

VIRTUAL ROLE REVERSAL FOR TEACHER TRAINERS ONLINE

Martha Clark Cummings
Renée Jourdenais

cummings@u-aizu.ac.jp

rjourdenais@miis.edu

Abstract

This paper explores the use of computer-mediated instruction in an MA TESOL program. The researchers, three teacher trainers who have participated in online MATESOL courses both as students and as instructors, focus primarily on the shifting identities they experienced while teaching and learning online. The authors describe their struggles with virtual teaching and learning, including the acquisition of necessary computer knowledge and skills to lead and participate in online classes, changes in discourse style in both synchronous and asynchronous communication, struggling with teacher-student identities, and coping with simultaneous feelings of frustration, empowerment, isolation, and collaboration. Through an analysis of online chats, teaching and learning diaries, and email exchanges, the authors explore their evolution as teachers and learners in cyberspace.

1 Introduction

Linguists...sociolinguists...and critical discourse analysts have all pointed out that any social encounter, including any of those in which talk is engaged, has as its logical first and interactionally ongoing highest priority to position the participants in the social encounter in relationship to each other. Whatever else we do in speaking to each other, we make claims about ourselves as a person, we make claims about the person of our listeners, we claim how those persons are related to each other at the outset of the encounter, we project an ongoing monitoring of those multiple relationships, and as we close the encounter we make claims about what sorts of relationships we expect will hold upon resuming our contacts in future social encounters. (Scollon 1998, p. 33)

This paper describes an *online classroom* situated in cyberspace between California and Japan, occupied by three professors, one of whom was the instructor, and twelve graduate students over the course of seven weeks. Drawing on critical discourse

analysis, the story progresses through the positioning, via discursive strategies, of the three professors, particularly the two who had entered the course as auditors. The course, entitled, 'Online and Distance Education,' was offered as an elective in a TESOL graduate program in the States. The instructor taught the course online from Japan.

Dr. Maureen Kelly (hereafter, MK) and Dr. Nan Reed (hereafter, NR) (both are pseudonyms) were two faculty members who requested permission to audit the course; they did so for different reasons. MK was a professor being urged to put her Language Program Administration Certificate courses online so that alumni, and others who had previously earned MA's in TESOL, could benefit from them. A very experienced classroom teacher with little online teaching experience, she reflects many professors who are feeling pressured by their administrations to create and teach courses online (Carnevale, 2004). This pressure is widespread in the United States, as evidenced by an increasing number of teaching journals featuring articles written by teachers trying to persuade other teachers into the world of technology. For example, a sort of 'If I can do it, so can you, mentality pervades the November 2000 Issue of *English Journal*, with titles such as "The Technophobe seeks common denominators," and "Eight Good Reasons to Use Technology." MK wanted to at least find out what she was being asked to do. NR is the MATESOL/MATFL Program Head and has taught courses in the Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) Certificate program. She was interested in auditing the course because she knew it was likely that she would be called upon to teach an online course herself at some point in the near future.

The interaction between the three professors regarding the class began when NR, at the end of an E-mail message, said,

ALSO...Maureen and I would like very very much to "audit" your class. May we? We'll be good. :) If so, can you please include us on any class emails? We have no spying intentions, we just really want to see/learn what this online/distance stuff is all about. And from an expert such as yourself.

After E-mailing back and forth on this topic, MK decided to check with the students by posting a message to the course conference that read,

Hi, everyone –

I am writing to see if I can post a note to the conference because I am begging Martha to let me audit the course. Actually, I guess in e-terms I am asking to "lurk" or (leark) though I don't know if that is fair to the credit bearing students. Also I have to admit to some trepidation about this project because I am TOTALLY inept when it comes to technology and I am afraid that I don't have the background knowledge to participate well...

The instructor expressed some ambivalence about their being in the online classroom and attached this caveat to the first Chat Task posted to the class conference,

(Please note: My fearless colleagues MK and NR have asked if they can stop by from time to time to see what's new in online and distance education. I said, yes, of course (secretly hoping to put them to work!). So don't be surprised if their names turn up in your chat rooms.)

The students enrolled in the course were quick to reassure MK and NR that they were welcome to participate and the project began.

2 A Review of Relevant Literature

Discourse analysis derives in part from the work of Goffman (1959) and states, basically, that we create ourselves as we go, or, in Goffman's words, self is "something of collaborative manufacture" (p.253), that much depends on context, that we can play multiple roles in the same setting with different interlocutors and that we can express different identities through different voices in different settings (See: Kramsch, 1997; Kramsch, A'Ness & Lam, 2000; Lam, 2000; Lam, 2004; Peirce 1995; Mynard, 2002).

The literature on computer mediated communication (CMC) suggests that CMC is indeed an authentic setting (See: Kramsch et al., 2000). Online communities that can be reached by a click, then, are as real to many people as any other setting (Lam 2004). Identity, voice, and design are expressed with the same ferocity online as they are elsewhere (Lam, 2000). Kramsch et al. (2000) go so far as to claim that the physical characteristics of computer hardware, rather than being separate from the software and from us, its users, in fact define our actions, that is, our existence. They suggest it brings about fundamental changes in the way we use language and other semiotic systems to represent ourselves to ourselves and to others, and in the way we represent our world (Kramsch et al., 2000)

Internet chat has been differentiated from other written interaction in that it is not meant to be permanent, takes place in real time, has multiple conversations and threads, and often includes participants who do not know each other in the physical world (Bays, 1998). Chats are texts if they are saved as texts, but not while they are happening. The medium is more like a conversation than like a letter. As such, much of the vitality of the chat is lost when it is revisited later. One feature of Internet chat discussed repeatedly is its combination of utmost distance and utmost intimacy, of seriousness and playfulness, of authenticity, and of simulation (Kramsch et al, 2000).

Many benefits for language learners (and presumably their teachers) have also been reported (See: Cummings, 2004; Sullivan & Pratt, 1996; Warschauer, 2000) CMC, with its reduction of verbal and nonverbal contextualization cues (Gumperz, 1984), is said to be easier to manage for shy learners (Cummings et al, 2001; Mynard, 2002; Warschauer, Turbee & Roberts, 1996). Furthermore, learners seem to have more control over the discourse in synchronous chat, where the teacher's role is minimized In this analysis we will see the ways in which the professor/auditors struggled with these aspects of online discourse.

Finally, the literature of teacher talk is also relevant here. How do we know who is the boss in a classroom situation? Bellack, Kliebard, Hyman & Smith (1966) defined

the teacher as the person who sets up the *structure, solicit, respond, react* discourse pattern, as illustrated in this well-known example from Allwright & Bailey (1991):

T: OK. Now. A conductor. (*structuring*) Pedro, what's a conductor? (*soliciting*)

S: A conductor is the person who is boss in the em (*inaudible*) for example, in music. (*responding*)

T: OK. (*reacting*)

Johnson (2002) reminds us that the view of the teacher is as a facilitator of learning, rather than a provider of knowledge is common in online learning environments. But, he asks what it really means for the teacher to be a facilitator, when the he or she is physically absent in the online learning environment (Johnson, 2002). These questions are particularly relevant to this study as we explore the presence of multiple people filling the facilitator role in this online classroom.

3 The Online Course in Context

This course, “Online and Distance Education” was by no means a typical distance course. All of the students and the professor auditors were together at the same institution in California, while their instructor was in Japan. The instructor knew both MK and NR very well, personally as well as professionally, and also had had six of the twelve students in a “live” class the previous semester when the instructor was teaching on their campus. In addition, most of the students had either had MK and/or NR as a professor or as an advisor. This discourse, therefore, cannot be compared to the discourse in typical chat rooms where participants are all strangers and sometimes take on new identities. For the most part, identities of the various participants were known by at least one of the professors taking part in this project.

The Participants

MK is a well-respected teacher educator, who has been working, teaching, and publishing in the field for more than 25 years. Additionally, she is the founder of the MATESOL program at this institution. It would be safe to say that she is universally deferred to. NR, who joined the TESOL faculty in 1998, was appointed head of the program in 2000, and is also highly respected by students.

The Data

The data in this study consist of the texts of five synchronous class meetings with students in three chat rooms – that is, fifteen chat sessions of approximately one hour each, five follow-up tasks to the chats, six asynchronous tasks, E-mail messages, and private chat sessions between MK and instructor, NR and the instructor, or sometimes among the three.

Methodology

First, using the "Comment" function of Microsoft Word, the three participants independently read and commented on transcripts of those chat sessions in which they had individually participated. They made open-ended qualitative comments about the turns in and the contents of each chat session.

These open-ended comments led to a second phase of analysis in which the participants color-coded their turns in the discourse according to the following categories: (1) discourse issues, (2) technological issues, (3) pedagogical issues, and (4) interactional issues. The coding, like the comment interpretation described above, allowed us to identify recurrent themes in our online course participation, and facilitated the following analysis.

The Course

The TESOL program uses *First Class* client and its server for its online courses. This course consisted of a series of synchronous and asynchronous tasks for the students. (See Appendix A for the course syllabus and Appendix B for the tasks.) The goal of the course was to help the students, all of whom were in training to be teachers, and approximately half of whom were already practicing teachers, to explore what would be required of them to teach online, paying particular attention to what is required to convert face-to-face courses to an online format.

The synchronous chats took place on Monday evenings from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm in California and 8:00 am to 10:00 am on Tuesday mornings in Japan. The chat rooms were lettered A, B, and C, and the participants were selected so that they had maximum exposure to the other members of the course at each session. Each chat that MK or NR was involved in will be briefly considered, looking at presentation of self, role, voice, and footing.

In completing the first chat task (see Appendix B), two of the participants were able to establish a footing that is, an alignment taken up to themselves and the others present Goffman's (1981), sense and one was not. In the first session, the instructor functioned primarily as teacher/facilitator in chat room A, NR attempted to downplay her expertise and be just one of the students in chat room C, and MK was not able to access the chat rooms, apparently due to a technical difficulty, although *First Class* claims to allow users access to all aspects of online courses via the Internet, and was unable to join the class. Thus, her "participation" in the first synchronous chat session consisted of multiple attempts to enter the chat that registered as :

Maureen Kelley has entered the chat.

Maureen Kelley has left the chat.

After class MK expressed her dismay over not being able to participate in the chat via an E-mail to the course conference:

Subject: Feeling very stupid

Hi – It's 4:30 pm on Monday and I'm sure you are all having a great time chatting. I got onto the conference and was able to locate each chat room but found nothing happening. I mean – there was a grey screen there for each one. Now clearly you are chatting away and I'm doing something wrong, or – more likely – failing to do something right. I feel like the Japanese MA students in my first year at the school who told me that the turn taking rules of American English and Japanese were so different that they couldn't find a way into the conversation! Oh, well – I'm with you in spirit – Maureen K

NR took an active role in the discussion and established her footing in two ways. First, she tried to be “one of the gang” by using very casual language as demonstrated in the following three turns at different times in the chat:

NR: wanna be the spokesperson?

S1: I would like to feel more comfortable in chat rooms

NR: Yeah...I guess we'll get first hand experience!

NR: how 'bout thinking of a particular type of activity?

At the same time, however, it was clear that NR wasn't a novice regarding computer technology:

NR: Speaking wise, you can also do voice chats – if you've got a good computer connection

S1: I hadn't thought of that. I guess I'm not very familiar with the technology that's out there.

S2: Speaking in First Class?

NR: how 'bout chats?

NR: and listservs?

S1: what are listservs? (sorry, i know i've heard the word before, but...)

NR: i'm not exactly sure how you'd "teach" them...but maybe familiarization....
(listservs are giant email mailing lists)

S2: ... what was listservs, renee? I remember we learned from you before, but I forgot

In addition, NR demonstrated her ability to access other experts in the following contribution:

S4: Good, then what in detail do we provide in the tutorial page?

NR: I think that Bill L might have one to look at for the online writing class...might be a good place to start

The instructor took over the role of facilitator in chat room A (NR and MK were in chatrooms B & C, respectively), making her presence felt only when it seemed necessary in the other two chat rooms:

S1: I agree with you, S2. Synchronous course would be somewhat hard to practice in the classrooms that have many limitations.

S3: Like what limitations do you mean, S1?

S3: By the way, how about rules as we need them?

MC: That would be an ad-hoc needs analysis, right, S3?

After this first class, the primary struggles of the two professor/auditors became apparent. MK expressed frustration and anger at the technology via E-mail and NR perceived that she had behaved like a teacher and worried about having talked too much.

In the second chat, the instructor changed the members of the groups, again putting NR and MK in separate chat groups. Concerned that most students complained about the speed and chaos of the first chat session calling it “confusing”, “stressful”, and “chaotic”, and saying that answers were “all floating around”, “sometimes rapid fire, sometimes long wait”, that they felt “totally lost”, and that they missed the “emotion/affection we can share in face to face interaction,” the instructor decided to use the following set of protocols developed by Nunan (1999) for his online graduate chats:

? I want to ask a question
+ I would like to add something on this point
A I agree
D I disagree
// I've finished my turn
... I haven't finished my turn
go X It's your turn, X.

The students received these instructions with their task:

The first person on tonight's list will be the first facilitator. The facilitator will start the discussion and hand out the turns by saying, “Go, Sarah,” for example, when it's Sarah's turn. All participants will use the protocols above to indicate when they want to ask a question or add something. They will only begin posting what they have to say when the facilitator tells them to by saying, “Go,” and their name. After 15 or 20 minutes, the first facilitator will appoint the second facilitator, so that she/he has a chance to participate in the chat and others can experience being facilitator. After another 15 or 20 minutes, the second facilitator will appoint a third, who will wrap up the discussion. Anyone who did not get a turn at being facilitator can be either the recorder -- cutting and pasting the verbatim chat into a Microsoft Word document or an E-mail message and posting it to the conference --or the spokesperson, posting a summary of the chat into the course conference. In any case, please make sure these two jobs are done in each chat room.

It was hoped that this new protocol would help to alleviate some of the discomfort indicated in the first chat session.

In this second chat, MK had more success with the technology and happily announced her arrival into the chat room by saying:

Hi, Anyone and everyone. Maureen here getting into the chat from home. I am a happy camper. I learned some stuff about how to get into chat rooms. Took a lotta help from a lotta folks.

In her chat room, NR conscientiously continued to try to present herself as just one of the students, working hard at what Sacks (1984) would call “doing ‘being ordinary,’” but was forced back into the role of administrator by the fact that another teacher showed up with her students in the lab reserved for this online class. NR, acting on behalf of the instructor, had to intervene, talking on the phone to the supervisor of the computer lab while simultaneously contributing these comments to the chat:

NR: I’ve verified that we are the ones in fact who have the reservation!!!!

NR: She’s calling whomever is in there now to straighten this out.

NR: It’s ours!!!!

The instructor, in Japan, did not participate, but observed the online interactions, dropping very brief procedural guidelines into each chat by copying and pasting, and asking for updates from NR:

MC: OK, let me know what happens.

MC: So will they let you stay?

It was clearly difficult for NR to “be ordinary” as far as a student role was concerned. Rather she needed to find a way to accept her blended administrator/professor/student roles. In the third, fourth, and fifth chats, NR seemed to relax into the situation, sometimes sounding like a facilitator:

NR: I was thinking more broadly at the idea of how to get the sense of community going. I mean, we seem to like the idea of smaller groups...but then I think that we might just be dealing with a whole bunch of tiny classes and I don’t think that’s what we’re necessarily aiming for either...so how can we make a big group feel connected to one another?

Sometimes behaving as a learner:

NR: I hate to admit it, I just don’t end up reading everything everyone posts.

And sometimes sounded like a mix of participant and facilitator:

NR: So ok, we might start with ice breaker types of things (of some sort) and then work more on the classroom/academic interaction...and we came up with smaller groups...Sorry, I just squirm at the idea of having all these separate conversations.

In addition, she also provided teacher-like “reactions” (Bellack et al, 1966) by offering feedback on some of the students’ contributions:

NR: That’s a good point...once the set up is done, maintaining and updating is much easier.

Despite her apparent increasing ease with her multi-faceted role, however, NR continued to demonstrate concerns about the online learning environment:

NR: (these silences are killing me!) I thought I’d elaborate a little...

NR: ...I find that that’s what I find so frustrating about sites, getting lost in them, around them, in other linked sites...

S3: A

NR: ...I imagine it’s like a classroom taking place in the middle of a highway somewhere...how much learning can take place if you can’t sit there comfortably?//

In fact, frustrated by the pacing of the chats, she attempts to test the constraints of the chat conventions:

NR: Do you think we can do this w/o a moderator since there are only three of us? Maybe just hitting a "+" if you want some time to talk?

and tries to see if one can whisper “an aside” without bidding for a turn:

NR: (earlier: OOOHHHHH sorry I missed that part on the Chat 5t sheet! :))

MK, in the meantime, continued her stance as a reluctant student, confessing at the outset of the third chat that she had not completed the asynchronous task she was supposed to have completed between the two synchronous meetings.

MK: I wish I could hide in the back row and crouch down so you don’t see me and call on me. The dog ate my homework.//

MC: :-)

MK: I have a plan to get caught up though.

In spite of her increasing technology proficiency and knowledge, MK remained discomfited by distance education throughout the seven weeks of the course, using some interesting metaphors to describe her frustration. In an E-mail to the instructor, she wrote:

One big thing for me is that I can't do what I think I do best as a teacher – I don't see a way to use my sense of humor in online chats and it's too time-consuming to weave the discursal nets – I can't type something like, 'As Mary was saying last week when we were discussing reliability...' and then make the point. I have to just make the point.

In another, directed to her colleagues, she said:

I feel like I am driving a very difficult vehicle (heavy truck, grinding gears, no power steering, dim headlights) to an unknown destination on a difficult road (poor road signs, pot holes, narrow lanes, steep drops off cliffs on each side) with a mental and physical map that is creased and torn and blurred. Now it's starting to rain... I long for the sleek sportscar, the open road, the familiar destination: classrooms where we talk, and it's so easy, so fluid, so fast, so fun and so funny... The only thing that keeps me driving is Martha's voice on the cell phone, saying, "You can do it – Your destination is just a little way ahead. Isn't this an interesting view? Put on your turn signal now..." I want to pull over and call it quits for the night. But the other drivers are not running me off the road. They are supportive and polite (this is California, after all, not NY). OK, a ten minute break. The rain has stopped for the moment...Hmm. Soon it will probably start to hail...

Finally, MK wrote an E-mail to the whole class regarding an image of a Shaker classroom posted when discussing incorporating multimedia in the online classroom:

Hey – I think this image of the room w/the chairs hung up on the wall and the grandfather clock at center stage deep is highly relevant! It's how I feel – it's my nightmare about our class – I finally get there and everyone has left already, neatly re-hanging the chairs on the walls, with only the incessant tick-tock and the pendulum swinging to tell me that time has run out!

As the seven weeks progressed, however, MK, in addition to finding her way, figuratively, through the door and into the classroom, did, in fact, find a way to do at least some of what she does best as a professor. In her "live" classes, MK actively works to help her students analyze and synthesize their ideas in greater depth. MK found ways to enact these solicitation patterns in the online chatrooms in which she participated by using both confirmation checks, where she asks if she has understood her interlocutor correctly, and clarification checks, in which she requests further information or help in understanding a concept. Beginning in chat 3 and continuing in chats 4 and 5, her contributions to the discussions were often framed as "I like what you're saying and would like to hear more" – what teachers working as facilitators often do:

MK: You guys are talking about language classes – right? If so, would assessment depend on the level (grammar, vocab, etc.) or skill (reading, writing, etc.) being taught?

MK: Hmm. Good point, L. I need to think more about this. Does it differ if we are talking language vs content? //

MK: This medium seems to limit what I consider to be “indepth” student presentations. Can someone help me w/ this concept?//

MK: Yes, BP, students have to do their best w/ what they have (hardware/software) BUT we as Ts have a responsibility to provide a good educational experience. How do we do that???//

In fact, by chat four, MK was creating new protocols to accommodate her discourse needs:

MK: You guys, I need a sign that says, “Interesting. Please say more.” I don’t want a turn (so + isn’t right) and I don’t want to agree or disagree. I just want [the speaker] to say more. Do we have a symbol?

After some discussion the group comes up with “\$” as their new symbol, about which MK says:

MK: OK – so the \$ is cool cuz we could think about a bank account accruing interest.

The new symbol allows MK to participate actively both in the technological discourse and in the chat conversations in ways which work for her. Despite her stated discomfort, she has become a member of this online community (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

As the final assignment for the course, the students were required to do a group project. One of the requirements of the project was that the group members meet for a private online chat. NR sent the text of her group’s chat to me instead of posting it to the course conference because she and MK (who had joined forces for the project to explore putting some of the program’s certificate courses online) felt that some of the discussion might be too negative for the class to see:

MK: NR, do you do chats in any of your courses?

NR: You’ve got to be kidding! :) with my reactions to them?

MK: Silly me.

MK: OK, they’re a pain but I’ve found some in MC’s class to be interesting. W/a good moderator I’ve actually learned stuff.//

Interestingly, it may be worth noting here that NR tried to meet with MK in person, rather than online, preferring face-to-face interaction, but MK had insisted that meeting take place online, as the task required. The “reluctant student” had clearly lost some of her reluctance!

4 Conclusion and Future Research

The data collected and analyzed in this project contribute to identifying the complexities of the online learning environment. Admittedly, this was a somewhat unusual circumstance, as it is not often that one has two program-related professors auditing a course, but the concerns that arise for each of them are undoubtedly common to many online learning environments, from both instructor and student perspectives. One participant attempts to mitigate her technological and administrative expertise and “fit in” with the class, while another struggles with her level of technological expertise in an attempt to gain entry into the class. We think that such explorations of online learning environments are important if we are to better understand what the environment can offer to learners and instructors alike.

In future research, we hope that information about teachers’ attitudes toward new technology might be advanced. An interesting approach, for example, would be to conduct a longitudinal study of these two teachers, observing them as they make their way toward the status of full-fledged distance educators. In fact, NR did teach an online course during the following academic year. Exploring her evolving reactions to online learning environments would be of value, as would exploring the growing technological expertise of MK.

Additionally, exploring data collected from teachers of different age groups and genders might prove valuable. Clearly of interest, would also be data collected from teachers with varying level of technological expertise, as well as data from teachers in a range of different teaching situations, rather than graduate school professors only. The processes and practices, attitudes and approaches of various teachers could also be compared and contrasted to provide further information on the effectiveness of various styles of online communication. Finally, cross-cultural studies of how teachers adapt to online education could be made, perhaps with certain variables-- such as forms of talk-- singled out for scrutiny.

Ultimately, we hope that the most promising aspect of such exploration are the benefits that may lie in assisting teachers who are embarking on the journey toward proficiency in online and distance education. They are not alone.

References

- Allwright, D. & Bailey, K.M. (1991). *Focus on the language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bays, H. (1998). Framing and face in Internet exchanges: A socio-cognitive approach. *Linguistic online, 1*. Retrieved September 6, 2004 from the World Wide Web: <http://viadrina.euv-frankfurt-o.de/~wjournal/bays.htm>.
- Bellack, A., Kliebard, R., Hyman, T. & Smith, F.L. 1966. *The language of the classroom*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Carnevale, D. (2004). Professors seek compensation for online courses. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. <http://chronicle.com/free/v50/i49/49a02701.htm> retrieved 9/1/04.
- Cummings, M.C., Katoku, C., Nichols, J. & Russell, J. (2001) Meeting the challenges of web-based instruction. Paper presented at International TESOL Conference, St. Louis, MO: March, 2001.
- Cummings, M.C. (2004) Because we are shy and fear mistaking: Computer mediated communication with EFL writers. *Journal of Basic Writing, Vol.23*, 39-67.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of talk*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Gumperz, J. (1982). *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Hill, L.G.C. (2000) Eight good reasons to use technology. *English Journal, Vol. 2.*, 22-24.
- Johnson, E.M. (2002). The role of computer-supported discussion for language teacher education: What do the students say? *CALICO Journal, Vol. 20*, 59-79.
- Kramsch, C. (1997). Language teaching in an electronic age. In G.M. Jacobs (Ed.), *Language classrooms of tomorrow: Issues and responses* (pp. 105-117). Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.
- Kramsch, C., A’Ness, F. & Lam, W.S. E. (2000). Authenticity and authorship in the computer-mediated acquisition of L2 literacy. *Language Learning & Technology, 4* (2), 78-104.
- Lam, W.S. E. (2000). L2 literacy and the design of the self: A case study of a teenager

- writing on the internet. *TESOL Quarterly* Vol. 34, No. 3, 457-482.
- Lam, W.S. E. (2004). Second language socialization in a bilingual chat room: Global and local considerations. *Language Learning & Technology*, 8, 3, 44-65.
- J. (2002). Using Internet chat rooms with language learners.
<http://jomynard.tripod.com/chat2002.htm> retrieved 9/22/04.
- Nunan, D. (1999). A foot in the world of ideas: Graduate study through the internet. *Language learning & Technology*, 3, 2, 52-74.
- Peirce, B.N. (1995). Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29, 9-32.
- Sacks, H. (1984). On doing 'being ordinary'. In J. M. Atkinson & J. C. Heritage (Eds), *Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis*. New York: Cambridge University Press (pp. 413-429).
- Scollon, R. (1998). *Mediated discourse as social interaction: A study of news discourse*. New York: Longman.
- Sullivan, N. & Pratt, E. (1996). A comparative study of two ESL writing environments: A computer-assisted classroom and a traditional oral classroom." *System*, 29, 491-501.
- Tchudi, S. (2000). The technophobe seeks common denominators. *English Journal*, 2, 30 – 37.
- Tidwell, L.C. & Walther, J.B. (2002) Computer-mediated communication effects on disclosure, impressions, and interpersonal evaluations: Getting to know one another a bit at a time. *Human Communication Research*, 28, 314 – 348.
- Warschauer, M. (2000). On-line learning in second language classrooms: An ethnographic study. In M. Warschauer & R. Kern. (Eds.). *Network-based language teaching: concepts and practice*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 41-58.

Appendix A

Course Description

In this course, we will explore how to create, develop, teach, and participate in online and distance courses. We will do this by investigating the differences between online and face-to-face interaction, by critiquing courses already available online, experimenting with planning online courses, discovering how to create and sustain an online community, and learning how to take advantage of the technology that is available to us.

Course Requirements

- 1) Completion of all the assigned hands-on tasks
- 2) Active participation in the online community of this course, including substantial contributions to the ongoing asynchronous conversations at least twice a week
- 3) Active participation in all synchronous chats
- 4) Completion of a course project suitable to your needs as an online teacher

Readings

There will be no required textbook for this course. Required online readings will be listed in the CALL 573 conference. Books will be recommended.

Tentative schedule (subject to revision depending on the needs of the participants)

Week One

Identifying, describing, defining online/distance education

Week Two

Looking at what's already out there, mostly about language learning

Week Three

Planning and designing an online course

Week Four

Building and sustaining an online community

Week Five

Creating a media-rich learning environment

Week Six

Staying organized

Week Seven Presentation of Projects

Appendix B Synchronous Chat Tasks

Chat Task One

- 1) Go to your assigned Chat Room, A, B, or C.
- 2) Introduce yourself to the others in the room.
- 3) Appoint a spokesperson for the group. The spokesperson's job is to report the results of your discussion to the whole group in an E-mail posted to the course conference with the subject line "Task One, Chat Room A (or B or C, depending), Summary." (Get help from your group in composing this summary.)
- 4) Appoint a recorder. The recorder's job is to save the chat and post it to the conference with the subject line "Task One, Chat Room A, Verbatim." (If you don't know how to do this, get technical assistance. Make sure everyone in the group learns how.)
- 5) Appoint a facilitator. The facilitator's job is to make sure everyone gets a turn and no one takes too long a turn.
- 6) Please discuss these prompts:
 - 1) As a result of taking this course, I would like to know...
 - 2) I would like to be able to...
 - 3) I think a worthwhile project for this course would be...

You will have about a half hour to chat, fifteen minutes to summarize and post, and then, when I give you the signal, we will read what has been posted and discuss some more. I think the whole task should take about an hour but this is just an estimate!

(Please note: My fearless colleagues Maureen Kelley and Nan Reed have asked if they can stop by from time to time to see what's new in online and distance education. I said, yes, of course (secretly hoping to put them to work!). So don't be surprised if their names turn up in your chat rooms.)

[Student names and the Chat Rooms A, B, and C they were assigned to, were listed here.]

Chat Task Two

Over the next week, I am going to ask you to investigate and evaluate three language learning sites on the web. Therefore, today I would like you to develop a set of criteria for evaluating a web-based language learning site with your chat group. Do this from the perspective of the learner. Think about what would make you choose to study language online at a particular site.

RULES:

Here are some new rules for chatting.

David Nunan, in his article, A foot in the world of ideas: Graduate study through the Internet, located at <http://ilt.msu.edu/vol13num1/nunan/>

suggested that synchronous chats would work better if the chatters used protocols such as these:

- ? I want to ask a question
- + I would like to add something on this point
- A I agree
- D I disagree
- // I've finished my turn
- I haven't finished my turn
- go X It's your turn, X.

This first person on tonight's list will be the first facilitator. The facilitator will start the discussion and hand out the turns by saying, -- Go, Sarah, -- for example, when it's Sarah's turn. All participants will use the protocols above to indicate when they want to ask a question or add something. They will only begin posting what they have to say when the facilitator tells them to by saying, "Go, X" and their name. After 15 or 20 minutes, the first facilitator will appoint the second facilitator, so that she/he has a chance to participate in the chat and others can experience being facilitator. After another 15 or 20 minutes, the second facilitator will appoint a third, who will wrap up the discussion.

Anyone who did not get a turn at being facilitator can be either the recorder -- cutting and pasting the verbatim chat into a Microsoft Word document or an Email message and posting it to the conference -- or the spokesperson, posting a summary of the chat into the course conference. In any case, please make sure these two jobs are done in each chat room.

It might be a good idea to print these instructions and the list of names and bring them with you to the chat, since even the names start scrolling away after a certain point.

Angst over turn-taking was a major issue in the feedback you posted about the last chat. Let's see if the protocols work to alleviate the worry. Undoubtedly other issues will be raised.

Chat Task Three Planning and designing an online course

This week, we will look at what's involved in planning and designing an online course. If you have time, here is one site to take a look at before we meet on Monday, September 23 at 4pm:

<http://online.valencia.cc.fl.us/Faculty/Vofacultysyllabus.htm>

If you don't have time to look at it now, I will suggest it again for this week's asynchronous task.

In Chat Task Three, please brainstorm about how you might convert a course you regularly teach, or would like to teach, from face-to-face to online. Please talk together about what issues are involved in teaching online and how you would have to change what you do in the classroom to meet the needs of your online students and the constraints of the medium. Here are some suggestions to help you get started.

- 1) Students: more or fewer? Traditional or non-traditional? In different time zones?
- 2) What kind of Internet access will your students have? Will they be together in a lab or at home? Will they have unlimited access through the school or have to pay for their own ISP?
- 3) How will you arrange for collaborative work among students?
- 4) How will you assess student learning?
- 5) What will the balance be between student-centered and teacher-centered learning?
- 6) What about discussion in class and student presentations?
- 7) What are your preferred methods of presenting content in face-to-face settings? How will those have to change?
- 8) What graphic/audio/video requirements do you have? Do you, for example, have access to a scanner to scan in your existing handouts and overheads?
- 9) What kinds of research will you require your students to do? How can you be sure they have access to what they need?
- 10) In what ways will the software you are using limit you?

Enough of my questions! I'm sure you have questions of your own.

Let's continue using the protocols, since you all seemed to prefer having them.

- ? I want to ask a question
- + I would like to add something on this point
- ++ I want to start a new topic
- A I agree (and that's all I have to say)
- D I disagree (and that's all I have to say)
- // I have finished my turn
- ... I haven't finished my turn
- go X It's your turn, X (some groups found it saved time to use initials instead of names for this prompt.)

Chat Task Four Building and Sustaining an Online Community

Our topic this week is “Building and Sustaining an Online Community.” I think the first question we need to discuss is

- 1) Do you feel that you are a member of a community in the class? How is it similar to/different from being a member of a community in a face to face classroom?
From there we can go to,
 - 2) What could we do to strengthen and solidify the community that we are building in this class?
 - 3) What can we do in the online and distance classes we will teach in the future to help students feel like community members?
For example,
 - a) What kind of needs analysis should we do for an online course?
 - b) How can we get students more involved in the online interaction?
 - c) What kinds of interaction can students have outside of class that will strengthen their bonds?

Here are some links that might provide some food for thought:

<http://www.hopetillman.com/vc.html>

<http://www.tafe.sa.edu.au/lsrc/one/natproj/tal/index.htm>

Chat Task Five Creating a media-rich learning environment

What is media-rich? What I mean is adding graphics, scanning images, adding sound, narrated slide shows, and animation to your course. All of these things can be done! Before we get into the how-to, which will be the longer, asynchronous part of this segment of the course, let’s talk about why and when we might want to. The question this week is, Why and when is it worth it to use multimedia?

If you have time, please look at a couple of these sites before class. They illustrate the features of multimedia very well.

<http://www.ac.wvu.edu/~stephan/Animation/animation.html>

<http://www.macromedia.com/resources/education/>

<http://www.real.com>

<http://www.microsoft.com/office/powerpoint/>

<http://www.apple.com/quicktime>

For the Mac users among us

<http://www.thinker.org>

Provides an excellent argument for posting artwork

Here's an example. I couldn't resist!



Obviously, if you are an art teacher or a biology teacher, and teaching online, the answer is easy. You have to. But do language teachers need to spend the extra time and effort to use multimedia? Here are some issues to consider and discuss with your group. Think if these reasons to use multimedia apply to the class you are thinking of teaching on line. Chat about them in your group.

1. To illustrate the mechanics of how things work. Sometimes the process in question can be illustrated with a graph or a series of pictures. Sometimes animation showing the process in motion is better. Sometimes sound is needed.
2. To clarify or emphasize abstract concepts. For example, we might want to post a series of pictures to illustrate acronyms.
3. To make unfamiliar material lively and entertaining.
4. As the basis for an assignment. Students can collect data, convert it to digital form, and display it online as part of an assignment, provided, of course, they know how or you teach them.

You might also want to discuss with your group when to avoid multimedia. Here are some questions you might ask each other.

1. Will you have institutional support? Are there labs, media centers, and paid student assistants who can help you?
2. Is the material relevant? Too often, I have seen instructors adding video and animation to their sites that is neither relevant nor helpful for the students, and sometimes even becomes a distraction.
3. Availability of the material elsewhere. Is the material you want to show your students available on a publicly accessible web site? It's worth spending some time looking first!

I'm sure that you have lots of other issues to discuss about this topic. Please feel free to ask questions other than the ones I've posted.