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An investigation of ESL students' reading engagement and language output in selected online environments

Leandi Coertze
Iowa State University

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An investigation of ESL students’ reading engagement and language output in selected online environments

by

Leandi Coertze

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty

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Program of Study Committee:
Volker Hegelheimer, Major Professor
Tammy Slater
Denise Schmidt

Iowa State University
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ABSTRACT

A primary influence in the development of ESL students’ reading skill and strategies is that of engagement. This study examined the use of Google Docs and blogs as two CMC environments in which reading related tasks were presented as it is believed that they provide high student interest and therefore have the potential to initiate and maintain higher levels of engagement. This study specifically paid attention to how the communicative tasks presented in Google Docs and blogs affect ESL students’ engagement with the reading texts and tasks as well as how the language output generated by the students in these environments differ in terms of the quantity and quality of their contributions. While the detailed ethnographic field notes taken during the three weeks of a high intermediate reading class, followed the engagement and participation behavior of the entire class, the data presented and analyzed in this qualitative study focused on six of these students. The baseline engagement behavior of the students as it is identified in the analysis of the detailed ethnographic field notes taken in the traditional face-to-face reading class, with emphasis on the students’ engagement and participation behavior as well as the language output they produced were compared to the engagement and participation behavior as well as the language output students produced in the reading related tasks presented in the CMC environments. The language output generated by the six students in the CMC environments is also analyzed in terms of the quantity and quality of their contributions. The analysis of the data is further discussed in terms of the semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants during the fourth week. The data analyzed in this study, provided positive evidence especially for the mid and high performing students, specifically in terms of task engagement as well as showing a more balanced distribution of participation.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The importance of reading as a language skill, especially in academic contexts cannot be denied. Being able to decode and comprehend reading texts in this environment is undoubtedly connected to academic success where acquiring new knowledge and information is central, and much dependent on what Jalilifar (2010) termed having “good reading skill” (p. 96). This is even more so the reality for English as a Second Language (ESL) students (Levine, Ferenz & Reves, 2000) as a large majority of textbooks, research and materials presented and employed in these academic settings are published in English.

Reading, in addition to being a complex, multivariate skill (Nassaji, 2003), is also in essence a “transactional process” one which involves, as L’Allier and Elish-Piper (2007) explain, the reader interacting with the text and context and where the texts are understood and interpreted “based on the background knowledge, stance, purpose and goal they bring to the reading situation” (p. 339). The development of reading strategies in order to successfully engage in this transactional process in turn develops the reading skill. Closely related to the development of these reading strategies is the important role engagement plays both in the reading of texts and participating and performing reading related tasks (Alyousef, 2006; Batstone, 2002; Grabe & Stoller, 2001).

As ESL instructors and researchers, we are continually faced with the question of how students’ engagement with the reading texts and tasks can be increased. Several researchers argue that engagement is the result of motivation combined with cognitive strategies (Guthrie & Cox, 2001; Wigfield, Guthrie, Perencevich, Taboada, Klauda, Mcrae & Barbosa, 2008; Tilley, 2009) and therefore the answer for increased engagement is to be found in increased motivation. The view held in this study as put forth by Cho, Xu and Rhodes (2010), is that motivation and engagement are two different concepts that influence each other. The relationship between motivation and engagement is further explained by L’Allier and Elish-Piper (2007) in that “readers’ motivations, which include their personal goals, values and
beliefs influence whether engagement with text occurs” (p. 339). The role that motivation plays in students’ engagement with reading texts and tasks is thus of much importance in the development of the language skill, reading. One method discussed in the literature on increasing learner engagement with reading texts and tasks is to introduce these in environments and contexts with high student situational interest (Guthrie, Wigfield, Humenick, Perencevich, Taboada & Barbosa, 2006), in other words to incorporate environments that students deem interesting and engaging in traditional classrooms.

With the “rapid growth of the internet” argued by Warschauer (1997) as perhaps “the fastest growth of any technology in history” (p. 470), language teachers cannot ignore the effects on and potential it holds for language skills development. Students spend many hours reading and writing online and as a result, Williams (2008) notes, “today’s online technologies have young people reading and writing far more than they were 20 years or even a decade ago” (p. 682). This coupled with the inclusion of images, videos, animations and sound, result in our 21st century students reading and writing “thousands of words online each week” (ibid.), much more than they are often willing to do in traditional reading and writing classrooms. The integral role that technology plays in today’s students’ lives is consequently undeniable and Williams (2008) rightly argues that these “rapidly, evolving, online technologies” truly have “implications for how we teach reading and writing” (p. 683).

As students spend extensive time in these technological, mostly online, environments, it can be inferred that they find these environments interesting. This leads to the possibility that when reading related tasks are presented in these student-frequented environments, students’ situational interest is addressed and thus motivation and engagement with the reading texts and tasks can be increased. Increased engagement, as discussed previously, has positive effects on reading strategies and skills development. Therefore, to effectively teach and develop reading skills in the current technological age, language teachers need to realize that the integration of technology into the reading classroom cannot be ignored, as it presents the possibility of new social contexts that influences how learning occurs and language skills (such as reading) develop (Warschauer 2004). The argument of social contexts influencing
learning is based on the notion of collaborative learning which forms the basic tenets of current teaching practices.

Research on collaborative learning has highlighted several positive results in terms of student engagement and this coupled with the provision of authentic and varied texts as well as tasks that challenge students have the potential to increase learner engagement (Cho et al., 2010; Conrad & Donaldson, 2004). Environments that cater to these various aspects, especially in terms of allowing collaboration and meaning making and which students also find interesting, find their existence in computer-mediated communication (CMC) environments. One possible reason for why these environments are especially able to facilitate collaborative learning is expressed by Gibbons (2010) in that “online collaboration is a quick and simple method to motivate learning” for it “allows students who are typically hesitant when chiming in on class discussions to have a voice and have their opinions heard” (p. 39), an aspect of learner engagement and language output that receives more attention in this study.

Research on CMC environments highlights various other benefits for language learning and skill development as well, especially in reference to writing and oral production. However, the research on the effects of CMC integration in the English reading classroom and how these environments influence reading engagement and language output concerning reading tasks have not received much attention in the past.

**The Present Study**

As ESL teachers, we have to present our students with opportunities and strategies to address their reading skill development and in doing so these opportunities have to cater for increased engagement with the reading texts and tasks as well, for engagement is an important component in the reading skill’s development. The issue concerning increased and sustained engagement, however, is an aspect in the teaching of reading that is often more difficult to accomplish. With the very real problem of many students being unmotivated and disengaged in ESL reading classes and with the limited number of studies investigating ways to increase students’ engagement, this study aims to in some way address this by investigating ESL
students’ reading engagement and language output in two CMC environments. The two CMC environments selected for this study, due to their potential collaborative nature, their user-friendly interfaces as well as their popularity with students (visited outside the classroom) are blogs created on Blogger (www.blogger.com) and Google Documents or Google Docs (accessed through Gmail on the Google homepage).

It is argued that if the presenting of reading related tasks and activities in online environments lead to an increase in engagement and language production, as is investigated in this study, then surely the way that reading is taught in the 21st century needs to be revisited and readdressed in order to cater to our students’ needs in a way that would best facilitate the development of the complex, interactive, multifaceted reading skill.

In order to investigate ESL students’ reading engagement and language output in selected online environments, the following research questions are designed to guide this study:

1. How do the communicative reading tasks presented in selected online environments (Google Docs and blogs) affect students’ engagement with the reading texts and reading tasks?
2. How does the language output generated by students in these selected online environments differ in terms of both the quantity and quality of contributions?

The second research question pays specific attention to the language output generated by the ESL students in this study and is investigated in terms of the quantity and quality features present in their various productions. It is argued in this study that language output can act as one indicator of reading engagement, and therefore in a study that investigates learner engagement with reading texts and tasks, language output needs to be addressed. Research question 2 in part then also addresses research question 1. Research question 1 is considered the main research question in this study as it attempts to shed some light on whether there is a difference in student engagement with reading texts and tasks when CMC environments are incorporated into the ESL reading class.
With the two main research questions established, attention is paid to the theoretical framework in which this study is situated (Chapter 2), the methodology that guides the analysis of the data collected (Chapter 3), the representation and discussion of the primary results (Chapter 4) and the conclusion, highlighting the implications and limitations of this study (Chapter 5).
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to contextualize the current study by highlighting and summarizing relevant literature surrounding topics such as ESL reading, reading engagement, computer-mediated communication (CMC) and language output associated with reading skill and strategy development.

ESL Reading

The complexity of reading as a language skill is situated in the various layers of processing that are involved in decoding and ultimately comprehending a text. Research of the past 30 years has moved from viewing reading as “a mere process of decoding’ to viewing reading as an “interactive process” (Alyousef, 2006, p.63). Reading seen as this active process requires that the reader not only identifies and understands new information in a text, but also accesses his/her previous knowledge (schemata) as well as his/her own expectations concerning the text and utilizes these in order to accommodate and assimilate new information (Alyousef, 2006; Borgia & Owles, 2007; Grabe & Stoller, 2001; L’Allier & Elish-Piper, 2007; Lin & Chen, 2007; Oded & Walters, 2001; Pulido, 2007; Stahl, Jacobson, Davis, & Davis, 2006). This active process of reading involves what Lin and Chen (2007) define as a reader’s “learning set” which is comprised of the “existing cognitive structure that contains components to which the learner can connect substantive and relevant features of the information and thus draw various relationships between existing knowledge and newly acquired information” (p. 84).

This active process of accessing and integrating new information with prior knowledge and expectations further utilizes both higher-level (semantic and syntactic) and lower-level (word recognition, orthographic and phonological) processing skills (Alyousef, 2006; Lin & Chen, 2007; Nassaji, 2003). In an attempt to take all these various components and levels of processing into consideration, Nassaji (2003) provides a more detailed definition of what constitutes reading, and claims that it is a
multivariate skill involving a complex combination and integration of a variety of
cognitive, linguistic, and nonlinguistic skills ranging from the very basic low-level
processing abilities involved in decoding print and encoding visual configurations to
high-level skills of syntax, semantics, and discourse, and to still higher-order
knowledge of text representation and the integration of ideas with the reader’s
global knowledge (p.261).

This definition of reading provides the framework for the interactive model of reading
comprehension, which is in agreement with the most current views on second language
reading and includes that reading and the comprehension of a text is a process that involves
“the combination and integration of various sources of knowledge” (Nassaji, 2003, p. 262).
These various knowledge sources include linguistic, semantic, schematic and syntactic
knowledge (Alyousef, 2006; Grabe & Stoller, 2001, Lin & Chen, 2007), and comprise what
Nassaji (2003) termed “lower-level and higher-level knowledge sources” (p. 262). These
various knowledge sources, operating individually, collaboratively construct understanding
and the creation of knowledge and meaning making. This process as Nassaji (2003) further
explains involves that while the “data-driven processing level is doing visual analysis, the
syntactic and semantic processing systems are operating to generate hypotheses about the
interpretation of the visual information coming from visual analysis” (p.262-263). The
information gathered by each of these independent processing levels are then “transferred to
a central organizer in the form of hypotheses that can be confirmed or rejected” based on the
various pieces of information gathered from the individual knowledge sources as it is
presented in this central organizer or “message center” (Nassaji, 2003, p. 263). Reading
comprehension is thus ultimately achieved through the “combination and integration of these
different knowledge sources contained in the message center” (ibid.).

ESL Academic Reading

The prominent presence and value of the reading skill, in especially an academic context
is undeniable (Cho et al., 2010; Dreyer & Nel, 2003; Grabe & Stoller, 2001; Jalilifar,
2010; Levine et al., 2000). Grabe and Stoller (2001) state that for the past 15 years many
have argued that “reading is the most important language skill for second language students” (p. 187). This, Grabe and Stoller (2001) state, is because reading is seen as “the central means for learning new information and gaining access to alternative explanations and interpretations” as well as being a “means for independent learning” closely associated with learner autonomy, regardless of whether “the goal is performing better on academic tasks, learning more about subject matter or improving language abilities” (p. 187) which are key in contributing to academic success, professional development and lifelong learning (Dreyer & Nel, 2003). In addition, the goals of reading, as mentioned above, can further be divided in terms of the various purposes it can address, which Grabe and Stoller (2001) explain as:

We sometimes read to get the main idea but not much more (e.g. skimming a newspaper story), and sometimes we read to locate specific information (e.g., scanning for a name, date, or term). Commonly we read texts to learn information (i.e., reading to learn), and sometimes we are expected to synthesize information from multiple texts, or from a longer chapter or book, in order to take a critical position with respect to that information (i.e., reading to integrate and evaluate information). Perhaps most often, we read for general comprehension (i.e., reading to understand main ideas and relevant supporting information). We also read for pleasure, with the intention of being entertained or informed, but not tested (p. 187).

In academic settings, most of these purposes if not all are addressed, with particular attention paid to realizing the goals associated with searching for main and specific information, identifying purpose, critically evaluating content, drawing and testing inferences, reading for general comprehension as well as for synthesizing and evaluating information in various texts (Grabe & Stoller, 2001; Levine et al., 2000). In addition to reading for these specific purposes, the general act of reading, even for L1 speakers, involves “rapid word recognition, vocabulary development, text-structure awareness, and strategic reading” (Grabe & Stoller, 2001, p. 188). This means that for ESL learners in particular, these additional cognitive loads whilst reading for a specific purpose form the active, complex reading skill that calls for extensive teaching and creating opportunity and conditions for effective development. In addition, the more an ESL student’s reading skill develops, the more “interactive” the
process becomes, which according to Alyousef (2006) “leads to automaticity (or reading fluency)” (p.64). Students thus have to be explicitly guided in developing their reading skill in order to increase reading comprehension and to become fluent readers, who according to Grabe and Stoller (2001) display the following characteristics and abilities:

1. Read rapidly for comprehension
2. Recognize words rapidly and automatically (without seeming to pay any attention to them)
3. Draw on a very large vocabulary store
4. Integrate text information with their own knowledge
5. Recognize the purpose(s) for reading
6. Comprehend the text as necessary
7. Shift purpose to read strategically
8. Use strategies to monitor comprehension
9. Recognize and repair miscomprehension
10. Read critically and evaluate information (p. 188)

Fluent or autonomous readers, furthermore, interact dynamically with texts and engage in accessing and utilizing, what Alyousef (2006) identifies as the “six general component skills and knowledge areas” in an attempt to elicit and construct meaning from a text. These include, “(1) automatic recognition skills, (2) vocabulary and structural knowledge, (3) formal discourse structure knowledge, (4) content/word background knowledge, (5) synthesis and evaluation skills стратегies and (6) metacognitive knowledge and skills monitoring” (p. 64).

With the understanding of reading as this complex, interactive, multivariate skill that involves various components engaged in different levels of processing, the fact that in order for effective and efficient reading to occur, learners need explicit teaching and facilitation of their reading skill and strategies development is again illuminated. This argument is supported by Dreyer and Nel (2003) as they note that “many students enter higher education unprepared for the reading demands that are placed upon them”, that learners often “select ineffective and inefficient strategies with little strategic intent” and that this is caused by students’ “low level of reading strategy knowledge and lack of
metacognitive control” (p. 350). These however, can effectively be addressed through explicit instruction (Dreyer & Nel, 2003; Guthrie & Cox, 2001) and by guiding students in building a repertoire of strategies that facilitate reading comprehension and reading skill development.

A question that remains largely unanswered in the literature on teaching reading is whether strategies and skills are interchangeable terms or whether they stand for different entities. For a large part of literature surrounding reading strategies and skills, the two concepts are used without making a clear distinction and this might be as Akyel and Erçetin (2009) state, that the distinction between the two concepts “has begun to fade” (p. 136). Akyel and Erçetin (2009) however argue that the difference between the two concepts can be described in terms of the idea that “a skill can become a strategy when it is used intentionally” and that a strategy is used automatically by a fluent reader (p.136). This concept of intentionality as a means of distinction between a strategy and a skill is supported by Stahl (2006). However, Stahl (2006) views skills as those “cognitive processes that are executed automatically, without the reader’s conscious attention or conscious choice”, while strategies are “deliberately chosen and applied to a situation in reading”, even if they occur at just some basic level such as briefly looking up from a text when reading, to reflect on an ambiguous sentence (p. 55). In other words, while Akyel and Erçetin (2009) argue that skills become strategies, Stahl (2006) argues that strategies can become skills. In both these definitions, the latter mentioned is considered to be the automatic action, while the first mentioned requires some degree of intentional and conscious use. The view held by Stahl (2006) forms the working definition of strategy and skill as used in this study.

In addition to the call for explicit teaching of reading strategies is the idea that enhancing student engagement with the reading text and tasks lies central to reading strategies and skills development. The importance of this contributor in the development of the reading skill is discussed in more detail in the next section. In reference to the role engagement plays in the reading skill development and second language acquisition in general, Batstone (2002) asserts that:
Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research has come under fire in recent years for focusing too much on cognitive processes (such as ‘noticing’, ‘intake’ and ‘pushed output’) and too little on the contexts of engagement within which such processes may (or may not) occur (p.1).

Batstone (2002) continues this argument with a call for a more balanced approach, taking into consideration these cognitive processes as well as contextual factors (including learner engagement) in search for an attempt to encompass the complex and dynamic field which is SLA. In recognizing the importance of the various components that influence and affect second language reading skill development, the current study investigates reading engagement in selected online environments and therefore the next section aims to provide a brief outline of current research’s view on the role of engagement, specifically in second language reading.

**Reading engagement**

Directly related to being “motivated strategic strategy users” as Dreyer and Nel (2003) propose, is what Grabe and Stoller (2001) describe as an individual trait that is observed through “task persistence and positive feelings toward an activity” (p. 199), recognized as students’ motivation levels. Whilst keeping in mind that reading is an active, complex and cognitive loaded skill, the influence of motivation in the development of the reading skill as well as engagement with the text and tasks becomes all the more important.

The relationship between motivation and engagement is discussed by Tilley (2009), who cites Guthrie’s (2001) claim that engagement is “a merger of motivation and thoughtfulness” (p. 40) and that although motivation and engagement are two different concepts, they “can feed and influence each other” (Cho et al., 2010, p. 207). In addition, reading engagement can further be explained, as Guthrie and Cox (2001) state, as “an interlocked composite of jointly functioning motivation and strategies” (p. 294), which is in keeping with the tenets of the engagement model of reading comprehension (Wigfield et al., 2008). In acknowledgement that motivation and accordingly engagement are necessary components in the reading process, the question arises as to how these components can be increased in the
development of students’ reading skill. In an attempt to answer this question, Guthrie and Knowles (2001) argue that there are “several dimensions” that need to be addressed in order to enhance motivation so that engagement with reading texts and tasks are facilitated (p. 159). These include, as the authors list, providing students with “(a) conceptual themes, (b) real-world interactions, (c) support for self-direction, (d) using interesting texts, (e) cognitive strategy instruction, (f) social collaboration, and (g) supporting students’ self-expression” (ibid.).

Learners will therefore be engaged with the reading texts and tasks if teachers provide opportunities for assimilation and accommodation of new information with prior schemata, make real-world connections between the text, tasks and the learner’s world, provide explicit instruction in strategy use, allow students to collaborate with others, allow learners to take responsibility for their own learning and provide opportunities for learners to engage in self-expression and reflection regarding the texts. This argument is supported by Conrad and Donaldson (2004) as they emphasize that engaged reading, which leads to engaged learning, is defined as “a collaborative learning process in which the instructor and learner are partners in building the knowledge” (p. ix), which means that when learning is interactive, “learners are actively engaged in a variety of activities, and along with peers and the teacher, they are co-constructors of knowledge” (p. 3). This type of learning and co-construction of knowledge occurs, as Neal and Miller (2006) state, when students are “meaningfully engaged in learning activities through interaction with others on relevant and authentic tasks requiring cognitive processes such as creating, problem solving, reasoning, decision making, and evaluation” (p. 337). A few characteristics of engaged learning, identified by Conrad and Donaldson (2004) include that (i) engaged learning is focused on the learner; (ii) that each learner’s knowledge and actions contribute to both individual and community knowledge and (iii) that learners have to be active participants in the learning situation (p.5-7).

Engaged reading, leading to engaged learning described above, also include as Guthrie & Knowles (2001) mention, “the fusion of cognitive strategies, conceptual knowledge, and motivational goals during reading” (p. 159). This means that engaged readers can also be
characterized as being “intrinsically motivated to read for the knowledge and enjoyment it provides” while employing various reading strategies (Guthrie & Cox, 2001, p. 284) in order to facilitate reading comprehension (Wigfield et al., 2008). The teaching of reading skills and strategies can as such then not successfully occur without finding a way to increase students’ engagement level with the reading texts and tasks and to a certain extent this can be addressed by creating a learning environment and presenting reading related tasks that cater to initiating and maintaining increased engagement levels. To determine the extent to which activities and tasks in especially a CMC learning context has potential to do this, Conrad and Donaldson (2004) suggest that the following questions need to be investigated:

- Will the activity help learners use the online tools?
- Does it assist in the social process needed to establish community?
- What type of interaction or collaboration with peers occurs?
- Is reflection required?
- Will a particular problem be solved? (p. 18).

In addition to asking these questions pertaining specifically to reading activities and tasks, Guthrie and Cox (2001) emphasize the importance of creating a learning context that would facilitate and sustain these higher levels of engagement as well, and suggest that it could be done through

(a) identifying a knowledge goal and announcing it; (b) providing a brief real-world experience related to the learning goal; (c) making trade books and multiple resources available; (d) giving students some choice about the subtopics and texts for learning; (e) teaching cognitive strategies that empower students to succeed in reading these texts; (f) assuring social collaboration for learning; and (g) aligning evaluation of student work with the context (e.g., grading students for progress towards the learning and knowledge goals) (p. 299-300).

Other considerations highlighted by various studies in an attempt to initiate and maintain higher levels of student engagement with reading and reading related tasks include, as Cho et al. (2010) mention, that reading teachers and thus reading instruction
(1) needs to provide links outside literacy activities to reading, (2) uses diverse texts, (3) provides authentic reasons to read, (4) promotes collaborative learning, (5) offers choices and options, and (6) challenges students (p. 207).

A learning environment that allows for all these components to be addressed, that have been identified as important for initiating and maintaining higher levels of engagement, where opportunities for more meaningful collaboration and knowledge building between learners within a social context can be created and that not only provides real-world experiences, but also challenges students, can be found in various computer-mediated communication (CMC) environments.

It is therefore argued that perhaps the key to presenting reading texts and reading related tasks to students in a way that initiates and maintains higher levels of engagement and therefore also produces more language output in terms of quantity and quality, is to present these tasks in online environments that allow for interaction, communication and collaboration (holding true to the interactionist and socio-constructivist approaches to SLA, described in this chapter).

**Online environments for reading tasks and language output**

Technology plays a prominent role in our daily lives and even more so for learners of the 21st century. With students spending several hours reading and writing online, Williams (2008) suggests that for our students “life on the screen is an everyday, natural practice – they know no other way of being” (p. 682.). Godwin-Jones (2006) warns educators that “electronic literacy is a moving target” and that the “how and why we read and write online are evolving at the fast pace of Internet time” (p. 8). We “not only need to facilitate literacy skills in this new environment” but also allow learning experiences that mirror the kind of online world students experience, thus creating an environment that is characterized by being student centered with collaborative opportunities, allowing plenty of space for creative and reflective processes” (Godwin-Jones, 2006, p. 13). One way to do so is through the integration of CMC environments for learning and communicative tasks in our language teaching.
CMC is broadly defined by Lee (2002) as “a domain where information can be exchanged through the use of a computer” (p. 2). Communication delivered in this environment is classified as either being synchronous or asynchronous. Synchronous modes are those in which communication occurs in real time, requiring the participation of at least two interlocutors, with a communication tone typically resembling that of face-to-face interaction, such as to be found in online chat rooms and instant messaging. Asynchronous modes on the other hand, entails that contributions are made in an ongoing dialogue, with the option of having time elapsed, which include communication and interaction in online discussion forums, emails and blogs (Chapelle, 2003; Lee, 2002; Levy & Stockwell, 2006; Lai, Zhao & Li, 2008; Montero, Watts & García-Carbonell, 2007; Sun, 2009; Weininger & Shield, 2003). Other online environments have the potential to cater for both modes. These are, for example, social networking sites such as Facebook, where one can engage in real-time conversation via the chat function or with delayed response via the message and status update functions, or other collaborative environments such as Google Docs, where collaboration can occur in real-time (all participants work on the same document at the same time) or at different times, which would cater for the asynchronous communication mode.

The integration and application of CMC environments in second language teaching and learning is supported by two SLA models that form the framework for current research in this field. These two models, the interactionist perspective of SLA and the social constructivist theory to language learning, have several characteristics that intersect as can be seen in the outline of the two perspectives presented below.

The Social Constructivist approach to SLA

The social constructivist approach to SLA derives in part, as Warschauer (1997) notes, from theories put forth by Vygotsky and his work on the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which in terms of language learning illuminates “the role of social interaction in creating an environment to learn language, learn about language, and learn “through” language” (Warschauer, 1997, p. 471). The ZPD, as described by Vygotsky (1978), cited by...
Vandergiff (2006), is “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving … in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 111). Vandergiff (2006) further explains that “the ZPD will only emerge if the learners assist each other through collaborative scaffolding, a process which enables them to do what they would not be able to do without assistance, such as complete a task, solve problems, and attain control over L2 forms and meanings” (p.111).

This approach to SLA further allows, as Strambi and Bouvet (2003) remark, for the integration of “affective, cognitive and social interactionist perspectives into a coherent picture” (p. 83), placing a strong emphasis on the role of collaborative learning and the negotiation of meaning (De la Fuente, 2003). Language learners are, in this approach, seen as active participants in the meaning-making and problem-solving processes as they are co-constructors of knowledge. This is achieved through, as Strambi and Bouvet (2003) assert, the differences in their individual “affective and cognitive resources”, where attention is focused on the “individual differences in terms of knowledge, skills, personality, cultural values, and lifestyles” (p. 83) and how these can be used to contribute to and enhance the collaborative knowledge building experience. This approach to language teaching and learning is further explained by Levy and Stockwell (2006) as they outline how Dalgarno (2001) viewed learning in this approach, paying specific attention to three principles that are to be considered the primary principles of the social constructivist approach:

1. Each person forms their own representation of knowledge.
2. People learn through active exploration.
3. Learning occurs within a social context, and interaction between learners and their peers is a necessary part of the learning process (p. 122).

These three principles require a strong focus on the learner being the central figure in this approach, a claim also supported by Birch and Volkov (2007) as they explain that the emphasis is on learner-centered learning, where learners “share their experiences and
perspectives with one another, and then negotiate to arrive at shared meanings and perspectives” (p. 291). In addition, the authors note that:

Students are encouraged to collaborate and engage in active dialogue to construct knowledge by discovering principles for themselves. Providing students with an opportunity to extend their current knowledge (scaffolding) by encouraging them to actively engage in dialogue with other students and instructors (reciprocal teaching), rather than simply requiring them to answer questions, support the socio-constructivist paradigm. Moreover in this paradigm, the role of the teacher has shifted away from one way information transfer, toward facilitation of student centered learning through greater emphasis on peer interactions for cognitive development. Social interaction influences cognitive development (ibid.).

The Interactionist Perspective of SLA

The interactive model of reading comprehension described in the discussion on ESL reading is in alignment with the interactionist perspective of SLA. In this perspective to language learning, specific attention is paid to the relationship between interaction, modified input and output or language production (Cao & Philp, 2006; Lai et al. 2008; Vandergriff, 2006). Not only does this approach argue for the creation of opportunities that enhance noticing and comprehension, but it also calls for knowledge construction through interaction, much in the same way that the social-constructivist theory of SLA also do. The reason for this is that the interactionist perspective also stems in part from the work of Vygotsky and his argument for collaboration in the ZPD.

The interactionist perspective of SLA recognizes the importance of both interaction and meaning negotiation between collaborators, but moreover places an emphasis on the role of input and noticing in learning language and language skills. The interactionist approach to language learning, as Vandergriff (2006) explains, argues that “interaction first and foremost provides opportunities for comprehension, which enables learners to link the L2 forms to the meanings they encode”; in other words, the negotiation of meaning, “facilitates comprehension and the development of L2” (p. 110). This approach to language learning further holds that for learning to take place, “active collaborative construction of knowledge” where opportunity for “thoughtful reflection” is created, is necessary (Weasenforth,
Biesenbach-Lucas & Meloni, 2002, p. 58) through interaction. Moreover, before negotiation of meaning and comprehension can occur, this model emphasizes, as Hegelheimer and Chapelle (2000) state, the importance of linguistic input that should become intake, which in turn is defined as input that is comprehended through the assistance of the “learner’s existing schemata” (p. 42). The interactionist model further asserts the importance of noticing important aspects that “is necessary for acquisition” as well as interaction that would highlight these features that are to be noticed (ibid.). In addition, interaction that is most useful in language learning and language skill development is, as Hegelheimer and Chapelle (2000) emphasize, those interactions that function to “help learners comprehend the semantics and syntax of input” and “help learners to improve the comprehensibility of their own linguistic output” (p. 42). The basic tenets of the interactionist perspective on SLA as described above are highlighted by Figure 1, as presented by Chapelle (1998). Appearception is this model is, as Chapelle (1998) explains, an important aspect in this theory as it contains the “noticing aspects of the input” (p. 22). Figure 1 therefore illustrates that for language learning or skill development to take place, learners need to be provided with input; they need to be guided to notice the L2 forms, the gaps in the comprehension or the use of a strategy or skill in order to gain specific information (noticing in this model is referred to as apperception). After apperception, comprehension occurs where input becomes intake. This information is then assimilated and accommodated with learners’ existing knowledge (knowledge-building), which in turn allows the learner to produce the target forms or language.

Figure 1. “Basic components in the SLA process in interactionist research” (Chapelle, 1998, p. 22).
The integration and application of CMC environments in language learning and teaching address the premises of both models of SLA that underlie current language teaching and research, the social-constructivist and the interactionist approaches. As mentioned in the discussion on these two SLA perspectives, several key characteristics overlap in the two models. Current research on the use and integration of CMC in second language teaching and learning seem to particularly support the use of the interactionist model as a framework. The reason for this might be attributed to the fact that while the social constructivist theory is specifically founded on the work of Vygotsky and the theory of ZPD, where emphasis is placed on how learners bring unique contributions to the negotiation and problem-solving phases that facilitate language learning, the interactionist perspective acknowledges these concepts too. In addition, the interactionist approach highlights the importance of input and noticing of language features and strategies to be used as well. For reading instruction and the development of reading strategies, the interactionist approach is manifested in that learners’ attention is focused on the use of specific strategies within the reading task and then learners are encouraged to engage in interaction and actively negotiate meaning and co-construct knowledge. In addition, students are provided with an opportunity, as De la Fuente (2003) notes, to “monitor, that is to read, re-read and think about language features, reflect and focus their attentional devices on target items of the L2 forms and self-correct their mistakes” (p. 50) or correct misunderstandings regarding the text. An environment that when effectively integrated allows for this active, complex task of reading and reading comprehension facilitation to occur, while still addressing the basic tenets of the social constructivist and moreover the interactionist approach to language teaching is found in the use of CMC environments.

CMC benefits and limitations for language learning and language output

In addition to meeting the theoretical premises for effective language teaching and learning, the integration and application of CMC has been documented by several research studies to have benefits for language learning and language output. De la Fuente (2003) for example, notes that synchronous interactive tasks “promote an increase in production of learner output
by increasing the amount of participation” (p. 50). An important aspect of language learning and language skill development is that students need to be given an opportunity to produce language output (Chapelle, 1998). Language output is described by Chapelle (1998), as

like input [which] can be either uncomprehended noise or valuable for acquisition, output can be produced mindlessly or it can be created by the learner under conditions that facilitate acquisition. The latter type of production is called “comprehensible input”. It is learner language that is intended to convey meaning to an interlocutor while stretching the learner’s linguistic resources. In other words, not all production qualifies as valuable comprehensible output. It may be important that learners have an audience for the linguistic output they produce so that they attempt to use the language to construct meanings for communication rather than solely for practice. (p. 23).

In addition, Pica, Kanagy and Falodun (1993) also assert that activities are to be structured in a way that would allow students to talk (communicate) and not just “for the sake of producing language as an end in itself, but as a means of sharing ideas and opinions, collaborating toward a single goal or competing to achieve individual goals” (p. 10). The need for students to produce output, not just for practice, but in active collaborative communication for meaning making and knowledge construction has been successfully addressed in CMC environments.

CMC environments have in addition to providing opportunities for meaningful collaboration and meaning making, several other benefits for language production as well. These benefits for language learning in the CMC environments which have specific reference to writing and oral language skill development are supported by various studies (Gibbons, 2010; Kessler, 2009; Lam, 2000; Payne & Ross, 2005; Williams, 2008; Witte, 2007).

CMC is described by Lam (2000) as a “vehicle for the metaphorical construction of community, the crafting of multiple personae and collective identities, and the assumption of social roles in the temporal frame of on-line exchanges” (p. 461). Several of the advantages that these CMC environments have include (a) the development of critical thinking skills and problem-solving skills (Godwin-Jones, 2006; Kim 2008; Weasenforth et al., 2002); (b) equal
participation or better termed balanced participation (Collentine, 2009; Fitze, 2006; Godwin-Jones, 2003; Kim, 2008); (c) interactivity with the environment as well as with fellow learners (Elola & Oskoz, 2010; Fitze, 2006; Kim, 2008; Strambi & Bouvet, 2003; Vandergriff, 2006; Weasenforth et al., 2002); (d) knowledge building and collaborative learning through collaboration and meaning negotiation (Collentine, 2009; Elola & Oskoz, 2010; Gibbons, 2010; Godwin-Jones, 2003; Kessler, 2009; Montero et al., 2007; Strambi & Bouvet, 2003; Sun, 2009; Vandergriff, 2006), language activities presented in CMC environments tend to be more; (e) learner-centered (Elola & Oskoz, 2010; Sun, 2009); it tends to allow learners to create; (f) more complex responses that often is more lexically rich (Godwin-Jones, 2003; Monetro et al., 2007; Strambi & Bouvet, 2003; Warschauer, 1997); due in part to the notion that learners (g) have more time for reflection (Strambi & Bouvet, 2003); (h) find interaction in an environment that is non-threatening with a reduction of anxiety associated with face-to-face interaction (Strambi & Bouvet, 2003; Sun, 2009); while still representing (i) real social contexts with tasks that reflect authenticity (Montero et al., 2007); which allows for (h) meaningful communication, learner autonomy, better opportunities for comprehension and enhanced motivation (Gibbons, 2010; Godwin-Jones, 2003; Kessler, 2009; Strambi & Bouvet, 2003; Sun, 2009; Weasenforth et al., 2002).

In addition, Payne and Ross (2005) also mention various other benefits that past research has identified for language learning and CMC environments, including

(a) students often produce more language in a classroom than in face-to-face settings

(b) students tend to use more complex language when chatting, including more accurate usage of past-tense morphological markers

(c) there is greater equity in participation among students in a classroom

(d) students exhibit improved attitudes towards foreign language learning as a result of chatting (p. 36).
Even though these various benefits have been identified for the use of CMC environments, the use of CMC environments with regards to language learning, does not remain without limitations. Kim (2008), for example, mentions that “students are less likely to be voluntarily engaged in the e-learning environment” (p. 1343), especially when they have received inefficient learner training, when learning outcomes are not clear, or when students might not see how the environments are “helpful to engage to their academic performance” (Kim, 2008, p. 1343). Elola and Oskoz (2010) also note that although CMC holds several benefits for language learning, one needs to evaluate the relationships between the various components of an educational setting carefully and be informed as to how those CMC properties address and accommodate the various educational components, such as “subject content, curriculum, communication, process, resources, scaffolding and learning tasks” (p. 64). Vandergriff (2006) further warns that the benefits listed above cannot alone be associated with the use of CMC environments, as other factors that also contribute to the successful use and integration of these environments in a language learning context include among other “language proficiency, institutional setting [and] keyboarding skills” (p. 11).

**Significance of the current study**

As mentioned previously, researchers such as Batstone (2002) have called for a more balanced approach to language learning research where cognitive processes such as noticing, intake and output and aspects of engagement as well as the learning context are all addressed and viewed as important in language skill development.

Several studies on the effects of the integration and application of CMC environments for language learning have been conducted. However the majority of these studies investigating language skill development have focused on writing and oral language production and less on the effects of CMC environments on learner engagement and language output associated with reading skill development. A theoretical approach that has been considered as successful in increasing learners’ motivation and engagement levels with specific reference
to reading skill development is put forth by Guthrie et al. (2006), that teachers should use “situational interests” (p. 232). In other words, learners need to be presented with tasks that initiate and sustain learners’ interest and engagement as well as to present these tasks in environments (situations) which students find engaging and interesting.

There are however certain aspects regarding reading, engagement and interaction in CMC environments that need to be taken into consideration. Several authors, such as Smith and Regan (1999) as cited by Conrad and Donaldson (2004), caution against the “perspective that learner enthusiasm and engagement always equates with learning taking place” (p.18). A more reliable indicator of whether learners are engaged in the learning process and activities, according to Conrad and Donaldson (2004) is the “amount of interaction between students and the quality of interaction” (p. 24). A second word of caution is provided by Wigfield et al. (2008) as they argue that in terms of reading and reading related tasks, “any intervention that increases reading comprehension is complex, and when it succeeds, the positive outcomes could be due to a number of factors” (p. 433). A third reservation when investigating reading and reading engagement is as Koga (2010) notes, that perhaps “it is probably task-specific state motivation that gives insight into the dynamic aspect of motivation in a classroom setting because different kinds of tasks can elicit diverse responses” (p. 173). Although this argument is presented in reference to motivation, its relevance for engagement can easily be envisioned. A final word of caution is provided by what Warschauer (2004) describes as “technological determinism”, the idea that the “introduction of new technology automatically brings certain results” (p. 15).

Taking these words of caution and voiced reservations regarding the investigation of online environments, reading engagement and language output into consideration, it is argued in this study that 1) if students find CMC environments engaging, interesting and as a way that they extensively communicate in, and 2) if the CMC environments hold several advantages for increased engagement and language output for writing and oral production, perhaps then, the development of the reading skill, in terms of engagement and language production (including participation and the quantity and quality of
language output), can be increased. As there is little research done on reading and online environments in terms of above mentioned aspects, the current study aims to in some way address this gap.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The goal of this chapter is to outline the resources and process employed in conducting this study. It begins by describing the participants of the study, followed by a discussion of the materials and procedure used. The chapter concludes by explaining the data analysis procedure employed in order to answer each of the research questions posed in chapter one.

Participants

The participants for this study included six high intermediate adult ESL learners from a variety of language backgrounds including Arabic, Chinese, French and Japanese. Of the participants, four are male and two are female. At the time of the study, all the participants were enrolled as full-time students at a large Midwestern research university in the Intensive English Orientation Program (IEOP). IEOP assesses students’ language proficiency at the beginning of the semester and places them in classes aimed at facilitating skill development for each of the following language areas: reading, writing, listening and speaking as well as grammar. The participants of this study are comprised from one such reading class (level 5, high intermediate).

While the entire class (12 students) participated in the study, the analysis of the data and the discussion of the results center on six of these participants. The decision as to which six participants’ data to present is based on criteria that, it is believed, allow us to draw a wide range of engagement levels from the original group. The six participants, on whom the in-depth discussion of reading engagement and language output is based, are categorized as two being high-, two middle- and two low-performing students. The criteria used in identifying these six students from the larger participant group include 1) the teacher’s assessment of class performance, 2) attendance, 3) task completion and 4) engagement with the reading text and tasks as noted in the ethnographic field observations.
All 12 initial participants were asked to use pseudonyms and participation throughout the study was voluntary. Table 1 presents the student profiles of the six participants on whom the discussion of the data is based. Luther presents an interesting selection choice, for in the teacher’s assessment of class standings, Luther is considered to be one of the top students in the class, as measured in terms of test scores and quality of submitted work. However, based on the remaining three criteria, Luther is ultimately considered to be a low-performing student, especially concerning task completion and engagement with the reading texts and tasks.

Table 1

*Participant profiles*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Home Language</th>
<th>Time spent in the US</th>
<th>Years of English Instruction (including time with English instruction in US)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soufi</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>7.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Middle</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicky</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>6.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zi</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>12.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luther</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Saudi-Arabia</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>11 months</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>5.5 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N = 6*
Materials

The materials discussed in this chapter are divided into sections concerning the reading texts, related tasks and data gathering instruments used in this study.

Texts

This study was integrated into the curriculum of this specific IEOP reading class and the reading texts used during this study were the texts presented in units 3 and 4 of the reading textbook assigned to this class. The textbook used is Wegmann, B., & Knezevic, M. (2007). *Mosaic 2: Reading (Silver Ed.)*. New York: McGraw Hill Companies Inc. Table 2 outlines the various texts as they are presented in the two units, while Figure 2 provides an excerpt from the text *What Makes Sound Beautiful?* as an example.

Table 2

Reading texts used in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit 3: Gender and Relationships</th>
<th>Name of the text</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finding Real Love</td>
<td>Oh when I was in love with you By A.E. Housman</td>
<td>58-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Bare Branches” Might Snap in Asia</td>
<td>61-65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matchmaking</td>
<td>70-73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 4: Beauty and Aesthetics</td>
<td>Taj Mahal, India</td>
<td>83-85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Around the Globe: Outstanding Architecture of the World (focusing on The Alhambra Palace and Himeji Castle),</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Korea’s Makeover from Dull to Hip Changes the Face of Asia</td>
<td>93-96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What Makes Sound Beautiful?</td>
<td>101-102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These various texts, with the exception of the poem by A.E. Housman (which consisted of eight lines), vary in length from about 230 to 925 words, and contain words from both the Academic Word List (AWL) and words that students might encounter on a TOEFL iBT test. An example of one of these texts (used in this study) is added in Appendix A.

A  
Beauty is certainly more than skin-deep. However you might define it, beauty extends far beyond the visual to that which pleases other senses and even the mind. Prime among these other routes for the observation of beauty is the sense of hearing. Music is routinely recognized as beautiful. So are other sounds, like the whispering of wind through pines or the gentle purring of a cat.

B  
Just as philosophers and scientists have struggled to pin down the definition of visual beauty, they have attempted to dissect the appeal of pleasant sounds as well. Ultimately, sonic beauty is in the ear of the beholder. Research and intuition can, however, suggest reasons why one person considers a musical piece gorgeous while another considers it a bucketful of noise.

Figure 2. Excerpt from What Makes Sound Beautiful (Wegmann & Knezevic, 2007, p.101)

Tasks

The tasks employed in this study are considered to be typical of those found in a reading class of this level and primarily concern pre- and post reading tasks which serve either to activate necessary schemata or to facilitate comprehension and reading strategies development (Alyousef, 2006; Grabe & Stoller, 2001). The tasks presented are furthermore characteristic of an academic setting and involve summarizing, synthesizing, evaluating, and reflecting on texts as well as searching for specific or main ideas. The various tasks employed in this study are added as Appendix B.

The rationale for selecting the tasks used in this study finds justification in a four-fold argument. The first important aspect of this justification argument is that there is growing
support for CMC to be used as an extension of traditional face-to-face classroom situations (Comeaux & McKenna-Byington, 2003). This call for CMC and CALL integration coupled with the notion that technology and CMC environments are evolving and changing at a rapid rate influences as Williams (2008) notes “how people read and write with words and images” (p. 682). The advantages that CMC environments hold were discussed in the previous chapter, specifically how reading engagement and language output might benefit from collaboration and interaction between students in these online environments (Murphy, 2007). The third aspect of the justification for selecting the tasks discussed in this section is closely related to the idea that meaning negotiation, as found with opportunities for collaboration and interaction, has the potential to allow for deeper processing and ultimately higher levels of comprehension. For this purpose, the tasks that students are presented with in this study address 1) the interactionist perspective of SLA; 2) the communicative practices that underlie much of the current ESL teaching and 3) provide students with contexts that could allow for higher levels of situational motivation and thus engagement with the reading texts and tasks. To this end, Pica et al.’s, (1993) communicative task requirement, that students should not just engage in talk “for the sake of producing language as an end in itself”, but rather as a means of sharing their ideas and opinions and/or “collaborating toward a single goal, or competing to achieve individual goals” (p. 10) is adhered to in the designing of the reading tasks employed in this study as well.

With keeping the first three parts of the justification for the tasks in mind, the reading-related tasks presented to the participants in this study are strongly connected to the reading texts assigned in their class curriculum, addressing both lesson and learning outcomes set for IEOP reading level 5 classes. Table 3 outlines the tasks in terms of the reading texts, the type of activity involved, the environment it is to be completed in as well as whether it is a one-way or two-way exchange of information or an individual activity. Communication gap activities such as jigsaw or two-way information gap tasks have been noted to be especially appropriate and effective for initiating and maintaining meaning negotiation or meaning construction (Blake, 2000; Mackey & Abbuhl, 2005; Pica et al., 1993) which in turn has been argued as advantageous for increasing comprehension. In information gap activities, students
engage in exchanging information either in a one-way or two-way exchange; in a jigsaw activity, students each have different pieces of information and need to collaborate in order to reach a common outcome or goal and in decision-making tasks, all participants have the same information and need to interact and engage in discussion in order to reach a conclusion, answer or common solution (Blake, 2000; Crookes & Chaudron, 2001; Pica et al., 1993).

As mentioned, Table 3 outlines the major reading-related activities performed for the various reading sections and although other activities were also present in the class meetings, such as the activation of background knowledge, while-reading comprehension checks and vocabulary-building exercises, the readings and tasks outlined in Table 3 filled the majority of the reading class time and are thus of particular interest in this study.

Table 3

*Outline of the tasks presented to the Reading class over the three week class observation period*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Primary Text</th>
<th>Primary Task</th>
<th>Type of main activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Finding Real Love</td>
<td>Writing 2-3 paragraphs on real love or why one person is immediately attracted to another</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional &amp; Google Docs</td>
<td>No primary text</td>
<td>Putting sentences in order</td>
<td>Pair – Jigsaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional &amp; Blogs</td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>Find a favorite love song/poem &amp; explain what it means and post it in the blog</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Bare Branches</td>
<td>Pair discussion – Class discussion</td>
<td>Decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional &amp; Google Docs</td>
<td>Matchmaking</td>
<td>Groups of three. Each student has to summarize three paragraphs. The group has to agree on the final answer. Complete in Google Docs.</td>
<td>Jigsaw</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 (continued)

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Google Docs &amp; Blogs</strong></td>
<td>No primary text</td>
<td>Completing the previous activity. Starting a pre-reading, pre-chapter activity. Find pictures or videos about the most beautiful thing or place (not person) you have seen and explain in the blogs why it holds such beauty for you.</td>
<td>Jigsaw Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional</strong></td>
<td>Taj Mahal</td>
<td>Groups of four, search for specific information on certain aspects. Different from other groups. Groups give class presentations.</td>
<td>Decision making to one-way communication gap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional</strong></td>
<td>Global Architecture</td>
<td>The two groups discuss their paragraph, answer specific questions. Then individuals in group A pair up with individuals in group B. They share their answers and complete the Venn diagram. Whole class feedback.</td>
<td>Jigsaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional &amp; Blog</strong></td>
<td>Beautiful Music</td>
<td>After reading the text, search for a song, music that you think is very beautiful and explain why as well as answering the question on universal beauty.</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional &amp; Google Docs</strong></td>
<td>Korea’s Plastic Surgery</td>
<td>After reading the text, the text is summarized by identifying the main characters, providing a description and answer specific questions posed in <em>Google Docs</em>.</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the focus of the study is on investigating students’ engagement with reading texts and tasks and the language output they produce in the selected CMC environments, the tasks had to be structured in a way to allow for language to be produced and for this reason, as illustrated in Table 3, writing activities are incorporated, which in itself holds the dilemma as articulated by Siok Lee (2008), that language skills “are still mostly taught as distinct skills and researched as such, a dilemma in L2 reading research and instruction” (p. 654). The majority of the tasks presented in the CMC environments have a strong writing presence. This reading-writing connection provides the fourth aspect to the justification argument for selecting the tasks used in the study.
Even though the exact nature of the reading-writing relationship cannot as yet be fully explained, it is widely accepted that the two processes do affect each other (Parodi, 2007) and that the incorporation of writing into reading tasks holds several benefits (Choo, 2010; Kol & Schcolnik, 2008; Oded & Walters, 2001). One of these benefits include, as Choo (2010) remarks, creating “communicative awareness which is based on the idea that writing and reading are communicative activities” and that when “writers transact with their work, they perform the role of critical readers of their own texts; similarly, as readers transact with texts, they rewrite them, thus performing the role of authors” (p. 166).

The call for establishing a reading-writing connection is further grounded in the idea that reading has the ability to enhance writing and vice versa, specifically in terms of reading comprehension and retention of information (Hsu, 2004; Oded & Walters, 2001). This idea is explained by Hsu (2004) who argues that when we note information while we read, we are composing and therefore, “we [are] actually vocalizing our understanding of the written texts” (p. 6). In addition to this vocalizing comprehension of a text, writing is seen as having the potential to facilitate understanding (Hsu, 2004; Kol & Schcolnik, 2008), a view expressed by Lapadat (2002), cited by Kol and Schcolnik (2008), that “expressing oneself via a written medium holds the promise of writing one’s way into understanding” (p. 49). However, the claim made here that writing activities have the potential to increase reading comprehension and deeper levels of processing does not imply advocating for teaching the two skills as being integrated; both skills should also be taught separately for the purpose of that specific skill’s development (Hsu, 2004). What is argued here is that the writing tasks used to elicit language output from students in a reading class, as is the case with this study, is not without justification.

**Data Gathering Instruments**

This qualitative study allows for an investigation of six ESL students’ reading engagement and language output in selected CMC environments. In order to capture data that would
allow for said investigation, the following data gathering instruments were employed in this study.

*Ethnographic field notes*

One of the criteria for selecting the participants from whom the data are to be presented, as discussed earlier, is based on how engaged learners were with the reading texts and reading tasks. These evaluations are based on observations made during the class meetings. To this effect, detailed field notes were taken of all 12 initial participants. The use of field notes or observations is characteristic of ethnographic studies such as the present study, which as Watson-Gegeo (1988) argues, have the aim to

> provide a description and an interpretive-explanatory account of what people do in a setting (such as a classroom, neighborhood, or community), the outcome of their interactions, and way they understand what they are doing (the meaning interactions have for them) (p. 576).

For the purpose of this study, the ethnographic field notes focused on recording students’ contributions in whole class discussions and their engagement behavior during text reading as well as during task completion as it functions as the baseline for participant engagement behavior against which engagement in the online environments are investigated.

*Blogs*

Weblogs or blogs as they are typically referred to, have as Sun (2009) states, “fundamentally changed the way people use and interact on the Internet, by changing users from consumers to contributors of information” (p. 88). In addition to providing an environment that caters to the requirements of this study, blogs are easy to set up and maintain or contribute information through posting (Bloch, 2007; Kim, 2008; Sun, 2009). Users do not have to have any knowledge of programming or HTML (Godwin-Jones, 2003; Kim, 2008; Sun, 2009) for it uses the WYSIWYG format. In addition, blogs can be converted into multimodal domains by easy insertion of videos, pictures and links. Blogs are further particularly interactive and have
the potential to support cooperative and autonomous learning (Bloch, 2007; Godwin-Jones, 2003; Kim 2008; Sun 2009).

Because blogs record and store postings chronologically, both the original post and comments made are easily accessible. Screenshots of the participants’ blog postings and any comments made are taken and these form part of the data analyzed as discussed in the analysis section of this chapter. Figure 3 below shows an example of a screenshot taken from a blog post created by one of the students.

Figure 3. An example of a blog post

Google Docs

Google Docs, a word processing facility provided by Google which is accessible once a Google account has been opened, provides a highly collaborative writing environment. As collaboration is seen as an important facilitator for meaning negotiation and knowledge building, which can ultimately enhance comprehension and lead to higher levels of processing and engagement, collaborative environments such as Google Docs are beneficial in language learning and skill development (Elola & Oskoz, 2010; Montero et al., 2007). Collaborative environments such as Google Docs, further allow the learner, as Elola & Oskoz (2010) note, to “participate and relate with others in an ongoing social and
interactional process” (p. 52) and these environments therefore “provide learners with a tool to create, transform and erase their work with built in accountability” (p. 53).

In addition, while blogs function as an asynchronous CMC environment, Google Docs allow for real-time synchronous collaboration, where all collaborators can be online, working on the same document at the same time, communicating right there in the CMC environment, but it also has the added benefit of being flexible and acting as an asynchronous environment, providing learners with an opportunity for more reflective and thought-through contributions. Google Docs therefore cater to both modes of online communication.

Google Docs is particularly useful in providing a representation of the interaction and collaboration that occur between collaborators on a document, by accessing the revision history. Because Google Docs automatically and often saves the interaction and collaboration that occur (every minute or so depending on the activity in the document), by accessing the revision history, the interaction, collaboration and meaning negotiation that occur (where applicable) by each participant can be identified as each participants’ contribution is indicated by a different color. Each revision option presented is selected, which allows a more detailed account of contributions to be seen. A screenshot is taken of each of these revision histories and this provides the data of the engagement and language production that occurred within the tasks presented in the Google Docs environment. Figure 4 below provides an example of the interaction and collaboration between two students in a shared Google Docs.
Interviews

The six participants were invited to individual interviews that lasted between 15 and 25 minutes each. Participation in the interview phase was voluntary and the six participants identified all agreed to these semi-structured interviews. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The 15 main questions that guided the interviews addressed aspects such as the participants’ views on the advantages and disadvantages of the two online environments for the tasks, issues on collaboration with peers, the use and usability of the environments, their engagement practices with the texts and tasks as well as their language production in these environments. The semi-structured interview questions used to guide the interviews are added in Appendix C and the transcribed interviews are presented in Appendix D.

Procedure

The study, with reading-related tasks presented in selected online environments (blogs and Google Docs), was incorporated into the reading class’ curriculum. This means that all tasks and activities were conducted during normal class time. The reading class met every day for 50 minutes for three weeks (duration of the study). During the three-week class meetings, 11 classes were used in comprising the data, and for the four remaining days, this reading class
did not meet for regular classes as it was involved in field trips and other activities presented by IEOP. The interviews were conducted during the fourth week. On the days in which reading-related tasks were presented in online environments as well as the days allocated for setting up student accounts and providing learner training, classes were conducted in a computer lab on campus which allowed each student to have their own Macintosh computer, all being connected to the internet. In these labs and across most of campus free wireless internet was available.

The first step in this study was to set up learner accounts and to provide learner training. This occurred during two class meetings prior to the three week class observation. The first account set up was the Gmail accounts that would provide students access to Google Docs available for access on the Google interface (http://www.google.com). Students were asked to open a new account, even if they already had one, as this account would be used for activities and tasks related to this reading class. In addition, students were asked to use pseudonyms. This was done because Google accounts are easily used to create Blogger accounts, which is the hosting domain of students’ blog accounts (http://www.blogger.com). For both these accounts, students were taken through a step-by-step set up. In addition, for the Blogger accounts, students were advised to create both the blog name and the hosting name under the pseudonym they chose. Students were allowed to set up the blog in any way they preferred leaving the choice of background, color, font, picture and layout to them. This was done in an attempt to allow learners to take ownership of their own blog. The various blog addresses were posted on the Moodle site the class used prior to study commencement.

After the set up of the accounts, students received learner training in navigating the interface of both these CMC environments, as well as the features that were to be used during the study such as inserting text, video, pictures, links, making comments, previewing text, revising, editing and posting in the blogs, while in Google Docs, students were shown how the word processing features operate, how to create new documents, invite collaborators, share the document, add text, pictures, links, edit, revise, save, and so on.
After setting up the accounts and providing learners training in the use of these CMC environments, the reading class was taught as the teacher saw fit. Normal class activities characterized the classes throughout the study, which included activating background knowledge, dealing with important vocabulary words, the actual reading of the texts and pre-, during and post reading activities. The only difference this study brought to this specific class’s normal activities was that some of the reading related tasks were to be performed using the selected CMC environments. Throughout all class sessions, detailed field notes were taken as the researcher acted as a mere observer, with the flow of activities and the control of the class remaining in the teacher’s control. While the teacher led the class, activities were structured by the researcher in conjunction with the teacher, whose responsibility it was to ensure that the necessary learning outcomes set for this reading class were addressed in the various activities presented.

For the purpose of the study, three weeks of classes were observed. During these three weeks, 11 days are included in the study. A breakdown of the main activities presented during these 11 classes is presented in Table 4. As can be seen in this table, three main reading-related tasks were presented the Google Docs CMC environment, three involving blog posts and three involving normal face-to-face classroom activities (to be used as a baseline for activity engagement). During the fourth week of the study, interviews were conducted with the six participants identified.

Table 4
A breakdown of the lessons and tasks presented during the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Primary Text</th>
<th>Pre-/During-/Post Reading task</th>
<th>Primary Task</th>
<th>Participant interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Classroom</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Finding Real Love</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Writing a paragraph on what is real love or why one person is immediately attracted to another.</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 (continued)

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2: Lab</td>
<td>Traditional &amp; <em>Google Docs</em></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>During</td>
<td>Putting sentences in order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Lab</td>
<td>Traditional &amp; Blogs</td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Find a favorite love song/poem &amp; explain what it means and post it in the blog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Classroom</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Bare Branches</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pair discussion – Class discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Lab</td>
<td>Traditional &amp; <em>Google Docs</em></td>
<td>Matchmaking</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Groups of three. Each student has to summarize three paragraphs. Group has to agree on the final answer. Completed in <em>Google Docs</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: Lab</td>
<td><em>Google Docs</em> &amp; Blogs</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Completing the previous activity. Starting a pre-reading, pre-chapter activity. Find pictures or videos about the most beautiful thing or place (not person) you have seen and explain why it holds such beauty for you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7: Classroom</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Taj Mahal</td>
<td>Pre &amp; During</td>
<td>Reading of the text, activating background, vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8: Classroom</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Taj Mahal</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Groups of three, search for specific information on certain aspects. Different from other groups. Make a class presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9: Classroom</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Global Architecture</td>
<td>During &amp; Post</td>
<td>Two groups discuss their paragraph, answer specific questions. Group A reads the paragraph on the Alhambra Palace, while group B reads the paragraph on the Himeji Castle. Then individuals in group A pair up with individuals in group B. They share their answers and complete the Venn diagram. Whole class feedback.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Both the CMC environments used in the study can be accessed from anywhere with a computer and internet connection, which allows learners the flexibility of completing the tasks at their convenience as well as allowing time to reflect and make valuable, insightful and reflective contributions. Most of the students seemed to have only used this advantage for task completion concerning the blogs and resorted to engaging in collaboration with peers in Google Docs during class time, even when they were instructed to complete the tasks for homework. As a result, class 6 as shown in Table 4, begins by allowing the completion of class 5’s activity and is followed with a blog task, as students seem to be more likely to finish blog tasks for homework than arrange a time to meet with their partners online in Google Docs, even though Google Docs allows collaborators to work synchronously and asynchronously.

**Analysis**

In an attempt to address the research questions posed in chapter one, the analysis of the data consisted of a discussion of the ethnographic field notes, an analysis of CMC tasks and an analysis of the interview responses.
Research Question #1

The first research question concerns how students’ engagement with the reading texts and tasks are affected when reading tasks are presented in CMC environments such as Google Docs and blogs. In order to answer this question, a description of the six students’ engagement behavior in the traditional face-to-face reading classroom needs to be identified. For this purpose, detailed ethnographic field notes are taken during the study, which include aspects such as learner participation in class discussions, group or pair activities, their engagement behavior while reading the reading texts, and during the pre-, during and post reading tasks as well as creating an overview of their language output in especially whole class discussions. These field notes serve as an indication of the baseline activity and engagement behavior of the six participants.

The baseline engagement behavior is comparatively discussed with the ethnographic notes taken during task completion in online environments as well as with what is identified in the two online environments in terms of participation, task completion, collaboration, turn-taking and interaction with peers. These are to be identified from activity evident from the blogs as well as by reviewing the revision history in the various Google documents created. Figure 5 shows how these are identified in one excerpt of a Google document. The various screenshots made of the revision history of the Google Docs tasks, form the transcript of interaction for each task and each of the six participants. The various turns in the transcripts are then labeled as applicable and specific attention is paid to instances of negotiation of meaning that occurred, instances of information sharing, the number of turns taken, whether all students participated or whether the task was mainly conducted by one student. The aim of identifying these instances is to show the participants’ engagement and activity behavior in the various tasks presented in the two CMC environments.
H: Internet has revolutionized the matchmaking system by matching conveniently people based on information the given. This system is gaining more influence even though the match are not always appreciated by users.

I: matchmaking is very firm in Korea. They always rejected some customers because of something undesirable. So some customers have filed lawsuit.

Do we have to arrange the order of the sentences? I: matchmaking is very firm in Korea. They always rejected some customers because of something undesirable. So some customers have filed lawsuit. We need to finish p.73 Practice. (Gloria)

I think A, D, and F are correct. How do you guys think about? (Gloria)

Figure 5. An excerpt of the Matchmaking task between Gloria, Soufi and one other student. The final part of Gloria’s contribution is presented.

In this particular excerpt, Soufi asked whether the sentences need to be put in order. Gloria then proceeded to do so, by moving the paragraphs, so that B follows A, C follows B, etc. She then proceeded to remind the other two students that the last part of the task was to select the three sentences from a list that best complete the summary of the text. In addition to reminding them, she presented what she thought the answers were and asked for feedback as well. In this short excerpt, one can see that Gloria provided both information and meaning negotiation or “talk” contributions.

The final part in describing the six ESL students’ reading engagement is to discuss what has been observed in the classroom (ethnographic field notes) and their behavior in the online environments (such as displayed in Figure 5) and discussing these in terms of the responses the participants provided in their interviews. In addition to serving the purpose of this
additional layer of investigation into the six students’ engagement behavior, the interviews also act as a triangulation feature of the study, in that possible observer bias in the interpretation of the data is to a certain extent reduced by allowing students the opportunity to reflect on their own engagement behavior with the reading texts and reading-related tasks (Davis, 1992; Johnson & Saville-Troike, 1992). Data analyzed in an attempt to answer the second research question also in part contributes to answering the first research question.

Research Question #2

The second research question focuses specifically on how the language output students produce in Google Docs and blogs differ, especially in terms of the quantity and quality of the contributions. It is argued that language output can act as one indicator of engagement and to this effect, it is considered an important feature in this study. The focus of this question is not primarily to investigate whether students produce more or less language in online environments than in the face-to-face traditional reading classroom (although this is touched upon), but rather to investigate how this language output looks in these environments. This is done by paying specific attention to the quality and quantity of the online contributions, for these may act as indicators of student engagement.

In order to investigate the quantity and quality of language output produced in the CMC environments employed in this study, both quantity and quality as constructs are first described. It is important to note that because this is a reading class, language produced in the various activities and tasks are not assessed according to grammatical or lexical accuracy. Quantity as it is defined and used in the analysis of the data concern the degree of participation (Zha, Kelly, Park & Fitzgerald, 2006). This degree of participation is further comprised of aspects such as the number of contributions made (Kol & Schcolnik, 2008), the length of those contributions (Kol & Schcolnik, 2008), how many of those contributions were providing information and how many were negotiating meaning or carried mere communication (talk) contributions.
The quality construct employed in the analysis of the students’ language output in the two selected online environments is to a large extent informed by Halliday’s social theory of language, the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework. In this SFL framework, language is understood as being used to convey meaning and is consequently semantic in nature. This meaning, however, needs to be interpreted in terms of the context of both the culture and situation in which it is used. The SFL framework guides the analysis of any language produced in terms of three main domains namely the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual. The ideational domain primarily concerns the content of the discourse and is examined through the participants, processes and circumstances mentioned, while the textual domain concerns the features that produce a coherent and cohesive text.

The quality construct as it is used in this study to investigate students’ language output in the two CMC environments focuses specifically on the interpersonal domain, with emphasis placed on the appraisal framework associated with SFL. Complimentary to the appraisal framework is as Martin and White (2005) explain, the notions of negotiation and involvement, where negotiation focuses “on the interactive aspects of discourse, speech function and exchange structure” and involvement focuses “on non-gradable resources for negotiating tenor relations, especially solidarity” (p. 33). Appraisal itself concerns three interacting domains, including attitude, engagement and graduation (Sook Lee, 2008; Martin & White, 2005). Employing the concepts associated with the appraisal framework of SFL in the analysis of the students’ language, allows for an identification of aspects such as utterances or expressions indicating feelings, emotions, opinions, different uses of voice, the amplification or minimizing of utterances, judgements, criticism and praise regarding behavior or the appreciation of objects, ideas and concepts both physical and abstract (Martin & White, 2005).

Appraisal as an aspect of the interpersonal domain of SFL influenced the design of the quality construct as it is employed in this study and pays specific attention, as Sook Lee (2008) notes to the “analysis of stance and positioning in relation to values, intertextuality,
identity, and voice in the text” (p. 241). As a result, the quality construct used in the analysis of the students’ language output addresses aspects such as the degree of self-expression identified in features such as self-expression, expression of enjoyment and opinions introduced for example by linguistic markers such as I think, I believe, I wonder, we should, I like, my favorite, in my opinion, etc. (Zha et al., 2006), the accuracy of the answer identified in aspects such as accurateness of the answer, insight, reflection or thought shown (Birch & Volkov, 2007; Kol & Schcolnik, 2008) and the appropriateness of the response, which includes an indication of audience awareness, referencing and responding to the task (Kol & Schcolnik, 2008; Zha et al., 2006).

Table 5 outlines the constructs quantity and quality as they are used in the data analysis. These more holistic views of the language output generated by the six participants are also discussed in terms of responses the students’ provided in their interviews.

Table 5

Outline of students’ language output analysis features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Feature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantity</td>
<td>Degree of Participation</td>
<td>Number of contributions (including comments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Degree of self-expression</td>
<td>Self –expression/enjoyment/opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accuracy of the answer</td>
<td>Accurateness/ Insight/ reflection/thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appropriateness of the response</td>
<td>Awareness of audience/ referencing/responding to the task</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6 presents a summary of the data analysis procedure as it is employed in this study in an attempt to answer the research questions discussed in chapter one.
Research Question 1:
How do the communicative reading tasks presented in the selected online environments (Google Docs and Blogs) affect students’ engagement

Research Question 2:
How the language output students produce in Google Docs and Blogs differ in terms of the quantity and quality of contributions?

As language output is viewed as one indicator of engagement, Question 2 in part answers Question 1

Ethnographic field notes of the face-to-face classroom: learner participation, engagement & language output = Baseline engagement behavior of the 6 students

Comparison with ethnographic notes in task completion and interaction in CMC environments as seen in the screenshots of the Google Docs revision history and blog posts + comments posted focusing on participation, task completion, collaboration and interaction

Quantity and quality of the contributions as identified in the various screenshots of blog posts and comments as well as the various revision history screen shots of the Google Docs tasks

How do the six participants’ language output differ in terms of each other?

Discussed in terms of student responses gained in the interview

Figure 6. A summary of the data analysis procedure used in this study
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the findings from the data are reported and discussed in answer to the two research questions posed. This is done in an attempt to investigate the six ESL students’ reading engagement and language output in selected online environments.

Research question #1

The first main research question that guided this study is how do the communicative reading tasks presented in the selected online environments (Google Docs and blogs) affect students’ engagement with the reading texts and tasks?

Reading engagement, as discussed in chapter 2 is complex in nature, being affected by external and internal factors and integrates, as Borgia and Owles (2007) emphasize, “cognitive thought, and motivational and social aspects of reading” (p. 34). Successful interventions or any positive outcomes in terms of reading engagement whether in reference to the texts or the tasks could be the results of various factors and contributors (Wigfield et al., 2008). However, even though the reason for increased engagement with the reading texts and tasks might potentially be brought about by factors outside of the intervention introduced, educators still have to implement a variety of interventions, such as introducing environments that are viewed as conducive for initiating and maintaining higher levels of reading engagement, which in turn positively influences reading comprehension and reading skill development (Alyousef, 2006; Guthrie & Cox, 2001; Wigfield et al., 2008).

The first research question allows for an investigation of how communicative reading tasks presented in the two online environments, Google Docs and blogs, affect students’ engagement with the reading texts and tasks. Communicative reading tasks, whether presented during the pre-, during, or post-reading phases of a reading lesson have, as Jalilifar (2010) believes, the potential to introduce a variety of strategies that utilize “students’ collaboration to maximize interaction among students according to the principles of positive
interdependence, individual accountability, group processing, and equal opportunity for class participation” (p. 97). This belief supports the interactionist perspective on SLA and the communicative practices that underscore current ESL teaching.

With communicative reading tasks being presented in the two CMC environments and with conditions theoretically beneficial for increased levels of engagement for both reading of texts and task completion, the six students’ engagement behavior is investigated. In order to determine the effect on learner engagement brought about by presenting communicative reading tasks in these CMC environments, the students’ engagement behavior as it is observed in the five traditional face-to-face reading classroom meetings is first described. This is to serve as a baseline against which the students’ engagement behavior in the selected CMC environments is discussed. The baseline engagement behavior is outlined by providing an account of the patterns that emerge from the ethnographic field notes specifically in terms of learner participation, engagement and language output during the three phases (pre-, during and post) of these traditional face-to-face reading class meetings.

Traditional reading classroom behavior

The ethnographic field notes taken during the five observed traditional classes present some indication of the various students’ engagement and participation behavior in these whole class discussions.

Learner participation behavior and language output

This specific reading class engages in various whole class discussions throughout especially the pre- and post-reading phases of the lessons. These whole class discussions are predominantly in question-answer format and are mostly teacher initiated IRF (initiation-response-feedback) sequences.

Table 6 provides an overview of learner participation in these whole class discussions in terms of students volunteering an answer and is therefore seen as students’ willingness to communicate. Willingness to communicate, even though considered an indication of learner
participation, is a phenomenon that is ever changing as it is influenced by various factors, including culture, the situation and motivation (Cao & Philp, 2006). Motivation in turn is closely connected to engagement (Alyousef, 2006; Cho et al. 2010; Dreyer & Nel, 2003; Grabe & Stoller, 2001; Guthrie and Cox, 2001; Tilley, 2009), and as willingness to communicate has a strong motivation factor (Cao & Philp, 2006), Table 6 (learner participation in whole-class discussions) provides some insight into the baseline engagement behavior of the six students.

Table 6

Learner participation in whole class discussion on an answer volunteer basis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Number of questions directed to the whole class</th>
<th>Number of no verbal or gestural responses</th>
<th>Gloria</th>
<th>Joe</th>
<th>Luther</th>
<th>Soufi</th>
<th>Vicky</th>
<th>Zi</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Real Love</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Bare Branches</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7: Taj Mahal (1)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>3*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8: No main reading :Taj Mahal (2)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9: Architecture of the World</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>3*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=12. Note: * indicates when students answered questions simultaneously or both started and one finished or one answer is given after another in response to the same question. These are all viewed and counted as contributions made to the whole class discussion and is thus seen as indicative of learner participation. In addition, this explains why the total percentages given exceed the total of 100%.
Table 6 shows that a large number of the questions directed to the whole class remained unanswered, which in most instances were either answered by the teacher or redirected to specific students. On the answer volunteer basis, Soufi and Luther seemed to participate predominantly more in the whole class discussions than the other students, where Zi is seen not volunteering any answers. This large distribution difference of 22 percent to 0 percent is supported by Kung (2004) who notes that “when discussions are held in the classroom, a small number of enthusiastic students tend to dominate the conversation, leaving the less vocal students unheard” (p. 164). By directing questions to specific students, these less vocal students are provided with an opportunity to take the floor and contribute. In the five observed traditional face-to-face reading classes, questions were specifically directed to all students, with Gloria and Joe each receiving six such questions and the remaining four students receiving seven questions each. With these speaker specific questions included in the analysis of the whole-class discussions, illustrated in Table 7, all students’ voices are represented and Soufi’s 22 percent overall contribution is slightly less at 16.8 percent, yet still the highest in terms of individual participation in the class.

Table 7

*Contributions made by students to whole class discussions in reference to teacher-initiated question-answer sequences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Number of questions</th>
<th>No responses</th>
<th>Gloria</th>
<th>Joe</th>
<th>Luther</th>
<th>Soufi</th>
<th>Vicky</th>
<th>Zi</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% 20.1 7.6 10.1 14.3 16.8 8.4 5.9 21.8

\[N=12\]
The information presented so far merely outlines student participation based on teacher-initiated question-answer sequences. In these whole class discussions, students also on occasion generated questions of their own. However, these are far less frequent and apart from excerpt 1 (Zi) and 2 (Luther) below, questions asked by students primarily concerned requesting clarification of task instructions or requesting the teacher to repeat the question (Gloria, Luther and Soufi). In addition, Joe and Vicky asked no questions in these whole class discussions. Excerpt 1 as mentioned shows one of Zi’s contributions to a whole class discussion session and even though he generated a question in this response, he did not wait for an answer and responded as he saw appropriate. Excerpt 2 provides an example of Luther contributing to knowledge building with the instructor in one of the pre-reading whole class discussion sessions. Here Luther enquires as to how the word castle should be pronounced.

**Excerpt 1: Class 4**

The teacher directing the question to Zi asked whether women have a lower status than men in his country.

Zi: No, I think they are equal.

Teacher: Does it depend on where in China you come from?

Zi: Maybe, I’m from South West of China. Maybe in my part of the country. Do you mean status in society or family? In society they’re equal. In my family, women have a higher status than men.

**Excerpt 2: Class 9**

Luther: Excuse me, castle, the t is silent?

Teacher: The e?

Luther: The t.

Teacher: Yes, it is, it is cas-le.

Luther: Cas-le, oh, ok.

The second aspect in describing students’ baseline engagement behavior is to pay attention to the length of the utterances produced. The ethnographic field notes reveal interesting patterns
in regard to these whole class discussions. Classes are not recorded and as such the output length presented in Table 8 is based on the written field notes of what students said in the classes. Table 8 thus shows utterance length in relative terms. This however remains an aspect to consider in describing student engagement behavior for a student who volunteers many answers, even though they are one word utterances might be more active in contributing to these whole class discussions than a student who produces fewer answers, even though they are more verbose. However, as Table 8 indicates, of the six students investigated in this study, Soufi produced by far the most answers both in terms of number and length of contributions. Gloria’s language output is vastly different from Soufi’s. Soufi presented 11 one word answers, six answers consisting of six or more words (one sentence) and four answers of two or more sentences. Gloria, on the other hand produced predominantly one word answers, and on one occasion she produced a longer utterance of six or more words (one sentence). Thus Soufi’s high observable participation in the whole class discussion cannot be attributed to the fact that he is a high performing student (in terms of class standings) because Gloria, who is also a high performing student, displayed very different whole class discussion participation behavior. Joe and Vicky are considered to be of different performing levels and yet their language output in terms of utterance length is similar. It therefore seems as if performance levels are not, in terms of these six students, directly linked to whole class discussion participation.

The final aspect included in the description of students’ baseline engagement behavior is the identification of emerging engagement patterns as noted in the ethnographic field notes taken during the various phases of the traditional reading class meetings.
Table 8

*Occurrence of output length in whole class discussions both in answering and generating questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 word</th>
<th>2 words</th>
<th>3 words</th>
<th>4 words</th>
<th>5 words</th>
<th>6 or more words, but one sentence</th>
<th>2 or more sentences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luther</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soufi</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicky</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zi</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N=6

*Learner baseline engagement behavior*

In identifying the patterns of engagement behavior, phrases and observations that are recurring in the ethnographic field notes are considered to illuminate the engagement behavior of the six students. A more detailed account of the engagement behavior of the students in terms of the various reading phases in both the traditional reading class and classes with integrated CMC components are added in Appendix E. To follow is a short overview of the six students’ observed engagement behavior, presented in Figure 7. A summary of the six student’s baseline engagement behavior is presented in Table 9. Information presented in this table is discussed in more detail in reference to students’ engagement behavior observed in the CMC environments at the end of the discussion on the first research question.
• **Gloria**: is seen as actively engaged in all phases of the reading class. She starts the various pre- and post reading tasks without delay and throughout the text readings, she follows along continually, underlining, circling and taking notes. In group and pair activities, she is observed taking initiative in asking questions, re-reading texts, writing answers down, discussing ideas with peers and presenting answers during the group presentations.

• **Joe**: seems rather disengaged throughout the various activities presented in class. However, for most of the reading of the text, he is seen following along. In group discussions, he rarely took part and he did not present during the group presentations.

• **Luther**: appears to only participate in pre-reading tasks that are in question-answer whole class format. He reads along with the various readings in intervals and is often seen doing off-task activities. He frequently delays in starting the post-reading tasks, however, it should be noted that although the individual tasks are not performed in an actively engaged manner, he does contribute to group discussions and presentations.

• **Soufi**: is engaged in all phases of the class. He starts his pre- and post reading tasks immediately, contributes in pair and group discussions and follows along in the various readings.

• **Vicky**: often delays her start in pre-reading activities. For most of the readings, she follows along throughout. In post-reading tasks, Vicky starts most of the tasks immediately, but loses interest after a while and only works on them in intervals; however in group discussions, she seems to want to participate and contribute.

• **Zi**: rarely starts the pre-reading tasks immediately. He does not follow along in the textbook readings and for post-reading tasks, especially group tasks, he does not contribute. However, the individual and pair tasks are completed with more observed engagement.

**Figure 7.** Students’ observed baseline engagement behavior

The establishment of the students’ baseline engagement behavior in the traditional reading class allows the first research question to be addressed by focusing on students’ engagement in the selected online environments (*Google Docs* and blogs) and determining a possible change from the baseline behaviors outlined in Table 9.
Table 9

Summary of the students’ baseline engagement behavior in the traditional reading classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gloria</th>
<th>Joe</th>
<th>Luther</th>
<th>Soufi</th>
<th>Vicky</th>
<th>Zi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in WC discussion</td>
<td>7.6 %</td>
<td>10.1 %</td>
<td>14.3 %</td>
<td>16.8 %</td>
<td>8.4 %</td>
<td>5.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterances more than 6 words</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present of the 5 classes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged in pre-reading</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged while reading</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>On-off</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged in post-reading individual</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged in post reading group/pair</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Mostly no</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual work submitted</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=6

Students’ engagement behavior in the CMC environments

The six students’ engagement with reading texts and tasks as they feature in the classes with the CMC component incorporated are discussed in terms of learner participation (task completion and interaction with peers in these online environments) as well as in terms of what is noted in both the ethnographic field notes taken during these classes and in the emerging patterns of engagement in the *Google Docs* and blogs. These are further discussed in terms of students’ responses in the semi-structured interviews.

Learner participation in classes with CMC components

The discussion of learners’ engagement in the selected CMC environments is much dependent on whether students attempted the tasks as they were presented in the various classes. Apart from Joe being absent for three of these six classes and completing only one online task and Luther being absent from one class and completing two of the six tasks, the other four students performed all tasks presented. Appendix F provides a summary of the online tasks and task completion.
In the interview conducted with Luther, he mentioned that the reason he did not complete the online tasks was that he felt the class was boring (“Sometimes to be honest, in this semester, I feel all IEOP, all the classes are boring”) and that paying attention to blogs or Google Docs one day and then having a traditional reading class the next day acted as distraction as he explained “Yeah, because that uh, we don’t focus, uh, maybe sometimes focus in book sometimes focus on the blogs, it doesn’t make sense”. Joe’s main reasons why he did not perform the online tasks, as mentioned in his interview responses included that even though he especially enjoyed the blog tasks, he did not have time to finish the tasks for homework (“Uh, I didn’t have time” and “I, I like the blog but the I, I don’t know”, “I finished it like three quarters of the way but didn’t post”).

In the interviews conducted with these six students, they were asked whether they enjoyed performing CMC tasks or tasks in the traditional reading class more. Gloria and Luther answered that they enjoyed completing tasks in both environments, while the other four students (including Joe) stated that they enjoyed performing the online tasks more than the traditional classroom tasks. In response to the question as to which environment they preferred completing tasks in (be it online or pen-and-paper format), Gloria stated that she prefers pen-and-paper tasks and thus the traditional classroom environment, while Vicky, Joe, Zi and Luther prefer performing tasks in the online environments more. Soufi mentioned that he prefers both environments as can be seen in excerpt 3, highlighting several of Soufi’s answers in response to this question.

**Excerpt 3: Soufi’s interview**

- “Uhm, it depends, I enjoy, first I enjoy, I enjoy online because uh by working online I kind of a working on several tasks, not only the work I’m doing, I’m, I’m mastering also the technology thing, knowing how to post, because I can apply it and and I’ve already applied it by creating my own blog and I can share, maybe I have a friend elsewhere in the world, we can work on the same document, we can do the same document, we can discuss about the same topic, so that’s very interesting”

- “but, uhm, the paper one is, is uh, is also good. It’s good, I cannot say that the online uh activity replace or uh is uh 100 percent”
• “Yeah, we need both, both of them”.

An important aspect in the investigation of learner participation in the CMC environments is to analyze the interaction that occurred within the various online tasks. The first CMC environment discussed in terms of learner interaction is the three blog posts. As Luther and Joe did not participate in these tasks, they are not included in this discussion. In addition, even though leaving comments on peers’ blog posts were part of the task assignments, only Gloria performed this part for one of the tasks. She posted a comment on three students’ blog posts concerning the most beautiful place or thing they have seen. Gloria attempted to engage in extended discourse with one of the students (excerpt 4), however as no reply was received, this marked the end of the extended discourse. The teacher of the course also posted several comments on the students’ posts. These however are not included in the analysis of the data as the students did not reply to these comments.

**Excerpt 4**: Gloria’s response to Student X’s blog post

Hi, Student X!

This picture is very simple and also very nostalgic.
I like it!
Especially, we are in the United States, so we can share the same feeling from this picture.
Our hometown also has railroad [sic] and the same kind of view.
Was this picture taken in the early morning or early evening?

In the interview responses, students provided several reasons for not commenting on each other’s blog posts, ranging from forgetting to do so, to not having time and finding it boring. Vicky however stated that she wanted to leave comments, but as she did not want to offend the authors, she decided against commenting (“Uh, maybe I think sometimes it’s just the uh, I start to write what I feel about other people but because we don’t know each other maybe” …. “some comments will make them feel angry”). Vicky’s motivation for not commenting corresponds to reasons for being unwilling to communicate as identified by Koga (2010) including communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation.
Reading tasks presented in the second online environment employed in this study, *Google Docs*, seem to allow for greater interaction and collaboration between students than the blog tasks did. This might be due to the nature of the communicative reading tasks presented in the *Google Docs* environment that required students’ interaction and collaboration for successful completion of the tasks. For example, in the first *Google Docs* task, students were required to work in pairs to reconstruct a story based on their differing sets of sentences (six per student) and in the second task, students in groups of three needed to collaborate in summarizing the text on *Matchmaking* (each being given specific paragraphs to summarize) and then to collaborate and negotiate with each other to reach an answer posed for the second part of the task. Table 10 presents the number of turn-taking interactions that occurred in the first *Google Docs* task, while Table 11 shows the same information for the second *Google Docs* task. In both these tasks, students were randomly assigned to their various groups. In the second task, only Gloria and Soufi’s group attempted the second aspect of the task (reaching an answer), however as Gloria requested approval for her suggestion from her group members and no reply was received, this marked the end of their group interaction as well.

Table 10

*The interactional turns that occurred during the first Google Docs task*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luther</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soufi</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicky</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Y</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of interactional turns</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% of contribution made</strong></td>
<td><strong>73</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N=6*

It should be noted that Joe is not mentioned as he did not perform this task. In addition, it is also important to note that when a student inserted multiple sentences within one interactional turn (thus still performing the same function), these sentences are viewed and
counted as one interaction. The interactional turns are therefore not an indication of the students’ actual contributions made in task completion, but rather an indication of how much of the activity that occurred during the task (based on the document’s revision history) can be ascribed to which student. Table 10 indicates that 73% of the activity that is observed in group 1’s document is due to Gloria’s participation, with Luther responsible for 27% of the interaction that occurred. The interaction in the other two groups, still unevenly distributed, is far less so than in group 1. However, as explained previously, the unequal interaction distribution is not a true reflection of the amount of information conveyed or contributed by each student. The same statement applies to Table 11. Group 4, for example, produced longer utterances (or moved several sentences to the correct place) at once, and as is explained with the first *Google Docs* task, this is again seen as one transactional turn.

**Table 11**

*The interactional turns that occurred during the second Google Docs task*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of interactional turns</th>
<th>% of contribution made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicky</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student A</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luther</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student B &amp; C</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zi</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student D &amp; E</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group 4</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soufi</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N=12*
Table 11 further highlights the degree of participation of the six students in terms of the participation by their other group members. Vicky, for example, contributed to the overall activity in her group’s document 50 percent, while Joe, who only corrected two spelling errors and is therefore seen actively contributing in the document on two occasions (he also did not summarize his section) is seen as contributing 11 percent. Luther, who does summarize his section, but does not engage in interaction with his other group members (apart from introducing himself), is seen contributing 18 percent to the overall activity in his group’s document. Zi and Gloria contributed the most in their respective groups (54 and 50%), while Soufi contributed 31 percent.

The third Google Docs task required students to summarize specific information (the main people mentioned) in the text as well as to answer several true/false questions that followed. As is the case with the second Google Docs task, Gloria once more is the only student that completed the entire task (true/false questions). Although Luther was present in this class, he did not perform the task, nor did Joe who was absent. As this was a task designed for individual completion, interaction and collaboration with peers was not required for task completion.

In the interviews conducted, students were asked questions concerning collaborating with their peers on the various tasks and whether this was an easy feat. Luther explained that when his partners knew how the online environments worked, it was easy to collaborate and interact with them, while Gloria experienced some frustration in this process (“I don’t know, uh, in my opinion, only my opinion, some people don’t focus on class and they did something, uh something different things” and “Yeah, a little bit like frustration”). Soufi, as seen in excerpt 5, explained that the online environments were favorable for interaction and collaboration.
**Excerpt 5: Soufi’s interview**

Ja, it was easy to do because, it is very interesting, I, I didn’t know before about such, uh, about that. It seems like you have your, your uh, partner sitting in front of you, because you can discuss anything, you can argue, agree or disagree or anything.

Students’ language output as identified in the various tasks in the two online environments is discussed in more depth in answer to the second research question posed. The second aspect of students’ engagement behavior in these CMC environments concerns the observed engagement behavior in both the completion of these online tasks and during the reading of the various texts as mentioned in the ethnographic field notes.

*Student engagement behavior in the reading classes with integrated CMC environments*

The reading classes with the integrated CMC environments feature much like the traditional reading classes with the exception that the main reading task is performed in either *Google Docs* or in blog tasks. In these classes, several whole class discussions in question-answer format also characterize these lessons in addition to the reading of the texts as is found in the traditional reading classes. As with the traditional reading classes, engagement behavior in the six classes with the integrated CMC components are also observed and the engagement behavior presented below in Figure 8 are based on recurring patterns of behavior identified in the ethnographic field notes summarized in Appendix E.
Summary of students’ engagement behavior in the online environments

A summary of the students’ engagement behavior in these classes with the integrated CMC environments is presented in Table 12. Following Table 12 is an outline of how the communicative reading tasks presented in the online environments might have contributed to affect students’ engagement with the reading texts and reading related tasks, thus in answer of the first research question posed. The differences in student engagement behavior in these two environments can only be argued for with consideration that the results presented cannot

- **Gloria**: displays much of the same engagement behavior as seen in the traditional face-to-face reading class, circling and underlining words in the textbook and making notes, while following along with the reading continuously. For tasks in the CMC environments, she starts without delay and works on them for the duration of allocated task time.

- **Joe**: was absent for three of the six classes and participating in only one CMC task. He usually starts the reading of the text by following along in the textbook, however as the reading progresses, he is observed to follow along in intervals. An interesting observation is that with the blog tasks, Joe is observed going to his blog and is seen typing in his blog, yet he never posted.

- **Luther**: was only absent one of the six CMC integrated classes, yet he performed only two of the tasks and did not make any blog posts. In other phases of the class, he is observed as rarely paying attention to the task at hand. He is often seen visiting other websites.

- **Soufi**: generally follows along while reading of the texts takes place, he also starts his CMC tasks without delay and in pre-reading tasks he pays attention, often seen visiting online dictionary websites.

- **Vicky and Zi**: share much commonality in their engagement behavior as they rarely seem engaged in pre-reading activities, yet far more engaged in the tasks conducted in the CMC environments, especially the blog related tasks. While Vicky follows the reading of the text in intervals, visiting other websites such as Facebook in between, Zi is noted to rarely follow the readings in these classes.

Figure 8. Students’ observed engagement behavior in classes with integrated CMC environments

Summary of students’ engagement behavior in the online environments

A summary of the students’ engagement behavior in these classes with the integrated CMC environments is presented in Table 12. Following Table 12 is an outline of how the communicative reading tasks presented in the online environments might have contributed to affect students’ engagement with the reading texts and reading related tasks, thus in answer of the first research question posed. The differences in student engagement behavior in these two environments can only be argued for with consideration that the results presented cannot
with finality be attributed to the intervention alone, as many factors might influence student behavior in both environments.

Table 12

*Summary of students’ engagement behavior in classes with CMC integration*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gloria</th>
<th>Joe</th>
<th>Luther</th>
<th>Soufi</th>
<th>Vicky</th>
<th>Zi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task completion of six</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comments on other students’ blog posts</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Google Doc 1 interaction activity %</strong></td>
<td>73</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Google Doc 2 interaction activity %</strong></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Present of the 6 classes</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engaged in pre-reading</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not determined</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>On-off</td>
<td>Not determined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engaged while reading</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>On-off</td>
<td>Mostly No</td>
<td>Mostly Yes</td>
<td>On-off</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engaged in CMC environment</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=6

The most prominent changes in students’ engagement behavior in reference to the communicative tasks presented in the selected online environments as evident from the data analyzed in this chapter include:

1) Gloria, who did not contribute significantly to whole-class discussions in the question-answer format, was responsible for the majority of interaction and contribution that took
place in the CMC environments. She remained engaged throughout all activities in both environments.

2) Soufi, who dominated whole-class discussions, produced less interaction and collaboration in the CMC environments than Vicky and Zi. He does however seem engaged in all activities regardless of the task environment.

3) Vicky who only produced 8.4 percent contribution in whole class discussions, was responsible for almost half of the interaction of her group in the two Google Docs tasks, producing more interaction and collaboration than Soufi.

4) Vicky’s reading text engagement did however minimize with distractions such as Facebook and email facilities being available during the various phases of the task.

5) Zi who produced the least amount of whole-class contribution (traditional face-to-face), with no answers being volunteered, produced the second most activity, contribution and interaction of the six students in the Google Docs tasks.

6) While Zi was only engaged in the pair and individual tasks in the traditional classroom, he was observed to be engaged in all the tasks in the CMC environments.

7) Zi’s engagement with the reading texts seems unaffected by the introduction of CMC environments as he is noted to be disengaged with the reading texts throughout the study.

8) Luther contributes less in the CMC environments than he does in the traditional reading classroom whole class discussions, contributing only 27 percent and 18 percent respectively in the two Google Docs tasks that require collaboration and interaction.

9) Luther seems to be engaged in the traditional classroom activities when pair or group work is involved. In the CMC environments he only completes the tasks that require peer interaction. His behavior in terms of this seems constant regardless of the environment.
10) Joe produces more language output in traditional whole class discussions, more than Gloria, Vicky and Zi, yet in the CMC environments he only contributed in one Google Docs task (11%).

11) Even though Joe did not make any blog posts, he is seen being more engaged in post-reading activities in the CMC environment than he is in the traditional classroom attempting blog tasks, even though he did not publish any posts.

Students’ engagement behavior in reference to the selected CMC environments is further explained in terms of their interview responses. Gloria for example explained that although she prefers face-to-face interaction as seen in excerpt 6, she finds the online environments presenting her with an opportunity to work at her own pace, which might in part explain why she contributed more in the online environments than she did in traditional classes’ whole class discussions.

**Excerpt 6:** Gloria’s interview

…so like real-time conversation, and uh, uhm, I am not native speaker, so sometimes I don’t understand, I can’t understand a lot what uhm, others say, but face-to-face I can, maybe I can understand like atmosphere like visual.

Vicky’s interview responses also shed some light on why her interaction and language output in the online environments are more than in the traditional reading classroom as she explains that communicating in CMC environments is less face-threatening (excerpt 7).

**Excerpt 7:** Vicky’s interview

Yeah, because the online reading is easy to do and the, it’s not like the this face-to-face, maybe sometimes it’s embarrassing, you don’t know the person and they don’t know you and they can’t tell the truth, and uh, I mean maybe you are not good in it and uh, makes sense embarrass.

Students were also asked to assess the interfaces of the two online environments in terms of ease of navigation, editing, posting, sharing, and so on. All students apart from Gloria said that they felt the environments were easy to use. Gloria explained that she felt her
unfamiliarity with the interfaces made it slightly more difficult for her to use the environments.

In addition, students were questioned regarding their own assessment of effort that they put towards reading the texts in terms of whether they thought it was different depending on the environment in which the post-reading tasks were presented. All students except Vicky explained that they put the same effort into the reading of the texts regardless of the task environment. Vicky stated that she put more effort in reading the texts followed by pen-and-paper activities. Vicky’s explanation for her reading engagement is supported in the field notes where it is mentioned that she is often seen visiting other sites such as Facebook or her email accounts throughout the reading of the texts in the lab classes. Her behavior is further supported in her argument regarding the disadvantages of presenting reading tasks in online environments, as she states that “I think maybe they will open the other website, (laughs) they will searching the net or do, do something else”.

The data analyzed in terms of learners’ engagement behavior seem to support the arguments that communicative reading tasks presented in online environments allow for greater equality and increase in terms of learner participation than do traditional reading classroom tasks (De la Fuente, 2003; Godwin-Jones, 2003; Kim, 2008). Interpretation of the results leads a second argument in reference to these six students, that when students are engaged in the traditional reading classroom, they are engaged in the online environments as well. However, when they are not fully engaged in especially pre- and during reading phases, the students became even more distracted in the classes with CMC environments incorporated.

The communicative reading tasks presented in these selected online environments allow students to (especially in the blog tasks) use their “personal experiences to make connections to new knowledge and information” and this as Borgia and Owles (2007) continue to explain, “can enhance comprehension and promote engagement in reading” (p. 35). In addition, as the authors note, when students “work and share their ideas, reading engagement is increased through the social nature of the activity and the personal connections each participant makes” (ibid.). However, a reliable indicator of engagement in terms of collaboration and CMC task
participation is the interaction that occurs between students both in terms of quantity and quality (Conrad & Donaldson, 2004). In other words, language output produced by students in the various CMC tasks serve in part as an indicator of student engagement and therefore deserves specific attention. To this extent the second research question is addressed.

**Research Question #2**

The second research question that guided the study is, *how does the language output students produce in Google Docs and blogs differ in terms of the quantity and quality of the contributions?* In order to investigate the quantity and quality of the contributions, the various blog posts and comments as well as the contributions in the various *Google Docs* tasks, are analyzed and what is observed in the data of the six students are discussed in terms of each other as well as in terms of their interview responses. The quantity and quality constructs used in this analysis are discussed in more detail in chapter 3. Quantity in essence, is analyzed in terms of the degree of participation (number of contributions made), while the quality construct, being influenced by the appraisal framework associated with Halliday’s *SFL*, is analyzed in terms of the degree of self-expression, the accuracy of the answer and the appropriateness of the response.

**Language output analysis: Quantity**

The argument that communicative tasks presented in online environments have the potential to allow for an increase in learner output (De la Fuente, 2003) underlies the first aspect of the quantity analysis. Here language output generated by the students in the various CMC tasks are investigated, paying specific attention to which students produced more language output and discussing this in reference to the students’ engagement behavior. Table 13 presents an overview of the language produced by the students in the three *Google Docs* tasks and illustrates how much of the language produced is information contributing and how much is to be considered mere talk (communication) or meaning negotiation interactions.
Table 13

Language output in the three Google Docs tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Participation</th>
<th>Gloria</th>
<th>Joe</th>
<th>Luther</th>
<th>Soufi</th>
<th>Vicky</th>
<th>Zi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Google Docs 1: Pair Sentence Sequencing</td>
<td>% of overall task contribution</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of contributions</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of info contributions</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of meaning/talk contributions</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Google Docs 2: Groups of 3 students Summarizing the Matchmaking text

| % of overall task contribution | 50 | 11 | 18 | 31 | 50 | 54 |
| Number of contributions | 8 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 9 | 13 |
| Number of info contributions | 5 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 5 |
| % | 62.5 | 100 | 80 | 60 | 56 | 38.5 |
| Number of meaning/talk contributions | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 8 |
| % | 37.5 | 0 | 20 | 40 | 44 | 61.5 |

N= 12

It should be noted that the percentages presented in Table 13 are based on how much of the interaction or contributions that occurred in the tasks are to be attributed to which student. The percentages presented above are thus based on the randomly assigned group formations students found themselves in.

Information presented in Table 13 indicates that in the first Google Docs task, Gloria contributed 73 percent to the overall interaction that occurred in her group task, of which the vast majority of her contributions, 62.5 percent was concerned with relaying information. This is in steep contrast to Luther, who was Gloria’s partner for this task. He only contributed to 27 percent of the overall activity observed in this document and 89 percent of those interactions were related to talking or meaning negotiation. Talk or meaning negotiation
includes mere communication, introductions and task feedback such as Luther’s comment to Gloria, “really, it’s a great job. I agree”. Luther further contributed to information sharing or knowledge building only one time where he entered all his sentences at once. He did not help his partner in moving the sentences into the correct sequence. This therefore explains why Luther’s information contribution in Google Docs task 1 constitutes 11 percent of overall contributions of his group. Luther, however, displays different language output distribution in Google Docs task 2. Even though his overall contribution to this task completion is still low (18%), he rarely engaged in any talk, apart from introducing himself and only provided the information he was responsible for, thus making the information contribution of his interaction 80 percent and talk or negotiation 20 percent in contrast to 89 percent as seen in Google Docs task 1. Gloria seems to devote consistent distribution in both tasks to information contribution (62.5%) and talk or negotiation of meaning (37.5%). Vicky and Zi seem relatively consistent in their contribution distribution as well. Soufi in turn also inverts his contribution distribution, as Luther did. In Google Docs task 1, Soufi devoted 35 percent of his contributions to information sharing, while in Google Docs task 2, 60 percent of his contributions is based on information sharing. The changes in contributions between information sharing and talk (including meaning negotiation) are illustrated in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Students’ contribution distribution in the first two Google Docs tasks
It is to be understood that Gloria, being observed as engaged in all phases of the various reading classes, displays a greater willingness to communicate in these CMC environments and remain consistent in her distribution between information sharing and talk contributions, placing a greater emphasis on information sharing. Vicky and Zi appear more engaged in the online activities than in the traditional class’s various phases and seem relatively consistent in their various contributions between talk and information sharing over the two tasks. The analysis of these contributions, especially in terms of the more equal participation opportunities for the six students, supports Murphy’s (2007) argument that online communicative tasks “provide positive implications for promoting interaction through paired online reading activities” (p. 108).

However, as previously mentioned, this is not an accurate representation of contributions made by students, as length of contributions within an interactional turn has to be incorporated in a discussion on language output as well. Length of contributions therefore forms the second aspect of the quantity construct that receives attention.

In the discussion of the length of students’ language output, it is important to note that when students moved a sentence into the correct order or inserted a number to indicate the position of a sentence, these instances are considered as an interactional turn and are counted as one word. As Joe did not perform the first or third task presented in Google Docs, and his contribution in the second task is the mere correction of two spelling errors, his language output for representation is not included in this section. Table 14 provides an indication of the length of the contributions students made in the first two Google Docs tasks.

In Google Docs 3, students performed the individual task of summarizing specific information in a text (characters mentioned) and the various document lengths produced by the students include Gloria 118 words, Soufi and Zi each with 112 words and Vicky with 108 words. The language output produced by students in this third Google Docs tasks is relatively the same with regards to quantity, regardless of students’ engagement behavior or performance level.
Table 14

Length of contributions on average in the first two Google Docs tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Google Docs Task</th>
<th>Gloria</th>
<th>Luther</th>
<th>Soufi</th>
<th>Vicky</th>
<th>Zi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information Contributions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of words</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average per turn</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk contributions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of words</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average per turn</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N=5*

The three Google Docs tasks constitute only half of the activities presented online. Language output in terms of quantity in the blogs is also analyzed. Because blog posts were in the form of individual tasks, interaction in terms of number of information contributions versus talk or meaning constructions are not considered in the analysis. In addition, as mentioned previously, only Gloria commented on three students’ posts and without receiving a reply, the interaction is complete and thus meaning negotiation and collaborative information sharing did not occur extensively. The focus is therefore on the length of the posts made by students. Joe and Luther made no blog posts and are consequently not included in discussions concerning blogs.
In terms of the length of posts, of the six students Gloria produced by far the most language output, progressively writing more in her blogs. Vicky and Zi also progressively wrote more in each blog task. In addition, Gloria produced 72, 61 and 54 words respectively in the three comments she made in response to students’ posts; however for comparative reasons, these are not included in the discussion on language output length. It should be mentioned that when lyrics or poems are presented in the various blog posts, these are also not included in the word count. The word counts presented in Table 15 are solely based on the number of words each student authored in his/her own voice.

Table 15

*Length of students’ blog posts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Blog post 1</th>
<th>Blog post 2</th>
<th>Blog post 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soufi</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicky</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zi</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N= 4*

In his first blog post, Zi made two entries, inserting *YouTube* videos of two songs. However he only presented his own thoughts in the second post where he completed the task in the commenting section. Vicky also completed the first two tasks in the commenting section of her blog posts as well. In the interviews when students were asked to reflect on whether they produced more language output, more words in the online environments or in the pen and paper tasks (of the traditional reading class), a variety of answers are received. Zi and Gloria said that they produced the same amount in both environments; Luther and Vicky argued that they produced more quantity-wise in the online environments; and Soufi and Joe stated that they produced more words in pen and paper format.
In terms of the six students investigated, it became evident that Zi, who volunteered no answers in the whole-class discussions in the traditional reading classes, produced on average more language output in the CMC environments than Vicky, who contributed more than Zi in the whole class discussions. In his interview, Zi mentioned that he felt the online environments made collaboration and interaction easy (“It’s easy to share with others”). Gloria contributed the most in the CMC environments in terms of the quantity of language output, far more than she did in the traditional reading classroom while Soufi, who dominated the traditional whole-class discussions, seemed to produce variety in terms of the quantity of his language output in the CMC environments.

Language output analysis: Quality

The second construct that is discussed in terms of learners’ language output is that of quality. The quality construct was investigated by paying attention to 1) the degree of self expression, 2) the accuracy of the answer and 3) the appropriateness of the response.

*The degree of self-expression*

The degree of self-expression as part of the quality construct is addressed by identifying instances of self-expression and expression of enjoyment and opinion. The aspect degree of self-expression, is closely related to the notion of identity construction in online environments. CMC environments are credited for providing a variety of opportunities for students to construct and reconstruct their identity in these online communities (Lam, 2000). In this study, students selected their own pseudonyms and as Zi in his interview explained, specifically in relation to his blog; he enjoyed the freedom of creating his blog as he chose (excerpt 8).

**Excerpt 8: Zi’s interview**

Because I can create my own spaces, the skin of the blog, the backgrounds, the picture is whatever you want, you can find a favorite picture to as your background, use your favorite color, and uh, I think it’s easy to post some prefer picture or songs so it is easy for others to come to see your blog.
In addition to identity construction that occurs automatically when students insert pictures, videos or music in their blogs, the actual language produced in the various CMC environments allow for further investigation into the degree of self-expression present.

Gloria is seen identifying herself in all three the Google Docs tasks. In the first Google Docs task, Gloria begins by introducing herself (I’m Gloria). In the second task she begins her interaction by stating that she will start summarizing and ends this sentence with her name in parentheses. At the end of the document interactions, she again provides this type of self-identification twice. She also identifies the work she submitted in the third Google Docs task by writing her name and surname at the top of the document. Through this type of identification, it can be argued that the students are taking ownership of their contributions, which in terms of identity construction and self-expression involves as Williams (2008) explains “a sense of empowerment” (p. 684). Gloria is further seen to self-express in terms of opinion utterances such as “Ok, I also done” and “Ok, I am on you”, where she agrees with her partner. In the three Google Docs tasks, Gloria gave instances of self-expression a total of 14 times. In the three blog tasks, Gloria self-expressed to an even greater degree. Comments such as “I like your picture; I am going to go to some Fiji islands in this year (gives time indication) for honeymoon” and “… I’m impressed with…”, to name a few are present in Gloria’s language output in the comments she made on students’ blog posts. However, for comparison purposes, self-expression as it occurs in the comments is not included in the analysis of the students’ language output.

In the various CMC reading-related tasks, Gloria gave instances of self-expression either by identification or expression of opinion and/or enjoyment several times. Sentences such as “I selected this poem”; “I think this temple is the most beautiful one in the world”; “I think this music is one of the most beautiful music in history” and “I like the flow of this music and it has beautiful sound waves” for example are identified in Gloria’s various blog posts. In the three blog tasks, Gloria used the pronoun I a total of 13 times, we a total of four times, two instances of us and me/my five times.
Zi’s language output is characterized by several instances of self-expression, much like Gloria’s. Expressions of opinion such as “this is one”; “this is 4”; “let’s find 3”; “put here is right?”; “I don’t think so” and “Think this song give me the true feeling about the singer” are some examples of evidence of self-expression in his language output. In total, Zi refers to himself (I) 14 times, me/my four times and we/us three times. In addition, self expression is also seen in excerpt 9, taken from his second blog post.

**Excerpt 9: Zi’s second blog post**

I took this picture when I visited Mongolian, it is a really beautiful place that I’ve ever been to. So I think we need to learn this spirit.

In the two Google Docs tasks that Luther performed, he starts by introducing himself (I’m Luther :) and by typing his name in the second one). In the first Google Docs task he showed self-expression by using the pronoun I three times and we once. Joe did not self-express in the one Google Docs task he participated in. Soufi provided more self-expression instances in opinion than he did in identification or the use of first pronouns. Soufi included expressions such as “seems like that” and “I think this should be 3”. In the blog tasks, expressions such as “that wonderful song”; “that wonderful image”; “these pyramids are beautiful” and “I like this song because it calms me down, whenever I am bored, it soothes me” are identified. Vicky starts the first Google Docs task by typing her name. Other instances of self-expression in the various online tasks include the use of I four times (including “I like this song…I love this song”), the use of we three times and the use of me once.

In terms of students’ self-expression in the various online environments, with the exception of Joe, all students to some degree provided evidence of self-expression with Gloria and Zi presenting the greatest degree of self-expression in their language output. In his interview, Soufi explained that there is responsibility connected to having one’s voice (or identity) present in these online environments (excerpt 10). Soufi in this interview also mentioned that he created his own personal blog after working with blogs in this study.
**Excerpt 10: Soufi’s interview**

- S: Ok, first one, before posting I have something online, I have to be responsible, since everybody see it. I know I should know what to write and I’m aware that the net is a public place
- S: Being able to express my thought, to express my thought, most important things
- S: First I like, I like the blog because ah it’s a way to have one’s identity on the internet, I can, I have my own page, I can share my feelings.

The second aspect of the quality investigation of learners’ language output concerns the accuracy of the answers.

*Accuracy of the answer*

Accuracy of the answers given in the *Google Docs* tasks is presented in Table 16. This table shows that even though students are willing to collaborate and interact with one another in these online environments, they might not strive for extreme accuracy in their contributions, a conclusion supported by Kessler (2009).

Table 16

*Accuracy of the answers in the various Google Docs tasks*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gloria</th>
<th>Joe</th>
<th>Luther</th>
<th>Soufi</th>
<th>Vicky</th>
<th>Zi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Google Docs 1</strong></td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td><strong>92%</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td><strong>92%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Google Docs 2</strong></td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>0</td>
<td><strong>66%</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td><strong>33%</strong></td>
<td>0 (wrong text)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Google Docs 3</strong></td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td><strong>43%</strong></td>
<td><strong>86%</strong></td>
<td><strong>86%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N= 6. Note: a – indicates no task attempt*

Accuracy of the answers in the students’ blog posts are determined in terms of the evidence of insight, reflection or thought shown. Blogs are seen as being particularly suited for
reflective writing due to its asynchronous nature and as Lai et al. (2008) mention, “reflection either through individual or interactive work is an effective means to strengthen learners’ self-management skills” (p. 98). Evidence of reflection, insight and/or thought in the various blog posts are evident in Gloria’s language output in sentences and phrases such as:

- Love does exists in any kinds of relationships
- Mozart was the greatest artist in music field
- The sound wave does not have any unwanted colors, like a very artificial symphonies
- It is comfortably natural and directly contacts with my brain

Of the six students, Gloria presented the greatest evidence of reflection, insight and thought as she discussed her chosen poem’s rhyme scheme, explained how Mozart’s music is synchronized with nature, and gave extensive background information to the Japanese temple in her second blog post. Soufi, Vicky and Zi all showed to a lesser degree than Gloria, instances of reflection, thought and insight. Soufi for example, highlighted how love is affected by the proximity of a loved one and how what is beautiful for one person or culture is not necessarily so for another. Vicky explained the meaning of the song she chose stating that “when you face the true love you should be brave”. Zi showed more insight and thought in his second post as shown in excerpt 11 (expanding excerpt 9). In the three blog posts by the four students, instances of reflection, thought or insight are indentified with Gloria presenting 13 such instances, Vicky and Zi five each and Soufi three. Researchers such as Kol and Schcolnik (2008) argue that by allowing students time for reflection, as is the case in the blog tasks, students are presented with an opportunity for “deeper thinking that is necessary to make connections between new and old information, integrate the two, and synthesize” (p. 49). However, with three of the four students presenting relatively few instances of reflection, serious thought or insight in their language output, arguments for deeper thinking, reflection and synthesizing of information cannot be argued for this study.
Excerpt 11: Zi’s second blog post

This picture is in a poor light of sun. This tree was dead, but it won’t fall down until 1000 years later. So I think we need to learn this spirit. We should keep walking in our life.

Students in their interviews made reference to the reflection, insight and thought possibility blogs hold. Even though Joe did not publish any posts, he is seen working on the blog tasks and in his interview he remarked that “It’s easier and we can find sources if you need some sources like I feel comfortable online” and that “….and like I said, you can find sources you need, pictures and citations”. This is an argument echoed by Vicky in her interview as well, as she stated that “because it’s online I can do some information from the internet and it’s easy to do, to do some research and then to find the information you need…”. Students further explained in their interviews that performing tasks online allowed them to add another dimension to their language output. Gloria mentioned that the inclusion of music and pictures leads to higher levels of enjoyment, while Zi said that he reflected more on what he wanted to write (even though reflection, insight and thought instances are few in his language output), he explained that “I, I want to give them they think this song or picture, this is beautiful, so I try my best to find the best ones I think”.

The third aspect of the quality construct that receives attention in this discussion is the appropriateness of the answer.

*The appropriateness of the answer*

The appropriateness of the answer is measured in terms of 1) appropriate response to the task, 2) referencing and 3) an indication of audience awareness.

Of the six students, only Gloria is regarded as appropriately responding to the tasks as she is the only student who attempted to complete all sections of the various CMC tasks in addition to being the only student who posted comments on her peers’ blogs.
In terms of referencing, the *Google Docs* tasks do not contain any referencing while in the blog posts students were instructed to reference pictures, videos, songs, lyrics, poems, etc. to avoid plagiarism and copyright infringement. Gloria referenced both the poem (blog post one) and the pictures of the temple (blog post 2); however she did not reference the music video inserted in blog post 3. Soufi referenced the music video and lyrics to the song inserted in his first blog post as well as the picture in the second blog post, but also did not reference the music video inserted in blog post 3. He did however in his first post write that “This video copy from youtube is just for fun and not design to offend any one”. Vicky presented no referencing in any of her blog posts and Zi while stating that he took the picture in blog post 2, also did not reference any of the music, videos, or lyrics included in his various posts.

The final aspect of the quality construct is an indication of audience awareness as is evident in the language output presented by the various students in the CMC tasks. The instances of audience awareness are seen through either addressing specific people by name or through the use of you/your/us and we. A few examples of these instances include “What are we going to do? Soufi?”; “who are u?” “How do you guys think about it?” and “As you know…”. In the *Google Docs* tasks 1 and 2, students seem to acknowledge their partners (the audience) in several instances. Soufi and Zi addressed each other in the first Google Docs task by name as did Gloria and Luther. In this first *Google Docs* task, Luther also provides Gloria with feedback on her question, acknowledging her by saying “really, it’s a great job”. In these first two *Google Docs* tasks, Soufi acknowledged the audience through the use of you/your/we and us a total of five times, Zi, seven times, Vicky, six times, Gloria nine times and Luther twice. In addition, in the second Google Docs tasks, Zi engaged in extensive talk with his partners in Chinese, an indication of audience awareness. As *Google Docs* 3 was an individual task, no audience awareness is needed.

In the blogs posts, having knowledge that students have a greater potential audience, acknowledgement of the audience occurred as follows: Gloria addressed the audience through the use of “you” a total of seven times, including “You and your wife/husband; you and your girlfriend/boyfriend [sic]…”. Vicky only referenced the audience once in saying
that “you should be brave”. The other students did not acknowledge the audience in their language output.

In terms of acknowledging the audience, Gloria again showed more instances of this aspect in her language output, Vicky acknowledging the audience in both environments, Zi referring to his audience in *Google Docs* tasks more than Vicky and Soufi, who still acknowledged their peers more than Luther did.

Gloria, who seemed to be engaged in all phases of the reading classroom regardless of the task environment, showed greater participation and interaction in the CMC environments than in the whole-class discussions. In addition, her language output produced displays that the quantity she produced is justified in the quality of those productions as well. Luther seemed to be only interested in tasks that involve pair or group work, but seemed to produce more language output in the traditional classroom setting, even though in his interviews he stated that he prefers working online more. Vicky and Zi both produced more language in the CMC environments and although their language contributions displayed most of the quality features, it is still so to a lesser extent than Gloria’s. Soufi still seemed engaged in the CMC environments, but his language output featured less in terms of quantity in the online environments than in the traditional reading classroom and regardless of his performance level in the traditional classroom, his language output in the CMC environments seemed comparable to that of Vicky and Zi’s, who were characterized as mid-performing students. A summary of the main findings in the analysis of the data is highlighted in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis serves to begin to address the current gap in research on ESL students’ reading engagement and language output in CMC environments like Google Docs and blogs. In the process of conducting this study various limitations are identified, yet these limitations do not take away from the conclusions that are made regarding the six ESL students’ engagement with reading texts and tasks. The limitations of the study, the conclusions reached and their significance and implications are presented in this final chapter.

Limitations

This study was conducted over three weeks, followed by the short interviews in week four. This coupled with the fact that learner training occurred only for two days prior to the three-week observations carry two limitations in itself as it pertains to this study. The first concerns the fact that more learner training is needed. Learner training as presented in this study, predominantly centered on the basic functionality of the two interfaces. Although most students in the interviews mentioned that the two CMC environments were easy to use, Gloria mentioned that she found her unfamiliarity with the two interfaces in a sense limiting. The second aspect to this limitation involves the fact that due to the short duration of the study, only three days (three class meetings) included the use of each CMC environment (six days in total) and five days consisted of traditional face-to-face reading class meetings. Students as a result only received limited opportunity to become familiar with the CMC environments and engage in collaboration with students in these environments. A more longitudinal study, where the integration of these CMC environments move beyond the novelty stage, might reveal very different observable engagement patterns.

A third limitation in this study is found in the fact that the classes, especially the traditional class meetings, were not recorded. If classes were recorded, actual utterance length and turn-taking in whole class discussions could more accurately be determined. In addition, if students were to wear microphones during their small group or pair activities, these
interactions and collaboration sessions could be compared to the interaction and collaboration that take place in the online environments and the differences between the two environments could be described in more depth.

These limitations do not take away from the fact that this study delivered evidence that highlights the potential benefits that CMC environments hold for ESL students’ reading engagement in especially task completion, participation and collaboration. As a result, the study discussed in this thesis holds several implications for the teaching of reading to students of the 21st century. These implications both for teaching and research are discussed in the following section where arguments presented are based on the main findings of the study. As this study aims to address the current research gap, it is to be viewed as a call for more research to be conducted, both in other aspects concerning reading engagement and CMC as well as a confirmation and expansion or even questioning of the findings and conclusions discussed below.

**Implications**

The results discussed in the previous chapter highlighted several findings concerning the engagement behavior of the six students who participated in this study and is not to be generalized to the whole class or the ESL student in general. Yet these results and observable patterns of behavior carry several implications for the teaching and research of ESL reading in the 21st century as discussed in this section.

The first is that students such as Gloria, Vicky and Zi, who are from high and mid-performing levels and who are generally reluctant to volunteer answers in the face-to-face whole-class discussions, displayed a greater willingness to communicate and thus participate in the tasks presented in the two CMC environments. This more balanced and equal distribution of learner participation is also echoed in studies conducted by Collentine (2009); Fitze (2006) and Godwin-Jones (2003) to name a few.
Students’ engagement with the reading texts seems not to be as such dependent on the environment in which the reading related tasks are presented. The majority of the students exhibited the same engagement behavior in terms of the reading text regardless of the task environment. The exception to this observation is Vicky, who appeared to be more distracted in the lab where access to social networks, email and other websites are readily available. Therefore, the mere presentation of reading related tasks in CMC environments does not appear to have a noticeable effect on reading engagement with the text, apart from offering selected students more opportunity to be disengaged. As a result, this study only seems to show positive evidence in terms of learner participation and task engagement.

For reading-related tasks engagement, students such as Zi seemed to be more engaged in the online activities. This behavior was also displayed by Joe and even though he did not publish his posts, he was still more engaged in the online tasks than in the face-to-face traditional reading class tasks. The increased engagement levels during task completion are an important contributor to reading strategies development and the facilitation of comprehension. Luther seemed to only be interested in completing tasks that require pair or group completion. His behavior is closely related to the idea that the social construction of knowledge, collaboration and interaction between students lead to higher engagement and motivation levels and this holds several benefits for language learning and skill development (Elola & Oskoz, 2010; Fitze, 2006; Gibbons, 2010; Kim 2008).

Based on the observable engagement behavior of the six students, this study presents evidence that the students who are engaged in the traditional reading classroom are also engaged in the online CMC environments. However, when they are not fully engaged in all the traditional classroom phases, they seem even more distracted in the classes with CMC incorporated elements (due to Facebook, email, access to various websites, etc.). Their language output and participation might increase, but they are still not engaged in the reading of the texts and the pre-reading activities not conducted in the online environments.
In addition, in terms of the quality and quantity of language output evident in the reading tasks in the CMC environments, it is argued that quantity and quality are directly connected to each other. Gloria provided by far the most language output (quantity) and also displayed the most features of quality. This however is an aspect that is beyond the scope of the current study and could be investigated in future research. In most of the students’ language output in the two CMC environments, students displayed instances of self-expression and identity construction and evidence for reflection, insight, thought and some indication of audience recognition can be found in the various CMC tasks.

A specific implication of this study pertains to the ESL and CALL research fields. Research on the use of CMC for especially oral and writing skill development frequents the literature. The language skill of reading, especially in terms of engagement and language output connected to the various reading tasks presented in online environments is an area that needs more research investment. In addition to the effects of CMC on reading engagement and reading skill development, two other aspects touched briefly upon in this study also calls for further research. The first aspect is the presence of self-expression and identity-making or identity construction in these online environments. Although the use of self-expression and identity-making is briefly discussed in this study, specifically as an aspect of language output that show evidence for the quality construct, these two interconnected notions are far more complex than discussed in this thesis. As Lam (2000) notes, “the communities in which they [students] obtain representational resources are critical to the design of their identities and their literacy development” (p. 461). Future research might investigate how these representational resources such as the pictures and music videos chosen contribute to having voice and identity in these online communities. The second aspect concerns the fact that for all the activities and tasks presented during this study, groups were randomly selected. More planned and precise groupings could shed light on whether students from one performance level are more or less engaged depending on the performance level of the other student(s). More research on the effect of performance level and task member groupings on engagement is therefore suggested.
In addition, the role of the various tasks, how they were constructed and designed, has not received attention in this study, yet it is undeniable that task design influences interaction, participation and engagement as well. Further research on the role of task design on reading text and task engagement is also suggested.

Based on the various findings of this study, it is argued that apart from a more equal and balanced distribution of participation, mid-performing level students’ engagement with especially the reading-related tasks seems to have shown evidence of increase. This in turn carries the second and main implication of this study. ESL teachers and instructors are constantly searching for ways to provide students with opportunities for language skill development and to identify the ways that would best address the needs of our students. With the importance of engagement and language output established as discussed in the previous chapters, it is to be argued that if the incorporation of these CMC environments into the traditional reading classroom hold benefits for the increase of engagement and language output, then surely we cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that our language teaching methods need to include these various CMC environments.

We cannot ignore the integral role these online environments play in the daily lives of our students and we therefore need to harness the potential these various environments hold for language learning and language skill development and integrate these into our traditional classrooms. This study highlighted several benefits for the incorporation of these environments in the reading classroom and it is therefore argued that especially the high and mid-performing students seem to have benefitted from the incorporation of these CMC environments.

We live in an exciting age, where technologies develop and change daily and it brings with it a magnitude of possibilities to provide students with opportunities to develop their language skills in ways that not only address their needs, but that students also find interesting and relevant. Teaching practices and methods in the 21st century are evolving just as fast as the technology that frequent our students’ lives and in order to address our 21st century students’
needs we need to harness the various CMC environments’ possibilities and integrate these into our reading classroom.
APPENDIX A

EXAMPLE OF ONE READING TEXT USED

All reading texts employed in this study, except the sentence sequencing text, which is taken from this source’s accompanying teacher’s guidebook is taken from:

APPENDIX B

THE READING TASKS

Class 1: Traditional Face-to-Face Class

Reading Text: Finding Real Love

Post-reading task: Individual task

Write 2-3 paragraphs on either option 1 or option 2.

Option 1: Why do you think we feel immediately attracted to one person and not another?

Option 2: What is real love? How do you know if/when love is real?

Class 2: Google Docs


Student A:

I am a wreck today. Let me tell you about it.

She was very angry with me.

They arrived at around 1.00 am and were all over the street with their sirens blaring. I think they left at about 3:30.

My dog had chased her cat into the tree.

Fortunately, they put the fire out before it could spread beyond the kitchen.

I replied, “Dogs will be dogs,” and then apologized.
Student B:

At 9:30 last night, my neighbor banged on my door yelling at me to get her cat out of a tree.

I got the cat down and she said, “Thank you”.

It turns out that she was cooking soup when the cat got stuck in the tree.

After she got her cat back, she forgot about the soup and it kept simmering away until none was left.

I changed my clothes and went to the garage to get my ladder.

She went to bed and awoke to the sound of her smoke detector going off. She called the fire department.

Reading task: Pair - Jigsaw

After logging into your Gmail account, access the shared Google Document BLM 5. The same document is shared with your partner. Each student received a set of six different sentences. Work with your partner to reconstruct the original story. All 12 sentences need to be used.

Directions in Google Docs:

Instructions: To be used as per class instruction

You and your partner each received different sentences. Collaboratively work together and put the sentences in the correct order so the story makes sense.

Class 3: Blogs

Reading Text: *Oh when I was in love with you*, by A.E. Housman

Post-reading Task: Individual
For this blog post, find and insert either 1) a love song and the lyrics to that song or 2) a love poem and explain what you understand it to mean.

**Class 4: Traditional Face-to-face**

Reading Text: “Bare Branches” Might Snap in Asia

Post-reading Task: Pair and whole class discussions

This class had several whole-class discussions led by the teacher

**Class 5: Google Docs**

Reading Text: Matchmaking

Post-reading Task: Groups of 3 – Jigsaw activity

After logging into your Gmail account, access the shared Google Document titled Matchmaking. The students that you have to collaborate with in this task received the same document.

Directions in the Google Docs task

After reading your section of the reading passage, create a mind map summary of the text. The other group members each received a different part of the passage.

Upon completion of the mind map, complete the exercise on page 73 of your textbook. You and your group members need to negotiate the answer and provide one response as a group.

**Class 6: Google Docs & Blogs**

Phase 1: Reading Text: Matchmaking (read in the previous class)

Post-reading Task: Groups of 3 – Jigsaw activity

After completion of the main activity based on the Matchmaking text in Google Docs in the previous class, phase 2 is conducted.
Phase 2: No main reading text

Pre-reading Task: Individual

For this task, create a blog post. Include the following:

- Insert a photo and/or link(s) to a website(s) illustrating and describing the most beautiful thing or place that you have ever seen. The task is to describe a thing or place, not a person.
- Discuss why this holds such beauty for you.
- Provide a definition for what beauty is
- Read each others’ blogs and comment on at least three.

Class 7: Traditional Face-to-face

Reading Text: Taj Mahal

Post-reading Task: Individual

Create a mind map (graphic organizer) summarizing the main points in the text

Class 8: Traditional Face-to-face

Reading Text: Taj Mahal (read in the previous class)

Post-reading Task: The whole class is divided into three groups (4 students per group), one way decision making task.

Each group is responsible to find specific information in the reading text and then present this information to the rest of the class. The questions are presented in the reading textbook under the heading Guided Academic Conversation on page 86.

Group 1: Number 1: The Five W’s of the Taj Mahal: When, Why, Who and What?
Group 2: Number 2: *Traditions and Fame of One of the World’s Most Famous Buildings.*

Group 3: Number 3: *The Style and Function of a Garden.*

The following are taken from the textbook used in this class:


Excerpt from page 86 in the textbook:

1. **The Five W’s of the Taj Mahal: When, Why, Who and What?**

When, where and why was the Taj Mahal built? Who built it? (Hint: this is not a question with a simple, easy answer.) What did it cost, both in money and in “human cost”? According to legend, what was done to the people who built the Taj Mahal after they finished, and why? What do you think of this policy? What other great structures have been built at great cost?

2. **Traditions and Fame of One of the World’s Most Famous Buildings.**

What types of architectural traditions does the Taj Mahal combine? Make a list with five different features that are distinctive in the Taj Mahal’s design. Did Prince William of Sweden prefer the Taj Mahal at night or during the day? Why? What do you makes the Taj Mahal so famous? What aspects of its beauty are the most important? In your opinion, is the Taj Mahal overrated? Explain.

3. **The Style and Function of a Garden.**

According to the article, what is the difference between Persian gardens and English or French gardens? Why does this difference exist? Which of these kinds of gardens is more similar to gardens in your culture? What other kinds of gardens have you heard of in other cultures? Write a brief description of what you would consider the perfect garden.

Class 9: Traditional Face-to-Face

Reading Text: *Around the Globe: Outstanding Architecture of the World*

(This text focuses on The Alhambra Palace and Himeji Castle)

Post-reading Task: Jigsaw
Phase 1: The class is divided into two groups. Group A reads the text concerning the Alhambra Palace and Group B reads the text concerning the Himeji Castle.

After reading the text, the two individual groups create a list of words (from the given list on page 89) that feature in the description of their building. The two individual groups need to ensure that they agree on the words and that everybody noted down what is discussed and agreed upon.

Phase 2: A student from group A pairs up with a student from group B. The two students verbally summarize the text for each other, after which they need to work together, looking at their individual lists and complete the Venn-diagram on page 89.

Class 10: Blog

Reading Text: What makes Sound Beautiful?

Post-reading Task: Individual

After reading the text, search for a song or piece of music on YouTube that you think are very beautiful. In a new blog post, insert this video and explain why you think it is so beautiful to you. Also answer either option 1 or 2 (as stated on page 104 of the textbook).

Option 1: Beauty (in a person, art, or nature) is something that can be universally agreed upon; there is an aesthetic standard common to all cultures the world over and throughout history.

Option 2: Beauty (in a person, art, or nature) is not something that can be universally agreed upon; individual cultures have different aesthetic standards that vary according to time and place.

Again, read your fellow classmates’ blogs and comment on at least 3 of the posts.

Class 11: Google Docs

Reading Text: Korea’s Makeover from Dull to Hip Changes the Face of Asia
Post-reading Task: Individual

After the reading of the text, access your Gmail account. You need to create a new document that you share with your teacher (gives the gmail.com address). In this document, you need to provide a description of each the key people mentioned in the article. The first one is done as an example:

1. Cate Siu: A Hong Kong fan of Korean television, who wanted to be an actress, so she flew to Seoul for some plastic surgery.

2. Song Hye Kyo

3. Chung Jong Pil

4. Jung Dong Hak

5. Lee Young Ae

6. BoA

7. Wang Simei

8. Lee Yihsiu

You also need to answer the True/False questions of exercise 5, page 98.
APPENDIX C

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following interview questions are semi-structured. The main aims are to gain insight to the students’ attitude towards engagement and language output regarding the presentation of reading tasks in online environments, as well as the use and usability of these CMC (computer mediated communication) environments. When necessary, follow-up questions are asked to gain more insight. The following questions are used to guide the 15 minute interview sessions.

Semi-structured open-ended questions, to be audio recorded and transcribed.

1. Did you enjoy the online reading tasks more or less than the face-to-face reading tasks? Why/why not?

2. Did you feel that you could more easily work with your classmates to perform the tasks online or in the face-to-face classrooms? Why?

3. Do you feel that the online environments were easy to use? What in particular made it easier/more difficult?

4. Do you prefer completing the tasks online or using pen and paper? Why?

5. Do you feel that the tasks in the online environments allow you to express yourself more, less, or the same amount as pen and paper tasks?

6. Do you believe that you could use the reading strategies taught effectively in completing the online activities? How/ how not?

7. Were there any specific tasks that you felt you could more actively engage with?

8. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of performing the tasks in online environments?
9. Did you consider your classmates’ responses in revising, creating your own blog posts and comments?

10. How do you feel about sharing your work online?

11. Do you feel that completing tasks online made you think about your answer more or less than when you were asked to perform them in the face-to-face environment, why or why not?

12. Did you put more, or the same effort in reading the texts carefully when you are asked to complete reading tasks online or when you had to complete reading tasks in class? Why?

13. Where there any online environments that you enjoyed performing the tasks in? Why?

14. Did you write more in your responses online or using pen and paper? Why?

15. What did you like the most and the least about using the online environments?
APPENDIX D

TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEWS

Interview with Gloria

I: Interviewer
G: Gloria

(After a short overview of what have been done in class, the following interview is conducted).

I: Did you enjoy the tasks in the online environments more than the face-to-face or not?

G: Uhm, both. The face-to-face, I like lecture, but ah, the Google, I have to create like visually, and of course like ah, like, not babbelry, uh, babble, ah, writing, so I like both.

I: Ok, alright. Did you feel that you could especially in the Google Docs, where you had to work with partners, for most of the time, did you feel that you could easily work with them? Could you easily work with them or not?

G: Uh, actually, uh, no.

I: Ok, why do you think?

G: Depends on the partners.

I: Ok, why do you think some of them, are more interested in doing it, than others?

G: I don’t know, uh, in my opinion, only my opinion, some people don’t focus on class and they did something, uh something different things.

I: So you think that they are busy with other things rather than doing the task?

G: Yeah, a little bit like frustration.

I: Yeah, I can imagine. Ok and do you feel that the online environments were easy to use? Was it easy to log in, to navigate, to post, to edit, to review?

G: Uhm, ah, I am not good at computers and email, and sometimes confusing, but, but I like that.

I: Ok, so you think that just because you are unfamiliarity with it that it kinda affected it?

G: Yeah.

I: Ok, do you prefer completing the tasks online or pen and paper?

G: Uh, paper.
I: Paper? Why do you think so?

G: Uhm, if, if computer, I need to uh, worry about did I did I submit correctly or what (laughs).

I: Alright, ok, was that the only reason do you think?

G: Yeah.

I: Ok, uh, so do you, ok, so in those online environments, do you think that you could express yourself more or less than when it’s pen and paper?

G: Uhm, it doesn’t matter.

I: It doesn’t matter?

G: Yeah,

I: Good, you kinda think it’s the same? Ok, so, we taught you some reading strategies, right? Like uhm, skimming, searching for main ideas, finding specific information. Do you think that in the online activities, you were, you, did you see that you use them? Could you see, ok now I’m searching for specific information or do you think it’s kinda this, you don’t really know which strategy you using, you are just doing it?

G: Uh, in my, uh, I always use the in my way, just, just, uh, scanning and skimming and uh, looking for main ideas, or specific ideas.

I: So you just do what you know to do?

G: Yeah.

I: Uhm, ok, were there any tasks that you felt that you actively have to engage with, which means that you had to, you wanted to put more effort in, you were more interested in, you wanted to do it?

G: Yes, Uh, I uh, I want to uh, like speed reading,

I: Ok, ok, but uhm more specifically to the tasks that you did, the face-to-face, the Google Docs, the blogs? More in light of that? Where there any that you felt you could more actively engage with? That kinda asked you to be there more, to put more effort in? But you wanted to?

G: Uhm, in the lecture, I could write something for someone, but in the Google, I need to create something by myself, and uhm, it was good because I can keep my pace, so laughs.

I: Ok, fair enough, ok. Uhm what do you think are the advantages of doing the online things?
G: Uh, uh, keep my pace, yeah, I can keep my pace.

I: Ok, what do you think are the disadvantages?

G: Uhm, not face-to-face, so like real-time conversation, and uh, uhm, I am not native speaker, so sometimes I don’t understand, I can’t understand a lot what uhm, others say, but face-to-face I can, maybe I can understand like atmosphere like visual.

I: Ok, I understand, ok, so uhm, when you posted your blogs, did you read your other classmates’ blogs?

G: Yes.

I: Ok, when you posted yours, did you think about theirs? Did you think about what they said?

G: Uh, no not really (laughs).

I: Ok, how do you feel, ok so when you post online, anybody can read it, how do you feel about it?

G: Uhm, I don’t care much, because I didn’t write anything wrong (laughs).

I: Ok, do you feel that completing the tasks online made you think about your answer more or less than when it was in class?

G: Uhm, more.

I: More? Why do you think so? Or why did you think more?

G: Uhm, because I need to complete uhm, own thing, and then submit that so in a lecture, if I can finish, I can finish all them, I can do uhm other time but, online, I need to do.

I: Ok, ok, did you put more or the same or less effort into reading the text when you knew that we were going online or face-to-face or was it the same?

G: Same.

I: The same, ok, were there any of the online environments that you enjoyed more? Was there, did you enjoy Google Docs or blogs more?

G: Uhm, yes, actually I did.

I: But both or them?

G: Yes.

I: So the one is not better than the other one?
G: No.

I: Did you write more in your responses like length wise using pen and paper or online?

G: Uhm (long pause).

I: You think it was kinda the same?

G: Yeah, the same.

I: Good, and then eh, what did you like the most about the online environments?

G: Eh, but uh, when I explain something with the music or the pictures we can enjoy more, like the music and pictures, not only the writing.

I: Ok, so that is what you like the most?

G: Yes.

I: Ok, what did you like the least?

G: Eh, uhm, the handles.

I: Ok, ok, kinda how to do it?

G: Yes, yes.

I: Do you think that if you had more step by step instructions that would have helped?

G: I think it is my memorize program laughs, I can see, I saw this page, but I can’t remember.

I: Ok, last question, do you have any other comments?

G: No.

*** ***

**Interview with Joe**

*I: Interviewer  J: Joe*

(After a short overview of what have been done in class, the following interview is conducted).

I: Did you enjoy those online tasks more than the face-to-face classroom tasks?

J: Yeah, I enjoy online more.

I: Ok, why?
J: Uh I don’t know, I like to work online.

I: You like to work alone?

J: Yeah.

I: But the Google [Docs]

J: no I mean] like uh, I like to type better than writing.

I: Ok, yeah.

J: And it was easier for me too.

I: You think it was easier?

J: Yeah.

I: Ok, do you feel that you could more easily work with your classmates online than you than in face-to-face?

J: No. Face-to-face is better.

I: You think so?

J: Yeah.

I: Alright, why do you think so?

J: Because uh, I cannot fully understand my classmates.

I: Ok so,

J: So it has to be face-to-face.

I: So that there can be more negotiations?

J: Yeah.

I: OK, do you feel that the online environments were easy to use? It was easy to log in, easy to post, easy to access?

J: Yeah it was.

I: What made it that easy?

J: Uh, your instructions.

I: Do you prefer doing the tasks online or pen and paper?
J: You mean tasks and that?
I: Uh-huh.
J: Online.
I: Ok, why do you prefer online?
J: It’s easier and we can find sources if you need some sources like I feel comfortable online.
I: Ok, ok, uhm, do you feel that the tasks in the online environments allowed you to express yourself more or less than the class to class face-to-face I mean?
J: No I think it is less than face-to-face.
I: Less? Why do you think so?
J: Because uh, when doing it on pen and paper, you usually talk more to the teacher.
I: Ok so, do you think that when it’s on pen and paper, the teacher, you kinda feel as if they are there?
J: Yeah.
I: than online, you don’t feel that they are there?
J: Yeah.
I: Ok, uhm, do you, so ok we gave you some reading strategies such as summarizing, skimming, finding the main ideas, uhm do you think that the in the tasks online that you actually used them?
J: You mean uhm, (long pause)
I: Use the strategies? Like in Google Docs, did you, could you feel you are practicing the strategies or didn’t it feel that way?
J: Yeah. No.
I: It did feel that way?
J: (inaudible)
I: Ok and then were there any specific tasks that you could more actively engage with? Which means that you were more interested in, you were more, you put in more effort because you wanted to?
J: The most beautiful place I’ve ever been to.
I: Ok, and then uhm, what do you think are the advantages of performing tasks online?

J: Uhm, it’s easier and we can do it faster than paper and like I said, you can a find sources you need, pictures and citations.

I: Ok, what about the disadvantages?

J: Mmm, we don’t talk much with the teacher and a it’s not a class work, we don’t negotiate with uh classmates only when the task was to talk to them.

I: Ok, yeah. Uhm, so you didn’t uhm post any blogs, right?

J: Uh-huh.

I: Did you read your classmates’ blogs?

J: Yeah.

I: You did?

J: Uh-huh.

I: So why do you think you did not post any?

J: Yeah, uh, that was uh, I, I didn’t do it.

I: Oh, yeah, I know. But why didn’t you do it?

J: Uh, I didn’t have time.

I: Ok, time, uhm, were they not, ok, uhm so, but we gave you time in class right?

J: Yeah.

I: So is that the only reason?

J: I finished it like three quarters of the way but didn’t post.

I: Ok, is that, so if you had more time, uhm, even though we gave them for homework, right? So if you had more time, do you think that you would have posted it [or

J: yeah]

I: or was [there

J: no, if there was more time I post it.

I: Ok, how do you, ok so, posting online anybody can read it, right? How do you feel about that?
J: Nah it’s ok.
I: Do you think that that would stop you from posting because anybody can read it or how, how does it affect [your
J: No], it’s better.
I: You think it’s better?
J: Yeah.
I: Why do you think it’s better?
J: Uh, maybe there’s something wrong, your classmates can tell you that this wrong if the teacher did not notice.
I: Ok, ok, alright. We’re almost finished. Do you feel that uhm, completing the tasks online, made you think about your answer more or less than face-to-face?
J: (long pause), I think, uh, face-to-face.
I: Ok, you think that in face-to-face you think more about your answer?
J: Yeah.
I: Ok, why do you think so?
J: Uh, uh, I don’t know. I think more about the answer I would give.
I: Ok, then uhm, did you put more or the same effort into reading the text when you know that we are going online or when you know we are going face-to-face or were they the same?
J: Ah, they are the same.
I: The same. Ok. Were there any online environments that you enjoyed doing the tasks more? Either Google Docs or blogs? Which one did you like more? Or didn’t you like them really?
J: Uhm, you mean any?
I: Uhm, no just, did you enjoy Google Docs or blogs more or didn’t you like, you didn’t really like any of them?
J: No. Blogs I would say.
I: You think the blogs were better?
J: Yeah.
I: Ok. Uh, did you write in your responses, oh uh, did you write more, like length wise, ah number of words, you think, more in pen and paper or more in online?

J: (Long pause), the same.

I: You think, maybe the same?

J: Yeah.

I: Ok, and then, uh, what did you enjoy the most about the online environments?

J: Uh, (long pause), like I said blogs, you like write about something you like, like the most beautiful place you’ve ever been to, and uh, you’re writing about something that you’re interested in.

I: Ok. What about, what didn’t you like at all about it?

J: Just like you don’t communicate.

I: Ok, so you would want to communicate more?

J: Yes.

I: Good stuff. Ok, last question. Any other comments?

J: Nothing.

I: Nothing? You didn’t want to say anything?

J: Uh, it was nice to meet you.

I: It was nice to meet you too. Thank you very much. Alright. I appreciate it.

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Interview with Luther

I: Interviewer L: Luther

(After a short overview of what have been done in class, the following interview is conducted).

I: Ok, so did you enjoy those tasks more or less than the face-to-face, I’m sorry, class, the normal class tasks?

L: Uhm, actually, the both of them, but both of them has the good and negative aspects, like in face-to-face, the class, I can chatted with my friend, I can directly interact, interaction with my teacher, but also I like the, the computer to use, because I like the technology, I like, to do all my stuff on computer, I don’t like to write in paper or I like to read from, everyday I read about one, two hours blogs or journals on computer.
I: Oh really, ok. Ok. Was it easy for you to work with your classmates in *Google Docs*?

L: Uhm, a little bit, because if my classmate was know about how can use the *Google documents*, they can do it.

I: Ok.

L: It’s almost easy.

I: Ok, do you feel that the online environments were they easy to use, easy to navigate, easy to log in, easy to post, to change?

L: Yeah, yeah, so easy.

I: Ok, what made it that easy?

L: I think it is the easy interface, easy to use, many things. Easy to catch it any time you like, if you go out or by, by my phone, when I’m, I’m in bus or the most effective example, if I want to read anything, I have to catch the bus, but if I have iPad or my phone, anywhere I can just get my phone and read and answer and review all what I have in class.

I: Ok, ok, so do you prefer then doing tasks online or pen and paper?

L: Uh, I like online.

I: Ok, why again?

L: As I said, it’s because it’s easy, it’s easy to organize, uh, anywhere you can do your homework, do your stuff. Sometime if you use the paper and book, maybe you have to be in your room in your desk have been paper, book, many things. But online, just your, your laptop.

I: Alright. Could you in those online environments, could you express yourself more or less than when you write pen and paper?

L: Say again?

I: In those online environments, could you express yourself more or less or the same as when you write pen and paper?

L: Uh, no. When I write on pen paper, I like to write in computer, because idea came up with me, my writing on computer.

I: Ok, uhm, uhm, then, ok, we taught you some reading strategies such as summarizing, skimming, main ideas, ok, do you feel that the tasks online, you could actually use them?
L: Yes, you can.
I: Ok, do you consider, ok, you uhm, didn’t post blogs, you didn’t do your blog posts, right?
L: Yeah, right.
I: Did you read your classmates’ blogs? Or not?
L: Just one. I have already a blog, because I, I’m familiar with that, before I post some blogs I had two or three blogs before.
I:Ok but for this.
L: For the class, no, no I didn’t, because I was so busy.
I: Ok, so is that why you then also didn’t post?
L: What’s that?
I: Is that why you didn’t post?
L: Yeah.
I: Because you were very busy?
L: Very busy and also I forgot about it, to be honest with you.
I: Ok, uhm, how do you feel about sharing your work online?
L: (long pause)
I: Because anybody can read it right, [the
L: Yeah], it’s good.
I: The whole world.
L: Good experience for me.
I: Ok.
L: Because we can uh, we can use this, uh this idea in many ways in our life. We can sharing our photos with my family in Saudi Arabia, with my brother in United in UK.
I: Ok, ok.
L: Also, I wrote, I can sharing what I have write with my, with others.
I: Uhm, do you feel that when you had to work online, do you feel that you think more about your answer or do you think more about your answer when you’re in class?

L: No, in online.

I: Online? Why do you think so?

L: Because sometime the environments class is boring. Sometimes I feel boring for that I was I want uh, I don’t want to write think of thinking of things, I just to read anything or just write without focus.

I: Ok, and you feel the online environments you could that?

L: Yeah, because environment online sometimes I, I don’t feel comfortable writing right there, I can go any place, get my stuff.

I: Do it later?

L: Yeah.

I: Uhm, when I gave you, gave you texts to read, right, and I told you, ok, now we are going online or I told you now we are going to do pen and paper, uhm, where there any of these two that you read the tasks, the texts, more carefully?

L: You mean I have (long pause)

I: I mean I give you have your reading book, right, so we are going to read now. When I tell you we are going to go online, did you pay more attention to your text or not so much, was it the same?

L: Not so much.

I: It was the same? Was it less?

L: No, I like the online.

I: Ok, ok, we’re almost finished. Uhm were there any of those environments that you enjoyed more? Like the blogs or the Google Docs? Which one did you like more?

L: To be honest, I usually read the both, the both, hard book and the for example, during my daily book, my daily reading out of class I mean, like novel or magazine or the both of them is ok, but sometime I like the online, especially in the classes.

I: Ok, but now especially for this class, and for what we did. Did you enjoy Google Docs or blogs more, which one?

L: Google or blog?
I: *Google* or blog.

L: No, blogs, yeah.

I: Blogs?

L: Yeah.

I: Ok, and then when you had to write online in *Google Docs*, or in pen and paper, which one did you write, length wise more?

L: Length?

I: Length/

L: Uh, *Google documents*. Online

I: *Google documents*. And then uhm, do you know why?

L: Maybe because uh, because I, I’m familiar with keyboard.

I: Ok.

L: More organization, laptop, you can remove anything you need or add something.

I: Ok, and then last question, uh, what did you like the most about *Google Docs* and blogs?

L: Uh *Google Documents* has uh, as I said to you, is more comfortable, and also more effective to just put your stuff. You can access to your stuff anywhere, anyplace.

I: Ok.

L: Also, you can keep your stuff in safe place. Some time when I write down pen and paper or something, maybe I will miss the paper, or (long pause)

I: Ok, ok and then uh, what did you like the least about it?

L: What’s that?

I: What did you, what didn’t you like about it?

L: About *Google documents*?

I: Yeah, because you didn’t use the blog, right?

L: Yeah.

I: Well why didn’t you?
L: I like the blog but the I, I don’t know.
I: Did you think it was boring maybe?
L: Sometime, to be honest, in this, this semester I feel all IEOP, all the classes are boring.
I: Ok.
L: Yeah it’s boring.
I: Ok, so is that the main reason why you didn’t blog?
L: Uhm, I’m not enjoying class, for that, I didn’t pay more attention to class.
I: Ok, so you weren’t that interested in it?
L: Yeah.
I: Ok, you think that if you were more interested, you would blog?
L: Yeah.
I: Ok, it makes sense. Alright,
L: Also, because you know, uh, we don’t have blog every day or because you are responsible about blog, and Google documents. Miss Susan about the book and but if the same teacher was responsible about the both sides, I think it will be more effective.
I: Ok.
L: Because I was in Florida, four months ago in English school. My reading, my (inaudible) class teacher use the blog beside the book and papers, but it was great, it can work in the class, have some homework online, some homework in the book.
I: Ok, ok, it makes sense. So if the were to use it [more
L: More] with the [same
I: Same] person it would [be
L: Yeah] because that uh, we don’t focus, uh, maybe sometimes focus in book sometimes focus on the blogs, it doesn’t make sense.
I: Ok, ok, fair enough.
L: Ok.
I: Uhm, do you have any other comments?

L: Uhm, uh, yes, just the last comment. I think it is important comment that if the teacher use the both, it will be great.

I: Ok, ok, great. I like it. Good. Thank you very much.

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Interview with Soufi

I: Interviewer
S: Soufi

I: Ok, so the first question is, did you enjoy the online reading tasks, the blogs and the Google Docs, did you enjoy them more than the pen and paper ones?

S: Yeah, I, I have enjoyed the a lot, the online courses because uh, as uh, part of uh application of new technology, uh, we cannot escape new technology today, we have to follow uh, the generation in which we are and the a activities have had were very interesting and ah, this kind of uh, we did this activity in reading class, but beside that it helped me to know how to create a blog. I already create my [blog

I: Oh you] did? Well done.

S: different from the class blog, that’s interesting and I’m planning, I see it, uh, I’m very exciting, I’m on the net.

I: Yes, you are, they can find you now (laughs).

S: Yeah, yeah, I can have my own page, so I can express my thoughts and (long pause).

I: People can read it?

S: People can read it.

I: That’s pretty cool.

S: Yeah.

I: Uh, ok, then uh, so most of those, especially Google Docs, you had to work with your classmates, right?

S: Ja

I: Did you find that it is easy to do?

S: Ja, it was easy to do because, it is very interesting, I, I didn’t know before about such, uh, about that. It seems like you have your, your uh, partner sitting in front of you, because you can discuss anything, you can argue, agree or disagree or anything.

I: So it is kinda like they’re there in person anyway?
S: Yeah.
I: Did you find that they, that your classmates were active in contributing or were they, did you struggle sometimes?
S: Yeah, no, ja. I struggled sometimes to maybe he sometimes don’t have an ideas or something, I struggle to explain him, to convince him that this, this is right thing we should do or as or sometimes, I express an idea but then uh, they disagree, we discuss and find the right solution, ja.
I: Ok, so did that happen?
S: Yeah that happened.
I: Ok, then also uhm, do you feel that these environments, the blogs and the Google Docs were, were pretty easy to use?
S: Yeah, especially for me, they were pretty easy to use since uh I have some some little knowledge about how to use uh, uh, I know how to use email, so (long pause).
I: So, so you think that logging in and navigating, and reviewing and revising and posting, those types of things were, weren’t difficult for you?
S: Yeah, not difficult.
I: Do you prefer completing the tasks then online or pen-and-paper?
S: Uhm, it depends, I enjoy, first I enjoy, I enjoy online because uh by working online I kind of a working on several tasks, not only the work I’m doing, I’m I’m mastering also the technology thing, knowing how to post, because I can apply it and and I’ve already applied it by creating my own blog and I can share, maybe I have a friend elsewhere in the world, we can work on the same document, we can do the same document, we can discuss about the same topic, so that’s very interesting.
I: Ok, so,
S: But uhm, the paper one is, is uh, is also good. It’s good, I cannot say that the online uh activity replace or uh is uh 100 percent.
I: So you feel that both need to be included?
S: Yeah, we need both, both of them.
I: Do you feel that they address different skills?
S: Please?
I: They address different skills, right?
S: They address different skills but, uh, uh, but the online activities is kind of integrated.

I: Yeah.

S: Different kinds of skills.

I: Ok. Uhm, do you feel that the tasks in that online environments uhm allow you to express yourself more or less or maybe the same amount as when you write in pen and paper? So should I rephrase? Did you express yourself [more

S: Uh-huh]

I: when you did things online or did you express yourself more in pen and paper?

S: Oh, when I uh, did the activity online, I express my opinion less when I did them on paper, because some times online, we have the contrast of uh of time.

I: Oh, ok, even though you could maybe complete it at home, like the blogs?

S: Oh yeah, if I have time, extra time I could but as homework, it was easy I could write (inaudible).

I: But generally, it was, you express it more in pen and paper?

S: In paper.

I: Ok, uhm, then also, do you believe that you could use the reading strategies, like uh, searching for main ideas or, uhm summarizing, you know strategies, strategies that we taught, do you feel that you could use them more in the online activities or in the pen- and paper activities?

S: Oh, yeah so, this uh, uhm before, I had a problem with uhm with uhm finding with reading generally, reading online, but since I were preparing for so many exam for inter- for computer-based exam, I took interest, I practiced a lot and uhm I am seeing myself taking interest a lot of reading online, uh skimming, scanning, finding the main ideas and important details online. Yeah.

I: Ok.

S: Yeah, I think that it is good.

I: Ok, were there any tasks that you felt you could put in more effort, that you were actively engaged with, that you had more interest in, in the online environments?

S: Do you restate again?

I: Ok, we did three blogs, do you remember them?
S: Three blogs.
I: Uh-huh. The first one was the love song.
S: The song.
I: The second one was uhm was something beautiful.
S: Beautiful.
I: And the third one was the most beautiful music, right?
S: Music.
I: These were the three blogs. Then the Google Docs were, the first one was you had to work with a partner to construct those sentences.
S: Sentences, yes.
I: The second one was that you had to summarize that long passage. You had three paragraphs, your partner had three paragraphs.
S: Ok.
I: And the last one was, you had to say who was Kate Sui, you know all those Korean plastic surgery.
S: Oh ja, ja.
I: So the question is, were there any of those tasks that you felt you were most interested in, that you gave more, that you were more engaged with?
S: Oh yeah, oh I found the second one, which is the to discuss a place or something beautiful in uhm life in the world, I found this task was very interesting because sometimes you know, we have something, we have feelings towards something, we love something, we are only maybe we don’t found, we didn’t found someone with the same interest, but by sharing it online and uh being sure that it will be seen, not only in the case of this class where the blog is only seen by our classmates, but generally if you had to share a thought or a feeling toward something in the internet, it’s uh and we are sure that uh, many people, maybe we can found someone with the same interest who is going to read what you said and as uh, give you some feedback or some comment on agrees with you, uh, I think that is very interesting.
I: Ok.
S: Very interesting, because we uh, we need to ex- to have someone who has the same interest.
I: Ok, ok, it makes sense. Uhm, what do you think are the advantages of performing tasks online?

S: Ok, there are several advantages of performing tasks online, including first, getting to know the getting to getting involved with the technology, knowing how to use the because everything we are learning in class is not already only designed for class, we have to apply it in our worlds, in our long life, our during our life, so this is one important thing we learn about the technology. Second being able to to to work remotely, we are not uh, uh, closely close to each other, but you can work, we can work on the same topic, we we we can work as we are close. This is an important thing of working online. Uh, another important thing of working online, advantage of working online, we don’t have to sad we don’t have to write on paper, we don’t have to care about paper, or something like this. Everything is easy. Just type, so (long pause).

I: And there you go.

S: Yeah, and this is comforting.

I: Exactly, ok, disadvantages?

S: Yeah.

I: Were there any?

S: Ja, this is the main advantages that I have, but there are many others.

I: Many more. What about the disadvantages?

S: Oh there, one of the disadvantages of working online sometimes when we work online, we made some, made some errors that we don’t, we don’t care about because, uh, one effect of new technology, since we have to use uh, we use message, we use slang words [and

I: so uhm] these slang [words

S: we] tend to use them when typing ad maybe in academic, in some serious tasks, than in a message to a friend, so this is kind of a disadvantage.

I: You don’t like it, right?

S: I don’t like it.

I: You [feel rather formal language is better?]

S: I try to] avoid it. Yeah, yeah of course (long pause).
I: Ok, what about uh, did you consider your classmates’ responses in revising and creating your own blog posts? Did you read your classmates’ blogs?

S: No, I did not read all of them. I read just only one of my classmate blog.

I: Ok, ok, did you respond?

S: No, I didn’t respond.

I: Why?

S: Because uh, I was uh, I didn’t respond because I don’t have time even though I know it was one part of our assignment, but ah, I didn’t do it but uh, and I remember later that I had to do it, and when I remember I consider that it is past, so I skip it.

I: Ok, alright. Uhm, how do you feel about sharing you work online?

S: In terms of?

I: Like with, because if you post it online, anybody can read it.

S: Ok, first one, before posting I have something online, I have to be responsible, since everybody see it. I know I should know what to write and I’m aware that the net is a public place.

I: But would that stop you? Or would you still post?

S: Which?

I: Would you still put things on the internet?

S: Yeah.

I: Ok, what specifically do you like about having your voice out there?

S: Being able to express my thought, to express my thought, most important things.

I: Ok. Ok uhm, then do you feel that completing the tasks online made you think more about your answers? Or less?

S: About my?

I: Your answers. Than when you did in the class?

S: No, I I don’t think because all come from my mind, so I am I always express my thought (long pause).

I: Carefully?
S: Yeah, carefully what I think is right no matter on class or online, I always be responsible of my thought. I know that your people is the same, people if you are in front of people if you did something good or wrong, people may have reaction and it’s the same when someone sees your post online, he may he may read and have some feedback on, some feeling about you. It’s the same.

I: Ok, it’s the same. Uhm, then uhm, most of the, all of these tasks, you were given a text and then you had to read them, right?

S: Ok.

I: Did you read them more carefully, when you knew that you had to go online than you did in the class or was it the other way around?

S: (long pause)

I: So when did you read, when did you pay more attention to the text? Or was it the same?

S: On paper?

I: So when so when I give you a text, and I tell you had to go post something online, either in the Google Doc or on the blog, that’s the one part, or normal classroom stuff, like summarizing, right? When did you read the texts more carefully? Or were they the same?

S: (long pause)

I: Did you read them the same way?

S: I read the same way, because depend on the, I didn’t categorize saying that this is online I have to read more or less or because this is normal classroom I read more or less. No.

I: Then uhm, we’re almost finished. Were there any of those. Ok well I already asked you about it. Did you enjoy the blogs or the Google Docs more?

S: Both of them.

I: Both of them?

S: Both of them.

I: Ok, why do you like both?

S: First I like, I like the blog because ah it’s a way to have one’s identity on the internet, I can, I have my own page, I can share my feelings.
I: Your identity?

S: Yeah, my identity, uhm for the *Google Doc*. I found that it is interesting that the sometimes I want to work with my friend, we use somewhere or I went to help one of my friend understanding something or we can create a *Google Docs*, work at the same times, yeah.

I: So you don’t have to go there anymore?

S: Yeah, yeah, I can have, I can tutor my friend, people at the same time.

I: Ok, ok, alright. So with the blogs you enjoyed your identity and on the *Google Docs* you enjoyed the skills and the conveniency?

S: Yeah, yeah, of course.

I: Then uhm did you write more, did you write more, when you used pen and paper or when you posted?

S: (long pause)

I: Length wise?

S: I write on paper, more on paper.

I: More on paper?

S: Yes.

I: Was it just easier to write more? Was it faster?

S: Oh yeah, on paper, the fact is that I’m not a good typer, this is [why

I: so] it takes a bit longer?

S: Yes, just because of typing, my my my speed in typing. This is just the matters. You know otherwise I would like to type.

I: Ok, and then last question, aren’t you glad? What did you like the most? Oh we did this. Never mind.

S: Ok.

I: I already asked you what did you like the most and what did you like the least about the online environments.

S: Ok, ok.
I: So that Soufi, brings us to the end. Unless you have anything else that you want to say about the tasks?

S: Ok, I don’t have any special things. I think I have ah, already expressed what I think, I like the online class because we cannot escape the use of technology or something.

I: I agree, well thank you very much, that is it.

S: Ok, ok.

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Interview with Vicky

I: Interviewer   V: Vicky

(After a short overview of what has been done in the various classes, the following interview is conducted).

I: Did you enjoy the online reading tasks more than the face-to-face reading tasks?

V: No, I think so.

I: You think so?

V: Yeah, because the online reading is easy to do and the, it’s not like the this face-to-face, maybe sometimes it’s embarrassing, you don’t know the person and they don’t know you and they can’t tell the truth, and uh, I mean maybe you are not good in it and uh, makes sense embarrass.

I: Ok, alright so, in, you think that in online it’s not so, you don’t, it’s not face-threatening?

V: Yeah, it’s not worry about what the people say think about you there.

I: Ok, do you feel that you could easily work with your classmates in especially Google Docs, right, you had to work with them or do you think it’s easier to work with them in the face-to-face?

V: Uhm, I think that maybe it is uh, both has some advantage and disadvantage.

I: Ok.

V: Maybe in face-to-face you can learn each other very quickly and you can know who is Jason, who is Jake and uh, maybe practice your speak and uh, well in uhm, online you can, how do you say it, uhm, maybe uhm make some people not enjoy to meet some strange or other person and they want to uhm, work by their own so maybe, uh online work is can make them work with other person.
I: Ok, I understand. Ok, uhm, do you think that those online environments were easy to use, they were easy to log in, to navigate, to post, to edit?
V: Yeah, it’s easy.
I: Ok, why do you think it was that easy? What made it that easy?
V: Because it’s log in, it is just to enter your email and uhm, remember your password, [so
I: Uh-huh], but how about posting and editing [and
V: it’s] also easy.
I: Easy?
V: Yeah.
I: Ok. Ok, uhm, do you prefer completing the tasks online or using pen and paper?
V: Online.
I: Online. Why?
V: Because, it’s quick, and uh, uhm, because if you uh write online, maybe you uh, the system can help you to correct your spell mistakes, spelling mistakes, things like that.
I: Ok. Then uhm, oh, do you feel that the tasks in the online environments allowed you to express yourself more or less or the same as when it’s pen and paper?
V: Mmm, I think it’s more.
I: Ok, why do you think it’s more?
V: Mmm, because it’s online I can do some information from the internet and it’s easy to do, to do some research and then to find the information you need. Uh, uh, what I do the paper, I just thinking in my mind, my mind and I can’t find it the information, can’t get the information needed.
I: Ok, any other reasons or was that it?
V: No that is it.
I: Ok. Uh, do you believe that you could use the reading strategies like summarizing, skimming, searching for information, did you think that you could use them effectively or easily with the online activities?
V: Mmm. I think it’s fine to write it online, to practice it online.
I: Ok, uhm, were there any specific tasks that you feel that you could easily or actively engage with? So engage means that you were interested, you want to do it, you put in more effort.

V: So what things are interesting to do?

I: That you put more of yourself into.

V: So, for this class?

I: Uh-huh, any of those tasks that we did.

V: Ah, no it is a really a reading class and we need to do more practice at reading, and I think we can get together and uhm, uh, uh, maybe some uh, some novel or some paper and some uh, interesting stories or we discuss in class maybe easy to push them people interesting in this task.

I: It makes sense. Ok, from what we did already, the class activities, and the online activities that we did, were there any of them that you felt, yeah, you were, you wanted to do it, they were interesting, you were engaged? Which ones, can you remember?

V: The, the post, the favorite song or favorite movie, and raise some comments to other people, I think, first you can watch a good movie or listen a good music and uh, then it’s more interesting than just uhm doing some reading or doing some paper work.

I: Yeah. Ok, uhm, what do you think are the advantages of doing those online tasks, like we did?

V: Uhm first you can practice your online working and your speed for the types of keyboard, student easy to do something online because right now some people is uhm, how do you say it, like to use the laptop and uhm, use the internet maybe doing some the reading courses online is easier for them and they don’t feel boring about it.

I: Ok. What do you think are the disadvantages?

V: Disadvantages, I think maybe they will open the other website, (laughs) they will searching the net or do, do something else.

I: So not task, they’re, they’re busy with their own thing?

V: Yeah.

I: Ok. Uhm do you, ok, so, when you posted on the blog, did you read your classmates’ blogs?

V: Yeah.
I: Ok. Uhm, did you leave comments?
V: Uh, not at all.
I: Can you remember why you didn’t leave comments? Was there
V: I’d like this, I like that so, I want to say something (long pause)
I: Ok so you like it, so you wanted to say something good?
V: huh-huh.
I: But? Then you, what stopped you?
V: What?
I: What stopped you to comment?
V: Uh, maybe I think sometimes it’s just the uh, (long pause) I start to write what I feel
about other people but because we don’t know each other [maybe
I: ok]
V: some comments will make them feel angry.
I: I understand. Ok, ok, alright. So when you posted your own blogs, did you think
about theirs? Did you think about what they wrote?
V: Yeah, maybe I think about it, I think maybe this one or disliked.
I: Ok, when you wrote yours you thought would they like yours or not?
V: Yeah.
I: Ok.
V: I was think about it, but I’m not very focus on it.
I: Ok, so even though you thought it, it didn’t influence you so much?
V: Yeah.
I: Ok, how do you feel about sharing your work online? Because anybody can read it,
right?
V: Yeah.
I: How do you feel about that?
V:  Uhmm, maybe uhmm, it’s not a good thing, a good place to share, with other people, I don’t know, don’t think it’s very good to share with them, but I can share it with my friends that is fine, especially if we know each other and (long pause)

I:  Ok, so when you know someone it’s okay, but when it’s strangers you don’t like so much. Why don’t you like it that much?

V:  Long pause, ‘cause I think that it is weird, and I don’t, I don’t like some other people to, like to like or say something just like a ghost people and like that.

I:  Ok. Did that influence your, your posting?

V:  (Long pause)

I:  Did you think about that?

V:  No, I don’t think.

I:  Ok. Uhm, do you think that completing the tasks online made you think more about your answer or less than when it was in the class?

V:  I think more

I:  Think more? Why would you think more?

V:  So when you type something on laptop, and I think more not sure how to say anything, maybe uhmm, more notice, I like the spelling mistake, the grammar mistake like that.

I:  Ok. Did you put more or less, ok so I give you the text, right, we’re going to read it, excuse me, then I tell you we are going to go online or we are going to go to normal classroom pen and paper activities, were there, did you maybe read the text more when it was online, would you focus more on it or was face-to-face or was it the same? The actual reading of the text?

V:  I think it’s (inaudible) because I take the TOEFL iBT so,

I:  but the text was still pen and, was still in the textbook right? So it was textbook texts.

V:  Textbook?

I:  Like the reading book that we have. So I give you the text and I say, we’re going to read it. If you know we are going to go online, did you read it, did you read it more, did you focus more or when I said we’re going to do pen and paper, did you focus more or was it the same?

V:  Pen and paper
I: pen and paper? Why do you think so?
V: Uh, because if the exam from book, it is not very long time and it’s uh, short time, and uh, the Face-to-face maybe can get more uhm like you focus on it, not like looking laptop to do I’m not sure, maybe I will do something else.
I: Ok, ok. Uh, we’re almost finished. Were there any online environments that you enjoyed performing the tasks more, that you enjoyed the blogs or the Google Docs more, or didn’t you enjoy any of them?
V: Blog.
I: You enjoyed the blogs more?
V: Yeah.
I: Why did, why?
V: Because I think, the blog is a little like Facebook, so more interesting than just doing some on Gmail.
I: Ok, ok, so because you could, is it because you could add pictures and video, or was it because you could put more of yourself into it?
V: Both of that.
I: Both? Ok, uhm, did you write more, like length wise in the online stuff or pen and paper?
V: About what?
I: What you wrote?
V: Length of you wrote?
I: Uh-huh, do you think that you, that you wrote more when it was online or when it was pen and paper?
V: Uh, if something I will want to publish, I will work online and then I will on paper.
I: Ok, but what we did, the tasks that we did, do you think that you typed more words or do you think that you wrote more words?
V: Type more words.
I: Type more? Why was it, was it, why was it easier to produce more words in the typing than writing?
V: (Long pause). Maybe, (long pause) maybe type is easy, like to handle.
I: Ok. I understand. And then what did you like the most about those online environments?

V: The most one?

I: What about that did you like the most?

V: Uh, it is more interesting.

I: More interesting? Why was it more interesting?

V: Maybe just to work on paper is not, it’s boring because just the book and faced to write paper that’s it (inaudible) but on the internet, if you write you feel tired you can some other’s blog to see what them doing.

I: Ok. How about, what did you the least of the of the online environments?

V: The least?

I: Uh-huh.

V: Uh, (long pause) we just have the Google mail and the blog, so just two things.

I: So you would want to, to have more, right?

V: Yeah.

I: Include Facebook, include Skype, include Twitter?

V: Oh yeah.

I: Alright. Last one, is there anything else that you think might be important about this for me to know?

V: Uhm, maybe uhm, only do some work online, we can start after that and we can make sure everybody knows how did they think and like practice the error, a community with each other.

I: Ok, so give feedback and try and establish a community?

V: Yeah, Ja.

I: Ok, thank you, very much. Good stuff. I appreciate it.
Interview with Zi

I: Interviewer   Z: Zi

(After a short overview of what has been done in the various classes, the following interview is conducted)

I: Did you enjoy the online reading tasks more or less than the face-to-face class ones?

Z: I prefer the online.

I: Online?

Z: Yeah.

I: Why?

Z: Because I think it can, I can have a have a vision to control it, if I want to do this, want to do this, it’s more, it’s more personal.

I: So it’s more personal?

Z: Yeah.

I: And you have more control?

Z: It’s not like you just follow what teacher said, what he asked us to do.

I: So you could kind of be more creative almost?

Z: Yeah, I think so.

I: Ok, uh, did you feel that you could, ok so, especially in Google Docs you had to work with other classmates, right?

Z: Yes, with others, it was my first time to use this, Google Docs.

I: Oh really? Was it fun for you?

Z: Yeah it is interesting.

I: Ah that’s cool. Alright, did you feel that you could easily work with your classmates to perform the tasks online or in face-to-face?

Z: I think both, but we are all interested be in it to then we can just type to each other within the same page because at first, maybe at first we have some, how do you say, first have some, mmm, misunderstanding about each [other

I: you mean] in online?
Z: Yeah, about the task we need to do, not the person, it is already a person we have class with one semester, yeah, and uh, when we discuss you know the that task about the sentence with a different story and ah we make it at least a, I think this one we would have some discuss about which one you prefer first, second third and so I think that it is good.

I: And do you think that in the online environments you could actually do that?

Z: Yeah I can.

I: Ok, uhm, so you prefer online working with classmates more than face-to-face working?

Z: Yeah.

I: Ok. Do you feel that the online environments were easy to use? Easy to navigate, easy to log in, easy to post?

Z: Yeah it is easy because to log in ah, Google Gmail and uh, uh, you will send me an email or just click the document.

I: Ok, and to post, was it easy?

Z: Yeah.

I: Ok. What do you think made that posting so easy?

Z: I don’t know, maybe it is just use computer a lot.

I: Ok, so do you prefer completing the tasks online or using pen and paper?

Z: I prefer online, (long pause).

I: Good.

Z: Because uhm, maybe I write not so beautiful and ah prefer to type things online it is more clear and uh, I prefer using a computer.

I: Ok. Do you think that the tasks in the online environments allowed you to express yourself more, less or the same as with when you write in pen and paper?

Z: Uhm I’m sorry.

I: To express yourself, so to give more of yourself.

Z: Give more of myself? I don’t think that the two has some difference.

I: So do you think that it’s the same?
Z: It’s the same.
I: Ok, ok uhm do you want to elaborate or should we move on?
Z: Elaborate?
I: Do you want to explain why you think it’s the same?
Z: Uhm, uhm, I just think that because when I write, or to the task, it is what I want to say.
I: So what you want to say is what you want to say?
Z: Yeah, that’s why I think it is the same.
I: Ok, ok. Then uhm, do you, ok so we taught you some reading strategies such as summarizing, skimming, searching for main ideas, could you see how you used them in the online environments or not really, did you just do what you were asked?
Z: I’m supposed to do what I was asked to do and I uh and also I sometimes read a paragraph and uh, and uh, I’m not, how to say, required to summary but because I have summary in mind, I look for what is the main idea.
I: Ok, so it happens just automatically anyway?
Z: Yeah.
I: Ok and that’s the same whether it is online or pen and paper?
Z: Yeah.
I: Ok. Were there any of those tasks that you felt that you could actively engage with? Which means that you could that you put more effort into because you wanted to that were interesting? So you
Z: you mean online or in face-to-face?
I: Yeah, any of them.
Z: I prefer the using computer too.
I: So if it’s computer, which ones, can you remember the tasks that you felt, oh I want to do this, this is good? That you put more effort in?
Z: Oh, the story. You, you used the whole story to different sentence and make a sense of it.
I: Do you know why you wanted to do it?
Z: Uh, I think, I think it was more interesting, it’s like a game.
I: Kinda like a game? Ok. Uhm, what do you think are the advantages of doing tasks in the online environments, *Google Docs* and blogs?
Z: Uhm, first is you don’t need to communicate with each other all the while, because some of us are from different countries and uh, maybe have some misunderstanding while talking, and it waste time but if we just type it online, it is it is words and we can understand each other easily.
I: Ok. Any others?
Z: Uhm, I think typing is more quickly than write.
I: What about disadvantages?
Z: Disadvantages, is ah, is ah, you cannot do it whenever you want or wherever you go because if you use pen and paper, you can maybe, uhm, wait for lunch you can just think about it, and uh just work on the road, but with the computer you just can’t, you have to go to the lab or go home, have a computer. So the requirement is the computer.
I: I understand. Ok. So, when you, did you read your classmates’ blogs?
Z: Yeah, some of them.
I: But you didn’t comment, right?
Z: Maybe I forget.
I: Ok, so why do you think, what stopped you from commenting?
Z: I forget it.
I: You forgot? Is it the only reason? I mean you can be honest.
Z: Yeah, I want to reply, to leave comment, to leave, but I think maybe I leave comment to Vicky’s blog. I’m not sure.
I: Ok. So you did read theirs?
Z: Yeah, I enjoy reading others’ blogs because the person’s information is not the same and uh, uh, you asked us to post the favorite song, favorite pictures, I think it’s easy, it’s, it’s interesting to read blogs and think about others’ favorite songs and the pictures.
I: So when you posted your own, did you think about the others?
Z: No.
I: You just posted?
Z: When I post mine?
I: Uh-huh, you don’t think about what they wrote or what they will think? You just posted what you felt?
Z: Not exactly because I want to give them they think this song or picture, this is beautiful, so I try my best to find the best ones I think.
I: Ok, so you did think about them?
Z: I think about them.
I: Ok, because you wanted to contribute?
Z: Yeah
I: Ok, how do you, so when you, when you post, things online, anybody can read it, [how do you feel about that, sharing your work online?]
Z: yeah] if you share online,
I: Thinking that anybody can read it?
Z: Yeah, it’s interesting, but not some personal information. I can share with them picture I took, you know at Iowa State University, or other views but for my personal (inaudible) I don’t really want to share with them, but a picture I taken or my favorite song, favorite movie, that’s ok. I enjoy sharing this with others and read others’ comments about me.
I: Ok, ok, as long as it is not too personal?
Z: Yeah, it’s not too personal.
I: Ok, do you feel that completing the tasks online made you think about your answer more, less or the same than when it’s pen and paper?
Z: Same.
I: The same?
Z: Uh-huh.
I: Why do you think it’s the same?
Z: You answer a question, (inaudible).
I: Ok, yes, ok. Did you put more or the same effort into reading the texts, so the texts were in the textbook, if I told you we were going to go online, or I told you we are going to do classroom activities, did you read the text, when did you read the text more carefully or was it the same?

Z: I read the the passage in the textbook, long pause.

I: More carefully or

Z: more carefully.

I: When?

Z: Anytime

I: But uhm, in class and online activities regardless, it doesn’t matter? You read them the same?

Z: I think I prefer the reading articles and long passage test, like the TOEFL, very long the test.

I: Ok, but when I gave you the texts and I said, ok we are going to go to blogs or Google Docs, did you pay more attention to the text or if I told you ok, we are going to have a classroom discussion, did you pay more attention to the text?

Z: Uhm, I would pay more attention to the online because a lot of more interesting things, but in the textbook, we can just see the boring the passage and the some pictures but if we go online we can maybe see more interesting more interesting more pictures or some reading.

I: Ok, we’re almost finished. Were there any of the online environments that you enjoyed performing the tasks in? Like Google Docs or blogs that you enjoyed, one more than the other?

Z: You mean which you, the blog or the Google Docs?

I: Or are they the same?

Z: (long pause)

I: Of what you enjoyed.

Z: Enjoyed the blog.

I: The blogs more? Why did you enjoy them more?

Z: Because I can create my own spaces, the skin of the blog, the backgrounds, the picture is whatever you want, you can find a favorite picture to as your background,
use your favorite color, and uh, I think it’s easy to post some prefer picture or songs so it is easy for others to come to see your blog.

I: Ok, good. And then, uh, did you length wise, did you write more in pen and paper or using blogs?

Z: Write more? Because I think the blog is interesting so I want to write more about blog, but when it’s paper, we can make it takes a long time but in blog because I think writing is on paper, you should be more, how do you say, be more academic, make feel tired, but if it’s online, you can do edit whenever you want, and there were be no recording.

I: Ok, and then what did you like the most about using online environments?

Z: Yeah I think it is more easy for me to do it online.

I: What did you like the most of going online, using the online environments, Google Docs and blogs? What did you like the most about it?

Z: It’s easy to share with others.

I: Ok, what did you like the least?

Z: You mean about the story?

I: No, no, uhm so what you like the most about Google Docs and blogs is that you could share?

Z: Yeah.

I: What did you like the least?

Z: What is the least?

I: Means opposite of the most, like not at all.

Z: Uhm, (long pause), maybe it’s because uh the you cannot do it computer whenever you want to. If I didn’t finish it in class, and I need to go back home and opening computer, but if I maybe have dinner at my home and go the library, it’s not easy, it’s not easy to do.

I: Ok, so uh, you kinda have to have a computer to do it?

Z: Yeah.

I: Right, and you don’t have one at home, right, so you have to go to the library?

Z: No. (Laughs). I have one.
I: Oh, you have one?
Z: I mean sometimes, I don’t want to study at home, so then I have to go to the library.
I: So you have to go to a place with a computer?
Z: Yeah.
I: Ok, I get it. Last thing, we are finished with the interview, thank you very much. But do you think that I should know or that was interesting that you think I need to know about?
Z: I, I don’t understand.
I: Ok, anything that, what I’m asking is that, do you have any other comments on it? Anything that you think I need to know?
Z: Uh, uh, yes. It is just uh, uh that should ask more of us because we have three or four regular class and two, one or two days for lab, I think it is not good, listening to teacher is not good, but (inaudible).
I: Should there be more lab days, do you think?
Z: Yeah.
I: Ok, alright. That’s it. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

*** ***
APPENDIX E

SUMMARY OF ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELD NOTES

Students’ Baseline Engagement Behavior

Gloria

Gloria seems to consistently start the various tasks she is presented with, without delay. While texts are being read, be it by the students or an audio recording, she continually follows along in her textbook, underlining, circling and taking notes. In group and pair activities, she appears to take initiative in asking questions, re-reading texts, writing answers down, discussing ideas with peers and presenting answers during the group presentations. Gloria seems to take the activities more seriously as the following example highlights: In the jigsaw activity concerning *Architecture around the World*, in the final phase of the activity, she and Luther are paired to complete the Venn-diagram with their separate groups’ lists. Gloria proceeds to copy the words from Luther’s list into her Venn-diagram, but when he becomes occupied with his phone and does not discuss the answers with her, she re-reads his section, comparing what she thinks the answers are to the ones given to her by Luther.

Joe

During pre-reading activities, Joe seems disengaged; at times he does not have his book in front of him at other times he just stares at the blank pages before him. He is observed to rarely start the pre-reading tasks immediately. On several occasions, it is noted that Joe and Luther speak to each other for extended periods in Arabic, even when he and Luther complete pre-reading tasks together, they discuss the ideas in Arabic, with an occasional number in English being heard. For most of the during-reading phases, Joe follows along in his textbook as the reading occurs. In addition, post-reading tasks are seldom started immediately, he either talks to Luther in Arabic for extended periods before starting tasks or he is observed looking at his text. In group discussions, he rarely took part and he did not present during the group presentations. Joe did however, after about 15 minutes into the
allocated 20 minutes for the class presentation task help one of his group members find some of the information they needed to present to the class and in so doing for about 5 minutes contribute to the group discussion.

Luther

He rarely performed the pre-reading tasks that were not in the question-answer format. He is seen in various classes to be busy with other things such as checking his email or speaking to Joe in Arabic during the pre-reading phases of the various lessons. With the reading texts, he regularly starts by following along, but not long after, he is seen only following along in intervals. Post reading tasks are also seldom started without a delay. He would on occasion visit other websites, mostly in Arabic, or speak to Joe. Luther does seem to contribute in the group discussions and did present some aspects of the group’s findings in the group presentations on the Taj Mahal.

Soufi

Soufi starts the pre-reading tasks as soon as they are given and in most classes he follows the readings in his book throughout. He also starts the post-reading tasks immediately and in group discussions, he seems to take an active role, asking questions, writing answers down, re-reading texts and discussing answers with members. In the group presentations on the Taj Mahal, he was the only presenter. When Vicky tried to contribute during the presentation, Soufi continued talking and in so doing did not give up control of the floor. Through all the various activities, Soufi is noted as seeming as though he wanted to discuss the answers and tasks and be engaged in performing what was requested of him.

Vicky

Vicky rarely starts the pre-reading tasks immediately. On one occasion she arrived late to class and missed the pre-reading activities entirely and on a second occasion, when she forgot her textbook, she only after 10 minutes asked Soufi if he would share with her. On other occasions she and Zi speak to each other in Chinese throughout the activities. For most
of the during reading phases, she follows along in her book, throughout the readings. In post-reading tasks, Vicky starts most of the tasks immediately, but loses interest after a while and only work on them in intervals. During group discussion, she seems to want to contribute, asking questions and giving some ideas. During the class presentation, she attempts to present some of the group findings to the class, however every time she bids for the floor by starting to talk, Soufi continues and she stops.

Zi

Zi arrives late to class on a regular basis, and does not start the pre-reading tasks immediately. On several occasions, it is noted that he waits until time for an activity is almost finished before he quickly does the task. He speaks to Vicky in Chinese for extended periods during the pre-reading phases. Zi does not follow along in his book, while reading occurs. He either just listens, plays with his phone (cleaning it, searching for information, texting), or counts the paragraphs that he needs to read and waits for his turn. For the post-reading task of writing a paragraph on real love, Zi starts immediately, however in all other traditional classes observed, he does not start the task, or does not attempt to contribute, except the Venn-diagram that in the pair phase, he and Vicky worked together to complete the list. In other larger group discussions, Zi does not contribute, he does not present and rather just sits staring at his book, with the occasional reading of the text.

Students’ Engagement behavior in classes with integrated CMC environments

Gloria

As with the traditional face-to-face reading classes, Gloria in these classes with the CMC elements again circles and underlines words in her textbook while writing definitions and notes as the reading occurs. Again, she as mentioned in the field notes of the traditional classes, follows along in her textbook throughout the entire reading, regardless of whether students take turns reading the text or whether they follow along with an audio recording of the text. For the tasks in the CMC environments, be they pre- or post reading tasks, she immediately goes to the domain in which the task is to be performed after receiving
instructions. She is the only one of the six students that opted to use a love poem instead of the love song and in the entire class of 12 students is only one of two students that used a poem. It is noted that while Gloria types in her blogs, she consults her electronic dictionary as if she is very careful about the words she wants to use. In addition, for the most beautiful music blog task, she selected a classical piece by Mozart, again being the only student in the class choosing a classical piece.

Joe

Of the six classes with the CMC component, Joe was absent for 3 of them and arrived 11 minutes late for another one. He only completed one online task, that being the group summarizing task on the matchmaking text. It is noted however, that in the classes with the CMC component that Joe did attend, he would look up words such as aesthetics online. Again, as is the case with the traditional classes, it is often noted that Joe and Luther would talk to each other during the various phases of the class for extensive periods in Arabic. Joe usually starts the actual section of the class by following along in the textbook, and then as the reading progresses, he only follows in intervals. It is further observed that Joe does in fact go to his blog, searches for songs to insert, asks Luther how to do that, types in his blog, yet he never posted. However, after Luther shows Joe how to insert a song into his blog, Joe seems to lose interest in the task and listens to various songs on YouTube and shows no further blog activity.

Luther

Although Luther was only absent one of the six classes where there reading task was to be performed in the CMC environment, he only performed two of the three Google Docs tasks and did not post in his blog at all. In both pre-reading and during reading phases of these classes, Luther is seen to rarely pay attention to the task at hand. He is noted to search the internet for other things, such as books on system analysis and designs, visiting various websites, particularly websites that concern his curriculum after this program, and possible class schedules at another university. As mentioned previously, Luther and Joe would talk to
each other in Arabic throughout various phases of the lessons. In the reading phases where students read specific paragraphs, Luther is seen counting the paragraphs and students that have to read before it is his turn and is ready to start reading when it is his turn. However in one class, it is noted that Luther did follow along in the text for an extended period. In addition, it is also mentioned in the field notes that instead of posting in Blogger, Luther is seen reading the news in Arabic or listening to news stories and videos about a car show.

Soufi

Soufi is often seen visiting online dictionaries in both the pre- and during reading phases of the classes with the CMC components. In addition, it is often noted that Soufi follows along in his textbook while reading occurs, only in one class did Soufi follow the reading text in intervals. Soufi also wastes no time in starting with the CMC reading tasks and works on the tasks for the duration of time allocated in class for these tasks.

Vicky

It is noted in the ethnographic field notes that Vicky immediately starts the activities that are blog related. She often shares what she has found with Zi, be it pictures or music, sharing her headphones with him so that he can listen too. During the pre-reading and during reading phases, Vicky is often seen visiting other sites such as Facebook or viewing her email accounts. For one class she was 17 minutes late and thus missed the pre-reading and most of the actual reading of the text too. However in most of these classes, Vicky seems to follow the reading of texts in intervals, visiting other websites in between the readings.

Zi

Zi is also 17 minutes late for one class and thus missed both the pre-reading and the majority of the reading of the text for that specific class. He seems disengaged when the reading of the various texts occurs and visits his email and Facebook accounts in intervals while the reading takes place. Yet, he immediately starts the tasks, especially the blog tasks. He too makes Vicky listen to the songs that he found and seems eager in visiting and reading his fellow
classmates’ blogs as he enquired on the first day of posting in his blog where he can visit his peers’ blogs.
### APPENDIX F

#### SUMMARY OF ONLINE TASKS AND TASK COMPLETION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Google Docs (1)</th>
<th>Google Docs (2)</th>
<th>Google Docs (3)</th>
<th>Blog post (1)</th>
<th>Blog post (2)</th>
<th>Blog post (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pair sentence sequencing</td>
<td>Groups of 3 summarizing the reading text on Matchmaking</td>
<td>Individual searching for specific information in the reading text on plastic surgery in Korea</td>
<td>Love song/poem</td>
<td>Most beautiful place/thing you’ve ever seen</td>
<td>Most beautiful/favorite music or song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>6 X X X X X X X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>1 - X - - - - -</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luther</td>
<td>2 X X - - - - -</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soufi</td>
<td>6 X X X X X X X</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicky</td>
<td>6 X X X X X X X</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zi</td>
<td>6 X X X X X X X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N= 6. Note: The Black shaded cells indicate absences and the dash (-) indicates no attempt of the task.*
REFERENCES


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