sales team
- Writing a letter

II. Language reflections

A. Language and grammar functions
- Modal verb+present perfect
B. Vocabulary

- Prefixes
- Diplomatic language

III. Sociocultural aspects

- To think about the importance of working in teams
- To respect workmates
-

CROSS-CURRICULAR TOPICS

Moral and Civic Education
To respect workmates
To think about the importance of working in teams

Education for equality
To respect workmates

Unit 9: Raising Finance
Aims

- To use dependent prepositions
- To discuss where and how finance can be raised
- To listen to an interview with the MD of a private equity team
- To read an article from *The Financial Times* about no more easy money
- To know financial terms
- To read a text about negotiating
- To read a text about negotiating finance for a new film
- To write a summary

Contents

I. Communication skills
- Talking about where and how finance can be raised
- Listening to an interview with the MD of a private equity team
- Reading an article from *The Financial Times* about no more easy money
- Reading a text about negotiating
- Reading a text about negotiating finance for a new film
- Writing a summary

II. Language reflections

A. Language and grammar functions
- Dependent prepositions
B. Vocabulary

- Financial terms
III. Sociocultural aspects

- To think about ways of raising money
- To think about money and life

CROSS-CURRICULAR TOPICS

Moral and civic education
To think about money and society
Consumer education
To think about earning money.
To think about wasting money

Unit 10: Customer Service
Aims

- To use gerunds
- To complain
- To discuss the importance of customer service
- To listen to an interview with the manager of a top restaurant

- To read an article from *The Financial Times* about the changes of the customer world
- To develop skills to improve active listening
- To read a text about dealing with customer complaints
- To write a report
- To write a letter of complaint

Contents

I. Communication skills
- Talking about the importance of customer service
- Listening to an interview with the manager of a top restaurant
- Reading an article from *The Financial Times* about the changes of the customer world
- Reading a text about dealing with customer complaints
- Writing a report
- Writing a letter of complaint

II. Language reflections

A. Language and grammar functions
- Gerunds

B. Vocabulary

- Complaints

III. Sociocultural aspects

- To know how to complain
- To think about customer rights

CROSS-CURRICULAR TOPICS

Moral and civic education
To think about customer rights
Consumer Education
To debate about customer service

Unit 11: Crisis Management
Aims

- To use the conditionals
- To discuss ways of handling crisis
- To know vocabulary related to handling crisis
- To listen to an interview with a professor of ethics and social responsibility
- To read an article from *The Financial Times* about how not to take care of a brand
- To read text about expecting the unexpected.
- To ask difficult questions
- To answer difficult questions
- To read a text about preparing a press conference to defend criticism of a video game
- To write an article
- To write a report

Contents

I. Communication skills
- Talking about ways of handling crisis
- Listening to an interview with a professor of ethics and social responsibility
- Reading an article from *The Financial Times* about how not to take care of a brand
- Reading a text about expecting the unexpected.
- Asking difficult questions
- Answering difficult questions
- Reading a text about preparing a press conference to defend criticism of a video game
- Writing an article
- Writing a report

II. Language reflections

A. Language and grammar functions
- Conditionals
B. Vocabulary

- Handling crisis
III. Sociocultural aspects

- To think about handling crisis
- To debate about crisis management
- To debate about ethics and social responsibility
- To debate about video games

CROSS-CURRICULAR TOPICS

Moral and civic education
To think about ethics and social responsibility
Consumer education
To debate about video games

Unit 12: Mergers and Acquisitions
Aims

- To talk about prediction
- To talk about probability
- To describe mergers
- To describe acquisitions
- To discuss acquisitions, mergers and joint ventures
- To listen to an interview with the Director of an M&A research centre
- To read an article from *Corporate knight* about green targets
- To make a presentation
- To read a text about presenting recommendations for an acquisition
- To write a report

Contents

I. Communication skills
- Talking about prediction

- Talking about probability
- Describing mergers
- Describing acquisitions
- Talking about acquisitions, mergers and joint ventures
- Listening to an interview with the Director of an M&A research centre
- Reading an article from *Corporate knight* about green targets
- Reading a text about presenting recommendations for an acquisition
- Writing a report

II. Language reflections

A. Language and grammar functions
- Prediction
- Probability
B. Vocabulary

- Numbers
III. Sociocultural aspects

- To think about buying a company
- To debate about joining other companies to form a bigger one
- To debate about green targets

CROSS-CURRICULAR TOPICS

Environmental Education
To debate about green targets

Market Leader contains a great variety of exercises and activities, which can be carried out individually or in groups in accordance with the needs of the learner. It is worth mentioning that the activities are aimed to develop not only language skills but also competences such as:

- ✓ Communication in a foreign language
- ✓ Digital competence
- ✓ Learning to learn
- ✓ Social and civic competences
- ✓ Cultural awareness
- ✓ Being autonomous

*Communication in a foreign language* includes grammar, word building (prefixes and suffixes), idioms, collocations, synonyms and antonyms, describing situations, management qualities, diplomatic language, financial terms, complaints, handling a crisis, making predictions and expressing probability.

*Digital competence* involves the confident and critical use of information available through information and communication technology (ICT).

*Learning to learn* is related to the acquisition of learning strategies to improve a student's ability to learn efficiently.

*Social and civic competences* refer to personal, interpersonal and intercultural competence and is linked to personal and social well-being. It is related to the understanding of codes of conduct in different environments. Civic competence equips individuals to engage in active and democratic participation.

*Cultural awareness* involves appreciation of the importance of respecting different people's customs, traditions, beliefs and religions.

*Being autonomous* is the ability to work on one's own. It involves the ability to plan and manage learning in order to achieve objectives.


Market Leader Upper-Intermediate consists of twelve units which distribute content in an organized manner to develop language skills and basic competences. A wide range of exercises and activities are involved to practice grammar, vocabulary, listening, reading and writing skills along with the ability to apply critical thinking to solve everyday situations. The topics are carefully chosen to satisfy the learners' needs. They are dynamic and engaging, since each topic represents a real situation in business environment. Units are built to make learners feel integrated in terms of the language they acquire and the awareness of personal and professional skills that are needed to achieve successful career outcomes.


### 4.3.11   Contents and Structure of New Language Leader

New Language Leader is mainly targeted to university adult students and has a good balance of general and academic English and develops skills that students of the 21$^{st}$ century need to be successful in the globalized world. Nowadays, it is not just about learning English but developing skills such as critical thinking or digital literacies to feel integrated in academic and professional life. Each unit in New Language Leader is focused to reinforce these aspects. Up-to-date topics motivate learners to discuss around contemporary issues, which develop their language skills and critical thinking. The topics are varied and include global affairs, health, sport, science, crime, communication, environment and globalization.

In this section I will talk about different components of the course book New Language Leader Upper-Intermediate. We have been using it to teach English to Industrial Engineering students at the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia.

Every lesson in New Language Leader has a scenario with a case study and a "Meet the Expert" video with leading professionals in different fields. It also has a Study Skills section to teach students how to do their best in academic studies.

Let's begin with the distribution of contents.



Figure 4.3: Coursebook contents

The digital version of the course book consists of twelve units, which has the same layout, design and distribution as its analogical counterpart. Each unit is divided into several relevant sections:

- ✓ Grammar
- ✓ Vocabulary
- ✓ Reading
- ✓ Listening
- ✓ Speaking/Pronunciation
- ✓ Scenario
- ✓ Study skills/Writing
- ✓ Video

Let's have a look at Unit 1 Communication. On the left-hand side, we can see the list of the objectives for this unit and they are divided into five sections:

- ✓ Grammar
- ✓ Vocabulary
- ✓ Scenario
- ✓ Study skills
- ✓ Writing skills
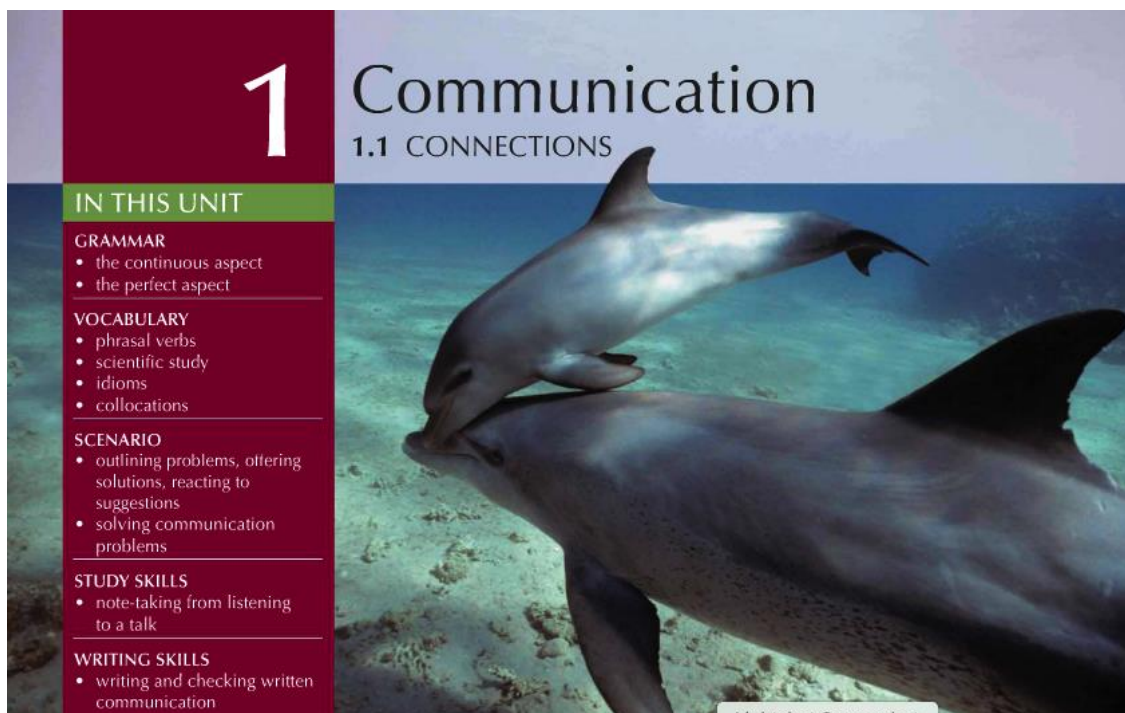


Figure 4.4: Coursebook_unit objectives

The unit begins with speaking, listening, vocabulary, reading and writing activities to encourage students to think about the subject topic and revise the vocabulary that they might have learnt previously. Vocabulary items are usually words, collocations or idioms related to the topic. There will be usually ten lexical items.

Listening activities give more input in terms of topic area. Listening and reading activities provide examples for the grammar section that follows speaking, reading, listening and vocabulary sections. Once they have done speaking, reading, listening and vocabulary, students are ready to do the final speaking and writing activities. These are production activities, so the teacher can see what the students have learnt.

At the end of the book there is the section called Language Reference and Extra Practice.

Figure 4.5: Language reference



Figure 4.6: Extra practice

Here students will be given clear descriptions about the grammar that they have studied and extra practice if they need it.  Grammar is introduced through the inductive approach. There is also a pronunciation activity usually related to the grammar.

There are quite a few activities which are directed to develop student critical thinking. This can be seen in following activities.

## SPEAKING

**10a** Work in groups and talk about current trends in communication. Think about the following topics.

- reading
- texting
- the internet
- tablets
- telephoning
- writing letters
- writing emails
- smartphones
- using Twitter

*People are reading fewer novels these days because they're using computers more.*

Figure 4.7: Speaking activity 1

## SPEAKING

**11a** Work with a partner to think of three pieces of advice for men communicating with women, and women communicating with men. Use the information in this unit, and your own ideas.

**11b** Work with another pair to share your ideas. Choose the three best pieces of advice.

Figure 4.8: Speaking activity 2

This part of the unit finishes with a task. It is usually an extended production task, which the students must do in groups.

## TASK
### SOLVING COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS

**5** Martin, Paul, Stewart and Carlos are students sharing a flat for a year. Read about them and discuss what problems could arise because of their different personalities.

**6a** The students are having problems living together. Work in groups of four. You are counsellors at the Advice Centre and are helping the students to sort out their problems. Each of you has met one of the flatmates. Read the notes of your conversation.

Counsellor A: look at page 155.
Counsellor B: look at page 157.
Counsellor C: look at page 161.
Counsellor D: look at page 163.

Figure 4.9: Communicative task

The final section in each unit is divided into Study Skills and Writing Skills.



Figure 4.10: Study and Writing Skills

The e-textbook provides dynamic learning; however, the activities are not interactive. The exercises can be auto-checked and are of the type such as Multiple choice, Short-answer Quizzes, Matching, or Cloze texts.

New Language Leader is correlated with CEFR regulations. Its methodology is based on a communicative and academic approach to learn English oriented to university students. Case studies and scenarios provide students with the chance to apply their knowledge in authentic situations. The videos of the sections Study Skills give useful guidelines for study and Study-skills experts help students develop the skills they will need for presentations and discussions.

The course book is available with MyEnglishLab for additional practice and self-study. It provides students with instant feedback through the self-grading interface and teachers receive a helpful analysis of their students' engagement and progress. We will now turn to the analysis of this online platform that comes with both Market Leader and New Language Leader.

### 4.3.12   Contents and Structure of MyEnglishLab

MyEnglishLab is an online tool, which is designed to enrich the learning experience and complement the course book with course-related extra practice. This platform might be

considered as blended learning and can be used on a PC, tablets and mobiles anywhere there is access to the Internet.

The products are designed to extend the contact hours with students out of class, help them get deeper insights into the topics learnt in the course book thus making the learning process more meaningful.

Students find this platform beneficial, since it delivers content through a motivating and flexible environment where automated marking and extra support for students is provided. Moreover, the user gets immediate feedback. Online hints and tips direct the self-work which ensures that students get engaged with the task. Once the activities are completed the grades are fed to the Gradebook to monitor students' progress.

The platform is broken down into several sections:
- Assignments
- Course
- Gradebook
- Messages
- Settings

Assignments

In this section the teacher might assign work as homework or to be done in class as part of the To Do List , Calendar and Recent Activity.
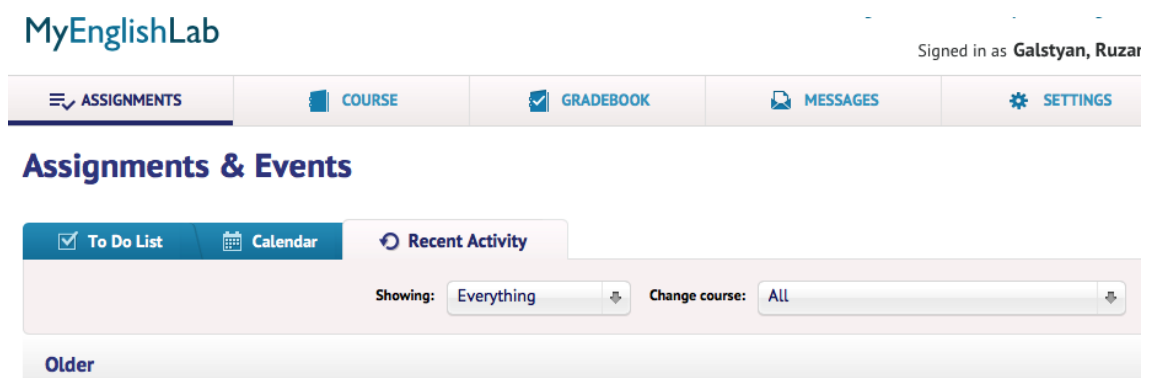


Figure 4.11: Assignments

Course

When you click on the Course, you will see the list of units on the left, which are exactly the same as the units of the course book (and have a similar look and feel).



Figure 4.12: Course units

By clicking on each unit, you will see the list of topics on the right and by clicking on each topic all the activities and exercises will appear. The teacher can choose to show or hide the activities.
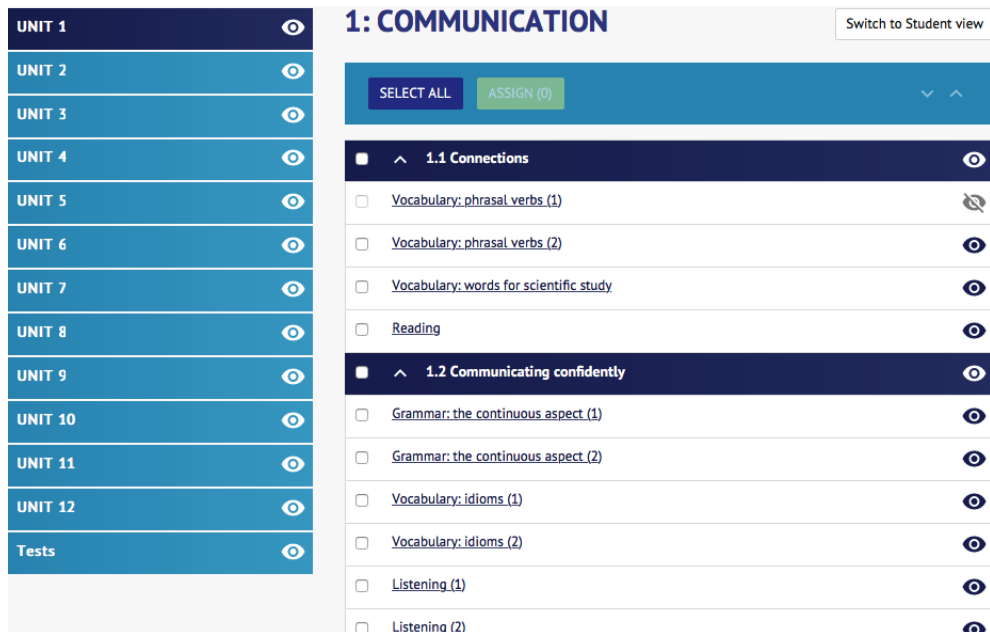
Figure 4.13: Course exercises

Gradebook

In this section it is easy to see how the class or individual students are performing. According to the results, the teacher can provide more support if it is required through the section Assignments. One of the most innovative features is Diagnostics. This report provides an in-depth analysis of:

- Time/Unit: this shows the average time a student has spent on units in the course.
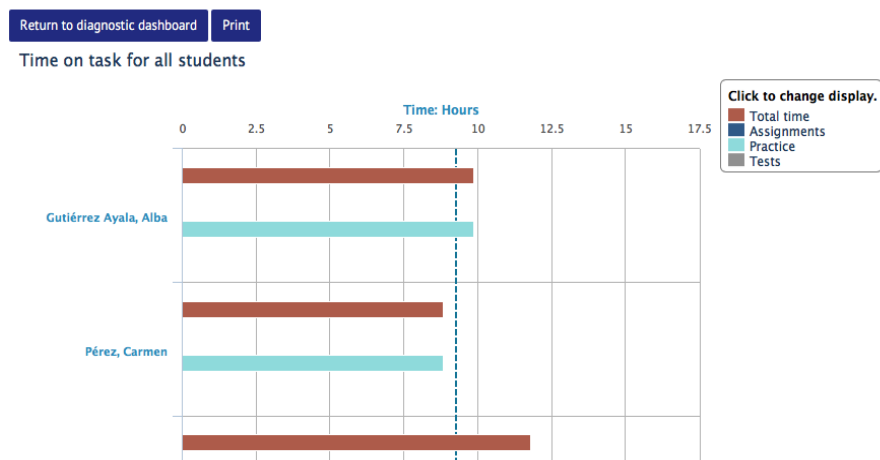


Figure 4.13: Time on task

- Score/Skill: this shows the average score for each skill in this area.

Average scores by skill
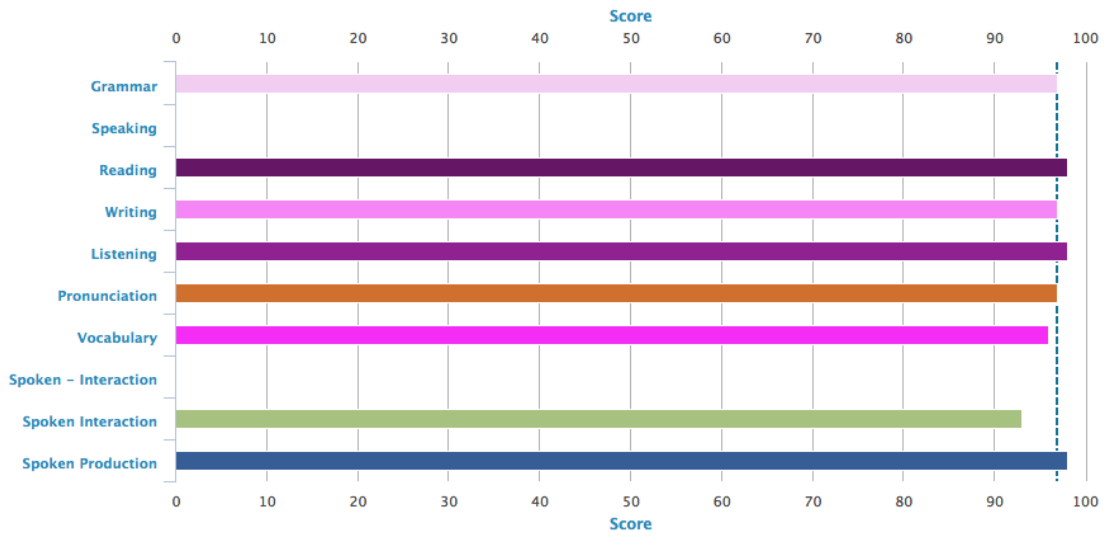


Figure 4.14: Average scores

- Time/Sub-section: this shows the amount of time that has been spent in this area.



Figure 4.15: Average time on task for units

- Score/Student: this shows the score for each student in this area.

Scores by skill for students
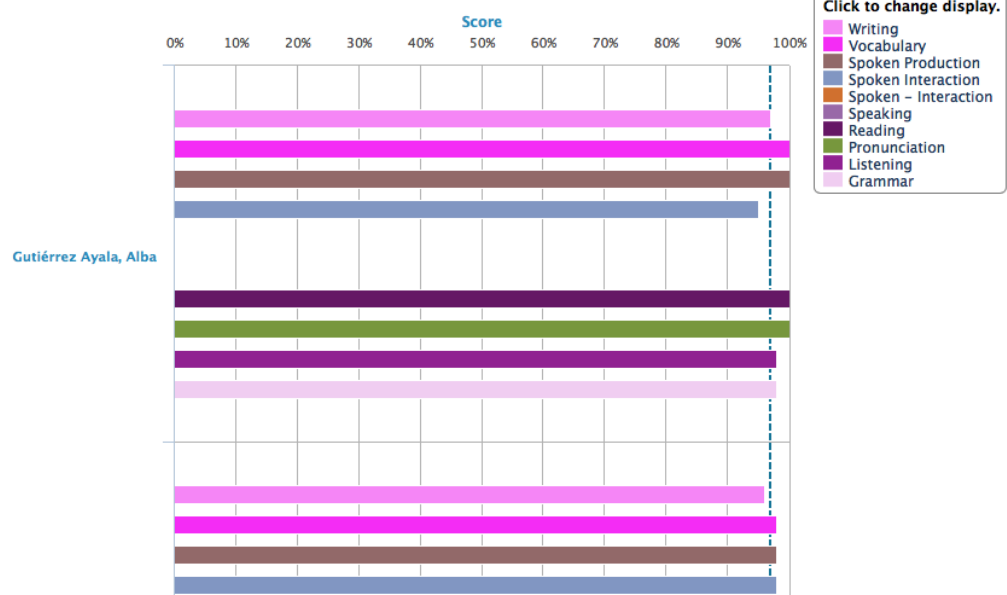


Figure 4.16: Score by skill

- Attempt/Score: this shows the average number of attempts and score.

Number of attempts and average scores for all units
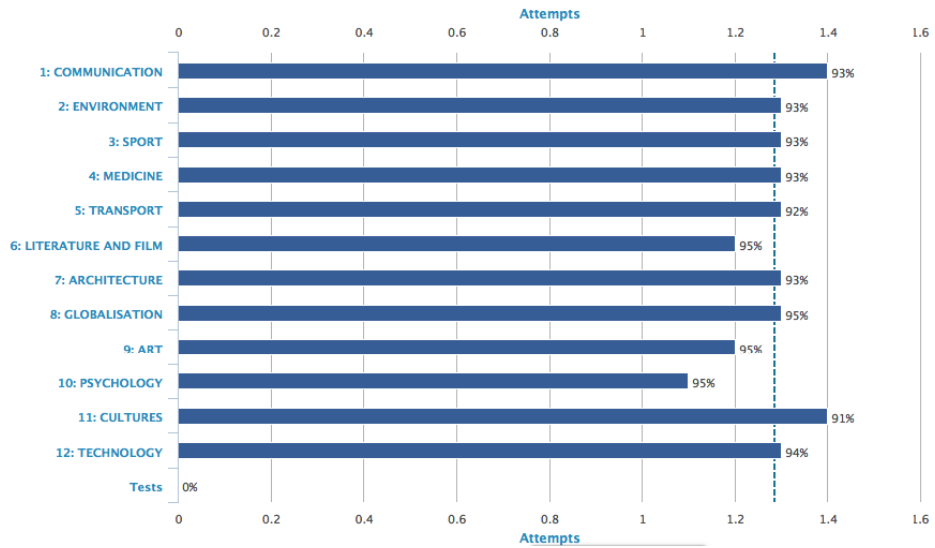


Figure 4.17: Number of attempts and average scores for all units

In the option Change the View, we can choose to see only what we need: Assignments and Tests, Assignment Only, Test Only, Practice and Tests and Practice Only.
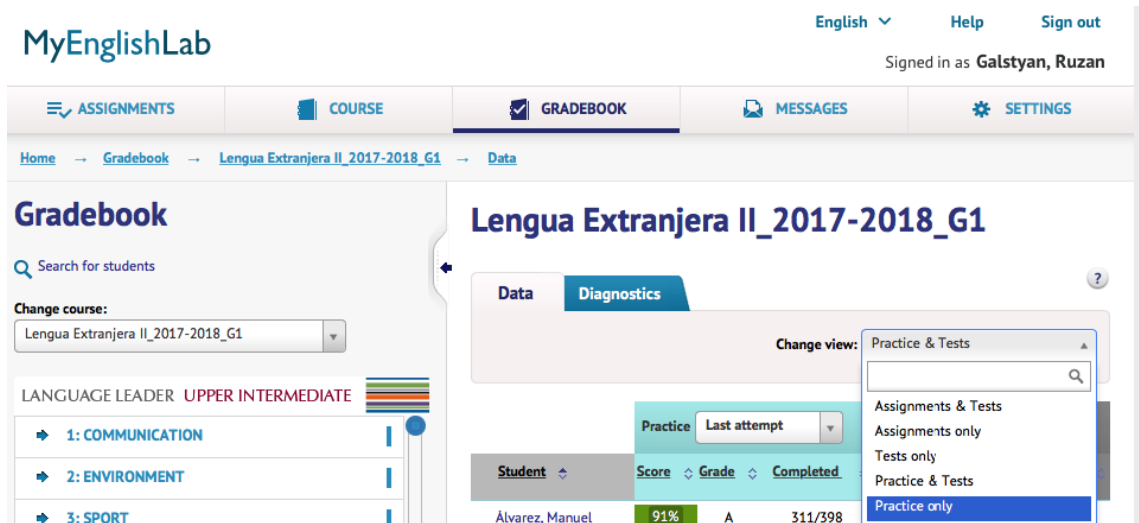
Figure 4.18: Change view

In the option Practice, we can choose the type of scores: Last Attempt, First Attempt, Average Score or Highest Score. This filter enables the teacher to personalize the Gradebook and show exactly what the teacher needs.
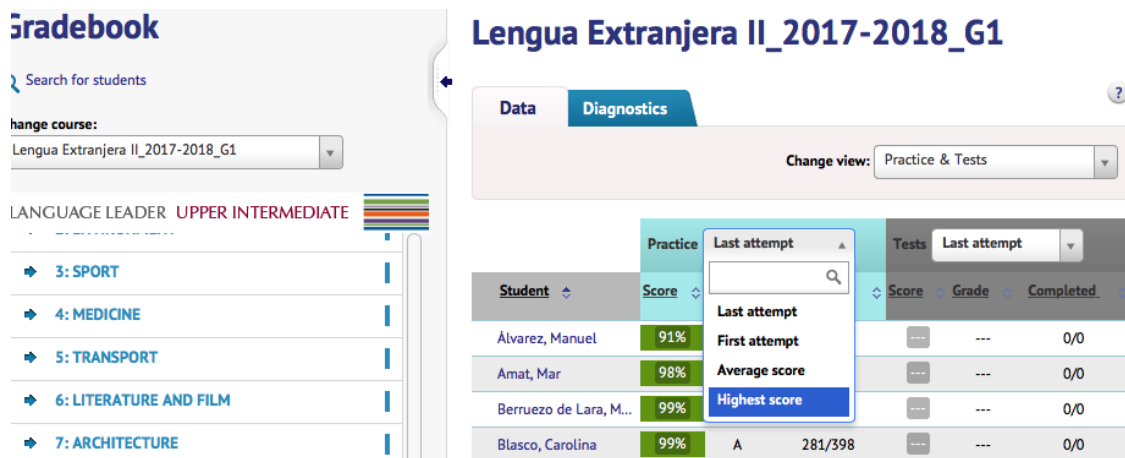


Figure 4.19: Practice

We can also click on a student's name to see the individual grades for that student for units, lesson or activity.

Messages

There is also a messaging facility that provides an opportunity to stay in contact with other students or the tutor.
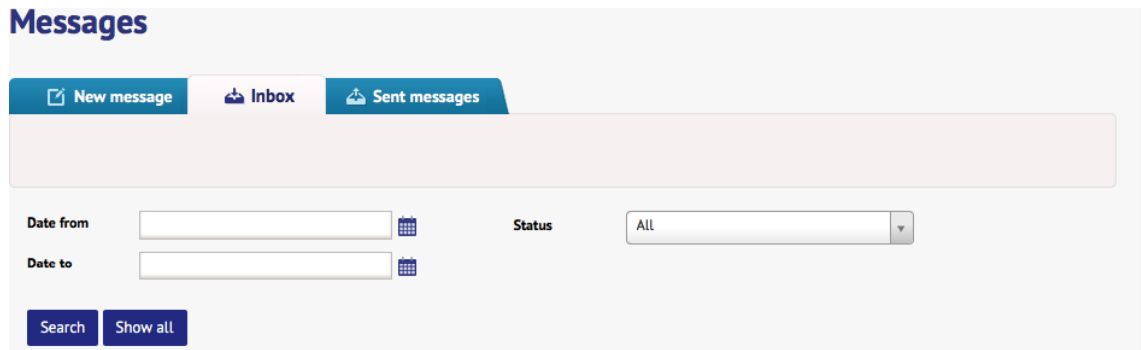
Figure 4.20: Messages

Settings

This is where students and teachers manage the course and the personal profile. Tutors can set up their basic information such as email address, language, time zone and password. It is important to have the same time zone established both for students and teachers so that any deadline for assignment is the same for the whole class.
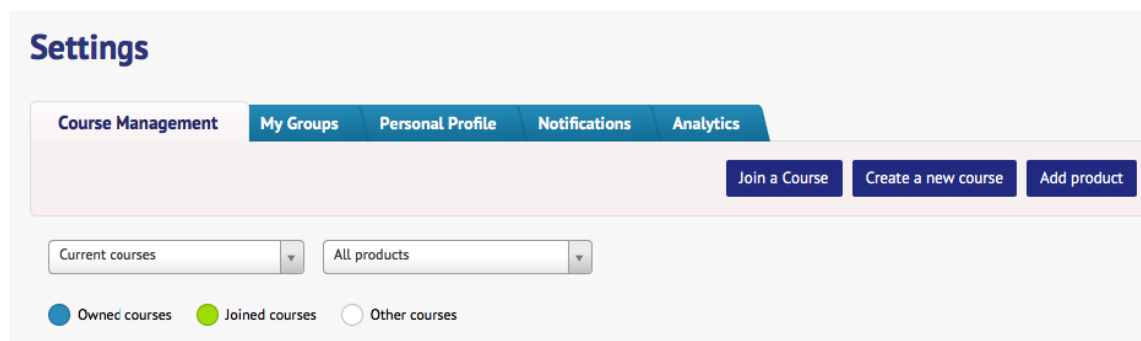


Figure 4.21: Settings

Under Course Management the teacher can create new courses or edit existing ones, add a new product or join a course using a code number. Here we can manage resources or change course settings. In the option Current Courses, we can choose to see all courses or current courses and, in the option All Products, we need to choose the product we want to work with.
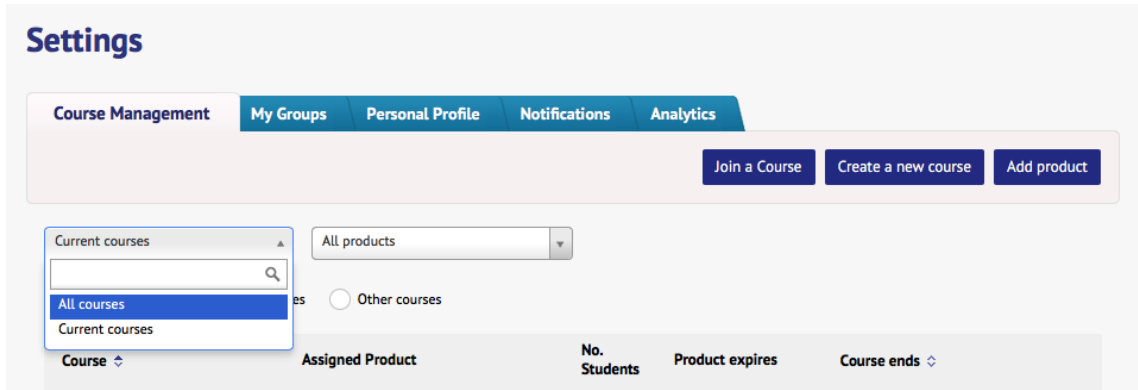
Figure 4.22: Course management

In the section My Group, we can find the name of the program administrator.
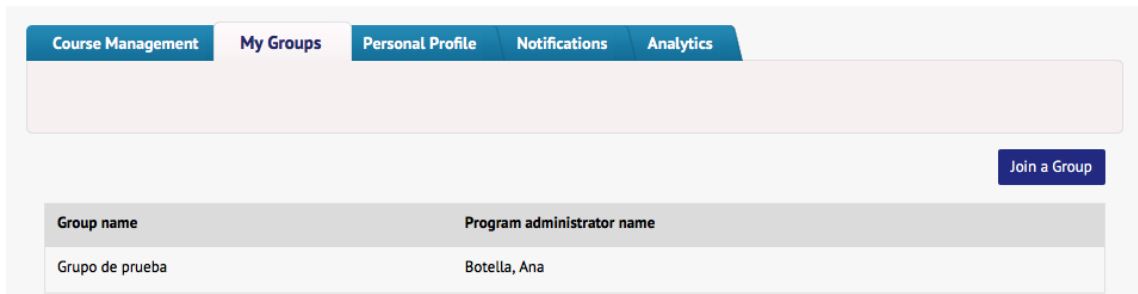


Figure 4.23: My Groups

In the option Personal Profile, the tutor can find the information that was introduced previously to create the course.
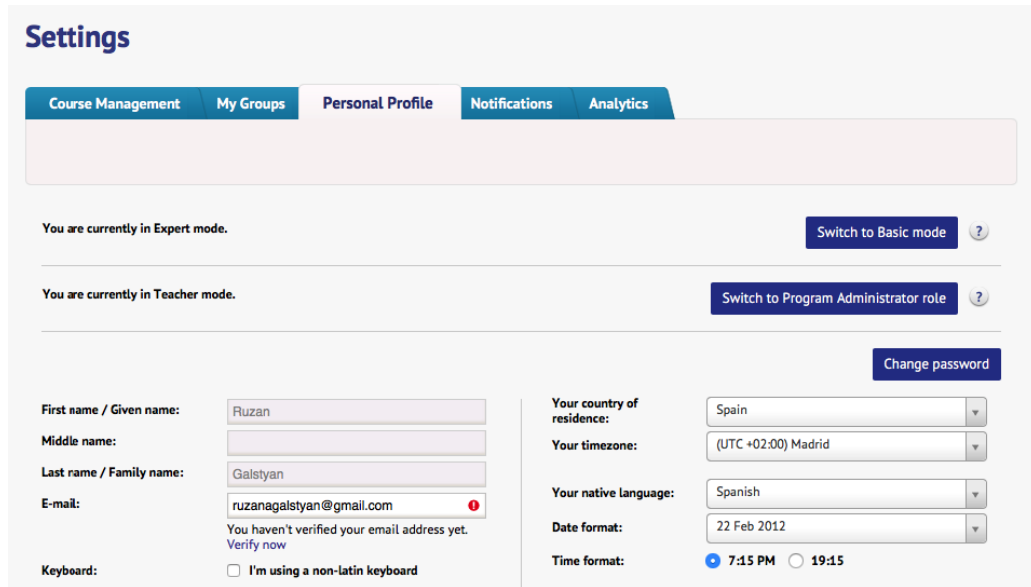


Figure 4.24: Personal profile

Notification is another useful tool that enables tutors to be notified when students submit their assignments.
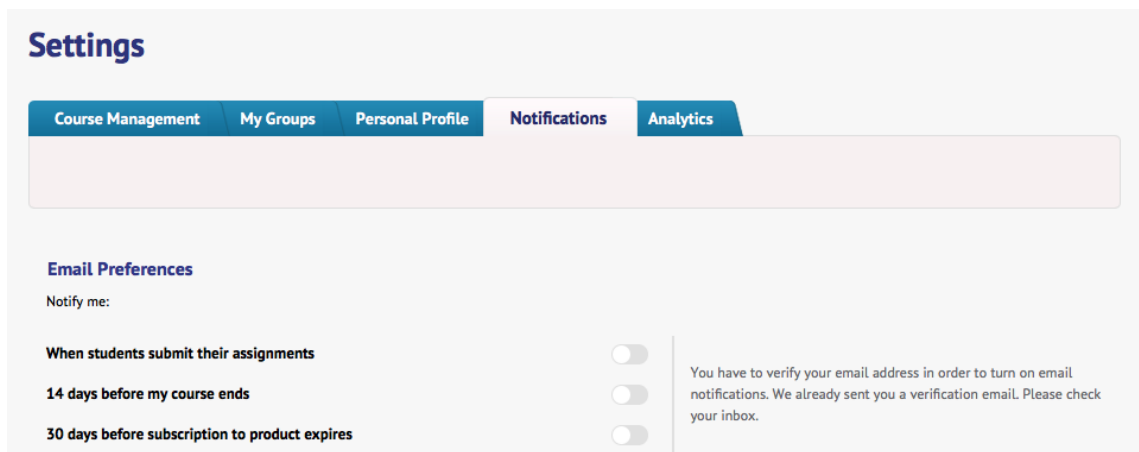


Figure 4.25: Notifications

In the section Analytics, tutors can either export multiple gradebooks from multiple products, courses and teachers or view gradebook exports.
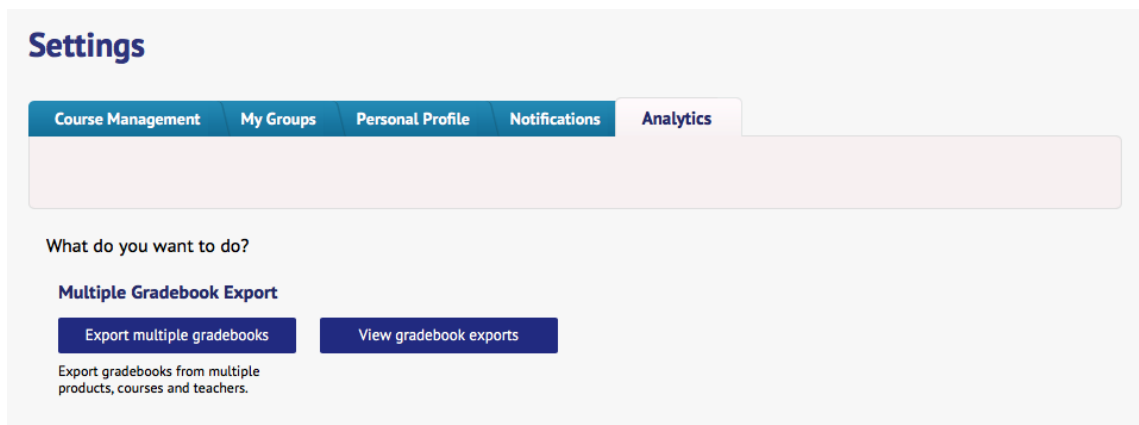


Figure 4.26: Analytics

### 4.3.13 Conclusion

In this section, we have analysed two e-textbooks and their accompanying online platform. A set of evaluation criteria was developed. The developed criteria list was subdivided into three groups according to the three aspects of e-textbooks. These criteria were used for evaluating the two English language e-textbooks, whereby the books were evaluated, and the results recorded against the checklist. We also analysed the contents and structure of the two e-

textbooks and their online platform. The online platform benefits from lots of self-correcting mechanical exercises but is like a workbook placed online. There are no real communicative tasks. The e-textbooks show more awareness of communicative goals. However, the e-textbooks as well as the online platform are highly structured and repetitive. This is not a bad thing as it may make learning easier by having clear objectives albeit extremely routine and somewhat boring. For our primary objective (the design of a model of online language learning), we feel that an online language learning course should break out of the model of traditional, analogical coursebooks and fully exploit the communicative tools offered by online technologies.

## 4.4 A Review of MOOCs

### 4.4.1   Introduction

An obvious place to find about online language learning is to analyse how Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) are delivering second language (L2) learning courses. To obtain data with regards to MOOCs, ten language courses (language MOOCs) delivered by Coursera, eDX and Future Learn have been analysed considering the following characteristics:

      1. Course content and structure (including evaluation methods)

      2. Financial Accessibility

      3. Certification

      4. Name of course

      5. Course time limit

      6. University/Institution

      7. Language

If one visits the website online course reports[5], one can obtain data, albeit not completely rigorous data (as the authors admit) but sufficiently so, about the 50 most popular MOOCS of all

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[5] https://www.onlinecoursereport.com/the-50-most-popular-moocs-of-all-time/

time. Interestingly, the most popular MOOC of all time is one that teaches you how to learn[6]. This shows how important student autonomy and student learning strategies are in online learning. A student needs to know how to learn. For this thesis, though, even more interesting is the data about learning the English language. There are several English language MOOCs among the most popular ones:

9. Understanding IELTS: Techniques for English Language Tests / British Council

- Total enrolment: 690567

24. Write101x: English Grammar and Style / University of Queensland

- Total enrolment: 414,432

25. IELTSx: IELTS Academic Test Preparation / University of Queensland

- Total enrolment: 355,026

27. Exploring English: Language and Culture / British Council

- Total enrolment: 326,093

What is noticeable is that they are niche courses. They are not general language courses. They have a specific aim, particularly the two IELTS test preparation courses. In this thesis, we are more interested in finding out about a model for a general online language course (for example, a B2 language course or the equivalent to a Cambridge First Certificate course).

It should also be noted that most top courses come from two platforms: Coursera and edX. The latter, in this case, amounts to MIT and Harvard courses. Therefore, along with Future Learn, we decided to concentrate our analysis on these three platforms.

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[6] Learning How to Learn: Powerful mental tools to help you master tough subjects

Before embarking on our findings, it became clear from our analysis that too many MOOCs are over-structured, too linear and too like traditional University courses. In other words, despite the new technology, they are often the reflection of a university course moved online although it may be shortened to 4 or 6 weeks rather than based on the 10 to 15-week semester structure.

### 4.4.2    MOOC platform (Future Learn)

Future Learn is based on Social Learning theory, which states that continuous mutual interactions positively influence the way humans learn (particularly the work of Laurillard, 2002). In other words, the general approach is a social constructivist approach. However, this should not blind us to the fact that the courses that we analyzed are highly structured. Ideas are introduced through videos and articles. Learners can then discuss what they have learned, testing their new knowledge with interactive quizzes that offer responses and the opportunity to try again if an answer is wrong. Every course takes a step by step approach, with challenges and helpful tips along the way, to test and build a learner's understanding. However, as I have said, courses are highly structured around the following format: Videos (plus transcripts), Articles, Discussion (forums), and Quizzes. Future Learn states that their social learning model is organized around 1) discussion for learning (sharing and debating ideas with fellow learners, mainly on forums); 2) visible learning (making the learning process visible, through their "To Do list", see figure 4.27 below); 3) community supported learning (learners sharing their knowledge with their peers); 4) massive-scale social learning (they say it is a new way of learning, but are not explicit about what it is, although without doubt they have massive recognized expertise from the Open University and the BBC).
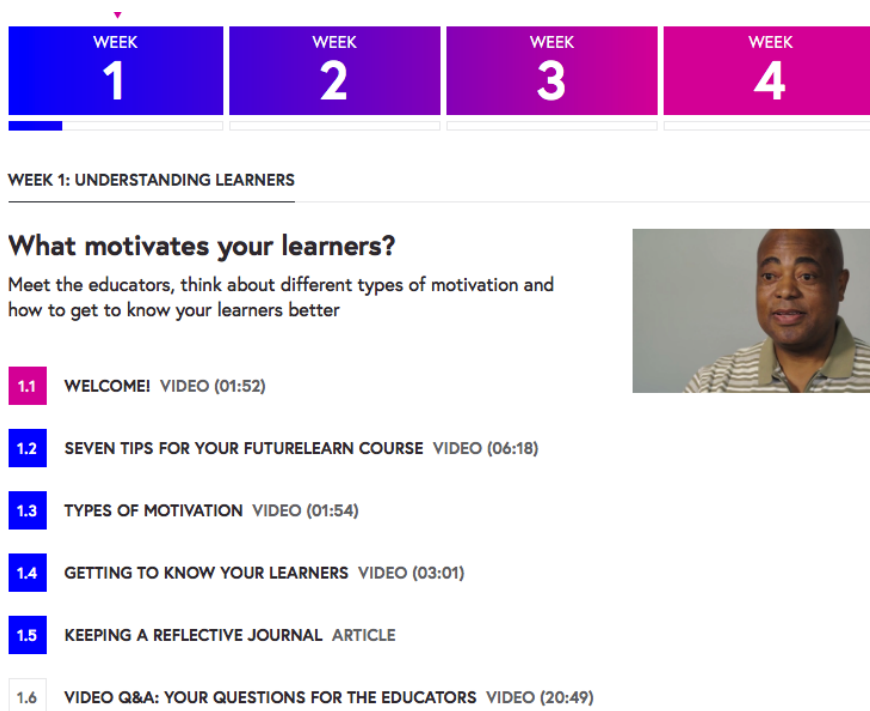
Figure 4.27: Course Structure

Let's now look at some examples of the English language courses that we analysed.

| MOOC Platform | Name of course | University, Institution | Fee or Free | Language | Official Certification, Credit, Badges | Time Limit: Yes / No | Course: Content & Structure |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| FutureLearn (UK) www.futurelearn.com | English for Academic Purposes: a MOVE-ME Project Course | The Open University, National University of Ireland Galway, Università per Stranieri di Siena (UniStraSi) | Free | English | Yes, but it is not free | Yes (if not upgraded) | **Week 1: Introduction Week 1: Introduction** Welcome Welcome, introduction of the educators and introduce yourself. 1.1Let's get to know each other (discussion) 1.2 Learning Outcomes of the Week (article) 1.3 Why are you taking this course? (exercise) Understanding this Online Course Structure and objectives of this Online Course. Tips for making the most of this course. Targeted skills. 1.4 Structure and objectives of this online course (article) 1.5 How to get the most out of this online course (article) Academic: Definitions and Genres This section focuses on the concept of 'academic' and analyses different academic text types and genres. 1.6 What does 'academic' mean? - Students' opinions video (00:31) 1.7 What is 'academic'? (article) 1.8 Origin and definition of 'academic' video (03:37) |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | 1.9 Academic genres (quiz)<br>1.10 More genres (article)<br>1.11 Which academic genres do you know? (discussion)<br>Features of Academic Discourse<br>What characterizes academic discourse?<br>1.12 Talking 'difficult': The Big Bang Theory (discussion)<br>1.13 Key features of public talk (article)<br>1.14 Key features of academic lectures (discussion)<br>1.15 Talk, lecture or both? (quiz)<br>1.16 Lectures vs Public Talk (article)<br>1.17 Our views (article)<br>Wrapping up<br>Let's recap what we have learnt so far. Answer the questions below to check your understanding of the main points covered this week.<br>1.18 A quick revision (quiz)<br>1.19 What have you learnt this week? (discussion)<br>**Course structure:**<br>Articles, Videos, Discussion, Quizzes |
| FutureLearn (UK) www.futurelearn.com | An Intermediate Guide to Writing in English for University Study | University of Reading | Free | English | Yes, but it is not free | Yes (if not upgraded) | | **Week 1: Welcome to the course**<br>Meet the team and learn more about what you will cover this Week.<br>1.1 What does academic writing mean to you? (discussion)<br>1.2 Welcome to the course video (02:59)<br>1.3 What is academic writing? (article)<br>1.4 What features did you spot? (quiz)<br>What is academic writing<br>What key features distinguish academic writing from other styles of writing?<br>1.5 Newspaper article video (02:25)<br>1.6 IELTS exam essay video (03:07)<br>1.7 Academic essay video (05:24)<br>1.8 Test your understanding: what is academic writing? (quiz)<br>1.9 Common features of academic writing (discussion)<br>Different essay structures<br>How does the purpose of your essay relate to the structure?<br>1.10 Choosing the correct structure for your essay question (article)<br>1.11 Patrick's essay: structure video (02:08)<br>Analysing the essay question<br>Explore how to analyse the essay question to help you develop the most effective structure for your essay.<br>1.12 Analysing the question video (03:05)<br>1.13 Your main essay question (article)<br>1.14 Test your understanding: The essay question (quiz)<br>1.15 Generating ideas for the essay (discussion) |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | 1.16 Generating ideas for the essay article Language focus: Identifying a word class Learn more about different language skills used in academic writing. 1.17 Introduction to language in essays (article) 1.18 Parts of speech video (01:51) 1.19 Can you identify the word class? (quiz) 1.20 Correcting word class errors (discussion) 1.21 Part of speech: Suffixes (article) 1.22 Word games (article) 1.23 Can you name the part of speech? (quiz) **Course structure:** Articles, Videos, Discussion, Quizzes |
| FutureLearn (UK) www.futurelearn.com | Understanding IELTS | British Council | Free | English | Yes, but it is not free | Yes (if not upgraded) | **Week 1: Getting started** Meet the educators and share your feelings about exams. 1.1 Welcome! (article) 1.2 Seven tips for your FutureLearn Course video (06:18) 1.3 Facebook Live video (38:42) 1.4 Exams and me video (02:30) Getting to know the IELTS test 1.5 Poll: Your IELTS journey (exercise) 1.6 IELTS and me video (01:34) 1.7 The IELTS test format video (04:00) 1.8 The IELTS test format (quiz) Reading and Listening Practice A reading and listening activity on the IELTS exam. 1.9 What's next? video (00:45) 1.10 Reading: exam stress (article) 1.11 Exam stress - check your understanding (quiz) 1.12 Listening - how the IELTS test is produced (audio) Watching a recorded IELTS interview in preparation for next week. 1.13 Marking the Speaking test video (00:51) 1.14 Some practice interviews - Part 1 video (07:21) A review of Week 1 1.15 Booking an IELTS test with the British Council (discussion) 1.16 The Global Study Awards video (03:33) 1.17 Video review of Week 1 video (04:51) **Course structure:** Articles, Videos, Discussion, Quizzes |

Table 4.8: English language courses on Future Learn

Two of the above courses last 6 weeks and one has a duration of 5 weeks (with 2 to 4 hours of studying per week depending on the course). As can be seen, despite a stated philosophy of social learning (in other words, a constructivist and connectivist approach), the courses are

highly structured and well-organized. This is not a criticism but the nature of online learning. Generally speaking, online learning does not permit improvisation in the same way as a classroom may. However, even in brick and mortar classrooms, it is not recommendable to over-improvise. The need to provide an off-the-shelf course on an online platform means that teachers may be limited in creative use of technology. MOOCs on the Future Learn platform do not use a wide variety of tools, but the designers of these courses would probably argue that learners will use tools like Skype, Google Translator and the many other Apps available anyway to learn the English language (either as a form of informal or incidental learning or as explicit learning tools and strategies). Initially, it may seem that the student experience in learning language skills are limited but these MOOCs are normally specialized and very specific courses. In a general English language course, an online platform needs to include more of the language learning tools that students can use to improve their language skills online.

### 4.4.3    MOOC platform (Coursera)

The course, *Machine Learning: Master the Fundamentals* (Stanford University), and which led to the founding of Coursera, is taught by Andrew Ng. Ng is an associate professor of Computer Science at Stanford. He co-founded Coursera with Daphne Koller, another Stanford computer science professor. This has led to the idea that Coursera uses powerful artificial intelligence algorithms and whose basic course design is firmly in the xMoOC type (in other words, behaviourist or cognitive learning). Let's now look at some examples of the English language courses that we analyzed (following the same methodology as in the previous section).

| MOOC Platform | Name of course | University, Institution | Fee or Free | Language | Official Certification, Credit, Badges | Time Limit: Yes / No | Course: Content & Structure |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Coursera https://www.coursera.org/ | Business English: Basics | Hong Kong University of Science and Technology | Fee | English | Official Certification | Yes, 6 weeks | Welcome module **Welcome to Week 1!** 3 videos, 4 readings Communication basics **Welcome to Week 2!** 7 videos, 7 readings, 2 practice quizzes Module 2 Genres and styles **Welcome to Week 3!** 7 videos, 6 readings, 2 practice quizzes |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | **Assignment:** Correct the grammar and rewrite<br>Module 3<br>Audience and purpose<br>**Welcome to Week 4!**<br>7 videos, 5 readings, 2 practice quizzes<br>**Assignment:** Using appropriate tone and style<br>Module 4<br>Analyzing business cases<br>**Welcome to Week 5!**<br>5 videos, 8 readings,<br>2 practice quizzes<br>**Assignment:** Sustainable Resort Proposal<br>Module 5<br>Concluding module<br>**Welcome to Week 6!**<br>1 reading<br>**Assignment:** Final exam |
| Coursera<br>https://www.coursera.org/ | Business English: Meetings | University of Washington | Fee | English | Official Certification | Yes, 4 weeks | **WEEK 1**<br>Introduction to Meetings<br>10 videos, 6 readings, 2 practice quizzes<br>**Assignment:** Successful Meetings<br>**Assignment:** Setting Up A Meeting Email<br>**Assignment:** Writing an Agenda<br>**Assignment:** Responding to Meeting Invitations<br>**Assignment:** Writing and Responding to a Meeting Announcement<br>**WEEK 2**<br>The Language of Meetings<br>12 videos, 5 readings, 4 practice quizzes<br>**Assignment:** Teleconferencing<br>**Assignment:** Plan a Teleconference<br>**WEEK 3**<br>Reporting in Meetings<br>14 videos, 4 readings, 4 practice quizzes<br>**Assignment:** Directing People's Attention<br>**Assignment:** Reporting on Data<br>**WEEK 4**<br>Writing A Proposal<br>12 videos, 5 readings, 4 practice quizzes<br>**Assignment:** Brainstorming Ideas<br>**Assignment:** Add the Missing Words<br>**Assignment:** Creating a Proposal |
| Coursera<br>https://www.coursera.org/ | English for Business and Entrepreneurship | University of Pennsylvania | Fee | English | Official Certification | Yes, 5 weeks | **WEEK 1**<br>Unit 1: Becoming an Entrepreneur<br>In this unit, we will introduce course goals and logistics, then discuss basic concepts and vocabulary related to entrepreneurship.<br>23 videos, 14 readings, 9 practice quizzes<br>**Assignment:** Self-Assessment of Business & Entrepreneurship Vocabulary Knowledge<br>**Assignment:** Check Your Understanding: "Entrepreneurship Seen as Solution to S. Africa's Unemployment Crisis" |

| | | | | | | | | Assignment: Check Your Understanding: "Women taxi startups gaining speed globally" |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Assignment: Check Your Understanding: "Women taxi startups gaining speed globally"
Assignment: Check Your Understanding: "This recent grad brewed a startup by managing the details"
**WEEK 2**
Unit 2: Identifying an Opportunity
This unit will cover how to do market research to determine whether a new product presents an opportunity in a market. We will focus on surveys and questions.
19 videos, 11 readings, 5 practice quizzes
Assignment: Check Your Understanding: "Nigeria's Wecyclers for reusable future in Lagos"
Assignment: Check Your Understanding: "Chinese Go to Los Angeles for Kobe Bryant, But Skip the Beach"
**WEEK 4**
Unit 3: Creating a Business Plan (Part 2)
In this second part of Unit 3, we will learn about the Financials section of a business plan and how to create a simple, brief business plan of our own.
9 videos, 3 readings, 4 practice quizzes
Assignment: Unit 3 Assessment 2: Written Business Plan
**WEEK 5**
Unit 4: Attracting Investors and Obtaining Financial Support
In this unit, we will discuss different ways to get the money needed to start a business. At the end you will create a "pitch" to present your business ideas.
22 videos, 10 readings, 5 practice quizzes
Assignment: Unit 4 Assessment 1: Reflective Response
Assignment: Check Your Understanding: "Microfinance gives voice to rural Indian women"
Assignment: Check Your Understanding: "Crowd-sourced funding provides 'Kickstart' to new business ventures"
Assignment: Check Your Understanding: "How to Pitch a Business"
Assignment: Unit 4: Assessment 2: Persuasive Pitch

Table 4.9: English language courses on Coursera

The Coursera platform offers a range of courses from 4 to 10 weeks (rather like Future Learn) to help students acquire language skills online. The courses contain one to two hours of video

lectures a week and provide quizzes, weekly exercises, peer-graded assignments, and sometimes a final project or exam. The platform is trusted for the credible certifications and the organizations that provide the courses (see the table above, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, University of Washington, University of Pennsylvania). The Coursera platform shares some similarities with Future Learn MOOCs based on how the courses are offered to students. Second language learners can access their learning material using video presentations. These videos demonstrate the use of language skills to the students where they can learn vocabulary, listening, grammar, speaking and pronunciation skills. However, when looking at Coursera and Future Learn, it is possible to find some differences. The learning in Coursera is limited to video demonstrations without initial reading exercises that can prepare students with the language skills they will need to watch the video. It may mean that it is more of a challenge for students to grasp the language skills using Coursera than Future Learn.

Furthermore, on Coursera, forums were useful in helping students to learn language skills from one another. However, the inability to engage with the lecturer was a shortcoming that Coursera students experience when compared to Future Learn. Speaking with the lecturer is a useful aspect that may help the students in asking essential questions about the gained skills and areas of difficulties. When students cannot engage with the teacher, they may fail to have answers to crucial questions that are helpful in understanding the use of language skills in different scenarios. Lecturers and teaching assistants are more active on Future Learn.

However, the differences in student learning capabilities enabled by Coursera and Future Learn do not help to explain the differences between xMOOCs and connectivist MOOCs courses. Although Future Learn advocates social learning and Coursera has a much more commercial feel as well as charging fees for practically all courses, Coursera courses are designed and "taught" by world class universities and excellent teachers. From the table above, one can see a great variety of fairly sophisticated activities in their courses. Their slogan envisions a world where anyone, anywhere can transform their life by accessing the world's best learning experience.

In an interesting study of MOOCs (Hone & El Said, 2016), the researchers found that student that stuck to the course (stickiness) was highly correlated to the quality of the 'content'. This contradicts those who believe that the primary driver in MOOCs is social. They found that the

learners dropped out if they didn't find the content appropriate, or of the right quality and good content turns out to be a primary driver for perseverance and completion, as their statistics show. Coursera courses can certainly boast of producing high quality content.

### 4.4.4    MOOC platform (edX)

EdX, a non-profit organization based in Cambridge, Massachusetts provides people access to education from the best universities and institutions in the world, including Harvard, MIT, Oxford, and Microsoft. EdX is, in a way, in a league of its own as it has powerful universities and institutions behind it. EdX was originally an MIT & Harvard funded start-up company. They say they are the only leading MOOC provider that is both non-profit and open source[7]. Open edX is the open-source platform that powers edX courses and is freely available. With Open edX , educators and technologists can build learning tools and contribute new features to the platform. Their stated aim is to increase access to high-quality education for everyone, everywhere.

EdX courses tend to base their course structures on a traditional behaviourist model. The courses consist of video presentations, and the participants can adapt their pace of learning. In contrast to Coursera, they design their own courses available through the platform. EdX provides students with stimulating and meaningful content. The courses are engaging because they are challenging. They use traditional techniques such as plain texts or provide network interaction such as forums or chat rooms. It offers a more dynamic on-campus learning format in its online learning standards which provides the students with a feeling of following real classroom instruction.

EdX offers four to twelve-week courses which are sectioned into different video sub lessons which have some questions to make sure that knowledge has been acquired. Most MOOCs do not have a time limit. The content material is grouped by week and can be easily identified. The

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[7] https://www.edx.org/about-us

layout is logically organised although you might have to use your intuition while navigating.

EdX makes use of its own forums, which are divided into general, course or specific ones and allows the participants to create groups or learning communities in networks. On the other hand, probably due to the large number of learners and the workload, student-teacher communication and interaction are less developed. Live chat could be a good solution to tackle this situation.

EdX uses diverse techniques of grading and testing such as quizzes, multiple choice questions, online tests, midterm exams and final exams. However, it does not use peer review, which is commonly used by Coursera. It might be considered a useful tool to evaluate tasks such as essays or open response questions when they cannot be assessed by a computer. What is outstanding about edX is its Automated Essay Scoring (AES). Balfour (2013) states that the system trains itself to evaluate essays using machine learning algorithms and provides students with instant qualitative and quantitative feedback. Students can check their progress in the Progress Section obtained for the assignments.

Let's now look at some examples of the English language courses that we analyzed (following the same methodology as in the previous section).

| MOOC Platform | Name of course | University, Institution | Fee or Free | Language | Official Certification, Credit, Badges | Time Limit: Yes / No | Course: Content & Structure |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| edX www.edx.org | English Grammar and Style | The University of Queensland | Free | English | Official Certification | Yes, 8 weeks | Learn key concepts and strategies in grammar and style to help enhance your writing and confidently respond to the demand of high levels of literacy in the 21st century. Syllabus Description Week 1, we'll introduce you to the course and discuss what grammar is and why it matters; writing standard English; and how words work. In Week 2, Introduction to Sentences, we'll learn about parts of speech and word classes; structure and patterns of sentences, phrases, and clauses; and common sentence-level problems. In Week 3, Introduction to Verbs, we'll consider finite and non-finite verbs: linking verbs, auxiliary verbs, transitive |

| | | | | | | | | and intransitive verbs, verb phrases, phrasal verbs, verbal phrases, infinitives, participles, and gerunds. We'll also look at tense, mood, and voice of verbs.<br><br>In Week 4, Introduction to Nouns and Pronouns, we'll explore form and function of nouns: noun strings and nominalisations; form and function of pronouns, and problems with pronouns.<br><br>In Week 5, Introduction to Adjectives and Determiners, we'll discuss the form, function, and use of adjectives including the 'Royal Order of Adjectives' and degrees of comparison. Adjectival sequencing, punctuation, and determiners will also be discussed.<br><br>In Week 6, Introduction to Adverbs and Conjunctions, we'll learn about the form, function, degrees of comparison, and placement of adverbs; intensifiers; and weasels.<br><br>In Week 7, Introduction to Prepositions and Paragraphs, we'll identify how prepositions function and problems with prepositions. We'll also look at paragraph development and cohesive ties.<br><br>In Week 8, Introduction to Punctuation, we'll explore the main punctuation marks, punctuation problems, and other punctuation marks. |
| edX<br>www.edx.org | IELTS Academic Test Preparation | The University of Queensland | Free | English | Official Certification | No | | Syllabus Description<br>**MODULE 1: LISTENING**<br>The module begins with an overview of the IELTS Listening Test and what it includes. This will give you important facts about this module and what it is designed to assess. Following this, we'll show you the differences between each section of the IELTS Listening Test and the types of questions you will need to answer. You will also have opportunities to practice these types of questions and gain the skills that you need.<br><br>**MODULE 2: SPEAKING**<br>This module outlines the different features of the Speaking Test. In preparation for Part 1 of the Speaking Test, we focus on some of the grammar that you can use to talk about your likes and dislikes. We'll also give you some examples of how to extend your answers or make them longer. |

For Part 2 of the test, we'll then focus on the "Individual Long Turn". We'll look at how to analyze the task effectively and how to organize your ideas so that you have a good start, and end, to your talk.

For Part 3 of the test, we will focus on "The Discussion". You'll learn to develop vocabulary related to common Part 3 topics and also some of the common grammar features you need for success in the discussion. This includes focusing on tenses and making comparisons. Later in the unit, we'll introduce some strategies to make your pronunciation clearer.

In this module, you can watch and learn from videos of students taking different parts of the test.

**MODULE 3: READING**
This module begins with an overview of the IELTS Reading Test and what it includes. This will give you important information about what the test is designed to assess, and the different question types used in the test. There will be opportunities to practice the skills you have learned.

**MODULE 4: WRITING**
The module begins with an overview of the IELTS Writing Test and what it includes. We'll then look at the two tasks involved in the test. In preparation for Task 1, you'll learn how to identify different types of visuals, identify and describe the topic and the main features of these visuals, and how to write an overview paragraph to summarize the key information. We'll then look at describing data for Task 1 of the test. You'll learn about what language to use to describe data, as well as how to select and group information. We'll also look at the language used for ordering ideas in paragraphs. In addition, this module offers the chance to practice writing the opening and data description paragraphs, which you can grade with our new assessment criteria. Additionally, you can get feedback on your writing from your peers and give them feedback using the IELTS criteria.

In preparation for Task 2, we're going to take a closer look at the essay question to

| edX www.edx.org | English at Work in Asia: Job Application | The Hong Kong Polytechnic University | Free | English | Official Certification | No | Syllabus Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | **Week 1: Excelling at Leadership and Creativity**<br>Find out what industry professionals think are the qualities and attributes of a leader, and why creativity is important in job applications; learn what you should do before applying for a job, plus vocabulary related to ambition and how to modify your level of formality.<br><br>**Week 2: Getting your CV / Résumé Noticed**<br>Know what you should put in a CV, and what should be left out. Learn different ways of ordering information in a CV, who you could use as a referee, plus vocabulary related to action verbs and HR buzz words.<br><br>**Week 3: Selling Yourself in the Cover Letter**<br>Learn how a cover letter can effectively complement a CV and give you the edge. Get tips from recruiters, as well as language input about parallel structures, verb forms, tone and style.<br><br>**Week 4: Creating a Compelling Online Presence**<br>Study the importance of an online presence when applying for jobs. Create your own online profile and expand your digital vocabulary.<br><br>**Week 5: Completion of Peer Assessment** |

"help you answer all its parts and we will examine ways of planning and organizing your essay. We'll also analyse the different parts of an IELTS essay, look in more detail at some possible task types in Task 2, and explain how they are assessed. We'll then look at how to write a good essay with good structure and appropriate language."

Table 4.10: English language courses on EdX

The basic approach in these English language courses is very similar to courses on Future Learn and Coursera. In other words, videos, mini-lectures, readings, quizzes, writing activities, and writing assignments were used as pedagogical activities. Like Future Learn and Coursera, there is the idea of a strictly linear diet of lectures and learning which I personally think should be eschewed, as different learners want different portions of the learning, at different times. A

more modular approach, where modules are self-contained and can be taken in any order may be one tactic to avoid such a structured and linear approach.

What I have said above relates to another issue of MOOCs which is the idea that students must be drip-fed, moving synchronously through the course with a cohort of other students. The evidence of the large enrolment numbers shows that there is a considerable thirst for doing things at one's own pace and convenience, than that mandated by synchronous, supported courses. It is precisely the flexibility of MOOCs that attracts so many students. Flexibility is usually critical for students especially those who are working and have families. Such flexibility is vital to enable the learner plan and manage their time efficiently. Many learners are highly autonomous and have developed their own learning strategies and digital literacy. Many have little interest in social chat and being part of a consistent group or cohort. One of the great MOOC myths is that social participation is a necessary condition for learning and/or success. Far too much is made of 'chat' in MOOCs, in terms of needs and quality. I am not arguing for no social components in MOOCs, only claiming that the evidence shows that they are less important than the 'social constructivist' orthodoxy in design would suggest. I am saying it is desirable, especially in language courses, but not essential. To rely on this as the essential pedagogic technique, is, in my opinion, a mistake and is to impose an ideology on learners that they do not want. Nevertheless, this is not an argument for a wholly unstructured strategy and language courses need forums, discussion groups, chats, sessions on Skype to develop communication skills, particularly oral skills. So, social learning is important but not essential.

### 4.4.5    Conclusion: LMOOCs

Language MOOCs (LMOOCs) are an emerging category. Martín Monje, and Bárcena Madera (2014: 1) is arguably the first major contribution to an analysis of theoretical as well as methodological issues related to LMOOCs, which the authors define as "dedicated web-based online courses for second languages with unrestricted access and potentially unlimited participation". The authors also point out that one of the main challenges faced by LMOOCs is that learning a language is fundamentally skill-based rather than knowledge-based, and practicing the skill requires learning with others, while the majority of existing LMOOCs follow an instructivist approach where learners are more passive, and which does not necessarily

promote collaboration. The challenge and the opportunity for LMOOC teachers is therefore to foster an environment which enhances social learning by including a range of activities and tools which stimulate discussion and collaboration amongst participants.

## 4.5 Questionnaire Results

### 4.5.1 Introduction

In this section, I present and discuss the results of the questionnaire data. Responses to closed questions are mainly presented in the form of figures and tables. Responses to open questions have been analysed using text analysis tools. I also present direct quotations from students, which enrichen our understanding of the data.

### 4.5.2 Questionnaire 1: The Internet as a Learning Tool

Questionnaire 1 investigates how participants viewed the internet as a learning tool, both, in the general sense and as a method for learning a foreign language. Questionnaire 1 is an open-ended questionnaire with nine questions in total. The first 4 questions are framed to elicit participants' knowledge of and views on online learning in general and the following 5 questions for the same purpose on online language learning. The objectives of this questionnaire are:

- To elicit from learners a definition of what online learning is
- To ask learners if they had ever participated in an online course and their level of satisfaction with the course
- To identify what pedagogical and technical aspects learners considered important
- To ask about the advantages of online learning
- To elicit learner knowledge of websites for learning an L2
- To ask if learners thought they could learn an L2 online
- To ask learners about the contents of an L2 online course
- To ask in what ways ICT can improve language classes
- To ask learners if they would recommend learning a second language online

As the questions are open-ended and the participants are free to interpret and respond in the manner that they deem to be most suitable, the analysis of such a questionnaire can become difficult and time consuming. Moreover, there is also the strong probability that participant views will be very different. Because of the difficulty of studying multifaceted, unstructured and

subjective data, it needs to be simplified by cleaning the data, breaking it down into smaller meaningful portions and arranging these into specific thematic components. In this manner, the analysis of the responses to the questionnaire involved a methodical 'search and extract' of views that are similar or similarly worded. This resulted in a group of the most popularly held views as response to each of the questions. These similar groups were then ranked according to the number of similar responses.

A. Online Learning

*What is online learning?*

- What is online learning?
- Have you ever participated in any online course? Were you satisfied with it? Why/ why not?
- You are planning to follow an online course. What pedagogical and technical aspects would you expect to find in your course? (for example, independent learning materials provide learners with regular feedback through self-assessment activities)
- What advantages do you think an online course has over face to face instruction?

These were the questions posed to the participants about their views of online learning, in general. The responses that were most often given are analysed below:


*What is online learning?*

This question tries to elicit a definition of online learning as perceived by the participants. The most popular answer was almost a rewording of the question: *Learning through the internet*. The following answer was more detailed: *Learning using online platforms/ICT/web pages.* A more elaborate answer that included the concept of asynchronous learning was offered by some respondents: *It is a non-face-to-face form of learning via Internet instead of physical classes*.


Some participants saw this question as a means of explaining the chief reasons for learning online because it was: *motivating and/or flexible*. Online learning helps to motivate self-learning and because it can be pursued anywhere and at any time that are convenient to the learner. The course could also be flexibly constructed and can be moulded to the learner's needs. One of the other popular responses to this question is also a further definition of online learning as an *autonomous or autodidactic way of learning; it is self-learning through the internet.*

The 66 participants used 1272 word tokens and 311 word types (each student wrote an average of 19 words in defining online learning). They weren't exactly prolific. Examples of student definitions (opinions) are the following:

- *Online learning is a way to study without having to attend face-to-face classes*
- *It is a way of learning where you don't need to be in a classroom with a teacher all the time, you can access to the content and do your work when you need.*
- *I understand on-line learning as a course on which students do not have to attend physically, and lectures are done through Internet, as well as material delivering.*
- *Online learning is a way of studying for an internationally recognised qualification without needing to attend classes on campus.*
- *It is to study by internet, not face to face with a teacher. It is self-learning. One of the most important thing is to be organized in order to success your online learning.*
- *It is a way of study where the internet and the technology is the main thing. It is not necessary to go to a physical classroom, you just need a computer and a connection to internet.*
- *Online learning is to get learning through internet not face to face*
- *To deliver and receive an educational learning via Internet instead of physical classes.*
- *To learn through the Internet, it is a non-presential course*
- *The process of learning where the student acquire the knowledge not in class, but in his computer, tablet...*
- *Learning using the new technologies is motivating and very useful because you can use it yourself and in any place (at home, in school).*
- *I think it's a way to learn through the internet instead of face-to-face.*
- *Online learning is a way of studying without needing to attend classes.*
- *Online learning is a way of studying without attending classes face-to-face. It is aimed at those who work and cannot go to class every day.*
- *Online learning is a way of studying without needing to attend classes on a physical space.*
- *Online learning is a way of studying for an online courses and degree programs without the need to attend classes.*
- *Online learning is a way of teaching thought Internet and New Technologies. Using an online platform, materials, resources and activities are offered to students. The students have to work with that at home, without attending the classes.*
- *It is a way of studying without needing to attend classes, you only need a computer that has a connection to Internet.*
- *On line learning is the possibility to attend to different courses at home, whenever you want because there isn't a closed timetable. You only need a computer and a web connection.*

- *It is a useful and practical way for learning wherever you are*
- *Online learning is a technology tool lets us learn something whenever we want and wherever we are.*
- *It's a form of distance learning, which can be done at any time and in any place.*
- *A way of taking or delivering a course without having to be present. It offers the possibility of adapting to your own time schedule.*
- *Learning by internet with more flexibility than in a face to face instruction: you could study the contents whenever and wherever you want, for example. It is ideal for people who work or don't have time to go a class.*
- *It is a way of learning where you have the autonomy to choose what times you can learn.*
- *Online learning is a kind of learning methodology in which you can study at home or at work - wherever you like, whenever you like, within a prescribed time frame. Usually, courses have a set schedule and are delivered over a period of time.*
- *It is a type of learning that allows greater flexibility and that adapts to the personal circumstances of the student.*
- *It is a way of studying for without needing to attend classes at the university.*
- *It is studying without attending class and receiving materials and advice online.*

What is clear from these definitions is that students are aware of the asynchronous nature of online learning and that it offers the opportunity of learning anywhere, anytime. It is a constant theme in their answers. It is a break from the traditional classroom. This can be seen even more clearly from the following concordance lines (the search word was "without").

Online learning is a way to study without having to attend face-to-face classes

for an internationally recognised qualification without needing to attend classes on campus

Online learning is a way of studying without needing to attend classes. It's a good

Online learning is a way of studying without attending classes face-to-face. It is aimed

Online learning is a way of studying without needing to attend classes on a physical sp

Studying for an online courses and degree programs without the need to attend classes

Students have to work with that at home, without attending the classes. They have the support

It is a way of studying without needing to attend classes, you only need a

A way of taking or delivering a course without having to be present. It offers the possibility

It is a way of studying for without needing to attend classes at the university

It is studying without attending class and receiving materials

*Have you ever participated in an online course? Were you satisfied with it? Why/ why not?*

This is a semi-closed-ended question, with the first main part and the second sub-question requiring only a yes/no answer, but the third has to be an extended answer giving reasons for the choice of 'yes' or 'no'. Analysis of the answers to the first part of question 2 is visualized by a pie chart (figure 4.28):

Question 2. Have you ever participated in an online course?



Never studied online
27.3%
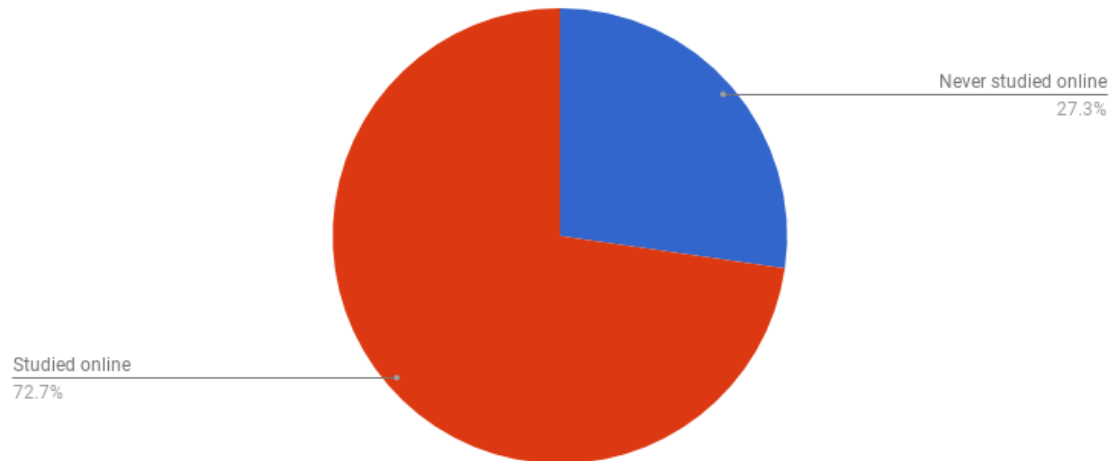
Studied online
72.7%

Figure 4.28: Response to Question 2

As is evident from the chart, more than 70% of the participants had participated in an online course at some time. Only 27% had not. Out of those who had studied online earlier, only a few participants had negative feelings about it. Maybe, as one participant put it, "*I like the traditional way*", or because the student had to undertake the responsibility of learning without a traditional timetable of study. Most of the positive answers gave reasons such as flexibility of time and place, tailor-made to their needs and requirements. This time, we give concordance line examples using the search word "satisfied".

- o   Yes, I have. Not quite satisfied, since I lacked face2face classroom
- o   have attended a couple of MOOC courses. I'm satisfied because they are easy and quick to learn
- o   so I joined in an online course. I'm satisfied with the course because it makes me
- o   Yes I was satisfied. The only concern is that since you do not
- o   I attended three online educational courses. I am satisfied because when is difficult to assist to class

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- have done different online courses and I am very satisfied with them because I have learnt a lot an
- career. Yes, I do it regularly. I am very satisfied. Flexibility , comfortable learning
- Yes, I have, I was satisfied in the study of grammar exercises and
- master's degree since last April. I'm very satisfied with the course. The way of working is
- I attended many online courses. I was satisfied but I missed the practical part while I
- master online by UNED. Until now I am very satisfied because I am learning a lot with my online
- we had to do a final activity. I'm satisfied with it because it allows me to organise my
- Yes, last month. I was satisfied but I missed the help of a teacher
- I was not satisfied with them, but - quite oddly- I was more
- Yes. I was very satisfied. It was a University Master. I had no t
- Yes, this course satisfied me but I personally like the interaction
- I was really satisfied with them because I developed my knowledge
- Yes, I did a master online. I wasn't satisfied with it because I never met my teachers
- am currently doing two courses online and I am satisfied because they give me the opportunity to
- did some online courses last year. I was not satisfied at all because I did not learn a lot
- Yes, and I wasn't satisfied because the course was too much theoretical
- for me to follow a routine. Yes. I was satisfied because I obtained the points I needed.
- Yes, I have. I was satisfied with it because it allows you flexibility
- I wasn't very satisfied because it wasn't very useful, I had a
- Yes I have. I was satisfied because I could do it at my own pace
- Yes, I have. I was very satisfied with it because I was pregnant and
- It has pros and cons, but I was satisfied. The course will achieve my expectation,

*You are planning to follow an online course. What pedagogical and technical aspects would you expect to find in your course? (for example, independent learning materials provide learners with regular feedback through self-assessment activities).*

The responses expected for this question were student perceptions about activities on any online learning medium. The participants gave a variety of answers and the most prevalent among those included *forums, discussions and videos* that were interactive and anything that

provided direct and active learning through an interface operating real-time. Other common answers also included *Virtual Environment (interaction)*, which also has more or less the same meaning.

*A variety of materials with feedback*, *regular assessments,* and *immediate feedback,* were responses that demonstrated the expectation of the student-participant regarding the need for regular and quick assessment and feedback to consolidate and evaluate their learning. Online interfaces have the facility to provide instant feedback, so that the learner can measure her or his learning and make modifications if needed. This saves a lot of time and can be done in real-time, and not only serves to enhance learning but also has a positive effect because the acquired knowledge is still fresh in the learner's mind. The following examples from student responses are based on concordance lines containing the word "feedback".

- feedback about my activities and in any moment I
- feedback about your exploitation, in this sense, I
- feedback after my essays or course works in order
- regular feedback and flexible schedule.
- regular feedback and self-assessment activities. I have to
- feedback and visual materials.  For me, it would
- feedback, assessment activities, examples...
- feedback, assessments, the possibility of getting
- regular feedback by mail, forums and possibility of skype
- feedback, etc. A lot of exercises to practice with
- feedback from the instructor, effective assessment
- feedback, if not my motivation goes down. What I
- regular feedback is essential. I would expect a small amount
- feedback. It would be good to provide students the
- feedback, that the course has activities to practice
- feedback to solve any questions/doubts that can
- feedback When I planning to follow this course
- regular feedback will strongly affect my decision.
- It's important to have regular feedback with a "tutor" or teacher who
- regular feedback with the students, and to correct their activities

Other answers to this question included: *Self-learning materials, Wide range of activities to cover all language skills* and *Flexible schedule.* Learning materials on online learning platforms are not merely digitalized texts but should also contain activities that maintain learner interest and motivate the self-learner through their variety and comprehensive quality to render learning more permanent. The online learner prefers to use this medium over traditional

analogical methods, mostly due to the flexibility it offers, both in the scheduling as well as in the personalization of the syllabus according to the interests and requirements of the learner.

*What advantages do you think an online course has over face to face instruction?*
This question elicited four answers that were the most common among the participants: *Flexible* – that again repeats the answer of the previous question regarding the pliability of time and curriculum; *Not as extensive* – the courses are short-term and finish quickly giving a chance to the student to pursue other interests or courses; *Personalized* – again reflecting on the customization of the program of study to meet the exact requirements of the student; and *Constantly updated* – as it is easier to do so online than in printed textbooks, and thus providing the latest information for the student's use.

In answering this question, the 66 students used 1828 word tokens and 466 word types. The first word with semantic content in the wordlist based on student answers was "time" (it is mentioned 37 times in their answers).  Here are some examples:

- Saving time and money in trips and school material
- You don't have to spend money and time moving from one place to another
- Flexibility in terms of time and place. However, it requires self-discipline
- You can have access in any time you are available
- In an online course you can organize your time, so that you can study when you can
- In this case, you can organize your own time and you can learn at any moment
- It requires discipline. Practicality it reduces the time and distance barriers of education.

B. Online Language Learning
Five questions were presented to the participants under this heading. Out of these, questions a, b and e are semi-closed ended ones, whereas c and d are open-ended. The method used for selecting the most prevalent or common answers from among those given by the participants, is similar to that followed in the part 1 of this questionnaire.

> a. Have you ever visited a web site for language learning? If so, list the sites you know.
> b. Do you think you could learn a second language online? Why/why not?
> c. From your experience in second language learning, what contents would you include in such a course?

d. How would you improve a language class with the use of information and communication technology?

e. Would you recommend learning a second language following an online course? Why/why not?

*Have you ever visited a web site for language learning? If so, list the sites you know.*

The yes/no answers to the first part of the question are displayed below in the form of a pie chart (figure 4.29):
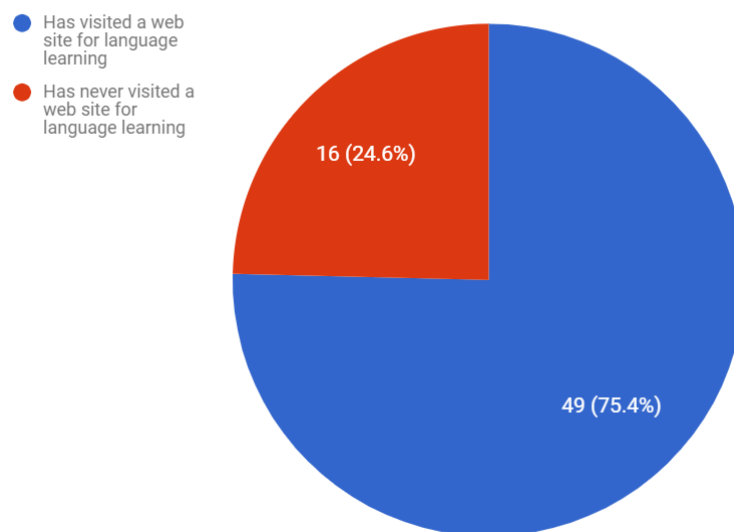


Figure 4.29: Response to Question 1

The results show that 49 of the participants, who form 75.4%, are already familiar with language learning websites, and consequently very suitable to be selected as a respondent in this study. However, 16 (24.6%) of the participants are first time visitors to language learning websites. This may not affect the answers much, as the questions are oriented towards their own views about language learning websites. There was one null answer.

Regarding the second part of their answer, many of those who have visited such websites are familiar with English language learning websites such as the BBC, the British Council and Word Reference. A few of them have also visited the Oxford and Cambridge sites.

*Do you think you could learn a second language online? Why/why not?*

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The results of the first part are represented in the chart below (figure 4.30). It was surprising that only 17 of the 66 participants, forming 25% of them, felt that it is possible to learn a second language online. The other 49 (75%) disagreed with this view.



Question 2. Do you think you could learn a second language online? Why/why not?
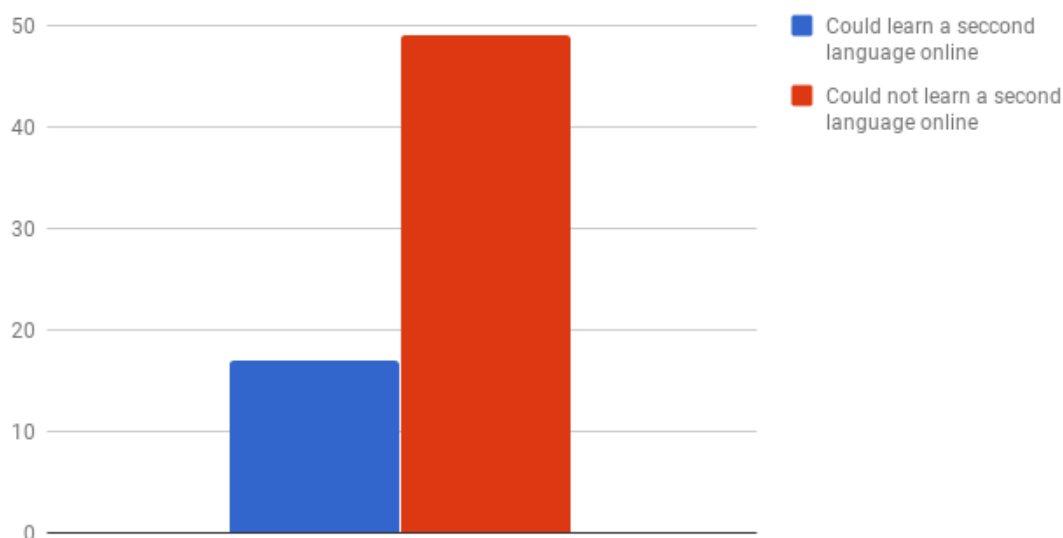
Figure 4.30: Learn a second language online

The reasons that they offered for supporting their positive and negative opinions mostly fall into two categories: those who feel that the traditional method of face to face learning is necessary for getting the complete picture of the language and help from a live teacher could make it easier to learn the nuances of the language better; and those who felt that since the modern, technically rich websites afforded more opportunities with interactive skills that they could consolidate and evaluate their skills in the language more thoroughly.

*From your experience in second language learning, what contents would you include in such a course?*

We initially created a wordlist (349 word tokens and 993 word types) to analyse the responses to these answers. The two most common content words in the learner participant answers were *grammar* and *vocabulary*; a very traditional view of language learning, especially given that we are talking about second language learning in the context of online learning with all the novel technologies on hand. As can be seen in table 4.11 below, although grammar and vocabulary

were mentioned frequently, the learners are aware of all the components involved in learning a

second language and mention many of the technologies used online.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 46 | to | 163 | 1 | connectors |
| 2 | 38 | and | 169 | 1 | conversation |
| 3 | 36 | the | 171 | 1 | corrected |
| 5 | 25 | grammar | 181 | 1 | dialogue |
| 6 | 23 | a | 182 | 1 | dictations |
| 9 | 17 | vocabulary | 183 | 1 | dictionary |
| 10 | 16 | listening | 186 | 1 | discuss |
| 13 | 15 | speaking | 187 | 1 | discussions |
| 17 | 12 | reading | 202 | 1 | explanations |
| 21 | 8 | activities | 203 | 1 | false friends |
| 24 | 8 | practice | 204 | 1 | feedback |
| 25 | 8 | videos | 207 | 1 | forum |
| 28 | 7 | language | 210 | 1 | games |
| 38 | 6 | writing | 224 | 1 | idioms |
| 40 | 5 | conversations | 226 | 1 | improve |
| 44 | 5 | skills | 227 | 1 | improving |
| 48 | 4 | examples | 229 | 1 | interest |
| 49 | 4 | exercises | 230 | 1 | interested |
| 51 | 4 | learn | 231 | 1 | interesting |
| 55 | 4 | pronunciation | 243 | 1 | listenings |
| 58 | 4 | video | 255 | 1 | monologue |
| 65 | 3 | expressions | 256 | 1 | motivate |
| 67 | 3 | information | 261 | 1 | negatives |
| 68 | 3 | learning | 267 | 1 | interrogatives |
| 69 | 3 | listen | 275 | 1 | podcasts |
| 71 | 3 | oral | 284 | 1 | readings |
| 79 | 3 | verbs | 287 | 1 | record |
| 88 | 2 | correct | 288 | 1 | recording |
| 91 | 2 | forums | 289 | 1 | recordings |
| 100 | 2 | mistakes | 292 | 1 | repeat |
| 105 | 2 | practical | 293 | 1 | routines |
| 106 | 2 | practise | 294 | 1 | rules |
| 107 | 2 | questions | 301 | 1 | skill |
| 108 | 2 | read | 302 | 1 | skype |
| 120 | 2 | texts | 308 | 1 | speakings |
| 140 | 1 | articles | 310 | 1 | speech |

| 143 | 1 | audio | 313 | 1 | structures |
|-----|---|-------|-----|---|------------|
| 149 | 1 | blogging | 315 | 1 | subjunctive |
| 150 | 1 | blogs | 323 | 1 | theory |
| 156 | 1 | chat | 332 | 1 | tutorials |
| 160 | 1 | communication | 337 | 1 | videoconferences |
| 161 | 1 | community | 345 | 1 | words |
| 162 | 1 | comprehension | 347 | 1 | writings |

Table 4.11: Partial wordlist of learner responses

There is always a danger of analysing language out of context. If we analyse meaning in context, we can see that learners are very much aware of the communicative function of language and the need for activities that increase communication and fluency.

- I would give more opportunities to students to practice the speaking and the listening.
- Speaking maybe is difficult to practise in an online course because there is no a person correct you, but now there are other methods.
- social media resources, speaking real situations.
- Also, the most of the websites have a lack of speaking practice for that reason I would include some resources to practise that such as video.
- speaking (recording conversations and also by skype).
- Speaking (dialogue and monologue),
- culture of the different countries where you can speak the language you are learning.
- but also daylife speakers language uses.
- I would include videos and instruments to practice speaking more than grammar.
- Oral communication is the skill in which I found more difficulty.
- Common mistakes and useful tips to speak fluently.

Even if they do not explicitly use the word speak* (our search word), they emphasize oral skills in other ways.

- Everyday possible conversations, basically.
- I'd include a lot of real situations where you can use the second language, removing, for that, time for learning grammatical aspects.
- Real conversations with people.
- I include lots of listening, videos, and class recordings.
- I would include practical activities which were linked with real examples where we use the language.
- I would include videoconferences, because you get to ask questions, and share ideas with classmates.

*How would you improve a language class with the use of information and communication technology?*

There were 61 responses out of a possible 66. This question elicited a wide range of answers, with by far the most prevalent among them being the use of *video* (it is mentioned 22 times by the respondents). The respondents answered with an assortment of technologies that included the following:

- Using, for example, Google tools focused on the collaborative environment that allow you to work online: Gmail, Google Drive, Google Calendar, Docs or Sites. Resources to communicate and debate like Google Hangouts or Blogger.
- Forums and chat rooms inclusion into a language teaching and learning process might help to engage students and make them feel part of a bigger language learning community.
- I would create a platform with the students through which they could publish everything they are interested on, or something they want to share with their classmates like links, pictures, news, videos, etc.
- There are different tools that are really interesting. For example, the text editors can help our students to improve their writings. They can know in the moment what are their mistakes by the visual way. Also, I know an application that it is called Voki. This application is used to improve the pronunciation.
- With forums, Moodle, Blackboard Collaborate, discussion boards or blogs.

The students showed a strong awareness of the uses of information technology to learn a language, making interesting suggestions such as in the case of the learner who talks about utilising Google tools focussed on a collaborative environment. Google offers multiple resources that can be integrated easily and economically into an online language learning environment.

*Would you recommend learning a second language following an online course? Why/why not?*

5. Would you recommend learning a second language following an online course? Why/why not?

Yes/no
22.7%

15 (22.7%)

37 (56.1%)    Yes, I wo…
56.1%

14 (21.2%)

No, I woul…
21.2%
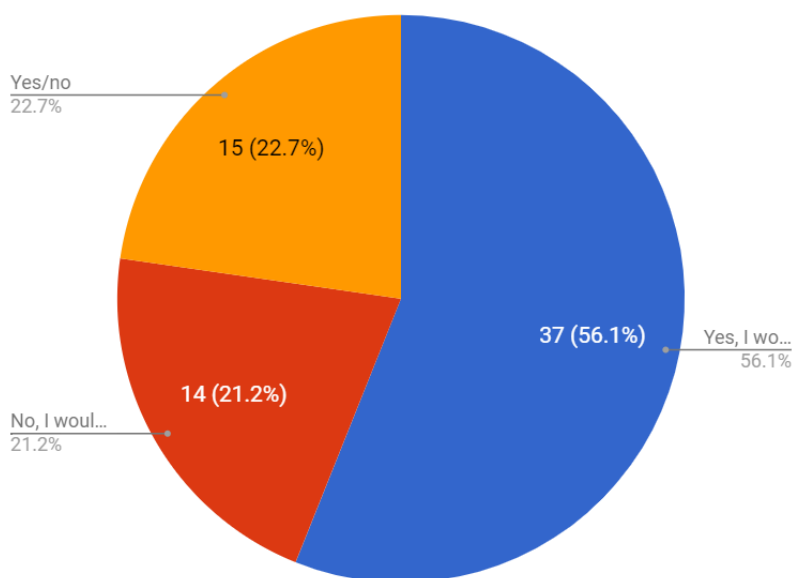
Figure 4.31: Recommend learning a second language following an online course

While only 37 participants or 56.1% responded positively to the first part of the question, 14 of them, or nearly 1/4 would not recommend online learning as being suitable for second language learning. However, while analysing their responses, it is seen that many of those who replied positively, added a rider to their suggestion that the learners should also use the traditional method for face to face learning of the spoken language. And those who responded negatively reasoned that only learners with good motivation, self-determination and perseverance can learn from online courses and learning a second language. Many suggested that, without the necessary discipline, learning a language online may be too demanding. It is, for this reason, that I decided to use a yes/no category (15 respondents, 22.7%). The main reason why respondents had doubts was related to interaction and oral skills. Many felt strongly the need for face-to-face interaction.

Nevertheless, what mainly came out of the analysis is how divided students are about learning a language online. Below, I offer some of their comments, so the reader can see for themselves.

- *I would recommend a course with on line content and presential hours. From my point of view, on line course is good to practice grammar contents, texts to practice reading and*

*videos to practice listening. But I don´t like because you can´t speak and communicate to other people in that language. To say the truth, you can communicate by video conference, but I prefer face to face.*

- *I think it could be learned, but I think it is more useful to learn it in class. In this way, people can listen to their classmates and thus learn from them. Also, I think the talking part is difficult to learn in an online course.*
- *Yes, in my opinion it has many advantages. But I would recommend it to those people who had constancy and were really interested in learning, because not having a fixed schedule can cause neglect or that the person doesn't spend the necessary hours.*
- *Yes, but I repeat the same. I think that after you learn a lot of contents throughout an online course, then you need someone that helps you with the speaking fluency for example.*
- *Yes, I really recommend learning a second language following an online course, but I think that it is necessary to implement the English language into your daily life and communicate with people in English at every opportunity you get.*
- *No, because I think that face to face conversation is necessary.*

### 4.5.3    Questionnaire 2: Evaluation Sheet for Language Learning Websites

A well-planned research revolves around the prospect of finding a general regularity or an identifiable pattern in the series of the phenomena that is under study. This is especially important in the present study. If we are to design and implement an online language tutoring website, it is essential to find out the patterns and trends on other similar websites, so that we can learn and make use of their best practices. This would also help in determining their obvious shortcomings that have to be avoided or sorted out. In order to undertake this, comprehensive and reliable data must be collected.

Questionnaire 2 is divided into two sections: Teaching/Learning (Pedagogy) and Communication Tools (Technology). The structure of the questionnaire is based on a multiple-choice grid, where respondents had to rate on a scale of poor to excellent different aspects of language learning websites related to Teaching/Learning (part 1) and Communication Tools (part 2). Results have been visualized by using charts and graphs. Interpretations of the results follow on from the visuals.

PART 1: Teaching/Learning (Pedagogy)

## Teaching/Learning (Pedagogy)

Grammar

N/A (not applicable)
4.0%
Poor
8.0%

Good
22.2%

36 (20.5%)

Excellent
20.5%

39 (22.2%)

57 (32.4%)

Very Good
32.4%

23 (13.1%)

Sufficient
13.1%
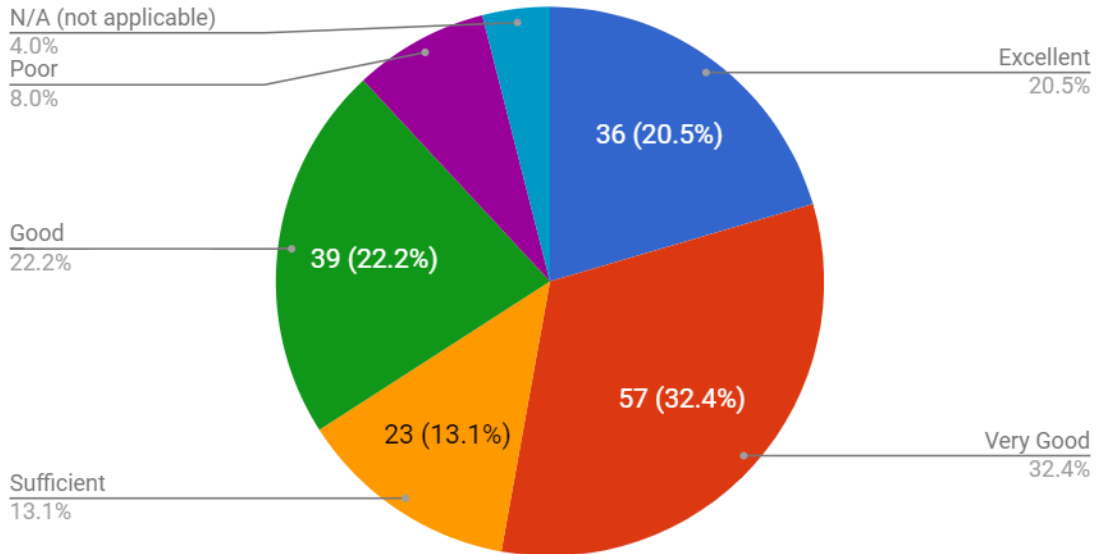
Figure 4.32: Grammar

The respondents have found the grammar sections on the websites that they visited to be, on the whole, impressive. While one-fifth of the respondents felt that the grammar components were excellent, about 75% of respondents rated the grammar on the higher scales of good to excellent. As grammar is one of the most important aspects of a language teaching website, a high rating should be expected.

**Teaching/Learning (Pedagogy)**

Vocabulary
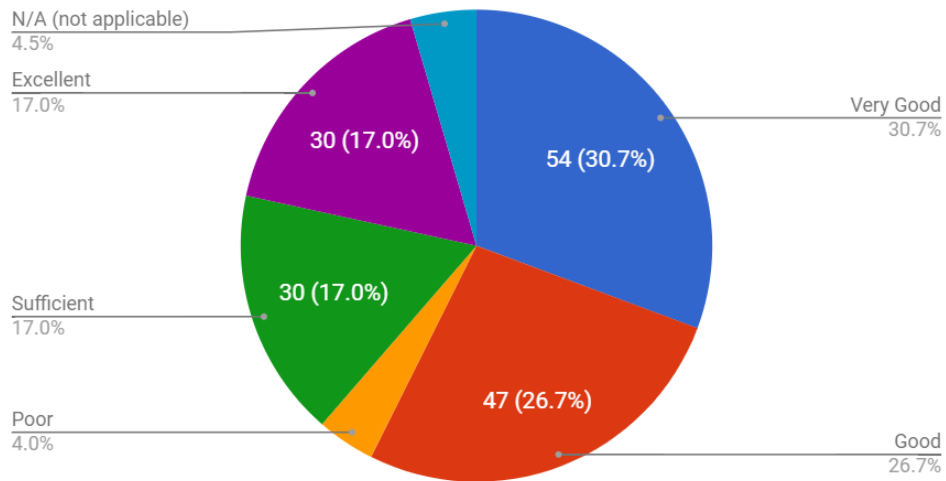


Figure 4.33: Vocabulary

Regarding vocabulary, although only 17% of the respondents have rated it as being excellent, the higher rating scales of very good and good make up nearly 60% (57.4%) of their views. Only very few respondents felt that it was poor (4%). Thus, vocabulary was evaluated at the higher grades by about 75% (74.4%) of the respondents.

**Teaching/Learning (Pedagogy)**

Pronunciation
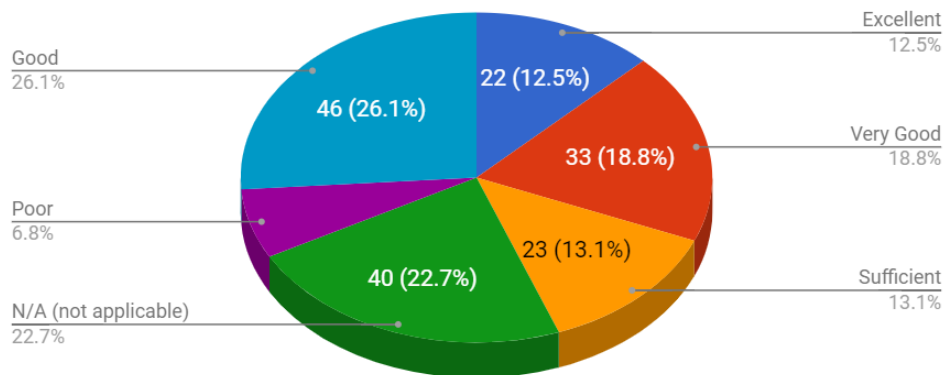


Figure 4.34: Pronunciation

The websites that were selected may not all have audio facilities for learning pronunciation. Because of this more than a fifth of the respondents have found that the rating for this feature is not applicable. And those sites that were rated good to excellent occupy 57.4% of the total respondents on the chart.

## Teaching/Learning (Pedagogy)
Texts (Reading)

| Rating | Count |
|--------|-------|
| Very Good | 39 |
| Excellent | 35 |
| Good | 51 |
| Sufficient | 17 |
| N/A (not applicable) | 24 |
| Poor | 10 |

Count
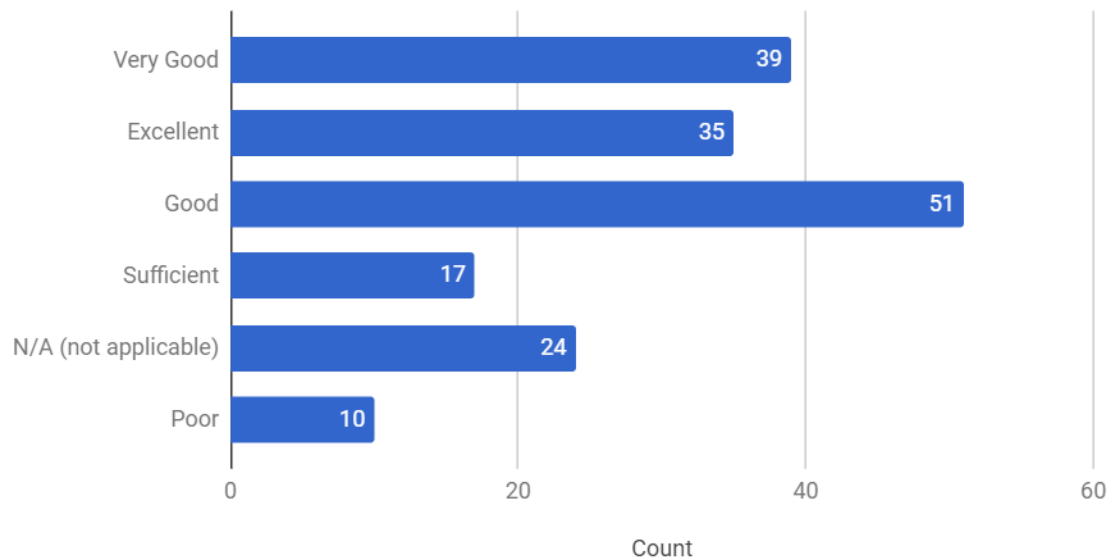
Figure 4.35: Texts (Reading)

The reading texts offered by the sites seem to be quite highly rated from good to excellent by 125 of the respondents (71%). There are some sites being rated as poor even in this important category and, quite strangely, some sites seem to have no reading texts for language learners because the respondents have marked this feature as being not applicable.

198

**Teaching/Learning (Pedagogy)**
Audio (Listening)
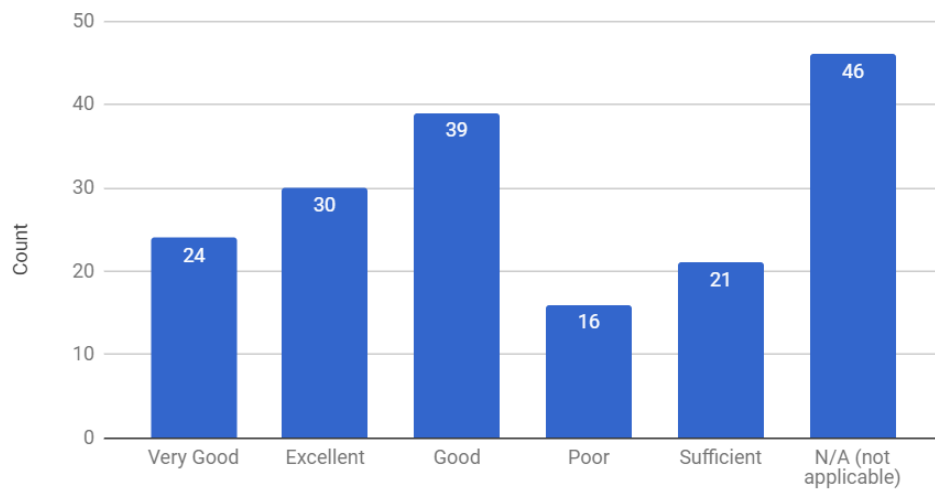


Figure 4.36: Audio (Listening)

As was apparent from the lack of pronunciation features on many sites, the audio elements also seem to be missing in some of the sites that were visited (46 students marked this feature as N/A). However, those sites that did have the audio, 30 students have rated them as excellent, with the higher grades (good, very good and excellent) being proportioned by 93 respondents. Although 21 of the students felt the audio to be sufficiently developed, 16 disagreed with this view and considered it to be poor.

**Teaching/Learning (Pedagogy)**
Video (Listening)
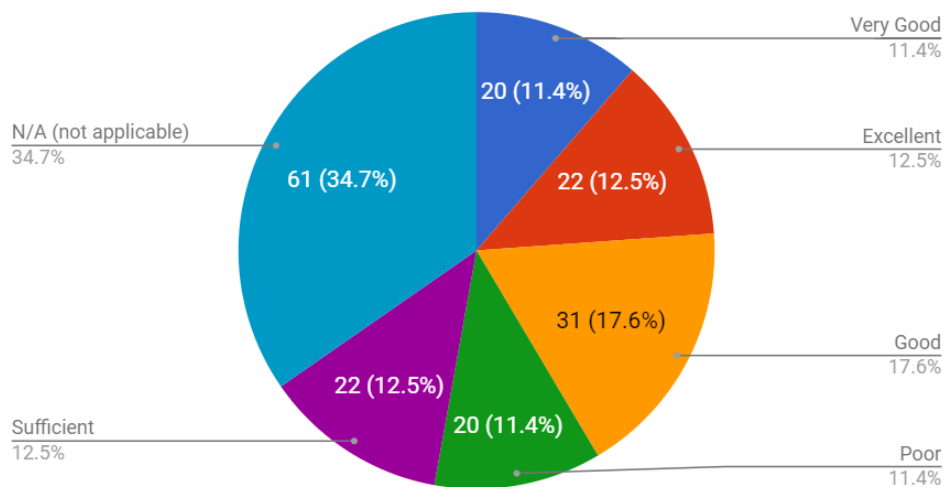


Figure 4.37: Video (Listening)

Video facilities for learning were also not available on over one-third of the sites and were marked 'not applicable' by the respondents. Those which did have this facility were almost equally graded as excellent, very good, good, sufficient and poor. It seems that these sites need to improve with regards to teaching with video. However, with the existence of YouTube, it might be equally effective to link to that website and use the facilities offered there.

## Teaching/Learning (Pedagogy)
Writing

N/A (not applicable)
19.9%

35 (19.9%)

42 (23.9%)

Very Good
23.9%

16 (9.1%)

Excellent
9.1%

Poor
12.5%

22 (12.5%)

21 (11.9%)

40 (22.7%)

Sufficient
11.9%

Good
22.7%
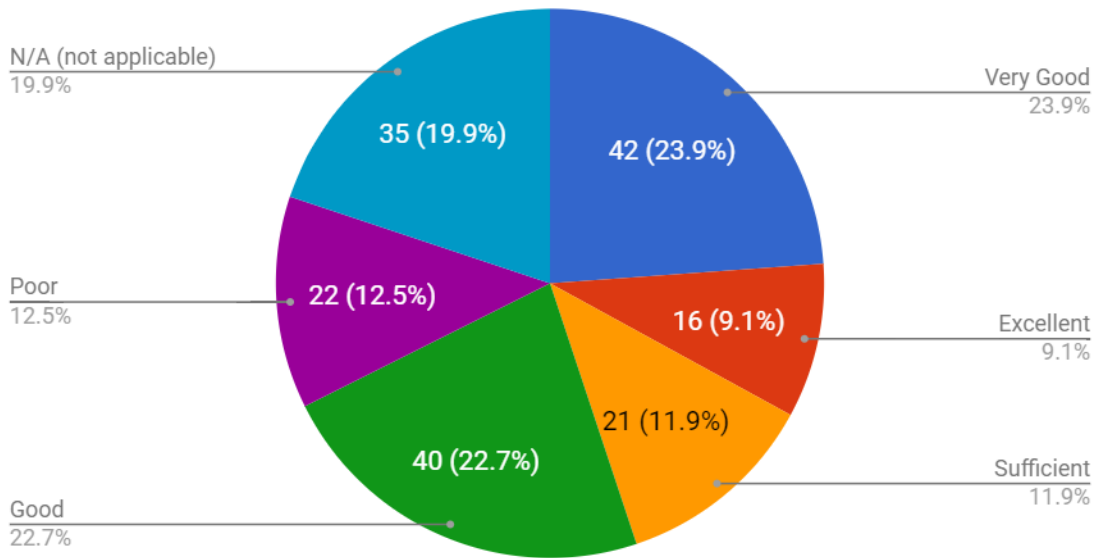
Figure 4.38: Writing

On the writing front, less than 10 percent were rated excellent. Even this most basic feature in learning languages was marked N/A indicating its absence by about 16% of the respondents. On the whole, the higher ratings stood at just about 56% (55.7%), which does not speak that highly of the way writing activities and exercises have been developed on these sites.
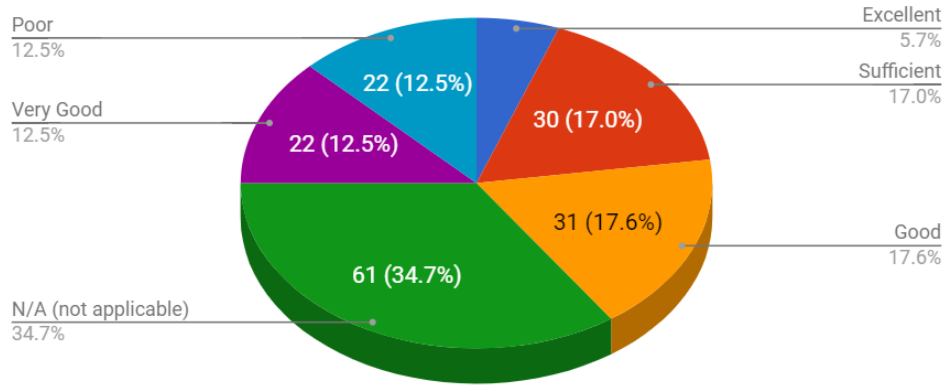
Speaking



Figure 4.39: Speaking

Language teaching through speaking was not present in about a third of the sites. Out of the other two-thirds, just over a third received the higher ratings of good-very good-excellent. Poor speaking facilities for teaching and learning were found in a little more than 12% of the sites, whereas another 17% were found to have satisfactory services (to be sufficient) for speaking activities.

Teaching/Learning (Pedagogy)

Dictionaries & Glossaries
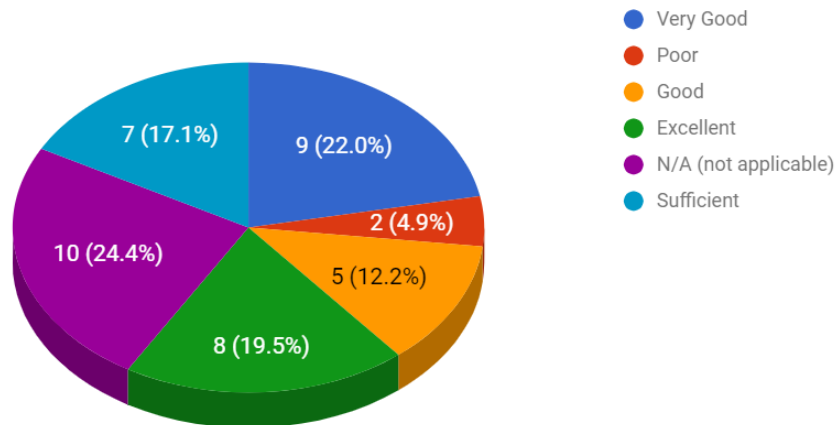


Figure 4.40: Dictionaries & Glossaries

It is heartening to note that only 10% of the sites did not have dictionary and glossary amenities for the improvement of vocabulary. Higher ratings were given to 53.7 percent of the sites for this feature. Only about 5 percent of the respondents rated their sites poor in this instance.

## Teaching/Learning (Pedagogy)
Other Language Resources
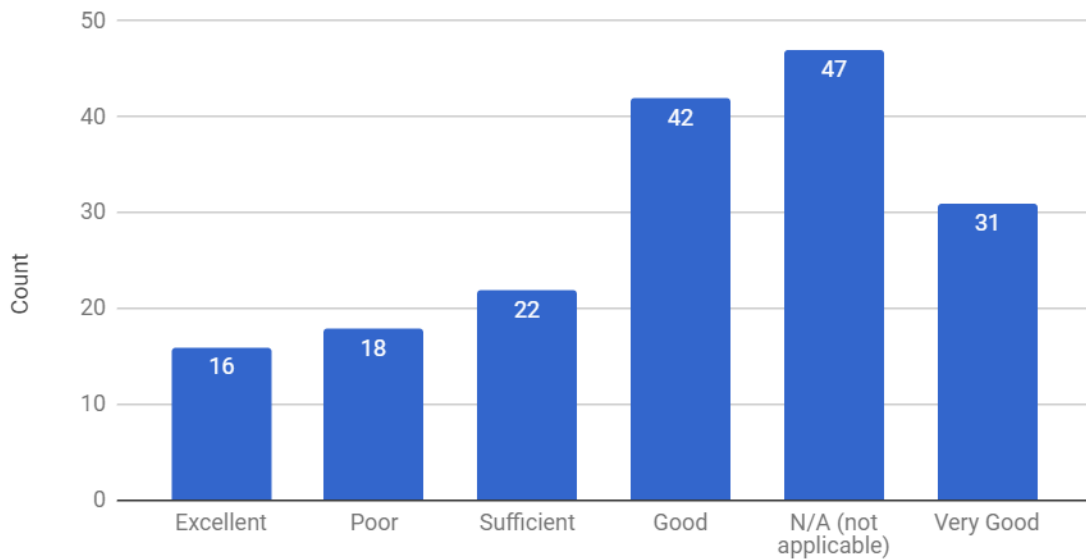


Figure 4.41: Other Language Resources

Other language resources that were not specifically named were not very prevalent, with about one third of all responses being 'not applicable'. However, these resources wherever available were graded as good and very good by the majority of the respondents. Very few – about 9% (16 out of 176) - felt that these resources were excellently developed and maintained in the sites they visited.

PART 2: Communication Tools (Technology)

**Communication Tools (Technology)**
Chat
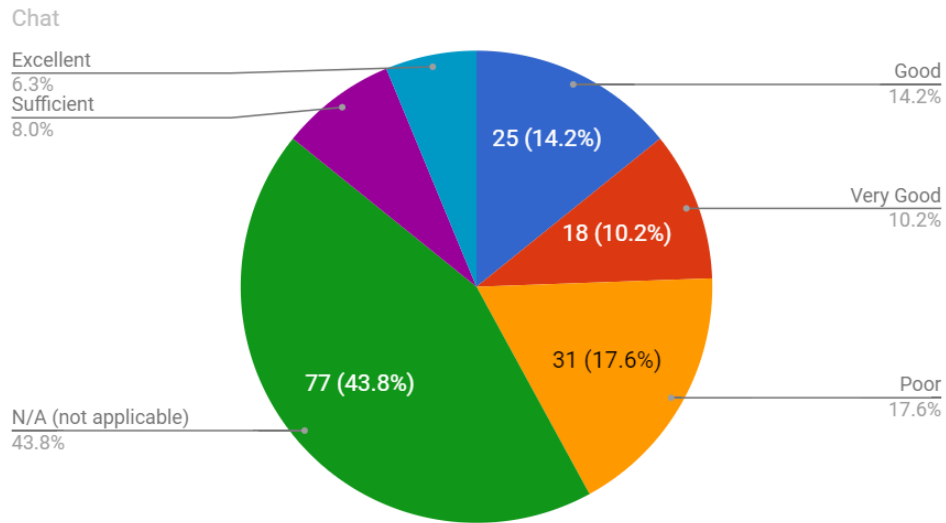


Figure 4.42: Chat

Communication tools or the technology for communication through chat was not applicable according to more than 40% (77, 43.8%) of the respondents. In other words, chat was not available on many websites for language learning. Moreover, even when present on the sites, it was rated as poor by nearly one fifth (31, 17.6%) of the respondents. The higher ratings were given only by around 30% of the respondents.

**Communication Tools (Technology)**
Email
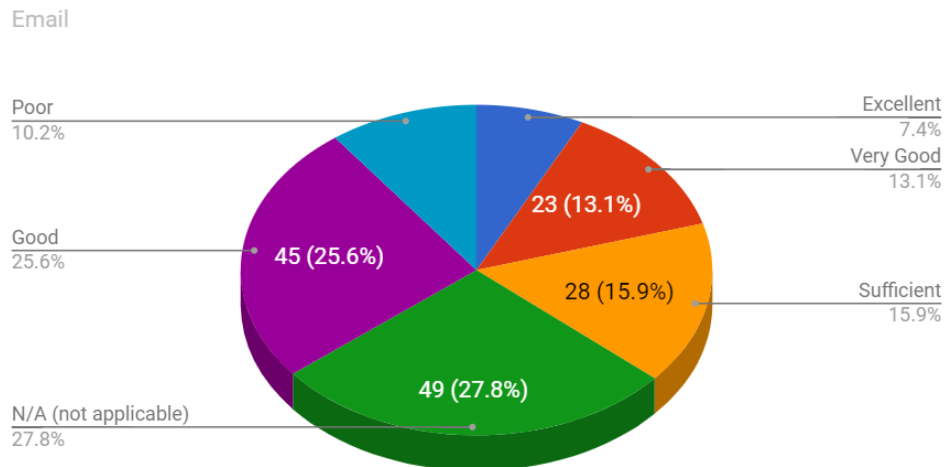


Figure 4.43: Email

With reference to email facilities on the visited sites, over a quarter of them did not support this kind of communication technology. However, nearly half of them received higher ratings of good to excellent, whenever these facilities were present and around 16% felt that there was adequate feedback through email. Only about ten percent of them were graded poor in this aspect.

**Communication Tools (Technology)**
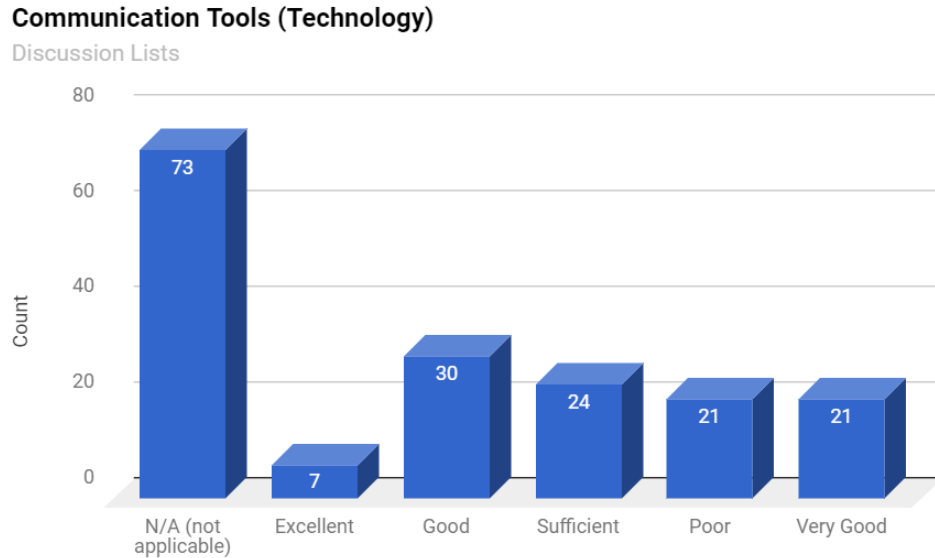
Discussion Lists



Figure 4.44: Discussion Lists

It seems that Discussion lists are not very popular on these websites as more than 70 did not have them. Wherever the facility was offered, the ratings show only about 58 respondents at the higher ends of the scale. At the same time, while there are 24 counts for sufficient provision, poor grades were given by 21.

**Communication Tools (Technology)**
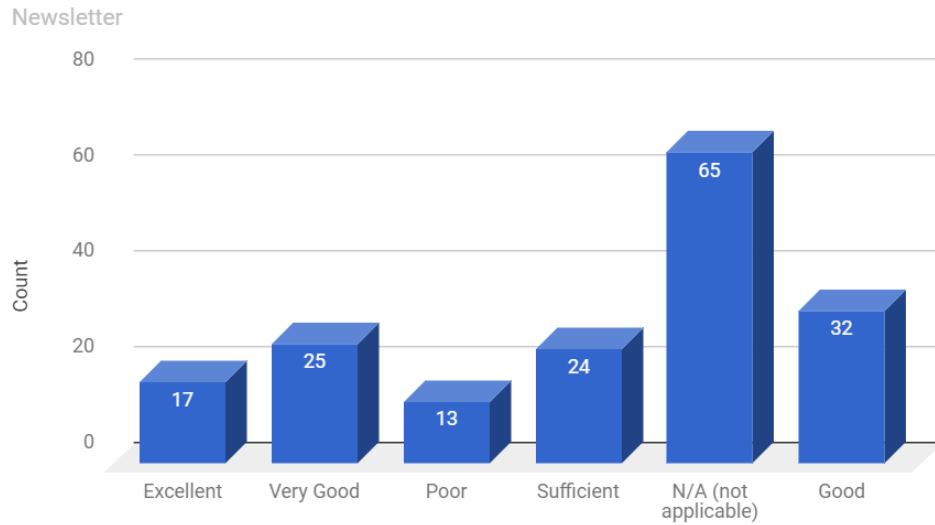
Newsletter



Figure 4.45: Newsletter

Newsletters, again, are not being offered as a communication tool according to 65 respondents. And this communication tool rates about 70 percent on the higher scales of good, very good and excellent. While 17 respondents found the feature excellent on the sites they visited, 13 found it poor.

# Communication Tools (Technology)
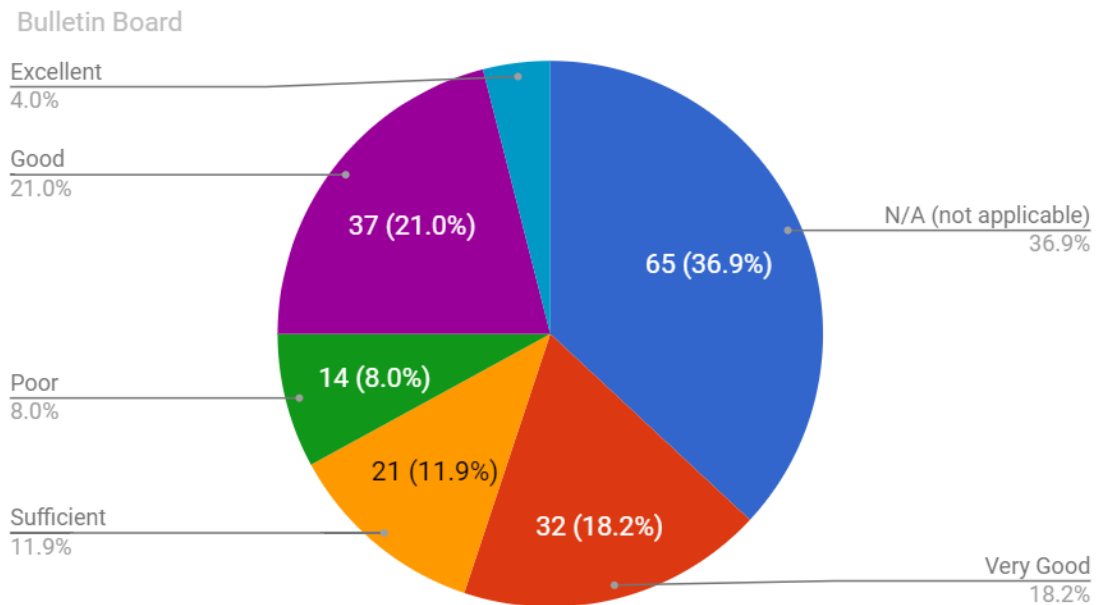
Bulletin Board



Figure 4.46: Bulletin Board

More than a third of the sites lacked the facility of a bulletin board that informed about the latest events on the site or about courses. Nevertheless, those sites that offered this service were rated as being either excellent, very good or good by about 45% of respondents. Only about 12% rated this service as sufficient and 8% gave this service a rating of poor.

## Communication Tools (Technology)
Video-Conferencing (Skype, Facetime etc.)
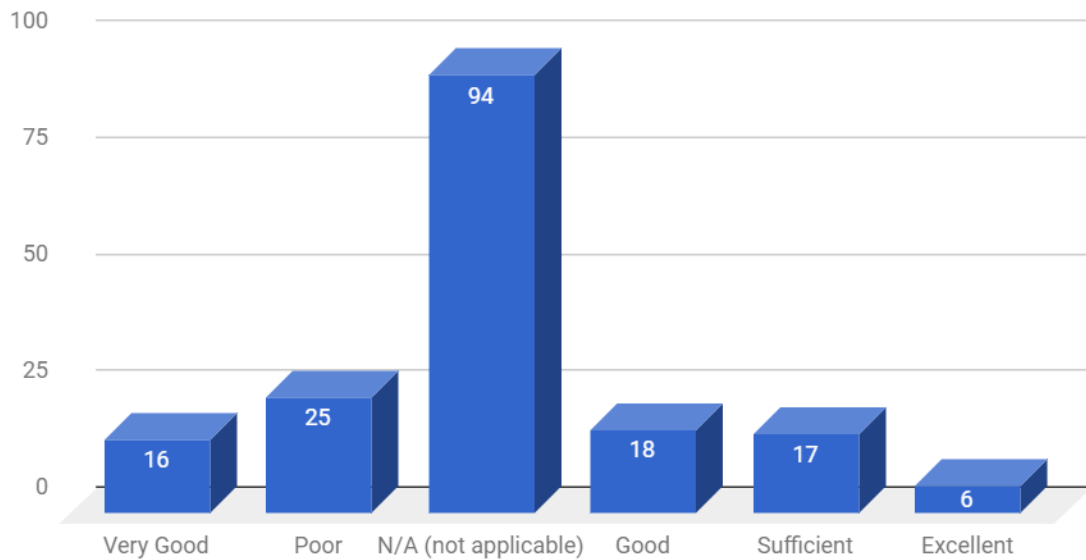


Figure 4.47: Video-Conferencing (Skype, FaceTime)

Video conferencing as a method of communication does not seem to be very popular or offered by language learning websites. 94 respondents said that the sites they visited lacked this communication tool. This means that more than half of all respondents found that this kind of application was missing. While those language learning websites that had this tool, 42 students graded it as being sufficient or poor and 40 students thought it was good, very good or excellent.

**Communication Tools (Technology)**

Map / Guide / Organization
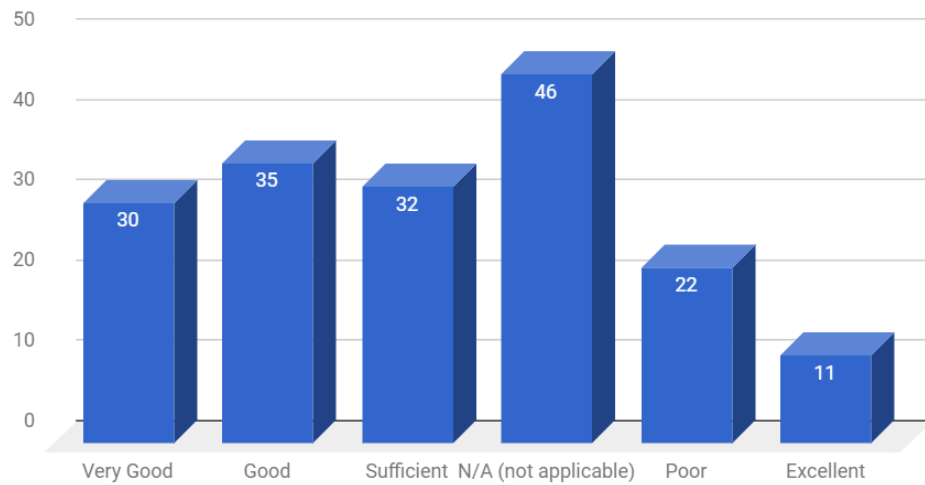


Figure 4.48: Map/Guide/Organization

With relevance to maps/guides or organization, the counts were more encouraging. Although 46 counts showed the lack of this facility on the visited websites, the higher rating was given by more than 75 counts and 32 counts showed the adequacy of this convenience. 20+ counts graded poor or unsatisfactory.

**Communication Tools (Technology)**

Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc.)
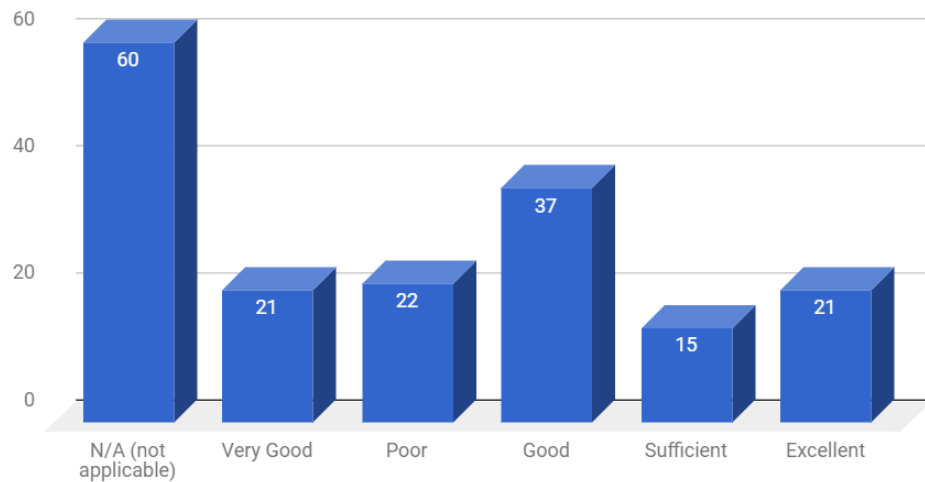


Figure 4.49: Social Media

As far as the use of social media is concerned, social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, 60 counts were marked as 'Not Applicable' to show that these sites for language learning did not use these kinds of social networking sites. Nevertheless, the sites that offered them were rated quite high, while 15 stated that use of social media was sufficient. There were 22 respondents that evaluated the use of social media as inadequate.

## Communication Tools (Technology)

External Links
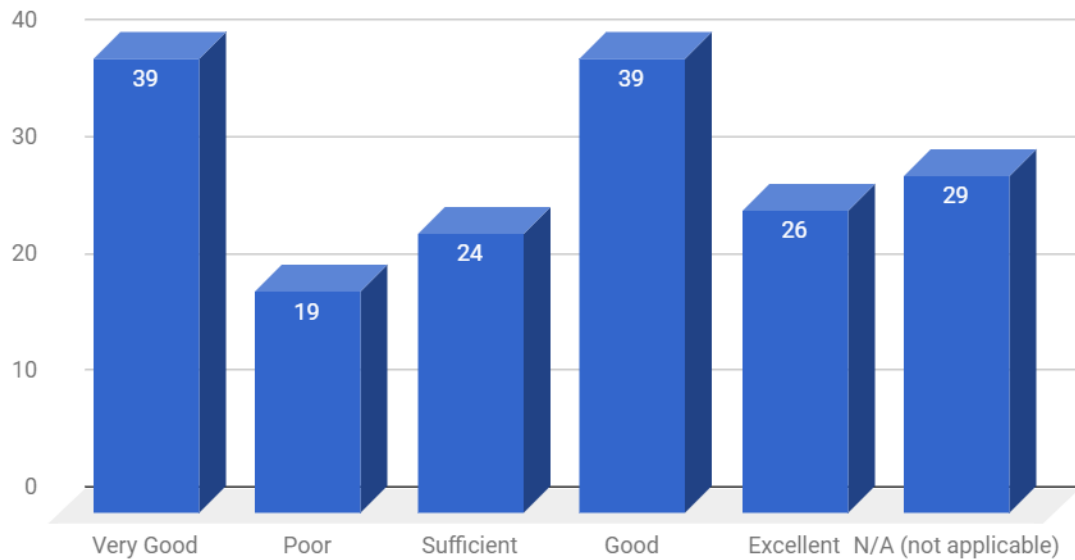


Figure 4.50: External Links

External links serve to diversify and enhance the learning experience of the student and thus quite important to learning websites. Except for a few sites missing this feature – about 29 counts, the general rating for this item ranges from 25 to 39 counts in the good to excellent scale. Less than 20 counts rated it as insufficient while more than 20 counts are seen for sufficient.

**Communication Tools (Technology)**

SMS
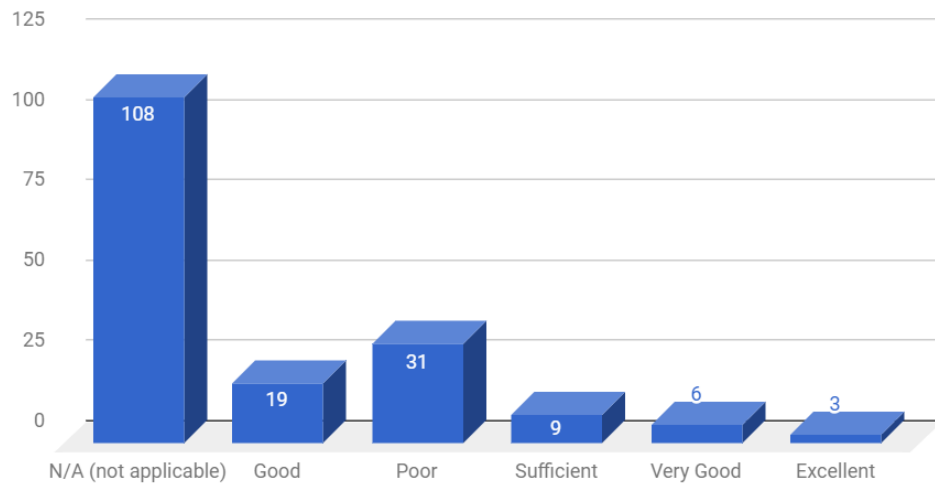


Figure 4.51: SMS

SMS or Short Messaging Services are an old new technology. Like email, they have been around since the beginning of the Internet era. They are very rarely found on the language learning sites that were visited. Over a hundred respondents rated this feature as not applicable. And even where it was offered, 31 respondents rate it as poor. The other gradings on the scale from excellent to very good, good and sufficient are from 19 to 3 respondents. There are useful applications for SMS such as automatically sending grades or marks to student mobile phones.

**Communication Tools (Technology)**

WhatsApp
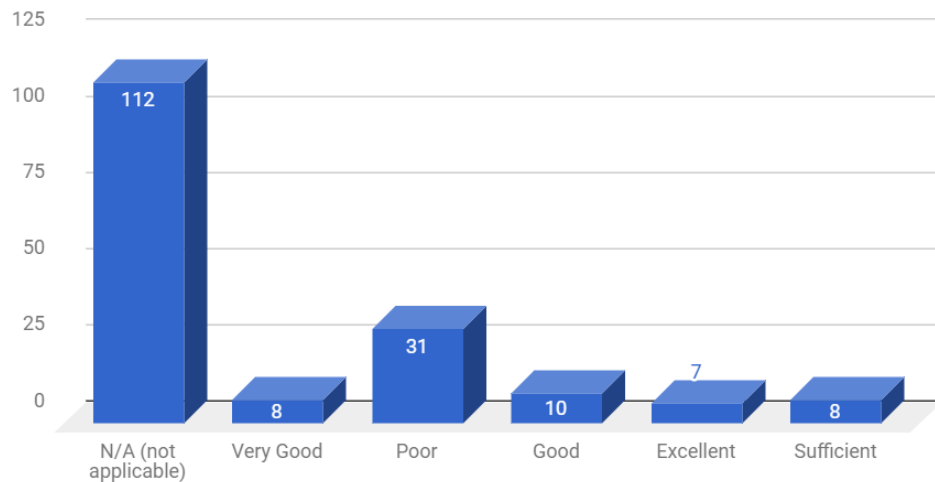


Figure 4.52: WhatsApp

The ratings for the communication app *WhatsApp* are like those for SMS: more than hundred respondents replied with N/A, 31 counts for poor and 10 or less counts for each of the other grades ranging from excellent to sufficient.

**Communication Tools (Technology)**
Discussion Forum
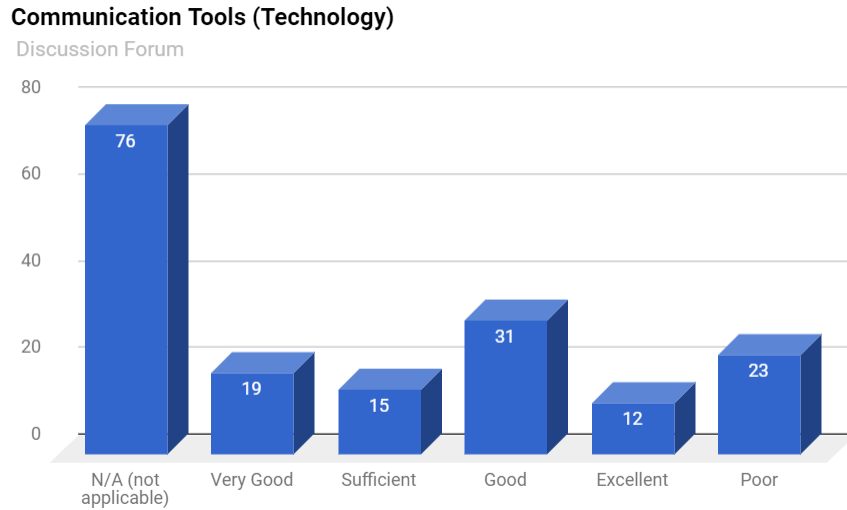


Figure 4.53: Discussion Forum

Discussion forums are a little more prevalent, but still 76 respondents replied with N/A. However, the ratings for those sites that offered this facility range from 12 counts for Excellent to 31 counts for Good. The inadequacy of this facility rated more than 20 counts (23 respondents).

**Communication Tools (Technology)**
Dropbox
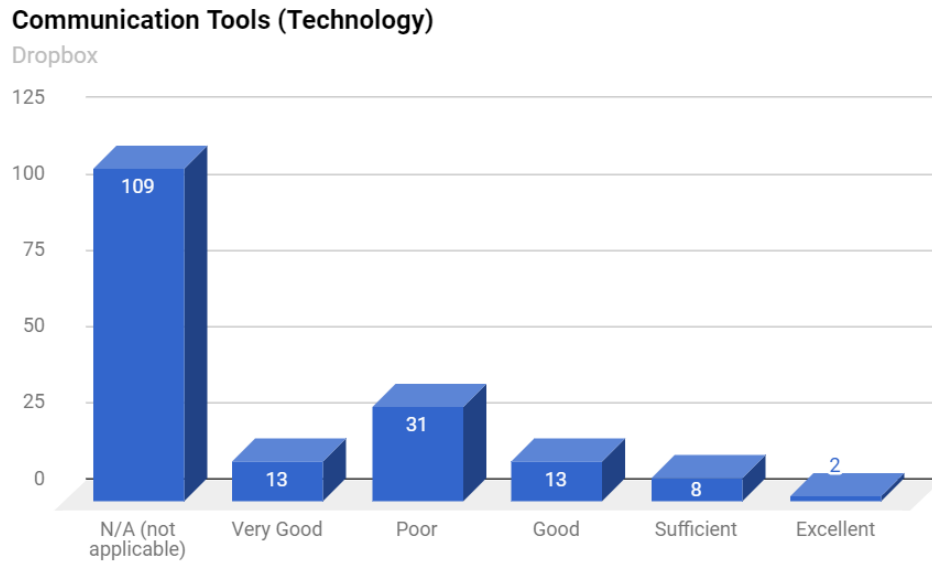


Figure 4.54: DropBox

The use of Dropbox as a communication was found to be not very common and over 100 counts (109 respondents) rated this as not applicable. The inadequacy of this feature received much higher ratings, at 31 counts for Poor. The higher grades of excellent (2), very good (13) and good (13) averaged at a little under 9. The rating of Sufficient was given by 8 respondents.

**Communication Tools (Technology)**
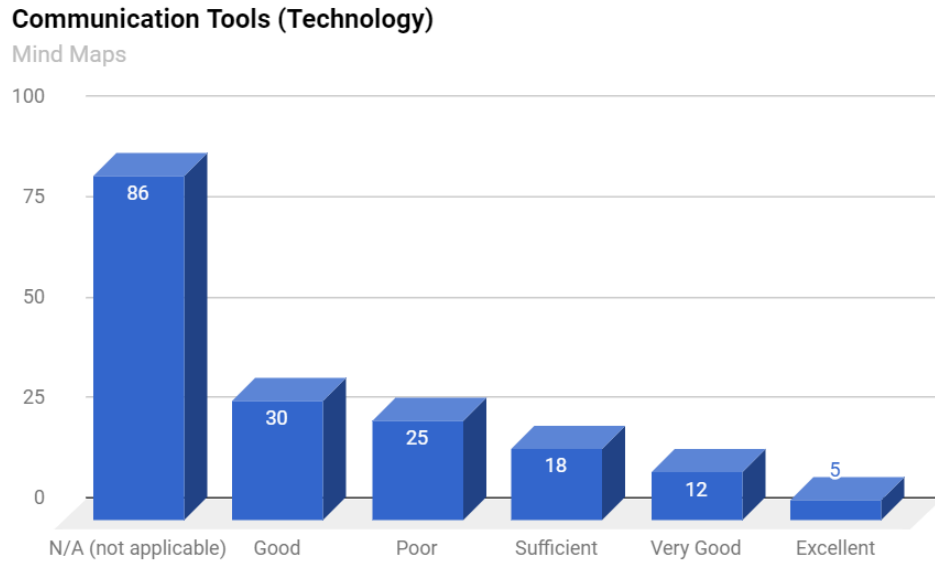
Mind Maps



Figure 4.55: Mind Maps

Regarding the feature Mind Maps, again another uncommon communication tool on language learning websites, was found to be not applicable by 86 respondents. The ratings for Mind Maps ranged from 5 for Excellent, a little more than 10 for Very Good (12), and 30 counts for Good. 25 counts found the facility Poor.

**Communication Tools (Technology)**

Quizzes/Interactive Exercises (Hot Potatoes, Quizlet etc.)
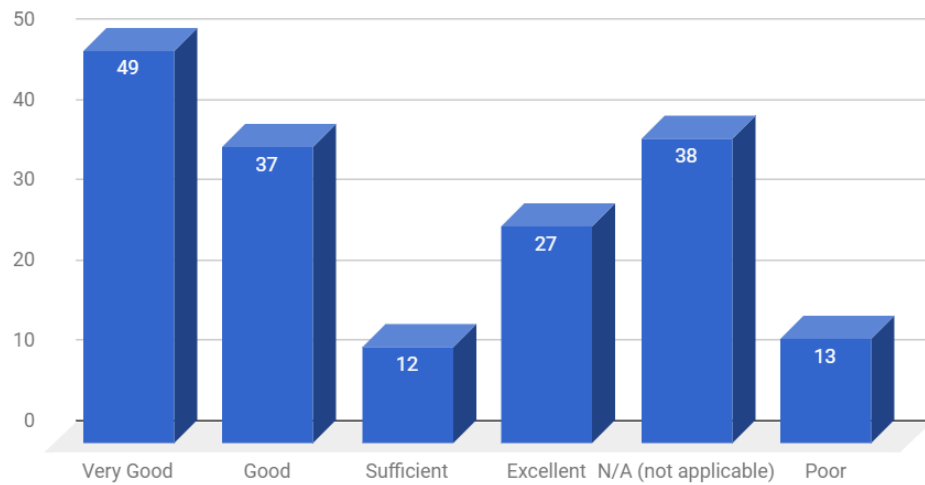


Figure 4.56: Quizzes/Interactive Exercises

Quizzes and other interactive exercises, like Hot Potatoes and Quizlet, are widely prevalent on these language learning sites. Very Good counts stood at nearly 50, Good at 37 and Excellent at 27 counts. Similarly, only 13 counts were observed for Poor.

**Communication Tools (Technology)**

Self-assessment systems (self-correction)



Figure 4.57: Self-assessment systems

Self-assessment systems that allowed the student to receive feedback and have his work corrected automatically mistakes were rated from 43 for Very Good, 36 for Excellent, and 27 for Good. However, about 40 counts show that this system is not present on the visited sites.

### 4.5.4    Questionnaire 3: Taxonomy of Language Learning Activities

Any research involves the transition of *doxa* into *episteme,* wherein the researcher investigates what he trusts to be a certainty and discovers what is indeed the reality. In order to carry out the investigation, the researcher has to make use of a methodology or a plan that is charted to collect the necessary information from a selected set of people. This gathered information or data is then studied to discover the patterns or relationships among the various categories of the data (Silverman, 2005).

Questionnaire 3 goes some way in meeting this demand. This questionnaire deals with the Taxonomy of Language Learning Activities. The Questionnaire 3 consists of two parts: Part 1 with a single open-ended question regarding the participants' own preferences and views on any language learning activities that they deem an important asset to such sites, in their own words. Part 2 has 50 close-ended questions that must be graded on a 1 to 5 Likert-type scale starting with Totally Agree on the highest scale-end, and gradually downwards to other degrees such as: Agree, Indifferent, Disagree and Totally Disagree at the other levels. These questions are based on the importance or otherwise of the different categories of activities that are present on the visited sites.

The questionnaire was distributed to 134 participants who were selected from a group of tertiary level STEM (Mechanical Engineering, Computer Science) and Business students along with the instructions to mark them according to what they thought about language learning activities that are important for such websites. The URLs for the websites:  50 in number, were provided. The participants were given exhaustive instructions on the mode of filling in the questionnaire, the time schedule to complete them and the process of returning the data sheets to the researcher.

At the designated time, the filled in questionnaires were collected back from the participants, put together according to the date when the website was visited. Later, when all the responses were available, the data in them was collated and analysed using graphs in the form of pie charts. These charted results make it very easy and useful for quick analysis so that the results of these questions are evident at a glance.

This is a mixed method questionnaire with the first question being an open-ended one. As such, the analysis of this questionnaire is two-pronged: interpretive analysis of the open-ended responses separately and cognitive comparative analysis of the charts made from the other questions/responses.

Questionnaire 3 deals with the different language-learning activities on the visited websites and the questions enquire of the participants their views on the importance of each of these activities to language learning. The results would show us a consolidation of their views and thus mark a path to the creating of an ideal website that would have all the essential activities at the optimal level, which is at once sophisticated with all the latest technological features, and also academically sound including all the necessary language aspects. With a view to this, an exhaustive list of 50 such activities were prepared and presented in the form of a Likert-type of questionnaire with instructions to grade them according to the participants own views and interests.

As this website is to be for language learning, let us deal with the academic aspects first that are normally used in all language learning centres, digital or otherwise. These could include pedagogical items that are used for teaching, learning and evaluation aspects of languages. Some of these are those used in evaluating what has been learnt about lexical and grammatical usages of the language. For instance, exercises in testing simple skills using multiple choice, re-ordering sentences, gap filling. sentence transformation or rewriting according to the instructions, matching using words, definitions or images, crosswords, brainteasers, and word search. Extended use of the language in exercises such as paragraph ordering, sentence insertion, putting in headings and sub-headings, summary writing, and reading comprehension.

Other items in the questionnaire include those that need a little more technical knowledge or for learning how to use the learnt language in communicating through technological means. For instance, the audio-visual methods of learning, telephoning, email, web search and reporting, graphs, business presentations, designing and presenting web pages, designing and presenting a product, email, locating technical information in the web, video-conferencing, and developing databases such as dictionaries and glossaries.

There were 134 respondents to this questionnaire. Based on a Global Analysis of the data, of a total of 6700 responses that were collected, 1359 (20%) indicated Totally Agreed, 2634 (39%) denoted Agree, 1717(26%) marked Indifferent, 782(12%) Disagree, and 208 (3%) Totally Disagree, to all the posed questions.
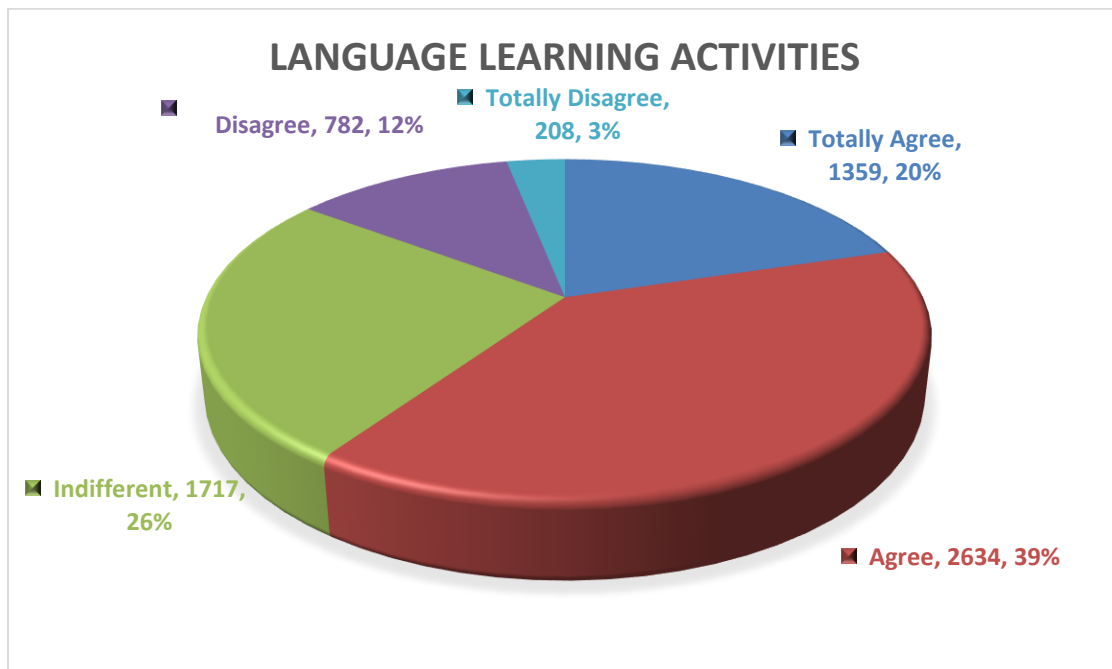


Figure 4.58: Student response to Language Learning Activities

As can be observed from the chart, the scale Agree occupies the largest sector and almost twice the area of Totally Agree and consequently much more than Disagree and Totally Disagree put together. This demonstrates the fact that the questions regarding the language learning activities are on the right track and that most of the students who responded felt these features as being important to be included in a potentially new model for a language learning website.

When the two sections of the questionnaire – the first 20 questions regarding the learning of basic grammatical and lexical skills and testing and the 30 questions dealing with the extended skills in the usage of the learnt language into everyday practice items, it is observed that both sections are considered equally important by the participants. For instance, with an average of 41.2% for the Agree scale point on the basic section and an almost similar 38% for the extended usage section clearly show that all these activities are considered important features of any language learning website.
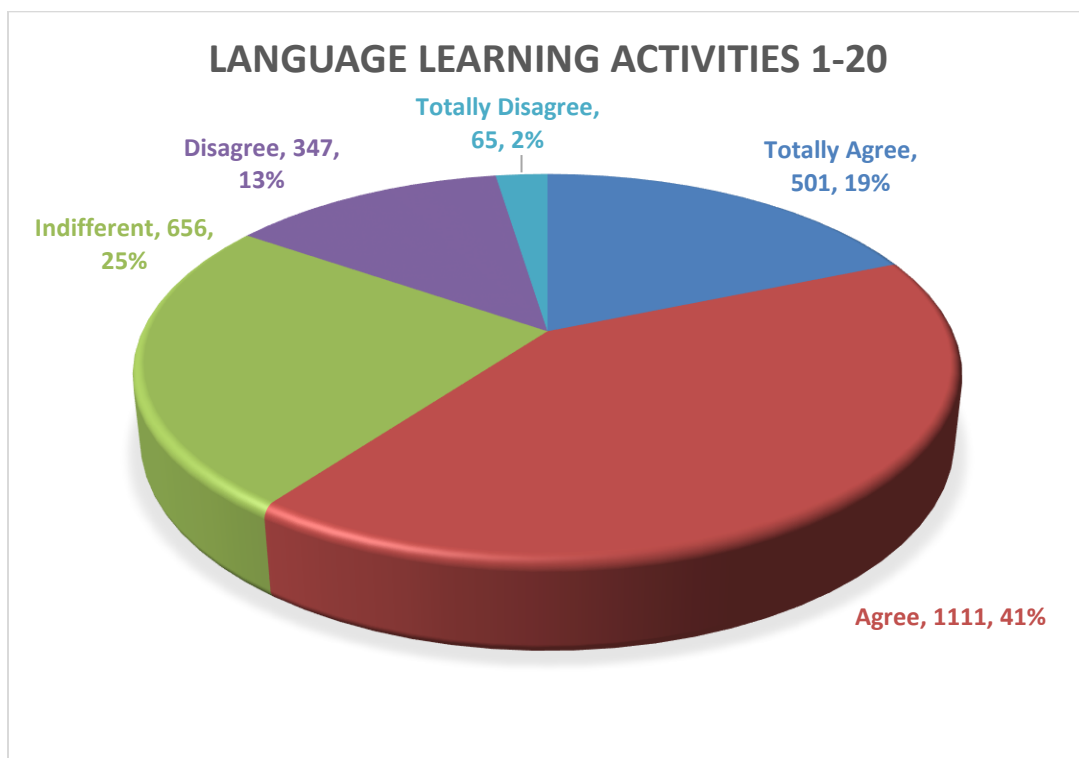


Figure 4.59: Student response to Language Learning Activities 1-20

**LANGUAGE LEARNING ACTIVITIES 20-50**

Totally Disagree, 143, 4%

Disagree, 435, 11%

Totally Agree, 858, 21%

Indifferent, 1061, 26%

Agree, 1523, 38%
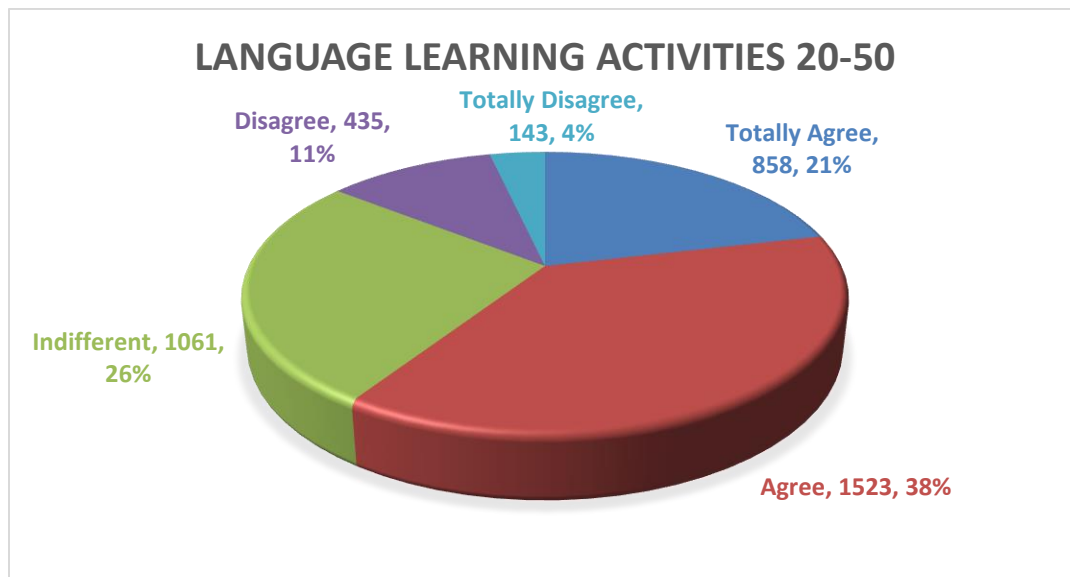
Figure 4.60: Student response to Language Learning Activities 21-50

Questionnaire 3 results by items show the following. While about 54.5% agree with the importance of multiple-choice evaluation, other items such as jumbled sentences, gap fill, sentence transformation, and sentence rewriting are not given as much importance, with a uniform score of 20% for all these items, across the 5 scales.

Other items from the basic language learning activities such as matching through definitions, summary writing, brainstorm activities, finding synonyms and antonyms from texts as well as from definitions, testing of reading comprehension using open questions and multiple-choice questions all score more than 23% at the highest scale level of Totally Agree, with brainstorming activities and synonyms and antonyms from definitions score more than 32% on this scale. At the other end of the scale: Totally Disagree, leaving aside the anomaly of 20% score of the 4 items mentioned before, 6% have rated the items crosswords and brainteasers as completely irrelevant to learning a foreign language through a website.

When considering the advanced methods of learning and evaluation activities pertaining thereto, audio-visual inputs with multiple-choice and open questions for evaluation as well as writing emails are observed to be rated more than 30% at the highest scale level. On the other hand, extended activities such as telephonic communication, designing and developing

webpages or for marketing of products, technical glossaries, and developing dictionaries are considered about one-third less in importance to language learning.

At the second level of the scale (Agree), letter writing, writing emails, making notes, report writing, case study analysis and report, developing projects with foreign universities, comparing different projects from different groups, are all ranked more than 40%. On the other hand, activities such as telephoning and locating technical information on the web are considered less important.

The first question in this questionnaire is an open-ended question asking for the respondents to make their own suggestions regarding any important activity for language learning that is not in the list but that they feel should be included in the website. The analysis of the responses to this question was done by picking out those responses that were the most repetitive among all the participants and ranking them by the number of times these suggested activities were found in the answers.

The highest number among the suggestions is for engaging in group activities with other students of the course such as group discussions on specific topics, group-wise debates or learning through role play by acting out a topic by putting on a performance centred around the topic and acting out the different roles. 25 of the participants recommended such activities.

The next highly popular method of learning is through games. 22 of the participants have recommended the game technique as a way of interacting with other students and also as a means of acquiring language skills that are inherent to the game itself. These games could also be online or video games with the students learning to use the language through interaction with their peers and the tutor too. Such games could serve in creating a more heightened interest in the topic or subject of study and would also help in maintaining their attention at the highest pitch. Games such as *Kahoot!* seem to be very popular among students for learning new information.

Twelve of the participants suggest travel and meeting and conversing with foreigners as a language learning tool. Travel is described variously as travelling to the country where the

language is widely spoken, excursions to nearby places that have populations well-versed in the language that they are studying. A few suggested interactions through the web, video or phone with foreigners proficient in the language. These types of interactions would make it possible to explore the intricacies of the language first-hand, from the native speakers themselves.

Audio-visual stimulus for learning such as watching performances, movies has been rated as an essential part of learning a foreign language. 11 of the participants agree with this view. Some of the participants felt that audio-visual learning can also be achieved by watching a series on the television or online. This passive watching of such material could not only allow them to experience the language first hand from native speakers but may also expose them to the cultural and social background of the language and the speakers.

The fifth highest in the list of suggestions was for learning the language through listening to music in that language. As music is a universally liked medium, the lyrics would provide an interesting and effective way to understand the vocabulary, usage and different meanings of the expressions, figures of speech and usages of the foreign tongue.

There were a few suggestions from two or three participants regarding the inclusion of learning through video classrooms where the teachers from the site or other institutions give some of the important lectures. There were even suggestions that these virtual classrooms should have interactive features so that the students can get their doubts cleared up face to face.

Another feature that merited a few votes was the use of social media for interacting with other students in the language and improve the learning process.

To summarize the findings of this questionnaire, the participants' responses to the close-ended questions show that there is an overall agreement with the different types of activities laid out through them with 3993 responses for the higher end scales of totally agree and agree and only 990 for disagree and totally disagree.

## 4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented and discussed research findings that resulted from the methodology used in this research project. Our main instrument was the use of questionnaires but there were also additional findings gained through the analysis of e-textbooks (and their online platform) and through the analysis of MOOCs. This process was focussed on trying to understand language learning in an online environment from the point of view of the end user (our learners) and through materials and courses (e-textbooks and MOOCs) that have already transitioned from analogical formats to digital formats. In the figure below, I summarize our main findings.

**Initial classroom research**
- Learner knowledge of multiple tools, audiovisual tools (YouTube, Netflix, Series, VideoGames) most popular, mainly passive learning, implicit and informal

**Analysis of e-textbooks and online platform**
- Highly structured, well-organised, clear objectives, mechanical exercises, repetitive, no exploitation of new technologies for task-based/project-based communicative activities, lots of self-correcting traditional exercises (clone of analogical coursebook and workbook)

**Analysis of MOOCs**
- Highly structured, well-organised, clear objectives, lots of video (lecture style) and self-correcting exercises (multiple choice etc.), linear, short courses, poor academic support (clone of university courses), poor interaction for language courses, niche language learning (highly specific)

**Questionnaire 1**
- Clear idea of online learning, 70% + had participated in an online course, positive about online learning: flexibility of time and place, tailor-made to their needs and requirements, need to include *forums, discussions and videos* that were interactive and anything that provided direct and active learning, respondents also felt the need for *a variety of materials with feedback*, *regular assessments,* and *immediate feedback*, main advantages of online course as being *flexible, personalized, constantly updated* and *not as extensive* (short-term), 75.4% familiar with language learning websites, only 25% respondents felt possible to learn a second language online,  56.1% would recommend online learning as being suitable for second language learning, need for face-to-face interaction, video preferred technology

**Questionnaire 2**
- Most language learning websites are based on grammar and vocabulary which are practised using quizzes and self-assessment systems. On many language learning websites, there were very few communicative activities. Many communication tools not present (Chat, Discussion Lists, Forum, Social Media [Facebook, Twitter etc.], Videoconference [Skype, FaceTime etc.])

**Questionnaire 3**
- Respondents valued as equally important short exercises such as multiple choice, re-ordering sentences, gap filling, matching words, etc. as they did longer tasks such as paragraph ordering, sentence insertion, summary writing and project-based tasks such as web search and reporting tasks, business presentations, and video-conferencing. Students suggested engaging in group activities such as group discussions, topics, group-wise debates, role play and gaming.

Figure 4.61: Summary of results

# CHAPTER 5
# MOLL: Model of Online Language Learning

# CHAPTER 5: MOLL: A Model of Online Language Learning

## 5.1.    Introduction

In this introduction, we offer an overview of a model of online language learning. The model is divided into three main parts: Social Context, Academic Context, Learning Context. As teachers, our main interest is in the Learning Context. This part will be discussed in greater detail in the model. However, we cannot ignore that all education occurs within a socioeconomic context and within an institution (in our case, a university), within an academic context. Table 5.1 presents a summary of the model which is a representation of the general concepts that teachers need to be informed about when designing and developing an online language learning course.

| MOLL: A Model of Online Language Learning | |
|---|---|
| **Social Context** | ▪ ① Analysis of Social Demand<br>▪ ② Language Communication Needs in Business and Industry<br>▪ ③ Professional Profile Needs<br>▪ ④ Common European Framework of Reference for Languages<br>▪ ⑤ Language Course Specification<br>▪ ⑥ Feedback to and from Business and Industry |
| **Academic Context** | ▪ ① Analysis of Academic Institution<br>▪ ② Human Resources: Academic Skills<br>▪ ③ Human Resources: Technological Skills<br>▪ ④ Institutional Material Resources<br>▪ ⑤ Administrative and Political Support |
| **Learning Context** | ▪ ① *Learner Analysis*<br>  ▪ Information about Learners (Pre-test)<br>  ▪ Language Information about Target Situation<br>  ▪ Language Learning Needs (Learning Outcomes)<br>  ▪ Language Skills (to be acquired) |

- ❷ *Technological Analysis*
  - ❶ LMS list
    - Analysis of LMS functions
    - LMS Evaluation
    - LMS Selection
    - LMS Testing
  - ❷ Tools List and Functions (Wiki, Blog, Podcast, Forum etc.)
    - Tool Functions
    - Tools & Tasks
    - Tools, Tasks and Language Skills
    - Tool Evaluation
  - ❸ Tool Functions and Language Tasks
    - Podcast, VoiceThread (practice speaking and communication)
    - Wiki, Blog (practice writing)
    - Office tools (report writing)
    - Chat (private conversation and small discussion)
    - Forum (group discussion)
    - Skype, FaceTime (virtual project meetings)
    - Video (oral presentations)
    - Google Drive, Dropbox etc. (collaborative project work)
- ❸ *Course Design*
  - ❶ Learning Outcomes
    - Learning Objectives
    - Language Skills
    - Language Learning Materials and Methods
    - Task Design
    - Learner Evaluation

- ❷ Language Skills

  - Language Content (informed by corpora)
  - Genre & Discourse
  - Language Functions
  - Lexico-grammar
  - Pronunciation
  - Four skills: Listening, Reading, Speaking, Writing
  - Evaluation of Language Skills

- ❸ Content Design (language learning materials)

  - Language Materials
  - Media (text, image, audio, video)
  - Methods
  - Tasks
  - Language Materials Evaluation

- ❹ Task Design (delivery and methodology)

  - Task List
  - Task Type
  - Match Task Type to Language Skills
  - Match Task Type to Language Skills and Technology
  - Task Evaluation

- ❺ Assessment

  - Evaluation Types (Formative, Summative)
  - Evaluation Activities (Projects, Multiple Choice Tests, etc.)
  - Verification of Learner Outcomes
  - Accreditation/Certification
  - Evaluation of Assessment System

- ❹ *Learning Support (Academic and Technical)*
- ❺ *Continuous Evaluation and Ongoing Course Improvement*

Table 5.1: MOLL_A Model of Online Language Learning

## 5.2.    Social Context

Education does not happen in a vacuum. It is a response to a social need and a social demand. Many working people pay taxes to maintain an education system that will provide their sons and daughters with a job and hopefully a brighter future as education and standards of living rise. In many parts of the world (including our own social context, a Spanish University), learning a language (particularly, English) is considered a way of advancing oneself and can help a student get a job.

Our wider social context is Europe. As part of its efforts to promote mobility and intercultural understanding, the EU has designated language learning as an important priority, and funds numerous programmes and projects in this area. Multilingualism, in the EU's view, is an important element in Europe's competitiveness. One of the objectives of the EU's language policy is therefore that every European citizen should master two other languages in addition to their mother tongue.

An *Analysis of Social Demand* is an important task for language teachers. In Europe, this is made slightly easier because the European Union has decided that, to participate in the Erasmus Programme, students will need to achieve at least a B2 level before participating in the exchange programme. In other words, this gives an institution of higher education a fairly clear idea of what level is expected of tertiary level students. In the case of our university, all students need to have achieved a B2 level if they want to graduate. However, linguistic skills are related to different kind of competences which are demanded by society of our students. These skills include, in particular, everything related to *Effective Communication*, which implies the acquisition of the following skills (and many more that we have not listed).

> a. listen actively and communicate effectively with others
> b. be able to make coherent oral presentations
> c. employ the appropriate language (depending on audience and social situation)
> d. write clearly and accurately in a variety of contexts and formats
> e. write correctly (orthographically and syntactically)
> f. listen and ask questions to understand other people's viewpoints
> g. use language specific to a discipline in an appropriate form

h. be aware of and responsive to verbal and non-verbal communication styles
i. recognize cultural differences in communication
j. use effective cross-cultural communication skills

However, a competence like *Effective Communication* is a basic competence. Our students, especially our engineers are likely to need specialist language training because of *Language Communication Needs in Business and Industry*. There is a long tradition within English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English Specific Purposes (ESP) which tries to cover these needs. Below are examples of project work carried out by our engineering and business students. These activities normally result in an oral presentation and written report.

- ✓ *Inventing a new chemical substance (Chemical Engineers)*
- ✓ *Inventing a new product (Industrial Design)*
- ✓ *Design a wearable computer (Computer Science)*
- ✓ *Design an Online Holiday website (Computer Science)*
- ✓ *Guanambo (helping a developing country) (Engineering and Business)*
- ✓ *Inequality and discrimination in the workplace (Business Management)*
- ✓ *Discipline-based presentations (Engineering)*
- ✓ *Welcome to my Lab (Video Activity: Engineering)*
- ✓ *Redesigning an existing product (Industrial Design)*
- ✓ *Webquest (Engineering and Business)*
- ✓ *Business Plan (Business Management)*

This kind of project work we see as creating the following:
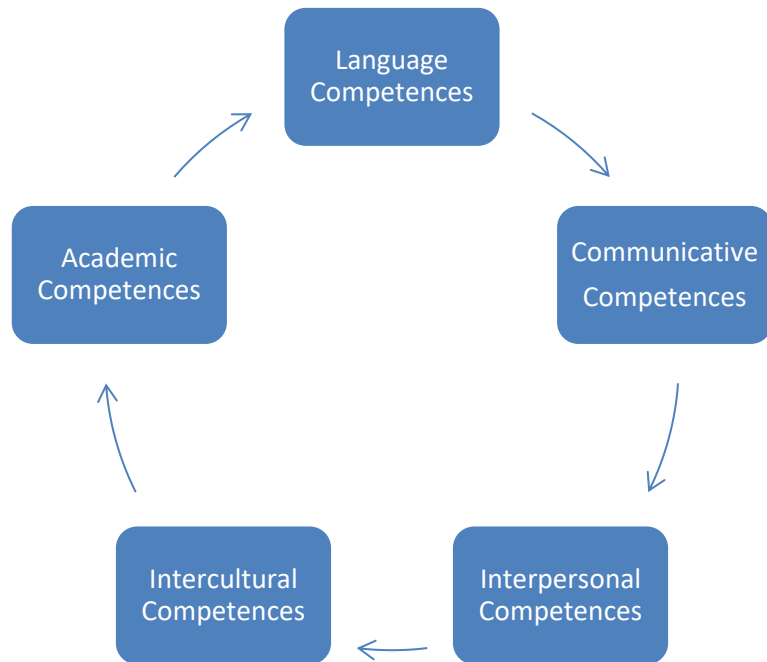
Figure 5.1: Developing student language competences for Business and Industry

This is closely related to *Professional Profile Needs* which is a summary of the skills, strengths, and key experiences that a student needs to bring to the workplace, so s/he is employable. In our case, it is the linguistic skills they need. In our social context, these linguistic skills will be based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) is a framework of reference, which was designed to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials, and the assessment of foreign language proficiency. This document is likely to inform our *Language Course Specification*, although there are many other reference sources and the demands of society, business and industry will all impact on how we finally decide to specify our students' language needs. Finally, in our model of Social Context, we should always be responding to *Feedback from Business and Industry* and offering *Feedback to Business and Industry*.

## 5.3. Academic Context

When we talk about the Academic Context, we are focussing our attention on the *Analysis of the Academic Institution* we work in. In our particular case, it is a tertiary level institution (a university), where most degrees are offered to STEM students, although we also have a Business Management and a Fine Arts degree. All other degrees would be considered to be Engineering and Science degrees. Among these degrees, we have Telecommunications and Computer Science degrees. Therefore, we are in a privileged position of having expertise within our institution in online learning, networks and programming.

It is also a university with strong links to business and industry, which means we have a means of creating income and employment which not all Spanish Universities have. So, we can say that we have both the *Human Resources (Academic and Technological Skills)* and *Institutional Material Resources*. There is no doubt that we have a powerful and fast network, good computer technicians and good infrastructure for online learning along with our own LMS (Learning Management System) called PoliformaT[8].

However, we are dealing here with online language learning which is led by our Department of Applied Linguistics. It is quite clear that our academic staff do not have the same set of *Academic and Technological Skills.* This is a clear example of why we have to analyse the *Human Resources (Academic and Technological Skills)* available. Our Computer Science colleagues may be involved in setting up basic infrastructure and providing the necessary conditions for a language teacher to think of designing and developing an online course, but they are not going to do the work for us. Therefore, our departmental teachers need some basic academic and technological training to be able to start thinking about teaching online.

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[8] PoliformaT is powered by Sakai (https://www.sakaiproject.org/), a 100% open source LMS, a collaboration between leading higher education institutions to combine and synchronize their assorted learning software into a collection of integrated, open source tools.

For example, an online language teacher should be familiar with e-moderating. Salmon (2011) has developed a model for e-moderators that demarcates the progression of tasks which the online teacher moves through in the process of effectively moderating an online course. The process begins by providing students with access and motivation. In this stage, any technical or social issues that inhibit participation are addressed, and students are encouraged to share information about themselves to create a virtual presence. In the second stage, Salmon (2011) suggests that the e-moderator continues to develop online socialization by building bridges between cultural, social, and learning environments. In the third stage, the "information exchange", Salmon suggests that the teaching task moves to facilitating learning tasks, moderating content-based discussions, and bringing to light student misconceptions and misunderstandings. In the fourth stage, "knowledge construction", students focus on creating knowledge artefacts and projects that collaboratively and individually illustrate their understanding of course content and approaches. In the final "development" stage, learners become responsible for their own and their group's learning by creating final projects, working on summative assignments, and demonstrating the achievement of learning outcomes. The figure below summarizes Salmon's ideas.

As can be seen in figure 5.2 below, alongside e-moderating skills, Salmon introduces what she calls *Technical Support*. One of them is conferencing. Any language teacher, who wants to teach online, is going to learn how to carry out activities using Skype, FaceTime etc. In other words, they will need technological skills such as videoconferencing. Possibly, a language teacher will not have to know about setting up a system for online learning, but they will definitely need to know about accessing the system (so they can help learners how are struggling with access). This may be anything from user ids and passwords to downloading a PDF file or using software provided for successful completion of the course.
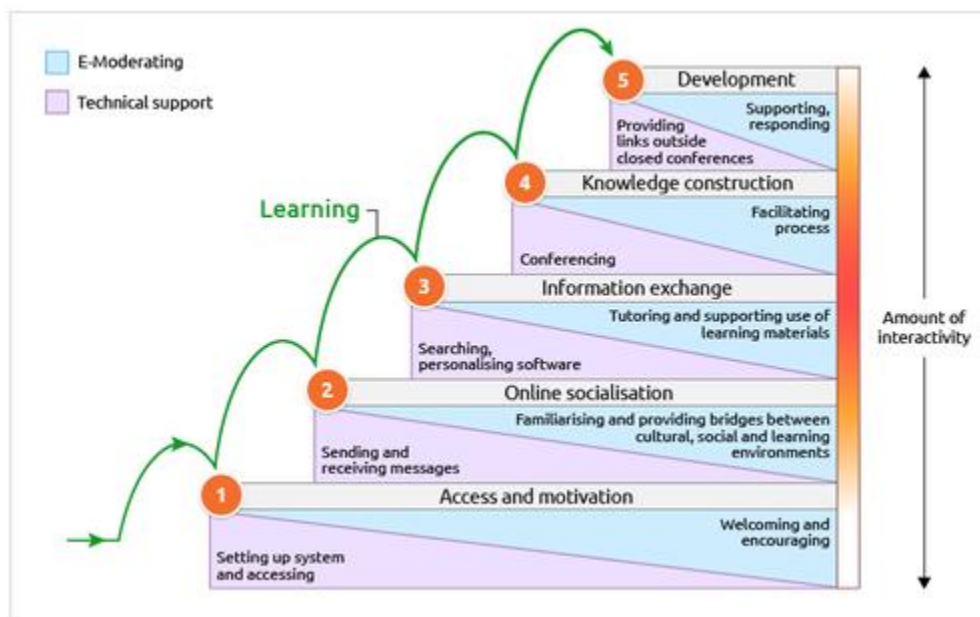
Figure 5.2: Model of teaching and learning online (Salmon 2011)

What this all adds up to is that university departments without the necessary *Academic and Technological Skills* are going to need *Administrative and Political Support* from their institution. In this way, teachers will receive the necessary academic and technological training and are given the necessary *Institutional Material Resources* so that training can be put to good use.

## 5.4.    Learning Context

### 5.4.1 Learner Analysis

Learner Analysis involves two types of analysis: 1) knowing our learners (identify the language needs of the learners) and 2) knowing what kind of skills students need to acquire to learn a language successfully online.

1)    Knowing our learners (identify the language needs of the learners)

One of the basic assumptions of English language curriculum development is that a sound program for an English language class should be based on an analysis of learners' needs. Procedures used to collect information about learners' needs are known as needs analysis. Needs analysis is a distinct and necessary phase in planning any online language course. Needs

analysis is concerned with the establishment of the learner's communicative needs and their linguistic realisations, resulting from an analysis of the communication in the target situation (for example, English for Mechanical Engineers studying a university who will need to learn about technical report writing and present technical information orally). One of the easiest ways of finding about learner needs is by asking your students questions. An example questionnaire is offered below.

---

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

**Please fill in this questionnaire giving as much detail as you can:**

A. BIODATA

**Name: _____**

**Sex:**      **Male**      **Female**

**Nationality: _____**

**Degree Course: _____**

**Mother tongue: _____**

**Other languages: _____**

B. LANGUAGE STUDY

**How many years of English have you studied? _____**

C. ACADEMIC LIFE

**How confident are you about your English in the following situations?**

| Speaking | **Most Confident = 10** | | | | | **Least Confident = 1** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **face-to-face** | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| **telephone** | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| **lectures** | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| **tutorials** | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| **conferences** | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| **meetings** | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

| Listening | **Most Confident = 10** | | | | | **Least Confident = 1** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **face-to-face** | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| **telephone** | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| **lectures** | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| **tutorials** | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| **conferences** | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| **meetings** | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| **lab work** | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| **radio** | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| **television** | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| **video** | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

| Writing | **Most Confident = 10** | | | | | **Least Confident = 1** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **project** | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| **report** | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| **essay** | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| **assignment** | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **exams** | **10** | **9** | **8** | **7** | **6** | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **letters** | **10** | **9** | **8** | **7** | **6** | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **articles 10** | **9** | **8** | **7** | **6** | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **fax** | **10** | **9** | **8** | **7** | **6** | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **email** | **10** | **9** | **8** | **7** | **6** | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **memo** | **10** | **9** | **8** | **7** | **6** | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |

| Reading | | **Most Confident = 10** | | | | **Least Confident = 1** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **professional journal** | **10** | **9** | **8** | **7** | **6** | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **textbook** | **10** | **9** | **8** | **7** | **6** | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **academic books** | **10** | **9** | **8** | **7** | **6** | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **reports** | **10** | **9** | **8** | **7** | **6** | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **newspapers** | **10** | **9** | **8** | **7** | **6** | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **magazines** | **10** | **9** | **8** | **7** | **6** | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **fiction** | **10** | **9** | **8** | **7** | **6** | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **fax** | **10** | **9** | **8** | **7** | **6** | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **email** | **10** | **9** | **8** | **7** | **6** | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **memo** | **10** | **9** | **8** | **7** | **6** | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |

D. Any other comments:

_____

_____

Table 5.2: A simple student questionnaire for needs analysis

This is a fairly simple questionnaire. There are much more sophisticated instruments. There has been a whole industry starting in the 1970s with Munby's '*Communicative Needs Processor*'. Munby (1978: 154) states that it is an instrument that collects information (information of a sociolinguistic, communicative and functional type) that is used to determine what is the profile of the communicative needs of the learners on an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course. The profile is used to fix the language and thematic contents of the course.

We can describe the process as, firstly, there would be an analysis of the use of language (linguistic knowledge) so that the student can communicate with fluency and correction in a given social context while, secondly, there is an analysis of how students will learn these skills

during a course or a subject, students will progress from point A to point Z in order to learn and assimilate the knowledge they need to acquire.

Identify attitudes/needs/potential of learners

Identify skills and knowledge needed to function in the target language situation

Write syllabus/materials to exploit the potential of the learning situation in the acquisition of the skills and knowledge required by the target language situation
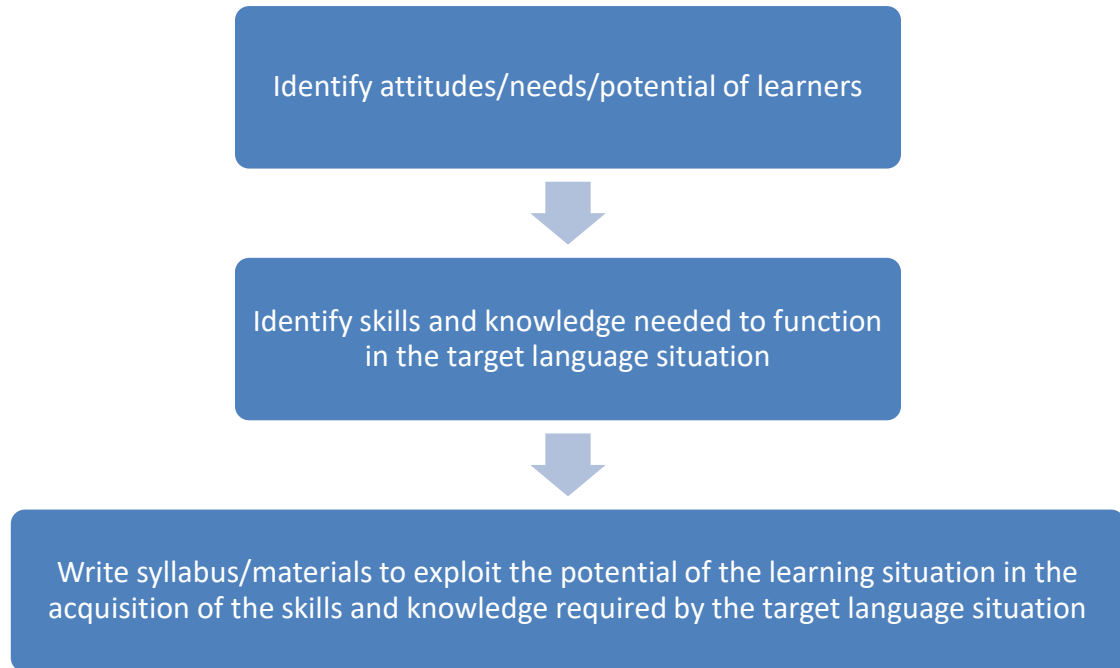
Figure 5.3: Analysing learner needs

Of course, it is often the case that a teacher already has a lot of well-defined information about their learners. Most of our learners are male, 21 years old, in the third year of their degrees and trying to become engineers. In our engineering degrees, there are extremely low numbers of women. Most students are preparing for professions where they will be managing projects. They are normally intelligent as engineering and computer science degrees are not easy and involve a great deal of self-discipline and autonomy. The ability for a student to be autonomous is extremely important in online language learning. We now consider what kind of skills our students need to acquire to learn a language successfully online.

2) Knowing what kind of skills, students need to acquire to learn a language successfully online

A successful online language student needs to be autonomous, self-directed, self-motivated and digitally literate. The student must be able to carry out self-evaluation, measure their learning and be aware of the processes through which they can acquire knowledge of a language. In a

self-regulated learning model (as is online language learning), the student is responsible and is aware of their learning objectives. This student self-evaluates, and therefore s/he is aware of how s/he manages to learn, as well as having a reasonable idea of their level of competence. In short, they take an active role in their learning and take every opportunity what they have to understand, practice and learn. Self-regulated learning is related to different factors, such as metacognition, intrinsic motivation, and strategic planning.

Systematic online teaching should provide support for language students to set their own learning goals; manage their learning; formalize the contents and processes; and communicate with others in the learning process, as well as achieve learning objectives. Students must have some the following skills:

- They should know how to use a series of cognitive techniques that will enable them to attend to, analyse, transform, organize, elaborate and recover information.
- Metacognition: Ability to plan, direct and control their brain processes towards the realization of their individual goals
- They should perceive self-regulation process as a substantial element to achieving academic success

The students should have a high sense of academic self-efficiency, the development of positive emotions before doing tasks, and the ability to adjust to the requirements of the task in hand. Students should plan and manage the time and effort that will be used in the completion of tasks. They should be capable of a series of volitional strategies, aimed at avoiding external and internal distractions, to maintain their concentration, effort, and motivation during the performance of academic tasks. Students should be able to choose, create and structure environments (places where students can see their learning favoured) to optimize learning, advice seeking, information gathering and analysis.

A teacher needs to be aware of the kind of learner that will be successful, so they can provide the necessary support for the learner and offer advice, strategies and tools to help the learner acquire the cognitive and metacognitive skills to learn the language in an online environment.

**5.4.2 Technological Analysis**

The explosion of new technologies and multiple tools means that a teacher has to acquire a minimum knowledge of the technologies required to teach online. These technologies can include presentation and multimedia technologies, social networking technologies, mobile technologies and gaming, simulations and virtual reality technologies.  In the figure 5.4 below, we present an overview of this section on technological analysis.



Figure 5.4: Technological Analysis

**5.4.2.1 LMS List**

Most language teachers who work for an academic institution will not have to decide on an LMS (Learning Management System) and then have to set it up. This will only be the case if you are an individual or a private language school. In the UPV, we have our own LMS (PoliformaT) powered by Sakai (an open source system) and we use edX which is both non-profit and open source to launch MOOCs. Nevertheless, it is worth considering what may be involved if you have to choose your own LMS and set it up. The first step would be to make a list of potential LMS

that suit your purposes. Examples of well-known LMS include Moodle, Schoology, Blackboard, Google Classroom, OPENedX. Once we have our list of potential LMS, we need to analyze their functions and characteristics. These include: administration, assessment and testing tools, compatibility and supported devices, communication and collaboration, customization and branding, course interactivity, e-commerce (if you plan to sell your course online), email notifications, mobile learning, social learning, student portal, tracking and reporting, user registration. These items can be used as a checklist to evaluate an LMS. Once you have carried out your evaluation, you would select and test the LMS until you are sure you have got what you need to run online language courses.

**5.4.2.2 Tools List and Functions (Wiki, Blog, Podcast, Forum etc.)**

One of the most important things a language teacher will have to take decisions about when teaching online are the tools s/he is going to use. For this purpose, it is useful to match tools to skills that language learners need to acquire. For example, if the focus is on interactivity, where we want learners to develop their communications skills by participating, discussing, explaining etc., we should choose the appropriate tools (videoconferencing, digital audio, podcasts, email, instant messaging, forums, social media). If the focus is on writing, where learners create and share content, they can use wikis and blogs. If the focus is on reading, then the technology will be simpler a PDF or Word document, but this may be accompanied by some technology to ask them questions about the reading using a quiz tool such as Hot Potatoes. Quiz tools offer many functions such as Drag-and-Drop, Fill-in-the-blank (cloze), Matching, Multiple choice, Pull-Down List (selection question), Ranking (Rank in Order), True/False? or Yes/No?, Wh-questions (open questions) and Word response (text match). If the focus is on listening, we will be thinking about YouTube videos, podcasts, digital audio along with some specific task such as information extraction. If the learners are asked to brainstorm for an activity or organize vocabulary, they can use concept mapping tools. If we want to check on a learner's pronunciation, we are going to be using recording tools and voice recognition tools.

### 5.4.2.3 Tool Functions and Language Tasks

At this point, we can begin to see the full potential of online language learning. The abundance of tools means that there are more opportunities and locations for learning and, therefore, a wider range of pedagogies. In online language learning, one of the decisions you are going to have to make is matching up language activities and technology (tool functions). In figure 5.5 below, we illustrate how this process may work, if you know what activity you want your students to do and want ideas for the sorts of technology that you might use. This can also work the other way around. As a teacher, you might want to know what you can do with a particular tool, for example, a blog.

A blog can mean any authored content with an underlying chronological basis that is published on the Worldwide Web. At its simplest, it is just an online journal that allows other people to comment on your entries. The content may be about any topic and consist of any media, including audio, images and video. The majority of blogs are still largely text-based. However, audio and video blogs are also available, and these may be particularly suitable for students who want to practice their oral skills. The blog can authored by more than one person.

Blogging is a very easy and useful way to maintain a record of investigative activity (here, we are thinking of tertiary level students such as our mechanical engineers or computer science students: for students' project work, it can cover thoughts and ideas, notes following meetings, further reflections and so on. It is ideal for a diary, providing content that can be written up later as more formal documentation. The ability for others to comment on a blog means that the teacher can provide the student with support and feedback directly in the blogging environment. Blogs can even be the object of peer assessment activities, where students comment on, and rate, each other's reflections according to criteria set by the teacher. Blogs are clearly useful for developing writing skills. One of the uses we have made of blogs is obliging students to write up what they have learnt in class. It, therefore, becomes a revision tool and a means of summarizing what they did in the classroom (or, in an online course, it could be used to summarize a discussion or an article they have read).
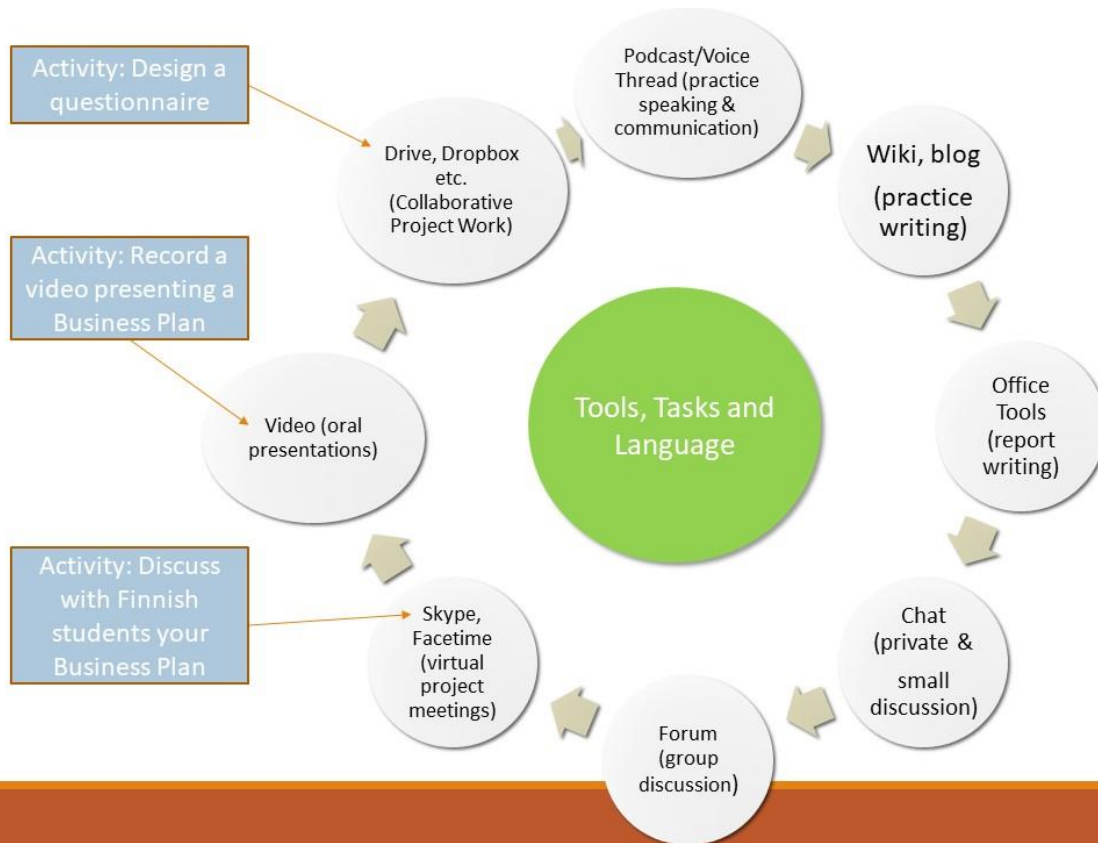
Figure 5.5: Tools, Tasks and Language

Videoconferencing/meeting tools allow synchronous interactions in a single interface which usually offers audio and video, chat tools, whiteboards and application sharing. This combination of functionality provides the potential for fully interactive online learning with a greater sense of presence and immediacy than asynchronous systems. However, the increased functionality of these systems requires higher specification computers and connections as well as a greater level of competency from users to engage in these environments. When they work well, they can provide the ability to mimic the experience of face to face interaction. This is really useful for students to carry our oral communication skills and foster a sense of community, for example, team building. We used videoconferencing tools to communicate with students in Finland so that Spanish Business Management students could create, discuss and evaluate business plans.

In the literature review, we presented a list of 100 tools that can be used in online learning courses. The question for a language teacher is how to match tools with task and language to

make for productive language learning. For example, above in figure 5.5, we have an activity designing a questionnaire. The tool (Google Forms) we use for this is in Google Drive. Investigating with a questionnaire is typical academic activity, but at the same time we are practicing question formation: open (wh-questions) and closed questions (yes/no questions). So, we have the tool (Google Forms), the task (Questionnaire Design) and the language (question formation).

### 5.4.3 Course Design

Online course design is not really that different from traditional classroom course design. The basic components are very similar. A typical online language course design, as in a classroom setting, will start with analysing learner needs and establishing the target language to be acquired (this would be a B2 syllabus with a technical component in our classes). On the basis of the learner having to acquire a B2 level, one would establish the general learning outcomes.

*At the end of this course, the student should have achieved an upper intermediate level of English, equivalent to the B2 linguistic level as described by the European Association of Language Examiners and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages of the Council of Europe. Therefore, the general objectives of the course are the following:*

*1. the student can understand the main ideas of texts and complex speeches that deal with both concrete and abstract issues, even if they are technical, provided they are within their field of specialization.*

*2. the student can relate to other speakers with a sufficient degree of fluency and naturalness so that the communication is carried out without effort on the part of the interlocutors.*

*3. the student can produce clear and detailed texts on various topics as well as defend a point of view on general issues indicating the pros and cons of the different options.*

From here, we would move onto more specific outcomes and objectives of the modules and units that the course is made up of. In figure 5.6 below, we offer an overview of online course design.
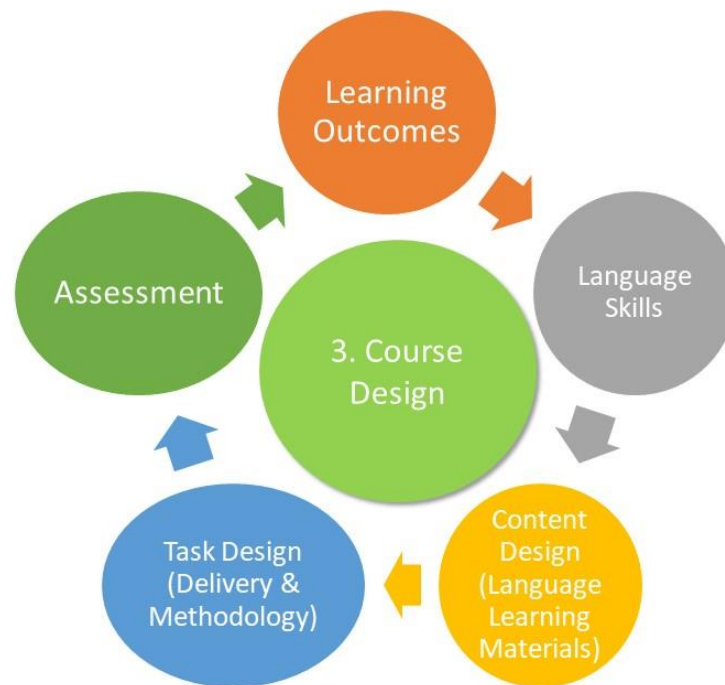
Figure 5.6: Online Course Design

## 5.4.3.1 Learning Outcomes

When we talk about learning outcomes, we are discussing what the student should have learnt by the end of the course. An example of objectives is the following.

☐ By the end of this unit you should have:

 ◻ Extracted specific information and language items from **listening** and **reading** texts

 ◻ Revised/learned about **indirect questions** and practised using these

 ◻ revised and/or extended your range of **adverbs**

 ◻ given a **short presentation**

These are not learning outcomes *per se*, setting objectives is a way to achieving outcomes. Speaking generally, our students need to acquire the language skills of a B2 level with an academic and professional component. Learning outcomes are descriptors of what students will

learn. These descriptors can be obtained from different sources, but an empirical way of obtaining these descriptors is, for example, going to the English Profile project (http://www.englishprofile.org/) which describes what aspects of English are typically learned at each CEFR level. The English Profile project uses empirical data from learner corpora and curricula to inform its research findings. It has produced an English Grammar Profile and an English Vocabulary Profile. You can log on to their site and gain access to B2 grammar and vocabulary. However, there are other types of skills that students need to acquire such as academic and professional skills:

| |
|---|
| Create audio and/or video (upload to YouTube) |
| Critical Thinking Skills |
| Describing/interpreting graphics |
| Design a questionnaire |
| Discursive Essay |
| Note-taking |
| Oral Presentations |
| References, Citations (relate to reported speech) |
| Report writing |
| Summarizing |
| Write a Blog |
| Write instructions |

Table 5.3: Academic and Professional Skills

One way of efficiently organizing our learning outcomes is to put them into an Excel spreadsheet as can be seen in figure 5.7 below:

Can use 'The reason (that)', 'The place (which)' + clause as subject + 'be' for focus. ► Relative clauses

|  | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **B2 Language Syllabus** | | | | | | |
| 2 | Language Skills: Grammar | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | | |
| 224 | VERBS | prepositional | B2 | FORM: VERB + A | Can use an adverb between the verb and the preposition. | I am really willing to know | |
| 225 | VERBS | phrasal | B2 | FORM: NO OBJE | Can use a wide range of phrasal verbs without an object. | Some species are dying ou | |
| 226 | VERBS | phrasal | B2 | FORM: VERB + P | Can use a wide range of phrasal verbs + particle + object. | I don't need to use my ima | |
| 227 | VERBS | phrasal | B2 | FORM: VERB + N | Can use phrasal verbs + nouns as object + particle. | I am glad that you have de | |
| 228 | VERBS | types | B2 | FORM: SEMI-MC | Can use semi-modal auxiliary verbs, 'dare' and 'need'. | You needn't worry about v | |
| 229 | VERBS | patterns_with to and -ing | B2 | FORM: VERB + '- | Can use an increasing range of verbs followed by an '-ing' form. | [talking about cars] ... we | |
| 230 | VERBS | patterns_with to and -ing | B2 | FORM: VERB + N | Can introduce a new subject before the '-ing' form (using noun or object pronoun | If your boss doesn't mind | |
| 231 | VERBS | patterns_with to and -ing | B2 | FORM: 'TO'-INFI | Can follow some verbs with a 'to'-infinitive or an '-ing' form, with a change in mea | He said if you need to cha | |
| 232 | VERBS | patterns_with to and -ing | B2 | FORM/USE: VER | Can use some verbs connected with the senses + direct object + an '-ing' form, to | Then I heard someone scr | |
| 233 | VERBS | there is/are | B2 | FORM: 'THERE' + | Can use 'there' with other verbs with modal meaning + 'be' + complement. | I figured out that there ha | |
| 234 | VERBS | linking | B2 | FORM: LINKING | Can use a wide range of linking verbs with complements. | There are indeed many wa | |
| 235 | CLAUSES | conditional | B2 | FORM/USE: SUB | Can use conditional subordinate clauses with a range of conjunctions ('as long as' | As long as it involves child | |
| 236 | DISCOURSE MARKERS | discourse markers in writi | B2 | FORM/USE: CON | Can use a range of phrases as discourse markers to introduce a comparison. | [talking about celebrating | |
| 237 | DISCOURSE MARKERS | discourse markers in writi | B2 | FORM/USE: ORG | Can use a range of phrases as discourse markers to open and close texts and poin | To begin with, I want to er | |
| 238 | DISCOURSE MARKERS | discourse markers in writi | B2 | FORM/USE: SUM | Can use a range of phrases as discourse markers to summarise. | Thus, I would be very grat | |
| 239 | REPORTED SPEECH | reported speech | B2 | FORM: DIRECT S | Can report speech and thought directly using the reporting verb in the mid positi | "No problem", I thought, ' | |
| 240 | REPORTED SPEECH | reported speech | B2 | FORM: DIRECT S | Can report speech directly inverting the subject and verb in the reporting clause v | "I was astonished when I s | |
| 241 | REPORTED SPEECH | reported speech | B2 | FORM: MODIFIC | Can modify the reporting verb with an adverb. | "So this is a real cow, mon | |
| 242 | REPORTED SPEECH | reported speech | B2 | FORM: REPORTE | Can report requests and commands with 'ask' or 'tell' + direct object + 'not' + 'to-i | Meanwhile, she told me r | |
| 243 | REPORTED SPEECH | reported speech | B2 | FORM/USE: CITA | Can use the present simple form of the reporting verb to report information from | First of all, your advertise | |
| 244 | REPORTED SPEECH | reported speech | B2 | FORM/USE: REP | Can use the past continuous of the reporting verb to report mental processes, wi | I was wondering why I fail | |
| 245 | REPORTED SPEECH | reported speech | B2 | FORM/USE: TEM | Can report speech about events in the past with backshifts for tenses and words i | She had told me the previ | |
| 246 | FOCUS | focus | B2 | FORM/USE: 'THE | Can use 'The reason (that)', 'The place (which)' + clause as subject + 'be' for focus. | The reason I am writing is | |
| 247 | FOCUS | focus | B2 | FORM/USE: 'THE | Can use 'The thing, fact, point, problem, or reason + is (that)' for focus. | The reason is I like childre | |
| 248 | NEGATION | negation | B2 | FORM/USE: 'NO | Can use uncontracted 'not' for emphasis or in formal contexts. | Do not take on too many a | |
| 249 | NEGATION | negation | B2 | FORM/USE: 'NEV | Can use 'never' in front position followed by an inverted subject (most commonly | Never have I seen such a r | |
| 250 | NEGATION | negation | B2 | FORM/USE: 'NEI | Can use 'neither ? nor' to connect two words, phrases or clauses, often to give en | Neither you nor I would li | |
| 251 | NEGATION | negation | B2 | FORM: 'NEITHER | Can use negative forms 'neither of' and 'none of' + pronoun or noun phrase with t | Neither of us is liable in th | |
| 252 | MODALITY | could | B2 | FORM: PAST | Can used 'could' have + '-ed'. | In fact it could have been | |
| 253 | MODALITY | could | B2 | USE: PAST POSSI | Can used affirmative 'could' have + '-ed' to talk about past possibility. | Alice was disappointed th | |
| 254 | MODALITY | could | B2 | USE: PAST SPECL | Can use 'could have' + '-ed' to speculate about the past. | I thought perhaps a thief c | |
| 255 | MODALITY | could | B2 | USE: REGRET | Can use 'could have' + '-ed' to talk about regrets. | I wish I could have stayed, | |
| 256 | MODALITY | could | B2 | USE: REPORTED | Can use 'could' as the past form of 'can' in reported speech. | I told them I couldn't go b | |

Module Structure_Overview | Module Structure_Detail | Academic & Professional Skills | Discourse Skills | Learning Strategies | **Grammar** | Vocabulary

Figure 5.7: Organising Learning Outcomes

## 5.4.3.2 Language Skills

In figure 5.8 below, we have an overview of what I mean by language skills.
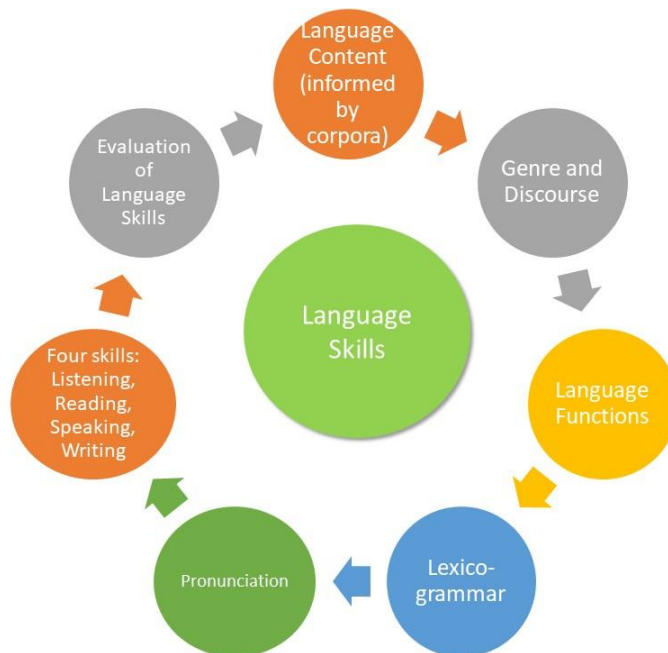
Figure 5.8: Language Skills

We have already touched on this in the section above on learning outcomes and I would like to concentrate on the concept of language content being informed by corpora. It may even be worth introducing learners to corpora that exist online such as Mark Davies's site (https://corpus.byu.edu/). Pedagogical materials (especially grammars and coursebooks) sometimes provide partial, inaccurate or misleading information. In the attempt to chunk and parcel learning into digestible pieces, sometimes information is missed. For example, the word *way* which is very common in the English language (frequency of 94, 797 in BNC and 587,478 in COCA) and enters into numerous idiomatic expressions is hardly touched upon in coursebooks.

| Way |
| --- |
| all the way |
| all the way from — to — |
| all ways |
| be in the way |
| (be) on your way |
| be or stand in (one's) way |
| by the way |
| by the way of |

Table 5.4: Some collocations of *way* (source: OED)

|   | Collocation | Frequency |   | Collocation | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | by the way | 13635 | 1 | in the way | 2990 |
| 2 | in the way | 10467 | 2 | on the way | 2230 |
| 3 | on the way | 9694 | 3 | of the way | 1928 |
| 4 | of the way | 8475 | 4 | by the way | 1527 |
| 5 | along the way | 5185 | 5 | about the way | 562 |
| 6 | about the way | 1945 | 6 | to the way | 482 |
| 7 | to the way | 1650 | 7 | with the way | 415 |
| 8 | with the way | 1612 | 8 | along the way | 312 |

Table 5.5: Preposition + *the way* (COCA, BNC)

Another very common word in English is *point*. A frequent technique in Corpus Linguistics is to use a Concordancer to display the word form (*node word*) one is interested in, centred in a screen of lines of context. Thus, one can see at a glance how the word behaves in different contexts. It is then up to the user to inspect and interpret the output. Most concordancing software allows concordance lines to be sorted, edited, saved and printed.

- ☐ LAST year could have been a turning **point** for your love life.
- ☐ taken credit for it. The turning **point** was the big oil price increase
- ☐ to use Maastricht as a starting **point** for ever closer integration
- ☐ discounting ourselves.  There is no **point** going out there with a defeatist
- ☐ times life  is  unfair. There is no **point** wasting time moaning about this but
- ☐ to assert himself. There seemed no **point** in not telling him that the
- ☐ She is expected to make the **point** in a speech to the Czechoslovak Parliament
- ☐ then some guy got up to make a **point** of order and she turned round and
- ☐ lled me for that. Because there isn't any **point** in living if you have to live
- ☐ ises that can't be kept. Nor is there any **point** in making commitments now which
- ☐ at night) was that there is no longer any **point** in trying to use music as a
- ☐ though he sympathizes with the state's **point** of view. The Exxon chemical is
- ☐ of the process from the customer's **point** of view and are closely linked to
- ☐ he game. We generally start from the **point** of view of tax avoidance. The first

If we look at these concordance lines with the word *point*, some interesting patterns and meanings emerge. For example,

<div align="center">
starting, turning point

there is no point + *-ing*

there isn't any point in + *-ing*

to make a/the point (we can also say 'to have a point')

point of view, of honour, of reference, of law, of principle etc.

on the point of + *-ing*
</div>

Because concordance lines can be sorted, edited, saved and printed, they can be used to design online exercises if one so wanted to.

## POINT

1. …just letting time pass by and hoping something works out.
2. As a president, I have a very different…………. . I have already signed a letter and sent it.
3. It creates a ……………, reminding you that you can be in that place again.
4. Jack Martin had made it a ………………. never to criticize his wife no matter what she did.
5. If anything can count as art, then art ceases …………
6. If Mary Alice Mayhew really comes to the reunion, Dorothy will ……………. being nice to her. Yes, she will.
7. I think tried to ………… in the book, that there was a legal analysis done.
8. The cafeteria was …………..going bankrupt because of them. Everybody knew that.
9. I think for me that was the ……………… in whatever this trial's going to end up being.
10. Our ……….was to reject the Big Bang hypothesis for the creation or recreation of our planet.

---

starting point, on the point of, point of reference, make the point, make a point of, turning point, point of honor, to have a point, there is no point in, point of view

---

In preparing an online language course, the teacher will provide texts to read and videos to listen to. But this will not always be the case, you can also ask students to provide their own texts and videos (related to their discipline). We carry out a project with the Computer Science students where they design their own PLLE (Personal Language Learning Environment). For this project, they should find texts and videos they think might be useful because they are interesting and can help them with their English. In this project, there are many other kinds of resources which they collect to help them with their English. When designing an online course, there is room for thinking about how students can collect their own language learning resources in order to learn autonomously.

**5.4.3.3 Content Design (language learning materials)**

At this stage, we are talking about creating language learning materials. This implies exploiting resources (text, images, audio, video) to create materials that will deliver the learning outcomes that we have established for our students. We need to ensure coherence among the different elements of the language learning materials. We should verify that there is balance, rigour and a close alignment between Learning Objectives, Topics, the Structure of Units, Teaching Strategies, Learning Activities and Assessments.

| Learning Objectives | Topics | Teaching strategy/ Learning activity | Assessment |
|---|---|---|---|
| -Students will practice question formation -Students will collect data and analyse data -Students will write a report | -Social Networking -Questionnaire design | -Introduce students to different types of questions -Students design questionnaire -Collect data with questionnaire and analyse it | -Quality of questionnaire -Written report |

Table 5.6: Content Design

This is an arduous and complex task as can be seen from analysing a language learning platform such as MyEnglishLab (Copyright © 2012-2018 Pearson Education Limited). Their B2 Upper Intermediate course has about 350 exercises. Admittedly, they are traditional self-correcting exercises (mechanical exercises such as matching words or filling in a gap). They don't include projects or any form of long complicated tasks. Nevertheless, it shows how much practice students need before they can achieve a B2 level.

We may start with a global schematic structure such as the following.

---

**Unit 1: Computer Hardware**
Computers require input hardware, processing hardware and output hardware. The hardware that defines a computer is the CPU and Memory. Without these a computer could not function.
    **1.1 Listening**
    **Pre-listening**
    **Listening Comprehension:** *What's inside your computer?*
    (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rdm8E59L8Og)

---

Fill in the gaps as you listen:
**Post-listening Speaking Activity**
Describe the components that a typical home computer system is made up of
(see image below).

### 1.2  Grammar: Active & Passive Tenses

### 1.3 Vocabulary

Take a look at all these verbs. They are related to hardware. They can be used with different
hardware components and pieces. Read about them and do the exercises.

**Exercise 1**
Here you have the steps to install a new graphics card in your computer. Fill the
spaces with the verbs from the box. Then put the sentences in the correct order.

### 1.4 Pronunciation

#### 1.4.1   Vowels: Listen & Repeat
#### 1.4.2   Underline the word with a different vowel sound

### 1.5  Reading

#### 1.5.1 Pre-reading: answer this question
*How do you think brain-computer interfaces work?*
#### 1.5.2 Reading
How Brain-computer Interfaces Work (adapted text)
by Ed Grabianowski (http://computer.howstuffworks.com/brain-computer-interface.htm)

### 1.6 Listening

A.  **Listen and complete the details in the customer call record.**
B.  **Listen again and complete the sentences**

### 1.7 Reading and Writing: Samsung Galaxy or Apple iPhone?
**Which features are most important to you in a mobile phone? List them in order of
importance (1-10):** *size of phone, screen size, size of keys, talking time, recharging
time, storage capacity, weight, video, music, organised address book.*
**Read the following technical specifications from two mobile phones. Then, write 7 sentences
comparing both products using the information provided.**

Table 5.7: Basic structure of a teaching unit

We might decide that all units are going to have the same structure.

Each unit contains 8 sections with their respective subsections:

1.  Topic Presentation
    1.1.  Introduction
    1.2.  Listening
    1.3.  Language Activities
2.  Grammar
    2.1.  Explanation

2.2. Grammar activities
2.3. Grammar links
3. Vocabulary
3.1. Word Building
3.2. Vocabulary Learning Strategies
3.3. Semantic Set
3.4. Vocabulary activities
4. Discourse Skills
4.1. Text analysis
4.1.1. Reading
4.1.2. Writing
4.2. Discourse analysis
4.2.1. Listening
4.2.2. Speaking
5. Pronunciation
5.1. Explanation
5.2. Listening
5.3. Pronunciation Activities
6. Business Functions
6.1. Listening
6.2. Social Functional language activities
7. Recycling
7.1. Explanation
7.2. Grammar activities
7.3. Explanation
7.4. Vocabulary activities
8. Communicative Activity
8.1. Communication Tasks
8.2. Web Site Interaction

Table 5.8: Traditional structure of a teaching unit

Whether we decide on having a sequenced structure where learning components are always sequenced in the same way is something that, in online learning, we may not necessarily want and might think about a looser, less formal structure. The advantage about a repetitive structure is a student knows what to expect and it might be apparently better organised rather than having a student jumping from one task to another. One of the most important things we have to do in content design is prepare tasks. We now continue with task design

**5.4.3.4 Task Design (delivery and methodology)**

One way of thinking of a task is whether we want the language practice to achieve accuracy or fluency. A transformation exercise involves accuracy whereas a discussion will involve fluency where the emphasis is on communication. In online language learning, the distinction between

accuracy and fluency may be not so important. In fact, I would propose that tasks are primarily affected by the length of the task whether it is a short-term mechanical exercise or a long-term project. Project work is long-term and highly communicative, but a written report of a project has to be accurate to achieve a good grade and a sloppy oral presentation of the project will also loose marks. In project work, students have to be both fluent and accurate. My thinking about task design is illustrated in figure 5.9 below. We will now continue with some examples of different types of tasks and relate them to the figure below.

**Long Term**                                                    **Short Term**

| Project Work | Assignment | Communicative Activity | | Task | Activity | Exercise |

**Integrated Skills**

Group Discussion

• Critical thinking

• Negotiating

Written Report
(deliverables)

Oral Presentation

• Peer & teacher assessment

**Integrated Skills**

Group Discussion

• Critical thinking

• Negotiating

Oral Presentation

**Reading & Speaking**

Group Discussion

• Critical thinking

• Negotiating

• Making a proposal

Class Discussion

**Speaking**

• Pair work

• Group work

**Listening & Reading**

• Individual

• Pair work

**Grammar & Vocabulary Listening & Reading**

• Gap fill

• Sentence transformation

• Multiple choice

Figure 5.9: Task Design

We will start with Oral Communication.

An **exercise** (including 'drills') would respond to the following examples: the transformation of a sentence to the passive voice or indirect speech, fill gaps in sentences and longer texts, order phrases, lexical exercises such as looking for antonyms or synonyms, add a prefix or suffix to a word (mechanical repetition exercises).

Some examples of **activities** are the following: make a phone call following a flow diagram demonstrating the communicative functions to be performed, listen to an oral speech or read a written text to extract information, make predictions before doing a reading or oral comprehension activity, make a summary of a text.

Examples of **tasks** would be the following: discuss an order of priorities in pairs/groups,

collect information individually that will later be used in the group to complete a task, solve a problem in groups, design a new logo for a product or a service and make an oral presentation explaining why we need the product or service.

Examples of **communicative activities** would be the following: games, role plays, simulations, 'Jigsaw' activities (fragment a text and each student has their own segment whose information the student has to share with the group to achieve a goal).

Examples of **assignments** would be the following: the linguistic analysis of a series of articles or texts to draw conclusions about genre and the lexico-grammatical structures of these texts, writing essays, summaries, glossaries, etc.

Examples of **projects** would be the following: a business plan for the creation of a company (oral presentation and written report), creating a product or service, the oral presentation of a balance sheet of a company with its relevant interpretations, marketing video, making a video to show how a computer works, etc. Any long-term activity that provides a novel way of learning English and that is rewarded with a high percentage of the marks for evaluation.

For the purposes of tasks that practice the writing skill, the terminology we shall use goes from controlled writing (being shorter) to free writing (being more extensive, longer pieces of writing).

**Controlled Writing**: design and interpretation of graphs (figures, tables, diagrams), comparing energy sources, comparison of technical specifications (mobiles and engines)
**Semi-controlled Writing**: summaries of academic articles, design of questionnaires, data collection and interpretation
**Guided Writing**: discursive essays (Globalisation), reports
**Free Writing**: academic blogs

Any task that we design can be assessed and given a mark. So, all online language learning activities can form part of the assessment of a student's knowledge.

**5.4.3.5 Assessment**

To be assessed, a student can carry out any of the above general learning activities in order to show that one's skills, knowledge and understanding meet the assessment criteria.  In a traditional classroom environment, it has been commonplace for the teacher to carry out assessment and evaluation activities (however, more recently, there have been significant changes). In online learning, either the teacher or the students can carry out these activities. Where students carry them out, they can promote self-assessment and peer-assessment. There are several ways of looking at assessment. One type of testing are placement tests (initial tests), formative tests (continuous evaluation, students are tested as they progress through the semester), summative tests (final exams where teachers try to find out if the subject matter has really been learnt) and diagnostic tests (which measure measures a student's current knowledge and skills). We have used diagnostic and placement tests to measure the level of our students and find out more about their current knowledge. This can be done online but would probably have to be a simple multiple-choice test which is automatically corrected. Formative tests are a form of continuous evaluation and they are the most obvious choice for an online course where students build up an e-portfolio. An example of continuous evaluation used with computer science students is given in the table below.

| Week | Tasks | Evaluation |
|------|-------|------------|
| 1 | Project Work 1: Personal Language Learning Environment (PLLE) | |
| 2 | Communicative Activity 1: How to build your own computer | 2% |
| 3 | Written Task 1: Email<br>Project Work 2: PLLE | 2% |
| 4 | Communicative Activity 2: Questionnaires | 2% |
| 5 | Written Task 2: Discursive Essay | 2% |
| 6 | Communicative Activity 3: Low-cost airline | 2% |
| 7 | Written Task 3: Narrative | 2% |
| 8 | Communicative Activity 4: Online Holiday Business | 2% |
| 9 | Written Task 4: Graphs, Figures, Tables | 2% |

| 10 | Communicative Activity 5: Decision Making | 2% |
|----|-------------------------------------------|-----|
| 11 | Written Task 5: Report | 2% |
| 12 | Project Work 3: PLLE | |
| 13 | Project Work 4: PLLE | 20% |
| 14 | Preparing Oral Presentation | |
| 15 | Oral Presentations | 10% |

Table 5.9: Scheduling Continuous Evaluation Tasks

Summative assessment is normally carried out midway through or at the end of a course. Summative assessments are designed to test what the students have learned, to determine whether they understand the subject matter (whether they know the language). This type of assessment is graded and can take the form of tests or exams.

In online learning, it is quite clear that there will be more formative than summative assessment. This may include assessment techniques such as short quizzes, checklists, rating scales, rubrics, and portfolio assessments, participation, peer and self-evaluation, and discussion. In an online language learning course, it might be interesting to get students to correct other students' written work. For oral communication, students can produce videos and then, based on criteria provided by the teacher (see table 5.10 below), can be evaluated by their peers.

---

ORAL PRESENTATION: EVALUATION SHEET

**Student's name:** _____

**Oral Presentation topic:** _____

**1 = poor;     2 = fair; 3 = quite good; 4 = good;     5 = very good;**

**1. The Introduction to the presentation told us 1     2     3     4     5**
   **what the presentation was all about.**

**2. The presenter explained things well, and I     1     2     3     4     5**
   **understood all the main points.**

**3. The presenter used good examples.          1     2     3     4     5**

**4. The presenter used good visual aids.        1     2     3     4     5**

---

**5. The presentation was well organised and used**
   **structuring language when appropriate.**       1        2        3        4        5

**6. The Conclusion to the presentation was well-**
   **structured and reinforced the main points.**   1        2        3        4        5

**7. The presenter spoke clearly and at a good**
   **speed: not too slowly, not too fast.**          1        2        3        4        5

**8. The presenter used good interactive techniques:**
   **s/he seemed confident and had a good rapport**
   **with the audience.**                            1        2        3        4        5

**9. Any other comments**
_____

_____

**10. Give the presenter a global mark from 1-10:**

        1        2        3        4        5        6        7        8        9        10

Table 5.10: Criteria for evaluation of an Oral Presentation

An approach that ensures involvement of the student in measuring their learning should be developed in an online language learning course. Students should be aware of the process with which they acquire knowledge. The students need to recognize that this process is essential in improving their performance, learning to self-evaluate, overcoming their deficiencies and being active agents throughout the process. The evaluation process should allow for the feedback of successes and errors to improve the teaching-learning process. Interactive assessment enables development of students' confidence that their effort will be taken into account. Active participation through ICT tools such as forums enables students to learn and evaluate their actions. An e-portfolio can be used as a teaching and evaluation method since it is a compilation of work done where the student has selected, organized, reflected and presented her/his work to show their ability in the subject. Student assessment tools allow us to control the quality of learning received, thanks to a variety of evaluation resources.

### 5.4.4 Learning Support (Academic and Technical)

Students will need to be autonomous and digitally literate to be successful on an online language learning course. However, this does not mean there is no academic or technical support to help them on their way to achieving greater knowledge of the target language. Many of those students who responded negatively in Questionnaire 1 (see Chapter 4) reasoned that only learners with good motivation, self-determination and perseverance can learn from online courses and learn a second language. Many suggested that, without the necessary discipline, learning a language online may be too demanding. The main reason why respondents had doubts was related to interaction and oral skills. Many felt strongly the need for face-to-face interaction. Therefore, there will have to be academic support in the form of a tutor. Only 56.1% of respondents recommended learning a second language online precisely because of these reasons. For obvious reasons, besides needing academic support, some students will also need technical support.

### 5.4.5 Continuous Evaluation and Ongoing Course Improvement

Ongoing course improvement is an important aspect of effective teaching. Tools used to review and improve courses include student course evaluations and feedback. Therefore, students are urged, not only to carefully complete the course evaluation, but to add comments which explain and give details about strengths and weaknesses of the course. Course Evaluations are normally available to students during the last few weeks of the course.

# CHAPTER 6
# Conclusions

# CHAPTER 6: Conclusions

This chapter marks the conclusion of my thesis. In section 6.1, I return to my research objectives and assess to what extent my findings have provided answers to them. In section 6.2, I turn to the applicability of my findings to my professional practice. Sections 6.3 and 6.4 focus on the limitations of my study and recommendations for future research, respectively. I conclude this thesis with some final remarks.

## 6.1.    Research findings in relation to research objectives

Our first specific objective was to identify and review the current state of the literature. In our review of the literature, we analysed the following aspects and we highlight some of the main findings.

A. Pedagogy for Online Language Teaching and Learning
Our discussion focussed on student-centred learning. In what follows are some of the main findings from the literature. Student-centred learning is broadly related to a constructivist theory of learning in which learning is an active process, where students construct their own knowledge based on previously known information and reflection. Student-centred learning is also supported by various other intersecting pedagogies, such as active learning, self-directed learning and cooperative learning and inquiry-based learning.

Connectivism fits in well with a learner-centred model because it offers greater independence and autonomy to the learner through unsupervised learning, peer-to-peer support and peer-to-peer assessment strategies.

The kind of tasks we give learners, so they may learn to do things and express themselves, should be varied. Learners differ markedly in the ways in which they can be engaged or motivated to learn.

B. Online Learning Technologies

In this section, we discussed a variety of issues. The first part of this section was dedicated to Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL).

(i) Computer Assisted Language Learning

The current philosophy of CALL puts emphasis on student-centred materials, leaning towards principles of integrative CALL. New approaches seek to integrate several language related skills, such as speaking, listening, reading and writing as well as technology into the process of language learning more thoroughly. Integrative methods encourage students to use technological utensils as a continuous process of language learning and to discover the most suitable learning paths for them.

According to several studies, CALL has been proven to be an effective tool in language learning and promoting learner autonomy in acquiring English as a second language. The results of the studies suggest that students improved their language learning strategies, were highly motivated and with the aid of CALL, were willing to take responsibility for individual learning outside of formal tuition situations. The studies also suggest that CALL does not eliminate the need for teachers, as learners do not readily accept personal responsibility for learning if no encouragement is received.

(ii) Language Learning Technology

There are a wide range of technologies for online learning. In this section, I offered a summary of tools that are potentially useful for learners participating on online learning courses. However, one thing that becomes clear from the literature is that, although there is an abundance of options as far as technology is concerned, a student needs to be able to able to use and manipulate graphics (Photoshop, Paint), audio (podcasts), and video (YouTube), as well as how and when they are combined in different ways to create novel learning objects whether for simple activities/exercises or larger projects (Godwin-Jones, 2016: 5).

Digital activities may include varied task-based online interactions through an application such as Skype where learners are encouraged to develop interactional skills. Or they might be asked to use digital tools such as open educational resources, concordances, text-to-speech tools,

pronunciation activities to foster the autonomous development of the basic skills required to engage in interactions. To benefit from the opportunities that technology presents for participating in language acquisition, language students need to develop digital literacy skills. This includes the ability to create and communicate digital information, the ability to find and evaluate information online, and the ability to solve problems in technology-rich environments and, more importantly to be able to do all this autonomously so that, as students, they can exploit the communicative riches of the online world.

(iii) Corpus linguistics and online language learning

Corpus Linguistics has changed the way we conceptualize and describe language through its empirical, data-driven approach. In principle, corpus linguistics could inform an online language course through specifying linguistic items to be learnt and through examples of usage. Corpora have already informed textbooks and other language teaching materials. Language testers have viewed corpora as very large, unstructured item banks, so that they can draw examples from them for their tests. So, there is no reason why Corpus Linguistics might not inform online language learning course design by describing the language to be acquired (particularly, the lexical and grammatical contents). In principle, this might be a great resource for deciding on and delivering language contents in an online language learning environment. However, there has been very little research on the use of corpora in online language learning environments.

(iv) Informal language learning and online technologies

Due to the ready availability of new online technologies, opportunities for incidental and informal learning of English have multiplied and may now exceed what can be done in more formal classroom environments. The question of how learners assess the potential of such informal learning opportunities - and whether they deliberately exploit it - has received little attention. Despite the preponderance of technology-enhanced input and communication, it is still not sufficiently clear how often student-initiated online activities take place in English, whether their potential is realized and deliberately exploited by learners. Technology use in informal settings is primarily driven by the intention to communicate rather than the intention to learn.

Interestingly, informal or incidental learning can involve both explicit and implicit processes; incidental explicit learning is distinguished from its counterpart by the learner's awareness of both process and product of learning (Rieder, 2003: 28). Trinder (2017) suggest that informal learning may be intentional. With the normalization of online applications and the concomitant frequent exposure of non-native English speakers to English-language media and communities, the question arises of whether informal learning is still mainly random and non-intentional. As a cultural observation, I can imagine many Spanish students indulging in incidental learning through Netflix, gaming and general Internet usage.

## C. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

MOOCs are focussed around multimedia, and includes video interviews, mini-lectures, readings, quizzes, writing activities, and writing assignments. I would suggest that MOOCs for a general English language course might encounter some problems. The face-to face, language classroom course experience is challenging to replicate online, and most MOOC platforms are not ready to teach languages, for the following reasons:

- To learn a language, students should do thousands of exercises, not dozens.
- Videos should be offered in the target language (for both practice and explanations, as well as listening comprehension). One is going to need a lot of video production.
- Conversation practice with peers online is challenging and may re-inforce learner errors.
- Feedback and assessment (both oral and written) has to come from people who know the language, not peers (so although one needs to use a connectionist model for language learning, a connectionist approach may not always be appropriate when wanting accuracy and correct use of English).

It seems that MOOCs are going to have a struggle with conversation practice and scalable feedback / assessment.

## D. Mobile Learning (mLearning) and Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL)

In this section, we investigated the literature on mobile learning (mLearning) and, then, focussed on Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL). Among the findings, we can highlight the following factors related to mLearning.

- mLearning via social media facilitates learner communities and self-regulation of learning via the provision of bite sized chunks.

- mLearning is purported to educate the learner to identify how and where they learn best hence potentially increasing the autonomy of the learner.
- Personalisation of learning is highlighted as an important factor in engagement, and mobile technologies claim to allow the student to contextualise and take ownership of their own learning.

Mobile assisted language learning (MALL) can be broadly defined as the integration of mobile devices into language learning. A learner, who is mobile while learning, may be on a train, in a pub, in a library or at home. Results from research into mobile language learning indicate that affordances such as flexible use, continuity of use, timely feedback, personalisation, socialisation, self-evaluation, active participation, peer coaching are elements of the mobile language learning experience that should be emphasized. Emphasis has been placed in MALL research papers on the following: learner agency and self-direction under the guidance of a teacher; learners' construction of knowledge; authentic communication and the integration of language skills; problem-solving and game-playing as popular approaches in task design; a desire to facilitate learning in and across multiple contexts and beyond the classroom.

E. Gaming and Language Learning

While playing games, players need to build alliances through chatting, discuss game strategies with other team members and contribute their distinctive skills to the team so that they can accomplish game quests, which they cannot do by themselves. Using text chat can lead players to communicate with each other inside the game, whilst visiting forums and websites can lead them to share their interests, tips and strategies outside of the game. This helps to develop language skills, especially productive communication skills (speaking and writing).

Game-based perspectives investigate the application of digital games that are explicitly designed for pedagogical purposes, and game-informed perspectives apply insights from the study of games and play to teaching and learning outside of traditional game spaces, that is, the phenomenon of 'gamification'. Often, educational games lack the sophisticated look and feel of COTS games, while the pedagogical intent is all too evident, sometimes interrupting the all-important "Game flow".

F. Social Networking and Language Learning

Below I summarise some of the findings on Social Networking and Language Learning:

- Popular social networking sites such as Facebook, Edmodo, and LinkedIn provide opportunities for language learners to enhance digital and multiliteracy skills, interact in and through the target language, work collaboratively, and enhance their linguistic and pragmatic proficiency.

- Social web tools may facilitate educators in setting up collaborative learning, as they place students at the core of the learning experience while, at the same time, allowing the teacher to function as the mentor and guide of knowledge construction and sharing.

- Some studies report increased motivation for learning and indicate that SNS can generate meaningful output and stimulate students' interest in language learning.

- The study suggests that if online education is to play a positive role in the teaching and learning of English, learners will need support, guidance, and well-structured activities to ensure the kinds of participation and linguistic interaction that can lead to success.

- Even a relatively "unfocussed" SNS like Facebook offers language learners the opportunity to communicate in a less formal, non-academic register.

- SNS can provide opportunities for English learners to communicate with native English speakers and practice their written language in authentic and motivating ways.

The impact of these technologies on education has come to be considered positive but also has some negative consequences. Some of the advantages cited by the literature are: increased student collaboration; improved participation; content rich resources; useful for team projects. Some of the disadvantages are: student distraction or lack of concentration (disruptive technologies); lack of control for inappropriate content; reliance on social media (Srivastava, 2012; Tess, 2013; Lavy and Sand, 2018). Tess (2013) concludes that there is a mix of opinion about whether social networking platforms should be integrated into learning processes. Teachers who support the integration of social media into the learning process are of the view

that conversational processes ensuring maximum interaction and maximum expressions of opinions are more likely through social networking platforms. This is an especially important finding for language learners who need to interact to develop their language skills.

Our second objective was to design the methodological processes for the research. The methodology used in this dissertation entailed the use of questionnaires for collecting useful statistical data that could answer our research questions. A questionnaire is a document containing questions prepared by a researcher to elicit information that may provide statistical quantitative data or unstructured qualitative data which may be useful in analysing the object of one's investigation. Three questionnaires were designed to ask students about their experiences and opinions with regards to online language learning.

The research, although centred on these three questionnaires, was conducted through a mixed methodology. We began the research process by carrying out some initial classroom research, which involved three B2 level English classes (75 Mechanical Engineering students, 28 Computer Science students, and 32 Business Management students). The participants were asked to name three tools they might use to learn English online and what skills would be developed, practised or improved with these tools.

The research continued by analysing e-textbooks. Language teachers often use e-textbooks in their teaching. This is a kind of halfway house to teaching online. These e-textbooks are often accompanied by online platforms that behave like an online course. They are in fact Learning Management Systems, but the materials and exercises are based on analogical coursebooks or workbooks. Therefore, it was a useful activity for our research to evaluate e-textbooks as they are practically an online language learning course. From these e-textbooks and the online platforms that accompany them, we could get a good idea what ingredients were necessary for designing an online language learning course.

The methodology that was undertaken entailed an analysis of two e-textbooks. The first book was "Market Leader" while the second one was "New Language Leader". The evaluation criteria for the e-textbooks entailed various steps. The researcher adopted Marczak's evaluation criteria

in the analysis which included: (i) layout and design; (ii) content and functionalities; and (iii) device, format and distribution (Marczak, 2013: 37-38).

An obvious place to find about online language learning was to analyse how Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) are delivering second language (L2) learning courses. To obtain data with regards to MOOCs, ten language courses (language MOOCs) delivered by Coursera, eDX and Future Learn were analysed considering the following characteristics:

1. Course content and structure (including evaluation methods)

2. Financial Accessibility

3. Certification

4. Name of course

5. Course time limit

6. University/Institution

7. Language

Finally, we centred our research efforts on our learners giving them three questionnaires to respond to. The questionnaires were created on the basis of wanting to:

1) carry out a general brainstorm questionnaire on online learning and, more particularly, on online language learning;

2) evaluate 50 preselected language learning websites; before getting our students to evaluate these websites, we had already culled the original list of over 100 websites through our own investigation and previous cohorts of students had been introduced to these websites;

3) evaluate a taxonomy of language learning activities that had previously been researched and used in the classroom with similar students from our university. In other words, we had piloted the evaluation of websites and the evaluation of language learning activities with former students.

Our third objective was to collect and analyse all the data from the methodological processes carried out. The easiest way to summarise the results of our initial classroom research is by comparing tables.

i) Initial Classroom Research

| Tools (Mechanical Engineering) | Frequency | Tools (Business Management) | Frequency | Tools (Computer Science) | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **MyEnglishLab** (online learning platform) | 30 | YouTube | 10 | Series | 16 |
| Netflix | 22 | **Duolingo** | 8 | Videogames | 12 |
| YouTube | 21 | **Linguee** | 7 | Music | 5 |
| Music (with lyrics: Spotify) | 17 | **Dictionaries** | 6 | **Wordreference** | 4 |
| **Books** | 16 | **MyEnglishLab** | 5 | **Duolingo** | 4 |
| **Online newspapers** | 16 | Series | 5 | YouTube | 3 |
| **Skype** | 16 | **WordReference** | 4 | **TV shows** | 3 |
| **Online dictionaries** (Cambridge,Wordreference) | 9 | Netflix | 3 | **Google Translator** | 3 |
| Videogames | 5 | Music | 2 | Games | 3 |
| **Forums** | 5 | **Babbel** | 2 | **Forums** | 3 |
| Playing games | 5 | **Lyricstraining** | 2 | **Babbel** | 2 |
| **Online English learning webpages (Saberingles, Busuu, Cambridge English, British Council)** | 4 | **Aula Facil** | 2 | Netflix | 2 |
| **Translators/Microsoft Translator** | 3 | **Online Exercises** | 2 | **Videos** | 2 |
| **Smartphone apps** | 3 | **Google Translator** | 1 | **Dictionaries** | 2 |
| **Duolinguo** | 2 | **TED talks** | 1 | **Films** | 2 |
| **Online courses** | 2 | **Vaughan** | 1 | **TermBank** | 2 |
| **Blogs, writing a blog** | 2 | **Instagram** | 1 | **Online newspapers** | 2 |
| **Babbel** | 2 | **Spotify** | 1 | **Documentaries** | 1 |
| **Grammar activities** | 1 | **Ibooks** | 1 | **Kahoot** | 1 |
| **Online test/activities** | 1 | **British Council** | 1 | **Books** | 1 |
| **Twitter** | 1 | | | **Skype** | 1 |
| **FaceTime** | 1 | | | **Radio** | 1 |
| **Chatrooms** | 1 | | | | |
| **Cambridge Exams webpage** | 1 | | | | |
| **Kahoot** | 1 | | | | |
| **Quizlet** | 1 | | | | |
| **Writing emails** | 1 | | | | |
| **TED talks** | 1 | | | | |
| **TV programs** | 1 | | | | |
| **Online news** | 1 | | | | |
| **Pronunciation Apps** | 1 | | | | |

Table 6.1: Tools (frequency)

Besides the great variety of tools which our students use, there is one single tendency in these tables above all else. It is a tendency you would expect. Our students choose audio-visual (multimedia) tools. There are some differences between the disciplines (videogames being popular among Computer Science students is almost a cliché). Mechanical Engineers read books. The Business Management students seem to be much more dependent on dictionaries or applications that function like dictionaries (Linguee, WordReference).

Exposure to techniques and tools is important. It forms part of their digital literacy. It is quite clear from our initial research that the Mechanical Engineering students mentioned MyEnglishLab as a good tool for learning English simply because they are using it in their English classes. 20% of their final mark is work on this online platform so it is strange that not more students (30 out of 75 students, 40%) named this online platform in our research.

However, despite the fact that our students seem to prefer audio-visual or multimedia tools, this is contradicted by the skills they mention they could practice with these tools. The receptive skills (listening and reading) are the most frequently mentioned along with vocabulary and grammar. The productive skills of speaking and writing are less frequently mentioned. This gives the impression that the students are passive consumers. Their informal learning appears to be implicit and they are not active participators. In designing an online language course, we would want our learners to be more active. Only the mechanical engineers mention that they use Skype fairly frequently. In other words, there is a need to push/persuade students to using tools proactively.

| Skills | Frequency | Skills | Frequency | Skills | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reading | 138 | Vocabulary | 60 | Vocabulary | 50 |
| Vocabulary | 133 | Listening | 52 | Listening | 31 |
| Listening | 131 | Grammar | 28 | Reading | 23 |
| Grammar | 95 | Pronunciation | 21 | Grammar | 22 |
| Writing | 85 | Speaking | 18 | Pronunciation | 17 |
| Speaking | 80 | Reading | 16 | Speaking | 17 |
| Pronunciation | 49 | Writing | 11 | Writing | 16 |

Table 6.2: Skills (frequency)

ii) E-textbooks

As we said earlier in this thesis, e-textbooks are a kind of halfway house to an online language course, especially if they are accompanied by an online platform as is the case with the e-textbooks we analysed. E-textbook book functionalities are advantageous to learners. The related elements of the content are hyperlinked. Hyperlinks easily guide the needs of the readers. The e-textbooks that we analysed have multimedia. Multimedia capability is one of the most attractive features of e-textbooks. Because these e-textbooks have multimedia, the content is enhanced which gives it added value.

However, unlike a full-blown online course, these e-textbooks do not have an advanced search tool that allows the reader to use an array of search queries and take a variety of search routes. Bookmarking and annotations tools are available to the user. Other advantages are that the content of the e-textbook is laid out in scrollable areas, which can allow the reader to navigate through the book without necessarily following the linear structure of the printed media.

Market Leader Upper-Intermediate has been developed in association with the Financial Times to introduce students to business issues to help them build professional language and communication skills required in the current business environment.

The book consists of twelve units. Each unit is broken down into five sections:

- ✓ **Discussion,** which is targeted to develop speaking skills
- ✓ **Texts** to enhance reading from the Financial Times and authentic listening activities reflecting the global nature of business
- ✓ **Language work** to introduce and practice grammar issues
- ✓ **Skills** contains vocabulary development activities and regular focus on key business functions
- ✓ **Case study** allows students to practice speaking and writing skills with opinions from successful consultants who work in the real world of business. It also helps students practice language they have worked on during the unit.

It is worth mentioning that the activities are aimed to develop not only language skills but also competences such as:

- ✓ Communication in a foreign language

- ✓ Digital competence
- ✓ Learning to learn
- ✓ Social and civic competences
- ✓ Cultural awareness
- ✓ Being autonomous

So, we can see that this e-textbook is already widening out its perspective to take on aspects of the world of online language learning.

New Language Leader is mainly targeted to university adult students and has a good balance of general and academic English and develops skills that students of the 21$^{st}$ century need to be successful in the globalized world. Nowadays, it is not just about learning English but developing skills such as critical thinking or digital literacies to feel integrated in academic and professional life.

Every lesson in New Language Leader has a scenario with a case study and a "Meet the Expert" video with leading professionals in different fields. It also has a Study Skills section to teach students how to do their best in academic studies.

The digital version of the course book consists of twelve units, which has the same layout, design and distribution as its analogical counterpart. Each unit is divided into several relevant sections:

- ✓ Grammar
- ✓ Vocabulary
- ✓ Reading
- ✓ Listening
- ✓ Speaking/Pronunciation
- ✓ Scenario
- ✓ Study skills/Writing
- ✓ Video

At the end of the book there is the section called Language Reference and Extra Practice. There are quite a few activities which are directed to develop student critical thinking. This e-textbook has a traditional structure but introduces more dynamic communicative elements in the Scenario section.

MyEnglishLab

This online platform (an extension of the e-textbooks) is designed to extend the contact hours with students out of class. Students find this platform beneficial, since it delivers content where automated marking and extra support for students is provided. Moreover, the user gets immediate feedback. Online hints and tips direct the self-work which ensures that students get engaged with the task. Once the activities are completed the grades are fed to the Gradebook to monitor students' progress.

In general, with regards to e-textbooks, we found that they were equivalent to their analogical counterparts and that the materials on the accompanying online platform MyEnglishLab being no more than a digital workbook. These materials were highly structured and extremely traditional. The exercises were mostly of a mechanical nature, traditional self-correcting exercises (exercises such as matching words or filling in a gap).  They did not involve integrating skills or dynamic communicative activities. They are quite behaviourist and repetitive. There was nothing resembling project work or long-term activities. Student average time on task is very short, although there are large amounts of these exercises (MyEnglishLab B2 Upper Intermediate course has about 350 exercises). Nevertheless, it shows how much practice students need before they can achieve a B2 level.

iii) MOOCs

An obvious place to find about online language learning is to analyse how Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) are delivering second language (L2) learning courses. What is noticeable is that they are niche courses. They are not general language courses. They have a specific aim, particularly the two IELTS test preparation courses. In this thesis, we are more interested in finding out about a model for a general online language course (for example, a B2 language course). It became clear from our analysis that too many MOOCs are over-structured, too linear and too like traditional University courses. In other words, despite the new technology, they are often the reflection of a university course moved online although it may be shortened to 4 or 6 weeks rather than based on the 10 to 15-week semester structure.

Future Learn is based on Social Learning theory, which states that continuous mutual interactions positively influence the way humans learn (Laurillard, 2002). In other words, the

general approach is a social constructivist approach. However, this should not blind us to the fact that the courses that we analysed are highly structured. Ideas are introduced through videos and articles. Learners can then discuss what they have learned, testing their new knowledge with interactive quizzes that offer responses and the opportunity to try again if an answer is wrong. Every course takes a step by step approach, with challenges and helpful tips along the way, to test and build a learner's understanding. However, as I have said, courses are highly structured around the following format: Videos (plus transcripts), Articles, Discussion (forums), and Quizzes. Future Learn states that their social learning model is organized around 1) discussion for learning (sharing and debating ideas with fellow learners, mainly on forums); 2) visible learning (making the learning process visible); 3) community supported learning (learners sharing their knowledge with their peers); 4) massive-scale social learning (they say it is a new way of learning, but are not explicit about what it is, although without doubt they have massive recognized expertise from the Open University and the BBC).

Coursera uses powerful artificial intelligence algorithms and whose basic course design is firmly in the xMoOC type (in other words, behaviourist or cognitive learning). The Coursera platform offers a range of courses from 4 to 10 weeks (rather like Future Learn) to help students acquire language skills online. The courses contain one to two hours of video lectures a week and provide quizzes, weekly exercises, peer-graded assignments, and sometimes a final project or exam.

On Coursera, forums were useful in helping students to learn language skills from one another. However, the inability to engage with the lecturer was a shortcoming that Coursera students experience when compared to Future Learn. Speaking with the lecturer is a useful aspect that may help the students in asking essential questions about areas of difficulties. When students cannot engage with the teacher, they may fail to have answers to crucial questions that clarify the use of language skills in different scenarios. Lecturers and teaching assistants are more active on Future Learn.

EdX courses tend to base their course structures on a traditional behaviourist model. The courses consist of video presentations, and the participants can adapt their pace of learning.

They use traditional techniques such as plain texts or provide network interaction such as forums or chat rooms. Like Coursera, student-teacher communication and interaction are less developed.

The basic approach in these English language courses is very similar. In other words, videos, mini-lectures, readings, quizzes, writing activities, and writing assignments were used as pedagogical activities. In EdX, like Future Learn and Coursera, there is the idea of a strictly linear diet of lectures and learning which I personally think should be eschewed, as different learners want different portions of the learning, at different times. A more modular approach, where modules are self-contained and can be taken in any order may be one tactic to avoid such a structured and linear approach.

One of the limitations of MOOCs for language learning is that social participation is a necessary condition for learning. For this to happen, well-designed language content and challenging language tasks are needed to provide interaction. Social participation is an essential pedagogic technique in language learning, but it would be a mistake to impose a social learning ideology on learners that do not want this (think of Asian students who might like a behaviourist or cognitive learning style). Nevertheless, language courses need forums, discussion groups, chats, sessions on Skype to develop communication skills, particularly oral skills. So, social participation is important on language courses.

iv) Student Questionnaires

At the heart of our study is trying to discover learner opinion about online language learning as the end user. We hold the view that an analysis of learner opinions is an essential step towards the design and development of a model of online language learning.

Questionnaire 1 investigated how participants viewed the internet as a learning tool, both, in the general sense and as a method for learning a second language. Questionnaire 1 is an open-ended questionnaire with nine questions in total. The first 4 questions are framed to elicit participants' knowledge of and views on online learning in general and the following 5 questions

for the same purpose on online language learning. The objectives of this questionnaire were the following:

- To elicit from learners a definition of what online learning is
- To ask learners if they had ever participated in an online course and their level of satisfaction with the course
- To identify what pedagogical and technical aspects learners considered important
- To ask about the advantages of online learning
- To elicit learner knowledge of websites for learning an L2
- To ask if learners thought they could learn an L2 online
- To ask learners about the contents of an L2 online course
- To ask in what ways ICT can improve language classes
- To ask learners if they would recommend learning a second language online

This open-ended questionnaire produced multifaceted, unstructured and subjective data, which needed to be simplified by cleaning the data, breaking it down into smaller meaningful portions and arranging these into specific thematic components. For this reason, the analysis of the responses to the questionnaire involved a methodical 'search and extract' of views that are similar or similarly worded. To be able to carry this out, corpus linguistics techniques were used to generate wordlists, frequencies and concordance lines so the data could become more operable. The results from this questionnaire showed that:

1. Respondents had a very clear idea of what online learning is:
   a. *It is a type of learning that allows greater flexibility and that adapts to the personal circumstances of the student.*
   b. *It is studying without attending class and receiving materials and advice online.*
   c. *Learning by internet with more flexibility than in a face to face instruction: you could study the contents whenever and wherever you want, for example. It is ideal for people who work or don't have time to go a class.*
   d. *It is a way of learning where you have the autonomy to choose what times you can learn.*
2. More than 70% of the respondents had participated in an online course at some time. Most respondents were positive about online learning and gave reasons such as flexibility of time and place, tailor-made to their needs and requirements.
3. Most respondents understood the need to include *forums, discussions and videos* that were interactive and anything that provided direct and active learning. Respondents also felt the need for *a variety of materials with feedback*, *regular assessments,* and *immediate feedback*. These responses demonstrated that they (as students) wanted regular and quick assessment and feedback to consolidate and evaluate their learning.

4. Respondents see the main advantages of online course as being *flexible, personalized, constantly updated* and *not as extensive* (short-term).
5. 75.4%, were already familiar with language learning websites.
6. It was surprising that only 17 of the 66 (25%) respondents felt that it was possible to learn a second language online. The reasons that they offered for supporting their positive and negative opinions mostly fall into two categories: those who feel that the traditional method of face to face learning is necessary for getting the complete picture of the language and help from a live teacher could make it easier to learn the nuances of the language better; and those who felt that since the modern, technically rich websites afforded more opportunities with interactive skills that they could consolidate and evaluate their skills in the language more thoroughly.
7. The two most common content words in the learner participant answers were *grammar* and *vocabulary*; a very traditional view of language learning, especially given that we are talking about second language learning in the context of online learning with all the novel technologies on hand. However, a close look revealed that they were very much aware of the communicative function of language and the need for activities that increased communication and fluency.
8. The preferred technology for learning a language online was video. Respondents showed a strong awareness of the uses of information technology to learn a language, making interesting suggestions such as in the case of the learner who talks about utilising Google tools focussed on a collaborative environment. Google offers multiple resources that can be integrated easily and economically into an online language learning environment.
9. 56.1% responded that they would recommend online learning as being suitable for second language learning. Approximately, 21% would not and 23% did not know or were unsure. The main caveat was related to interaction and oral skills. Many felt strongly the need for face-to-face interaction.

Questionnaire 2 was divided into two sections: Teaching/Learning (Pedagogy) and Communication Tools (Technology). The structure of the questionnaire was based on a multiple-choice grid, where respondents had to rate on a rating scale of poor to excellent a series of aspects related to teaching/learning and communication tools. As we are dealing with quantitative data, it was easier to analyse the data and answers were visualized by using charts and graphs.

The results from this questionnaire showed that:
1. Most language learning websites are based on grammar and vocabulary which are practised using quizzes and self-assessment systems.

2. On many language learning websites, there were very few communicative activities as can be seen from the following statistics. These statistics are based on learning activities and communication tools that are not present (N/A = not applicable) on these sites.

| Teaching/learning (Pedagogy) | | Communication tools (Technology) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Audio | 46 (26.1%) | Chat | 77 (43.8%) |
| Pronunciation | 40 (22.7%) | Discussion Lists | 73 (41.5%) |
| Speaking | 61 (34.7%) | Forum | 76 (43.2%) |
| Video | 61 (34.7%) | Social Media (Facebook, Twitter etc.) | 60 (34%) |
| Writing | 35 (19.9%) | Videoconference (Skype, FaceTime etc.) | 94 (53.4%) |

Table 6.3: Learning activities and communication tools not present on language learning websites

Questionnaire 3 consisted of two parts: Part 1 with a single open-ended question where respondents expressed preferences and views on any language learning activities that they deem an important asset to an online language learning website. Part 2 had 50 close-ended questions that should be graded on a 1 to 5 Likert-type scale starting with Totally Agree on the highest scale-end, and gradually downwards to other degrees such as: Agree, Indifferent, Disagree and Totally Disagree at the other levels. Questionnaire 3 dealt with diverse language-learning activities on websites respondents visited and the questions enquired of the respondents their views on the importance of each of these activities to language learning.

The results from this questionnaire were:

1. Respondents/students valued as equally important short exercises such as multiple choice, re-ordering sentences, gap filling, sentence transformation or rewriting according to the instructions, matching words, definitions etc. as they did longer tasks such as paragraph ordering, sentence insertion, putting in headings and sub-headings, summary writing and project-based tasks such as web search and reporting tasks, business presentations, and video-conferencing.
2. Activities, that were given less than 50% (Agree and Totally Agree), were considered to have "failed". The following activities were given less than 50%.

| Learning Activity | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Brainteasers | 41.1% |
| Heading & Subheading | 41.1% |
| Locating technical information on the Web | 43.3% |
| Developing Dictionaries / glossaries | 44% |
| Crosswords | 45.5% |
| Telephoning | 45.6% |
| Designing and marketing a product | 47.7% |
| Designing and presenting webpages | 48.5% |
| Technical glossaries | 49.2% |
| Jumbled Sentences (Word Order) | 49.3% |

Table 6.4: Less successful language learning activities

There were some other activities that only just "passed": *Graphs: Understanding, designing and describing graphs* (50%); *Case Study Analysis & Reporting (written & oral report)* (50.5%); *Comparing different online dictionaries* (50.8%); *Audiovisual (listening comprehension): sentence ordering* (53%); *Sentence Insertion* (53.7%); *Phonetic symbols: understanding & practical usage* (53.8%). What is slightly disappointing about these results is that some of the less popular activities are task-based and project-based communicative activities that we feel should be motivating and useful for the students. What also is clear is that they do not like dictionary work.

3. As for respondents' own suggestions for language learning activities, they suggested that engaging in group activities with other students on the course such as group discussions on specific topics, group-wise debates or learning through role play by acting out a topic by putting on a performance centred around the topic and acting out the different roles. 25 of the respondents recommended such activities. Another popular method of learning is through games. 22 of the participants recommended gaming as a way of interacting with other students and as a means of acquiring language skills that are inherent to the game itself. These games could be online or video games with other students learning to use the language through interaction with their peers.

Finally, in Chapter 5, we presented a model of online language learning which reflects what has been the main objective of this thesis which is to work towards the design and development of a model of online language learning.

Figure 6.1: MOLL_Model of Online Language Learning

## 6.2.    Implications for professional practice

The implications of this thesis for professional practice can be analysed in two ways:

1. Academic Research versus Action Research
2. A Model of Online Language Learning as a decision-making tool

Academic research is usually performed as a specific research project, not as part of one's professional development. It normally forms part of a course of study for a master's degree or, as in our case, a doctoral degree. It is a logical and systematic search for new and useful information on a topic. It is a means of finding solutions to scientific, social, human and educational problems through objective and systematic analysis. You usually investigate a theory or different theories, carry out experiments and try to discover something new. The purpose, in some respects at least, is the research itself, although it is often hoped that it will have a wider social applicability.

Action Research is different in that it is intended to be conducted by teachers, not academics, and the purpose of the research is to inform your professional practice and to help you make positive changes. It is highly context specific, because you are looking into what you do with your learners in your classroom. Professionally, action research can help a teacher get away from pointless speculation, vague intuition and the trial and error process that can lead to a disjointed and incoherent approach to teaching. The strength of action research is, ultimately, its ability to focus on generating solutions to practical problems and the way it gives teachers the tools to engage with the research process, to reflect on their own practice from a position of principle and with an informed critical eye, to be part of providing and implementing practical solutions. In this sense, this doctorate (as part of my teaching is online) is not only academic research but also action research as I am researching my own professional context.

Another application to professional practice of this thesis is that we can think of the design of a Model of Online Language Learning as a decision-making tool. In other words, this model can help me and, perhaps, other professionals to have a better understanding of online language learning and use the model as a checklist of different aspects that need to be taken into consideration.

## 6.3.    Limitations of the study

In this section, I discuss the limitations of my research in relation to theory and methodology.

### 6.3.1 Theoretical Level

The greatest limitation of this study lies in that it emphasises global, complex aspects of online language learning at the expense of any in-depth focus on a specific, given aspect of research in, for example, a field such as CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning). There are many areas that one can focus on in online language learning. We could have focussed specifically on one aspect such as gaming, learner strategies (what kind of language learner is a good learner online), mobile learning, social networking, task-based language learning to name but a few. I discuss (skim over) them, on a relatively superficial level. All are important for a model of online

language learning. However, I primarily draw my ideas on praxis to the extent that this is what elucidates my exploration of the nature and function of online language learning. As my model focusses on global aspects, it opens many angles for future research, some of which I will discuss in section 6.4 below.

### 6.3.2 Methodological Level

Methodologically, this thesis involved a systematic mixed-method, quasi-experimental design to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Data collection was aimed at and focussed on learner opinions about online language learner. The thinking behind this was that the learner is the end-user, the consumer of this type of learning and, therefore, central to any design and development of an online language course. We could have just used questionnaires in this study, but we felt that we needed also to look at materials and products that had been making the transition from analogical to digital learning. The strength of this study is that we obtained a lot of data. The limitation of this study is that the data could have been more specific. But, as we stated above in the limitations at the theoretical level, we were going for a global model of online language learning. If we examine the literature, there is no such model in such detail as the one produced here in this thesis.

Of course, the model could be improved. Each part of the model, when it is being applied, could be broken down into targets in the process of online language course development. A target is an action that is a specific, measurable and time-bound outcome which contributes to reaching a goal. Each target then could be measured through one or more indicators. Indicators help with accountability, it is a metric used to measure progress through data collection and analysis of our professional praxis. Below, in section 6.4, we give an example of how the model can be extended in the section on future research.

### 6.4.    Recommendations for future research

This thesis could give rise to many types of future research. We will concentrate on the idea from the last section of taking a specific part or goal of the model and how it can be applied. An

interesting part of the model is *tools*, *tasks* and *language*. Our research question would be: *How can we make best use of technological features in language learning task design*?

The selection of tools is a crucial part of online language learning. According to CEFR[9], communicative language competence embraces three different parts: linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic components, which go beyond the more traditional four skills of *listening, reading, speaking, writing*. In this spirit, the selection of a tool should be based on promoting communicative language learning and collaborative, social language learning. Some of these tools therefore should provide opportunities for:

1. Audio recording and editing (Audacity, Vocaroo)
2. Collaborative working and writing (blogs, wiki)
3. Communication and speaking (Skype, FaceTime)
4. Content and website creation (Google docs, forms, sheets; Google sites)
5. Content sharing / storing (Google drive, Dropbox)
6. E-portfolio (Weebly)
7. Finding resources (language learning websites, online dictionaries – wordreference.com, portals (EU, USA gov), statistics websites (Office for National Statistics (ONS))
8. Gaming (World of Warcraft, simple BBC language games)
9. Presentation (Prezi, PowerPoint)
10. Quizzes (Hot Potatoes, Kahoot, Quia)
11. Social Networking (Facebook)
12. Video recording and editing (YouTube)

The list of tools should be sufficient and varied enough to carry out our teaching and learning goals. Tools will often suggest tasks such as Google Forms for designing questionnaires. So, the task is designing a questionnaire and that will be linked to the linguistic objective of practising both open and closed questions. Once the tool is selected for the task, the kind of questions we need to ask for tasks are related to: task type, duration, complexity, accuracy versus fluency (or both), and language to be learnt. However, the design of the task should focus on the following:

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[9] https://rm.coe.int/1680459f97

1. Meaning
2. Engaging learner interest
3. A goal or an outcome
4. Success judged on achieving an outcome and completion is a priority
5. The task being a real-world activity (for example, for our engineering students should be given an academically relevant task)

Finally, we must ask ourselves what language is to be learnt doing the task or what communicative language competence is being developed? Will our syllabus be covered by the tasks to be carried out? So, an extension of the work on the general model presented here would look like what we have described above. So, at the beginning of this section, we asked ourselves: *how can we make best use of technological features in language learning task design*? This could be reformulated as another research question: *how do we create well-designed online language tasks that have a positive effect on student input, interaction, and output?*

Or we might want to know which particularly types of tasks are most effective in promoting language learning online.

As we have implied, with future work, the model can be extended and can become a decision-making tool (a checklist). This, in itself, might lead us to another research question:
*What does the model tell us about the needs of online language teacher education?*
Other more general types of research questions could be the following:

- *What are effective learner and teacher behaviours when studying a language online?*
- *What role do peers play in the development of language?*
- *How can web-based peer reviewing contribute to language learning?*
- *How can online intercultural exchanges (such as we have at the UPV with Finnish universities) contribute to language learning?*
- *What are the advantages and drawbacks of social media in online language learning?*
- *How can we optimize student interaction (collaboration/co-operation) in an online language learning environment?*
- *What indicators do we need for quality online language learning?*

## 6.5.    Final Remarks

This research was initially motivated by my own professional experience as a teacher of online courses that train other teachers to teach in English as the language of global communication. It is sometimes overlooked in what terms an online language course should be developed and what skills and knowledge does an online language teacher need to teach professional development courses. This study, with its methodological and analytical strengths and limitations, has sought to provide guidelines through a model of online language learning so that our teaching is more rigorous, and we are more critical about how we go about teaching online. This researcher believes that, by working in a team and working side-by-side with teachers/colleagues, we can find more creative, effective and efficient ways to support students and educational institutions. In a rapidly evolving digital world, it is an imperative to promote innovative course designs and strategies for helping teachers in the intricate task of teaching language with technology to the diverse language learners of this world by applying culturally and linguistically appropriate and responsive practices.

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