

ABSTRACT

LEE, YUNA. Implementing Synchronous Chat-Based Curriculum in an Advanced-Level ESL Classroom. (Under the direction of Dr. Ruie Jane Pritchard and Dr. Ellen Vasu.)

This study investigated how college-level ESL students perceived the curriculum involving synchronous computer-mediated-communication (online chatting) as a means to prepare for oral communication. Eight ESL students enrolled in a community college were selected to share their experiences with the chat-based curriculum specifically developed for this study. The curriculum was based on the sociolinguistic perspective of second language learning which emphasized the importance of communicating effectively with other speakers in a socially appropriate manner. Qualitative data such as observational notes, questionnaire, and transcripts of one-on-one and focus group interviews were analyzed to examine student perceptions about the curriculum.

Findings indicated that allowing ESL students to participate in small-group chat discussions resulted in increased level of participation and motivation in subsequent face-to-face discussions. According to data, chatting (1) prepared students for oral communication due to the opportunity to practice language output in slow-motion, (2) allowed students to experiment with English without the fear of embarrassment, and (3) encouraged honest and candid conversations which resulted in the development of personal relationships. Another critical component of the curriculum was identified as tailored classroom instruction that was designed by extracting linguistic errors from chat room transcripts. As a result of receiving tailored instruction, students became aware of habitual errors that they tend to make in oral language and reported that this awareness had contributed to improved oral fluency.

Secondary investigation involved comparing the properties of language produced during chat sessions with the properties of oral language that are established in Chafe and Danielewics' study (1987). Findings indicated that the language produced during chat sessions share many of the properties of oral language. These findings and data from interviews suggested that students' linguistic skills gained by participating in chat sessions made natural transition to their spoken language.

**IMPLEMENTING SYNCHRONOUS CHAT-BASED CURRICULUM IN AN
ADVANCED-LEVEL ESL CLASSROOM**

By

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PERSONAL BIOGRAPHY

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Introduction

Since the early 1950s, the ways that second languages are taught have dramatically changed from a focus on teaching discrete grammatical structures to language learners' communicative ability. Guiding language learners to communicate effectively in social contexts has become the focal point of second language classes.

This transformation in teaching reflects the changes in people's perceptions of second language acquisition. From 1920's to 1950's, second language learning reflected a structuralist perspective that perceived language learning as habit formation and conditioning. Various structural methods of language instruction were developed including the Audio Lingual Method (ALM) which focuses on habit formation through rote memorization, rigid drills, and grammar exercises with little emphasis placed on meaning. This method has produced learners who may acquire grammatical accuracy but do not communicate effectively in social contexts.

In the 60's, the structuralist perspective shifted to the cognitivist perspective of second language learning that viewed language learning as a process of generating and transforming knowledge guided by one's natural cognitive structures (Chomsky, 1960). Chomsky's cognitive perspective led to a shift from a teaching model based on imitation and habit formation to a model based on the development of cognitive learning processes (Kern & Warschauer, 2000). Thus, teachers focused on the development of problem-solving skills, encouraged exploration, and engaged students in heuristic exercises and collaborative tasks.

Then, in the 70's, second language learning embraced a sociolinguistic perspective that incorporated the knowledge of sociolinguistic rules. According to Hymes (1971), the knowledge of sociolinguistic rules is necessary in learning to communicate in a socially appropriate manner. He coined the term "communicative competence" which describes one's ability to interact effectively with other speakers. He argued that language learning involves communicative competence as well as one's knowledge of grammatical rules, vocabulary, and syntax.

Supporting Hymes, Krashen's language acquisition theory (Krashen, 1985) emerged which posits that language is best learned when it is acquired naturally through a subconscious and effortless process similar to the way a child acquires the first language. According to Krashen, when a child receives input at a level that is just beyond the current level of competence, language acquisition takes place. However, his claim that input alone can promote language proficiency has not been well accepted by other theorists.

Swain (1985) argued that in addition to input, learners must have opportunities to produce the language. When receiving input, learners' focus is on comprehension rather than on the syntactical structure of the language. When producing output, however, learners attend to the grammatical and syntactical rules and inevitably run into linguistic problems, which, according to Swain (1985), is a critical problem solving process of acquiring a second language.

In addition to input and output hypotheses, Long's interaction hypothesis (1981) added another dimension to the second language acquisition process. He suggested that to maximize language acquisition, learners should be provided with the opportunity to negotiate meaning with other speakers in order to resolve miscommunication. As learners

make adjustments to their output in response to negative feedback, their opportunities for acquiring a second language are increased.

These theories have led to the general acceptance that second language instructors should a) increase the amount of authentic and comprehensible input, b) contextualize language practice, and c) provide opportunities to produce language and negotiate meaning by interacting with others. These tenets have been used as the basis for introduction of numerous classroom activities. In an attempt to provide students with authentic input, for example, teachers have taught with video tapes of television programs, audio tapes that feature the voices of native speakers in various contexts, and multimedia compact disks read-only memory (CD ROM) designed for tutorials and practice. More recently, teachers have also used interactive CD ROMs that enable students to become participants, even if only within the boundaries of preprogrammed conditions.

These materials have some value, but they do not allow learners to engage in creative language development by interacting in an authentic and meaningful way. Language teachers also attempt to simulate realistic and authentic use of the target language in the classroom through role plays, games, and small group activities, but such interaction confined to the classroom is an unrealistic setting for natural interaction to occur.

In recent years, computer-mediated-communication (CMC) has received recognition for its ability to provide second language learners with an opportunity for authentic, two-way communication in a powerfully motivating and exciting way. CMC can be categorized as asynchronous and synchronous. Asynchronous CMC is a delayed response-time system such as email and electronic bulletin board, and synchronous is a

realtime communication such as Internet-based chats. Of the two categories of CMC, synchronous chats provide greater potential for language learning because they allow for realtime interaction (Yuan, 2003; Abrams, 2003).

Among the numerous advantages of integrating synchronous CMC into the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom, the most notable is that it creates an environment that is non-threatening, making language learning more enjoyable and less intimidating (Lee, 1998; Beauvois, 1992, 1993, 1994; Sullivan & Pratt). Other advantages include the following: (a) As teachers take on the role of facilitators, the environment becomes learner-centered (Chun, 1994; Kern, 1995; Sullivan & Pratt, 1996) (b) Students can interact without being affected by wait time, turn-taking, or being interrupted (Beauvois, 1995; Blake, 2000; Kern, 1995; Warschauer, 1996) (c) Slowing down the communication process provides students with more time to read, process, reflect, and respond than in oral conversation (Beauvois, 1992, 1993, 1994) (d) Not having to pronounce words can benefit students as it decreases their anxiety level resulting in increased participation (Warschauer, 1996) and (e) A stress-free environment allows students to take more risks and experiment with more advanced forms of language (Kern, 1995; Ortega, 1999; Sotillo, 2000; Warschauer, 1996, 1998). Based on these research studies identifying the advantages of synchronous CMC, second language researchers generally agree that it is an effective communication tool that fosters a fascinating, authentic, and enriching learning experience (Almeida, 2003).

In order to determine whether written or spoken language can be best developed through the use of synchronous CMC, several researchers have conducted discourse analyses to compare the language created in chatrooms with written and oral language.

Results of such studies demonstrate that the language produced in synchronous CMC is closer to oral language than to written language (Chun, 1994; Kern, 1995; Sotillo, 2000; Tudini, 1993; Warschauer, 1996). Although chatting is produced through typing, it takes place in real-time and involves informal exchanges as in spoken conversations. The presence of negotiation of meaning and self-repair in chatting further substantiates this claim. Because chatting is hypothesized to be closer to oral communication than to written communication, some researchers speculate that the skills gained from chat room interaction might transfer to students' speaking competence. (Chun, 1994; Sotillo, 2000; Tudini, 2002; Warschauer, 1996). However, to this date, only three studies involving university students have been conducted to test this hypothesis (Abrams, 2003; Beauvois, 1996; Lee, 1998).

Beauvois (1996) reported in his pilot study that French learners who participated in CMC scored higher in oral exams than learners who only participated in traditional classroom activities when he used pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, lexical choice and accuracy, and content as dependent variables. Similarly, Lee (1998) found that his Spanish students' oral skills improved during the course of a semester due to their weekly participation in a chat room discussing major events. In a more recent study, Abrams (2003) reported that his German students who participated in the chat room to prepare for oral discussion produced significantly more language than those who participated in traditional classroom activities and also more language than those who participated in electronic bulletin board discussions. This finding is significant because, according to Savignon (1983), the more learners produce meaningful output, the better their oral skills become.

Based on this researcher's experience as an ESL instructor at a university, she can attest to the difficulty of getting students to produce meaningful oral language in class. A review of the literature suggests that integrating synchronous CMC in ESL classrooms may prove to be an effective tool that can provide students with an opportunity to produce authentic communication in a non-threatening, motivating, and exciting way.

Definition of Terms

Computer-Mediated-Communication (CMC)

Computer-mediated communication refers to the interaction that occurs among people using computers as the communication medium. CMC can be categorized in two ways: asynchronous or delayed response systems such as email and electronic bulletin board and synchronous or real-time systems such as Internet-based chats (also known as chatting or chat room) which allow people to have a simultaneous conversation by typing at their keyboards.

Language Acquisition

Language acquisition is a subconscious process for developing language through a natural and effortless process similar to the way a child acquires the first language. According to Krashen (1985), when a child receives input at a level that is just beyond the current level of competence, language acquisition is known to take place.

Sociolinguistic Perspective of Language Learning

A view of second language learning that incorporates the knowledge of sociolinguistic rules which is deemed necessary in learning to communicate in a socially appropriate manner. Sociolinguists claim that language learning should involve communicative competence as well as one's knowledge of grammatical rules, vocabulary, and syntax.

Communicative Competence

Communicative competence describes one's ability to interact effectively with other speakers. In this study, communicative competence refers to speaking competence in terms of one's ability to create socially and culturally appropriate utterances. A theoretical model for communicative competence includes grammatical competence (knowledge of grammatical structure and vocabulary), discourse competence (knowledge of how to combine grammatical structures to produce a unified utterance), strategic competence (the use of strategies to handle communication breakdown), and sociolinguistic competence (knowledge of social rules of language use).

Chat-Based Curriculum

Using the theories from the sociolinguistic perspective of second language learning, an online chat-based curriculum was developed for this study. The curriculum focuses on the development of communicative competence by maximizing student-generated communication through the integration of chat room and small-group classroom discussions. Furthermore, the curriculum incorporates classroom instruction designed with chat transcripts as a basis, with the goal of developing students' oral communicative skills.

Rationale for Study

Although three studies previously cited have demonstrated that participating in chat room discussions is a good practice for oral communication for Spanish, German, and French learners, no studies have been conducted to determine the validity of this claim for English language learners. Furthermore, no studies have been conducted to investigate the effects of using chat room transcripts as a basis for classroom instruction. This current study will fill those gaps.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether the chat-based curriculum effectively prepares ESL students for oral communication. Qualitative data such as observation notes, transcripts of interviews, and questionnaire were analyzed to examine the efficacy of the curriculum. The analysis of chat transcripts was also conducted to investigate the properties of chat language in relation to oral language. Establishing similarities between these two modes of communication confirmed existing research that linguistic skills gained by interacting in chat rooms transfer to students' oral language due to the similar properties shared between chat language and oral language (Abrams, 2003; Beauvois, 1996; and Lee, 1998).

Guiding Questions

This study relied on five guiding questions:

1. How do students and the instructor describe their experiences with the chat-based curriculum designed to prepare for oral communication?
2. How do students perceive the tailored classroom instructions designed with the chat transcripts as the basis?
3. How do students describe their motivation to learn English as a result of participating in the chat-based curriculum?
4. How do students describe the transferability to oral language of linguistic skills gained by participating in online chat sessions?
5. What is the nature of chat room language? How does it compare to oral language?

Summary

This chapter presented the background of the current study, a rationale for the study, definition of terms, and the research problems that the study addresses. The study investigates whether the chat-based curriculum, designed with the sociolinguistic perspective of second language learning as a basis, effectively prepares ESL students for oral communication. The study aims to contribute to the body of literature on sociolinguistic views of second language learning as well as the growing body of literature on synchronous CMC.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This section gives a theoretical review of the literature supporting this research. The first section introduces prominent second language acquisition theories and their implications for second language teaching. The second section provides a summary of how computers are being used as a tool for second language teaching. The third section describes, more specifically, the implications of using synchronous CMC (also called chatting or chat room) to enhance English language learners' oral proficiency. The fourth section compares the language used in synchronous CMC with oral language, and the final section presents the types of negotiations and linguistic modifications that occur in synchronous CMC discourse.

Perspectives of Second Language Acquisition

Second language acquisition theories can be categorized into three perspectives: structural, cognitive, and sociolinguistic. These theories are described in the section that follows.

Structural Perspective

Skinner's Behaviorist Theory has led to numerous research studies in second language learning that produced theories that considered language learning as habit formation and conditioning. During the 1920s to 1950s, language teaching focused on teaching discrete rules of the language and structures that make up the language through rote memorization and drills. Influenced by Bloomfield (1933), a structural linguist, various structural methods of language instruction were developed including the Audio Lingual Method (ALM) which emphasized linguistic competence with grammatical

accuracy as its primary goal (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983). ALM is characterized by rigid drills, rote memorization of structure-based dialogs, attention to structure and form more than meaning, and avoidance of grammatical explanation and native language. The grammar-translation method was another variation of ALM with focus on written language skills while ALM focused on oral language skills. The grammar-translation method entailed memorization of verb tenses, application of rules, and translation of texts. In the classrooms, students learned a language through habit formation by repetitiously hearing and producing grammatically correct language with little emphasis placed on meaning. In the structural perspective, emphasis was placed on the linguistic competence, not on cognitive or social processes.

Cognitive Perspective

In 1960s, Noam Chomsky proposed a cognitive perspective to language learning and argued that the structural approach to second language learning was too mechanical and theoretically unjustified (Chomsky, 1965). He claimed that a speaker's ability to produce well-formed utterances can not be explained by a model based on imitation and habit formation. Instead, he viewed language learning as an active process of generating and transforming knowledge and argued that the development of one's grammatical system is guided by one's natural cognitive structures rather than the process of rote memorization and conditioning.

Chomsky's cognitive approach to second language learning had heavily influenced the model for teaching in ESL classrooms resulting in a shift from formulation of accurate language habits to the development of cognitive learning processes (Kern & Warschauer, 2000). He believed that learners construct new knowledge through

exploration and problem solving, so mistakes were encouraged as they were perceived as a natural part of the learning process rather than as bad habits to avoid. In the second language writing classrooms, instructors steered away from imitating correct structures and focused on the development of problem-solving skills, engaged students in heuristic exercises and collaborative tasks, and taught staged processes such idea generation through brainstorming, drafting, and revising.

Sociolinguistic Perspective

Communicative Competence

Hymes (1971) challenged the linguistic competence proposed by Chomsky, arguing that one's ability to produce grammatically correct sentences is not sufficient in determining one's language proficiency. He explained that such a view of linguistic theory is limiting and that it needed to incorporate the knowledge of sociolinguistic rules which are necessary in creating socially and culturally appropriate utterances. This knowledge entails the appropriate use of speech acts such as greeting, apologies, leave taking, compliments, expression of gratitude, and making requests as well as one's ability to communicate nonverbally. Thus Hymes proposed the concept of communicative competence that incorporates the knowledge of sociolinguistic rules to language teaching. In the sociolinguistic perspective, language is not viewed in isolation, but in its social context.

Canale and Swain (1980) described a theoretical model for communicative competence which included grammatical competence (knowledge of grammatical structure and vocabulary), discourse competence (knowledge of how to combine grammatical structures to produce a unified utterance), strategic competence (the use of

strategies to handle communication breakdown), and sociolinguistic competence (knowledge of social rules of language use).

Based on Hymes' communicative competence and Canale and Swain's theoretical model, communicative language teaching (CLT) was proposed. CLT treated language as a medium of communication rather than as a set of grammatical rules and words to memorize. It is characterized by five specific features: (a) meaning is more important than form, (b) dialogs center around communicative functions and are not memorized, (c) instruction should be contextualized, (d) language learning is learning to communicate, (e) students are expected to interact with other people, and (f) drilling may occur, but peripherally (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983). One of the most notable features of communicative language teaching is that it treats language as a medium of communication rather than as a set of grammatical rules and words to memorize.

At the time when the limitations of audiolingual methods were being widely realized, CLT became the focus of many researchers. They recognized that through the use of drills, memorization, and habit formation, the audiolingual approach has produced learners who know the linguistic rules, yet can not communicate effectively in social contexts. This is especially evident in ESL students from Korea who tend to obtain high scores in vocabulary, reading and writing skills, but score comparatively low in speaking and listening skills. In this researcher's interaction with these students, she discovered that audiolingual methods are still being used widely in the classrooms in Korea with very little or no emphasis placed on developing communicative skills. The proposed communicative competence model of language teaching will provide more opportunities

for students to participate in authentic, meaningful communication, so that they will be prepared to communicate effectively in social contexts.

Krashen's Input Hypothesis

Supporting Hymes, Krashen's language acquisition theory (Krashen, 1985) added another dimension to the communicative competence model. This theory posits that language is best learned when it is acquired naturally through a subconscious and effortless process similar to the way a child acquires the first language. According to Krashen, when a child receives input at a level that is just beyond the current level of competence, language acquisition takes place. This input hypothesis is the fundamental principle of Krashen's Monitor Model which suggests that in order for acquisition to take place, the input to the learner has to be comprehensible at the $i + 1$ level, where i represents the learner's current level of competence and $i + 1$, the stage just beyond that (Krashen, 1985). In other words, we acquire language when we understand the incoming messages containing structures that are one level beyond our current level.

Extending the input hypothesis, the affective hypothesis asserts that comprehensible input can only be effective when language acquirers are motivated, self confident, and when their level of anxiety and stress are low (Krashen, 1982). In other words, if the learner is anxious, not motivated, or lacking confidence, input may be understandable, but the affective filter will impede acquisition.

Although the importance of the role of comprehensible input for second language acquisition has been widely accepted by researchers, Krashen's claim that input alone can promote high level of language proficiency has not. The language immersion programs in Canada provide strong counter evidence. Although an input-rich learning environment is

provided, opportunities to produce the target language are limited. As a result, these learners are highly developed in understanding the language while exhibiting weakness in producing the language (Swain, 1995). Research suggests that students who enter the immersion program in kindergarten score as well as native speakers in listening and reading tests by the end of elementary school, but they lag behind in speaking and writing tests. Krashen failed to recognize the important role that output plays in acquiring proficiency in a second language. A thorough discussion of output hypothesis will be covered in the next section.

Swain's Output Hypothesis

From the input perspective, the role of output is seen as secondary and indirect in acquiring a second language. However, Swain argues that in addition to comprehensible input, learners must have opportunities to produce the language in order to become fluent speakers (Swain, 1985, 1993 1998; Swain & Lapkin, 1995).

According to Swain, one of the functions of output production is consciousness raising or noticing the gap. Gap is the difference between what the learners want to say and what they can say. He asserts that during the process of attempting to produce the language, learners will inevitably run into linguistic difficulties allowing them to become aware of their shortcomings. For instance, learners may notice that they don't know how to convey a certain meaning or that they don't know the appropriate word to describe something. Swain argues that noticing a problem triggers mental processes that push the learners to modify their output to make it more comprehensible which is a critical process of acquiring a second language. "It might be that producing language forces learners to recognize what they do not know or know only partially. This may trigger an analysis of

existing internal linguistic resources in order to fill the knowledge gap” (Swain & Lapkin, 1995, p.375).

Furthermore, she posits that learners must attend to both meaning and form when producing the language that pushes them to move from semantic to syntactic processing. When receiving input, learners focus on comprehending the overall meaning of the message rather than on the syntactical structure of the language. However, when producing output, one must attend to the grammatical and syntactical rules required to create an utterance. Therefore, Swain claims that tasks involved in producing output are more complex and provides learners with more linguistic practice than input.

Accordingly, Krashen (1982) proposes that, “In many cases, we do not utilize syntax in understanding. We often get the message with a combination of vocabulary or lexical information plus extra-linguistic information” (p. 66). In other words, learners can make guesses about the meaning based on the context and few key words that they might know. If comprehension allows syntactical and grammatical structures to be ignored in such a way, it may be that output plays a critical role in forcing learners to become cognizant of what they do not know.

Another function of output is hypothesis testing (Swain, 1985, 1993, 1998; Swain & Lapkin, 1995). Output provides the opportunity to try out what works and what does not. By experimenting with new language structures, forms, vocabulary, expressions, etc., learners can expand their linguistic knowledge. Swain explains that unless the learners are provided with an opportunity to fine tune their language production within a social context, they will not be able to acquire communicative competence, which was the case with the immersion students in Canada. According to Swain, an input-rich classroom is

not sufficient for the development of communicative competence. She hypothesizes that the lack of output practice deprives the immersion students of opportunities to experiment with, fine-tune, and test their hypothesis about the language which slows their language production process.

Numerous researchers have concluded that the output hypothesis does not undermine the importance of comprehensible input. For example, Swain argues “We wish to make the case that sometimes, under some conditions, output facilitates second language learning in ways that are different from, or enhance, those of input” (Swain, 1995a, p. 371). In other words, input and output hypotheses can both be seen as essential to the process of second language acquisition.

Long's Interaction Hypothesis

Long adds another dimension to input and output hypothesis and posits that participating in negotiation of meaning with other speakers improves the chances of acquiring a second language (1983, 1985, 1996). The interaction model can be explained as follows: While communicating, interlocutors (someone who takes part in a conversation) will typically experience confusion and miscommunication because of their limitations in grammatical, phonological, semantic, or pragmatic knowledge. When this happens, they will stop the conversation in order to resolve their miscommunication, usually resulting in the correction of specific mistakes (Varonis & Gass, 1985). As students make adjustments to their language output in response to clarification requests (requesting more info or verifying what others have said), confirmation requests (asking if the intended meaning was understood correctly), or overt correction, they will have greater the opportunities to improve their second language (Blake, 2000). In this view, negotiation

of meaning is inevitable in interaction because through this process, interlocutors can detect possible misunderstandings and make clarifications on one's own or the other's intentions so that mutual understanding can be achieved.

In Linnell's study (1995), nonnative speakers produced numerous syntax modifications in response to native speaker's clarification requests, and those modified or improved syntactical structures were maintained over time. In a similar study, Pica, Holliday, Lewis, and Morgenthaler (1989) found that more than one third of the learner's responses were modified or improved in response to clarification and confirmation requests by others. Not only does the process of negotiation of meaning facilitate second language acquisition by providing opportunities to modify output, it also helps make input more comprehensible which, in turn, assists in language learning (Gass & Varonis, 1985; Pica, 1994; Varonis & Gass, 1985).

Strong similarities can be found between the communicative competence model and the interaction model. Although they both focus on the importance of one's ability to communicate appropriately in social contexts, the communicative competence model delineates specific sociolinguistic rules and the strategies to be taught explicitly, whereas the interaction model assumes that these rules and strategies will be learned implicitly through the process of negotiating and interacting with others.

Influence of Sociolinguistic Perspective on Instruction

From the sociolinguistic perspective, language learning is no longer viewed solely in terms of changes in the learners' cognitive structures but also in terms of social context. Instruction became more learner-centered and less structurally driven: It focuses on the development of communicative competence by maximizing student-generated

communication and interaction. Learners are provided with the opportunities to engage in authentic discourse in social settings, which reflect what learners will confront in daily life. This authentic discourse is achieved by engaging students in tasks such as role-playing, skits, debates, retelling a story, and participating in small group/whole-class discussions. Reading instruction might entail reading a newspaper article or travel guides and engaging in follow-up discussions or writing activities. Listening instruction might involve listening to commercials, talk shows, or tape recorded interviews and engaging in activities that may hone their listening skills. Writing instruction might focus on making a shopping list or letter-writing and learning appropriate ways to present one's writing to various audiences.

Such integration of authentic materials and tasks corresponds to the sociolinguistic perspective of second language acquisition. Essentially, the sociolinguistic view proposes is that teachers should provide students with opportunities to engage in authentic tasks and expose them to authentic materials that reflect everyday uses of English, so that students can learn to participate in meaningful communication. According to Smith (2003), integration of authentic language, language used by real people in real contexts for real purposes, effectively motivates students and helps them achieve communicative competence. Smith warns, however, that unless teachers select materials that are appropriate to the learners' level, interests, and needs, students could lose motivation, productivity, and confidence (Song, 1997). According to Song, when chosen carefully, the benefits of using authentic materials far outweigh the commercially produced text books that represent a culture indirectly, present vocabulary and syntax that are not always

appropriate for the level for which they were intended, and include content that does not always reflect real life situations.

The Eclectic Approach

In this researcher's view, the combination of second language acquisition models within the sociolinguistic perspective interact to explain the process of second language acquisition: It seems unlikely that a single theory can explain this complex process. To illustrate this point, the process of learning a second language can be described as follows: Learners need ample comprehensible input to learn a language (input hypothesis) as well as opportunities to practice their newly acquired knowledge (output hypothesis). As learners attempt to produce output, they will inevitably encounter linguistic problems requiring self repair (output hypothesis) which can be defined as identifying one's own mistakes and making modifications (Yuan, 2003). Once output has been modified based on their metalinguistic awareness, it has to be tested by others to determine if their hypothesis is correct (hypothesis testing - output hypothesis). If their hypothesis is incorrect and their output is incomprehensible, they must negotiate for meaning with the interlocutor to achieve mutual understanding (interaction hypothesis).

This process of receiving comprehensible input and modifying output in response to both metalinguistic awareness and external feedback necessitates all three hypotheses to provide a comprehensive explanation of the second language acquisition process. These theories and models associated with the sociolinguistic perspective support the theoretical design of this study: (a) Krashen's input hypothesis, (b) Swain's output hypothesis, and (c) Long's interaction hypothesis.

Computers and Language Learning

The theoretical shifts from structural to sociolinguistic language learning parallels the shift in technology from the personal to the networked computer. Due to technological innovations, computer language programs have evolved from tutorial and drill/practice programs to interactive multimedia programs and to networked computers which are used to promote interactive authentic human communication (Kern & Warschauer, 2000). This recent introduction of networked technologies such as email and synchronous CMC coincided with a shift from cognitive theories of learning to a sociolinguistic view of learning in the field of education (Hawisher, 1994).

Drill and Practice Programs

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) represents all types of computer integrated activity from drill-and-practice, to multimedia, to network based programs. The earliest CALL programs focused on the building of specific skills through methodical exercises and mechanical drill-and-practice programs. During that period, computers were perceived as tutors that provided immediate, preprogrammed feedback with only one acceptable response per item. This type of tutorial is consistent with the structuralist view which emphasized that repeated language drilling and skill practice is essential to learning.

Multimedia Programs

Although drill-and-practice software was widely used during the earlier days, multimedia programs shifted emphasis from the tutor to the learner. Rather than viewing computers as something to be controlled by, they were viewed as tools that learners can control. This paralleled the cognitivists' view that learners construct new knowledge through exploration and problem solving which requires the use of existing knowledge

(Kern & Warschauer, 2000). Typical multimedia language programs engage learners in problem solving or hypothesis testing activities by interacting with the learner. Some offer simulated activities, and some has the capability to tailor the difficulty level for the learner.

Although this generation of CALL was a significant improvement over drill programs, these computer programs do not allow learners to engage in creative language development, because they respond only under preprogrammed conditions in a closed system. Although today's multimedia technology is capable of delivering opportunities for communicative interaction, they fall short of providing learners with the opportunity to engage in authentic, spontaneous communication and negotiation of meaning that are deemed necessary for second language acquisition (Crook, 1994).

Computer-Mediated-Communication (CMC)

Paralleling the move to sociolinguistic perspective to language teaching, a shift was made in CALL from learners' interaction with computers to interaction with other humans through networked computers. Computer networking in the language classroom stems from the development of computer-mediated communication (CMC), which refers to applications that allow person-to-person interaction. In CMC, the computer provides a communicative context, but does not engage in the communication itself. Rather, the computer users are engaged in discourse with each other using the computer as the communication medium. CMC tools can be categorized in two ways: (a) asynchronous or delayed response systems such as email and electronic bulletin board and (b) synchronous or realtime systems such as Internet-based chats that allow people all around the world to

have a simultaneous conversation by typing at their keyboards.

Because CMC permits one-to-many communication as well as one-to-one communication, it allows teachers and students to share a message with a partner, a small group, the entire class, or even with thousands of people all across the globe. Because people can share lengthy documents, collaborative reading or writing is also possible. Recently, a small but growing body of published research on the relationship between the use of computer networks and language teaching has emerged (Darhower, 2002).

CMC has existed in primitive form since the 1960s, but its use has become widespread only since the late 1980s. Initial studies of the effects of CMC on language learning began in the English department at Gallaudet University in the mid 1980's. Professor Batson developed the idea of electronic networks for interaction (ENFIs) to provide deaf students with the opportunity to communicate with one another in English rather than in sign language. The research in this field revealed that students' general ability to express themselves improved as a result of CMC (Batson, 1988). Due to the success of this project, interest in implementing CMC has expanded to other educational settings including the field of second language teaching particularly in French, Portuguese, and English as a second language (ESL) (Beauvois, 1992; Kern, 1995; Warschauer, 1996).

Some educators began to use email and others began to use synchronous software programs such as Daedalus Interchange to allow electronic chatting among learners and native speakers of the target language. Both email and chatting shifted the focus from language form to language use in meaningful contexts (Kelm, 1992) resulting in myriad advantages including increased student motivation (Almeida, 2003; Meunier, 98; Warschauer, 1996) and production of syntactically complex language (Sotillo, 2000) due

to the delayed nature of communication. These studies demonstrate the effectiveness of chatting over traditional classroom settings claiming that its nonthreatening nature and authentic communicative environment are more conducive to second language acquisition.

Synchronous CMC

Synchronous CMC allows people to interact instantaneously via a network with others connected to the same chat room as if they are sitting in a room together and talking. Compared with email and bulletin boards, chat rooms provide greater potential for language acquisition because they provide synchronous, real-time interaction (Abrams, 2003; Yuan, 2003;). Just as in conversations, participants must quickly process what they read on screen and provide immediate responses with no time to deliberate.

Participation

Second language researchers claim that synchronous CMC has an equalizing effect on participation that is recognized as an important role in learning a second language. Researchers who utilize synchronous CMC programs have found that all students participate in most cases (Beauvois, 1992; Chun, 1994; Kelm, 1992; Kern, 1995; Sullivan & Pratt, 1996; Warschauer, 1996). Beauvois (1992) and Kelm (1992) report increase in the participation of reticent and anxious university-level Portuguese and French learners who were perceived by the instructors to be less willing to participate in face-to-face classroom setting. Based on these students' evaluations, they felt less threatened and stressed due to the absence of feelings of being put on the spot when they participated. This finding is consistent with Warschauer (1996), Kern (1995), and Chun's (1994) claim that during chat room discussions, shy students who participate least in oral discussion participate as much or even more than those who normally dominate classroom discussion.

Freirmuth (2002) studied two groups of advanced-level ESL students during the course of a semester to investigate whether using a chat program promotes group equity. Participants involved 18 graduate students from various fields of study. He compared the group work done in a traditional classroom with group work done using a chat program and found that in the electronic group, turns were more evenly distributed with speakers taking shorter and more frequent turns, whereas in oral discussions, a few speakers dominated the conversations with longer turns. The longest turn in the oral group consisted of 226 words while the longest turn in the electronic group consisted of 30 words.

In another study involving ESL students, Sullivan and Pratt (1996) studied two college-level intermediate ESL writing classes taught by the same teacher over the course of a semester. While one class used the chat program to provide peer group response on classmates' essays, the other class carried on a discussion face-to-face. They discovered that oral discussions were dominated by the author of the essay, whereas participation was equalized in the electronic group.

The more equal participation pattern in electronic discussions may be attributed to the absence of the dangers of being interrupted (Kelm, 1992), being evaluated by interlocutors, making interlocutors become impatient, or forgetting one's own ideas while waiting for an opportunity to take the floor (Ortega, 1999). As teachers and learners become equal participants with no one dominating the discussion, everybody has an equal voice. Learners can interact with others as much as they want and whenever they want without being affected by wait time, turn-taking, or fear of being judged by others. Thus

the quantity of language production of learners increase, and fearful or shy learners are more likely to participate than they are during classroom discussions.

These findings point to the fact that synchronous CMC allows language learners to engage in an active learning environment where they have more opportunities to practice and to experiment with the target language. Electronic discussion is lively, conversational, learner-centered, and inclusive of all participants in a way not possible in face-to-face oral discussions (Beauvois, 1992).

Anxiety

From experience, this researcher can attest to the fact that learning a second language can be highly stressful and anxiety producing which can have a negative effect on second language acquisition (Young, 1992). Few studies have demonstrated that the impersonal and anonymous nature of synchronous CMC created a less stressful environment for second language learners than classroom environment (Beauvois, 1992, 1993, 1994; Lee, 1998; Sullivan & Pratt). Chun (1994) observed that in an on-line environment, learners are not under the time pressure to respond quickly in order to maintain the flow of the conversation which leads to the reduction of stress level. They can read comments and process the language at their own pace, contribute at their leisure, and wait to send messages only when they are completely satisfied with them. This kind of flexibility and self-pace appears to have a very positive effect on student attitudes and performance (Beauvois, 1992, 1993, 1994).

Synchronous CMC also reduces social anxiety that usually results from the fear of making a mistake or looking foolish in an on-line environment. In Ramzan and Saito's (1998) study, many students reported that they did not feel stupid or embarrassed when

making mistakes and when taking the time to respond during a chat session. They were able to experiment with the language with little or no fear of failure or negative feedback from others.

Attitude and Motivation

Learners are expected to be motivated to learn in a chat room environment due to the authentic and meaningful context that it provides. In fact, in Meunier's (1988) study on the effect of synchronous CMC on motivation, she found that Synchronous CMC elicited a high level of motivation as well as a positive attitude in college-level French and German students, regardless of initial motivations and computer background. Among other reasons, she suggests that this may be due to the authenticity of the exchanges, the casual nature of the discourse, and students' ability to control the discussion while participating at their own pace.

Warschauer (1996) also explored the effects of using chat room in the second language classroom on student motivation. The study was conducted during a 75 minute class period involving 16 students who were enrolled in an advanced-level ESL composition class at a community college. The 16 students were randomly assigned to four groups of four students. While two groups engaged in face-to-face discussions, the other two groups participated in online discussions. According to a student survey, students who participated in a chat session were more motivated to communicate with others and enjoyed a stronger sense of empowerment than those who participated in a classroom discussion only. However, this a study based on a single class session should be viewed with caution.

Similarly, Freirmuth's (2002) survey involving 18 graduate students from various fields of study also reflected ESL students' enjoyment in participating in online discussions. On a likert scale with 6 being the best experience, the mean was 5.375 for students who participated in online discussions during an entire semester. Several other reseachers have reported improvement in attitudes towards the target language after participating in chat room discussion (Abrams, 2003; Beauvois, 1994; Bump, 1990; Chun, 1994; Healy-Beavouis, 1992; Kern, 1995; Warschauer, 1996).

Implementing chat rooms in a language course fulfills the need for unstructured, comprehensible, authentic, and interactive input that is critical for second language acquisition (Krashen & Terrell, 1985). The use of synchronous CMC motivates students to stretch their linguistic resources in order to meet the demands of authentic and meaningful communication in a social context (Almeida, 2003; Ortega, 1997). This learning environment provides opportunities for individualized, spontaneous, and authentic communication which seems to go beyond what a traditional classroom can offer.

Role of the Instructor

One of the effects of using synchronous CMC in a classroom is the immediate shift in the role of the instructor. Whereas the teacher has full authority in a traditional classroom, the instructor becomes less authoritative and less dominant in the chat room environment because all participants have equal opportunity to participate (Kern, 1995; Chun, 1994; Sullivan & Pratt, 1996; Warschauer, 1996). In fact, Sullivan and Pratt found that the teacher in the classroom took 65% of the total turns whereas the teacher took only 15% of the total turns in the chat session, thereby reducing the central role of the instructor.

Chun (1994) demonstrated that decentralization of the instructor's role provides students with more autonomy to communicate their ideas resulting in more honest and candid expression of emotion as well as improved thinking and creativity. She also found that students played a greater role in managing the discourse by interacting directly with each other as opposed to interacting primarily with the teacher. According to Christison (1996), the learner-centered environment created by the use of synchronous CMC provides greater opportunity for learning than more teacher-centered environment.

Length of Messages

Several studies show conflicting results regarding the length of the messages. Kern (1995) and Sotillo (2000) discovered that sentences were usually short in chat sessions because shorter sentences tended to elicit more responses than longer ones. They also suggested that the rapidly scrolling messages exerted pressure on students to post short messages rather than long elaborate ones. Contradicting this finding, Beauvois (1997) reported that students wrote longer utterances in chat sessions than in the oral discussions. According to Chun (1994), a learner's perception and interpretation of the task determines whether students produce short messages that more closely resemble oral language or longer ones that resembles written language.

Complexity of Language

Some researchers claim that the language produced in chat room discussion is more syntactically complex and thus is of higher quality than oral language (Kern, 1995; Ortega, 1999; Sotillo, 2000; Warschauer, 1996, 1998). Several researchers have demonstrated extensive incorporation of new syntactical patterns and new vocabulary words during chat room interaction and have attributed this to more time to study the

incoming messages and to plan responses (Pelletieri, 2000; St. John & Cash, 1995; Warschauer, 1996). Other researchers argue that when teachers become equal participants during chat room discussion, students tend to take more linguistic risks resulting in production of more complex language (Chun, 1994; Kern, 1995).

Disadvantages of Synchronous CMC

Although there are numerous benefits of integrating synchronous CMC in second language classrooms, there are some potential drawbacks as well. For instance, as students take more risks and experiment with more advanced forms of the target language during a chat session, they tend to disregard accuracy (Sotillo, 2000). In an electronic environment where focus is more on fluency than accuracy, Kern (1995) also reported loss of grammatical accuracy and lack of coherence attributing it to the fast pace of the discussions taking place in real time. In addition, participating in a large group chat session is an intense activity that may cause confusion for learners. A great amount of information appears on the screen while students try to read, process, and then compose a response during an ongoing discussion. The rapid messages scrolling, intervening postings, and multiple threads occurring simultaneously may be overwhelming to students. Unlike spoken communication, a response does not necessarily refer to the posting immediately preceding it, but may refer to the posting made earlier. Thus, the fragmented postings make it difficult to discern who is saying what to whom. However, Tudini (2002) and Almeida (2003) suggest that these conversational features are characteristics of large group chat sessions and that chat sessions involving dyads or small group of participants are more manageable since they better reflect oral conversation.

Another disadvantage of integrating synchronous CMC in second language

classroom may be that technophobes' negative attitudes towards computers may cause negative feelings toward the course (Almeida, 2003). The time and energy required to learn to use the new technology may also be frustrating for these students. Therefore, Almeida suggests that instructors take time to train students prior to using the program and be accessible to provide guidance during the chat sessions.

A common belief among skeptics of synchronous CMC is that learners will make more mistakes when they communicate with each other without the presence of a teacher. However, Kern (1995) reports that the number of errors are no greater when learners interact with their same-level peers than when they interact with more proficient speakers. In addition, teacher's decentralized role can actually benefit students as they are given more autonomy to communicate their ideas in the second language (Chun, 1994).

Based on Tudini's (2002) research, poor spelling also tends to hinder students' ability to efficiently interact via chat. He concluded that forcing them to focus on form in such a way may actually be advantageous to their second language development as they are pushed to experiment with the language. Finally, lack of body language and facial expressions tend to force students to rely exclusively on verbal communication forcing them to experiment with the language and to test their hypotheses, believed to facilitate second language acquisition (Pica et al, 1989; Payne & Whitney, 2002). These empirically based research studies suggest that the benefits of using synchronous CMC in second language classrooms outweigh the perceived drawbacks.

Comparing Synchronous CMC and Oral Language

Similarities Between Synchronous CMC and Face-to-face Communication

Several researchers of synchronous CMC have demonstrated similarities between text based on-line chatting and face-to-face communication. Although chatting is produced through typing, it takes place in real time and involves informal exchanges as in spoken conversation. Based on these similarities, Tudini (2002) claims that chatting is probably closer to oral communication than written. Warschauer (1996) asserts that synchronous CMC tends to fall in the middle of the continuum of writing and speech, Sotillo (2000) suggests that chat room interactions foster communicative fluency, and Chun (1994) describes chatting as conversation in slow motion. Although on-line chatting may be technically a writing activity, Tudini (2002) suggests that it is not necessarily written in genre.

Tudini (2002) analyzed chat room transcripts of college-level intermediate learners of Italian to identify features of chat room discourse that may be considered indicators of spoken discourse: repairs and incorporation of target forms, variety of speech acts, discourse markers, and feedback tokens. Consistent with previous studies, he found that chat room discourse was conversational in style and consisted of a constant series of speech acts including exclamations, greetings, leave takings, and well wishings. Many feedback tokens such as *really* and *me too* and discourse markers such as *and you?* at the end of a question to elicit a response appeared frequently during the chat session. To express agreement, a phrase *I understand* was used, and to take the floor, phrases such as *well*, *to answer your question*, and *I'd like to say* were used. Out of 263 turns, 86 feedback tokens and discourse markers, and 41 questions were present that are indicators of spoken

discourse. Furthermore, short, syntactically simple sentences dominated this chat room discourse that can be commonly found in spoken discourse. Based on his analysis of chat room transcripts, Tudini argues that chatting is probably closer to oral communication than written communication.

Similarly, Chun (1994) investigated 14 beginning-level German students at a university who had regular 15-20 minute chats over the course of two semesters and demonstrated that chat discussions facilitated the acquisition of communicative competence. Based on analysis of chat room transcripts, she demonstrated that learners engage in a variety of discourse such as topic initiation, clarification requests, comprehension and confirmation checks, self repairs, and leave-taking utterances that are all indicators of spoken discourse. Thus, she suggests that chatting is a useful bridge between written and spoken language. In addition, Chun reports that chat room discussions allow students to take more initiative than they do in classrooms since the instructor's role is minimized. This, according to Chun, leads to more opportunity for students to practice varied communicative proficiency.

Extending on Chun's study, Sotillo (2000) studied two groups of 13 university-level students enrolled in academic writing classes designed specifically for ESL students. The classes met twice a week for three hours and were taught by different instructors. The purpose of this semester-long study was to investigate the discourse functions and syntactic complexity of language output obtained via asynchronous (bulletin board) and synchronous (chat room) discussions. Based on discourse analysis, Sotillo reported that the quantity of language and the types of discourse functions present in chat room are "similar to the types of interactional modifications found in face-to-face conversations that

are deemed necessary for second language acquisition" (p. 82). On the other hand, discourse functions in asynchronous discussions were more constrained and linear resembling the question-response-evaluation sequence of the traditional language classroom.

Based on the data gathered from four 90 minute chat sessions, she found that clarification requests, confirmation checks, and comprehension checks, which have been shown to facilitate second language acquisition, accounted for 14% of the discourse (Long, 1981; Pica, 1994). Other characteristics of oral language were present such as requesting personal information, flirting, making assertions, challenging classmates, and joking among themselves. Thus, Sotillo claims that interacting in chat rooms fosters communicative fluency, a quality of oral communication.

Transfer of Skills

Although the research mentioned in the previous section demonstrates the similarities between oral language and chat discussions leading to speculation that skills gained from chat room interactions might gradually be transferred to the students' speaking competence, only a few studies have been conducted to test this claim. In recent years, three researchers have demonstrated that chat room interaction does, indeed, improve students' speaking competence based on oral proficiency tests. In fact, some researchers claim that chat room interactions may actually be more beneficial in improving learners' oral proficiency than face-to-face interactions (Beauvois, 1997; Lee, 1998; Payne, 2002). For instance, slowing down the communication process provides students with more time to read, comprehend, and respond than oral conversation, resulting in more fluent output (Payne, 2002). Accordingly, the following studies attempt

to demonstrate that participating in chat room interactions enhances French, German, and Spanish language learners' oral competence.

Beauvois (1996) conducted a landmark study involving 83 college-level advanced French students to determine whether participating in chat once a week would result in improvement of oral proficiency. This empirical study involved an experimental group that participated in chat room discussions during one of three weekly meetings and a control group that met all three times in a regular classroom. The two groups had the same content and assignments. The only difference was that while the experimental group held discussions on-line, the control group held the same discussions orally in the classroom. Based on the three oral exams given throughout the semester, a significant difference between the groups was found at the .03 level with the experimental group scoring much higher.

Beauvois suggested that more input and more output observed in the chat room discussions can be attributed to the success of the experimental group. As mentioned earlier, more input and more output leads to more proficiency in the target language (Lee & Van Patten 1994). Although the results seemed promising, this study had a few limitations: (a) graduate students were used as instructors who may not necessarily have the expertise in teaching ESL, (b) dependent variables used to determine oral proficiency were not described, and (c) the results of each of the three exams were not calculated as separate dependent variables to see if students made progress over time.

Extending on Beauvois' study, Lee (1998) conducted a similar study and determined that oral communication skills of her advanced-level Spanish students in a university improved after participating in chat sessions. Throughout the semester, 38

students were required to read Spanish on-line newspapers and discuss the major events on the chat room once a week. Based on oral exams administered at the beginning and at the end of the semester, Lee claims that students' oral skills improved due to their participation in the chat room. However, the internal validity of a single group design is weak, because extraneous variables can not be effectively controlled. Events other than chat room discussions that took place during the course of the semester might have contributed to the increase in students' oral proficiency test scores. For instance, in addition to chat room discussions, students were involved in small group discussions, oral presentations, and journal writing which could have contributed to the development of overall language proficiency. Lee also failed to provide a description of how students' oral proficiency was measured. She merely reports, "Although subjectiveness is always a factor in scoring oral performance, most of the students attained a higher level of oral proficiency progressing from intermediate-mid to intermediate-high" (Lee, 1998, p.115). Due to the lack of a control group in this study, Lee's results should be viewed with caution.

In a more recent quasi experimental study, Abrams (2003) compared the oral proficiency of 96 third semester college-level German students after the treatments. The treatments consisted of participating in three different practice activities prior to classroom discussions: (a) a 50-minute synchronous chat room discussion, (b) asynchronous bulletin board discussion, and (c) regular classroom activities such as group work and vocabulary building. The dependent variables used in this study were lexical richness, syntactic complexity, and amount of language. The results confirmed that the synchronous CMC group produced significantly more words during subsequent oral discussions than the

control group that engaged in regular classroom activities, but the asynchronous CMC group did not outperform the control group. This suggests that the practice effects of synchronous chat may have transferred to subsequent face-to-face conversations in terms of the quantity of language produced while the practice effects of asynchronous bulletin board did not produce such effects. This finding is significant because being able to produce more language using sentence level or even incomplete utterances is a sign of increasing fluency (Lee & Van Patten, 1994).

Abrams also found no significant differences on the quality of language, measured by lexical richness and syntactic complexity, among three groups. Because these results were based on a short term study involving only three oral discussions, these results are not surprising. Perhaps a long-term use of CMC with increased opportunities for its use would significantly improve the quality of the language as well. Another limitation of this study was that it did not present any qualitative data that could provide more insight into the results. Nevertheless, this study is important because it is the first to incorporate the synchronous CMC as a *preparation* for oral discussions while other similar studies used it as a separate activity. This study also made a significant contribution to the field by making a distinction between the effects of synchronous and asynchronous CMC on oral proficiency.

Limitations of Synchronous CMC

Despite the promising results from these studies, participating in chat room interaction cannot replace face-to-face oral interaction because it fails to provide practice in pronunciation and other nonverbal communicative features. Language learners are likely to acquire pronunciation skills by modeling a native or a more proficient speaker.

Without the opportunity to interact with others verbally, this component of oral communication will most likely suffer. On the other hand, Warschauer (1996) notes that not having to pronounce words may actually be an advantage as it increases student participation due to lowering of anxiety level.

Another reason why chat room interaction cannot replace face-to-face oral interaction is that nonverbal communication that may be specific to a certain culture can best be learned during face-to-face interaction through modeling. Although this can be considered a disadvantage, Payne (2002) suggests that the absence of nonverbal communication can actually facilitate second language acquisition. When second language learners have a difficult time expressing themselves in a face-to-face situation, they can resort to various nonverbal strategies, such as using facial expressions and body language, to express intentions rather than enlisting assistance from the other interlocutor or challenging oneself to figure out the appropriate expression. In the chat room environment, however, one must rely exclusively on verbal communication which can push the learners to experiment with the higher levels of language in order to fill the gap. Nevertheless, nonverbal communication can not be learned through chat rooms.

If one can leave the development of pronunciation and nonverbal communicative skills to face-to-face classroom activities, conversation-like attributes of chat discourse can enhance second language learners' oral proficiency as claimed by the researchers mentioned earlier. By slowing down the process of communication for more time to reflect, and by providing a non threatening environment to practice the language, chat room interactions seem to facilitate the development of speaking skills beyond what is possible in face-to-face settings alone. Synchronous CMC is not meant to replace oral

practice, rather, it should supplement it. It is this researcher's belief that doing so will result in excellent opportunities for the development of oral proficiency for second language learners.

Synchronous CMC and Negotiation of Meaning

Negotiation of meaning is pointing out a breakdown in communication and finding a resolution so that mutual understanding can be achieved. Precisely, it is a "modification and restructuring of interaction that occurs when interlocutors anticipate, perceive, and experience difficulties in a message comprehensibility" (Pica, 1994, p. 495). Modification and restructuring include repetitions, self repairs, elaborations and expansions, comprehension and confirmation checks, recasts, and clarification requests (Long, 1996; Yuan, 2003). The purpose of these modifications is to ensure shared understanding. Several studies on synchronous CMC have demonstrated that negotiation of meaning occurs in chat room interactions as it does in face-to-face interaction. As noted earlier, the interactionist theory states that negotiation of meaning, which results in comprehensible input and modified output, is relevant in second language acquisition and is conducive to language development (Blake, 2000; Iwasaki & Oliver, 2003; Pellettieri, 2000; Toyoda & Harrison, 2002). Due to the fact that chat room language is comparable to the oral language, the negotiation of meaning occurring in chat rooms should contribute to the development of oral proficiency.

Recently, several studies in Spanish (Bake, 2000; Fernandez-Garcia, 2002; Pellettieri, 2000), Italian (Tudini, 2003), Japanese (Toyoda, 2002), and English (Smith, 2003; Yuan, 2003) have investigated whether negotiation of meaning occurs during chat room interaction. These studies, ranging from two weeks to two semester long

investigations, have consistently reported that negotiation of meaning does occur during chat room interaction with learners negotiating all aspects of their discourse, including both lexical and syntactical. Based on analysis of chat room transcripts, Pellettieri (2000) demonstrated that 34% of total turns are dedicated to negotiation, and nearly 70% of feedback led to the incorporation of correct forms in subsequent outputs. Supporting Pellettieri's findings, Smith (2003) also discovered that one third of total turns were composed of negotiation for meaning in a chat session among college-level English learners working on jigsaw and decision making tasks. Through negotiation of meaning, better comprehension, greater quantity of target language production, and more successful communication can be achieved (Pellettieri, 2003; Smith, 2003).

One notable finding is that in all aforementioned studies, lexical items were the most common source of negotiation than syntactical or structural ones. Blake (2000) explains that this may be due to the language learners' lack of syntactic knowledge with which to help or correct other learners. Vocabulary, on the other hand, can easily be identified, addressed, and straightforwardly negotiated. In addition, whereas lexical problems can seriously affect comprehension if left unresolved, in most cases, syntactical problems can be ignored without critically affecting comprehensibility, which may explain the paucity of syntactical negotiations in the studies mentioned above. Accordingly, Krashen (1982) states, "In many cases, we do not utilize syntax in understanding. We often get the message with a combination of vocabulary or lexical information." (p. 66). Rather than acquiring syntactical knowledge explicitly through negotiation, this researcher speculates that syntactical knowledge may be acquired implicitly through modeling from more proficient learners or native speakers.

Pellettieri's (2000) study involving college-level intermediate Spanish students provides evidence of noticing and self-repair occurring in chat room interactions. The chatting tool used in her study was Y-talk which offers a split screen view. On one screen, learners type their own messages while on the other screen, they view the messages being typed by the other users. A great deal of self-monitoring was indicated by constant backspacing and retyping. According to Swain and Lapkin (1995) and Yuan (2003), such an increased awareness may push the learners to notice gaps in their linguistic knowledge which is a necessary step in acquiring second language.

As mentioned previously, participating in synchronous CMC cannot replace face-to-face oral interaction, nor can it provide practice in pronunciation and other non verbal communicative features. However, these findings suggest that this kind of an environment provides learners with the opportunity to negotiate meaning as well as to increase learners' awareness of their linguistic problems leading to facilitation of second language acquisition (Swain & Lapkin, 1995; Yuan, 2003).

Summary

This chapter presented prominent second language acquisition theories, the implications of using synchronous CMC in the ESL classroom, and a comparison of the language used in synchronous CMC and oral language. The final section described the types of negotiations and linguistic modifications that occur in synchronous CMC.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The first section of this chapter describes the research design used in conducting this study. The description of the setting, participants, and procedures for data collection and analysis are presented. Validity, reliability, generalizability, and ethical issues are also addressed in this section. The second section of this chapter provides a detailed discussion of the curriculum, a sample lesson plan, a rationale for using authentic materials and for not including native speakers in chat groups, and a description of the role of the instructor during chat sessions. The third section of this chapter describes the preparation process for curriculum including computer training and pilot testing a chat discussion session.

Research Goals and Questions

The primary goal of this study was to investigate whether the chat-based curriculum effectively prepares ESL students for oral communication. The secondary goal was to conduct an analysis of chat transcripts to investigate the nature of chat language in relation to oral language. This study relied on five guiding questions:

6. How do students and the instructor describe their experiences with the chat-based curriculum designed to prepare for oral communication?
7. How do students perceive the tailored classroom instructions designed with the chat transcripts as the basis?
8. How do students describe their motivation to learn English as a result of participating in the chat-based curriculum?
9. How do students describe the transferability to oral language of linguistic skills gained by participating in online chat sessions?

10. What is the nature of chat room language? How does it compare to oral language?

Research Design

A qualitative methodology was employed to investigate students' (a) perceptions of a chat-based curriculum designed to develop oral communicative skills in English, (b) perceptions of tailored classroom instructions designed with the chat room transcripts as a basis, (c) motivation to learn English as a result of participating in the chat-based curriculum, and (d) linguistic skills in small group chat discussions and the potential impact of these linguistic skills on oral language. Additionally, chat room transcripts were analyzed to compare the chat language to oral language.

The case study approach used in this research included a questionnaire, electronic transcripts of the synchronous chat discussions, transcripts of one-on-one interviews, transcripts of small focus group discussions, instructor's reflection notes, and the researcher's observation notes. Among several definitions of a case study, Bogdan and Biklen's (1998) definition supports the approach used in this study. They claim that case study is "a detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or particular event" (p. 54). An ESL speaking class was the focus of this study, and the experiences of eight students were examined in detail.

Sampling

Study Site

The study site for this project was a satellite campus of a large community college in a southern state. This community college is called the "college for the real world," because the academic majors reflect the real-world skills that are necessary for success. Offering more than 120 different academic majors, this institution prepares students to

master job skills, transfer into a university, or expand their knowledge for personal growth. This school is located in a city that ranks as the sixth largest municipality in the state and is located near a world renowned complex of high-tech research and industrial facilities.

Participant Selection

The sample for this study was composed of community college students who enrolled in an advanced level ESL (English as a Second Language) speaking class offered in the spring semester of 2005. Although it is impossible to establish students' absolute level of English speaking proficiency, the college administered ACT's ESL Standardized Speaking Placement Test to determine students' eligibility for taking this course.

On March 7th, the research proposal was presented to the entire class by the researcher using a PowerPoint presentation. In lay language, the researcher described the purpose of this research, the procedures, and the potential risks and benefits of participating in this study. Students were informed that participating in this research was completely voluntary, and that only those who wished to participate should sign the consent form that reiterated the benefits and potential risks involved in participating in the study and detailed procedures and participant obligations (see Appendix 7.14). After a brief question and answer session, all 17 students signed the consent form and filled out the questionnaire. Based on the answers from the questionnaire, eight students were purposefully selected to ensure a diverse representation of native language, gender, age, chat experience, and preconceptions about the efficacy of the chat-based curriculum on oral proficiency.

Throughout the week of March 7th, the researcher met with the eight students individually and reiterated their roles as participants of the study and confirmed their continued interest in participating. The sample of eight students was composed of five females and three males, a ratio that roughly approximated the ratio of male and female in the ESL program at this college according to 2005 enrollment figures. Their native languages included Spanish, Korean, French, Polish, and Farsi, and their ages ranged from 21 to 37 years. The chat room experience of these students ranged from no experience to very experienced.

The ESL Program

The ESL program at this college served as a language institute for foreign students who plan to attend a university in the United States offering classroom instruction with four levels of proficiency in reading, composition, grammar and speaking. Although not required, students are encouraged to supplement ESL instruction with computer lab work which offers tutorials and practice on listening comprehension, reading, vocabulary development, pronunciation, and writing.

The objectives of the advanced speaking class were compatible with the curriculum goals in this study. The class was designed to prepare non-native speakers of English for effective oral expression and comprehension of spoken discourse in both informal and formal settings. In addition to classroom instruction, students were given opportunities to make oral presentations, engage in contextualized role plays, and participate in group activities and small discussions. The class met five times a week, 50 minutes a day.

The ESL Class

The advanced-level ESL speaking class was selected based on the instructor's willingness to participate in the study. The instructor welcomed the idea of providing her students with additional opportunities to engage in authentic communication. Considering that not many instructors are willing to adopt an outside curriculum that is innovative and carries a certain amount of risk, this researcher was fortunate to have found an instructor who was eager to incorporate the chat-based curriculum. Within the classroom, purposeful sampling technique was used to select eight key participants.

Software

Blackboard, an application that allows instructors to easily customize online courses, was used in this study. Blackboard allows students to take quizzes online, look up assignments, view class grade statistics, post assignments, and interact with other students synchronously through chat or asynchronously through email or bulletin board. The communication tool to be used for this course was the synchronous chat. Other tools such as email and bulletin board were not used, although they are part of the Blackboard package.

Procedure

On March 7, 2005, all students who had consented to participate completed a questionnaire designed to solicit information about their background (see Appendix 7.2). Based on the questionnaire, eight students were purposefully selected and interviewed one-on-one during the week of March 7th to discuss their preconceived ideas about the curriculum involving chat room designed to develop oral communication skills. (see Appendix 7.3 for student interview guide #1). These 20 to 30 minute interviews were

scheduled during regular class time and took place in the hallway outside the classroom.

The instructor was also interviewed in her office on March 8th to share her ideas and preconceptions about the chat-based curriculum (see Appendix 7.4 for instructor interview guide #1).

On March 7th, the class of 17 students brainstormed the topics of discussion that interested them. The long list was narrowed down to five topics based on students' level of interest and the topic's potential to generate thoughtful discussions: immigrant experiences, marriage, family life, discrimination in the U. S., and the world's perceptions of the U. S.

On March 9th, the researcher provided a 60-minute Blackboard application training to the class and the instructor in the school lab during regular class time. Students learned how to log on to Blackboard and to navigate in their chat room groups. It was not necessary for them to learn any other features of the Blackboard application. During the second half of the class session on March 9th, students practiced sending and receiving messages by participating in small group chat discussions. Students' oral reflections about this initial chat experience on the following day, served as a basis to fine tune subsequent chat sessions.

From March 14th through April 22nd, students participated in the chat room curriculum designed specifically for this study. On Mondays, each week's topic was introduced through authentic language input involving a guest speaker, *Oprah Winfrey* shows, and personal essays. The purpose of this activity was to pique students' interest in the week's topic and to help generate ideas for discussions. On Tuesdays, students broke into groups of two or three and participated in discussions using the chat room as a

communication tool and shared their ideas and perspectives about the week's topic. This was a student-centered activity with the instructor assuming the role of a facilitator and interjecting only when necessary. To facilitate the discussions, a list of guided questions was provided.

Immediately after the weekly chat discussion sessions, transcripts were printed and analyzed by the instructor and the researcher together. Both correct and incorrect examples of language use were extracted from the transcripts and were used as a basis for designing classroom instructions to teach oral communicative skills. Lessons on specific communicative acts such as showing gratitude, apologizing, defending one's point of view, supporting another's point of view, making requests to change the subject, and etc. were incorporated in the lessons as appropriate. The purpose of these classroom instructions that took place on Wednesdays and Thursdays was to prepare students for classroom discussions that followed.

On Fridays, students participated in small group face-to-face discussions to practice the production of meaningful and natural oral language. Students were assigned to groups of three or four, with each member of the group representing a different chat group. Discussion groups were assigned based on varying native languages, proficiency levels, and gender. Students shared the highlights of their chat group discussions and participated in a task-based activity relating to the week's topic.

During the week of April 25th, the eight selected students participated in a follow up one-on-one interview with the researcher to discuss their reflections and observations about the curriculum (see Appendix 7.5 for student interview guide #2). These 30 to 50 minute interviews took place in the empty classrooms and were scheduled at times

participants identified as convenient, usually before and after class. On April 29th, all 17 students participated in focus group discussions via the chat room during regular class time (see Appendix 7.6 for focus group interview guide). The instructor participated in a one-on-one interview with the researcher in her office after class to discuss her experience, perceptions, and reactions about teaching the chat-based curriculum. The interview with the instructor lasted 50 minutes (see Appendix 7.7 for instructor interview guide #2).

The following sections provide a detailed discussion of the data sources for the study.

Data Collection

Seven sets of data was used as primary sources in this research: (a) student questionnaire, (b) transcriptions of interviews with the students before and after the curriculum integration, (c) transcriptions of interviews with the instructor before and after the curriculum integration, (d) transcriptions of focus group discussions, (e) researcher's observational notes, (f) instructor's reflection notes, (g) electronic transcripts of chat room discussions.

Questionnaire

The student questionnaire was employed on the first day of class to obtain general information about the students' background. The questionnaire was designed to solicit background information such as students' native language, age, gender, and ethnicity as well as personal information such as students' experience with English, motivation level in learning English, comfort level with computers, and experience in using the chat room.

Student Interviews

During the week of March 6th, selected students participated in a one-on-one interview with the researcher to discuss their preconceived ideas about the chat-based curriculum designed to develop oral communicative skills. Then, at the end of the study, selected students participated in another one-on-one interview with the researcher to share their thoughts about the curriculum. To facilitate the follow-up interviews, a semi-structured interview guide was developed using the data from instructor's reflection notes, researcher's observation notes, and chat room transcripts.

Instructor Interviews

On March 8th, the instructor was interviewed by the researcher to discuss her preconceptions about the chat-based curriculum. Then, a formal follow-up interview was conducted on April 25th to elicit immediate responses on her observations, perceptions, and reactions to the curriculum. In this interview, emerging issues of integrating chat room into her ESL classroom were discussed, including the role of the teacher, student motivation, using transcripts as a basis for instruction, and her pedagogical philosophy about providing students with the opportunity to participate in chat discussions as a practice for oral communication.

Focus Group Interviews

Based on the responses from individual interviews, the researcher prepared a question guide which served as the catalyst for focus group discussions conducted via the chat room on April 29th during regular class time. All 17 students participated in focus group interviews, consisting of two or three students per group. The purpose of these interviews was to create a relaxed and enjoyable environment for students in the presence

of others, so that they were encouraged to express freely their feelings, perceptions, and ideas about the chat-based curriculum that they may not reveal in an individual interview situation (Krueger, 1988). These group interviews were instrumental in this study particularly for those who tended to shy away from one-on-one conversations. Using a question guide, students discussed freely among themselves without the presence of the researcher, so that they could take the responsibility for drawing out each other's views in a relaxed and comfortable environment.

Observations and Reflections

As a non-participant observer of the classroom activities, the researcher observed all classroom sessions which met five days a week during the five weeks of study. She took copious notes during class as well as after class. In order to cross check the researcher's observations, the instructor was asked to record her reflections as much as possible while following an observation guideline that the researcher had created (see Appendix 7.8). The observation and reflection notes provided rich descriptive information for this study and complemented the interview data by adding a full context.

Chat Room Transcripts

The chat room transcripts, available in text file, were accessed immediately after the chat discussion sessions. By analyzing the chat room transcripts, the nature of the language used in the chat room was investigated and compared with the properties of oral language to determine whether these two modes of communication share similar characteristics.

Data Analysis

The constant comparative method was used (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to analyze the data collected from the follow-up interviews, focus group interviews, instructor's reflection notes, and researcher's observation notes in order to answer the following questions:

1. How do students and the instructor describe their experiences with the chat-based curriculum designed to prepare for oral communication?
2. How do students perceive the tailored classroom instructions designed with the chat transcripts as the basis?
3. How do students describe their motivation to learn English as a result of participating in the chat-based curriculum?
4. How do students describe the transferability to oral language of linguistic skills gained by participating in online chat sessions?

Throughout the study, the researcher kept a running list of emerging themes and patterns. As the research progressed, however, new themes were added to the list and revisions were made. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), this process of constant comparison is non-linear and involves simultaneous collection of data, analysis, and writing.

Several times a week, the researcher scanned the collected data to obtain a broad perspective. Repeating this process eventually led to the emergence of preliminary categories that covered a broad spectrum of issues. These early categories included the following: definition of oral proficiency, comparing chatting with email, chatting as a practice for oral discussions, generating ideas for classroom discussion, processing time,

absence of body language, experimenting with language, comparing tailored instruction and text book learning, identifying habitual errors through tailored instructions, other benefits of tailored instructions, student motivation level towards the curriculum, non-threatening nature of chatting, participation level, getting to know classmates through chatting, negative aspects of the curriculum, student perceptions of skills transference from chat language to oral language, evidence of skills transference, and student perceptions of similarities and differences between chat language and oral language.

Knowing that these initial categories would evolve as the data were examined in closer detail, the researcher used them as a basis to color code the data chunk by chunk by using the highlight function of the Microsoft Word application. During this process, the researcher constantly reworked and refined the categories in light of new information. She added categories that were critical and relevant to the focus of the study, deleted extraneous ones, and merged others to reduce redundancy.

As a result of this constant analysis and comparative process, new relationships became apparent (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and major categories emerged into which the individual chunks were regrouped with the emergence of more refined categories, chunks were re-categorized and sorted by color. Then the categories were copied and pasted into separate Word files. After careful analysis of the categories, sub-categories were identified and color coded. Within the sub-categories, each chunk of data was identified by the respondent's name. This process continued until all data were accounted for and initial research questions were answered. The final list of categories and subcategories are presented below.

Category 1: Defining Oral Proficiency

Subcategories: Pronunciation is Key Component of Oral Proficiency
Oral Proficiency Involves Much More Than Pronunciation

Category 2: Chatting as a Preparation for Oral Communication (positive views represented)

Subcategories: More Processing Time Than Speaking
Opportunity to Practice Language Output
Experimenting With Language
Generating Ideas for Oral Discussion

Category 3: The Use of Authentic Material

Subcategories: Positive Views
Negative Views

Category 4: Negative Views About the Curriculum

Subcategories: Requires Computer/Typing Skills
Inability to Spell Becomes an Impediment
Can't Rely on Nonverbal Language

Category 5: Tailored Instruction

Subcategories: Targets Specific Needs of the Students
Identifies Mistakes Commonly Made in Oral Language
Negative Views

Category 6: Motivation (positive views represented)

Subcategories: Non-threatening Nature of Chat Room
Socialization

Category 7: Skills Transference

Subcategories: Student Perceptions
Instructor's Observations

Category 8: Similarities Between Chat Language and Oral Language

Subcategories: Real Time Communication
Conversational
Subvocalization

Once the final categories were established, it was necessary to reword and refine the study questions and to add the third question regarding student motivation towards the chat-based curriculum. Detailed discussion of each category is presented in the Results and Discussion chapter.

To address the fourth question, students were asked to report on structural, lexical, or any other communicative skills that they had acquired by participating in chat sessions and to reflect on instances in which they applied these new skills in spoken language. The purpose of this investigation was to determine the transferability of linguistic skills from chat room to oral language. The constant-comparative method was used to analyze data regarding students' beliefs, ideas, and reflections about such transference of skills.

Data from the first interviews and questionnaire were also analyzed and synthesized using the constant-comparative method to determine the eight key students' preconceptions about the efficacy of the chat-based curriculum. To present chapter six, Preconceptions and Reactions About the Curriculum, data that were organized into final categories had to be regrouped by the key students, so that a comparison could be made between each student's preconceptions and reactions about the curriculum.

Through the analysis of chat room transcripts and students' second interviews, the following questions were addressed: What is the nature of chat room language? How does it compare to oral language? In order to determine whether chat language is similar to oral language, the properties of oral language such as hedges, colloquial expressions, inexplicit reference, self-repair, and clarification requests were identified in chat transcripts and logged. During chat sessions, paralinguistic features that are present in spoken language were compensated for by using uppercase letters and exclamation marks to represent

emphasis and by using a series of letters and symbols to represent facial expressions. Such instances were identified and logged. Additionally, other indicators of spoken language such as self-repairs, clarification requests, and topic initiation were also identified and logged. These properties of oral language were referenced from Chafe and Danielewics' study (1987), "Properties of Spoken and Written Language". In their study, linguistic analysis was conducted to identify and compare the properties of oral and written language.

Validity Issues

Multiple Perspectives

The validity of this study is enhanced by using multiple data sources and data collection methods (Merriam, 1988). Data came from questionnaires, two sets of student interviews, focus group interviews, two instructor interviews, instructor's reflections, researcher's observations, and chat room transcripts. The researcher conducted all interviews and hired a transcriber to transcribe the interviews.

Data triangulation was also achieved by clarifying the researcher's observation notes with the instructor's reflection notes. While cross checking these data, inaccurate interpretations resulting from their personal biases towards ethnicity of students, gender, personal characteristics, etc. were identified and eliminated (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). Furthermore, the instructor's interviews served as a means of triangulating her reflection notes thereby substantiating the data. Lastly, the researcher's observation notes and the instructor's reflection notes complemented the interviews by adding a full context.

Member Validation

The most serious threat to the validity of a study occurs when the researcher fails to consider alternative interpretations of the data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Thus, students

engaged in member checks to verify the researcher's interpretations of the data from the questionnaire and the interviews. Throughout May and June, two out of eight students examined the rough drafts of the researcher's analysis to ensure accuracy and completeness (Creswell, 1997). Finding volunteers to verify the researcher's interpretations during the summer months was difficult as most of the foreign students returned home. This researcher was fortunate to have found two volunteers who were willing to review the rough draft. One student provided her feedback on the phone from Korea, and the other student met face-to-face with the researcher to discuss his thoughts.

Additionally, the instructor reviewed the chat room and the interview transcripts after the course ended and shared her thoughts about the researcher's initial interpretation of the data. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), providing participants such opportunities to clarify their perspective may be the most critical technique for establishing credibility.

Furthermore, to ensure the construct validity of the questionnaire, it was pre-tested with the students from another section of the advanced-level ESL speaking class. They were instructed to write their own interpretation of each question to determine whether they all shared the same understanding of the questions. They were also asked to make criticisms and recommendations for improving them. Based on their responses, questions were revised and retested until they were understood accurately. Similarly, open-ended questions for individual interviews were pilot tested with two students who were nonparticipants of this study. They were asked to paraphrase the questions as well as to answer the questions to determine whether they understood the questions accurately as intended.

According to Harter (1982), all observers should be adequately trained to be reliable. Prior to taking reflection and observation notes, the instructor and researcher discussed the individual items on the observation guideline and established a mutual understanding of what needed to be focused on in order to ensure consistency between their notes. They also agreed to record their perceptions, ideas, beliefs, and any unforeseen observations that they deemed important.

Another verification of the data came from peer review (Merriam, 1988). The researcher's friend who is a professor at a university in a southeastern state engaged the researcher in on-going discussions about whether or not the findings and the interpretations are supported by data. He also challenged the researcher to acknowledge her biases, prejudices, and orientations. These efforts served as a means of ensuring clarification and validity of the analysis and interpretations of this study.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the replicability of a study which is possible only when the processes involved in data collection and analysis and descriptions of the theoretical approaches are described in detail, so others could arrive at similar results if this study were replicated (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Thus, the researcher of this study has made all attempts to provide explicit descriptions of the theoretical approaches and detailed descriptions of the methodologies involved.

Generalizability

Generalizability is low for most qualitative investigations because qualitative researchers are more concerned with the accurate recording of what actually occurs in the setting rather than "the literal consistency across different observations" (Bogdan &

Biklen, 1992, p. 48). Particularly with a small nonrandom sample of students, the researcher acknowledges the limited generalizability of this study.

According to Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996), one approach to increase generalizability in a case study is to study a case that is typical of the phenomenon. Although the ESL class to be examined in this study was selected on the basis of convenience and accessibility, there is no reason to assume that this class does not represent a typical case. However, due to the interpretive, as opposed to the objective nature of qualitative studies, a claim can not be made that the findings of this study will be generalizable. Instead, the researcher wishes to place the responsibility of making generalizations on the readers and have them determine whether the findings are applicable to their situations (Wilson, 1979).

Ethics

Informed Consent

Prior to asking participants to sign the consent form, the researcher described the exact nature, purpose, and methods to be used for this study. She was explicit about the expectations, the procedures, and how the data and the results would be used. Because the participants involved in this study were English learners, it was important for the researcher to use language that is comprehensible to them and to respond to their questions with sensitivity. After all 17 students signed the consent form, the researcher selected eight students whose views would be examined closely through interviews. The researcher spoke to them in groups of four to inform them about their responsibilities as key participants. All eight students agreed to assume the role of key participants for this study.

The instructor also signed the consent form granting the researcher full access to the chat room transcripts and permission to observe classroom sessions (see Appendix 7.13).

Risk and Vulnerability

There were no risks involved in this study, but because the participants were students, it was important to ensure that they felt no pressure to act as a key participant if selected. Therefore, during the initial presentation, the researcher stressed that their role as key participants had no bearing on their grades. She also explained that they were free to decline interviews without any consequences.

To further protect the rights of the participants in this study, Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) was submitted to North Carolina University and the approval was obtained on February 24th, 2005.

Confidentiality

The researcher followed the proper standards to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants:

1. Data were stored securely with access limited to the researcher and the research assistant.
2. When transcribing individual interviews and analyzing the questionnaire, identifying codes were assigned to protect the identity of students from the research assistant.
3. In reporting the findings, the identity of the students was disguised by using pseudonyms.
4. The names of the instructor and the institution were not identified.
5. Upon completion of this study, any data that can jeopardize the confidentiality of the participants will be completely destroyed.

Compensation

Not all researchers provide tangible compensation to participants, but the researcher chose to compensate the participating instructor \$150 for her services because her support was key to the success of this study. To compensate the college for their support, the researcher provided services at no cost whenever possible. During the course of the study, she substitute taught five ESL classes (not involved in this study) and filled in as a guest speaker for a race relations class to share her insights on Asian culture.

Researcher's Bias

Although efforts were made to be objective during the data collection stage, the researcher's perceptions and interpretations inevitably played a major role in the analysis of the data. Rather than disguising her beliefs and prejudices, she has engaged in self-examination to guard against bias. According to Kleinman and Copp (1993), researchers need to be most alert about empathetic feelings towards the participants. As an Asian and a former ESL student, the researcher was cognizant of this danger and remained alert about the degree to which she identified with the participants when interpreting data. Additionally, the instructor's verification of the researcher's analysis and interpretations ensured objectivity and accuracy.

Access & Rapport

To obtain permission from this institution, the researcher followed the proper channels of authority by speaking to the director of the ESL department first. He expressed strong support for the study and volunteered to obtain an approval from the college. On November 2, 2004, the researcher received a letter from the college granting permission to conduct the study at their site.

Of the two ESL instructors who showed interest in participating, an instructor was selected on the basis of her good teaching record and the director's recommendation. The researcher maintained warm personal relationships with this instructor by showing sincere interest in her students' progress and respecting her viewpoints. She encouraged partnership by welcoming her insights and keeping her abreast of new discoveries and emerging ideas.

The Curriculum

The chat-based curriculum was developed for this study using the theories from the sociolinguistic perspective of second language learning which emphasize the importance of communicating effectively with other speakers in a socially appropriate manner. The curriculum focuses on the development of communicative competence by maximizing student-generated communication through the integration of chat room and small-group classroom discussions. The curriculum also incorporates classroom instruction designed with chat transcripts as a basis, with the goal of developing students' oral communicative skills.

Assumptions

The chat-based curriculum was designed based on five several assumptions. First, multi-sensory approach to teaching ESL is assumed to be more motivating for students than the traditional approach of providing lectures and assigning workbook pages. In this curriculum, multi-sensory experience is provided through television shows, guest speaker, chat room discussions, and task-based activities. Such activities allow active learning as opposed to passive learning which is assumed to further increase students' level of motivation. Secondly, classroom instruction that is customized for the needs of the

students is expected to be more personal, motivating, and effective than the instruction that is based on generic commercial material. Thus, classroom instructions are developed by extracting student errors from chat transcripts and are tailored to the specific needs of the students.

Thirdly, the curriculum was developed based on the assumption that scaffolded instruction facilitates learning. The activities are carefully sequenced to prepare students for oral communication. On Mondays, natural and authentic language input is provided to pique students' interest and to generate ideas for chat discussion. On Tuesdays, students participate in chat discussions to (1) practice language production, (2) generate ideas for oral discussion, and (3) build friendly relationships in a nonthreatening environment. On Wednesdays, tailored instruction designed with the chat transcripts as a basis is provided to prepare students for oral discussion that follows. On Fridays, students are expected to bring to oral discussions (1) ideas generated while chatting, (2) interest in the topic, (3) friendly relationships, and (4) awareness of the errors they tend to make. It is assumed that the students will be appropriately prepared for oral communication after participating in instructions and activities that are sequenced and scaffolded.

The fourth assumption is based on Krashen's language acquisition theory (Krashen, 1985) which, similar to scaffolding, states that language input should be slightly beyond the learner's current level. Accordingly, the researcher selected authentic materials such as *Oprah* shows and essays for language input that are one level beyond the students' current level. The guest speaker was also in tune with the students' current level of English and made efforts to tailor her speech to the appropriate level. Finally, sociolinguists believe that language is best learned when it is acquired naturally through an

effortless process similar to the way a child acquires the first language. Thus, students were provided with opportunities to interact with each other in natural contexts through chat room and classroom discussions as opposed to staged contexts such as skits and role plays which are common practice in ESL classrooms.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of the curriculum was to prepare students for effective oral communication by (a) providing authentic and comprehensible input, (b) contextualizing language practice, and (c) providing opportunities to produce language and to negotiate meaning by interacting with one another in a natural and non-threatening environment.

The objectives of the curriculum were as follows:

1. to guide students towards the production of communicative competence by providing opportunities to communicate in a non-threatening environment;
2. to develop students' overall communicative skills through oral practice and classroom instruction designed with chat transcripts as a basis;
3. to develop students' comprehension of spoken discourse by integrating listening activities that involve materials slightly above students' current level of competence;
and
4. to increase student motivation through the integration of chat rooms as a communication medium.

Activities

From Monday, March 14th through Friday, April 22nd, students participated in the chat room curriculum designed specifically for this study. The 50 minute class met five days a week and followed the general format described below.

Mondays: Listening Activity

The instructor introduced the topic and engaged the students in a brief discussion about the topic. To prepare students for the listening and reading activity, the instructor introduced the vocabulary words by putting them in context of a conversation and asked the students to work on the vocabulary worksheet in pairs. Subsequently, the authentic language input was provided through various listening activities involving *Oprah Winfrey* shows, a guest speaker, and personal essays. The purpose of this activity was to pique students' interest in the week's topic and to help generate ideas for discussion.

Tuesdays: Chat Room Discussion

Using a question guide to facilitate the discussion, students shared their ideas and perspectives about the week's topic in groups of two or three. (see Appendix 7.9 for examples of chat room transcripts). This was a student-centered activity with the instructor assuming the role of a facilitator and interjecting only when necessary. The groups were rearranged weekly to ensure variations in group dynamics.

Wednesdays and Thursdays: Classroom Instruction Based on Transcripts

Students worked independently on a worksheet created from extracting awkward and incorrect use of the language from chat room transcripts. Students were asked to rewrite the sentences and to cross-check their answers with a partner. The instructor reviewed each item by eliciting responses from the students. The instructor provided assistance by (a) introducing appropriate expressions that could be used to clarify an idea, (b) suggesting alternate choice of words that may be more appropriate, (c) providing grammar rule explanations based on common patterns of errors, and (d) demonstrating correct and appropriate use of expressions and grammar by using examples from the

transcripts as much as possible. Using the transcripts as a basis, the instructor also helped students develop social skills by demonstrating proper etiquette when greeting others, leave taking, showing gratitude, defending one's opinion, challenging others' viewpoints, making a request to change the subject, apologizing, etc. as appropriate (see Appendix 7.10 for an example of a tailored instruction). The purpose of this instruction was to prepare students for classroom discussions that follow.

Fridays: Small-Group Face-to-Face Discussion

Ideas generated in chat room discussion served as the basis for a small group face-to-face discussion. Students were assigned to groups of three or four in a “zig-zag” style grouping, with each member of the group representing a different chat room group. Students shared the highlights of their chat group discussions and participated in a task-based activity relating to the week's topic. Task-based activities entailed discussing a given issue relating to the week's topic, synthesizing group members' ideas, and presenting key points to the class. For example, during week one, students were asked to (a) discuss about the advantages and disadvantages of living in the U.S., (b) rate the advantages and disadvantages, and (c) present to the class. Task-based activities were thought to encourage lively discussion, collaborative learning, and team work. While students work together to accomplish a goal, it was expected that they would take more control of their learning, with an emphasis on mutual support and guidance (Almeida, 2003).

Discussion Topics and Tasks

On March 7th, students were asked to brainstorm the topics that interested them. As students shared their preferred topics, the instructor recorded them on the board. These

topics included dating, gender roles, how to be successful, how to be more outgoing, sports, friendship, marriage, family life, cooking, music, movies, American culture, immigrant experience, cars, fashion, educational system in the U.S., etc. The long list was narrowed down to five topics based on students' level of interest and the topic's potential to provide a rich exchange of experiences, perspectives, and cultural traditions. They were (a) immigrant experience, (b) marriage, (c) discrimination in the U.S., (d) family life, and (e) world's perceptions about the U.S.

According to Kaufman (1998), balance needs to be achieved between giving students too much freedom and restricting the topic of chat room discussion. He claims that too much freedom could lead to superficial dialog, and too many restrictions can result in a structured, teacher-centered activity. Meunier (1998) found that when the instructor exercised tight control during chat sessions by monitoring students' contributions, students were less motivated than when they were given more control. In the current study, an optimal environment for chat room discussions was achieved by allowing students to discuss freely within the guidelines of the week's topic. The purpose of the question guide was not to exercise control over the chat discussions, but to provide a general direction. Students were free to discuss beyond the scope of the questions as long as they stayed within the week's topic.

Week 1 - Immigrant Experience

The first week's topic was introduced with two personal essays about the immigrant experience. The first essay titled *An Unpayable Debt* was written by a first generation immigrant who attributed his success to his father's "quiet sacrifice and indefatigable work ethic" (Chung, 1997). The general message of this essay was that the

American dream is alive and well for those who are willing to put forth effort. The second essay did not depict such a positive outlook on life in America. The essay titled *The Pain and Fear of Immigration* was written by a first generation immigrant living in the ghettos of Boston. This author described the U.S. as a dangerous place fraught with violent crimes and drug problems (Nieto, 1996). He wrote about his disappointments with this country and his desire to go back to the Republic of Cape Verde. The purpose of providing such diverse perspectives was to provoke critical thinking and to generate ideas for a lively discussion.

During subsequent chat discussion session, students freely chatted about their experience of living in a foreign land. They shared their disappointments, surprises, and fears that are associated with living in another country as well as their dreams and hopes. They discussed the difficulties of living in America, and how they are coping with those difficulties. The task assigned for face-to-face discussion session was to determine three advantages and three disadvantages of living in the U.S.

Week 2 - Marriage

To generate student interest in this week's topic, marriage, a guest speaker was invited to talk about her personal experience of being in a marriage for over 15 years. She discussed the dangers of setting expectations about marriage that are unrealistically too high, shared her thoughts about how a happy marriage can be maintained, and exposed few of the "happy ever after" marriage myths. During the chat discussion session, students freely chatted about their thoughts on marriage (e.g., whether they want to be married or not, the obstacles that married couples might face and how they can overcome such

obstacles) The task assigned for face-to-face discussion session was to think of five ways to achieve a happy marriage.

Week 3 - World's Perceptions About the U. S.

Two 15 minute segments of an *Oprah* show titled *What Does the Rest of the World Think of Us?* was shown to introduce this week's topic, the world's perceptions about the U.S. In this show, CNN reporters went all around the globe to ask people what they thought about Americans. During subsequent chat discussion session, students freely chatted about what the people in their country thought about Americans. The task-based activity for face-to-face discussion session was to think of two ways for Americans to improve their image in the world.

Week 4 – Discrimination

In order to generate interest in the fourth week's topic, a student volunteer was asked to read an essay titled "Race as a Category, Why We Don't Need It!" This online essay was selected on the basis of its appropriate level of writing and its potential to generate thoughtful discussions. The author claims that people should not be forced to choose a category of their race on any forms, because doing so could lead to differentiation, stereotyping, and discrimination. For instance, as the Government census uses this information to provide statistics on the educational level of different races, stereotyping is perpetuated. He suggests that Americans should not emphasize race and focus on individual character.

During the chat session, students freely discussed the essay and shared their personal experiences with discrimination in this country. The face-to-face discussion session involved determining two ways to stop discrimination in this country.

Week 5 – How to Improve Family Life

The fifth week's topic was introduced with two 15 minute segments of an *Oprah* show titled *Building Strong Family Connections*. In one of the segments, *Oprah* interviews a woman, diagnosed with terminal cancer, who is desperately trying to reconnect with her family. She poignantly speaks about how her illness has forced her to reconnect, reconcile, and redefine what family truly means to her. The other segment was a documentary about five sisters who maintain a close bond from all around the globe. They pay tribute to the complex and enduring strength of sisterhood.

Chat discussion questions included the following: How do you prioritize family in your life? What does your family mean to you? The task-based activity for face-to-face discussion session was to determine three ways to strengthen family bonds.

A Sample Lesson Plan

Week 1: Immigrant Experience

Objectives:

1. To guide students towards the production of communicative competence by providing opportunities to communicate in a non-threatening environment.
2. To develop students' overall communicative skills through oral practice and classroom instruction designed with chat transcripts as a basis.
3. To develop students' comprehension of spoken discourse by integrating listening activities that involve materials slightly above students' current level of competence.
4. To increase student motivation through the integration of chat room as a communication medium

Procedures:

Monday: Providing Language Input

To get students thinking about the unit content, briefly discuss immigration in the U.S.

The U.S. has always attracted immigrants from all around the world. According to the Census Bureau, the state of California has more minorities (Asians, Hispanics, and those who belong to other minority groups) than the white Americans. By the year 2050, they expect that minorities will be the majority in the U.S. Why do you think so many people want to live here?

Prepare to Listen

Introduce vocabulary words relating to immigration to prepare students for the listening activity. In pairs, have students work through the vocabulary worksheet by reading the sentences/phrases and selecting the correct definitions of the underlined words.

Listening

Read out loud two personal essays written by immigrants about their experiences in the U.S.

Taking Notes

Encourage students to take detailed notes while listening in order to prepare for the comparing and contrasting activity.

Comparing and Contrasting

Have students discuss in pairs the similarities and the differences between the experiences of two immigrants.

Prepare for Chat Room Discussion

Hand out chat room question guide and encourage students to prepare for chat room discussion.

Tuesday: Chat Room Discussion

Have students discuss the week's topic via the chat room in groups of two or three using the question guide prepared by the researcher to facilitate the discussion.

Question Guide

1. Are you an immigrant? If so, what difficulties have you had in the U.S. and how did you overcome them? Were you surprised or disappointed with anything?
2. If you are a foreign student planning to go back to your country, would you ever consider moving to this country? Why? Why not? What would concern you the most? (cultural differences, language barrier, crime, career, discrimination, etc.) Please explain your answer.

Wednesday & Thursday: Classroom Instruction Based on Transcripts/Tailored Instruction

1. Have students work independently on a worksheet created from extracting awkward and incorrect use of the language from chat transcripts. Ask students to rewrite the expressions and to check their answers with a partner. Review each item by eliciting response from students.
2. Demonstrates correct and appropriate use of expressions, words, and grammar by using examples from transcripts.
3. Using the transcripts as a basis, help students develop social skills by demonstrating proper etiquette when welcoming one another to the group and leave taking.

Friday: Task Oriented Classroom Discussion

In groups of three or four, with each member representing a different chat group, have students a) share the highlights of their chat group discussion, b) discuss the advantages and disadvantages of living in the U. S. c) rate top two advantages and disadvantages, and d) present to the class. (see Appendix 7.11 for week two to five lesson plans)

Rationale for Using Authentic Materials

Authentic input is provided through various activities such as videotaped viewings of *Oprah Winfrey* shows, listening to a guest speaker talk about the week's topic, and reading personal essays. According to Smith (2003), authentic materials that provide natural language used by real people promotes communicative competence. He also claims that authentic materials provide access to culture and are highly motivating. However, unless the teacher selects materials that are appropriate to the learners' level, interests, and needs, students could lose motivation and confidence (Song, 1997). The authentic materials for this study were carefully selected by the researcher, with the help of the instructor, at a level that is just beyond the students' current level of competence.

The researcher and instructor agreed to incorporate the *Oprah* shows based on their entertainment value, popularity, and the use of every day language. After the discussion topics were established, the researcher searched the *Oprah Winfrey* web site for the availability of the video taped shows relating to the topics chosen for this study. Programs relating to family life and the world's perceptions about the U.S. were found. Each *Oprah* show includes three 15 minute segments, but due to time constraints, only two segments were shown in the classroom. Fifteen out of seventeen students reported that they had watched other *Oprah* shows previously, and all students were interested in watching them

for this class. At the end of the study, 14 out of 17 students agreed that the show was just slightly beyond their level of understanding, and three said the show was too difficult. According to Krashen (1985), in order for acquisition to take place, the input to the learner has to be comprehensible at the $i + 1$ level, where i represents the learner's current level of competence and $+ 1$, the stage just beyond that.

Additional sources of authentic materials used in this study included a guest speaker's lecture about marriage and essays written by proficient English speakers. The guest speaker was a college-level ESL instructor who was in tune with the students' listening comprehension level and the importance of providing comprehensible input. She was invited to share her personal experiences with marriage and her thoughts about maintaining a healthy marriage.. Two essays written by proficient English speakers that depicted the immigrant experience from two different perspectives were also read out loud to the class by the instructor, and an essay about discrimination in the U.S. was read out loud by a student volunteer. These materials were selected by the researcher and approved by the instructor based on the use of every day language and their thought provoking quality.

Rationale for Not Including Native Speakers

According to research, there are disadvantages to grouping English learners with native speakers for discussions. In Lee's study (1998), students believed that communicating with their peers was more private than communicating with native speakers. They felt more anxious and less comfortable expressing their ideas when native speakers were present due to the fear of embarrassment. Additionally, Blake (2000) found that native speakers tended to control and dominate the discussions, forcing second

language learners to take passive roles. He also speculated that when second language learners interact with the natives, fear of embarrassment can act as a damper to noticing and repairing any miscommunications. Therefore, in order to create a learner-centered environment that is relaxing and enjoyable for students, native speakers were not included in this study.

Rationale for Instructor's Decentralized Role During Chat Discussions

Advocates of using synchronous CMC in language teaching have agreed that teachers should maintain a non-authoritarian style and create a friendly, social environment (Berge, 1995). Following these guidelines, the instructor monitored the chat discussions, but her role was limited to a facilitator rather than a participant. Her main role was to monitor the discussion to ensure that computer etiquette was being practiced and to redirect the discussion when it digressed to a personal and superficial conversation. In general, students were free to discuss with peers with minimal supervision from the instructor. According to Chun (1994), instructor's decentralized role can benefit students as they are given more autonomy to communicate their ideas in the second language. On two occasions, the instructor participated in chat discussions to substitute for absent students who were assigned to a dyad, but she did so by taking on the non-authoritative style.

Preparing for Curriculum

This section describes the preparation process entailed in implementing the curriculum including computer training and pilot testing a chat discussion session. As a result of these preparations, insights were gained that facilitated the subsequent chat sessions and enriched the quality of the curriculum.

Computer Training

On March 9th, the researcher provided a 60 minute Blackboard application training to the students and the instructor in the school lab during regular class time. Students learned to log on to Blackboard, to navigate to the ir assigned chat groups, and to send and receive messages. It was not necessary for them to learn any other features of the Blackboard application. Two students had problems accessing Blackboard with their user identification numbers, so they had to use the instructor's numbers during training. This issue was investigated and resolved by the instructor after class. Prior to the training session, the researcher programmed the chat room groups, so that students could only access the groups to which they were assigned. Students had very little difficulty sending and receiving messages, as the steps were quite intuitive. At the end of the training session, a step-by-step instruction sheet was provided to the students (see Appendix 7.12).

On March 10th and 11th, the researcher worked individually with two students who needed additional computer training outside the class time. These students had very limited computer experience, so it was necessary to train them on basic keyboarding skills as well as Blackboard navigation. With the first chat session begining on the following Tuesday, March 15, these two students were instructed to practice keyboarding skills over the weekend.

Pilot Testing Chat Discussion Session

On March 9th, students participated in small group chat discussions which served as a basis to fine tune subsequent chat sessions. Based on this initial chatting experience, the researcher was able to gain insight into the disadvantages of assigning student leaders to faciliate chat discussions and an effective method to organize chat groups that would be

most conducive to learning. Furthermore, the researcher was able to develop guidelines to enrich and improve the quality of subsequent chat sessions.

The groups were given the option to choose from the following discussion topics: their future goals, their hobbies, and the places they have visited in the U.S. Most students were able to read, compose, and send messages with great ease. The two students who lacked computer skills required guidance from the instructor. During the following class session on March 10th, students freely discussed their initial chat discussion experience. Researcher's observations and students' feedback provided insight about chat room leadership, size of chat group, language proficiency of group members, and guidelines for chat sessions. On May 11th, the Friday before the study officially began, the instructor spent the last 20 minutes of the classroom session discussing the guidelines for the upcoming chat sessions.

Student Leaders

During the initial chat session, student leaders were assigned in the groups to facilitate the discussion. Leaders were asked to initiate the discussion by selecting a question from the question guide and to encourage responses from those who did not participate. However, giving the leader a centralized role restricted communication and created confusion. For instance, one leader forbade the group members to participate unless called on and reprimanded those who sent messages without being asked to participate. This overbearing and controlling leader demoralized the group members and failed to create an environment that promoted enjoyable social interaction. On the other hand, less aggressive leaders were defeated by the fast scrolling text and experienced anxiety as they attempted to regain control of the discussion. Thus, in order to allow free

flow of conversation in a friendly and stress-free environment, leaders were not assigned in subsequent chat sessions.

Chat Discussion Group Assignment

The pilot chat group size was set to three and four based on Payne's (2002) and McGuire's (1997) recommendations, but students reported that chatting in groups of four caused confusion and chaos due to multiple threads going on simultaneously and an immense amount of text being posted at a rapid speed. They expressed difficulty in trying to read, process, and compose messages while a great amount of information was scrolling on the screen. Unlike in spoken communication, a chat room response does not necessarily refer to the posting immediately preceding it, but may refer to a posting made earlier. Thus, the fragmented postings made it difficult to discern who was saying what to whom. However, these overwhelming features were not reflected in groups involving three students. Accordingly, Tudini (2002) and Almeida (2003) suggested that chat sessions involving two or three students are more manageable.

Group assignment was based on a diverse representation of proficiency levels, native language, and gender. However, grouping students with varying English proficiency levels had negative effects on many students. Although all students met the criteria for taking the advanced level speaking course, proficiency levels varied widely among students. Based on the instructor's rating of students on a scale from A to D, five students received A, eight students received B, and four students received C. On March 10th, during the class discussion regarding the pilot chat session, C-level students reported that they felt anxious and threatened when interacting with the A-level students. They not only felt overwhelmed by the fast pace of the interaction, but with the level of English that

was being used by the A-level students. Similarly, A-level students expressed their disappointments in the slow responses of the C-level students.

As a result of the pilot chat session, subsequent chat groups were assigned based on comparable English proficiency levels: Levels A and B were assigned to the same groups, levels B and C were assigned to the same groups, but levels A and C were not assigned to the same groups. Additionally, groups were composed of two or three students with a diverse representation of native language and gender. Within these boundaries, groups were reorganized weekly to ensure variation in group dynamics.

Guidelines for Chat Discussion Sessions

Based on the pilot chat discussion session, guidelines for discussions were developed to enrich and improve the quality of subsequent chat sessions (see Appendix 7.13). One of the guidelines included restricting abbreviations such as “u” for “you” and “4” for “for”. Some experienced chatters used shortcuts and abbreviations to type faster, but since their goal was to learn English, they were asked to spell out the words. Another guideline was to give slow typists and/or less proficient classmates time to respond before proceeding to another question. Slow typists had reported their frustration about the blurring pace of discussion.

Students were also encouraged to elaborate on their comments and to support their opinions by providing reasons and counterevidence. During the first chat session, students sent messages such as “I don’t like soccer” and “I don’t agree” without substantiating their statements. It was also necessary to teach students common communication courtesies to help groups build a sense of community. On May 11th, the Friday before the study

officially began, the instructor spent the last 20 minutes of the classroom session discussing the aforementioned guidelines for chat discussion sessions.

Summary

This chapter provided a description of the research design used in conducting this study and a detailed discussion of the curriculum. The preparation process for curriculum was also described which included computer training and pilot testing a chat discussion session.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first section of this chapter presents the profiles of eight participants and their experiences with the curriculum. Data from researcher's observation notes, instructor's reflection notes, first interviews, and questionnaire were used to build the profiles of students and to describe their experiences with the curriculum. The second section of this chapter presents students' preconceptions and their reactions to the curriculum. First interview transcripts and questionnaire were used to present students' preconceptions, and exit interview transcripts were used to describe their reactions to the curriculum. For triangulation, data from instructor's reflection notes, researcher's observation notes, and focus group interviews were analyzed and cross-checked with the data from exit interviews. The third section presents the analysis of chat room transcripts to compare the nature of chat language with oral language. The final section of this chapter presents the discussions of five guiding questions posed at the outset of this study.

Profiles of Eight Participants

Among the eight participants of the study, three were from Spanish speaking countries: Mexico, Peru, and Columbia. Two students came from Korea, one came from the Congo, one from Iran, and another from Poland. Such representation of ethnic groups proportionately reflects the ethnic makeup of the entire class. The youngest participant was 21 years old, and the oldest was 37. Two students were in their 30's and the rest were in their 20's. One female student had a master's degree in elementary education, and four students had college degrees. Of these four students, two were preparing to attend graduate school in the states. Three students did not have a college degree, but two of them planned

to get a degree in America. The group was composed of five women and three men. Four students were married, and three of them had children.

Beth

Beth is a vivacious and vocal 25 year-old student who emigrated from Mexico five years earlier with her family. She had two toddlers and was married to a Mexican American husband who owns a construction company. Although she worked as an office manager for the company, she wanted to have a career independent of her husband. After taking a few ESL courses to improve her English, she planned to work towards a degree in radiology to become a certified technician. As a working mom who was pressed for time, she struggled to meet the basic requirements for this course. During informal conversations with the researcher, the instructor expressed her concern for Beth:

Beth has not been coming to class last few days. I'm concerned. Last week, she wasn't able to do a single thing on the idioms test. Her proficiency level is very low in all areas. She is willing to participate and is very vocal which is great for the class, but she just needs to shape up, if she plans to pass this course. I think she is taking the class just to improve her English and not for academic reasons.

The instructor did not feel that Beth belonged in her advanced-level speaking class and speculated that the material was too difficult for her. When asked to rate Beth's speaking skills, she gave her a C rating. She felt that Beth's habitual use of incorrect grammar was due to her lack of formal training in English, and that she would have benefited more in a lower-level class where basic grammar skills are emphasized. Accordingly, during Beth's first interview, she commented on her lack of experience with English:

I come here for five years [I came here five years ago], but my English is still bad, 'cause I don't speak no English to no one. I only take [took] one more English class before this one. In Mexico, I never take [took] English class. If not in classes [outside of the classes], the only person I speak English to is my sister-in-law. She is American. My friends are all Spanish people and all workers are Mexicans.

Based on Beth's responses from the questionnaire, she was extremely motivated to learn English, was somewhat comfortable with computers, and had never participated in online chatting.

Mark

Mark was a 33 year-old man from Peru with a college degree in chemical engineering. He came to this country last year with his wife and a toddler to study English and to obtain a master's degree in the same field. He was searching for a job relating to the environment, but was having a difficult time with the interviews. He had good knowledge of grammar and good vocabulary but had major problems with pronunciation. Despite his pronunciation issues, he actively participated in class discussions with confidence. He was calm, composed, and friendly. The instructor described Mark as an excellent and dedicated student who took the class seriously. She gave him a B+ rating on speaking skills.

During his first interview, Mark reported that he was extremely motivated to improve his speaking skills, but he did not have any opportunity to practice his English. He regretted that he does not have much interaction with the English speakers outside of class, because all of his friends are from Peru:

I only speak Spanish because most... all of my friends are Spanish speaking people. I don't speak English unless I'm here [in class]. So it's hard for me to

improve my English. I try to watch a lot of T.V., but it only helps my listening, but not speaking. I need chance to practice, but don't have it. When I first came, I spoke very little and understood little. So maybe I improved, but I know my pronunciation is still very bad. I have to practice a lot.

Mark did not feel that four years of college-level training in English had prepared him for effective verbal communication, because English education in Peru emphasized discrete rule learning and rote memorization of isolated words rather than the development of communicative competence. He asserted that more emphasis should be placed on improving oral proficiency by providing more opportunities for oral practice.

In the questionnaire, he answered that he was very motivated to learn English, was extremely comfortable with computers, and had several years of online chatting experience in Spanish.

Rose

Rose immigrated to this country from Congo with her sister three years ago to start a new life. She was 21 years old and unmarried. She has been taking ESL courses full time for a year in preparation for a degree in Medical Laboratory Technology. According to the instructor, Rose was a B-level speaker, but had more confidence in her ability to speak English than any other student in the class:

Rose's oral proficiency level far exceeds her skills in listening, reading, and writing. I think that's because she has so much confidence, she tends to take a lot of chances with the language. She is not afraid to make mistakes which is a good thing.

The instructor explained that although Rose was an active participant in the classroom discussions, she was not a serious student. She often neglected to do homework and had a hard time staying focused in class. The instructor felt that Rose needed to improve her grammar and vocabulary.

In the questionnaire, Rose responded that this was her first year of learning English in a formal setting and that she was very motivated to learn English. To improve her English, she watches television and tries to interact with her classmates. However, outside of school, she does not get much English exposure. She reported that she was somewhat comfortable with computers and had some experience chatting online in English.

Sue Hee

Sue Hee was a 29 year-old woman from Seoul, Korea. She came to the states one year prior to the study with her husband who is working on his Ph.D. in paper science at a state university. She has a master's degree in elementary education and had taught kindergarten for three years. She also had five years experience working as a Japanese translator for the Korean government. Consequently, she was knowledgeable and had great insights about second language acquisition. During her stay in the states, her goal was to obtain an ESL teaching certification at a local university so that she can teach university-level English in Korea. Although she was the most advanced student in the class, she felt inadequate about her ability to communicate effectively. She reported that her skills in listening, reading, and writing far exceeded her ability to speak. Thus, she was taking this class to improve her oral communicative skills. Sue Hee had high vocabulary and excellent knowledge of grammar, but due to her lack of confidence in speaking skills,

she remained reticent in class. She was soft-spoken, friendly, and very well liked by her classmates.

In Korea, Sue Hee had studied English for six years as a requirement in the public schools, but because Korean schools place heavy emphasis on teaching the discrete grammatical structures and vocabulary through rote memory, she was not prepared to communicate effectively in social contexts. Her comments paralleled Mark's sentiments about the ineffective teaching methods in her native land:

In Korea, English teachers had bad pronunciation and bad knowledge of language, so we didn't learn from them how to communicate well orally. They gave us words and definitions to memorize every day and gave us worksheets to do on grammar, and we had tests all of the days. We never practice talking as we do in ESL classes here. When students ask questions to them about things that are not in books, they usually don't know how to answer. My English teachers can't speak English. They only know grammar and some vocabulary in books.

Sue Hee discussed the impractical nature of textbook knowledge:

You know the rules and you memorize from the books, but when you try to speak, you forget the rules. It's not practical to memorize rules. When you're talking with someone, you have to make connections between what you want to say and rules, but it doesn't come quickly in a speaking situation. I can get 100% on rule tests, but that doesn't help my speaking. I think it's better to memorize the often used phrases and sentences, so in speaking situations, I can just recite them! Book-learning English is no help for speaking.

Sue Hee watched television to get English exposure, but she did not have much interaction with the native English speakers outside of school. Based on the questionnaire, she was very motivated to learn English, had never participated in chat, and was somewhat comfortable with computers. She used computers to send email, surf the Internet, and to type up reports on a regular basis. The instructor endearingly described Sue Hee during her first interview:

I give Sue Hee an A rating for oral proficiency. She speaks very well. When she speaks, she's so mesmerizing, because she has the most angelic and feminine voice. She's smart, intelligent, and very soft spoken, but not necessarily shy. She is always happy to share her thoughts when I ask her, but she rarely volunteers to talk. I think it's cultural. She is a deliberative speaker, but when she speaks, she produces these beautiful poetic phrases, and what she says always has substance. Honestly, she doesn't belong in this class. She's too advanced.

Accordingly, the researcher's log on March 10th confirmed the instructor's assessment of Sue Hee:

Sue Hee is an amiable woman. Her angelic smile never left her face during the interview that lasted nearly 50 minutes. Before answering my questions, she would look out into space and deliberate for four to five seconds. Sometimes she took longer, but she always came back with incredible data, so I encouraged her to take her time. Her speech was slow, but thoughtful. She kept apologizing for her "terrible English" and useless drivel. She had a lot to say on this topic. She was genuinely interested in the outcome of this study and showed great interest in being a part of it.

Juan

Juan was a 25 year old student from Columbia with plans of starting a graduate program in the fall to become a priest. He worked full time at an English speaking church where he was learning to give baptism, sacraments, and communions. Ever since he was invited by the church two years ago, he had been taking ESL courses to improve his speaking skills. He was highly motivated to improve his English, so that he can preach and counsel more effectively. Considering he had only been learning English for two years, his English was exceptional. During the instructor's first interview with the researcher, she described Juan as the most serious student in the class:

He is a serious student, and his maturity level far exceeds his age. He is a solemn man with stoic expressions. He rarely socializes with other students before class, but when he does, he seems to be engaged in serious conversations. His classmates respect him, but at the same time, I think they are intimidated by him.

In response to a question about Juan's proficiency level, the instructor responded

Juan is right up there with Sue Hee. I would definitely consider him an advanced level. He has excellent vocabulary and grammar. His pronunciation is one of the best in the class. He doesn't say much, but when he speaks, everybody listens. He is an effective speaker and offers the class different perspectives on issues. He offers good ideas and good solutions.

Based on his answers from the questionnaire, he constantly reads books to learn formal English and applies his new knowledge by interacting with the English speakers at his church. Although his English was impressive, he wanted to become more fluent, so that he can provide sermons without having to read his notes. He reported that he was extremely

motivated to learn English, and that he felt very comfortable with computers. His limited chat experience entailed chatting with his family members in Spanish.

Hona

Hona is a 37 year-old Iranian woman with a 5 year-old son and an Iranian husband who is an architect. She started college in Iran, but quit after she got married. She has been in this country for six years but lacked confidence in her ability to speak English. During her first interview, she explained that as a stay-at-home mom, she did not have any opportunity to interact with English speakers outside of class which, she believed, limited her ability to speak English. Although she had been taking ESL classes for two years, she regretted that her speaking skills had not improved due to the lack of practice. Hona was a pleasant woman who always carried a diplomatic smile, but she was reserved and extremely shy. She never interacted with other students before and after class and rarely participated in class discussions unless prompted.

The instructor gave Hona a C+ rating on oral proficiency. She reflected that although Hona lacked confidence, she gave good speeches and displayed good knowledge of grammar:

Hona doesn't volunteer to talk, but when I call on her, she responds well. Her voice is quiet and she appears to lack confidence when she speaks, but her pronunciation is good and she has good understanding of grammar. She does need to work on her vocabulary though. She may not be at Sue Hee or Juan's level in terms of fluency, but I don't think she is too far behind. She just has to come out of her shell and practice.

In response to the questions from the questionnaire, Homa reported that she was very motivated to learn English, had limited computer experience, and had never participated in an online chat. To improve her English, Hona responded that she reads magazines and newspapers, but does not watch television

Kwan

Kwan is a 23 year-old man from Korea with a degree in statistics. He came to this country eight months ago to study English before he embarks on a career. Although he had received several years of formal training in English throughout his middle school and high school years in Korea, he felt that his speaking skills were inadequate. Confirming Sue Hee's assertions about the ineffective teaching methodologies that are being used in Korea, he lamented that rigorous rote memorization of vocabulary words and grammar rules had not prepared him for oral communication:

When I first came here, I couldn't understand anything Americans were saying, because I didn't have any practice listening and talking in Korea. It's also because Americans talk too fast and use strange accent. Speaking English is hard and I need more time to be good.

To improve his speaking skills, he had been taking ESL classes and was working part time at the coin laundromat where he interacted with the natives whenever possible. He had also surrounded himself with English speaking roommates and friends in order to create a conducive environment for oral practice. Among the seven participants, Kwan displayed the highest motivation to improve his oral proficiency. With his outgoing personality, he was able to immerse himself in English by creating invaluable opportunities for oral practice.

The instructor gave him a B - rating on his oral proficiency. Although Kwan had good understanding of grammar and high vocabulary, she did not feel that he applied them well in his speech. She also felt that he needed to improve his pronunciation. He particularly had difficulty distinguishing the letters B and V as well as P and F. She described his personality as friendly and outgoing. He liked to talk and did not hesitate to participate in classroom discussions.

Based on his answers from the questionnaire, Kwan was very motivated to learn English, was comfortable with computers, and had years of experience with chatting. He reported that he often chats in Korean with friends and family back home and also in English with American friends from work and school.

Marsha

Marsha is a 25 year-old woman from Poland with a college degree in accounting. She immigrated to this country three years ago to be with her boyfriend who is also Polish but an American citizen. She had been taking ESL courses for a year in preparation for a degree in Medical Assisting. She believed that her English had improved drastically within the past year from taking ESL courses and regretted that she did not start taking classes sooner. While in Poland, she had not studied English.

According to the instructor, Marsha was a B-level speaker. She described Marsha's speaking skills as good, but not too imaginative:

Marsha tends to stay in her comfort zone and does not venture out to experiment with the language. She sticks with what she knows...the simple sentences and basic vocabulary. Marsha is quiet, reserved, and serious, so she doesn't get many chances to practice and experiment with the language. When she talks, her

pronunciation is very good. She just needs to improve her grammar and vocabulary.

The researcher's log on March 16th described Marsha in a similar way:

Marsha walked in 10 minutes early and greeted me with an awkward smile. While I was shuffling through the worksheets, she had her head down as if she were reviewing her notes. As other students started to trickle in, she didn't look up to greet anyone. As Karen [instructor's pseudonym] started to elicit responses from students to correct the errors on the worksheet, Marsha kept her head down and remained quiet. She was not an active participant of classroom discussions.

In the questionnaire, Marsha responded that she was very motivated to learn English. To improve her English, she watches television and interacts with the customers at the restaurant where she works as a waitress. Her Polish American boyfriend sometimes speaks English to her, but they mostly converse in Polish. She responded that she was somewhat comfortable with computers, and had never experienced chatting online.

Summary of Student Profiles

This section focused on the profiles of the eight students selected for this study. Based on the data collected from the questionnaire, these students were highly motivated to improve their speaking skills in English, and their taking this course reinforced their desire to speak better. Regarding their comfort level with the computers, three students selected "very comfortable," four students selected "somewhat comfortable," and one student selected "uncomfortable." Four students reported that they had participated in online chat before, and four students reported that they had never experienced it.

Table 4.1

Summary of Student Profiles

Participant Pseudonym	Native Country	Age	Gender	Education	Chat Experience	Preconceptions About the Curriculum
Beth	Mexico	25	F	High school	None	Somewhat negative
Mark	Peru	33	M	College	Very experienced	Positive
Rose	Congo	21	F	High school	Some	Negative
Sue Hee	Korea	29	F	Master's Degree	None	Very positive
Juan	Columbia	25	M	College	Some	Very positive
Hona	Iran	37	F	High school	Never	Unsure
Kwan	Korea	23	M	College	Very experienced	Very negative
Marsha	Poland	25	F	College	None	Positive

*Experience With the Chat-Based Curriculum**Use of the Lab*

Students were not required to come to the reserved lab in order to participate in weekly chat sessions, but they all chose to use the computers there. Most students had other classes, so they had to be on campus regardless, and two students who did not have other classes had to be on campus, as they did not have Internet access at home. During informal conversations, students reported that they preferred to be in the lab, because they felt secure having the instructor and researcher available to provide computer assistance when needed.

Mondays: Language Input

On Mondays, the instructor introduced the week's topic and engaged the students in a vocabulary exercise to prepare for the listening and reading activity. To introduce the new words, she put them in a context of a conversation. For instance, she would say, "What words can you recognize? *Obsessed*? Is anyone obsessed with the way you look?"

or ‘*Grueling*? I hope nobody thinks that this class is so boring that it’s grueling. Did you ever sit through a grueling lecture? Can you guess what this word means?’” Students took copious notes while few students engaged in conversations with the instructor.

Subsequently, students were asked to work on the vocabulary worksheet in pairs which entailed matching definitions with words. Upon completion, the instructor reviewed the worksheets while eliciting responses from students. On the days that *Oprah* shows were presented, pair work was not possible due to time constraints. Instead, students worked through the worksheet as a class with the instructor’s guidance. During the instructor’s second interview, she lamented, “We should have done more vocabulary beforehand [before the listening and reading activities] because that is always effective. I felt rushed particularly when I had to allocate 30-35 minutes to the *Oprah* show.”

In general, the *Oprah* show piqued a lot of student interest in the topics and helped generate ideas for discussion. The instructor provided her reflections on the *Oprah* show during her second interview:

The *Oprah* show was a fantastic idea, because the discussions were based on an actual oral interaction among real people. Students were stimulated, and I think they felt more informed about the topics. I personally preferred it over the essays, because the *Oprah* show was more life-like. It is more appealing because it is visually stimulating. Also, she [*Oprah*] does not use big words: She uses every day words, so her shows are excellent for this level.

During Rose’s second interview, she discussed her thoughts about the *Oprah* show:

Oprah was motivating. It’s so much fun. That’s why I watch it all the time. I love watching T.V. and learning, because I get to use many senses like sight and hear. I

don't like learning from tape recording because it's no fun, and I can't see body's face like I can in T.V. I have to guess the meaning only by what I hear.

Sue Hee also shared her perspectives on integrating the *Oprah* shows in the ESL classroom. She specifically discussed how the shows effectively helped her generate ideas for discussion:

I never watch the show before, but it was very interesting. People have conversations like they are having it with friends. I could understand a lot, and I didn't feel lost. When my teacher said topic was family, I didn't know what we can talk about, but when *Oprah* show talked about many topics about family, I had more ideas about it. It's a good way to help students think about what to talk about. I think it's fun and the level is good.

Mark, however, expressed his disinterest in the *Oprah* show and television watching in general. It was apparent that Mark was disappointed about having to watch television in the class:

I don't think it [*Oprah* shows] was motivating. I don't like to watch T.V. because I don't like noise. I don't think I want to watch T.V. in my class. I can do that at home. I didn't like *Oprah* show because it was a female show. It's all talking about the girl things.

The researcher's observation notes on March 21st indicated that most students were engaged in the show:

Some students are leaning forward as a woman diagnosed with cancer talks about the importance of family. Students look intense. Some are nodding, and some are tearing up. After the first 15 minute segment, instructor stops the video and

encourages students to ask about any words or expressions that they didn't understand. There's a silence. It's apparent that they just want to keep watching.

As she turned the show back on, students focused intensely on the show.

After each segment of the *Oprah* show, the instructor stopped and explained difficult words, expressions, and idioms that were not included on the vocabulary worksheet. Some students were keeping a running log during the show and asked the instructor to elaborate on the items that they did not understand.

Another Monday's activity involved having the guest speaker talk about marriage which added new dynamics to the class. She shared her experiences of being married for 15 years and presented her views on how to achieve a happy and fulfilling marriage. Students seemed to appreciate her candor and honesty about the difficulties that she has had in her marriage. She enunciated clearly and made attempts to speak at a level that was appropriate for the students. Hona poignantly described her thoughts about the guest speaker during her second interview: "She [the guest speaker] was so honest. I am married for 10 years, and I understand her problems. I am close to her cause she's honest. I can't talk about my problems like her, but I think Americans are honest."

Additionally, through personal essays, two varying perspectives on the lives of the immigrants were presented to provoke thoughtful discussions about immigration. One essay described a pessimistic view of being an immigrant in the ghettos of Boston where violence and crime are a daily occurrence. The other essay painted a more positive picture by discussing the American dream that he was able to realize with hard work and persistence. Kwan expressed his appreciation for the essays: "Immigration was good topic because a lot of us are thinking about it [immigrating to the U. S.]. Essays are good,

because I got to hear about others' experiences. Some good and some bad, but it's good hearing different feelings about something." Accordingly, Marsha expressed her views: "I read and listen to others' experience and how they experienced different from me, it's interesting and thoughtful [provokes thought]".

An essay about discrimination provided an argument against requiring Americans to identify their race on various forms, because doing so perpetuates stereotypes and discrimination. This sensitive and controversial issue provoked thoughtful and interesting discussions. During Juan's second interview, he spoke favorably about selecting a controversial issue as a topic of discussion:

It is good we can agree or disagree, because we have different opinions. When we talk about issues people don't agree on, it's more interesting, and I think discrimination is a good topic for us to discuss about, because we experience it and can share that experience with each other.

Tuesdays: Chat Sessions

During the first week's chat session, approximately 20 minutes had elapsed by the time everyone accessed their chat groups. This delay was due to students' arriving late, fumbling through their notes to locate the Blackboard instruction sheet, and struggling to locate the Blackboard site. To rectify this situation, the instructor reinforced the importance of arriving on time to avoid inconveniencing the group members and asked students to arrive five to ten minutes early if they did not have a class prior to this one. Additionally, the researcher arrived at the lab 30 minutes early during subsequent chat sessions to get the Blackboard site up on all computers which facilitated the log-in process.

During the first two chat sessions, the novelty effect on this innovative mode of communication was blatantly apparent. The researcher's observation notes on May 15th described the excitements that permeated the room.

As I hear the tap-tapping of the keyboard get louder and faster, students are looking over each other's shoulders, giggling, and exchanging glances. Some are waving and some are pointing to themselves as if the groups are trying to identify their group members.

All students were proficient at typing with the exception of Hona and Mochi (Mochi was not one of the key participants selected for this study). They pecked at the keyboard, but they were undeterred. The instructor reflected on these students' determination to keep up with the group on March 15th.

I was worried about Hona and Mochi, but they seemed very excited. They were reading the messages, smiling, and looking around the room to locate their group members. They were not grouped with the very advanced students, so hopefully, they feel less anxious this time [as compared to the pilot chat session on March 9th]. They were both typing slowly, but they were picking up speed steadily.

During the first few sessions, the instructor and the researcher stayed close to Hona and Mochi to provide assistance in Blackboard navigation as well as basic keyboarding functions. When the instructor and the researcher were unavailable, they enlisted help from other students who gladly provided assistance.

On a few occasions, it was necessary for the instructor and researcher to participate in chat discussions to substitute for students who were absent. On March 29th, with the third member of the group absent, the instructor had to join Mochi's group to speed up the

communication. On April 5th, she had to fill in for an absent student who was assigned to a dyad. Likewise, on April 19th, both the instructor and researcher had to substitute for students who were absent.

While chatting, students became very alert to the language they produced even though that was not the focus of the chat room activities. They noticed the errors that they had made and sought confirmation from the instructor and other students. They also requested help from the instructor to find the appropriate words or expressions to convey their messages. The researcher's notes dated March 29th described students' increased awareness of their language output.

Juan asks the instructor, "What's opposite of honest? Is it *unhonest* or *nonhonest*?" The instructor responds, "It's *dishonest*. That's a very good question, Juan." She faces the class and announces, "If you have any questions about word choice, grammar, or anything, please ask." Several students are referring to their digital dictionaries while reading and composing messages. Young Jae has her vocabulary worksheet out and is referring to it while writing her messages. The instructor described Young Jae as extremely shy and quiet and come to think of it, I've never heard her talk, but she certainly seems comfortable with chatting online. She is really typing away!

Wednesdays and Thursdays: Classroom Instruction Based on Chat Transcripts

Students generally responded favorably to the tailored instruction based on chat discussion transcripts. When presented with the incorrect sentences that were extracted from chat transcripts, students often giggled and pointed out the ones that they had produced. They would volunteer to the class, "That's my mistake." or "I wrote that one." Despite the

errors, student seemed to appreciate the personal nature of the sentences. When asked to correct the sentences, students could not identify the errors for some of them. The instructor's reflection notes on March 16th point out an important finding:

I handed out the worksheet and many of the students looked puzzled. Beth commented, "There's nothing wrong with some of the sentences." When I asked the class if they chat the way they speak, some said yes after a brief moment of reflection, and most nodded their heads. Based on their reactions, it appears that language used in chat might resemble oral language! The worksheet included problems with prepositions, articles, subject/verb agreement, present perfect tense, etc., but they couldn't identify many of these errors. I just took for granted that they know all this at this level. I think the transcripts are going to provide invaluable information as to what I need to focus on during instruction.

The researchers' log on March 16th elaborated on the instructor's insights:

I'm surprised that students are not able to identify some of the most obvious errors from the chat transcripts. The instructor asks, "Can anyone identify the errors from the sentence, I'm a funny person, but people here is not funny and interesting?" "That sounds fine," Beth and Laura reply simultaneously without hesitation. Sue Hee, Juan, and Mark are shaking their heads, but they don't volunteer. Karen [instructor's pseudonym] asks Marsha to give it a try, but she keeps her head down and remains silent. Hesitantly, Juan corrects the sentence and several students nod their heads in agreement. It's possible that for some students, their incorrect way of speaking has been fossilized in their minds.

During tailored instruction, the instructor spent minimal class time covering proper etiquette such as greeting, leave taking, challenging others' viewpoints, and requesting more information that was carefully integrated in the curriculum with the goal of developing students' overall communicative skills. Instead, she focused on introducing new vocabulary words, expressions, and idioms that could be used to clarify an idea from chat transcripts. Her decision to deviate from the lesson plans was to accommodate a few students who expected to learn more vocabulary words and idioms in this class as indicated in the course description.

Considering the immense amount of raw material that was generated through chat transcripts and the vast amount of errors that were found, the instructor and researcher decided to dedicate two days to tailored classroom instruction.

Fridays: Small-Group Face-to-Face Discussion

Originally, the first half of Friday's session was spent in small group discussions, while the latter half was spent on whole-class discussion. However, based on the instructor's and the students' reactions after the first two weeks, it was apparent that 25 minutes assigned to the small group task-oriented activity was insufficient. Thus, more time was allocated to this activity starting the third week. Additionally, through observations and informal conversations with the students, the researcher discovered that the whole-class discussion did not provide a conducive environment for lively discussions. Students complained that during whole-class discussions, they did not have much opportunity to produce the language as the instructor tended to dominate the discussions. During informal conversations with the researcher, Mark expressed his disappointments:

I wanted to speak more about immigration because during chatting and during discussing with small group in class, I have many ideas about it. But I didn't get a chance to talk much. The teacher talked all the time. Okay, maybe that will be better for my listening, but for talking, it doesn't help.

While facilitating the large group discussions, the instructor often digressed from the lesson plan that the researcher had developed. Friday's lessons were carefully designed to reinforce the topics that were discussed during chat sessions, so adhering to the lesson plans was critical to this study. On April 1st, the instructor was to facilitate a discussion on achieving a happy marriage, but the discussion digressed to the topic of interracial marriage. The researcher's notes on April 1st revealed this incident.

Karen put Marsha on the spot and asks, "Would you ever marry a black man?"

Marsha glances at Rose from Congo and lets out an uneasy smile. Karen probes again, but Marsha seems uncomfortable. She just shakes her head and says, "I don't know." Karen then turns to Rose and asks the same question whether she would marry a white man. Rose, without hesitation, says, "I don't like white skin men. They don't look like a man. I like dark skin. That's what I just prefer." Some students giggle, some are shocked, and some look offended.

Not only were students unprepared to talk about the topic of interracial marriage, but the instructor broached a sensitive topic that made students feel uneasy and reluctant to talk. Immediately after this class session, the researcher met with the instructor and reinforced the importance of following the lesson plan. At this meeting, an agreement was made to allow additional 10 to 15 minutes for small group task-based activity and to

allocate the last 10 to 15 minutes for presenting ideas generated in small groups. The whole-class discussion was eliminated from the curriculum.

The small group task-based activity contributed to active participation from all group members, because accomplishing the tasks required all members' involvement in the decision making process. Students drew on each other's ideas and elicited responses from members who were reticent. In small groups of three or four, most students actively participated without the fear of being embarrassed. During small group discussions, laughter, giggles, and loud chattering filled the room. Students pondered, took notes, and occasionally consulted with the other groups. The instructor visited the groups to provide input and to generate new ideas for discussion. Small group tasks were carefully designed so that students could utilize and build on the language that was used during chat sessions.

Summary of Students' Experience With the Chat-Based Curriculum

As the curriculum progressed, great insights were gained to improve the curriculum making it necessary to make a few modifications. First, due to the efficacy of the tailored instruction and the vast amount of common errors that were found in chat transcripts, two days, rather than one day a week, were dedicated to the tailored instruction. Second, whole-class discussion was eliminated from the curriculum and more time was allotted to the small group task-based activity which created a better environment for oral practice.

Students' Preconceptions and Reactions

Beth

Preconceptions

Beth's lack of prior experience with online chatting led to doubts about the chat-based curriculum. Because she equated pronunciation with oral proficiency, she did not

expect to improve her speaking by participating in chat discussion sessions. However, she was open to the idea that other linguistic skills such as spelling can be gained by chatting. During her first interview, she displayed her confidence by speaking forcefully and looking intently into the researcher's eyes. She spoke with numerous grammatical errors, but her pronunciation was relatively good:

I know I speak so so much better than I write. I write terrible, and people can't understand and I get embarrassed with my mistakes. But when I speak, I think I make less mistakes, because I don't have to spell hard words. I know how to say, but I don't know how to spell. So spelling and grammar problem make it hard for me to say something in writing. Another thing is this. How can I learn to pronounce when I write? Maybe I can learn words and spelling by looking at what other people write, but I don't think it will help me speak better. I never chat before, so I don't know, but this is my opinion.

Beth considered spelling and grammar to be deterrents to chatting, and because she lacked confidence in those areas, she did not expect to have a positive experience with chatting. On motivation, she made the following comments:

I think chatting with few people will be fun. I don't know nobody in the class except two Spanish girls. It could be fun to chat with other people and get to know them. But we might get frustrated, if we can't say what we're thinking in writing.

She thought of chatting as a fun way to practice English while getting to know her classmates, although she was concerned that she may not be able to communicate as well in writing as she does orally. She also thought that introducing weekly topics through *Oprah* shows would pique her interest as she is a big fan of *Oprah*.

Regarding her views on tailored instruction, she said, “I don’t know about no tailored instruction that you talk about, but I think I understand little. I think I will make too much mistakes, so if somebody tell me what mistakes I make, it will help me.” Beth had a difficult time comprehending the concept of tailored instruction at first, but once she understood the general concept, she compared this process with having her writing edited by an instructor. This seemed to suggest that Beth considered chatting to be similar to writing.

Reactions

Beth showed drastic change in her attitudes towards chatting after the study. Because she had originally considered chatting to be more similar to writing than speaking, she felt that her poor spelling would limit her ability to communicate effectively via chat. However, in her second interview, she showed changes in her views and asserted that chatting is closer to speaking than writing:

Chatting is more like speaking, because I’m not concentrating on how to spell or correct grammar. In my head, I think someone is speaking to me, but just on the computer. I see that as speaking. I just don’t hear human voice. I hear computer voice.

Beth added that the absence of negative feedback from the instructor is an advantage to chatting:

Chatting is good because I can write with nobody saying that’s wrong. So I can try different things without people making me upset. When I speak in class, teacher is there to correct you and make you feel bad. In chatting, you feel more comfortable. In classroom, the teacher says speak, speak, everybody speak, but nobody speak

except me, because they are shy. In chat, everybody speak and I am surprised, because everybody speak better than me.

On motivation, she said, “It’s very fun to chat with people. I got to know a lot of people I never talked to in class. It’s not like learning. It’s like talking with friends.”

Her views about the effects of chat on oral proficiency took on a much more positive tone during the second interview:

I think chatting a lot will help me speak better, because I get to practice English and you get used to it. The more I practice on chat, the more I can speak... easier...and faster. I can improve English, because chat is same to me as talking.

Beth felt that chatting prepared her for classroom discussions, because through chat, ideas were generated:

Chatting helps me prepare for [classroom] discussion, because we have more ideas after we chat. We can compare your friends’ ideas with your idea, so we have a better answer in the classroom. If we chat about same topic as classroom discussion, it definitely help.

Of all the issues discussed during the second interview, Beth showed most enthusiasm towards the tailored instruction. Because she had established that chat language resembled oral language, she asserted that correcting her mistakes on chat transcripts helped her identify mistakes in her oral language resulting in improved oral proficiency:

My English is not so good and I’m speaking English bad. For a long time, I didn’t have nobody...anybody to tell me no, that’s not the right way, it’s this way. So I continue to speak my way. Some times I know it’s wrong, but when I speak,

people understand me, so I never have to fix my way. But when you tell me no, that's wrong way, I can learn...and so I speak better.

Beth remembered that she had already applied some of the grammar skills that she had gained by studying the transcripts, to her oral language:

I feel like I'm not doing right. In my head the conversation sound okay, but when I write, I make so much...I mean, many mistakes. I write in chat like I speak. I use grammar in chat as I speak. So when Karen [instructor's pseudonym] point out this is wrong, I think about that when I speak, and I try to fix it. Like I know now how to use *many* and *much*. I use to say *I don't have many money*, but now I say *much money*, and I say *I don't have any time* not *I don't have no time*. This is hard because it's Spanish.

Beth's enthusiasm towards tailored instruction is reflected on the researcher's log on March 17th:

When Karen passed out the worksheet containing errors from the transcripts, Beth shouted, "That's my mistake and that one too" with excitement in her voice. She seems to appreciate the personal nature of the worksheet. When asked to fix the errors in a sentence *Rude customers is everywhere*, she commented after hesitating, "I don't know what's wrong. That's how I always speak." After listening to Karen's explanation, she heaved a sigh and said, "Okay, I was talking wrong all the time."

The researcher's observation log on April 26th confirmed Beth's claim that the linguistic skills gained from chatting had transferred to spoken language. The researcher noted that during Beth's second interview, she deliberated more before she spoke,

suggesting that she was more aware of her language output. She identified many of her grammatical mistakes and made constant corrections as she spoke. She noticeably used fewer double negatives than she did during the first interview and deliberated to address her subject/verb agreement problem.

Although Beth was reluctant about using the chat-based curriculum in the beginning, her attitudes became more positive towards the end of the study. Because she perceived that language used during chat sessions more closely resembled spoken language than written language, she claimed that the skills that she had gained through chatting had transferred to her spoken language. With very little formal education in English, Beth had a lot to benefit from instruction that was tailored for her needs. Thus, she displayed high motivation for tailored instructions that were based on transcripts.

Mark

Preconceptions

Reflecting on his chatting experience with English speaking friends, Mark was optimistic about the chat-based curriculum. He described his chatting experience as a “fun way to learn English” and claimed to have learned numerous common expressions that are used in spoken language as a result of chatting with the native speakers. However, Mark added that the abbreviated language used in chat made the messages difficult to decipher at first and created havoc with his ability to spell. Therefore, he believed that the structured chat-based instruction that restricts the use of abbreviated chat language would be highly effective in developing one’s speaking skills as well as one’s ability to spell. In his calm and collected manner, Mark shared his insights about the benefits of processing time:

It [chatting] gives me more time to think about everything. When I speak, it gives me very short time to think, but when chatting, I can have more time to think about the right words and right grammar and so on. So it's like...more practice with English with no pressure to speak fast.

Mark fully supported the idea of chatting as a preparation for face-to-face discussion as he perceived chatting as a way of practicing speaking. He also speculated that chatting would provide him with the opportunity to think about the topic which would facilitate classroom discussion:

I think it will help me think about sentences before discussing in class. If I come to class and teacher says discuss this, I don't know what to say or how to say, but if I chat before class, I already think about the topic and how to say something, and I already discuss it. So discussion in class will be easier, I think.

Because Mark saw chatting as "talking to people", he expected that identifying and correcting his mistakes on chat transcripts would help him improve his oral language output:

You can see your mistakes because it's on the computer screen. If you don't see it, you won't know you're making them. I think [it] is much better than using textbook. If someone tells you you're making mistake, you know, but when we're talking, people don't tell me what I'm saying is wrong. So this will be a good way to know what you're saying is wrong and then of course, you will speak better.

In response to the question about motivation, he responded, "I think I will like this new way to learn English in the classroom, not always the same." Reflecting on his chat experience, he spoke about its non-threatening nature: "I like to sit in front of computer

and chat and not feel nervous about my poor pronunciation...and I don't care about making mistakes, because I'm not there." Mark also predicted that chatting in small groups without the instructor's presence would be highly motivating: "Without the teacher, we wouldn't have to listen so much, and we would have more time to practice English."

Reactions

Mark's responses in the interviews consistently supported his positive views about the new methodology. Due to his positive chatting experience prior to the study, he fully supported the chat-based curriculum and attended the classes with enthusiasm. As he speculated during his first interview, he reported that chatting had helped him prepare for face-to-face discussions by helping him generate ideas for discussion: "We chatted the same topic before we discuss in the class, so I had more ideas, because I already discussed in chatting." He added that chatting also provided him with the opportunity to fine-tune his language output:

Chatting also helped me make a better sentence to talk and explain, because it helped me practice. In chat, I had time to look up spelling and words from my dictionary, so I could make better sentences. When I type the sentence, I don't send it immediately. I correct mistakes and send it. So I'm thinking more than once. When I read again, I correct grammar mistakes and so on, so I'm really cleaning up my talking. Because it's in writing, it's easier to clean up.

During the focus group interview, Mark reinforced the value of chatting prior to a face-to-face discussion:

Mark: I like to chat because we are prepared for classroom discussion. It helps me prepare for discussions better.

Group member: yes. i also like to chat before classroom discussion because it helps me think first.

Mark: I think chatting helps our classroom discussions because chatting is about the same subject that we discuss in class.

It was apparent that Mark considered chatting to be synonymous with talking when he referred to correcting mistakes in his chat language as “cleaning up my talking.” In fact, he said, “Chatting is talking to myself. I hear myself talking when I type. So if I practice chatting every day, I’m sure I can improve my speaking.” Accordingly, he spoke positively about transference of skills from chat to oral language:

The words I look up in my [Spanish/English] dictionary when chatting like *naive* or *pompous*, I used in [face-to-face] discussion and also in writing in my writing class. If I learn words or grammar, of course I will use in my talking and writing. Anyways, it’s all related.

As expected, Mark asserted that tailored instructions were helpful in identifying his habitual mistakes which, he believed, will help him move towards fluency:

I know I have problem in double negatives because of my language, but I learned we [Spanish speaking people] also make so much mistakes on prepositions and articles too. The classes [tailored instruction] helped me know I need to learn how to use prepositions more correctly. I speak with incorrect grammar because of my habit and nobody correct me, so I continue to speak incorrect, but Karen showed me correct ways. Knowing my mistakes will help me talk better.

He provided examples of his prepositional mistakes that he had made during chat discussions such as *in the middle on my sentence* and *hard in Spanish people*. Based on the transcripts from chat sessions, he also wrote, *first at all* and *happy for made the decision*.

Although Mark claimed that his new knowledge of vocabulary had already transferred to his oral language, he did not believe that such transference had taken place with his new grammar skills during the course of this study. He theorized that more time was needed to process his new knowledge of grammar and to break bad habits, but he was certain that such transference to oral language would take place eventually. Accordingly, the researcher's log on April 27th reflected that Mark's speech during his second interview did not show much improvement in his use of grammar nor in his fluency.

When asked about his motivation level towards the curriculum, Mark responded favorably, but added that the topics could have been more interesting. He did not enjoy the topics of marriage nor discrimination although he enjoyed reading the essays about immigration. He also displayed strong disapproval for the *Oprah* shows and television watching in class in general. Despite these negative feelings, Mark said that the chat-based curriculum could be effective in improving language learner's oral proficiency level if integrated in an ESL class for a longer period of time.

Rose

Preconceptions

Reflecting on her limited experience with chatting and her friend's positive experience with email, Rose concluded that chatting regularly could help her improve her writing skills, but not speaking skills. She spoke about her friend who had significantly improved his writing skills as a result of emailing regularly with her in English, but had

not realized any noticeable gain in his oral proficiency. Thus, she speculated that chatting would produce similar results. Drawing a parallel to Beth's perspectives, Rose also viewed pronunciation as the most critical component of oral proficiency. Thus, she did not expect to improve her speaking skills by participating in chat sessions. With confidence and positive energy, Rose questioned, "The biggest problem for immigrants are accent and pronunciation. If we talk to Americans, they correct us and learn right way to pronounce, but the computer cannot help. So how can chatting teach me to speak?"

Rose admitted that chatting could help her with grammar and vocabulary but did not think that those skills would transfer to speaking. Unlike Mark, Rose viewed writing and speaking as isolated modes of communication that required separate skill sets:

The only thing that would help me is grammar and vocabulary maybe. For example, I can ask people what the word means they used, and they explain it. I can review what they write, memorize, and learn, but this is only for writing.

Chatting can not help me speak better. Talking on the phone or talking to someone help, but not chatting.

Whereas Beth considered her poor spelling and grammar to be deterrents to chatting, Rose felt that her limited vocabulary would hinder her ability to chat freely.

Consequently, she did not expect to have a positive experience with chatting:

The problem, I think, of communicating on the computer is vocabulary. If I don't know the word to express what I'm say, I can't communicate. But if I'm speaking, I can point to things and use my face or body to... say...to express. With computer, I have to know the correct word and also spelling.

Rose showed enthusiasm about the idea of tailoring instructions for her specific needs and drew a comparison with textbook learning: “I will learn something I need to learn, not things I already know. When I learn from work books, I know some things they are working on, and it waste my time.” Consistent with her previous assertions, she added that tailored instruction would help her improve her writing skills but not oral proficiency unless it involved practice in pronunciation.

With respect to motivation, Rose commented that chatting with classmates could be fun and exciting but was unsure about its educational value. She also predicted that allowing students to partake in the topic selection process will increase their motivation to participate in discussions.

Reactions

In her first interview, Rose compared chatting with email and concluded that participating in the chat-based curriculum might help her improve her writing skills, but not her speaking skills. During her experience with the new curriculum, her views about the effects of the curriculum on oral proficiency generally remained unchanged although she expressed contradicting views.

Considering the synchronous nature of chatting and the type of language used, Rose commented during her second interview, “Chat is just like talking: It’s very similar to talking language.” Despite the similarities found between the spoken and the chat language, she expressed strongly that chatting could not lead to improved oral proficiency due to the lack of pronunciation and speaking practice. However, she contradicted herself by saying that chatting helped her prepare for face-to-face discussions, because it gave her a chance to think about the topic. She commented, “After chatting, it was easier for me to

talk, because I already thought about it [the topic] and chatted about it.” When the researcher pointed out her contradiction, she responded with, “Chatting doesn’t help me speak because my pronunciation is not improved, but I can think of what to say faster because I’m prepared in my thinking. This is different thing.”

Rose spoke enthusiastically about the tailored instructions and reported that she had learned a lot of grammar, vocabulary, and expressions as a result of receiving such instructions:

When we type in chat, then the next day we go over mistakes...that help me because some times the way I write have a lot of mistake, but I didn’t know. It’s good to learn from mistake.

When asked to provide examples of what she had learned through tailored instructions, she said:

I learned *blindsided* and *grotesque* and how to spell...a lot of words, but can’t remember. I learned also from Karen that *it’s stressing* is not right. I should say *it’s stressful*. Uh...I learned idioms like *I’m not buying that* and *put me down* too.

Despite all that she had learned, she pointed out that her new linguistic knowledge had not transferred to her oral language, because her pronunciation was unaffected.

In response to the question about motivation, Rose expressed her frustration towards her inability to type:

I don’t like chatting because I talk better than I write. I’m not a fast typer, so I don’t like it. I want to say something, but my fingers are so slow, so I get upset. When I talk, I can talk fast, but when chatting, I can’t.

Although she preferred to talk than chat, she admitted that chatting could be a good way to get to know other people, particularly reticent ones: “I can get to know some people very well, because people that don’t talk much in class wrote a lot when chatting on the computer. Without chatting, I don’t think I can get to know them shy people.”

According to the instructor’s log on April 15th, Rose had become friendlier and less antagonistic during classroom discussions as a result of getting closer to her classmates by participating in chat discussions.

I do believe that they [students] became closer after discussing such private topics as ideas about marriage, racial prejudice, etc. online. I have noticed a visible change in Rose, who used to be really abrupt and antagonistic. She seems much friendlier.

Other than the opportunity to get to know her classmates, it was apparent that Rose did not see much value in chatting. Accordingly, she did not actively participate in chat sessions.

She expressed her disappointments during her second interview:

Many of people say they loved chatting, but I want to talk because I don’t like to write. When I write, I know I make lots of mistakes and it’s hard for me to express, but when I talk, I can express myself in... uh different way. I can’t use my body when I’m chatting, so it is hard for me. I don’t enjoy chatting and I couldn’t type fast, so I didn’t chat a lot.

During the focus interview, she discussed more effective ways to improve her oral proficiency:

Group member: What can be most helpful for improving speaking?

Rose: speak with American or with other people who does not speak my language.

Group member: and read a lot things in english.

Rose: you're right books, newspaper, magazines, and all kinds of things.

Group member: or get a american friend.

Although she did not enjoy chatting, Rose was an enthusiastic participant in the classroom. The researcher's log on March 30th revealed her enthusiasm:

Rose actively participates in class and is not shy to ask questions. When Karen asked the class about their thoughts on interracial marriage, Rose asked without raising her hand, "What is interracial?" Soon after Karen explained, Rose broke the silence by volunteering, "I want to marry my kind. I never think about marrying white men or Chinese men." Other students joined in on the discussion and Rose remained an active participant in the discussion. Rose asks a lot of questions in the class. At times, more advanced students look askance at her, but she never gets discouraged.

According to the instructor's log on April 15th, Rose had become friendlier and less antagonistic during classroom discussions as a result of participating in chat discussions with her classmates about private topics.

I do believe that they became closer after discussing such private topics as ideas about marriage, racial prejudice, etc. online. I have noticed a visible change in Rose, who used to be really abrupt and antagonistic. She seems much friendlier.

The instructor's log on April 22nd indicated that Rose had not realized any noticeable gain in her ability to communicate orally:

As usual, Rose actively participated in the small group activity today, but it's difficult to notice any improvement in her oral language. Her confidence level is high, but she fumbles for words and struggles with grammar.

Rose's views about the effects of the chat-based curriculum on oral proficiency remained largely unchanged. Although she reported that participating in chat sessions effectively prepared her for face-to-face discussions, she did not believe that her oral proficiency had improved due to the lack of practice in pronunciation. Generally, she maintained a low motivation level towards the curriculum throughout the study although she had some positive views about the tailored instruction.

Sue Hee

Preconceptions

As an educator, a translator, and a future English instructor, Sue Hee showed great interest and enthusiasm in the chat-based curriculum. Through her experience of acquiring Japanese as a second language and her continuing struggles to obtain English proficiency, Sue Hee had gained impressive insights on how the second languages are acquired. During her first interview, she made a clear distinction between listening and speaking skills. She claimed that one's ability to comprehend the language does not necessarily lead to good speaking skills: She suggested that one must practice creating the utterance in order to gain oral proficiency. In her soft-spoken voice, Sue Hee spoke cautiously, yet with confidence:

To me, understanding language is not only understanding general meaning of what people say, but it is if I can recite what they say. When I watch the movies, I can get general meaning by the pictures even if I only understand few words. To me,

this is not understanding language. It's...if I can say same thing in that same situation. So, in my experience of learning other language, speaking and listening is completely different. Listening is easy, speaking is not easy. To speak, I need to practice to speak, but if you listen and listen and never practice, you won't learn to speak. I know from the experience. I never tried chatting, but I think it will be practicing how to create language. If I can write one way, I can speak in exactly same way too. So I believe there is connection between chatting and speaking. I think it will help.

Although Sue Hee had never used an online chat program, she had great insights about its efficacy due to her experience with emails. Sue Hee was confident that chatting would provide oral language development as does communicating via email. Sue Hee added that the benefits of chatting would far outweigh the benefits of emailing, because communication occurs simultaneously in chat as does oral communication. Her enthusiasm and expectations towards the chat-based curriculum were high. She spoke enthusiastically about the value of learning from one another: "It will be good to chat with other students. What I don't know, other students know. We won't know all the same things, so we can learn from each other." She also expected chatting to provide good means to practice for oral language:

We'll try hard to think about the correct word or grammar to communicate, so this will be good practice. After practicing a lot, the sentences might come out easily when speaking. Words that I used when chatting might come out easier than words that I memorized, but never used.

Sue Hee expressed her optimism towards the tailored instruction:

If classroom instruction is from our mistake, it will be more useful than working on the lesson from the textbooks. Most times, textbook exercises are not related to me. Most times, I get bored, because I already know. I am excited about it [tailored instruction]. It will be helpful to learn what I need help.

One of the motivating factors of online chatting, according to Sue Hee, was its non-threatening nature. She believed that conversing in writing will be more “comfortable” than conversing orally, as she would not have to worry about pronunciation. She could also take more time to process and to prepare her messages. She mentioned the topics as another motivating factor: “Sometimes teachers have topics that are not related to the students or not interesting, or too hard. I like choosing our own topics.”

Reactions

In general, Sue Hee maintained a high motivation level towards the curriculum throughout the study. Her preconceptions and speculations about the benefits of integrating chat into an ESL classroom were reinforced after her experience with the curriculum. During her second interview, she elaborated on the benefits of slowing down the communication through chat.

When I speak Korean, I don’t need time to think before speaking, but in English, I need time to think so that’s why it’s hard for me to talk. If I take more than one second to think about correct grammar or word, the person can lose the interest. Chatting gave me time to think before I talk, so I can create better sentences. Also, when people talk, they talk too fast, but chatting is like slow conversation, so I can take time.

Sue Hee also spoke about the non-threatening nature of chatting:

Another merit that I see is...chatting is comfortable. When person is standing in the front, I forget all rules and words because I'm nervous, so maybe I avoid this situation. I can't get the practice because I avoid this situation.

Accordingly, during the focus group interview, she expressed, "I can have enough time to think about what I want to try to say when I am chatting."

Sue Hee reflected on the positive effects chatting had on classroom discussions. As she predicted, chatting provided her with the opportunity to practice producing the language which resulted in more fluent oral language output:

When we discuss same topics, it was easier to discuss in class because I already discussed in the chat room. The words or phrases or sentences that I used in chat room came out more easily during discussion in class. Words that I memorized don't come out freely if I never practice using them.

The instructor's observation log on April 22nd confirmed that Sue Hee was communicating with more ease and fluency: "I noticed today that in her discussion group, Sue Hee is pausing less before she speaks. She seems to be talking with more fluency than she did at the beginning of the semester." Researcher's observation notes taken on April 28th after Sue Hee's second interview further confirmed Sue Hee's noticeable improvement in her oral language: "Sue Hee started with good grammar, so it's hard to tell whether there's been an improvement there, but her pauses have become noticeably shorter and less in quantity which may be a sign that she is processing English faster. So I guess I can say her fluency has improved."

Unlike Beth, Sue Hee believed that oral proficiency entailed much more than pronunciation. According to her, it entails one's ability to express his/her ideas freely and naturally without having to think about the rules: "Words should come out naturally and automatically." She claimed that in order to gain this kind of fluency, one needs to practice producing the language in a non-threatening environment and suggested that online chat provided the most conducive environment for this purpose. Thus, Sue Hee was confident that chatting can help language learners move towards the development of oral proficiency.

A benefit of online chat that Sue Hee had not anticipated was its potential to generate more thoughtful classroom discussions by exposing her to others' views prior to face-to-face discussions: "When I'm chatting, I also can hear other people's responses which helped me prepare. When I know about different opinions, I can start thinking about that and prepare what I say to them in class." During the focus group interview, she also revealed that chatting provided her with the opportunity to think about the topics which facilitated the face-to-face discussions and said, "That is the best merit that chatting has".

Sue Hee expressed a mixture of feelings towards the tailored instruction. Although it was interesting for her to see the mistakes that other students had made, she was disappointed that the instructions were too low level for her. She did, however, appreciate learning how to express ideas more effectively.

What helped me most was when Karen taught us better ways of expressing the ideas. Uh... instead of saying *she seems nice and good, but they about me when I'm not there*, Karen told us we can say *she is not genuine and she talks behind my back*, and she said we can say *I feel ambivalent* instead of *my opinion is divided*

which is what Juan said during chatting. This helped me. I also learned words *spontaneous* and *moral values* and many other expressions, uh...also idioms like *take the bait*, and... I also like the expression *they think the world revolves around them*.

She reported that she had been applying these new skills in her oral language particularly during small-group activities and asserted:

Everything about language is connected, so grammar, vocabulary, and what I learn, I use in speaking, writing, listening, and reading. It was easy to use a lot of these things during discussions in class because topics were same as topics in chat room. So many expressions were useful.

As Sue Hee predicted, she found online chatting to be more comfortable and motivating than conversing orally, as she didn't have to be concerned about pronunciation. She enjoyed getting to know her classmates intimately while discussing about the topics that were personal and interesting:

In one year in this country, I never had opportunity to get to know the people from other countries, but in this class, I communicated with people from many different countries and got to know them. I want to continue being their friend even when this class is over. When I'm chatting, I wasn't nervous. It was great environment to get to know people.

Accordingly, during the focus interview, Sue Hee and Juan discussed this motivating factor.

Juan: It is very interesting for me to chat with someone i want to get to know in chatting room.

Sue Hee: It is very exciting because I get to know many people in this class who I did not know before. There are a lot of interesting people here, but I feel that when I am in front of that person I can not express a lot of things. So I like to express in chat room.

Juan: right, me too.

Sue Hee explained that chat sessions provided her with the opportunity to get to know her classmates better in a low -stress environment which led to open and honest discussions as well as increased participation.

On a few occasions, Sue Hee referred to chatting as “talking” which suggested that she viewed the chat language and the spoken language as interchangeable. In response to a direct question about the similarities between the language used in chat and spoken language, she responded that while chat language is in short phrases similar to spoken language, language used in writing is in full, formal sentences. She concluded that chat language resembled oral language.

The data analysis from Sue Hee’s interviews did not suggest much change in her overall perspectives about the chat-based curriculum although she expressed some disappointments with the tailored instruction. Generally, however, Sue Hee maintained high motivation and enthusiasm towards the curriculum throughout the study.

Juan

Preconceptions

As an avid reader, Juan provided considerable insights into how he was able to improve his oral proficiency by reading. He spoke about the “inner voice” that echoes inside of him as he reads silently and claimed that by focusing on his inner voice, he was

able to improve sentence construction, vocabulary, grammar, and even pronunciation.

Reflecting on his chat experience, he considered chatting to be similar to reading. Juan spoke with deliberation and thought while enunciating every word carefully.

Chatting is like reading. I have to learn a lot of vocabulary and seek how to pronounce when I don't recognize a word. When I listen to my inner voice as I type messages and read them, it forces you to learn to speak.

Contradicting Beth's and Rose's assertions that pronunciation is the most critical component in speaking, Juan said, "Talking is not only pronunciation, it is thinking about the words, phrases, and expressions that I can practice through chatting." Thus, Juan speculated that language learners can gain oral proficiency through chatting, because it provides them with the opportunity to experiment with and to practice producing the language.

Juan predicted that any linguistic skills gained through chatting and by reviewing errors from chat transcripts would transfer directly to spoken language: "What I can learn from chatting and reviewing transcripts will improve my speaking because chatting is like speaking, and if someone point out my mistakes, I will learn a lot." Juan explained that chat language is closer to oral language because of its conversational nature:

When you chat, I use same type of language as talking. Even though it is writing, it is more like talking, because it is a conversation at the same time. I have to hear that voice in myself before I type, and I hear the other person's voice when I read their message. I think of it as having a conversation with inner voices.

Although Juan claimed that language used in chat more closely resembled oral language than written language, he explained that all modes of communication, whether it is

listening, speaking, reading, or writing, are interconnected. Thus, improvement in one area will positively impact all other areas. This perspective contradicted Rose's view that writing and speaking require separate sets of skills.

Based on his positive experience with chatting, Juan predicted that students' motivation towards the chat-based curriculum would be high for a variety of reasons. First, he speculated that chatting would create a fun and motivating environment for students to practice English while getting to know his classmates more intimately. Second, he felt that the students would be more motivated to participate in discussions as they are allowed to participate in the topic selection process. Third, tailoring the instructions to meet the specific needs of the class was considered as another motivating factor: "Tailored instruction will be close to us, and it will be motivating because we will be learning from our mistakes instead of mistakes that textbook writers thought of...and it will meet our needs."

Reactions

The first words uttered by Juan in his second interview were "It was fun." He said that online chatting was a "highly motivating and comfortable" way to improve his speaking skills. Although he did not actually practice speaking through chatting, he believed that chatting effectively prepared him for face-to-face communication by allowing him time to organize his thoughts and practice sentence construction in a low-stress environment. During his second interview on April 25th, he expressed:

The experience of chatting helps me organize in my mind a little bit before speaking in the classroom, so it is really helpful. Chatting allows me to organize the conversation before the day of the conversation in the classroom. I can

organize my thinking and I can think of which words to use... my inner voice thinks of how to express my thoughts in sentences. I have more time to think about what I am going to say while chatting, so I'm not stressed. I think so much before I start to talk, so it helps me to prepare in advance for talking, yeah.

Confirming his second interview data, Juan and Sue Hee discussed these issues during a focus group interview:

Juan: I strongly believe that chatting helped me first to be interested in the topics and second to organize my thoughts before the classroom discussions start.

Sue Hee: I agree with you. chatting gave me chance to think about discussion topics and made discussing easier.

In his second interview, he reported that he had achieved a noticeable improvement in his oral proficiency. He commented with enthusiasm, "In my work, in this last days I have experienced... I feel more comfortable talking. I feel that I've improved my speaking mainly because of the chatting experience." According to the researcher's notes taken on April 26th right after his second interview, improvement in his oral language was not readily apparent although he seemed to be extremely comfortable discussing his thoughts about the curriculum: "Juan appeared to be much more relaxed, but it's difficult to tell whether there has been any improvement in his oral language, because he started with a very high level of fluency and solid understanding of grammar." The instructor's reflection notes also revealed that Juan appeared more comfortable participating in class towards the end of the study. Juan's second interview lasted nearly an hour which was the longest among the key participants.

Not only did Juan feel that chatting is an effective tool to improve speaking skills, but he also believed that it could improve listening skills. Based on his personal experience of learning to understand spoken English, he explained during his second interview that learners initially hear sporadic words and thus have difficult time understanding the messages. However, through chatting, he pointed out that learners can take the time to process the incoming messages which will prepare them to become better listeners. During his focus group interview he reiterated this point by saying, “Chatting helps me to think more deeply, understating almost everything that the person says...types.”

On the topic of tailored instruction, he said, “You are learning what your mistakes are, so in chat room I am free to make mistakes... and knowing they will be corrected, I can try or... uh...experiment with the language.” He identified tailored instruction to be a crucial component of the curriculum and mentioned that identifying his mistakes from chat transcripts helped him break bad habits in his oral language:

Through tailored instruction, I learned that I often make mistakes with subject/verb agreement when I’m speaking... and chatting, but I rarely make those mistakes in writing. Eh...I keep saying *people is* instead of *people are* or *there is...cookies* and...you know. I know the rules, but when I speak, I can’t think fast. I am now more aware of this... so I try to focus on them when I talk. When I am speaking, nobody corrects me, so this [tailored instruction] was so valuable to me. Also, when Karen tells me correct... or better ways to express my ideas, it helps me. Eh...during a chat discussion, I think I said, *God gave us life and he has to decide when we die*, but Karen recommended *God determines our destiny*. I like this

expression, and I use it in my church now. Oh, I also learned that Americans type *ha ha ha* not *ja ja ja* for laughing.

Juan reiterated at the end of the interview that chatting without the tailored instructions would not have been as effective: “Chatting with a purpose to learn was more effective than just chatting with friends without a purpose.”

In response to a question about the transference of skills from chat to oral language, he claimed that because the experience of chatting is comparable to talking, the skills had definitely transferred:

When I chat, I move my lips. To me, chatting is speaking out. Yeah, for me, it is a way of speaking...but very slowly. I hear my inner voice when I type and I hear the other person’s voice when I read messages. This is same as oral communication. So what I learned during chatting... helped me in speaking.

During the focus group interview, he elaborated on the importance of listening to one’s “inner voice” while chatting:

Juan: Have you noticed that when one is writing in chat room, at the same time is moving his or her lips as if one would be talking?

Sue Hee: right, I am moving my lips when I am reading. I never thought about that, but right.

Juan: That is why I think this experience could be important to learn to speak but one would have to be aware of listening to his or her own inner voice.

He cited examples of words such as *dishonest*, *spontaneous*, and *undermine* that he had learned while chatting with the instructor and claimed to have used them in his oral

language. Through chatting, Juan also reported that he was able to reaffirm the proper use of present perfect tense which facilitated his oral communication.

On the topic of motivation, Juan commented that chatting was a fun and motivating way to learn English, because it provided him with the opportunity to socialize with others in a low-stress environment. He poignantly spoke about the relationship among speaking, chatting, and socializing:

The objective of chatting and speaking is socializing... and chatting provides that opportunity to socialize, eh... in a fun way. While socializing and getting to know other people in class, we also learned skills on grammar and speaking and... a lot of us got to know each other better.

Juan reported that with the low anxiety level associated with chatting, he was motivated to express his ideas without the fear of embarrassment: "I am a shy person, so I like to try expressing my ideas in chat first and then if teacher confirms that my ideas is a good idea, I will express my idea in front of others." Accordingly, in his focus group interview, he mentioned, "Sometimes I feel very shy, so the experience of chatting helps me to speak without hiding what I think."

Juan's positive views remained unchanged during his experience with the new curriculum. However, he seemed to have gained insights regarding how online chat can be an effective tool to improve oral proficiency. First, he pointed out the importance of allowing students to chat on the same topic as the face-to-face discussion, so that they can practice creating the utterances that are relevant to the topic. Second, he emphasized the value of tailored instructions which helped students break bad habits in their spoken

language. Juan had the most positive experiences with the curriculum among the eight key students.

Hona

Preconceptions

Hona's confidence level seemed to be the lowest among the eight key students during the first interview. In fact, she did not appear to understand many of the interview questions. Ten minutes into the interview, she admitted that she had a difficult time understanding the researcher's presentation about the study, so she felt lost with the interview questions. Thus, it was necessary for the researcher to stop the interview and to elaborate on the key concepts about the research. Throughout the interview, Hona displayed her lack of confidence in herself as an ESL student by relentlessly apologizing for her poor English.

Her lack of experience with the online chat left her short of opinions about its efficacy, and she had relatively neutral views towards the chat-based curriculum. At first, she claimed that her oral language could not be improved through chatting, but as the interview progressed, she began to doubt her assertion. She spoke very quietly with uncertainty:

I never try chatting on computer, so... I don't know. Maybe it help me talk better, maybe not. It will help me typing, writing, and learning new vocabulary, and...grammar, but I don't know speaking, because it's writing and typing but we will not speak. I'm not sure.

In response to the question about the benefits of chatting, she responded that chatting would provide her with the opportunity to practice English in a comfortable setting:

My friends are from my country, so I don't have chance to speak in English, so if I can communicate in English on computer, it will give me more chance to improve my English. I am shy with Americans, so this will be good way. I don't know I have to try.

When Hona understood the concept of chatting in preparation for face-to-face discussions, she showed enthusiasm and responded, "Chatting can make you think about topic before class start, so I think I will prepare more things to talk about." After admitting that chatting will effectively prepare her to speak in class, she hesitated and conceded, "Maybe it will help my speaking, I don't know."

Hona predicted that chatting would be a fun and motivating way to practice English and to get to know her classmates during the process. She lamented that she did not know any of her classmates due to the lack of opportunity to talk in class, so she was particularly enthusiastic about the classroom discussion activities. In response to the question about tailored instruction, she did not have an opinion. She simply responded, "I don't know yet."

Reactions

Hona's neutral views about the curriculum took a more positive tone during her second interview. Due to her lack of computer experience, she struggled to keep up with her group members, but nevertheless, she participated with a positive attitude. During the first two weeks, she persistently asked the most fundamental keyboarding questions such as deleting, inserting, and backspacing, but by the fourth week, she was able to type independently. She didn't feel that chatting helped her prepare for classroom discussions due to her inability to type, but she reported that she learned from reading incoming

messages: “Chatting didn’t help me prepare for talking in class, because I’m too nervous because I’m slow, so it didn’t help me. But I learned from reading other people messages like vocabulary and some expressions.” In response to a question about whether she was able to apply these new skills to speaking during small group activities, she replied, “I use what I learned in speak, because language is all same.”

She commented with uncertainty that chatting may be closer to writing because “I have to spell and I don’t have to pronounce...and also erase and edit words.”

However, when she was responding to a question about skills transference, she referred to chatting as “talking”.

When I’m talking with mistakes, I don’t know if they are mistake, but I always make it because I don’t know if I’m wrong. When Karen correct us with transcripts, I learn it’s mistake and I tried to say correct next time. Like I always say *she wants to be middle of my life*, but it’s *in the middle*. I have also problem with noun and verbs. Like I say *fight is no good* to my son, but it’s *fighting is no good* and...I didn’t know how to say marry right, so I say *are you marry* [married]? but that’s wrong. I also thought hate can be noun, but I learned I should use hatred instead of hate for noun.

Hona claimed that through tailored instructions, she was able to realize the errors that she typically makes in her speech which made her more aware of her language output during oral conversations. She also revealed that the instructor’s suggestions for improving expressions” were very useful: “She told me to say *open-minded* for *their minds are open* and *close-minded* for *their minds are limited*. I didn’t know the better expressions, so it helped me.” In response to the skills transference question, she remembers uttering, *my*

husband's mother wants to be in the middle of our lives and why aren't you married?

correctly during the small group activity, and she pointed out that she had uttered the correct expressions during the second interview.

Although Hona could not articulate clearly about whether chat language is closer to writing than talking, she speculated that chatting regularly would help her improve her speaking skills, indicating that oral proficiency entails more than just pronunciation in Hona's perspective:

Talking and reading and writing is same to me, so chatting every day will help me get better in talking. If I write better, I talk better because when vocabulary and grammar improve, talking improve. They are not separate.

As Hona expected during her first interview, chatting effectively prepared her for face-to-face discussions by providing her with the opportunity to "think about the topic" beforehand. She also added that as she got to know her classmates better through chatting, she felt more comfortable communicating with them face-to-face. As a result, she claimed that she was able to participate progressively more during small group activities. According to the instructor's log on April 22nd, Hona participated actively during small group discussions and displayed more confidence.

I'm surprised that Hona had so much to say today in her group. She has always been so shy, so shy that she would wait to ask questions individually after class and never in front of the class. While I was sitting in her group, she discussed gender discrimination in her country and provided feedback to other members as they shared their experiences with discrimination in this country. She is still very soft spoken and quiet, but she appears to be more comfortable speaking out in front

of others. Actually, she still doesn't like to speak in front of the entire class, but she seems to be coming out of her shell during small group discussions.

Accordingly, the researcher's log on April 27th noted that Hona appeared to be developing her confidence in the class gradually: "She noticeably displayed more confidence during her second interview compared to her first interview. She didn't avoid eye contact with me and she spoke in longer sentences."

Hona concluded that chatting was a fun way to practice English and lamented that she could not participate actively due to her lack of keyboarding skills. She speculated that had she been a better typist, she could have benefited more from chatting. She added that communicating with classmates with her English and computer proficiency levels was more motivating and comfortable. "I can slow down and take longer time to think and not worry about other people waiting, but higher levels, they go fast and I miss chance to participate. I get nervous and I don't type."

Although Hona's lack of keyboarding skills kept her from participating actively during chat sessions, she displayed positive attitudes towards the curriculum throughout the study. Her views about the nature of chat language remained unclear in her mind, but as a result of participating in the study, she realized that chatting regularly could lead to better speaking skills. According to the researcher's and the instructor's assessments, Hona had gained a lot of confidence in her ability to speak in front of others as a result of participating in this study.

Preconceptions

Although Kwan's pronunciation was weak, he spoke confidently and did not have a problem making eye contact with the researcher during the interview. To compensate for his lack of vocabulary, he made a lot of hand gestures. Regarding the effects of the chat-based curriculum on oral proficiency, he expressed strong negative views. Sharing Beth and Rose's perspectives on what oral proficiency entails, Kwan considered pronunciation as the most critical component of oral proficiency. Thus, he did not expect to improve his speaking skills by participating in the chat-based curriculum:

I think chatting can improve the writing, but I don't think it improve speaking, because for improve speaking, talking is only way. When chatting, I think about what I will write about and I write, so it might help my writing, but to speak better, I need practice on speaking, but if I think about writing and don't get pronounce practice, I will not improve speaking. Pronunciation is important for speaking.

Although Kwan expressed strong doubts towards the effects of the chat-based curriculum on oral proficiency, he considered the possibility that chatting could produce positive effects on his writing. Reflecting on his chatting experience with English speakers, he claimed to have improved his English in general although not necessarily his speaking skills:

Other person will answer to me then I look at what that person write and I can learn. If they use vocabulary or something I don't know, I say oh, they can be used like this. I learned many idioms and vocabulary from chatting from Americans.

Some times I ask them to wait, and I look at words in dictionary to understand what they write. This way, I improved my English.

Responding to a question about whether he thought chatting prepared him to speak better, he expressed strong negative views. He explained that because chatting did not involve practice in pronunciation, his speaking was not impacted by his chatting experience. Sharing Beth and Rose's views, he believed that speaking involved a skill set that is mutually exclusive from other modes of communication.

Although Kwan believed that his speaking will not be impacted by chatting, he predicted that chatting would prepare him for classroom discussions, because he would be forced to think about the topic. He also thought that chatting about their choice of topics would be motivating: "Discussions will be fun, because topics are our choice." Reflecting on his experience, Kwan also added that the chat sessions will create an environment that is open and honest, making discussions more fun and motivating.

When I chat, you can say honest things. In class discussion, I am careful, because I don't want to hurt feelings. If face expression is bad, I will stop saying things that hurt them or make them mad, but when I chat, I am honest. So it will be more interesting conversation.

Kwan had positive perceptions about the tailored instruction. Consistent with Rose and Sue Hee's views, he speculated that the instruction that is tailor-made for the class would be much more effective and motivating than the traditional classroom instruction that is based on textbook material.

In response to a question about whether language used in chat is similar to written or oral language, Kwan hesitated for a moment and then concluded with uncertainty:

“Chat is like email, so it’s like writing, but dialogue in chat room requires dialogue immediately [synchronous communication], so it’s kind of like speaking. But we’re writing to communicate, so it’s writing. I don’t know.”

Reactions

Kwan, who did not believe that the chat-based curriculum would have positive effects on oral language, maintained his negative views throughout the study. As an experienced chatter, he compared his experience of chatting for a class with chatting for fun among friends. He expressed his disappointments in having to chat for a purpose.

I didn’t know people good, so I feel uncomfortable when I don’t know what to type. I like chatting with friends about fun things, whatever we want to chat about.

We know each other, so we joke for fun. But chatting for class was hard because of serious things, and I couldn’t think of things to say even when I know the questions before [ahead of time]. It wasn’t very fun to chat for that reason.

He also expressed his frustrations about his inability to use body language during chat sessions.

I like looking in people’s faces when speaking. When I chat with my friends, it’s about silly and fun things, so I don’t care, but when I chat for school, it’s hard, because it’s about hard things and I can express hard things better when I can see a person. When I’m talking, people guess what I try to say and I can say yes or no and I can use my body to say what I mean, but in chatting, I have to keep typing even when I don’t know how to say my points. They don’t write back until I’m finished with my point, and we waste time guessing what each other is mean.

In response to a question about whether the chat sessions helped him prepare for face-to-face discussions, he said, “After I chat, I can’t remember what things we talked about or words I used. So when I’m in the class, I don’t remember anything. It wasn’t helpful for speaking.” Although he expected that chatting would prepare him for classroom discussions because he would be forced to think about the topic, he concluded that it was not helpful. The instructor’s log on April 22nd indicated that Kwan was consistently active in small group discussions. Because he had always been very vocal in class discussions, she could not tell whether there had been a change in his participation level.

Kwan explained that the best way to improve oral language is by interacting with the natives. Because he had a formula that worked well for him, he was resistant to accept a new method.

In Laundromat, I talk to people who is just waiting for laundry. Some old people just want to talk to me, so it’s good for me for practice. I ask them to help me if I don’t know a word or...how to pronounce. I have three American roommate too. They help me learn English a lot. I live with them [natives] and work with them, so I can do both things, learn and work in the same time. Talking is best way to get better in talking, so I don’t think chatting will work. Maybe chatting will improve writing and reading, but not talking.

During the focus group interview, he reiterated this point:

Kwan: I think the best thing to improve your English is talking to native. I can write English but I need help speaking and listening in English so I think it’s better to practice listening and speaking.

Group member: I agree. chatting is best way to check your mistakes in grammar.

that's it. is not helpful for our speaking.

Kwan: you are right. chatting is just for entertainment in my opinion.

Kwan had a few positive things to say about the curriculum, however. He commented that he enjoyed learning from television, because it provided him with the context and visual stimulation. On the other hand, he expressed strong distaste for textbook learning and learning from tape recordings due to the lack of visual stimulation. "I can't see body language and face and I like to guess what people say by looking at their face."

He also admitted that he learned many vocabulary words and grammar through chatting and tailored instructions and admitted that chatting with a purpose of learning English was much more effective than chatting for entertainment: "I learned what *implicit* mean and *blatant* mean and idiom...*chip on his shoulder*. Uh...I can't remember too much, but chatting in this class help me learn English more than chatting with friends."

In general, he found the tailored instructions much more personal and motivating than the traditional classroom instructions that are based on commercial material. However, despite his positive views about the tailored instructions, he did not expect his new linguistic skills to transfer to his oral language, because neither chatting nor tailored instructions involved practice in pronunciation.

Contrary to what he had asserted during his first interview, he admitted that chat language was similar to oral language, because he was not concerned about grammar when he typed and the communication "felt like quiet conversation." Despite the similarities that he had found between the chat and oral language, he remained firm in his

belief that the skills will not transfer. Accordingly, the researcher's observation notes taken on April 24th immediately after Kwan's second interview indicated that his oral proficiency had not improved as a result of participating in the new curriculum: "Although he wasn't shy to express his thoughts about the curriculum, he continued to struggle with grammar and word choice."

The analysis of data from Kwan's first and second interviews suggested that his negative views about the effects of chat-based curriculum on oral proficiency were unaffected by his experience with the curriculum. Although he admitted that language used in chat more closely resembled oral language and that the tailored instructions were very helpful in improving his English, he claimed that his oral language remained unaffected. He believed that the chat-based curriculum might be more effective for other areas of language learning such as reading and writing.

Marsha

Preconceptions

Marsha appeared to be nervous while she was being interviewed. She had a difficult time maintaining eye contact and her hands occasionally trembled, but she enunciated well and spoke with great insights. Although Marsha did not have any experience with chatting, she had extremely positive views regarding the effects of the chat-based curriculum on oral proficiency. She speculated that chatting would effectively prepare her for classroom discussions:

It's good opportunity to improve talking, because we have more chance to practice English. Without preparing, it's difficult to talk. We need opportunity to practice

before discussion in class, so chat room will be great practice. It will help me prepare in my mind about what to and how to say.

With respect to her views on the advantages of chatting, she predicted that having more processing time would be beneficial:

It might help me express my ideas better, because it will give me more time to think. Whenever I talk with Americans, I need long time for answering. So if I will participate in chat room, I can take more time for making sentences to answer, and this will give me better practice.

Marsha also had some positive perceptions about the effects of tailored instruction:

“This is a good idea because Karen can recommend better way to express something. When she tells me this is the word you should use, I can learn from that. Correcting my grammar will help too.” In response to a question whether she thought the skills gained from tailored instruction would transfer to her spoken language, she commented, “The words and expressions... and grammar that I learn from chatting, I will use in my speaking just like I learn things from email, I use them when I speak.” Like Sue Hee, Marsha reflected on her positive experience with email and concluded that chatting would provide the means to prepare for oral language development as does communicating via email.

Marsha predicted that the chat-based curriculum would be motivating because it’s the “new way to learn English”. She expected that chatting among students without the teacher presence would provide them with the opportunity to express more openly and honestly. She also added that chatting would create a comfortable and motivating environment for English practice:

I can make mistakes with English and practice until I feel comfortable to speak. No one will care for my mistakes. In class, I am more scared and I don't like to speak, but in chat room, it's more fun to speak because there's no stress.

Marsha explained that the language used in chat might be similar to talking based on her emailing experience. She reflected that the language used in email is similar to oral language, thus she concluded that chat language would also be closer to oral than written language.

Reactions

Marsha's positive views about the chat-based curriculum were maintained throughout the study. In her quiet and cautious manner, she explained about her increased participation level in chatting as compared to talking. "I participated more, because I'm not nervous when chatting, so I tried different ways to say things... and I said whatever I wanted to say and I wasn't shy. Shy is my problem for talking." As compared to oral language, she also reflected that she was able to understand the incoming messages better and was able to ask more questions due to its stress-free nature:

I also understand people better when I'm chatting because it's in writing and I can look at the dictionary if I don't understand something. If I don't understand, I'm also gonna ask them to explain. When I'm talking to some body, I usually don't ask them to explain because I'm embarrassed, but in chatting, I wasn't embarrassed.

She poignantly described the advantages and disadvantages of having to spell:

One problem was I have to know the spelling of words that I know what it means, but I don't know how to spell. Then it is harder and slower than speaking. But it

can be good too because some words I don't know how to say, but I know how to spell. Then chatting is better.

Similar to Beth's views, Marsha considered spelling as a deterrent to chatting, and as Sue Hee pointed out, Marsha considered not having to pronounce words as an advantage to chatting.

Additionally, Marsha explained the advantage of not being able to use body language while communicating online. While chatting, she reflected that she was forced to think about the verbal expressions instead of relying on her body language which she believed could lead to a faster acquisition of language. "It's very good way to learn English, because I can't use body language. So it will make me think about English expressions quickly and help me learn English faster than just talking."

As she expected, chatting provided her with the opportunity to practice her oral language leading to a more fluent language output during small group activities. She also spoke about her motivation level to practice English:

I'm more motivated to practice English when I'm chatting. I know I'm gonna prepare more for chatting. When I talk, I just talk, but when chatting, I know I'm gonna... going to write something, so I'm going to check my grammar and I'm going to check my dictionary. I also check my sentences before I send my messages. So I practiced more, and when I practiced more, I could say things better when I'm in my group in class.

Accordingly, based on the instructor's log on April 15th, Marsha participated actively during the task-based activity with improved fluency.

Although Marsha is still very shy to talk in front of the entire class, she participated actively during the small group activity. She expressed her points and challenged her group members with very little hesitation. At one point, she looked straight at her group member and challenged, “Isn’t there discrimination every where? In your country, there’s no discrimination?” She still speaks softly with much thought, but she displays improved level of confidence in her ability to speak in front of others. Her fluency seems to have improved as well.

Marsha mentioned that she learned a lot of words and expressions that her group members have used by either asking them their meaning or by referring to her dictionary. She reported that she learned the meanings of words such as *sympathize*, *prejudice*, *pompous*, and *naive* as well as expressions such as the *American Dream* and *chip on his shoulder*.

In response to a question whether she had applied such new knowledge in her oral language, she emphatically said yes. “If I learn more English, of course I’m going to use it when I talk. To me, chatting is just like talking and talking is just like chatting.” She hesitated when asked to provide examples of skills transfer, she said, “I can’t remember, but I know I will use them in my talking.” Like many others, Marsha also found the instructor’s recommended expressions very helpful. “During chatting, I wrote, *some people’s dream is just to have things and things*, but she said it sounds better to say *material things*. It’s a very good idea to give us lesson on those things.” Finally, she mentioned that she had learned to spell difficult words such as jealous, marriage, and necessary as a result of chatting and receiving tailored instruction.

Through tailored instruction, Marsha realized that she had been using informal and incorrect English in her writing such as *I'm gonna*, *I wanna*, and she also added that she had learned to express sincere gratitude and ways to request for more information without sounding demanding. With the lack of formal training in English, her incorrect use of language seemed to have firmly ingrained in her mind because “nobody told me they are wrong.” She said the tailored instructions were instrumental in helping her identify bad habits and added that without such guided instructions, chatting alone would not have been as effective.

During the focus interview, she elaborated on this point:

Marsha: chatting is good because we write down. many times when we talk we don't know our mistakes. when we write, i know and when Karen helps us find them that's better. She helps me find routine mistakes that i make and i don't know about.

Group member: that is good point. when i talk I think i'm right and not notice mistakes. it help me when we went over [chat] transcript.

The researcher's observation during Marsha's second interview on April 28th reflects that although her overall fluency had not improved, she seemed to be more aware of her language output as she spoke.

Marsha constantly corrected herself as she spoke which seemed to indicate her awareness of her mistakes. She was more deliberative and thoughtful before she spoke which slowed down her speech, but this is a good sign. She also appeared to be more comfortable with me than during the first interview. She constantly made attempts to look into my eyes and let out a few wispy smiles.

As expected during the first interview, Marsha found the chat-based curriculum to be motivating due to its innovative methods of teaching English. She emphasized the value of integrating a student-centered activity such as chatting which allowed an open and honest discussion among students. “Without the teacher, we could talk more to each other and be more honest. This was more fun than the teacher control what we say.”

By drawing a parallel between chatting and “talking to people on the phone”, Marsha explained that chatting is similar to talking. She explained that in both situations, communication occurs synchronously without the presence of the interlocutors. Thus, she claimed that chatting is comparable to talking, and the only difference is that “you talk by typing.”

As a result of participating in this study, Marsha’s positive views about the chat-based curriculum have been reinforced. The data analysis suggests that as a result of participating in the chat-based curriculum, she was able to participate more actively in the small group discussions with improved level of confidence and fluency.

Summary of Students’ Preconceptions and Reactions to the Curriculum

The eight key students’ preconceptions and their reactions towards the chat-based curriculum have been described in this chapter. The data collected from the first and second interviews with the eight key students were primarily used to describe their preconceptions and reactions. The instructor and the researcher’s observation logs and students’ focus interviews were also used to confirm the findings.

The analysis of data from the first interviews suggested that some students felt optimistic about the chat-based curriculum, some showed hesitation to the new method, and others had mixed perspectives. Among them, Mark, Sue Hee, Juan, and Marsha had

the most positive preconceptions about the new curriculum, and their positive views were maintained throughout the study. Sue Hee and Juan self-reported that their fluency had improved as a result of participating in the new curriculum although only Sue Hee's claim was confirmed by the instructor and the researcher's notes. Mark claimed that he would have gained noticeable improvement in his oral proficiency had the curriculum lasted for a longer period of time, and Marsha demonstrated improved fluency during the small group activity.

Hona and Beth had doubted the efficacy of the new curriculum on oral proficiency at first, but their negative views took on a more positive tone towards the end of the study. Although Hona's experience with chatting had been limited due to her inability to type, she revealed that she had learned from reading incoming messages and believed that she would have improved her oral proficiency had she been able to type better. The researcher noted that she participated actively during small group discussions and that she displayed more confidence. Beth initially did not expect to have a positive experience with the curriculum, because she considered her poor spelling and limited grammar knowledge to be deterrents to chatting. However, during her second interview, she reported that she was unconcerned about spelling or grammar when she chatted which led her to believe that chatting was closer to speaking than writing. Thus, she concluded that the skills that she had gained from chatting must have transferred to her oral language due to the similarities found between chat and oral language. Accordingly, the researcher noted that she deliberated more before she spoke indicating that she was more aware of her mistakes.

Rose's and Kwan's negative views about the effects of chat-based curriculum on oral proficiency remained largely unchanged. Because they perceived pronunciation skills

as a major component of oral proficiency, they did not feel their oral proficiency had improved as a result of participating in the new curriculum. Although they held negative views about skills transference, they reported that they had benefited from the tailored instructions and found the curriculum to be motivating in general.

All key participants with the exception of Hona and Kwan claimed that participating in chat sessions effectively prepared them for face-to-face discussions because (1) it provided them with the opportunity to practice their language output leading to a more fluent spoken language and (2) it gave them time to think about the topic which led to more thoughtful oral discussions. Additionally, all key participants spoke favorably about the tailored instructions reflecting that learning from their own mistakes was much more effective than learning from commercial materials such as textbooks. Finally, all eight participants found the curriculum to be fun and motivating in general, and all eight participants except Hona perceived chat language to be closer to spoken language than to written language. In fact, Mark described chatting as “talking to myself” Juan referred to it as “hearing my inner voice” Kwan called it a “slow conversation” and Beth described it as hearing other people talk through a “computer voice.”

Analysis of Chat Language

In order to determine whether the language produced during chat session is similar to oral language, the properties of oral language such as hedges, colloquial expressions, inexplicit reference, self-repair, and clarification requests were identified in chat transcripts and logged. Through this analysis, the researcher was able to confirm existing research that chat language shares many of the properties of oral language. The properties of oral language were referenced from Chafe and Danielewics’ study (1987), ‘Properties

of Spoken and Written Language”. In their study, linguistic analysis was conducted to identify and compare the properties of oral and written language.

Hedges

According to Chafe and Danielewics (1987), hedges are properties of oral language which indicate speakers’ struggle to choose the appropriate words such as *like*, *you know*, *sort of*, and etc. In the current study, numerous hedges were used during chat sessions as chatters struggled to choose the appropriate words. Chatters’ use of hedges included the following expressions: *um*, *eh*, *I mean*, *like*, *I think*, *oh*, *oops*, *sort of*, and *you know* (See Table 4.2 for examples; errors are intact).

Table 4.2

Hedges Identified in the Context of Chat Discussions

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well, they are not really the best but they have some knowledge. ▪ I think they pretend being very conservative about some values ▪ Well, I left my country because I was invited to study here ▪ It means, sort of innocent ▪ Eh everybody what was your first impression when you came to the United States? ▪ Yes, I mean, I have to be with catholic people everytime here in this country, and they say to you you’re nice, you are good, but they speak about you with others ▪ I got big problems, you know, right now our country has serious safety problems ▪ Oh, this is me ▪ Like.. Americans kill many people for their advantage ▪ Oop, I forgot! |
|--|

Third-Person Neuter Pronouns

Inexplicit third-person neuter pronouns such as *it*, *this*, or *that* are prevalent in oral language according to Chafe and Danielewics (1987), because speakers cannot take the time to be explicit about to what they are referring. Similarly, chatters made numerous

uses of inexplicit third-person neuter pronouns in the current study (see Table 4.3 for examples; errors are intact).

Table 4.3

Third-Person Neuter Pronouns Identified in the Context of Chat Discussions

- **That** is why there is a lot of restaurant all around each corner
- **This** is my opinion
- **It** doesn't taste good for me
- They need **that** because there is too many crazy people in this country
- **that** is **that** i made a mistake
- at the same time, **it** causes that more young people want to become workers of the mafia
- the political leaders get personal benefits of **that** situation
- all people have differences between them, and **that** not means that they going to fight all the time; we have to be tolerant **that** is a important point
- **It** depend where are you coming from
- **it** is sad because colombia is a beautiful country
- **that's** the way that the education work here
- **that** is truth, somebody must help them find the way sometimes, but they can find **it** if they talk sincerily and honestly about **that**.

Coordinating Conjunctions

According to Chafe and Danielewics, another property of oral language is the use of coordinating conjunctions that chain together short phrases. They explained that casual speakers tend to produce simple intonation units joined together by coordinating conjunctions, avoiding the elaborate syntax which requires more processing time than speakers can devote to it. In the current study, numerous coordinating conjunctions were identified in chat transcripts. (see Table 4.4 for examples; errors are intact).

Table 4.4

Coordinating Conjunctions Identified in the Context of Chat Discussions

- That is not really true **but** not false also, **but** they ignore that the rest of the world exist.
- not all Americans are same **and** we are not suppose to judge them equal
- I came here **because** my father job is here **and** for have a better life
- I love food from my country **and** other country **but** not American food
- The pope John Paul II criticized the wild capitalism, **but** everyone of us know that the Vatican is almost the same.
- i want to cook traditional food, **but** I don't' have enough time **so** I usually go out
- Nobody has answer my question, **and** I think we are getting confused **because** we are talking about many different subject
- Colombia is known internationally as a very dangerous country, **but** Colombia has a lot of positive things
- I think you are verya smart person to study this kind of course **because** you really need to give up on many things **and** be very concentrate

Paralinguistic Features

Based on the analysis of chat transcripts, paralinguistic features that are present in spoken language were compensated in myriad ways during chat discussions which provided further evidence that chat language is similar to oral language. Uppercase letters and exclamation marks were used to represent emphasis (*me too!!*, *Yes! Yes!*, *OHHHH!!!!!!!!*, *WAKE UP*, *I LOVE cheese*, and *I AGREE!!*), and a series of symbols were used to represent facial expressions (^.^ and ;-) for smile, ;-(for frown, and ^o^ for a surprised look). Similarly, students typed *ha ha ha* , *I'm laughing* , and *jajaja* to compensate for the act of laughing out loud. Additionally, multiple question marks and

exclamation marks were used to represent frustration (*nothing!!!!, uffff that's discrimination!!!, are you THERE???, and what are you talking about?????*).

Other Indicators of Spoken Language

Other indicators of spoken language such as self-repair, clarification requests, and topic initiation were also found in the chat transcripts. Students not only reported that they edited their messages before they sent them, but there was evidence on the transcripts that they made corrections to their sent messages and resent the edited version. Based on the transcripts, examples of clarification requests included *do you mean..., what is naive?*, and *I didn't understand your question*, and examples of topic initiations included *let's talk about...*, and *which question should we discuss?* According to Chafe and Danielewics, the use of colloquial language is another indicator of spoken language. During chat sessions, students made considerable use of colloquial words and expressions that are commonly used in oral conversations such as *yeah, yup, hey, stuff like that, okay, oops, got ya, and come on*.

Summary of Chat Language Analysis

The analysis of chat transcripts indicated that the language produced during chat sessions more closely resembled oral language than written language. Sharing similar properties of oral language, chat language involved the use of hedges, colloquial expressions, inexplicit reference, and short phrases that are sometimes chained together with conjunctions. Other indicators of spoken language such as self-repairs, clarification requests, and topic initiation were also found in chat language and provided further evidence that chat language is similar to oral language.

Discussion

Based on the data from 17 students' questionnaire and focus group interviews, no pattern could be found in their reactions to the curriculum with respect to their native language, age, gender, level of education, chat experience, and preconceptions about the curriculum. Thus, students' perceptions and reactions to the curriculum can be attributed mainly to their experience with the curriculum as opposed to preexisting factors or predisposed ideas.

*Discussion of Findings for Question One:
How do students and the instructor describe their experiences with the chat-based curriculum designed to develop oral communicative skills?*

Students described the chat-based curriculum as a fun and motivating way to improve their oral skills, and the instructor described it as an “innovative multi-sensory approach” to ESL teaching. Students spoke positively about incorporating television programs and a guest speaker into the curriculum as a means to provide language input, and according to the instructor, integration of such authentic material contributed to the high level of student motivation towards the curriculum. Students also found the instruction based on chat transcripts to be more motivating and effective than learning from commercial materials, since such instructions are tailored to their needs. Most students held positive views about the curriculum, but a few expressed their disappointments about the chatting activity. Students' views about whether their oral proficiency had improved as a result of participating in the chat-based curriculum hinged on how they defined oral proficiency, but most described chatting as an effective way to prepare for oral communication due to the opportunity to practice their language output in slow-motion.

Student Perspectives: Defining Oral Proficiency (Category 1)

Kwan, Rose, and Beth, had negative preconceptions about the effects of chat-based curriculum on oral proficiency, because they perceived pronunciation skills as the dominant component of oral proficiency. They did not believe that their speaking skills could improve as a result of participating in a curriculum that does not involve pronunciation practice. Although Kwan and Rose maintained their negative views throughout the study, Beth's views took on a more positive tone as she began to discover the similarities between chat and oral language. She explained, "The more I practice on chat, the more I can speak, because chat is same to me as talking." Her comments indicated that she no longer viewed pronunciation as a key component of oral proficiency. She claimed to have improved her communication skills as a result of chatting which did not involve practice in pronunciation.

Contrasting the view that pronunciation is the dominant component of oral proficiency, Juan asserted that oral proficiency entailed thinking about the words, phrases, and expressions that he can practice through chatting. Similarly, Sue Hee explained oral proficiency as one's ability to express ideas freely and naturally without having to think about the rules. Although Hona was unable to articulate her thoughts clearly, she also seemed to believe that oral proficiency entailed much more than pronunciation. She explained, "Chatting every day will help me get better in talking. If I write better, I talk better because when vocabulary and grammar improve, talking improve." Similarly, Mark said, "Chatting also helped me make a better sentence to talk and explain, because it helped me practice."

Juan, Sue Hee, Hona, and Mark believed that all modes of communication, whether listening, speaking, reading, or writing, are interconnected, so improvement in one area will positively impact all other areas. Such perspective contradicted Kwan and Rose's view that writing and speaking require separate sets of skills. Kwan claimed to have improved his English "in general" as a result of participating in the study but did not think that his speaking skills were affected because speaking required a separate set of skills, largely pronunciation. He suggested that chat-based curriculum might be more effective for other areas of language learning such as reading and writing. Similarly, Rose reported that she had learned a lot of grammar, vocabulary, and spelling as a result of participating in the curriculum, but did not feel that her speaking had improved since her pronunciation was unaffected. Thus, students' perceptions about the efficacy of the curriculum on oral proficiency seem to be heavily influenced by the way they define oral proficiency.

Chatting as a Preparation for Oral Communication (Category 2)

All participants with the exception of Hona and Kwan described chatting as an effective way to prepare for oral discussions because (1) it provided them with the opportunity to practice their language output with more processing time and (2) it allowed them the chance to think about the topics which generated more thoughtful oral discussions.

Students considered slower processing time as one of many advantages of chatting, because it allowed them to experiment with language and to monitor their output. With fewer processing demands, students were able to re-read incoming messages, refer to a dictionary, and check their grammar and word choice. Marsha described chatting as a

“good opportunity to improve talking, because we have more chance to practice English”.

She remembered editing her sentences and checking her dictionary before sending messages. With such practice, she claimed that she was able to improve her language output during oral discussions particularly because the topic of discussion was the same for chat and oral discussions. Mark also shared his insights about the benefits of processing time. He said chatting allowed him more time to “think about the right words and right grammar with no pressure to speak fast.” He also discussed the benefits of having time to look up spelling and words in his dictionary and to correct his grammar mistakes. He referred to that process as “cleaning up my talking.” These data indicate that a reduced pace of communication allowed students to notice their errors and to edit their messages. Swain and Lapkin (1995) suggest that such increased awareness of errors tends to push language learners to engage in more syntactic processing which leads to faster acquisition of second language.

Juan explained that he was able to experiment with English during chat sessions due to the opportunity to practice sentence construction in a low-stress environment. He reflected that he had time to “think about which words to use and how to express his thoughts in sentences”. Due to the opportunity to process such thoughts in advance, Juan claimed that he was able to produce more fluent output during subsequent oral discussions. Similarly, Sue Hee recognized chatting as a good means to practice for face-to-face discussions, because it allowed more time to process incoming messages and to prepare her messages. Due to the slow paced communication, she reflected that she was able to experiment with new words, expressions, and syntax while chatting and claimed that such practice facilitated her oral language output. Beth did not elaborate on the

benefits of processing time, but she also expressed that chatting allowed her to “practice English” and to “get used to it” which helped her speak “easier and faster.” Students were able to read comments, process the language at their own pace, and wait to send messages only when they were completely satisfied with them. According to Beauvois (1992, 1993, 1994), this kind of flexibility and self-pace have a very positive effect on student attitudes and performance.

Rose admitted that through the process of reading and composing messages during chat discussions, she had become better prepared for face-to-face discussions, but because she equated oral proficiency exclusively with pronunciation skills, she did not think that her oral performance was affected by her being better prepared to talk in terms of word choice, syntax, and fluency. Kwan spoke negatively about participating in chat discussions as a preparation for face-to-face discussions. He asserted that after chatting, he was unable to remember anything.

Students also reported that chatting helped them generate ideas for oral discussions, since the same topic was assigned for both chat and oral discussions each week. Beth explained, “Chatting helps me prepare for [classroom] discussion, because we have more ideas after we chat.” Rose reported that chatting gave her the chance to think about the topic beforehand: “After chatting, it was easier for me to talk, because I already thought about it [the topic] and chatted about it.” Hona reinforced this point by saying, “Chatting can make you think about topic before class start, so I have more things to talk about.” Sue Hee added, “When we discuss same topics, it was easier to discuss in class, because I already discussed in the chat room.” Mark also reported that chatting provided

him with the opportunity to generate ideas about the topic which facilitated classroom discussions.

Juan believed that chatting effectively prepared him for oral discussions by allowing him time to “organize his thoughts” and to think about what he is going to say during class discussions. Sue Hee and Beth added that chatting helped them generate more thoughtful oral discussions by exposing them to others’ views prior to face-to-face discussions. They mentioned that reading someone else’s thoughts provoked them to think about varying perspectives on the issues. With great insight, Sue Hee articulated this point: “When I’m chatting, I also can hear other people’s responses which helped me prepare. When I know about different opinions, I can start thinking about that and prepare what I say to them in class”. Contrarily, Kwan spoke negatively about the value of chatting and its potential to generate ideas for oral discussions. Although Kwan expected that chatting would prepare him for oral discussions because he would be “forced to think about the topic,” he concluded that it was not helpful. He expressed disappointment that he did not remember anything that was discussed during chat sessions.

The instructor described the chat-based curriculum as an effective means to prepare students for oral language production. According to her, the greatest benefit of chatting was that it “forced them to think in English” which she considered to be invaluable in gaining oral proficiency. Although some students preferred to talk than chat online, she explained that their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar were reinforced as a result of having to type their messages which, she claimed, facilitates second language acquisition.

The Use of Authentic Material (Category 3)

Students held positive views about incorporating television programs, personal essays, and a guest speaker into the curriculum to provide language input. Such listening and reading activities piqued student interest in the topics and helped generate ideas for discussion. The instructor noted that integrating such authentic material had contributed to the high level of student motivation towards the curriculum and had helped them to become more informed about the topics. She said using *Oprah* shows as the basis for discussions was very effective due to its entertainment value and the use every day language. Drawing a comparison between learning from tape recordings and from television programs like *Oprah*, Kwan shared that he preferred learning from television programs, because they provided him with the context and visual stimulation: “I can’t see body language and face [when listening to tapes], and I like to guess what people say by looking at their face. Tapes is hard to guess what’s going on, because all I have is listening to words with no background and things.” Sue Hee also expressed positive views about the *Oprah* shows by reflecting on the appropriate level of English used and the program’s potential to generate ideas for discussion. Similarly, Rose and Beth displayed their approval for integrating *Oprah* shows into their ESL class and commented that they watch *Oprah* on a regular basis at home to learn English.

Mark, on the other hand, displayed strong disapproval for integrating *Oprah* shows into the curriculum and television watching in class in general. He considered *Oprah* as a “female show” and asserted that they tend to focus on issues relating to women that men do not find interesting. He also expressed that watching television in class was inappropriate, because “I can do that at home.” Mark also disapproved of the topics of

marriage and discrimination and referred to them as “very boring.” Based on his topic preference list, he preferred to discuss sports, cars, and places to visit in the United States. According to the instructor, however, “students had a great time discussing issues from *Oprah* that they don't normally have a chance to discuss.” She also felt that students had an added measure of motivation to discuss the topics, since they were allowed to partake in the topic selection process. Accordingly, Kwan commented, “Discussions were fun, because topics were our choice.”

Students also spoke favorably about incorporating a guest speaker and personal essays as a means of providing language input. The guest speaker added new dynamics to the class and stimulated students’ interest about the topic of marriage. Students displayed appreciation for the guest speaker’s candor and honesty while speaking openly about her marriage. Students also reflected that reading about others’ personal experiences with immigration was interesting, because they were able to relate to them. They mentioned that the essays provoked thought and generated ideas for discussion. Similarly, a controversial essay about discrimination was also received well by the students. Students asserted that this essay that provided an argument against requiring Americans to identify their race on various forms, provoked thoughtful and interesting discussions.

Negative Views About the Curriculum (Category 4)

Although most students spoke favorably about the chat-based curriculum, the instructor reflected on a few students who held negative views about the idea of chatting, because they preferred to talk rather than chat. She added that technophobic students also felt reluctant to use the computer to learn English:

I don't think Hona nor Mochi ever got really comfortable at the computer. They never complained, but they seemed afraid or...uh... reluctant to use the computer at first. Then when they got started, they were too cautious and slow when typing, so they didn't get to participate much, but still, they seemed to be having fun. Also, Kwan and few others said that they rather be talking, but I think that most enjoyed chatting once they got into it.

The instructor also revealed that two students spoke with her privately about their disappointment and lack of motivation to continue with the class after hearing the researcher's presentation about the research. They were unhappy about having to participate in a curriculum that appeared to be more grammar related than speech related. They specifically wanted to focus on improving their oral communication skills, because they have a separate grammar class where the focus is mainly on correcting sentences. In this class, they wanted more vocabulary, idioms, and practice speaking. In order to keep these students motivated, the instructor introduced new vocabulary words and idioms whenever possible during tailored instructions. On this topic, she commented

I think it all worked out in the end. I tried to incorporate vocabulary words and idioms that are being covered in my other speaking class. Students seemed to be enjoying learning those in the context of their chat discussions. Those students never complained again and didn't drop the course, so I guess they were satisfied.

Rose, one of two students who expressed negative views about chatting during the second interview, revealed that she did not like to chat because she does not enjoy writing: "I don't like chatting because I talk better than I write. When I write, I know I make lots of mistakes and it's hard for me to express." She also expressed her frustration in her

inability to type fast: “I’m not a fast typer, so I don’t like it. I want to say something, but my fingers are so slow, so I get upset. When I talk, I can talk fast, but when chatting, I can’t.” Additionally, her limited vocabulary was considered to be a deterrent to chatting as well. During the focus interview, she expressed that the more effective ways for her to improve oral proficiency is to speak English with those who do not speak her language and to read. Although she preferred to talk rather than chat online, she admitted that chatting provided a comfortable environment to cultivate friendships with her classmates.

Marsha shared that having to spell words decreased her motivation to chat at times: “One problem was I have to know the spelling of words that I know what it means, but I don’t know how to spell. Then it is harder and slower than speaking.” Based on Tudini’s (2002) research, poor spelling tends to hinder students’ ability to efficiently interact via chat, but he claimed that forcing them to focus on form in such a way may actually be advantageous to their second language development as they are pushed to experiment with the language.

The lack of body language and facial expressions associated with chatting was mentioned as another factor that decreased student motivation. Kwan expressed his frustration in not being able to resort to various nonverbal strategies to express his intentions while chatting: “When I’m talking, people guess what I try to say and I can say yes or no and I can use my body to say what I mean, but in chatting, I have to keep typing even when I don’t know how to say my points.” Marsha pointed out that not being able to use body language during chat sessions could be an advantage. She reflected that she was forced to think about the verbal expressions instead of relying on her body language while chatting which, she believed, could lead to a faster acquisition of language: “It’s very good

way to learn English, because I can't use body language. So it will make me think about English expressions quickly and help me learn English faster than just talking.”

Accordingly, Payne (2002) suggests that the absence of nonverbal communication can facilitate second language acquisition as students are forced to rely exclusively on verbal communication that tends to push the learners to experiment with the higher levels of language.

Summary of Findings for Question One

The instructor and most of the participants described the chat-based curriculum as an effective means to improve oral proficiency. However, because Kwan and Rose perceived pronunciation skills as a major component of oral proficiency, they did not believe their speaking could improve as a result of participating in a curriculum that does not focus on pronunciation practice. Whereas Kwan and Rose equated oral proficiency with pronunciation skills, others considered it to be much more complex. They viewed oral proficiency as one's ability to communicate freely and effectively using the cognitive processes of planning and preparing language output. Because the slow-paced exchange of chatting provided them with the opportunity to process language in slow motion, most students perceived chatting as an effective way to practice and to prepare for oral language production. They also reported that chatting helped them generate ideas about the topic which facilitated and enriched oral discussions.

Students also spoke positively about incorporating authentic material into the curriculum as a means to provide language input which, according to the instructor, contributed to the high level of student motivation towards the curriculum. The instructor also revealed that students had an added measure of motivation to participate in

discussions, because they were allowed to partake in the topic selection process. Although most students described the curriculum in a positive light, a few students expressed their disappointments with the chatting activity. These students preferred to talk rather than chat because their limited vocabulary, lack of computer knowledge, and/or inability to spell deterred them from participating actively during chat discussions. They also spoke negatively about not being able to rely on nonverbal language to fill their linguistic gaps.

*Discussion of Findings for Question Two:
How do students perceive the tailored classroom instruction designed with the chat transcripts as the basis?
(Category 5)*

The participants, with the exception of Sue Hee, considered tailored instruction to be a crucial component of the curriculum reflecting that learning from their own mistakes was much more personal and effective than learning from commercial materials such as textbooks. Particularly, Rose, Kwan, and Mark showed enthusiasm towards tailoring classroom instructions for their specific needs. Although Rose and Kwan held negative views towards the efficacy of chat-based curriculum on oral proficiency, they responded positively about the tailored instruction. Kwan reported that the instruction that was based on chat transcripts was much more effective and motivating than the traditional classroom instruction. Rose reflected that textbook learning does not necessarily meet her needs: “When I learn from work books, I know some things they are working on, and it waste my time.” In comparison, she commented that learning from her mistakes was much more effective.

Students noted that one of the advantages of chatting was that it allowed them to see their mistakes since chat room exchanges leave a text record. Because most students believed that the language they used during chat sessions resembled their oral language,

identifying errors in chat transcripts helped them identify mistakes that they commonly make in oral language. Mark reported that correcting his mistakes from chat transcripts helped him realize his incessant use of double negatives and incorrect use of prepositions. Although Mark did not feel that this awareness had helped him improve his oral language at the time of the interview, he expected long term effects. Similarly, Juan noticed his problems with subject/verb agreement even though he understood the rules. He claimed that this awareness allowed him to be more focused when he talked and, as a result, he was able to create more fluent oral language output. Hona and Beth also claimed that they were able to realize their habitual errors in their oral language as a result of participating in tailored instructions which made them more cognizant of their oral language output. Juan, Mark, and Beth reflected on the oral conversations that they have had with the native speakers outside of class and lamented that the natives generally do not correct their linguistic errors. Thus, they considered tailored instruction to be invaluable in helping them identify errors in their spoken language which they considered to be critical in moving towards fluency.

Based on the less proficient students' inability to identify some of the most obvious errors in chat transcripts, it is possible that their incorrect use of the language has fossilized in their minds. When asked to identify the errors, Beth responded, "There's nothing wrong with these sentences." This lack of awareness may be related to the lack of proper training in English and/or bad habits that never got addressed. In fact, Marsha referred to her incessant use of *gonna* and *wanna* and explained, "Nobody told me they are wrong." She said the tailored instructions were instrumental in helping her identify bad habits and added that without such guided instructions, she would have continued

speaking “bad English.” With respect to learning from mistakes on chat transcripts, Juan also pointed out that he tended to experiment more with the language knowing that his mistakes will be corrected. According to Chun (1994) and Kern (1995), taking linguistic risks results in more advanced forms of target language production leading to a faster acquisition of the language.

Students commented that the instructor’s recommendations for better choice of words and expressions were extremely beneficial. Marsha elaborated on this point by saying, “This is a good idea because Karen can recommend better way to express something. When she tells me this is the word you should use, I can learn from that.” Hona also revealed that the instructor’s suggestions were very helpful: “She told me to say *open minded* for *their minds are open* and *close-minded* for *their minds are limited*. I didn’t know the better expressions, so it helped me.” Juan said that when the instructor suggested better ways to express his ideas, he tried to apply them at work as well as during oral discussions. Although most students had positive experiences with the tailored instruction, Sue Hee expressed a mixture of feelings. She expressed that while it was interesting to see other students’ mistakes, she was disappointed at the low-level instruction. She did, however, speak favorably about learning how to express ideas more effectively: “What helped me most was when Karen taught us better ways of expressing the ideas.”

The instructor spoke positively about her experience with tailored instruction and described it as “ironing out what the students don’t know”. By examining the chat transcripts, she said that she was able to determine her students’ problem areas: “I took for granted that they know most of the fundamentals, but I’ve learned as an instructor that

they need a lot of help. Through tailored instructions, I was able to target those areas.” She added that by correcting errors as a group, students were able to be more objective about their own skills. Responding to Sue Hee’s negative response about the low level instruction, she said, “I don't think they were too easy for advanced students. No matter how advanced the students, there is always something they can gain from interaction with others.” She considered the tailored instruction a critical component of the curriculum and asserted that students would not be getting the full benefit of the chat sessions without it.

Summary of Findings for Question Two

Most students and the instructor had positive experiences with the tailored instructions that are designed by using chat transcripts as a basis. In comparison to textbook learning, students found the instruction to be more motivating, relevant, and effective. As a result of receiving such instruction, students were able to recognize habitual errors that they tend to make in their oral language. They believed that this awareness would lead to improved oral proficiency and concluded that chatting without the subsequent guided instruction would not have been as effective.

Discussion of Findings for Question Three: How do students describe their motivation to learn English as a result of participating in the chat-based curriculum? (Category 6)

Students described the chat-based curriculum as a “fun and motivating” way to learn English, and the instructor described it as an “innovative multi-sensory approach” to ESL teaching which helped break the monotony from traditional teaching methods. Marsha and Mark referred to the curriculum as a “new way to learn English” and Mark added that he enjoyed the variation in the methods because “it’s not always the same.” Even Hona described chatting as a “fun way to practice English” despite her inability to

participate actively due to her lack of keyboarding skills. Although Rose and Kwan had doubts about the curriculum with respect to its effect on oral proficiency, they found the curriculum to be fun and motivating in general. Juan also expressed that chatting was a “highly motivating and comfortable” way to improve his speaking skills, and Fabian said it was fun because “it was like a game.”

Non-threatening Nature of Chatting

Interviews with the students suggest that the use of chat sessions created a low stress environment for language learning that increased their degree of motivation. Sue Hee discussed this point during her second interview: “Chatting is comfortable. When person is standing in the front, I forget all rules and words because I’m nervous, so maybe I avoid this situation. I can’t get the practice because I avoid this situation.” She explained that in order to gain fluency, she needs to practice speaking in a “comfortable setting” and asserted that chat provided the most conducive environment for this purpose. Marsha revealed that compared to speaking face -to-face, she was less inhibited while chatting which allowed her to experiment with English: “I can make mistakes with English [during chat sessions] and practice until I feel comfortable to speak. No one will care for my mistakes. In class, I am more scared and I don’t like to speak, but in chat room, it’s more fun to speak.” Likewise, Mark also reported that he was not afraid to take a chance while chatting: “I don’t care about making mistakes, because I’m not there.” The instructor also attested that students were “taking more chances” and “running wild with it” due to the low anxiety level associated with chatting. It appeared that students’ level of motivation was increased in the chat environment as they were allowed to experiment with English in absence of social anxiety (Razman & Saito, 1998).

Student data also indicate that they were motivated to express their ideas with candor and honesty due to the impersonal and non-threatening nature of online chatting. Kwan reflected on his experience and commented that chatting created an environment that is open and honest, which made the discussions more fun and motivating:

When I chat, you can say honest things. In class discussion, I am careful, because I don't want to hurt feelings. If face expression is bad, I will stop saying things that hurt them or make them mad, but when I chat, I am honest. So it will be more interesting conversation.

Similarly, Juan reported that with the low anxiety level associated with chatting, he was motivated to express his ideas freely and openly:

I am a shy person, so I like to try expressing my ideas in chat first and then if teacher confirms that my ideas is a good idea, I will express my idea in front of others. The experience of chatting helps me to speak without hiding what I think.

Marsha also remembered that she felt free to express whatever was on her mind without feeling threatened or embarrassed: "I said whatever I wanted to say and I wasn't shy."

Students revealed that decentralization of the instructor's role further encouraged honest and candid expression of emotions during chat discussions. Marta commented that chatting among students without the teacher presence allowed her to be more honest: "Without the teacher, we could talk more to each other and be more honest. This was more fun than the teacher control what we say." Beth added that the absence of negative feedback from the instructor allowed her to be more honest, and Mark reflected that chatting in small groups without the instructor was more fun because it encouraged him and his classmates to share more personal experiences. According to current research,

teacher's decentralized role is known to benefit students as they are given more autonomy to communicate their ideas in a second language (Chun, 1994).

Data from interviews indicate that the low stress level associated with chatting also had the effect of increasing student motivation to participate, which is important in learning a second language. Based on the analysis of chat transcripts, the participation rate was 100% in all chat sessions. In fact, the most reticent students who are least likely to participate during oral discussion participated as much as those who normally dominate classroom discussion. The instructor's observations reflect that for some students, the increased level of participation in chat sessions led to an increased level of participation in small-group oral discussions:

If I visualize the classroom, I see a group of students eager to do something to improve their English. Everyone was willing to participate including the computerphobic ones and the really shy ones like Young Jae [pseudonym of a student who was not selected for this study] who participated so much more than she would have in a conversation in class. What I found interesting was that Marta and Hona participated noticeably more during classroom discussions as a result of participating in the chat room.

This research confirms existing research that chat room has an equalizing effect on participation due to its impersonal and non-threatening nature (Beauvois, 1992; Chun, 1994; Kelm, 1992; Kern, 1995; Sullivan & Pratt, 1996; Warschauer, 1996). Adding to the current knowledge, this study points to the possibility that chatting in small groups might lead to an increased level of participation in classroom discussions.

Socialization

Another motivating factor of the chat-based curriculum was identified as the opportunity for students to establish personal relationships with each other in a comfortable setting of the chat room. Although the class had been in session for two months prior to the study, most students did not know their classmates' names. Hona explained that she did not know any of her classmates due to the lack of opportunity to interact with each other during class. However, she reported that by participating in chat sessions, she was able to "become closer" to her classmates which helped her feel more comfortable while communicating with them orally. As a result, she claimed that she was able to participate progressively more during small group activities. Similarly, Sue Hee revealed that she enjoyed getting to know her classmates intimately while chatting openly about the topics that were personal and interesting. She claimed that the comfort level associated with chatting had transferred to her oral language which led to increased participation during small-group classroom discussions. Beth also thought of chatting as a fun way to practice English while getting to know her classmates: "It's very fun to chat with people. I got to know a lot of people I never talked to in class. It's not like learning. It's like talking with friends."

Although Rose preferred to talk rather than chat, she admitted that chatting was a good way to get to know other people particularly the reticent ones: "I can get to know some people very well, because people that don't talk much in class wrote a lot when chatting on the computer. Without chatting, I don't think I can get to know them shy people." Juan also commented that chatting provided him with the opportunity to socialize with others in a low-stress environment. The instructor observed that as students started to

build personal relationships with one another through their willingness to open up during chat sessions, they began to display more understanding, acceptance, and sensitivity towards one another which resulted in classroom discussions that were more “personal, interesting, and lively.”

Summary of Findings for Question Three

This research confirms findings from other studies that the impersonal nature of chatting created a non-threatening environment for language learners leading to increased level of motivation and participation (Beauvois, 1992, 1993, 1994; Lee, 1998; Sullivan & Pratt). Students displayed heightened motivation during chat sessions as they felt free to experiment with English without the fear of embarrassment or negative feedback from the instructor. The decentralized role of the instructor and the impersonal nature of chatting also encouraged honest and candid conversations among students that resulted in the development of personal relationships. An important finding of this study is that as students developed friendships and built mutual respect by participating in chat sessions, they tended to participate more actively with higher levels of motivation during small-group oral-discussions. Thus, this finding indicates that allowing ESL students to participate in small-group chat discussions might result in an increased level of participation and motivation in subsequent face-to-face discussions.

Discussion of Findings for Question Four: How do students describe the transferability to oral language of linguistic skills gained by participating in online chat sessions? (Category 7)

For most students, apparent similarities between oral and chat language led to the belief that skills gained from chat room interaction transferred to their spoken language resulting in more fluent output. Some explained that assigning the same topic for both oral

and chat discussions facilitated the transfer of relevant vocabulary words and expressions. It is also possible that other factors such as the predictability of lessons, desire to please the researcher (halo effect), increased level of confidence due to practice, and increased comfort level might have contributed to their perception of skills transference. Based on self assessments, all but Kwan and Rose claimed that their linguistic skills transferred from chat to oral language resulting in improved fluency. However, the instructor's informal assessments indicated that only Beth, Sue Hee, and Marsha realized noticeable gain in their ability to communicate orally as a result of participating in the chat-based curriculum.

The instructor referred to the process of chatting as intra-communicating which is communicating with oneself. She claimed that as people intra-communicate during chat sessions while composing messages and reading incoming messages, they are practicing speaking. Consequently, she theorized that the linguistic skills gained by chatting tend to make easy transition to oral language.

Student Perceptions of Skills Transference

Most students claimed to have applied to their oral language the linguistic skills that they had gained by chatting. Beth remembered making attempts to avoid the use of double negatives in her oral language, which was identified as her habitual mistake during chat sessions. She asserted that the skills that she had gained by chatting had transferred to her oral language due to the similarities found between chat and oral language. Although Marta could not provide examples of skills transfer, she was certain that transfer had taken place based on her increased level of confidence when she spoke in small groups. Hona remembered uttering sentences that she had learned from chatting such as, *my husband's*

mother wants to be in the middle of our lives and why aren't you married? during a small-group oral-discussions. She revealed her views on skills transfer by saying, "I use what I learned in speak [I apply to oral language the skill that I learned by chatting], because language is all same." Similarly, Juan claimed that because the experience of chatting is comparable to talking, the skills had definitely transferred in his case. He explained that his awareness of the grammatical errors that he tends to make in his oral language led to improved fluency: "In my work, in this last days ... I feel more comfortable talking. I feel I've improved my speaking mainly because of the chatting experience."

Sue Hee also displayed positive views about the skills transference from chat to oral language and reported that she had been applying to her oral language new words and expressions such as *ambivalent*, *spontaneous*, *take the bait*, and *they think the world revolves around them*. She explained "Everything about language is connected, so grammar, vocabulary, and what I learn, I use in speaking, writing, listening, and reading." Mark also spoke positively about the transference of skills from chat to oral language and remembered applying to oral language a few words that he had learned while chatting such as *naive* and *pompous*. Although he claimed that his new knowledge of vocabulary had transferred to his oral language, he did not believe that such transfer had taken place with his new grammar skills during the course of this study. He explained that more time was needed to process his new knowledge of grammar, but he was certain that transference would take place eventually. Like Sue Hee, he also theorized that linguistic skills transfer among "writing, reading, speaking, and listening, because they are all related." On the contrary, Rose and Kwan held negative views about skill transference, and their sentiments remained largely unchanged throughout the study.

Observations on Skills Transference

Based on the instructor's informal assessments, three out of eight participants displayed improvement in their oral language as a result of participating in the chat-based curriculum indicating that their linguistic skills had transferred from chat to oral language. The researcher's observation log confirmed Beth's claim that the linguistic skills gained from chatting had transferred to her spoken language. The researcher noted that during Beth's second interview, she deliberated more before she spoke suggesting that she was more aware of her language output. She identified many of her grammatical mistakes and made constant corrections as she spoke. The instructor's log suggested that Marsha had also gained improvement in her fluency as well as her level of confidence in speaking in front of others. As a result of participating in the curriculum, she was also able to participate more actively in small-group oral-discussions. Researcher's notes, however, revealed that Marsha had not realized improvement in her ability to communicate orally although she displayed more awareness of her mistakes by constantly correcting herself as she spoke. The researcher and the instructor agreed that Hona had gained confidence in her ability to speak in front of others as a result of participating in the curriculum which led to the increased level of participation during small-group oral-discussions. However, Hona had not gained noticeable improvement in oral language based on the researcher's and the instructor's informal assessments.

Researcher's notes indicated that improvement in Juan's ability to communicate orally was not readily apparent although he appeared to be extremely comfortable speaking in front of his classmates. Instructor's reflection notes also suggested that Juan appeared more comfortable participating in class towards the end of the study. The

instructor speculated that because Juan started out with very high level of fluency, she was unable to notice any improvement due to the ceiling effect: There is very little room for improvement in his case. Furthermore, the instructor's observation log confirmed Sue Hee's claim that she was able to speak with more ease and fluency as a result of participating in the new curriculum. Both the instructor and the researcher noticed fewer pauses in her speech which indicated that she was processing English faster. Based on the researcher's and the instructor's informal assessments, Rose, Mark, and Kwan had not realized much improvement in their oral language.

Summary of Findings for Question Four

Most students reported that linguistic skills gained from chat interactions had transferred to their oral language, and the instructor felt that Beth, Sue Hee, and Marsha had realized some gain in their ability to communicate orally as a result. Without empirical study, however, subjectivity associated with self assessments and the instructor's informal assessments of oral proficiency cannot be substantiated. Further investigation is necessary to examine whether students' linguistic skills gained by participating in small-group chat discussions transfer to oral language leading to improved oral proficiency. This would be an important investigation, because there has not been any studies that tested the transferability of skills between chat and oral language for English learners, although previous empirical studies have confirmed the transference of skills from oral to chat language for students learning Spanish (Lee, 1998), German (Abrams, 2003), and French (Beauvois, 1996).

*Discussion of Findings for Question Five:
What is the nature of chat room language? How does it compare to oral language?
(Category 8)*

Student Perceptions: Comparing Oral Language with Chat Language

Although chatting involves written language devoid of changes in voice, facial expressions, body language, or spatial context, all eight participants except Hona claimed that chatting is closer to oral than written communication. They supported their claim by drawing on the similarities between oral and chat language such as communication occurring in real-time without the presence of the interlocutors and the use of conversational language. Kwan and Beth reported that they were less concerned about the rules of the language when they chatted and were more concerned about getting the message across which further reinforced their belief that chatting is similar to speaking. Furthermore, Sue Hee pointed out that chat language is in short phrases similar to spoken language whereas language used in writing is in full, formal sentences, concluding that chat language more closely resembles oral language than written language. Contradicting this claim, Hona considered the possibility that chatting may be closer to writing because when chatting, (1) one can erase and edit, (2) one has to focus on the rules of the language, and (3) one does not have to worry about pronunciation. However, Hona displayed hesitation and uncertainty about this consideration and referred to chatting as *talking* during her second interview indicating her ambivalence.

Reflecting on their chat experience, many of the participants drew a parallel between chatting and having an oral conversation. Marsha claimed that chatting is similar to talking on the phone without the presence of the interlocutor, and the only difference was that chatting involved typing rather than speaking. During chat sessions, Beth felt that

someone was speaking to her through a computer voice, Mark remembered hearing himself talk while typing, Kwan felt as if he were having a quiet conversation, and Juan claimed to have had conversations with inner voices. This data indicate that most of the participants were conscious of their subvocalization (Payne, 1999) of the language that they produced in the chat room. Some participants reported that they overtly vocalized the incoming and outgoing messages, and others remembered speaking silently to themselves as they were composing and reading messages. Accordingly, during a chat-based focus group interview, Juan and Sue Hee noticed that they were moving their lips as they communicated with each other.

Most students considered chatting to be similar to having an oral conversation. This study points to the possibility that chatting might enhance the development of speaking skills through the experience of vocalizing typed messages that are conversational in nature. This study confirms current knowledge that interacting in chat room fosters communicative fluency, because the type of language used in chat room strongly resembles oral language (Chun, 1994; Sotillo, 2000; Tudini, 2002).

Evidence of Similarities Between Chat Language and Oral Language

Through the analysis of chat transcripts, the researcher was able to confirm existing research that chat language shares many of the properties of oral language. Similar to speaking, chatting involves the use of conversational language which occurs synchronously, requiring a rapid production of language. Consequently, hedges (*like, you know, sort of, etc.*) that indicate speakers' struggle to choose the appropriate words were found in chat language as well.

In addition to the use of hedges, chat language involved the use of inexplicit third-person neuter pronouns such as *it*, *this*, or *that* which is most prevalent in oral language. Chafe and Danielewics explain that speakers not only have less time to choose vocabulary, but they also cannot take the time to be explicit about to what they are referring. Thus, they tend to use a lot of inexplicit third-person neuter pronouns in oral language. Similarly, chatters used numerous third-person neuter pronouns as they had less time to be explicit about what they are referring to while communicating in real time.

Another property of oral language is the use of coordinating conjunctions that chain together short phrases. According to Chafe and Danielewics, casual speakers tend to produce simple intonation units joined together by coordinating conjunctions, avoiding the elaborate syntax which requires more processing time than speakers can devote to it. In the current study, numerous coordinating conjunctions were identified in chat transcripts.

Other indicators of oral language such as colloquial expressions, self-repairs, clarification requests, topic initiation, and paralinguistic features were also found in chat transcripts which further suggests that chat language is similar to oral language.

Summary of Findings for Question Five

Students perceived chat language resembled oral language due to the apparent similarities such as the use of colloquial language and the synchronous nature of communication. Their experience of vocalizing incoming and outgoing messages further reinforced their belief that chatting resembles speaking. The analysis of chat transcripts substantiates students' claim that chat language is similar to oral language. Properties of oral language such as the use of hedges, inexplicit references, and coordinating conjunctions were found in chat language that indicates that chat language shares similar

properties with oral language. Other indicators of spoken language such as colloquial expressions, self-repairs, clarification requests, topic initiation, and paralinguistic features found in chat transcripts provide further evidence. Based on samples of chat data and student evaluations, this study supports findings from previous qualitative research that language produced while chatting resembles oral language (Chun, 1994; Sotillo, 2000; and Tudini, 2002). However, to date, there has not been any empirical study to confirm this claim.

Summary

This chapter presented the profiles of the eight participants selected for this study and their preconceptions and reactions towards the chat-based curriculum. The results of the chat transcript analysis, conducted to investigate the nature of chat language, were presented as well as the discussion of the five guiding questions posted at the out set of this study.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

Summary

This study investigated how college-level ESL students perceived chat-based curriculum as a means to prepare for oral communication. Eight ESL students enrolled in a community college were selected to share their experiences with the chat-based curriculum specifically developed for this study. The curriculum was based on the sociolinguistic perspective of second language learning which emphasizes the importance of communicating effectively with other speakers in a socially appropriate manner. Qualitative data such as observational notes, questionnaires, and transcripts of one-on-one and focus group interviews were analyzed to examine student perceptions about the curriculum. Secondary investigation involved comparing the properties of language produced during chat sessions with the properties of oral language that are established in Chafe and Danielewics' study (1987). The purpose of this analysis was to investigate whether students' linguistic skills gained by participating in chat sessions would naturally transition to their spoken language due to the similarities found between chat language and oral language.

The study was guided by the following questions: How do students and the instructor describe their experiences with the chat-based curriculum designed to prepare for oral communication? How do students perceive the tailored classroom instructions designed with the chat transcripts as the basis? How do students describe their motivation to learn English as a result of participating in the chat-based curriculum? How do students describe the transferability to oral language of linguistic skills gained by participating in

online chat sessions? What is the nature of chat room language? How does it compare to oral language?

Major Findings

Most of the students and the instructor described the chat-based curriculum as an effective means to prepare for oral communication. However, two students who perceived pronunciation skills as the dominant component of oral proficiency did not believe that their speaking had improved as a result of participating in the curriculum that did not focus on pronunciation practice. Others viewed oral proficiency as one's ability to communicate freely and effectively using the cognitive processes of planning and preparing language output. Thus, they described chatting as an effective way to prepare for oral communication due to the opportunity to practice language output in slow-motion. Students' views on whether chat-based curriculum is an effective means to prepare for oral communication hinged on the way they defined oral proficiency.

Most students and the instructor had positive experiences with the tailored instructions that are designed by extracting common patterns of errors from chat room transcripts. In comparison to text book learning, students found the instruction to be more motivating, relevant, and effective. An important finding is that as a result of receiving such instruction, students became aware of habitual errors that they tend to make in oral language and reported that this awareness had contributed to improved oral fluency. Students concluded that chatting without tailored instruction would not have been as effective.

This research confirms findings from other studies that the impersonal nature of chatting created a non-threatening environment for language learners leading to increased

level of motivation and participation (Beauvois, 1992, 1993, 1994; Lee, 1998; Sullivan & Pratt). Students displayed heightened motivation during chat sessions as they felt free to experiment with English without the fear of embarrassment or negative feedback from the instructor. The decentralized role of the instructor and the impersonal nature of chatting also encouraged honest and candid conversations among students that resulted in the development of personal relationships. An important finding of this study is that as students developed friendships and built mutual respect by participating in chat sessions, they tend to participate more actively with higher level of motivation during small-group oral discussions. Thus, this finding suggests that allowing ESL students to participate in small-group chat discussion sessions might result in increased levels of participation and motivation in subsequent face-to-face discussion sessions.

Most students provided evidence of linguistic skills transfer from chat to oral language and claimed that they had improved their ability to communicate orally as a result of such transfer. Based on informal assessments, the instructor supported three students' claims that they had realized some improvement in their ability to communicate orally. However, due to the subjective nature of self assessments and the instructor's informal assessments of students' oral proficiency, further investigation is necessary to examine whether linguistic skills transfer from chat to oral language leading to improved oral proficiency.

Students believed that the linguistic skills gained from chat interactions had naturally transitioned to their spoken language due to the similarities between chat language and oral language such as the use of colloquial language and the synchronous nature of communication. Their experience of vocalizing incoming and outgoing messages

further reinforced their belief that chatting resembles speaking. The analysis of chat transcripts confirms students' claim that chat language is similar to oral language. Properties of oral language such as the use of hedges, inexplicit references, limited lexical variety, and conjunctions were found in chat language that indicate that chat language shares properties of oral language. Other indicators of spoken language such as colloquial expressions, self-repairs, clarification requests, topic initiation, and paralinguistic features found in chat transcripts provide further evidence. Based on samples of chat data and student perceptions, this study supports findings from previous qualitative research that language produced while chatting resembles oral language (Chun, 1994; Sotillo, 2000; and Tudini, 2002).

Implications for the Classroom

The findings of this study may have implications for ESL instructors who are planning to integrate a chat-based curriculum. Based on data from this study, students had increased motivation to participate in discussions, because they were allowed to partake in the topics selection process. This study suggests that to increase student motivation, instructors should consider allowing students to vote from predetermined topics that they find interesting and relevant to their experiences.

Locating authentic materials relating to the chosen topics may require effort, but incorporating *Oprah* shows, personal essays, and guest speakers into the curriculum piqued student interest about the topics and generated ideas for discussion. Selecting authentic material should be done with caution, however. Unless the instructor selects materials that are appropriate to the learners' level and interests, students could lose motivation and confidence. Starting out with television programs is recommended due to

the context and the visual stimulation that they provide. Then, the instructor can consider other options such as magazine/newspaper articles, radio shows, brochures, essays, guest speakers, etc. that reflect everyday uses of English.

Based on the results of this study, chat sessions effectively facilitated and enriched oral discussions by helping students generate ideas about the topic and by allowing them to practice language output. This suggests that chat sessions should precede face-to-face discussions. Integrating chat sessions takes careful planning and preparation. Instructors must invest time in becoming familiar with the chat application, so they can assist students and program chat groups assignments. They must take time to train students prior to using the chat application and be accessible to provide guidance during chat sessions. Otherwise, technophobes' negative attitudes towards computers may cause negative feelings toward the course. To accommodate students who are not proficient on the computer, a step-by-step instruction sheet with basic commands should be provided. In addition to computer training, instructors should discuss the guidelines for chat sessions such as restricting abbreviations and shortcuts, giving slow typists and/or less proficient classmates time to respond, and practicing common online courtesies to help groups build a sense of community.

Organizing chat groups requires thought and careful planning. Although some researchers recommend chat group size of three or four (Payne, 2002; McGuire, 1997), students in this study found that groups of four caused confusion and chaos. Thus, groups of two or three students are recommended. Assigning groups based on diverse representation of proficiency levels showed adverse effects in this study. Lower level students felt threatened and overwhelmed by the fast pace of the interaction, and higher

level students showed disappointments in the slow responses of low level students. Thus, this study suggests that students should be grouped based on similar proficiency levels. Additionally, it would be unwise to group together students with the same native language. Chat transcript data indicate that students with same the native language tend to resort to communicating in native language when they run into difficulties. Within these boundaries, groups should be reorganized weekly to ensure variation in group dynamics.

Incorrect use of English should be extracted from chat transcripts and used as a basis for designing classroom instructions. Instructors should allow opportunity for students to correct their errors from chat transcripts, clarify students' lack of comprehension of the given text, provide grammar rule explanations based on common patterns of errors, and provide alternate words or expressions to clarify the idea that they were trying to convey while chatting. During these classroom instructions, effort should be made to maintain anonymity of chatters to avoid stigmatizing the students.

This study suggests that classroom instruction should follow oral discussion. The topic that was assigned to the chat session should be assigned to this follow-up oral discussion as well, so that the ideas generated online can serve as the basis for the oral discussion. Students should be assigned to groups of three or four in a "zig-zag" style grouping, with each member of the group representing a different chat group. The purpose of such grouping is to encourage participation of all group members by asking them to speak on behalf of their chat groups. To further ensure active participation of all group members, they should be allowed to work together towards a mutual cause. One of the ways to achieve this is to engage them in a task-based activity. In this study, groups were asked to come up with a few ideas or solutions to a problem, but endless types of tasks

could be assigned for chat room discussions. Instructors should experiment with the task design in order to discover what types of tasks work best for their students.

A final recommendation is to involve native speakers in chat sessions once students feel comfortable interacting with one another. Students may benefit from interacting with one another in the beginning, because they need to practice producing the language in a low stress environment. However, they may later benefit from interacting with the natives, since the natives can serve as a model for correct language form as well as a cultural informant from whom the learners can learn interesting aspects of the American culture.

Limitations

The qualitative nature of this study precluded the use of a large sample. This study only involved a small sample of advanced-level ESL students. It is possible that a study conducted in a different context could produce varying results. Further study is needed to explore how different proficiency or grade level ESL students are affected by participating in the chat-based curriculum.

Learners' improvement on oral proficiency is difficult to detect in a short term study such as this one. A longitudinal experimental study involving a control group and sufficient sample size is needed to effectively measure the change in learners' oral proficiency level. Although data indicate possible transfer of skills from chat to oral language, the subjective nature of data from self-reports and teacher assessments lack validity. A valid and reliable oral proficiency measuring instrument such as the Basic Inventory of Natural Language (BINL) should be administered before and after treatment in a controlled environment in order to substantiate the claim made in this study.

Due to the interpretive nature of qualitative research, a claim can not be made that these findings will be generalizable to other college-level ESL classes. Thus, the responsibility of making generalizations will be left to the readers, so that they can determine whether the findings presented in this study are applicable to their situation (Wilson, 1979). The participants and the contexts are thoroughly described in this study, so that the readers can determine the similarities between the situation in this study and the situation of interest to them.

Recommendations for Research

The complexity involved in learning a language leaves many areas open for research. One possible area to explore further is the effect of chat-based curriculum on reading and writing. Similarities found between oral and chat language led to the belief that chatting results in improved oral proficiency. However, the process of chatting involves reading and composing messages which could have implications on ESL students' reading and writing skills. A close examination on the effects of chat-based curriculum on ESL students' reading and writing skills would provide better understanding about the benefits of the curriculum.

Replication of the present study in a two-group design involving a control group of ESL students and sufficient sample size would allow for more robust comparisons. A longitudinal experimental study using a valid and reliable oral-proficiency measuring-instrument would effectively confirm the findings of this study.

Future studies should also examine how different proficiency or grade level ESL students are affected by participating in the chat-based curriculum. Research concentrating on which proficiency or grade level of students benefit the most in the chat-based

curriculum might be useful. Differences in students' personality types could also impact attitudes towards participating in chat-based curriculum. Data from the current study indicate that the two most outgoing students, Kwan and Rose, were most resistant to the chatting activity because they preferred to talk with people in person. Contrarily, the reticent students valued the experience of communicating behind the scenes. Future studies should examine more extensively how different personality types are affected by the chat-based curriculum. Similarly, future studies should investigate how different learning styles, culture, gender, and native language of students impact attitudes towards participating in a chat-based curriculum.

Finally, additional studies should analyze the types of tasks that can be utilized in the chat environment. This study limited itself to one particular type of a task, but endless types of language tasks could be assigned for chat room discussions. Future studies should experiment with different types of task design in order to discover what types of tasks work best for the chat room environment.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 7.1

North Carolina State University
INFORMED CONSENT FORM
For Students

Title of Study: Implementing the Synchronous Computer-Mediated-Communication in the College-Level ESL Class: A Sociolinguistic Perspective

Principal Investigator: Yuna Lee

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Ruie Pritchard and Dr. Ellen Vasu

Your class has been selected to participate in a research study involving online chat room from March 14th to April 22, 2005. The purpose of this study is to determine whether participating in small group chat room discussions is a good practice for oral communication. For five weeks, you will participate in a curriculum designed specifically for this study. Activities will be similar to what are typically offered in an ESL speaking class with the addition of participating in small group online chat room discussions and receiving tailored classroom instructions based on chat room transcripts. Also, eight students will be asked to agree to be interviewed before and after the study period.

You will be asked to agree to the following terms:

- to fill out a questionnaire on March 7, 2005 to provide information about your personal background, your experience of learning English, your attitudes towards learning English, and your experience of using the chat room
- to possibly participate in a one-on-one interview during the week of March 7, 2005 to discuss your preconceived ideas about integrating the chat room into an ESL listening and speaking class
- to possibly participate in a one-on-one interview during the week of April 25th, 2005 to discuss your perceptions and reflections about participating in small group chat room discussions as a practice for oral communication
- to participate in a chat room focus group interview either on April 28th or 29th to discuss about your experience of using the chat room in an ESL class
- to grant the researcher access to the chat room transcripts
- to review the researcher's analysis and interpretation of the data for accuracy during the first week of June (can be done via email)

The information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential in the following ways:

- Data from the interviews, questionnaire, and observations will be stored securely and will be made available only to the researcher unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise.
- When transcribing individual interviews, identifying codes will be assigned.
- Identifying codes will be assigned to chat room transcripts.
- When reporting the findings of this study, pseudonyms will be used.
- The name of the institution will not be identified.
- The interviews will be audio taped, and the audiotapes will be destroyed after the completion of the study.

Although there will not be any major risks to you for participating in this study, you may feel anxious about using the chat room if you are not computer literate. Thus, I will ensure that you receive proper training prior to the study. You may also feel stress and anxiety from being interviewed, so I will not interview you unless you sign this consent form. During the interview, you are not required to state anything that might make you feel uncomfortable. Your responses to the interviews and the questionnaire will not affect your grades in any way, and will not be shared by your teacher.

You may produce more language during chat room discussions than during face-to-face classroom discussions due to the non-threatening nature of the chat room environment. This is a potential benefit, because according to research, more practice in language production leads to faster acquisition. Additionally, receiving tailored classroom instructions can be another obvious benefit for you.

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Yuna Lee, at 118 Fox Briar Lane Cary, NC 27511, or 919-859-2871. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this consent form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. Matthew Zingraff, Chair of the NCSU IRB for the Use of Human Subjects in Research Committee, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/513-1834) or Mr. Matthew Ronning, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Research Administration, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/513-2148)

I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Subject's signature_____ Date _____

Investigator's signature_____
Date _____

APPENDIX 7.2

Learner Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions as honestly as you can. Your answers to this questionnaire will not affect your grade in this course. If you are uncertain about any of the questions, please ask the researcher.

Student Identifying Code: _____

Phone Number/E-mail: _____

Gender: _____

Age: _____

Native language: _____

Ethnicity: _____

Level of education: _____

Reasons for taking this course _____

Briefly describe your experience with English (i.e, years of study, exposure to American media, contact with English speakers)

Motivation level in learning English (circle your choice):

- I am extremely motivated to learn the English language.
- I am very motivated to learn the English language.
- I am somewhat motivated to learn the English language.
- I am not very motivated to learn the English language.
- I am not at all motivated to learn the English language.

Comfort level with computers (circle your choice):

- I am extremely comfortable with computers.
- I am very comfortable with computers.
- I am somewhat comfortable with computers.
- I am not very comfortable with computers.
- I am uncomfortable with computers and do not like to use them.

I use the computer for following purposes: (please list)

Have you ever participated in online chat discussion sessions? If so, in what language and for what purpose?

Do you think participating in chat room discussions is a good way to learn English? Do you think it is an effective way to improve your speaking skills? Please explain.

APPENDIX 7.3

Student Interview Guide #1

1. Please share your experience with online chat room. Did you use it in any of the classes? Do you chat online with friends or family?
2. If you have chatted before, please describe any incidental learning that has occurred as a result of chatting online. Did you learn vocabulary, grammar, or any other communicative skills that you did not expect to learn by chatting?
3. If you have chatted before, how do you think participating in chat sessions helped you improve your oral communication skills, if at all?
4. Provide examples of the skills that you think can be gained by participating in chat sessions. Do you think those skills would transfer to your oral language?
5. Do you think the experience of chatting would be more comparable to speaking or writing? Please explain.
6. Please explain whether you think your motivation towards learning English could improve as a result of participating in the chat-based curriculum.
7. What benefits do you foresee in receiving classroom instructions that are based on common errors from chat transcripts?

APPENDIX 7.4

Teacher Interview Guide #1

1. Please share your chat room experience.
2. What do you think about incorporating Oprah shows, personal essays, and a guest speaker into the curriculum? How do you think these materials could affect your students' motivation level?
3. Provide examples of the skills that your students might be able to gain by participating in small-group chat sessions. Do you think these skills could transfer to oral language?
4. Explain whether student motivation level could improve as a result of participating in a chat-based curriculum.
5. What benefits do you foresee in providing classroom instructions that are based on errors from chat transcripts?
6. Please provide a description of each key participant in terms of their motivation level towards learning English, class participation/involvement, English proficiency level, personality, etc.

APPENDIX 7.5

Student Interview Guide #2

1. What did you think about incorporating Oprah shows, personal essays, and a guest speaker into the curriculum? How did these materials affect your motivation level?
2. Please describe your experience of participating in chat discussion sessions in comparison to oral discussion sessions. Comment on your participation level, comfort level, motivation, pace of conversation, turn taking, etc.
3. What specific aspects of chatting, if any, helped you improve your skills in English?
4. In your opinion, is chatting more like speaking or writing? Please explain.
5. Please explain whether participating in chat sessions was a good practice for oral language development. More specifically, how do you think participating in chat discussions helped you prepare for face-to-face discussions?
6. If you chat for an hour every day, do you think your speaking will improve? Why or why not?
7. Can you think of any grammar structures, vocabulary words, idioms, expressions, or any other linguistic skills that you might have gained by participating in chat sessions? Did you incorporate them into your oral language? (did you apply them while talking?)
8. What did you like the most and the least about participating in chat sessions?
9. Please explain how you felt about receiving classroom instruction that was designed based on chat transcripts. What did you like and dislike about such instructions?
10. Please describe your experience with the small-group face-to-face discussions. What did you think about the tasks that were assigned?
11. How were you able to apply to oral discussions the ideas generated during chat sessions?
12. Please explain any change in your motivation towards learning English that might have resulted from participating in the curriculum.
13. Is there anything else that you would like to share regarding the curriculum and your experience with the research study?

APPENDIX 7.6

Focus Group Interview Guide

1. Please share what you liked and disliked about the chat-based curriculum?
2. Please share how participating in chat sessions helped you prepare for subsequent classroom discussions?
3. Discuss with each other whether you think your speaking skills will improve as a result of chatting for an hour every day? Please explain.
4. Please share your thoughts about the classroom instructions that were designed based on chat transcripts? Do you think this was an effective way to learn English?
5. Please discuss whether you think participating in the chat-based curriculum improved your motivation to learn English.
6. How could the chat-based curriculum be improved?

APPENDIX 7.7

Teacher Interview Guide #2

1. What did you think about incorporating Oprah shows, personal essays, and a guest speaker into the curriculum? How did these materials affect your students' motivation level?
2. What specific aspects of chatting, if any, do you think helped your students to improve their skills in English?
3. Please describe whether you think participating in chat sessions is a good practice for oral language development. More specifically, how do you think participating in chat sessions helped your students prepare for classroom discussions?
4. Can you think of any specific linguistic skills such as grammar structures, vocabulary words, or expressions that might have transferred from your students' chat language to oral language? In other words, did you notice your students applying to oral language the skills that they might have gained from participating in chat sessions?
5. Please describe your experience of providing classroom instructions that were designed based on chat transcripts. How did your students respond? What were the advantages and disadvantages? How did it compare to teaching from commercial material?
6. What did you think about the tasks that were assigned to small-group face-to-face discussions? Do you think the tasks effectively encouraged active participation of all group members as they were allowed to work together towards a mutual cause?
7. Explain whether your students were able to apply to oral discussions the ideas generated during chat sessions?
8. Please explain any changes in your students' motivation level towards learning English that might have resulted from participating in the curriculum.
9. What aspects of this curriculum went well? What could we have done differently to improve the curriculum?

APPENDIX 7.8

Teacher Observation Guide

Chat Sessions

- Describe the physical setting of the lab.
- Comment on students' apparent anxiety level (e.g. tapping of the feet, tense facial expressions, lip biting, fist making, sweating, etc.).
- Comment on students' apparent engagement level (e.g. facial expressions, laughter, exchanging glances, talking, whispering, looking at the clock, etc.).
- Record student comments, requests for assistance, off-task activities, etc.
- How do students participate? Are students engaged in reading and typing messages? Is anyone not on task?
- How do students behave when the class ends? Do they continue typing or do they rush out the door?
- Record any other observations.

Tailored Classroom Instructions

- Provide a description of the physical setting including seating arrangements.
- Comment on students' apparent engagement level (e.g. facial expressions, posture, body language, looking at the clock, other off-task activities, etc.).
- How do students participate during the instruction? Are they able to identify the errors? Do they volunteer to correct the errors? Do they ask questions?
- How do students work in pairs? Are they friendly to each other? Do they share ideas?
- Record student comments regarding the errors from transcripts.
- Record any other observations.

Small Group Oral Discussions

- Provide a description of the physical setting including seating arrangements.
- Comment on students' apparent engagement/motivation level. (e.g. facial expression, posture, body language, tone of voice, looking at the clock, other off-task activities, etc.)
- How do students participate in their groups? Did the level of participation change for any student since the beginning of the study?
- Describe the dynamics of each group. How do students interact with each other? Are they agreeable, argumentative, or removed? Are they tense or relaxed? Are they friendly or antagonistic?
- How are students prepared to discuss the issues? Are they knowledgeable about the topics? Do students make references to their chat discussions?

- How do students behave when the class ends? Is there a group that stays later to continue with the discussion? Is there a group that starts packing to leave before the class ends?

APPENDIX 7.9

Chat Discussion Transcript

Archive for Group 2

Discussion Topic: Discrimination

Sue Hee (pseudonym) has entered. [11:43:44 AM]

Juan (pseudonym) has entered. [11:44:02 AM]

Sue Hee >Hi

Juan > Hi Sue Hee

Sue Hee >I'm ready

Juan > Ok, what do you think about the first question?

Juan > Let's think about the issue about racial discrimination. What do you think?

Sue Hee > why do you think racial discrimination exists?

Juan > I would like to think in one element. It would be the need of having a group which gives us a security

Sue Hee >what are you talking about?

Juan > I mean, everyone of us needs a group which listen to our opinions, and sometimes it does not matter if that group practices the racial discrimination

Sue Hee >I still don't understand what you are talking about.

Juan > okay, forget it. What do you think racial discrimination exists for?

Sue Hee >I think it should be eliminated

Juan > yes me too, but sometimes that would depend on each one

Sue Hee >I think we have learned racial discrimination little by little since we were young.

Juan > yes, children very early don't have that idea in their minds

Sue Hee >I worked in kindergarten as teacher for 2 years, at that time, I found it interesting that 5 year old children don't have any racial discrimination, but 7 year old children do.

Sue Hee > isn't that interesting?

Sue Hee >what do you think?

Juan > interesting, sad, but at the same time I think it dawned on me: the hope is in the children, depending on how we are aware of that

Juan > yesterday I was watching a video, very sad, about the economical discrimination in south America, and it was very powerfull that children there are learning to hate before learning to read

Juan > you said discrimination should be eliminated. What do you think it would be the best way to eliminate that?

Sue Hee > that's sad. According to children development research, 7 year old children like fiends who have white skin more than friends who have dark skin.

Sue Hee > okay, I caught what you said

Sue Hee > let's got to second question. What do you think about how it starts?

Juan > I think it starts in the family,

Sue Hee > i agree with you.

Juan > but not just in the family. We also have to ask to ourselves, how does it start other than family.

Sue Hee > it also start in education from parents and teachers

Juan > so we have to think in the society

Sue Hee > mass media also influence on that

Juan > Yes. I SSSSSuuuuuuper agree

Juan > for example I watch a lot of racial discrimination sometimes in MTV

Sue Hee > when we watch tv, we are likely to believe that everything on tv is right.

Juan > and children watch that

Juan > maybe the most of the time, mass media make generalizations about different people, and culture

Sue Hee > right. Children just believe what they see on tv because they are like sponge, so they accept many things without doubt.

Juan > but how we could protest about that kind of tv programs with racial things?

Sue Hee > some programs is full of baloney on tv, but children believe everything the tv shows.

Juan > what do you think about the last question. Do you agree?

Sue Hee > well, I think parent's role is very important when children try to kick it around with their parents.

Sue Hee > children learn and acquire information about different country and different culture from their parents.

Juan > so the problem would be the adult's problem

Sue Hee > yes, parents try to educate their children well and I think parents have to think about how they teach their children race.

Juan > would you like your child to marry someone from different race?

Juan > I think you love learning about other cultures. I admire you because of that

Sue Hee > eh...I am very interested in learning different culture and different language, but... I want my child to marry someone from same race

Sue Hee > I think accepting different culture and race is very good way to eliminate racial discrimination, but I don't want it to be connected to marriage.

Juan > oh, that's very interesting. I had not thought about that

Sue Hee > because we have to consider many things to have the happy marriage.

Sue Hee > time to go. It was nice chatting with you.

Juan > okay sue, it was a pleasure. bye.

Chat Discussion Transcript

(Week 3)

Discussion Topic: World's Perceptions About the U. S.

Gonzalez (pseudonym) has entered [11:16:02 AM]

Marcos (pseudonym) has entered [11 17:00 AM]

Yan (pseudonym) has entered [1118:34 AM]

Yan > hello! Everyone!!! I'm here!!!

Marcos> Hello yan who else is here?

Gonzalez> me. Okay, let's talk about north americans

Yan > ok

Marcos> yes

Gonzalez> what do you about people from USA?

Gonzalez> think!

Gonzalez> Where are you sitting yan?

Yan > I'm in second row. Next marta

Gonzalez> a ok! I see you now!! It's confusing keep your name, because korean people have similar names for me!!

Yan > that's funny ^^

Gonzalez> okay I saw you both!! Let's start now

Marcos> what did you think about americans people before you came here, yan?

Yan > um...some american people are god but others are not...

Gonzalez> well, people here in my opinion is not firmly, but now when I can speak better I understand a little more his life

Gonzalez> do you know I'm married with american girl

Yan > oh, really?? I didn't know that...

Gonzalez> yes!! But we speak only spanish at home so she can learn but that's bad for me you know

Marcos> what kind of food she like to cook?

Gonzalez> nothing!!!

Gonzalez> mc donals!!! And burger king.

Gonzalez> she is not a good cooker

Marcos> that kind of food is not food to me

Marcos> i like to eat it sometimes, but not every day

Gonzalez> I don't have choice!!!

Marcos> in my case, my wife and I cook our food

Gonzalez> well sometimes she cook good dishes but not every day

Marcos> what kind of food you eat, yan?

Yan > I eat rice, vegetables, kimchi, not much meat. I am almost vegetarian

Marcos> do you cook that food?

Yan > yes...

Marcos> what do you think about american food?

Yan > I don't like it. It's too much oil

Gonzalez> returning to the culture these people are difficult to understand, they never read about the world, they only want to know this country

Gonzalez> the world is indifferent for the majority

Yan > I think they are selfish...

Marcos> I agree, that is the way that the education work here

Yan > in history, they kill many people for their advantage

Marcos> and still doing

Yan > yes

Gonzalez> really selfish even my wife, because she learned spanish and she doesn't want to talk to me in english. She doesn't care about me learn english.

Gonzalez> you're right and still killing people for his benefits

Marcos> they use all their power to convert all countries in democracy

Yan > yes, they really do that

Marcos> they think democracy is open commerce with USA

Gonzalez> that's the idea

Gonzalez> business and business, more money and money

Marcos> all was that USA are involve is for business

Gonzalez> they don't know about geography or history for other countries

Yan > nobody know where Korea is located

Marcos> they like to use all natural resources around the world before use their own ones

Yan > that's not good and they cause many pollutions

Gonzalez> different cultures are very really good but these guys want to put his own culture in the world.

Gonzalez> they never call protocol of kioto

Gonzalez> in general USA never sign for safe nature.. only wars

Gonzalez> and people here look same

Marcos> I was reading that some people are joining for hunting mexicans in the border to protect this country like animal hunting

Gonzalez> but the government says nothing! we are people not animals!!!

Yan > crazy...

Gonzalez> but when one american killed in other country they start war immediately

Marcos> they protect their people

Gonzalez> one american is equal to 1000 people for other country.

Gonzalez> there are more important culture than this... for example chinese, egyptian, mayas, aztecs, etc. real cultures not immigrant like this country.

Marcos> it's impossible to have culture if they don't read about our cultures and learn that we are different. There are so many cultures that are thousands of years old and have so much to learn from that

Gonzalez> okay it was pleasure to talk to you, but I think it is time to go...

Yan > ok, bye you too.

Marcos> bye...

APPENDIX 7.10

Tailored Instruction

* Procedure: Students work independently on the following worksheet created from extracting awkward and incorrect use of the language from chat transcript. Students are asked to rewrite the sentences and to cross-check their answers with a partner. The instructor reviews each item by eliciting responses from students.

Correct the following sentences/phrases.

1. peace of paper _____
2. I am marriage for ten years. _____
3. Other important things are the jealous.

4. People can have family without married.

5. I think fight in front of the children is the worst.

6. So, you think that marriage should be based in romance?

7. I think there are some problems about different of personality.

8. Have you ever regret to marry?

9. One of the big problem that couple have...

10. What is your suggestion live with marriage or without marriage?

11. What do you think to exchange gifts for no reason?

12. Welcome to join us and discuss. _____

13. I'm here for give him a class of passion.

14. They want to be middle of our life. _____
15. You not interested in get married? _____
16. That will be extremly bored. _____
17. Have you think to get married? _____
18. The first years in any couple are difficult because just start really knowing each other.

19. That problem was also before marriage. _____
20. I think that nobody cannot happy all the time.

* The instructor introduces appropriate expressions that could be used to clarify an idea and by suggesting alternate choice of words that may be more appropriate. The following suggestion sheet is provided to the students to use as a reference.

Instructor's Suggestions

Peace of paper piece of paper

I am marriage for ten years. I have been married for ten years.

Other important things are the jelous. Another important issue is jealousy.

People can have family without married.
People can have a family without being married.

I think fight in front of the children is bad. I think fighting in front of the children is bad.

So, you think that marriages should be based in romance?
So, you think that marriage should be based on romance?

I think there are some problems about different of personality.
There are personality differences that could cause problems.

Have you ever regret to marry?
Have you ever regretted getting married?

One of the big problem that couple have...
One of the big problems that couples have...

What is your suggestion live with marriage or without marriage?
What is your suggestion, marriage or no marriage?

What do you think to exchange gifts for no reason?
What do you think about exchanging gifts without a reason?
What do you think about exchanging gifts spontaneously?

Welcome to join us and discuss.
Welcome to our group.
Glad to have you join us in our discussion.

I'm here for give him a class of passion.
I'm here to give him a class on passion.

They want to be middle of our life.
They want to be in the middle of our lives.
They want to meddle in our lives.

They want to impose their values on us.

You not interested in get married?

Aren't you interested in getting married?

You don't have any interest in getting married?

You don't want to be married?

That will be extremely bored.

That will be extremely boring.

I am bored.

I am boring.

Have you think to get married?

Have you thought about getting married?

Do you think you will get married?

The first years in any couple are difficult because just start really knowing each other.

The first years are difficult for any couple, because they are just starting to get to know one another.

That problem was also before marriage.

That problem existed before we got married

That problem existed prior to our marriage.

I think that nobody cannot happy all the time.

I don't think anybody can be happy all the time.

* Instructor provides a mini grammar lesson based on common patterns of errors from chat transcripts.

Grammar Practice

Write a sentence for each word by focusing on the part of speech that the word represents.

1. Jealousy: _____

Jealous : _____

2. Bored: _____

Boring: _____

3. Marriage: _____

Marry: _____

Getting married: _____

4. Fight: _____

Fighting: _____

* Instructor demonstrates correct and appropriate use of expressions by using examples from chat transcripts.

Exemplary Sentences From Chat Transcripts

1. A huge problem is the idea of the extended family and its role in our lives.
2. That drives my husband nuts.
3. Problems definitely come because of the different cultures and expectations.
4. I had to teach my parents to keep their distance, which was very painful for me and them, but it is the only way my marriage can work.
5. Having different view points is good for the relationship.
6. I also think that people should know each other before they jump to this step.
7. I think that men have a lot contribution in the difficulties of a marriage
8. I don't think you need passion all the time to have a good marriage.
9. Although my heart does not flutter any more when I see my husband, we have a wonderful, loving marriage.
10. Couples disagree on how to raise their kids, and they have their own perspectives.
11. He needs a crash course on passion.
12. I'm looking for my future partner.

* The instructor helps students develop social skills by demonstrating appropriate ways to express disagreement. The purpose of this lesson is to prepare students for classroom discussions that follow.

Communicative Acts to Use as a Guide

When you don't agree with the other person, challenge or question their point of view. Then defend your own opinion.

- "I think that's a good point, but I don't see it that way. Can you please explain the reasons behind your thinking?"
- "You bring up an interesting point, but I don't agree with you because..."
- "I can understand why you think that way, but have you considered....?"

APPENDIX 7.11

Week Two Lesson Plan: Marriage

Goals:

5. To guide students towards the production of communicative competence by providing opportunities to communicate in a non-threatening environment.
6. To develop students' overall communicative skills through oral practice and classroom instruction based on chat transcripts.
7. To develop students' comprehension of spoken discourse by integrating listening activities that are slightly above students' current level of competence.
8. To increase student motivation through the integration of chat room as a communication medium.

Procedure:

Monday: Providing Language Input

Introduction

To get students thinking about the unit content, ask how many of the students are married. Ask the unmarried students if they plan to get married and ask them to share their reasons.

Prepare to Listen

Introduce vocabulary words that are extracted from the guest speaker's outline to prepare students for the listening activity. In pairs, have students match the underlined words with correct definitions.

Listening

A native speaking guest speaker shares her personal experience with marriage. She provides a question and answer session afterwards.

Taking Notes

Have students make a list of unfamiliar words/expressions while listening to the guest speaker and provide assistance.

Prepare for Chat Room Discussion

Hand out chat room question guide and encourage students to prepare for chat room discussion.

Tuesday: Chat Room Discussion

Chat Room Discussion

Have students discuss the week's topic via the chat room in groups of two or three using the question guide prepared by the researcher.

Question Guide

1. What are your thoughts on marriage?
2. If you're not married already, do you want to be married some day? Why or why not?
3. What are some of the obstacles that the married couples might face? How do you think they can overcome such obstacles?

Wednesday & Thursday: Classroom Instruction Based on Transcripts

4. Have students work independently on a worksheet created from extracting awkward and incorrect uses of the language from chat transcripts. Ask students to rewrite the expressions and to check their answers with a partner. Review each item by eliciting response from students.
5. Demonstrate correct and appropriate use of expressions, words, and grammar by using examples from transcripts.
6. Using the transcripts as a basis, help students develop social skills by demonstrating proper etiquette when welcoming one another to the group and leave taking.

Friday: Task Oriented Classroom Discussion

Task Oriented Classroom Discussion

In groups of three or four, with each member representing a different chat group, have students a) share the highlights of their chat group discussion, b) discuss five ways to achieve a happy marriage, and c) present to the class.

Week Three Lesson Plan: World's Perceptions About the U.S.

Goals:

1. To guide students towards the production of communicative competence by providing opportunities to communicate in a non-threatening environment.
2. To develop students' overall communicative skills through oral practice and classroom instruction based on chat transcripts.
3. To develop students' comprehension of spoken discourse by integrating listening activities that are slightly above students' current level of competence.
4. To increase student motivation through the integration of chat room as a communication medium.

Procedure:

Monday: Providing Language Input

Introduction

To get students thinking about the week's topic, briefly discuss how our perceptions of other countries are formed:

When we think of other countries, we have a preconceived notion about them. When we think of Columbia, we think drugs and coffee. When we think of Middle Eastern countries, we think about terrorists and so on. We have these images of a country because of what we hear on the news, but they may not be an accurate reflection of reality. Today we're going to see how the world sees America based on popular media, the Oprah show.

Prepare to Listen

Introduce vocabulary words that are extracted from the Oprah show transcript to prepare students for the listening activity. In pairs, have students match the underlined words with correct definitions.

Listening

Show two 15 minute segments of Oprah show titled *What do the Rest of the World Think of Us?*

Taking Notes

Have students make a list of unfamiliar words/expressions while watching the show and provide assistance.

Prepare for Chat Room Discussion

Hand out chat room question guide and encourage students to prepare for chat room discussion.

Tuesday: Chat Room Discussion

Chat Room Discussion

Students discuss the week's topic via the chat room in groups of two or three using the question guide prepared by the researcher.

Question Guide

1. What do the people in your country think about the Americans?
2. What are the most common complaints about the Americans?

Wednesday

(Class does not meet due to Spring Fling.)

Thursday: Classroom Instruction Based on Transcripts

1. Have students work independently on a worksheet created from extracting awkward and incorrect uses of the language from chat transcripts. Ask students to rewrite the expressions and to check their answers with a partner. Review each item by eliciting response from students.
2. Demonstrate correct and appropriate use of expressions, words, and grammar by using examples from transcripts.
3. Using the transcripts as a basis, help students develop social skills by demonstrating proper etiquette when welcoming one another to the group and leave taking.

Friday: Task Oriented Classroom Discussion

Task Oriented Classroom Discussion

In groups of three or four, with each member representing a different chat group, have students a) share the highlights of their chat group discussion, b) think of two ways for Americans to improve their image in the world, and c) present to the class.

Week Four Lesson Plan: Discrimination

Goals:

1. To guide students towards the production of communicative competence by providing opportunities to communicate in a non-threatening environment.
2. To develop students' overall communicative skills through oral practice and classroom instruction based on chat transcripts.
3. To develop students' comprehension of spoken discourse by integrating listening activities that are slightly above students' current level of competence.
4. To increase student motivation through the integration of chat room as a communication medium.

Procedure:

Monday: Providing Language Input

Introduction

To introduce the week's topic, briefly discuss what discrimination means: "Discrimination is an unfair treatment of a person or a group on the basis of prejudice. It's when people are treated based on their group membership such as race, gender, age, sexual orientation, size, and etc. rather than on individual merit." Define prejudice and discusses how subtle and sometimes blatant forms of discrimination still exist in the U. S.

Prepare to Read

Introduce vocabulary words that are extracted from the online essay titled *Race as a Category, Why We Don't Need It!* In pairs, have students work through the vocabulary worksheet by matching the underlined words with correct definitions.

Read

Have a student volunteer to read the essay out loud.

Prepare for Chat Room Discussion

Hand out chat room question guide and encourage students to prepare for chat room discussion.

Tuesday: Chat Room Discussion

Chat Room Discussion

Have students discuss the week's topic via the chat room in groups of two or three using the question guide prepared by the researcher.

Question Guide

1. What do you think about the essay? Do you agree with the author?
2. Do you have any personal experiences with discrimination in this country?

Wednesday & Thursday

Classroom Instruction Based on Transcripts

1. Have students work independently on a worksheet created from extracting awkward and incorrect uses of the language from chat transcripts. Ask students to rewrite the expressions and to check their answers with a partner. Review each item by eliciting response from students.
2. Demonstrate correct and appropriate use of expressions, words, and grammar by using examples from transcripts.
3. Using the transcripts as a basis, help students develop social skills by demonstrating proper etiquette when welcoming one another to the group and leave taking.

Friday: Task Oriented Classroom Discussion

Task Oriented Classroom Discussion

In groups of three or four, with each member representing a different chat group, have students a) share the highlights of their chat group discussion, b) determine two ways to stop discrimination in this country, c) rate top two advantages and disadvantages, and d) present to the class.

Week Five Lesson Plan: How to Improve Family Life

Goals:

1. To guide students towards the production of communicative competence by providing opportunities to communicate in a non-threatening environment.
2. To develop students' overall communicative skills through oral practice and classroom instruction based on chat transcripts.
3. To develop students' comprehension of spoken discourse by integrating listening activities that are slightly above students' current level of competence.
4. To increase student motivation through the integration of chat room as a communication medium.

Procedure:

Monday: Providing Language Input

Introduction

To get students thinking about the week's topic, briefly discuss the importance of family, the greatest human bond:

Being part of a family is a warm feeling. You know that you're not alone in this world when you're with family. Hopefully, most of you are close to your family, and you fully value and appreciate the bond that you have with them. Some of you might have lost that connection and may feel distant and alone. If so, how do we reconnect that bond? Let's find out what Oprah has to say about this.

Prepare to Listen

Introduce vocabulary words that are extracted from the Oprah show transcript to prepare students for the listening activity. In pairs, have students match the underlined words with correct definitions.

Listening

Show two 15 minute segments of Oprah show titled *Building Strong Family Connections*.

Taking Notes

Have students make a list of unfamiliar words/expressions while watching the show and provide assistance.

Prepare for Chat Room Discussion

Hand out chat room question guide and encourage students to prepare for chat room discussion.

Tuesday: Chat Room Discussion

Chat Room Discussion

Have students discuss the week's topic via the chat room in groups of two or three using the question guide prepared by the researcher.

Question Guide

1. How do you prioritize family in your life?
2. What does your family mean to you?

Wednesday & Thursday: Classroom Instruction Based on Transcripts

Classroom Instruction Based on Transcripts

1. Have students work independently on a worksheet created from extracting awkward and incorrect uses of the language from chat transcripts. Ask students to rewrite the expressions and to check their answers with a partner. Review each item by eliciting response from students.
2. Demonstrate correct and appropriate use of expressions, words, and grammar by using examples from transcripts.
3. Using the transcripts as a basis, help students develop social skills by demonstrating proper etiquette when welcoming one another to the group and leave taking.

Friday: Task Oriented Classroom Discussion

Task Oriented Classroom Discussion

In groups of three or four, with each member representing a different chat group, have students a) share the highlights of their chat group discussion, b) determine three ways to strengthen the family bond, and c) present to the class.

APPENDIX 7.12

Blackboard Instructions

- Type in the following Web site address: http://www.waketech.edu/dist_ed/
- Select Login to Blackboard.
- Click on the Login button.
- User name is your first name initial, middle name initial, last name and last two digits of your social security number (letters are all lower case). Password is your social security number.
- Select Listening-Speaking IV (2005.01.EFL.064.001) link under the heading, My Courses.
- Select VirtualClassroom button on the left side of the screen.
- Select Enter Virtual Classroom and wait for the chat room to load.
- Start typing messages on the white box at the bottom of the panel and enter.
- Click on the Participant Information tab to see who is in your group.
- We will not be using the white board which is the top half, so increase the chat room panel by dragging and dropping the horizontal bar upwards.

APPENDIX 7.13

Chat Room Guidelines

1. Spell out all words and do not use shortcuts or abbreviations. (i.e., do not use “u” for you or “4” for).
2. Give slow typists and/or less proficient classmates time to respond before moving on to another question. Make the following suggestion to other group members and elicit their response before moving on.
 - a. Should we move on to another question?
 - b. What does everybody think about moving on to question 2?
3. Elaborate on your comments and support your opinion. Don’t just type “I don’t like soccer” or “I don’t agree with you”. Provide reasons and explain. (i.e., I don’t like soccer, because I’m not good at it.)
4. Greet one another warmly.
 - a. Welcome to the group.
 - b. Nice to have you in the group.
5. If you don’t agree with someone’s opinion, politely state your views.
 - a. I think that’s a very good point, but I also think...
 - b. I can understand why you see it that way, but also consider....
6. Encourage one another.
 - a. I agree with what you’re saying...
 - b. That’s very insightful...
 - c. I never saw it that way...
 - d. That’s a very interesting point...

APPENDIX 7.14

North Carolina State University
INFORMED CONSENT FORM
For the Instructor

Title of Study: Implementing Synchronous Computer-Mediated-Communication in the College-Level ESL Class: A Sociolinguistic Perspective

Principal Investigator: Yuna Lee

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Ruie Pritchard and Dr. Ellen Vasu

Your class has been selected to participate in a research study involving online chat room from March 14 to April 22, 2005. The purpose of this study is to determine whether participating in small group chat room discussions is a good practice for oral communication. For five weeks, your class will participate in a curriculum designed specifically for this study which will be similar to what are typically offered in an ESL speaking class with the addition of integrating chat room discussions and providing tailored classroom instructions based on chat room transcripts.

You will be asked to agree to the following terms:

- to work with the researcher once a week on creating classroom instructions based on chat room transcripts
- to send six reflections to the researcher via email: two classroom instructions, two classroom discussions, and two classroom activities. In these reflections, you will be asked to document the dynamics of the classroom discussions, students' reaction to the activities, your perceptions about the efficacy of the activities, your ideas, thoughts, and beliefs.
- to grant the researcher access to the chat room
- to grant the researcher permission to observe two classroom instructions, two classroom discussions, and two classroom activities
- to participate in a an interview with the researcher during the week of April 25th to discuss your observations, perceptions, and reactions about integrating chat room into the ESL classroom as a practice for oral communication and the curriculum in general
- to review the researcher's analysis and interpretation of the data for appropriateness and accuracy during the first week of June (can be done via email)

The information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential in the following ways:

- Data from the interview, reflections, and chat room transcripts will be stored securely and will be made available only to the researcher unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise.
- When transcribing the interview, a pseudonym will be used.
- Identifying codes will be assigned to chat room transcripts.
- When reporting the findings of this study, pseudonyms will be used.
- The name of the institution will not be identified.

- The interview will be audio taped, and the audio tape will be destroyed at the end of the study.

I expect your students to produce more language during chat room discussions than during face-to-face classroom discussions due to the non-threatening nature of the chat room environment. This is a potential benefit for your students and you as an instructor, because according to research, more practice in language production leads to faster acquisition. Through this study, you will be kept abreast of the issues related to integrating chat room into the ESL classroom and experience its potential benefits.

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Yuna Lee, at 118 Fox Briar Lane Cary, NC 27511, or 919-859-2871. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this consent form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. Matthew Zingraff, Chair of the NCSU IRB for the Use of Human Subjects in Research Committee, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/513-1834) or Mr. Matthew Ronning, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Research Administration, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/513-2148)

I have read and understood the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Subject's signature _____
Date _____

Investigator's signature _____
Date _____