

# Collaboration or Bust?

An Inquiry into the use of Differing On-line Models of Delivery for a Pre-service Grammar Course for English Teachers

**Jo Gakonga, University of Warwick**

## **Abstract (Jo Gakonga)**

*The internet has changed the face of teacher training. Continuing professional development, once a luxury that few were able to access, is now open to any teacher with a computer and a broadband connection. Many in-service courses are run exclusively on-line or in a blended manner and even in pre-service training, it is becoming a more possible and common scenario that some aspects are delivered on-line.*

*The current study charts the development of an on-line course aimed at teaching language awareness to native English speaking pre-service teacher trainees and novice teachers. The primary concern was how the course could be taught most effectively using the range of technology available, and what balance of interactive and independent learning was appropriate. Of particular interest was a comparison between synchronous learning using a virtual classroom such as ElluminateLive! and asynchronously accessed recordings of these sessions, focusing on the relative uptake of both and participants' attitudes to them. Secondly, the study sought to investigate the use of asynchronous consolidation tools, comparing independently accessed materials such as quizzes and those which required collaboration such as web based forums. The effects were investigated using a ten week pilot course in Moodle and culminated in the development and launch of a final product for commercial use.*

*Although the original assumption was that a course that most nearly approximated a face to face experience i.e. synchronous and collaborative, would be more successful, this paper will argue that for a large number of learners, an asynchronously accessed recording is preferable. As may be expected, this is partly for the convenience that it offers but more interestingly, some participants reported that a recorded presentation was pedagogically more useful as it allowed them the freedom to replay, pause, take notes and consult other reference materials for consolidation of learning. There was also evidence that some participants watched the recorded sessions on more than one occasion for revision purposes. It appears that for both convenience and pedagogical reasons asynchronously accessed video presentations have an advantage over the potential benefits of a virtual classroom for this kind of course. It will also be argued that whilst asynchronous collaborative learning via internet forums is of benefit and has motivational value for some learners, the majority of participants in this study preferred their learning to be of an independent nature.*

*The study used a mixed methods approach. Quantitative data on uptake and use was collected, using both manual logging of attendance and computer generated data from Moodle and qualitative feedback from participants in the form of questionnaires using different tools was also collected.*

# Introduction

---

The Cambridge ESOL CELTA and the Trinity Cert TESOL courses are well recognised worldwide and are therefore a popular route into the profession particularly for native speaker teachers, with around 11,000 trainees graduating from these courses every year (Brandt 2008). However, they are both very short (around 120 hours) and very practical in nature. Around half of the course time is devoted to teaching practice and the time available for input is therefore, quite limited.

I work in a college of further education in the West Midlands, which runs three CELTA courses a year, both full time over four weeks and part time over ten weeks and trains approximately seventy English teachers per year. The majority of the trainees are native English speakers and have usually had neither the cause nor opportunity to learn the nomenclature or systems of the language. This is a common observation in many institutions (Andrews 1999) and is especially true if trainees have not studied a foreign language to any degree of proficiency. A common level of knowledge is a rudimentary understanding of basic terms such as 'noun' 'verb' and 'adjective' which may have been taught in school but an absence of more technical nomenclature such as 'auxiliary' 'gerund' or 'modal' and it is also usual that trainees have never had cause to learn the terminology associated with verb tenses or the way in which clauses, sentences and wider discourse are constructed.

For many years I considered how best to approach this problem. The recommendation that I most usually gave to trainees in this position was to provide a reading list and recommend home study. Whilst there are some excellent texts available, for some trainees their low level of knowledge meant that even these presented a serious level of challenge. In the words of one who was a graduate, came from a professional background and went on to be very successful on the course:

*I tried reading some grammar books before the course, as I knew it was a weak area, and to be honest, I may as well have been reading Russian.*

Some CELTA centres offer a face to face pre-CELTA course which is designed to address this issue and provide at least an overview of the nomenclature. This is an idea which has great merit, not only for language development, but also for group building and for possible assessment of suitability for teacher training. However, within our organisation, this proved impossible to organise for practical reasons of cost, enrolment numbers and availability of staff. As an alternative, I decided to run a pre-CELTA grammar awareness course on-line. The main reason for this originally was entirely practical, and idea being to replicate a face to face class as nearly as was possible, as I considered this to be the ideal. However, when running an initial pilot, it became apparent that there may be other good reasons to use an on-line medium and that this may necessitate changes to the pedagogy to which I was accustomed. The current study describes research in a subsequent pilot using both synchronous and asynchronous tools and investigating the preferences of participants to collaborative tasks or those accessed independently.

The course was designed in two parts; the first comprising five units and describing parts of speech and tense nomenclature, both active and passive. It was considered an important part of this that the language was clarified effectively, but also that it was considered in a manner that would be relevant and useful for English teachers. For example, when teaching the nomenclature for articles, some of the difficulties that learners have with these was explained. The second part of the course had seven units, each covering a grammatical area commonly difficult for learners (and teachers) for example, the present perfect, the future and conditionals. Clearly, it is impossible to cover all aspects of grammatical terminology of difficulty on a short course, but I attempted to cover a range of the most frequently occurring and challenging areas. A more detailed breakdown of the course structure was as follows:

## **Part 1 – Grammatical nomenclature**

### **Unit 1- Parts of Speech 1**

*Nouns; countable and uncountable, concrete, abstract, proper and common, subject, object and relative pronouns.  
Adjectives, word order*

## **Unit 2 - Parts of Speech 2**

*Recap of the previous session  
Adverbs; of manner, of frequency, of place and time and of degree and word order rules.  
Verbs; transitive and intransitive, auxiliaries and participles, regular and irregular.*

## **Unit 3 -Parts of Speech 3**

*Recap of past session  
Gerunds; identification and differentiation from present participles and –ing adjectives  
Articles; indefinite and definite and the difficulties that they present to learners. Brief overview of common rules.  
Prepositions; of location and dependent prepositions.  
Conjunctions; types, word order and punctuation  
Modals; Identification only – further session on this later.*

## **Unit 4 - Verb Tenses -active**

*Recap of all of parts of speech work.  
True tenses, present and past  
Continuous aspect  
Perfect aspect  
Identification of tenses*

## **Unit 5 -Verb Tenses- passive**

*Recap of active tense nomenclature .  
Passive voice – meaning and use.  
Form production  
Identification of tenses in passive form*

## **Part 2 – Parts of grammar traditionally difficult for learners**

*Each of the following units analysed the language, paying particular attention to the difficulties with meaning form and pronunciation that learners (and novice teachers) often find with it. Particular care was taken to clarify where similar forms denote different meanings.*

### **Unit 6- Present Perfect**

### **Unit 7 - The Future**

### **Unit 8 -Modals**

### **Unit 9 - Narrative Tenses**

### **Unit 10 -Phrasal Verbs**

## **Unit 11 -Conditionals**

## **Unit 12 - Relative Clauses**

Each unit was delivered in a weekly synchronous session in a virtual classroom, lasting around 90 minutes. This was recorded and available on-line to view asynchronously. I also provided weekly quizzes and discussion forums which I hoped would consolidate learning and provide a further opportunity in the latter case for social interaction and support.

Three programmes were used during the pilot:

### **Moodle**

Moodle is a virtual learning platform which is free and open source and therefore it is possible to customise in many ways. It is a platform that is widely used in both business and education and was chosen for this investigation for several reasons. It allows quantitative data on access by individuals to be easily collected and access to the course to be password protected. Furthermore, it is possible to create quizzes within the platform, giving automatic feedback to the participant and to the tutor.

### **IlluminateLive!**

IlluminateLive! is a virtual classroom which can synchronously connect a teacher and learners. The interface is pictured below. The teacher is seen and heard on webcam and a PowerPoint presentation can be uploaded, which can then be written on in the same way as an IWB by both the teacher and the participants. The participants' names are listed, and a text chat box is available for communication.

### **myBrainshark.com**

MyBrainshark is a tool designed to produce voiced over presentations. It is possible to upload PowerPoint presentations or photograph slideshows and record an associated audio track. This can then be shared as a url link or embedded on a website. It has great ease of use and is free provided that the presentation is public.

# Literature review

---

## Course content rationale

There is good evidence that explicit teaching of grammar is an important part of language learning (Norris and Ortega 2000, Gass and Selinker 2008, Spada and Tomita 2010) and in order to teach grammar, it is imperative that it is fully understood by the teacher. This is not to say that learning the nomenclature and systems of the language is the only factor in teacher training and a knowledge of grammatical terminology will not guarantee excellent teaching ability (Bartels 2005, Andrews 2001). It may even lead to teacher led, teacher focused grammar lectures which serve the purpose only to bore and possibly confuse learners; as Wright (1991:68-9) suggests, 'one great danger of acquiring specialist knowledge about language is the possible desire to show learners that you have this knowledge'. Thornberry (1997: x), however, is clear that this is a problem with methodology and not of language awareness and also suggests that teachers who lack a solid grounding in the meta-language of their subject will have difficulties in several areas. These include an inability to anticipate the difficulties that trainees will have with particular areas of language, leading to lessons not being appropriately prepared and to the teacher not being able to explain learners' errors. In the situation that teachers are unable to clarify language patterns, the confidence of their learners is easily lost (Thornberry 1997:xii *op cit*). Other researchers have written in a similar vein, Andrews and McNeill (2005:159 *op cit*), suggesting that it may be a 'crucial variable in determining the quality and potential effectiveness of practice' and it is certainly observable that those trainees with a better language awareness often have less difficulty in planning lessons. Wright and Bolitho (1993) state this in even more strongly worded terms; 'Our starting point is simple: the more aware a teacher is of language and how it works, the better...' and this paper also makes the point that:

...we suspect that successful communicative teaching depends more than ever on a high level of language awareness in a teacher due to the richness and complexity of a 'communicative view'.

(Wright and Bolitho 1993 *op cit*)

Whilst this view is now almost 20 years old, the prevailing trends in teaching grammar using a communicative approach, a task based learning approach (Willis and Willis 2007) and more recently Meddings and Thornberry's Dogme approach (2009) continue in this direction.

There has generally been a movement to a focus on 'form' in grammar, this being 'a prerequisite engagement in meaning before attention to linguistic features can expect to be effective' (Doughty and Williams, 1998:3 ) as opposed to a focus on 'forms' which implies a course based around a grammatical syllabus, delivering what Thornberry rather derisively calls 'Grammar McNuggetts' (Thornberry 2010). This shift does not imply a move away from grammar teaching and in fact requires teachers to be more confident in their knowledge in order that they can teach language effectively as it emerges. This is impossible without a thorough grounding in language awareness. Even in the common situation of using a printed course book, which may assume a more linear approach to language acquisition and a focus on 'forms' it remains imperative that teachers are able to explain language clearly, concisely and effectively.

### **Advantages of on-line training**

As has been stated, in this case the initial impetus to consider an on-line solution to the difficulties of delivering a grammar course was entirely pragmatic, the practical advantages of on-line learning being well established. Salmon (2001) for example, identifies the availability of networked courses and the lack of need for learners to travel to a specified point to learn. This lack of geographical limitation, opens up many possibilities in terms of the target student population and from the point of view of the teaching institution it is not necessary to provide a physical room with all of the expenses that that implies. This is not a small consideration as can be witnessed in the burgeoning increase in on-line courses being offered by universities, particularly in North America and Western Europe. In addition to this, if the course is asynchronous, the restriction of time as well as distance is removed. This can be of enormous importance to inclusiveness and to the 'non-traditional' learner. Bartolic-Zlomislic and Bates (1999a) suggest, based on a case study from the University of British Columbia, that this allowed a flexible schedule which could fit differing work patterns. They state that this had a two-fold impact in that it was of value for the convenience of the students, but that it also enabled 'access to international experts' (Bartolic-Zlomislic & Bates 1999a *op cit* ), something that would be almost certainly impossible in a face to face course. On-line learning may also enable courses to run which would not have sufficient learners in a face to face situation. Whilst Bartolic-Zlomislic & Bates (1999b) acknowledge



that this may also be possible using traditional print based methods of distance learning, it was found that generally learners find the immediacy of on-line learning more motivating and supportive.

Convenience and access are clearly of huge significance, but on-line learning may also offer other, less obvious advantages. One consideration is that in a more anonymous setting, less confident learners may have greater opportunities to contribute. In case studies (Bartolic-Zlomislic & Bates 1999b *op cit*) tutors found that without visual clues, learners were more likely to be treated equally and to participate more, both with each other and with the tutor. Salmon (2001 *ibid*) suggests that the 'neutral' nature of the message sent, having no reference to age or appearance, 'tends to favour minorities of every kind and encourages everyone to 'be himself or herself''. Other researchers have also found that on-line courses can 'foster a greater degree of communication and closeness among students and faculty (Knight *et al* 1998; Waschull, 1997). Waschull (2001) confirms this finding and in her study, noting that students were less intimidated by the prospect of e-mailing a question than by asking it in class. Again, the benefit was not only to the student as this medium also allows the instructor time to answer the question without it being to the detriment of class time.

Another advantage that Waschull (2001 *op cit*) reports is that on-line learning allows instructors to link learners to a wide range of primary sources and other materials on the net. Whilst this is clearly also possible in a face to face course, the immediacy of access that hyperlinks offer whilst learners are on-line encourages greater exploitation of this potential.

Whilst some researchers have found that an online learning environment may be 'more rigorous than the traditional classroom environment' (Ridley 1998) with on-line students reporting that they spent more time studying, reading required and suggested texts and discussing course material compared to their on-campus counterparts, the general consensus is that there is no great difference in effectiveness between distance and face to face learning (Beare, 1989; Fox, 1998; McKissack, 1997; Sonner, 1999; Waschull, 2001 *ibid*).

## **Challenges of on-line training**

On-line learning, however, is not a panacea and there are many limitations. These may include feelings of isolation and motivation issues, as well as the inevitable technological difficulties. Schrum and Hong (2002) identified seven attributes which they felt were likely to affect success in on-line learning. These included personal qualities such as self-discipline and a preference for text based learning, lifestyle factors such as sufficient time to engage with the course and practical considerations such as reliable access to technology and level of experience in using it. However, the only factors that they considered that had a statistically significant influence on outcome grades were self-discipline and the motivation that the learners had to do well on the course. It is worth noting that these qualities are also likely to be those which will affect success in traditional face to face courses.

One of the major proponents of on-line learning have been the Open University (OU) who have been using computer mediated communication (CMC) since the late 1980s and who have built up a wide research base from these experiences. Jones and Issroff (2005) describe how the initial drive to use the technology was motivated by a desire to reduce the isolation commonly felt by distance learners, but that in an environment where there was a considerable amount of anonymity, there was also less emotional restraint and that if the affective aspects of building a social community were ignored, it often led to an environment inconducive to learning. Wegerif (1998) describes the large differences between learners on a teaching and learning course, and 'found that individual success or failure on the course depended upon the extent to which students were able to cross a threshold from feeling like outsiders to feeling like insiders.' In his course, some of the learners felt themselves to be part of a community and participated wholeheartedly, expressing in their post-course feedback how much they felt they had learnt from each other and the process. Others, however, contributed little and in one case withdrew from the course because they felt themselves to be outsiders. Reasons for a lack of participation may have been practical, in that they had limited internet access or time and found it difficult to contribute to the on-line discussions due to the difficulties of reading and assimilating past contributions but other learners expressed their feelings that they felt inadequate or less able and were uncomfortable about revealing their perceived ignorance in a forum. Bartolic-Zlomislic &

Bates (1999a *ibid*) also found that some learners were worried about the permanence of their answers in forum postings. This disparate perception of CMC by different participants is not an unusual finding. Mason and Weller's (2000) research found that although some participants found the discussion groups of great help and use, less experienced users of the medium 'tended to find the number of messages overwhelming and the competence and tone of the messages from experienced computer users very off-putting', whilst still others complained about the lack of participation in the discussion forums. In their surveys, only 14% felt the group work was working 'very well'. My personal experience of a successful on-line e-moderator course was that it was possible to form relationships in an on-line course and work in a collaborative manner especially where there was some form of synchronous communication. However, because the participants were all highly motivated, there was a consequently large number of posts on forums and this resulted in a feeling of being overwhelmed, of reading similar comments multiple times and therefore of the learning being rather superficial. This is perhaps where the skill of an e-moderator lies.

Other researchers have noted different factors which may contribute to difficulties. Tolmie and Boyle (2000) found that 'developing a community in which learners feel safe and trust each other is 'crucial' and that this was affected by group size, a larger group making a community more difficult to build. In addition to this, and perhaps less obviously, they found that 'a clear need for CMC ... is necessary for learner engagement'. Their findings were that where the course conflicted with other demands on learners' time, these would predominate unless the use of the technology was perceived to be instrumental to the learning.

It would be expected from a social constructivist view of learning that a social medium in which learning can be co-constructed would be of use and interest to a large percentage of learners, but it is again interesting that this is not of universal appeal. Mason and Weller (2000 *ibid*) point out that 'many students simply did not like this method of study' and preferred a more traditional and independent approach to distance learning. For tutors, too, collaborative on-line learning has its advantages and disadvantages. Hara and Kling (1999) note that that 'many advocates of computer-mediated distance education emphasise its positive aspects and understate the kind of work that it requires for students and faculty.'

The pressures for students have already been noted but those for tutors may include an increase in workload with an expectation from learners of swift replies to postings and of more individualised help than may be expected in a face to face course. This perceived lack of prompt response by tutors was cited as one of the most important frustrations in Hara and Kling's study (1999 *op cit*) in addition to technical difficulties and ambiguous instructions on the web. For tutors, therefore, the expectations that they will be available at any time, including evenings and weekends can lead to unreasonable demands on time. It is also worth noting that time spent on-line may not be considered by management to be 'teaching' time in the way that time in a classroom would be considered so. This may be a particular reason for tutors to be reluctant to initiate and participate in on-line courses.

Salmon (2001 *ibid*) suggests that a change from face to face learning to learning on-line 'changes the learning environment and the student experience...[and]...dramatically changes the role of the trainer' and for this reason learning management tools and techniques which are appropriate in classrooms need to be changed. This dissertation is the story of finding a path through that change.

## **Synchronous and asynchronous on-line learning**

One of the two questions I was interested in investigating in this pilot was a comparison of synchronous and asynchronous delivery of material. In deciding on the structure of the course I was perhaps influenced by my background in a face to face classroom. Lieblein (2000) notes that whilst synchronous methods are similar to a traditional classroom, the pedagogy for asynchronous learning is significantly different and account needs to be made of this in training both staff and students. He does, however, also state that there is 'neither an ideal online learning environment nor an ideal approach to online pedagogy' but that 'some environments and approaches facilitate student learning whilst others impede it' (Lieblein 2000 *op cit*) and suggests that the teacher is a critical factor. Given social constructivist theories of learning (Vygotsky 1978) it was expected that an environment in which participants and the teacher could communicate in real time would be advantageous and I therefore planned the course predominantly around a weekly live seminar which was

available asynchronously in recorded form. There has been considerable work done in comparing the efficacy of synchronous and asynchronous collaborative learning, although little in the field of teacher training, and the majority of findings show that there is not a significant difference in assessment outcomes between them (Gunawardena and Mclsaac 2004: 355-395) but they may serve different purposes. Hrastinski's research (2008) compared both synchronous and asynchronous collaborative work and found that in comparison to synchronous CMC, asynchronous supported more content focused communication at the expense of task planning and social support. This supports Robert and Dennis' 'cognitive model of media choice' which suggests that synchronous communication can be motivational and is more likely to produce social interaction, but that asynchronous tasks, in giving learners time to formulate answers in their own time, allow them to process information more effectively (Robert and Dennis 2005: 10-21). Im and Lee (2003) also report similar results with pre-service teachers in South Korea, with synchronous CMC yielding more social interactions and asynchronous being more task oriented.

Midkiff and DaSilva (2000), working in the field of engineering, found that whilst both modes can be effective, it is necessary to take account of each when considering course design. They suggest that whilst a synchronous model follows the patterns of a face to face course, its primary 'driver' being lectures that have implicit learning aims, an asynchronous model requires learners to take a more independent approach to their learning and prioritise for themselves and for this reason, the learning aims therefore need to be more explicitly stated.

Other differences that are stated in the literature often support the use of asynchronous media. When considering working in an asynchronous environment, many researchers have found that learners have more time to formulate their answers before submitting them, and this may ensure a greater depth of thought (eg Daniel & Marquis 1979, Davidson-Shivers *et al* 2001, Levin *et al* 2006). Conversely, but also advantageously 'participants can ask questions without waiting in turn' (Salmon 2001 *ibid*) and it is possible for all learners to take part. This may lead to a greater degree of participation than in a synchronous medium and even in comparison to face to face classes. This ability to interact freely with the

instructor and other students' was noted by Bartolic-Zlomislic & Bates (1999a *ibid*) in their reported case studies, as well as, 'the potential for more interaction than in a face-to-face setting'. Here, perhaps, the emphasis should be on 'potential' since they also note that compared with face to face settings, discussions took longer and were not preferred by those who were in a campus setting. Preference of synchronous and asynchronous discussion was also investigated by Levin *et al* (2006 *op cit*) in their study of pre-service teachers. Initially, only three participants who were involved in both synchronous and asynchronous discussions stated that they preferred a synchronous medium with 32 initially preferring asynchronous discussions. However, after the course, 15 had changed their opinion. The reasons stated for this included:

- (a) immediate feedback from peers and the professor;
- (b) the pace of the discussions, which they said felt more like a real conversation;
- (c) the convenience of having a one-hour chat, rather than having to check many times during the week to see how the asynchronous discussion was progressing; and
- (d) being challenged to think intensely and learn from peers in a short time frame.

Levin *et al* (2006 *op cit*)

Those who preferred an asynchronous mode did so for reasons of convenience and the time to consider answers thoroughly. They were concerned, however, at the amount of reading required and the speed at which colleagues replied to posts. The authors of this study (Levin *et al* 2006 *op cit*) conclude that each mode has advantages and both are illustrative of adult learning theories (Knowles, 1984; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991) which suggest that effective learning in adulthood is maximised when there is choice, a sense of control, opportunities to get feedback and a collaborative environment.

## Methodology

---

### Course Design

In order to investigate the relative merits of different models of delivery on-line, synchronous and asynchronous, a pilot course was run from September to December 2011

over a period of 10 weeks. This was run on a Moodle platform and used Elluminate Live for the synchronous class element. Participants were initially enrolled and encouraged to post a profile on the Moodle site, with a brief description and a photograph and a general forum was introduced in which social contact was possible. The main content delivery was a series of twelve interactive sessions of 90 minutes each which were delivered live once a week on a Sunday evening the first five covering basic parts of speech and tense nomenclature, the final seven covering areas of grammar that commonly cause confusion for trainees and learners. The original aim was for 60 minute classes as this was felt to be an appropriate length of time for participants to concentrate, but the pace on-line proved to be somewhat slower than would be anticipated in a face to face environment for various technological reasons. These included the time taken to ensure that all participants could hear and see me, a greater length of time taken for participants to answer questions due to typing delays and further time taken in moving in and out of breakout rooms. For these reasons, 90 minute classes were instigated. Anderson (2003) notes that many synchronous classes do not make use of the possibilities for student interaction that are possible and the classes therefore are only substitutes for lectures. There is certainly a danger in this and whilst the technology has improved very significantly in the decade since this paper was published, there are still difficulties in maintaining good student-student interaction and, to a lesser degree good student-teacher interaction. Broadband speeds dictate that only the teacher can be viewed on webcam and distortion and feedback make communication difficult if more than one or at most two microphones are switched on. In practice, this meant that the majority of the interaction was that the teacher spoke and the participants responded in text chat. Whilst breakout rooms can potentially aid the difficulties of peer interaction, they were also problematic as some participants did not have microphones and some had poor connections, meaning that they may 'drop-out' of the course unexpectedly at times, having to log in again and leaving their breakout room partner alone. Some participants also complained of a feeling of isolation when in the breakout rooms and so this tool was largely phased out later in the course.

Each live session was recorded in order to allow participants who were not able to attend to access the content and the links for the recording were displayed on the Moodle site each week. The recordings show both teacher and learner interaction and allow participants a

sense of 'being there' if they had missed the session in addition to allowing participants to review the sessions if they wished to do so. In order to consolidate learning and in conjunction with each live session, an on-line quiz with immediate feedback was available. These were built in Moodle in order that use could be monitored. Finally, a task was set each week to be completed asynchronously on a web-based forum. These tasks encouraged participants to notice language systems, to post about them and to comment on each other's posts. For example, if the topic was 'The Future', participants were asked to listen for future forms in their daily lives and note them on the forum, identifying and analysing the different uses of 'will', 'going to', the present continuous and present simple tenses used with future reference. The design of the course was linear; a new module being added week by week as can be seen below.

The pilot was advertised through the CELTA e-mail forum which disseminates information to CELTA centres worldwide and there was a large and immediate response, perhaps indicative of the perceived need for such instruction. Seventy participants were enrolled on the course, many of them living in the UK but over half living in and/ or originating from a wide range of countries, including the Netherlands, Canada, Korea, the UAE, and Poland. No charge was made for the course and participants were informed of the research nature of the project. All gave written permission for their data to be used anonymously.

My primary concerns were twofold. The first was to investigate whether synchronous live classes or asynchronously accessed recordings were more well used and possible reasons for differences in the popularity of these. The second was to compare the use of independent or collaborative asynchronous tasks in the form of on-line quizzes or web-based forums and to ascertain possible reasons for differences in uptake of these task types.

## **Data collection**

Quantitative data was collected throughout the course using Moodle to track the patterns of access of individuals and the rates of access of the group to particular activities. This allowed numerical data to be gathered on 'hit' rates of each activity. Manual registers were



also kept of the attendance of the live classes. In the final three weeks, myBrainshark presentations were included in the course to supplement the Elluminate recordings and access rates to these were noted, using software available on the myBrainshark website. In addition to this numerical data, both quantitative and qualitative survey data was collected in three ways. In week 3 of the course, initial feedback was collected using an on-line anonymous survey tool (Survey Monkey) to gather information about the demographic of the participants and their initial reactions to the course. In week 7, a collaborative on-line survey tool (Tricider) was used to elicit opinions on participation rates and finally, at the end of the course an exit questionnaire was sent by e-mail to gather information on participation and perceptions of both synchronous and asynchronous tasks.

### **Issues with data collection**

One of the great strengths of using Moodle for this research project was that a large amount of data could be collected on participation rates. Technology, however, has its flaws and two major problems were encountered with on-line quantitative data collection, both in part due to my inexperience with the tool. During week 5 of the course, the server which I was using closed, necessitating a change of Moodle provider. Although the course itself was transferred, unbeknownst to myself all log data proceeding that time was not, meaning that the data detailing access to Elluminate recordings over those initial four weeks was lost. A second difficulty was that in weeks 7, 8 and 9 a redesign of the course layout to make it more aesthetically appealing led to the data for the number of recordings accessed being amalgamated with hit rates for all other activities in those weeks. The specific number, therefore, for the recording access is not available.

These losses are unfortunate and highlight the potential difficulties of using technology in data collection. However, the data that was collected shows conclusively the findings reached and further data could only strengthen this.

## **Findings and discussion**

---

## Demographic of participants

It quickly became clear that a large number of the participants who had signed up would not be active. Thirty participants responded to the Survey Monkey data taken in week three. Of the total, 11 participants (44%) were just about to do celta, 8 (27%) had just finished a course, a further 7 (24%) were on a course, some of those on-line and 4 (13%) were already teachers.

When this question was asked in the end of course questionnaire, of seventeen respondents, the ratios were similar, although interestingly, the greatest difference was a decrease in trainees who had not yet started a course, and a corresponding increase in the proportion of those who had recently finished suggesting that it is only during or after an initial teacher training course that the need for grammar becomes more apparent. It may also be that statuses had changed over the three month period of the course as those who had been about to start courses, did so.

Participants	Just about to do celta	Doing celta	Just finished	Already a teacher	Total respondents
Survey Monkey October 2011	11(37%)	7 (23%)	8 (27%)	4 (13%)	30
Questionnaire Dec 2011	5 (29%)	4 (23%)	6 (35%)	2 (12%)	17

The respondents were asked to identify their reasons for taking the course and the majority (63%) stated that they were doing the course because they were worried that they didn't know enough about grammar. However, the course being recommended by a tutor was a reason for 50% and others admitted that they were interested in how an on-line course would work, or that a major factor had been that it was free.

## Motivation

One of the most striking aspects of the pilot was that despite a very good initial response to the call for participants and good feedback from those who took part, the general uptake

was very low in all parts of the course. The comments given on the content of the course were consistently very positive, although it is notable that this was from the small cohort who had attended the course and who had returned the questionnaire. However, they were without exception, extremely complimentary:

*‘The content was practical, interesting (you get extra points for that given the rather dry subject matter!) and challenging enough without discouraging us.*

*‘Your knowledge of the subject matter shone through time and time again. I gained a great deal from all your effort’*

*‘I loved this course! I’m teaching adults now and I honestly don’t know how I would have survived without this course.’*

Despite this, motivation was a key issue. The barrier to entry to the course was minimal, a free on-line course presenting no impediment in terms of cost or location and the result of this was that a large number of people signed up, perhaps without considering the time that would be required and the majority did not participate. After the first five lessons, it became apparent that around half of the people who had signed up had never logged onto the course and at this point, these people were e-mailed to ask if they wanted to continue. This reduced numbers from 75 to 40 and the course was offered again to fifty further applicants who had originally been refused, on the nominal payment of £10. This was charged to try to ensure that any new entrants had some level of commitment and motivation and four new learners joined the course at this point.

The table below illustrates the level of activity in the final seven weeks of the course, ‘Activity’ indicating the number of hits on the Moodle site for each individual and ‘Days’ denoting the number of separate days that they accessed the course asynchronously. As can be seen, only 26 participants accessed the site and only seven of those used the site on average more than once a week.

**Activity on Moodle (asynchronous access of recordings and quizzes) over last 7 weeks of course.**

Name	Activity	Days	Name	Activity	Days	Name	Activity	Days
Ben	124	15	Rena	25	5	Maggie	8	2
Carolyn	185	13	Bilal	102	5	Nina	3	2
Katie	140	12	Rooma	13	5	Dariusz	11	2
Marie	170	10	Anthony	38	4	Vivienne	29	2
Arlene	138	10	Daniel	42	4	Sasha	5	1
Julie 1	178	9	Justine	68	4	Muna	7	1

Julie 2	179	8	Sinead	19	4	Andrea	2	1
Dyanne	23	6	Anne	33	3	Tarryn	0	
Michelle	21	6	Shah	5	3			
Rochelle	98	6	Lynne	8	2			

#### Paying participants

Tarryn is included here as she never logged onto the Moodle site, but attended all but one of the live sessions.

When participants in week three were asked why they had not yet logged on, only twelve of the 30 respondents answered, presumably because the other 18 had done so. Of the twelve people who answered this question, 90% stated time difficulties. These included that the course coincided with CELTA beginning and a consequent increase in time pressure:

*I've only had time for one session and have now started the (CELTA) course and am finding I can't continue because of the work load*

*I was only able to attend one session due to pressure of my course and work.*

This was a common theme throughout the feedback process, with similar comments from the Tricider survey in November:

*I don't think the course is really a problem. I think it's busy schedules, international time zone differences and personal priorities*

In addition to the time factors which were perhaps a polite excuse, some participants were candid about the difficulties of maintaining the motivation required to attend an on-line course.

*I think I'm just lazy. I honestly had time last Friday, but I preferred to go out because it's so easy not to attend a class that is online. I think it's the main problem of online education: it's too tempting to cancel classes or just miss them.*

Another highlighted the low barrier to entry that a free on-line course represents as a difficulty.

*It's too easy to say yes to something that is free without considering all the implications, so this is the dilemma!*

It is also, perhaps the nature of the course in that there was no external motivation in the form of formative or summative assessment and no requirement to 'pass' for certification purposes. Other studies on motivation in on-line learning courses have shown differing

results regarding attendance and motivation, and Waschull (2001 *ibid*) for example, found that attrition in her on-line undergraduate psychology course was low and comparable to face to face courses. It is likely that in this case motivation will have been linked to the attainment of a college degree, however, and Brooks (1997:135) in contrast, claims that students 'who are poor at self-regulation can easily be slaughtered in www-based courses' . Other studies, where external assessment is absent, show a low usage rate (eg Dudley 2011), who cites reasons for the low take up of asynchronous tasks by language students as time, navigational difficulties and cultural factors. A further reason cited in literature for poor motivation may be learning styles and poor study skills (Loomis 2000).

### **Synchronous live classes**

When the idea for the course was first conceived, I saw the potential of a virtual classroom as being an affordable and practical alternative to a face to face class. I therefore assumed that a live environment in which it is possible to clarify points with a tutor in real time and collaborate with other learners to co-construct knowledge would be the most popular and well received option. There were certainly some participants who enjoyed the opportunity that a synchronous class affords:

*the live sessions themselves were very good and it was good to have the ability to talk to you.*

*I like the opportunity to meet others with similar interests who live in far flung places.*

However, low participation rates were particularly noticeable in the on-line classes. Although the attendance figures for first live session were encouraging (20 participants), this was still only a relatively small number of the possible total of 70 and in subsequent sessions the average attendance was only around four to five people.

Session	Attended live session (synchronous)
Parts of Speech I	20
Parts of Speech II	5
Parts of Speech III	2
Verb Tenses	5

Passive Verb Tenses	2
Present Perfect	4
The Future	4
Modals	4
Narrative Tenses	4
Phrasal Verbs	4
Conditionals	4
Relative Clauses	3

As has been noted, the reasons for not attending the live sessions were often practical in nature:

*the time wasn't convenient for me*

*it was sometimes not possible or convenient to attend on a Sunday evening*

For some the difficulties were due to their time zones, lessons being held at a time which suited the majority of the participants, who were based in Europe.

*I'm in New Zealand, so the timing is not good for me which is why I'm watching the delayed webinars.*

*it was purely a time factor – midnight on a Sunday evening (from the UAE)*

*the time difference is what kept me from being as regular about it as I would have liked.*

In an attempt to address this, during weeks 2 and 3, a second weekly class was run in order to make it possible for those in other time zones to attend but the number of people who attended was very low. In addition to this, two sessions a week was too intensive for most and so this was abandoned.

In the final questionnaire, work related difficulties were noted by some participants as a reason why they had not attended the live classes:

*I couldn't manage the classes as I have been unusually busy at work , hence very very tired when getting home.*

*As I...work full time, often life got in the way.*

and personal circumstances also made participation difficult in some cases:

*Our house is being extended and it was too chaotic and noisy in the house for me to sit down and concentrate.*

*They clashed with other things (babysitting my nieces and nephews or helping my dad with his sheep)*

*I missed a few due to poor internet access or being away from home during the lesson.*

*..only a jammed wheel bearing on the highway from KL to Singapore could keep me away...*

I was, however, concerned that a further reason for low attendance may be that the classes were not engaging, given the greater level of teacher talk. My perception is that this medium promotes a rather teacher centred approach due to the technical difficulties of participants using voice. For the majority of the participants who responded to the questionnaire, this was not the case, all respondents replying that they felt engaged and eight of the seventeen expressed strongly that this had been the case.

*I was engaged and felt 100% involved*

*I think I participated more than I would of [sic] in a real class as no one knows who you are so it's less embarrassing if you make a mistake.*

*As long as I set time aside in a quiet room, it was just as effective as being in a classroom.*

Only one respondent expressed reservations:

*It is undoubtedly harder to participate in the whole class group, I think due to two problems. Firstly, without non-verbal communication it is much more difficult to tell when someone wants to speak...I feel a bit juvenile putting up my hand (albeit digitally) when I want to speak. The second problem is that due to internet protocol, there is an unavoidable lag between saying something and others hearing what you have said...makes it difficult to maintain a flow in discussion.*

This final point is a very valid one. As was noted previously, allowing participants to use microphones led to technical difficulties with feedback and the protocol quickly settled upon was that of the teacher using voice and participants communicating using the text chat function. This allowed all participants to answer questions, a situation that would not be possible in a face to face environment but for the teacher this inevitably led to a propensity

towards closed questioning in order to facilitate quick responses from the participants and not to discriminate against those who did not have such fluent keyboard skills. This tended to promote communication between the teacher and individual students at the expense of building student to student rapport. It also favoured a predomination of an IRF (Initiation, Response, Feedback) model (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) in the class and whilst this confirmed participants' understanding, it did not allow for a more democratic classroom dynamic.

My expectation had been that using Moodle as a platform would allow participants to develop relationships by reading each other's profiles and seeing each other's pictures. This, I hoped, would lead to better interaction in the virtual classroom and a consequent increase in attendance. Around half of the participants posted profiles and pictures, but this did not seem to correlate with motivation as three of the ten most active participants on the course never posted profiles or pictures and five of the ten least active participants did do so. There is evidence that group size can be a contributing factor to on-line motivation (Wegerif 1998 *ibid*) and it is possible that with a smaller group of perhaps twelve participants, there may be more impetus for each participant to explore the profiles of the others and this may encourage more personal interaction.

### **Asynchronously accessed recordings**

One of the most useful aspects of using ElluminateLive is that it is a very straightforward procedure to record the sessions and allow participants to view these on demand using a link which was made available on the Moodle site each week after the live class. Feedback on these was very positive:

*They are a fantastic resource, which I am glad to have had access to, especially as it was difficult for me to make the live sessions.*

*...just as effective as taking part.*

*..ability to replay them and return to them at your leisure was very convenient.*

and only one person expressed reservations about them pedagogically:

*I found it helpful, but I found it took longer to get through the material. I had to replay it to understand it...Overall, live was definitely more engaging.*



Unfortunately, there were some difficulties associated with the ElluminateLive recordings. The first and most important were the technical difficulties that experienced by some with download time. A number of people, myself included, encountered difficulties with downloading the recordings, which often took a long time and, once loaded were not easy to navigate forwards and back.

*It would take one or two tries before I was able to load Elluminate and the loading time was a tad long.*

*On a few occasions the player would not load. Another few times it started loading and nothing would happen (for up to an hour)*

In addition to load time, there was also the need to click each time to accept the download of each video and this made some participants nervous:

*It feels as if you might be downloading a huge Trojan virus!*

Whilst the download time was the major problem with the recordings, a further factor often cited as a difficulty was that of the silence in the recording when participants went into breakout rooms.

*..as I was only watching the recordings, to either sit through the silences (of the breakout rooms) or scroll through without missing where the class picked up again was a bit tedious. It would have been helpful to have some way of either editing out pauses or knowing how far to scroll forward to.'*

*...it's quite annoying watching the Elluminate recordings when there is so much time wasted – eg when new participants come or go or they go into a side room etc*

In the last three weeks of the course, due to these difficulties with the Elluminate recordings, I also recorded the class using myBrainshark.com. This programme allows a PowerPoint presentation to be uploaded and for an audio soundtrack to be recorded in conjunction with this. As this comprised a monologue of the content of the session it was much shorter in comparison to the on-line class, the former taking around 30 -40 minutes whilst the class usually lasted around 90 minutes. The content remained the same including the tasks for participants and instructions to pause the recording whilst they did them.

Interestingly, of those who filled in the questionnaire, there was support for the longer Elluminate recordings, despite the fact that some people experienced technical difficulties in downloading them. Opinions expressed were that the Elluminate sessions were more detailed or more 'human' as they involved personal interaction:

*I prefer Elluminate because of the classroom interaction aspect. I used Brainshark to clarify the notes that I made having watched sessions on Elluminate.*

*I tried the shorter versions. They were informative but I missed the additional interactions.*

*I preferred Elluminate as the tutor/ participant interaction put more 'meat on the bones' of the subject.*

*Brainshark was good for a quick overview.*

However, it is perhaps the case that these comments were from the small number of participants who returned questionnaires and were perhaps the most highly motivated. Quantitative analysis of the relative access rates show that myBrainshark recordings were accessed much more frequently than Elluminate, examples being the conditional session (12 views of Elluminate to 25 views of myBrainshark) and that on Relative Clauses (8 views of Elluminate to 20 views of myBrainshark). One opinion expressed on this was;

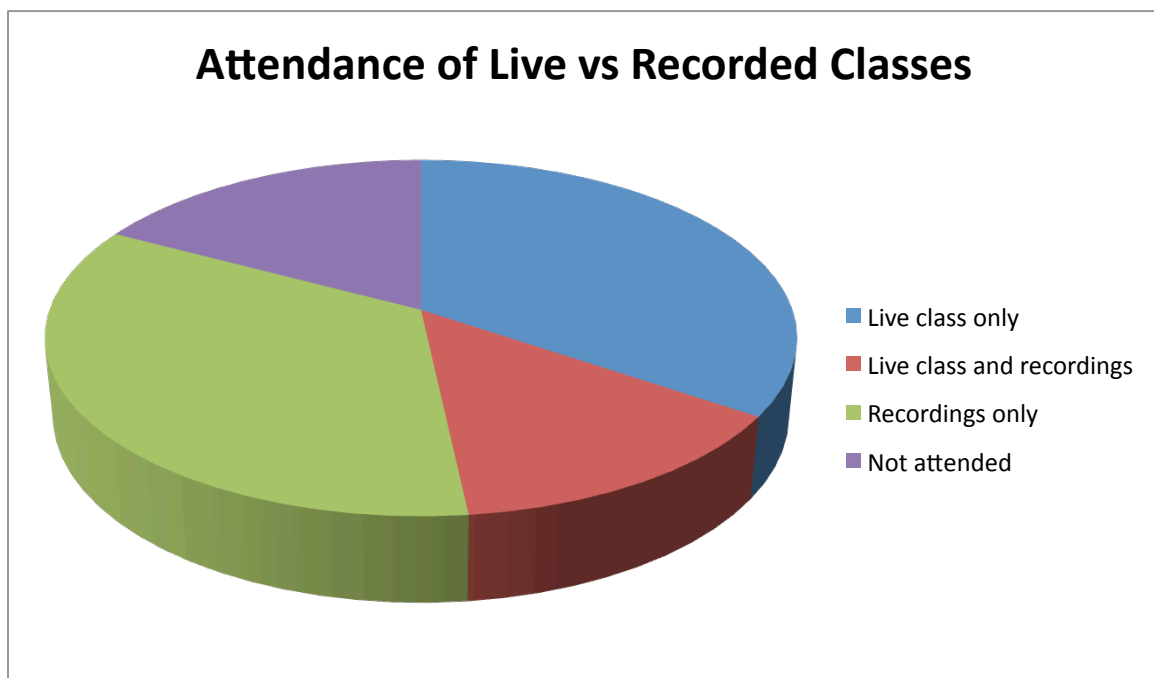
*...because the (Brainshark) recording was shorter, I felt I could listen to it right the way through and then replay it again taking notes. With a long recording there's much more investment in time...Brainshark is also a lot more accessible than an Elluminate recording – I can jump forward or back quite easily.*

A further advantage that myBrainshark videos offer is that they are accessible on smartphones, which the Elluminate recordings are not. One participant suggested that allowing the course to be accessed as an m-learning tool would allow greater access and participation and is possible using myBrainshark.

*I try to access the course on my smart phone only the forum works. Smartboard works on android systems so if the course could be accessed from smart phones perhaps people could participate during life's down time.*

## Access rates and perceptions of recordings

Although the attendance rate for the live classes was very low, the recordings proved much more popular. Responses to the final feedback questionnaire showed that this was both as a supplement to the live sessions but also as an alternative to them. Of the seventeen responses to the final feedback questionnaire, eight people had been to the live sessions and nine had not. Four of the respondents had not attended the course, and cited time restrictions and technical problems when trying to load Elluminate as the reasons but of those who had attended there were eight who had not been to the live sessions but had watched the recordings. The remaining five had been to some of the live sessions had also watched the recordings.



In addition to questionnaire data on this, which was returned by a relatively small number of the participants, Moodle allows data to be collected on all access to the recordings. As can be seen from the table below, this was much greater than attendance at the synchronous classes, particularly when the myBrainshark recordings are included. Due to the technical difficulties of having to change Moodle provider, the data for the recording access was only collected from 25<sup>th</sup> October (around week 5) to the end of the course (December 8<sup>th</sup>) and as a consequence, it is likely that the actual figures for the early recordings **marked** are considerably higher than are noted here.

Session		Recordings accessed (asynchronous)	Attended live session (synchronous)	
Parts of Speech I		39	20	
Parts of Speech II		7	5	
Parts of Speech III		6	2	
Verb Tenses		16	5	
Passive Verb Tenses		10	2	
Present Perfect		19	4	
The Future		23	4	
Modals		data unavailable	4	
Narrative Tenses		data unavailable	4	
Phrasal Verbs	Elluminate	data unavailable	28	4
	Brainshark	28		
Conditionals	Elluminate	12	37	4
	Brainshark	25		
Relative Clauses	Elluminate	8	28	3
	Brainshark	20		

Figures for recordings are expressed per viewing and not per person. The pattern of access of some participants was that of accessing the recordings more than once, sometimes on the same day at a different time, suggesting that they had paused and returned to the recording, and sometimes on different days, sometimes a week or more apart, suggesting that they were returning to watch the recording for a second or third time. One example of this was Arlene, who returned to the Present Perfect recording on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of December, or Julie 1 who watched the same recording on the 26<sup>th</sup> November and again on the 5<sup>th</sup> December, almost two weeks later. This suggests an advantage of the recordings over the live sessions in enabling learners to have greater control over their learning. It is also notable that earlier recordings, particularly from the first week were still being accessed by a large number of people in the second half of the course (weeks 5 – 10).

It had been expected that the recordings would act as a primary source of input for those who weren't able to attend the live sessions, and that the convenience of being able to access the information in their own time would be advantageous for some participants. However, it was evident from survey data that in addition to using these as a primary source, some participants were using the recordings as a revision aid and watching them after the live class in order to recap and make more effective notes.

*The recordings helped to recap or look back at work I didn't initially understand.*

*...I was able to catch up and also re-watch the sessions I had participated in and make notes by pausing and rewinding. And because I had access to this information, I felt I was learning more and was therefore more prepared for the next session.*

*It's extremely useful being able to relive a session if originally unable to attend or if unclear on some of the material.*

*..a useful way of enforcing and embedding what is learnt in sessions. I think this is particularly helpful for learners within the higher age group category and/or have short term memory problems.*

*I found these very helpful for taking notes as it's hard to take notes when you are participating in class.*

Additionally, and interestingly, for some trainees, the recordings represented not an alternative to the live class, but a preferable option. One comment in particular was thought provoking as the participant expressed strongly and eloquently the potential benefits of using asynchronous independent learning but combining that with instruction in a human voice.

*I found myself pausing often, sometimes for 5-10 minutes at a time in order to make notes and give myself extra time for the quizzes and tasks you set...I'm someone who prefers to work things out on my own rather than deduce things by liaising with peers...Hence, allowing people to watch the playback versions has the advantage of longer contemplation time and the opportunity for the watcher to really test themselves without the fear of 'help' from anyone else. (my emphasis)...I can think more clearly when knowingly not under pressure to deliver a 'quick' answer. Moreover, if shown to have made an error, I have nothing to blame except my own lack of understanding (rather than being hurried and pressured into making a mistake). ...watching recorded sessions, as opposed to conducting self-study from text books has its merits and can be, in some aspects, even more beneficial than the actual, live interactive stream.*

Khan (2011) suggests that learners may prefer a recording for several reasons. The first may be that with a recording they are able to pause and repeat if they haven't understood, without any fear that they are wasting the teacher's time. In addition, if they need to repeat or review information, it is available, without the embarrassment of having to ask the teacher directly. Learners are also able to watch videos in their own time and at their own pace, reducing the 'one-size-fits-all' dangers of lecture based material and ensuring effective differentiation. Finally, and he suggests possibly most importantly, where concepts are new

and require time to be assimilated, it isn't necessarily helpful to have the pressure of a teacher's expectations. It is very noticeable that these reasons are confirmed in the feedback above.

In addition to this, there were those who genuinely preferred the recording for other reasons:

*'I found it hard to interject in the live session. I was conscious that I was starting from a low knowledge base and I did not want to hold up the class with silly questions. I know I would have had fewer inhibitions in a face to face class. I found the recorded session suited my level of knowledge (low) better. I was able to pause the playback quite often to make sense of the material. On occasion I rewound and replayed bits I needed to see again.'*

*I didn't want to go into the breakout rooms if I didn't fully understand something. I've never liked answering questions in class. I prefer to mindlessly take notes and then reread and consolidate them afterwards. So, personal learning style, I guess.*

*I prefer watching the classes at my own speed, pausing to take notes and flip through grammar books*

*I prefer to watch the videos afterwards because I can go at my own speed, taking notes, pausing, and really taking the time to understand things (looking up definitions and elaborating my notes by using the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary and the book "Grammar for English Language Teachers" by Martin Parrott)*

These findings were unexpected and counter-intuitive in that the recordings which had been included as a complimentary addition to the live classes became not only the more widely accessed option, but also the preferred one for some participants on grounds other than convenience.

### **Asynchronous collaborative tasks – forums.**

In addition to comparing learning in the virtual classroom with independent access of asynchronous recordings I wanted to explore the possibilities of asynchronous collaborative tasks. It was hoped that by using Moodle, it would be possible to easily introduce an element of asynchronous learning in forums which would enable participants who were in differing time zones or whose schedules did not allow them to participate in real time in the virtual classroom to have a more collaborative learning experience. Each week a forum (or

wiki) was added to the site with a 'spark' (Salmon 2002) related to the grammatical point of the week. These were often tasks which required the participants to 'notice' a particular structure in their day-to-day lives and to post examples of this, perhaps analysing it in some way. For example, after input on conditional forms, participants were asked to post any 'if' or 'when' clauses that they noted and describe them in terms of the nomenclature taught (first, second, third conditional etc). It was hoped that this 'noticing' approach (Schmidt 1990) would encourage participants, as expert users of the language, to activate their subconscious knowledge of the grammatical systems, would give them confidence in their knowledge and would enable consolidation of learning, both in noticing language around them and applying their knowledge and also by seeing a range of examples posted by other learners and posting comments on these. The data was collected from Moodle and several different categories of involvement are highlighted, being the number of original posts that were written, the replies that were generated and also the number of views that each forum received.

As above, data **marked** is that which was only collected after the 25<sup>th</sup> October and is therefore probably lower than its true value. The data from the posts themselves was preserved as part of the course, and is therefore accurate.

<b>Week/ activity</b>	<b>No of hits 25/10-8/12</b>	<b>No of posts</b>	<b>No of replies</b>	<b>Posts +replies</b>
1. Website of the week discussion	12	3	6	9
1. Noun wiki	n/a	9	n/a	9
2. Website of the week discussion	3	6	3	9
3. First Impressions	4	2	13	15
4. Any surprises this week?	14	4	0	4
5. Present Perfect examples	59	8	17	25
5. The Future – all sorts of forms	87	5	6	11
6. Modals	125	5	9	14
7. Narrative tenses	60	5	3	6
8. Phrasal Verbs	82	6	2	8
9. Conditionals	104	5	9	13
10. Relative Clauses	20	3	4	7

<i>Cafe</i>	149	7	35	42
Totals	700	48	85	130

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the data is a comparison of the number of interactions with the number of posts viewed. An overall total of 130 posts and comments made on these is a small fraction of the 700 views of these that were viewed. Based on the fact that some data was lost and there were between around 60 and 120 views each week, the true total is likely to be considerably higher, and probably over 1000 views. It seems, therefore that although many people were not sufficiently confident or motivated to post themselves, they were interested in posts that others had written and thus gained from 'lurking'. This confirms other researchers' which note the 'value in "vicarious interaction," in which non-active participants gain from observing and empathizing with active participants' findings' (Sutton, 2001; Fulford and Zhang, 1993 in Anderson 2003 *ibid*). There were also some participants who never posted themselves, but who did reply to other people's posts eg Arlene, Maggie, Nina and Frances.

A total of fifteen people posted at any time, five of these posting only once or twice, and in that sense a small community was formed, particularly between myself and the seven most active participants. It is a feature of Moodle forums that if a participant has contributed, all further posts to that forum will be sent directly to them by e-mail on a daily basis and this 'push' technology may act as a motivating force to continue participation and may in turn form a community of insiders (Wegerif 1998 *ibid*). Whilst this will not necessarily preclude access to the forum by other users, it may act as a disincentive to those who have not contributed.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Posted</b>	<b>Replied to other's post</b>	<b>Replied to own post</b>	<b>Total</b>
Carolynn	10	5	2	17
Marie	8	4	4	16
Dyanne	5	2	1	8
Julie 1	5	5	0	10
Vivienne	3	0	0	3
Katie	3	6	0	9
Ben	2	1	4	7



Rochelle	2	4	2	8
Justine	2	3	0	5
Paul	1	1	0	2
Dariusz	1	0	0	1
Arlene	0	3	0	3
Maggie	0	1	0	1
Nina	0	1	0	1
Frances	0	1	0	1
Own posts	6	29	6	41
	48	66	19	133

Amongst this community, there was evidence of learning through the asynchronous tasks. This week was one of the first weeks in which participants were asked to find examples of the tense and post them and there was a good level of activity on the site, with 8 topics posted by different people and seventeen replies in total. One participant replied to a post, with some irony, 'I've been reading all these examples of the present perfect and now I think I have understood' (my emphasis) (See Appendix 1 for example of forum posts)

On the whole, however, the forums were not well used, perhaps because there was no extrinsic motivation to do so, unlike assessed on-line courses leading to a qualification. One participant, who had been a regular poster in the forums commented:

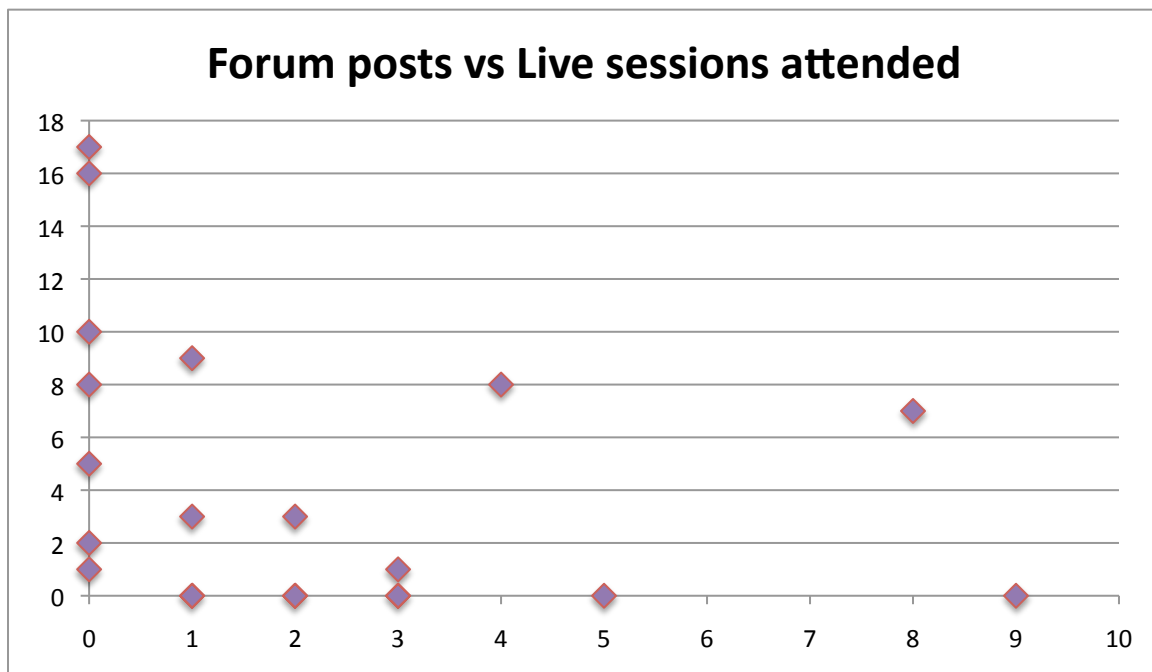
*I wouldn't say that they were particularly helpful, but I did find them interesting and kept me motivated somewhat. Because the course was not very long, I didn't feel the need to interact with other students (I liked the fact that Jo was on the end of an e-mail and I could contact her if I wanted/ needed to).*

### **Collaborative tasks – Synchronous vs Asynchronous**

An interesting aspect of participation patterns is that people tended to either be attenders of the live sessions or to be more active in the asynchronous tasks, but, with two exceptions, not both.

Name	No of live sessions attended	No of posts and replies
------	------------------------------	-------------------------

Tarryn	9	0
Ben	8	7
Rena	5	0
Shah	3	0
Nina	3	1
Lynne	1	0
Anne	2	0
Arlene	2	3
Dyanne	4	8
Fay	3	0
Michelle	2	0
Mayeen	1	0
Vivienne	1	3
Carolynn	0	17
Marie	0	16
Julie 1	0	10
Katie	1	9
Rochelle	0	8
Justine	0	5
Paul	0	2
Dariusz	0	1
Maggie	0	1
Nina	1	1
Frances	0	1



Whilst it is perhaps not surprising that those who wished to participate but who were not able to attend the live sessions because of time differences, would be more involved in the asynchronous tasks, it is interesting that four of the six most regular live class attenders never posted in the forums.

### **Asynchronous Independent tasks – Quizzes**

One of the advantages of using Moodle for the course was the opportunity to introduce interactive quizzes easily into the programme. There is evidence from cognitive science (eg Epstein *et al* 2002) and that work done with immediate feedback can be a crucial part of learning and that on-line quizzes with built in feedback can fill this niche. Thus, a short on-line quiz with built in feedback accompanies each of the recorded videos in order to highlight any difficulties that trainees are having with the material and encourage them to review it or to post these difficulties on the forum.

Moodle allows quizzes to be constructed that will give corrective and supportive feedback and whilst there is a cost to the teacher in terms of time to construct these, there being a direct relationship between the helpfulness of the feedback and the time taken to write it, they can be used repeatedly once made. The quizzes allow self-paced learning and consolidation and there was very positive feedback from the participants regarding them:

*‘They (the quizzes) really helped me to consolidate what I had learnt and to test where I still wasn’t clear on things. The fact that the answers were actually given meant that I could see where I had gone wrong.’*

*I really like the quiz; it's really great for review of the lesson and to cement the content of the lesson;*

*The quizzes are great and could even be a little more difficult in my opinion*

Other web links were also included, both to sites for practicing grammar and for other useful sites that can be used for teaching language. However, two thirds of the participants preferred the quizzes to other website links.

As can be seen from the data below, the access rates to the quizzes were relatively high. However, in the last six weeks of the course, only thirteen participants used the quizzes,

indicating that they frequently revisited quizzes on multiple occasions. It can be seen from the data on the quizzes in the first four weeks (only collected after the 25<sup>th</sup> October) that participants were not necessarily following the course in chronological order, but were referring back to earlier quizzes as the course progressed.

Week/ activity	No of hits	Week/ activity	No of hits
1. Noun, pronoun flashcards	7	6. Modals	25
2. Verbs and adverbs	16	7. Narrative tenses	15
3. Parts of Speech	7	8. Phrasal Verbs	25
3. Passive	7	9. Conditionals	2
4. Verb tenses revisited	27	10. Relative Clauses	6
5. Verb tenses revisited again!	33		
5. Future forms	26		

Data **marked** is that which was only collected after the 25<sup>th</sup> October and is therefore probably lower than its true value.

Whilst a similar number of people accessed quizzes (13) and posted on forum discussions (15), the activity recorded for quizzes far exceeds that for active forum use. It is worth remembering, however that the hit rate for the reading of forum posts was far higher than either of these and the existence of a forum seems to be a motivational tool.

#### Comparison of asynchronous task use

<b>Collaborative</b>	
Total forum posts (minus own posts)	<b>92 (total – 11 weeks)</b>
<b>Independent</b>	

Total number of quizzes accessed	196 (last 6 weeks only)
----------------------------------	-------------------------

## Reflections

---

In considering common interaction patterns in distance education, Anderson and Garrison (1998) describe three main possibilities, teacher to student, student to student and student to content (see below). Of particular interest, because perhaps less obvious and because highly relevant to the current project, is the interaction between student and content.

In his 'rationale for interaction', Anderson highlights his earlier work and states that;

Despite the high degree of rhetoric from constructivist and feminist educational theorists of the value of interaction in creating interdependence in the learning sequence (Kirkup and von Prummer, 1990; Litzinger, Carr and Marra, 1997), there is also evidence that many students deliberately choose learning programs that allow them to minimize the amount of student-teacher and student-student interaction required (May, 2003; Kramarae, 2003). Anderson 2003 *ibid*

In the context of the current course, this is particularly interesting as it highlights my research findings that there are indeed many learners who access an on-line course without wishing for a collaborative environment. He goes on to state that;

Deep and meaningful formal learning is supported as long as one of the three forms of interaction (student–teacher; student-student; student-content) is at a high level. The other two may be offered at minimal levels, or even eliminated, without degrading the educational experience. Anderson 2003 *ibid*

My findings suggest that this is indeed the case for this particular course and that for many learners student-content interaction was of greatest importance, evidenced by the preference of most for access to recordings and use of quizzes to consolidate learning, neither requiring or necessitating collaboration. Anderson (2003 *ibid*) suggests that most forms of student-content interaction can be recorded and displayed asynchronously, and this may be the case if content is delivered in a text based form, but his findings also support my use of Elluminate recordings and later the Brainshark presentations as he states that ‘some teacher interaction can be transformed into learning objects (videos, animations, assessment programs etc.), thus migrating student-teacher interaction to student-content interaction.’ (Anderson 2003 *ibid*). Thus, whilst the reality is a student-content interaction, there is an illusion of a teacher-student interaction, which may improve the pedagogical experience for the learner. This illusion is in part due to the inclusion of a personal voice and this is the area in which a voiced over presentation video may be more engaging than text-only based content. Providing motivating tasks with clear feedback will also improve student-content interaction. In short, engagement, as in all educational settings, is the key. Research suggests that there are three issues of importance when building and sustaining e-learning communities (Haythornthwaite 2002: 159-190), these being content-related communication, planning of tasks, and social support. The findings of the research in this case, however, seem to suggest that the learners were not well motivated to form an on-line community and largely preferred to access information in an independent and asynchronous manner. It is possible that the nature of the course itself may have an effect on this and may therefore dictate the approach that is most applicable. There are several reasons for this; firstly, the course under current discussion is relatively short and hence learners may not feel that they want to invest time in social interaction. This aspect may be exacerbated as the contact with other participants is limited, it does not contain tasks to be completed and is not assessed formally in any way, nor certified. This may have an effect on motivation although it should be noted that most of the participants do have external motivation to

learn the content since they are training to be teachers or are novice teachers and this is a body of knowledge that will be vital to their teaching. Furthermore and more interestingly, the course content is of an unusual nature. If we consider Bloom's taxonomy, (Bloom *et al* 1956) the learning will generally proceed from the lower levels of 'remembering' and 'understanding' to the highest of 'creating'.

In the case of the body of knowledge in this course, the participants, being native speakers, already have the higher level capacity of 'creating' and are able to use the grammar rules that they know instinctively to produce flawless language patterns. This is clearly a very different approach to teaching non-native English speakers grammar, as fluent production of accurate language using patterns learnt often remains an elusive goal. In this respect, the learning in this course is the reverse of the norm, and the levels that the participants require are the lower ones of 'remembering' and 'understanding' as they already possess the abilities associated with the higher levels of the taxonomy. In practice, this means that they have automatic access to a wealth of example models of language and should be able to link these back to first principles when these are clarified. The content of the course is therefore not 'developmental' in the strictest sense of the word since it does not aim to develop a teacher's skills by reflecting on co-constructed knowledge. In many ways, it acts more as a repository of knowledge, in the way that a reference book may be used but presented in a form which may be more accessible.

## Development of the course based on findings

---

Having completed the pilot, it became clear that the difficulties of motivation and time meant that for this kind of course, an asynchronous approach using largely independently accessible learning materials was the way forward. Whilst the feedback from those who

attended the live sessions was very positive, the numbers, even when a large cohort were recruited, were simply too small to be sustainable. One of the clearest results was that independent access of the recordings asynchronously was the most popular way of learning this material. This seemed to be particularly so after the introduction of the shorter, monologue versions on myBrainshark.com although the data is insufficient to establish whether or not the comparison is significant.

The other successful element of the course was the use of quizzes for consolidating learning, another asynchronous independent element. These were used more extensively than the forum discussions and there was good feedback on them. This is an area that could be developed much further, giving participants more extensive tasks, incorporating further authentic use of language and also providing more feedback on individual questions.

Although for a small community of learners, the asynchronous collaborative forum tasks were motivating and useful, they were not well used overall. A similar number of people accessed both these and the quizzes, but the latter were much more frequently visited and utilised and the feedback about them was also more positive. There was a much higher rate of viewing than posting on the forum discussions, perhaps suggesting that a greater number of participants enjoy a vicarious role in this type of activity.

Draper (1998) puts forward the view that in order to be successful, the use of ICT must have a close fit with its purpose, ie it must fill its technological niche. I feel that the technology in this case is appropriate because a voiced presentation or recording can be seen to combine the best of synchronous and asynchronous learning, giving some illusion of a 'live' teacher which may provide the psychological arousal and motivation that is associated with synchronous learning, and the increased ability to process information that an asynchronous medium allows (Robert and Dennis 2005 *ibid*).

One of the aims of the pilot was to inform the development of the course on a commercial basis. After consideration of the results, a model was redesigned and constructed based on reflection of these. In the final product, Moodle was used as the platform but the course was changed considerably to be one which it is possible to access independently and asynchronously. Midkiff and DaSilva (2000 *ibid*) suggest that whilst a synchronous class should have the linear structure used in the pilot, something that Moodle is designed for, an



asynchronous course is best delivered in a modular manner, the course being driven by learning objectives. In their course, they included 5 – 15 minutes of streamed content, with links to related resources and a self-assessment task for each module. In my new course, I have used a modular structure (see below) but the emphasis is much more heavily placed on the video presentations, these forming the backbone of the course and in this way hope to have retained some element of the teacher-student interaction more commonly associated with synchronous classes.

Each module contains:

Camtasia, a screen capture video tool was used for the recordings for two main reasons. Firstly, it offers a more flexible approach to recording than myBrainshark.com as it allows the recording not only of PowerPoint slides, but also internet sites and any other programmes on the desktop. This was of particular use when demonstrating useful websites on the recordings. It is also much more easily editable and it is possible to partition the presentation into labelled 'chapters'. Although I have not used this facility so far, it is potentially a useful one. In addition, Camtasia enables the use of different effects such as panning in and out and highlighting aspects of slides. These effects can help to maintain interest and engagement in a slideshow and feedback from participants was positive. The second reason that Camtasia was seen to be a better alternative to myBrainshark was that the videos can be stored and accessed in a password protected manner. This is of importance in a commercial course and whilst it is possible to do this with myBrainshark.com, it was prohibitively expensive for a course of this nature. The course was constructed in the same twelve units, the content being that which had been honed and developed over the pilot course. Each unit has as its primary focus, a video recording lasting

30 – 40 minutes. These recordings are monologues but include frequent ‘stop and test yourself’ quizzes and questions, feedback being given immediately. Each unit also includes a quiz to consolidate learning and links to websites which include further reading on the topic. A forum is also available where participants can post their grammar questions to be answered by the tutor, a resource that will subsequently be available for other participants to learn from.

As has been noted, it is a common challenge for native speakers who are training to be teachers, that they have never considered the mechanics of the language that they instinctively know and other courses do exist on the internet to teach this. These are, however, predominantly text based with quiz consolidation, although some include video footage of classroom situations. They are independently accessible and largely non-collaborative although most have an internet forum. One collaborative synchronous course exists that I know of but the tutor time involved is reflected in its high price and this may discourage many learners. My hope in setting up this course, in accordance with my research findings is that the use of video presentation provides engaging student-content interaction and reinforces this with a lower level but significant teacher-student interaction by allowing the learners the illusion of greater personal contact with the teacher. This is particularly so since tasks are set and feedback is then given immediately by the tutor. Furthermore, some level of student-student and teacher-student interaction can be forged using a public grammar question forum to which all participants are party. In many ways, I hope that this arrangement acts as an ‘interactive text book’ which combines the best of a reference book for self-study and a teacher led course, providing the ‘presence’ of a teacher, even if illusory, in a manner which allows the course to be offered at an affordable price. Initial feedback from the course which can be viewed at [www.elt-training.com](http://www.elt-training.com) has been positive and of particular interest was the following comment from one participant who had done part of the pilot and subsequently trialled the commercial course:

*The new design just looks ten times better and is easier to access. It is well laid out, user friendly and all teaching is at an easy pace allowing the learner to stop and start whilst taking on new information. I found it helped having learning points put into context with use of examples and quick quizzes which really helped solidify learning. The session was just the right length, not too short and not too long. Above all I felt in control of my learning.*

# Limitations and Future Research

---

The most major limitation of the study was that of the lost data and this is regrettable. This was my first foray into research of this nature and it was a steep learning curve. The process has highlighted very clearly the importance of careful consideration of data collection. When relying on technology, there are potentially many traps. A computer crash after the exit questionnaire had been returned could have proved disastrous but fortunately in this case, both a hard and soft copy back-ups had been made. In the case of the transfer of the course to another provider, it was simple lack of experience which weighed against me, but I feel that were I to repeat the process or use Moodle for research purposes again, I would take screen prints on a weekly basis of the logged data as I did at the end of the course. Moodle has an immensely powerful potential for qualitative research as it is able to record so much detailed data. However, it is also worthy of note that it stores this for a default length of time of 30 days. Whilst it is possible to manually increase this to up to a year, it is necessary to know to do this. Finally, further knowledge of the system and its functionality would have prevented the difficulties I had in weeks 6, 7 and 8. In this case, a redesign of the modules for aesthetic reasons to allow icons to be used meant that activity specific data was not available.

These shortcomings in the data collection process were indeed unfortunate but do highlight the importance of the consideration of this to less experienced researchers, especially when using unfamiliar technology for these purposes. In the context of the current study, the results that were recorded showed patterns that were useful and these were supplemented and supported by the qualitative evidence from the questionnaires. However, research with incomplete data must always be less than completely satisfactory.

The size of the group was another factor which, in retrospect, could have been changed. A smaller group size, perhaps 12 – 15 participants, may have ensured further participation in asynchronous forums and also perhaps in the synchronous classes. The practical difficulty here would be in choosing the small number who may be relied upon to participate at all and perhaps a payment, even if token, would ensure that the trainees had at least a serious interest. This would be an interesting avenue for further research. It is possible that more attention to assessment may increase motivation and therefore participation and this could also form the basis for further

research. Unfortunately, there would be little external impetus in 'passing' the course as it has not external accreditation or recognition. Making it an obligatory part of beginning CELTA at our centre would likely simply drive candidates to apply elsewhere.

As time elapses and technology improves, and ease of communication between students and teacher in a virtual classroom becomes easier, it would be of interest to review the current findings. It is expected that, although good reasons have been given for use of recorded classes or presentations, as the possibilities improve for the intuitive use of webcam and voice, synchronous classes may become more motivating to a greater number of participants.

Finally, the use of pre-recorded voiced over presentations as an engaging method of providing student-content interaction has a wide scope of application and this technique could be extended to CELTA input and revision of concepts.

## Conclusions

---

In conclusion, the current study has been of immense interest and use within the context that I teach. The purpose of the study was twofold. The first question regarded an investigation of the relative worth of a synchronous class and asynchronously accessed recordings of the material. The results seem clear that whilst a real time, collaborative experience, emulating a face to face class as nearly as possible is a medium that is motivating for some learners, for the majority in this context an asynchronous model is better. It was expected that the convenience of being able to access the course at times personally best suited to individuals would be a factor, and this was certainly true. However, it was interesting that for some learners, there were other advantages of a recording such as the ability to play and replay at will in order to clarify material, refer to other sources such as text books and revise concepts which made the recordings a preferable option to the live classes.

The second question considered was that of asynchronous tasks being of a collaborative or independent nature and in this case, whilst the evidence was not so strong, participants overall preferred and were more active in the quizzes than the on-line forums. However,

greater skill on the part of the teacher in designing 'sparks' for these forum tasks or a smaller community of learners may have resulted in greater participation.

Overall, whilst some learners do find a collaborative experience more motivating, in the case of the content under study, it is less important than the ability to access materials and learn in a more independent manner.

## References

---

**Anderson, T.** 2003. Getting the Mix Right Again: An updated and theoretical rationale for interaction *International review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 4/2: accessed on 14-05-2012 at <http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/149/230>

- Anderson, T., & D.Garrison.** 1998. 'Learning in a networked world: New roles and responsibilities.' In C. Gibson (Ed.), *Distance Learners in Higher Education*. Madison, WI.: Atwood Publishing
- Andrews, S.** 1999. "All these like little name things': A comparative study of language teachers' explicit knowlwdge of grammar and grammatical terminology.' *Language Awareness*. 8/3: 143-159
- Andrews, S.** 2001. The language awareness of the L2 teacher: Its impact on pedagogical practice. *Language Awareness*: 10/2:75 – 90
- Andrews, S & A. McNeill.** 2005. Knowledge about language and the 'good language teacher'. In Bartels,N(ed) *Applied linguistics and language teacher education*. New York: Springer
- Bartels, N.** 2005. 'Applied linguistics and language teacher education: what we know' in N.Bartels, (ed) *Applied Linguistics and Teacher Education*. New York:Springer
- Bartolic-Zlomislic, S. and Bates, A. W. (1999a).** Assessing the costs and benefits of telelearning: A case study from the University of British Columbia. Accessed on 12/1/12 <http://www.c3l.uni-oldenburg.de/cde/econ/readings/bates99.pdf>
- Bartolic-Zlomislic, S. and Bates, A. W. 1999b.** Investing in On-line Learning: Potential Benefits and Limitations *Canadian Journal of Communication*, Vol 24, No 3 accessed on 21/01/12 <http://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/viewArticle/1111/1017>
- Beare, P. L.** 1989. The comparative effectiveness of videotape, audiotape, and telecture in delivering continuing teacher education. *The American Journal of Distance Education*, 3(2),57–66.
- Bloom, B., M.Engelhart, E. Furst, W. Hill & D. Krathwohl,** 1956. *Taxonomy of educational objectives: the classification of educational goals; Handbook I: Cognitive Domain* New York: Longmans.
- Brandt, C.** 2008. Integrating feedback and reflection in teacher preparation. *ELT Journal*, 62(1), 37–46.
- Brooks, D. W.** 1997. *Web Teaching: a guide to designing interactive teaching for the World Wide Web*. New York:Plenum Press.
- Daniel, J. & C.Marquis, C.** 1979. Interaction and Independence: Getting the mixture right. *Teaching at a Distance*, 15, 25 – 44.
- Doughty, C., & J. Williams.** (eds) 1998. *Focus on form in classroom second language acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Draper, S. W.** 1998. Niche-based success in CAL. *Computers and Education*, 30, 5–8.

**Dudley, S.** 2011. Towards greater autonomy? An investigation into the use of on-line materials in a pre-sessional EAP course. Unpublished MA dissertation Warwick University.

**Davidson-Shivers, G., L. Muilenburg, & E. Tanner.** 2001. How Do Students Participate in Synchronous and Asynchronous Online Discussions? *Journal of Educational Computing Research* 25/4: 351-366

**Epstein, M., A. Lazarus, T. Calvano, K. Matthews, R. Hendel, B. Epstein, G. Brosvic.** 2002. 'Immediate Feedback Assessment Technique Promotes Learning and Corrects Inaccurate First Responses'. *The Psychological Record*. 52/2: 5 Accessed on 5-4-12 at <http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/tpr/vol52/iss2/5/>

**Fox, J.** 1998. Distance education: Is it good enough? *The University Concourse*, 3(4), 3–5.

**Gass, S.M. & Selinker, L.** 2008. *Second Language Acquisition: An Introductory Course (Third Edition)*. Abingdon: Routledge.

**Gunawardena, C.N. and M. S. Mclsaac.** 2004. 'Distance Education'. in *Handbook of Research on Educational Communications and Technology*, ed. D.H. Jonassen, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

**Hara, N. and Kling, R.** (1999). Students' frustrations with a web-based distance education course: A taboo topic in the discourses. [http://www.slis.indiana.edu/CSI/wp99\\_01.html](http://www.slis.indiana.edu/CSI/wp99_01.html) [verified 14 Jul 2000]

**Haythornthwaite, C.** 2002. "Building Social Networks via Computer Networks: Creating and Sustaining Distributed Learning Communities," in *Building Virtual Communities: Learning and Change in Cyberspace*, K. Ann Renninger and Wesley Schumar, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Hrastinski, S.** 2008. Asynchronous and Synchronous E-Learning. *EDUCAUSE Quarterly*, 31: 4 accessed on 14/05/2012 at <http://www-cdn.educause.edu/EDUCAUSE+Quarterly/EDUCAUSEQuarterlyMagazineVolum/AsynchronousandSynchronousELea/163445>

**Im, Y., & Lee, O.** 2003. Pedagogical implications of online discussions for preservice teacher training. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 36(2), 155-170.

**Jones, A. & K. Issroff .** 2005. Learning technologies: Affective and social issues in computer-supported collaborative learning *Computers & Education* 44 (2005) 395–408

**Knight, J., D. Ridley & E. Davies.** 1998. Assessment of student academic achievement in on-line program. Paper presented at the Association for Institutional Research Annual Forum, Minneapolis, MN.

**Knowles, M.** 1984. *Andragogy in action*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Levin, B., Y. He, and H.H. Robbins.** 2006. Comparative Analysis of Pre-service Teachers' Reflective Thinking in Synchronous versus Asynchronous Online Case Discussions *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education* 14/3: 439-460
- Lieblein, E.** 2000. Critical factors for successful delivery of online programs. *The Internet and Higher Education* 3/3: 161-174
- Loomis, K. D.** 2000. "Learning Styles and Asynchronous Learning: Comparing the LASSI Model to Class Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks 4(1): 23-31.
- McKissack, C. E.** 1997. A comparative study of grade point average (GPA) between the students in the traditional classroom setting and the distance learning classroom setting in selected colleges and universities. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 58(8), 3039A. (UMI No. ABA98-06343)
- Mason, R., & Weller, R.** (2000). Factors affecting students' satisfaction on a web course. *Australian Journal of Educational Technology*, 16(2), 173-200, Available: <http://ascilite.org.au/ajet/ajet16/mason.html>
- Meddings, L & S. Thornberry.** 2009. *Teaching Unplugged*. Surrey: Delta Publishing
- Merriam, S.B., & R. S. Caffarella.** 1991. *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Midkiff, S. & L. DaSilva.** 2000. Leveraging the Web for Synchronous Versus Asynchronous Distance Learning. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Engineering* accessed on 12-05-12 at <http://www.ineer.org/Events/ICEE2000/Proceedings/papers/MD8-2.pdf>
- Norris, J.M. & Ortega, L.** 2000. Effectiveness of L2 instruction: a research synthesis and quantitative meta-analysis. *Language Learning*. 50/3 : 417-528
- Robert, L.P. and A. R. Dennis.**2005. 'Paradox of Richness: A Cognitive Model of Media Choice.' *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, 48/ 1: 10-21
- Ridley, D.R.** 1998. The 1998 assessment report on CNU on-line. Paper presented to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, Newport News, VA.
- Salmon, G.** 2001. Psychological and Group Learning Perspectives: Their relevance to e-learning. Presented to E-learning, London February 2001 accessed on 18/1/12 at <http://oubs.open.ac.uk/gilly>
- Salmon, G.** 2002. *E-tivities. The key to active on-line learning*. London. Sterling (USA): Kogan Page



- Schmidt, R.** 1990. 'The role of consciousness in second language learning'. *Applied Linguistics* 11: 129-58.
- Schrum, L., & S. Hong.** 2002. Dimensions and strategies for online success: Voices from experienced educators. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 6(1), 57–67.
- Sinclair, J. M., & Coulthard, M.** 1975. *Towards an analysis of discourse: The English used by teachers and pupils*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Sonner, B.** 1999. Success in the capstone business course—Assessing the effectiveness of distance learning. *Journal of Education for Business*, 74, 243–248.
- Spada, N. & Tomita, Y.** 2010. Interactions between type of instruction and type of language feature: a meta-analysis. *Language Learning* 60/2:1---46.
- Tolmie, A., & Boyle, J.** (2000). Factors influencing the success of computer mediated communication (CMC) environments in university teaching: A review and case study. *Computers and Education*, 34, 119–140.
- Thornberry, S.** 1997. *About Language; Tasks for teachers of English*. Cambridge: CUP
- Waschull, S.B.** 1997. Teaching and learning over the WWW. Paper presented at the meeting of the National Alliance of Community and technical Colleges, Biloxi, MS.
- Waschull, S.** 2001. The Online Delivery of Psychology Courses: Attrition, Performance, and Evaluation, *Teaching of Psychology*, 28/2: 143-147
- Wegerif, R.** 1998. The Social Dimension of Asynchronous Learning Networks JALN 2/ 1:34-50
- Willis, D & J. Willis.** 2007. *Doing Task Based Learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Wright, T.** 1991. Language awareness in teacher education programmes for non-native speakers. In James, C., & Garret, P. (eds.). *Language Awareness in the Classroom*, pp. 62-77. Harlow: Longman.
- Wright, T. & R. Bolitho.** 1993. 'Language awareness. A missing link in language teacher education? *ELT Journal* 47/4: 292-304
- Vygotsky, L.S.** 1978. *Mind in Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

# Webpages

**Khan, S.** 2011. Let's use video to reinvent education. *TED Talks*.

[http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/salman\\_khan\\_let\\_s\\_use\\_video\\_to\\_reinvent\\_education.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/salman_khan_let_s_use_video_to_reinvent_education.html)

**Thornberry, S.** 2010. Grammar McNuggets. *An A-Z f ELT*. Accessed on 21-05-12 at

<http://scottthornbury.wordpress.com/2010/09/18/g-is-for-grammar-mcnuggets/>

---