REFLECTIONS ON LEARNING, COMMUNICATION, AND IDENTITY IN A HYBRID COURSE ON LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

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REFLECTIONS ON LEARNING, COMMUNICATION, AND IDENTITY IN A HYBRID COURSE ON LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

by

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
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Dedication

To Dr. Adélamar Alcántara:

Ikaw ang isa sa mga dahilan kung bakit ko pinagpapatuloy ang gawaing ito. I will do my best to carry on the work for the community. Salamat na madame, Tita Dely.
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REFLECTIONS ON LEARNING, COMMUNICATION, AND IDENTITY IN A HYBRID COURSE ON LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This research explored the relationship between the face-to-face and online spaces in my university hybrid course on first and second language development in cultural contexts, as well as my students’ and my own communication, learning, and development of identity as teachers and students. This study was grounded in practitioner inquiry and ethnography of communication as a methodological tool to understand the role of language among teacher and students in the virtual co-construction of knowledge. The findings suggest that self-disclosures, legitimizing the self and others, and relatability played key roles in students navigating new course content, a hybrid space and discussions on language development in their Discussion Circle groups throughout a 16-week semester. Another finding suggests that a shared story, in this case, one of disrupted bilingual development, among the instructor and students influences conceptual change related to learning and teaching in multicultural and multilingual classrooms. Creating conditions for students to take ownership of their learning, safely share their experiences and assumptions, and self-interrogate, and to consider accessibility are included as implications and directions for future work.

Key words: practitioner inquiry, online asynchronous learning, hybrid learning, bilingual identity development
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Chapter 1: Introduction

“Emily, the Discussion Circle director, said to her group in a slightly raised and annoyed tone, “The problem is that we need more communication! No one’s having enough ideas to start their written product! Then Emily directs them (her DC group members) to the online asynchronous forum she created labeled “CHECKUP” and continues on about how she emailed what she posted.” (Researcher’s journal entry, 3/18/2015)

As online learning has become normalized in higher education in recent decades, I have become preoccupied with the ways learners new to this mode of learning understand what teaching and learning online look like. This preoccupation comes from my own experience teaching and taking online courses at a research university and participating in an online teacher-training program in a for-profit university in 2009. Learning new ways of content delivery, participation and communication were jarring, frustrating and fascinating, considering that previously I was only familiar with pedagogical practices in face-to-face (f2f) settings. Formerly, I only conceived of being able to construct individual written assignments, participate in class dialogues, and work in small groups through f2f contexts. Lacking the physical and verbal cues of the teacher and peers in the online environment, I wondered how these could be negotiated in what seemed to me a detached, impersonal space. These cues helped to serve as f2f feedback to determine if my responses as either student or instructor were on track. They helped me learn through observation how to conduct certain learning tasks. Eye-contact, smiles, and degrees of proximity were useful for me in establishing rapport with my colleagues or my students. Instructors could observe who was and was not participating and call on students in real-time. What could participation, communication and relationship building possibly look like online?
Entering this new world of online teaching and learning became an arduous journey but one that granted me insights into new forms of education in the 21st century. I say arduous because I had to change the way I thought participation and communication should look like, the way I related to my colleagues and my students, and the way I construed a learning context. Directly quoting my peers in my own posts was a way of relating to my peers’ ideas. If there was someone who did not participate, we were encouraged to include everyone by drawing out the “quiet ones” on discussion boards. Directly linking our experiences in written form to the course material was crucial in the online environment, not only to display our knowledge, but to see how our experiences related to those of others. The use of emoticons or acronyms (e.g. 😊, 😞, lol) were encouraged as they helped us connect to our peers. Even in cases of disagreement, we were meant to provide encouraging comments and follow-up questions. If I missed posting a response for the week, the instructor would email me privately and let me know the class was “waiting for your participation.” I learned that just as there were consequences for non-participation in the f2f learning environment, so with online teaching. Because communication in this new context is in written form, there is a feeling of permanence, creating a concern for constructing thoughtful and edited posts. These techniques learned as an online student were, in turn, considered useful for when I became an online instructor. I learned all of these techniques and strategies in a short training program at a for-profit university. But even after this short training, I was still more comfortable learning and teaching in f2f environments.

At the time I embarked on this project, I noticed online learning was increasingly gaining popularity and changing the way humans would view knowledge, communication, and social relationship building (Harasim, 2012; Wilson & Peterson, 2002). In order to keep up with the fast paced development of e-learning in higher education over roughly the last decade, I forced
myself to engage in learning how to learn and teach in a context still foreign to me, as I was concerned that I would not be successful in the process. In the end and despite my moments of discomfort, I was able to teach online for a few terms in 2009-2010 at a for-profit university. To be clear, this was not related to my dissertation.

To contextualize this dissertation study, in 2015, I was teaching a course on first and second language development in sociocultural contexts as a doctoral Teaching Assistant at the major research university in a Southwestern state. I had taught this course several times before. The course was meant for upper undergraduate students in a teacher education program in a major urban center. The student demographics in this course, in general, were Diné, Zuni Pueblo, Mexican-American, Hispanic, and White. The study was conducted for 16-weeks in the spring semester of 2015.

Now that I had been teaching online and had taken a number of online courses at this research university at in the Southwest, I realized that these fears of the unknown and reticence for engaging in unfamiliar learning contexts were not unique to me as an online participant. All learners (and instructors) in a new learning context may find themselves in a temporary space of negotiating their roles and ways of behaving and communicating, but the online learning context poses another layer of negotiation. How do learners new to the online environment learn how to communicate and participate with members of the class without the explicit training I received? How do they transition from the familiar brick-and-mortar classroom setting to a classroom context that is not defined by space and time? Threshold concepts, such as Third Space and liminality, offer ways to describe processes in which learners experience a transitional space, where they negotiate their status in unfamiliar contexts (Bhabha, 1994; James & Busher, 2013)
and “reconceive who they are and what they might be able to accomplish academically and beyond” (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 148).

**Statement of problem**

Because language is integral to learning processes, it should be taken seriously in our investigations of the ways learners come to understand how knowledge is constructed, not only in our traditional f2f courses, but also in online learning courses, especially as online learning becomes a normal mode of teaching and learning in higher education. Language socialization research discusses how people come to develop communicative competence - what people need to know in order to behave appropriately in a given community, both f2f and online (Cazden, 1988; Ha, 2010; Lam, 2008; Saville-Troike, 2003; Peele-Eady, 2011). Building on discussions of language socialization would inform educators about the importance of language in learning and teaching processes and the ways in which learners new to environments such as the online learning context learn through social interaction “evidence about normative, appropriate uses of the language, and of the worldviews, ideologies, values, and identities of community members” (Duff, 2010, p. 172). Focusing our attention on language as integral to learning processes helps us understand how students adopt and adapt new communication technologies (Keating, 2006) and how they may extend what they have learned beyond the classroom. Therefore, more investigation on language and the processes of negotiating new learning contexts is needed in the online context to gain insight into how learners and teachers understand their roles, build relationships, and co-construct knowledge.

**Research Questions**
The following research questions are meant to guide my investigation of language and learning processes engaged in by university students who were new to online learning in a hybrid upper level undergraduate class on first and second language development.

1. In what ways do my upper level undergraduate teacher education students new to an online or hybrid learning context become competent members of the class?
2. What evidence of learning do I see through the class’ communication in both the face-to-face and online asynchronous learning contexts over the course of a 16-week semester?
3. How do both learning contexts in this hybrid course play a role in the following:
   a. my students’ identity-development and transformation, both as learners and future teachers?
   b. my own identity-development and transformation as a practitioner researcher and instructor?
4. How do students and instructor make sense of the messiness of a new learning and research space?
5. How does my learning as the practitioner researcher influence my future teaching practices?

**Purpose of study**

The purpose of this research was to explore the relationship between the face-to-face and online spaces in my university hybrid course on first and second language development in cultural contexts, as well as my students’ and my own communication, learning, and development of identity as teachers and students. In order to address this purpose, this study was grounded in practitioner inquiry and ethnography of communication as methodological tools to understand the role of language among teacher and students in the virtual co-construction of
knowledge. Through practitioner inquiry as a stance, I consider my role as the teacher/researcher as integral to the communication and learning processes taking place in this hybrid course on language development. I consider “practice as the site of inquiry, interrogating one’s own and others’ practices and assumptions, and learning from and about practice by collecting and analyzing ‘data’ of daily work” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2004, p. 638). The ethnography of communication serves as a compatible methodological tool to understand learning processes taking place through use of language and the consequences and meaning of language “in the context of social interaction” (Saville-Troike, 2003, p. 14).

**Hybrid course for researching language and learning processes**

The present study investigated language and learning processes in a hybrid (online, as well as f2f) learning context. Specifically, learning processes, threshold concepts, and reflexivity guide my understanding of how participants in this course negotiate new learning contexts. This study may help offer insight into how learners and teachers understand their roles, build relationships, and co-construct knowledge in either f2f or online classroom environments.

The motivation to establish interpersonal connections and communicate is not a new concept when investigating learning processes; however, as online communication becomes increasingly embedded in our lives, these learning processes become more complex, and perhaps opaque. Wilson and Peterson (2003) assert that “an anthropological approach is well suited to investigate the continuum of communities, identities, and networks that exist—from the most cohesive to the most diffuse—regardless of the ways in which community members interact” (pp. 456-457). Therefore, it is not useful to see communication online and offline in isolation from one another. When an online learning context is experienced by new learners, it is not uncommon that they draw on their offline resources, such as their peers. Such resourcefulness
suggests the ways in which learners are able “to reconceive who they are and what they might be able to accomplish academically and beyond” (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 148) in a new space. As learners make sense of the online environment, their movement across offline and online contexts may provide another conceptualization of zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) and the apprenticeship model of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

The combination of f2f and online aspects of hybrid learning offers a way for teachers and learners to reflect on their own communication. Develotte (2009) states that “a new relationship to knowledge is being put in place through the dynamics of online learners’ interactions […] such as the relationship to writing” (p. 91). Written communication online is archived, and learners have access to this anytime during the life of the course. So, class participants learn online ways of becoming, communicating, and participating through the teacher, peers, and written artifacts. Nasir & Cooks (2009) highlight that learners’ peers play key roles in establishing necessary connections in learning processes. These connections are important to my exploration into how online communication impacts our offline communication, identity development, relationship-building, and knowledge co-construction.

Research in online and hybrid learning contexts is still fairly new in educational research. Navigating these possibilities thus creates a type of liminal or Third Space. James and Busher (2013) make the case that researching hybrid communities gives educational ethnographers a way to “capture [people’s] use of liminal or ‘in-between’ spaces” (p. 195). In a hybrid course, these liminal spaces would entail: a) the ways in which learners’ negotiate the new online learning context; b) the ways a practitioner (teacher as researcher) investigates the impact of her own online and offline interactions on her students and on course content development; c) impact of students’ online and offline interactions on other students, on the teacher/practitioner, and on
course content development; and d) the ways the practitioner-researcher makes sense of the online learning context as a site for investigation.

**Key terms**

Although the following terms are described in upcoming chapters, I provide a short glossary below.

- **Asynchronous communication** – online communication that does not happen in the same space or in real time. Examples of asynchronous communication are email, discussion boards, or audio or video recorded content as learning material.

- **Community of practice (CoP)** – a group of people with shared interests who, through interaction, learn from one another in pursuit of solving a problem (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

- **Discussion Circle (DC)** – discussion circle, an adapted version of Harvey Daniels’ (2002) work on Literature Circles, designed to be learner-centered book clubs of peer-led discussions around the same piece of literature. Each person is assigned a role, such as illustrator, questioner, or connector.

- **Knowledge co-construction** – the idea that learners and instructors, through social interaction, generate, organize, and converge ideas resulting in new knowledge and conceptual change.

- **Face-to-face (f2f)** – traditional brick-and-mortar learning context where instructor and students must be in the same space at the same time. For example, a ‘typical’ K-12 or university classroom would be characterized as a class where students and teachers/instructors are physically present for instruction.
• Hybrid course – a combination of internet-based learning and traditional face-to-face learning contexts. Online learning is not required to take place in a brick-and-mortar school setting in the presence of the other students and instructor, but rather in students’ homes or other non-school sites. A hybrid course, then, combines the brick-and-mortar course context with an online component of the course.

• Language socialization – a process by which people learn through language how to interact appropriately in a given context (Cazden, 1988; Ha, 2010; Lam, 2008; Saville-Troike, 2003; Peele-Eady, 2011).

• Liminal space, third space (also sometimes capitalized, depending on author) – processes in which learners negotiate their status in unfamiliar contexts and navigate unfamiliar contexts (Bhabha, 1994; James & Busher, 2013), and in which they “reconceive who they are and what they might be able to accomplish academically and beyond” (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 148).

• Online learning – Internet-based learning context that employs the use of synchronous (real-time) chat rooms, video communication, or asynchronous (not real-time) forms of communication, such as discussion boards, recorded audio or video, etc. Online learning does not have to take place in a physical K-12 and college learning setting where teachers/instructors and learners share space.

• Reflexivity – constant critical reflection on how the researcher/teacher, students, and the setting affect and change one another in a particular context over time.
Chapter 2: Literature review

I begin by discussing the relationship between cultural transmission and learning processes. Then, to understand how learners make sense of new learning contexts, I move on to threshold concepts. Last, I discuss what the concept of reflexivity may suggest about learning processes. These concepts form my conceptual work for investigating the relationship between the face-to-face (f2f) and online spaces in my hybrid course on language development, and my students’ and my own communication, learning, and development of identity as teachers and students.

Learning processes

“Education is culture, that is, education involves the continual remaking of culture as human beings transmit and acquire the symbolic meanings that infuse social life” (Levinson, 2000, p. 15). Earlier works on cultural transmission focused on the ways families and immediate communities transmit or teach the knowledge one needs to have in order to function appropriately and establish membership in a given community (Boggs, 1985; Cohen, 2000; Michalchik, 1997; Spindler, 1997). These works offer us insight into how the educational system recruits members into specific cultural groups and maintains their membership (Spindler, 1997). Parents and children work together to convey to younger children what is appropriate behavior and that there are consequences for displaying knowledge that is not valued in the community. In Michalchik’s (1997) work on Kosraen knowledge, culture “…broadly defined as the knowledge needed to appropriately live in one’s world - is transmitted to a new generation, [and] this focus on the display of knowledge leads to a better understanding of the transmission process” (p. 398).
The notion of cultural transmission is easily applicable to the formal learning context, such as that in a university classroom like mine. Just as in any learning institution, the university is a site into which those new to the contexts are enculturated or socialized. But even though enculturation and socialization take place in our university, and both the university’s and the students’ success depend on them, we rarely interrogate what we consider to be our everyday normal practices that support these crucial social processes. Instead, we perpetuate the same biases and assumptions that we purport to deconstruct in other institutions we research. Wisniewski (2000) suggests that while higher education institutions encourage the examination of other academic institutions’ practices (both those in other higher education settings and those in K-12 classrooms), they rarely investigate their own institutional practices and processes of cultural transmission. I wanted to respond to this by investigating my instructional processes within my own course while also influencing my students to do the same.

Cultural transmission is illustrative of how university instructors play a role in teaching what we have learned to our students, but also of how cultural processes are not static, but instead inhere change. Humans are complex and the processes of cultural transmission are not seamless. We should take into account the ways conflict functions in cultural transmission, and yet how humans are able to adapt to their environment. We are reminded how adults, children, teachers and students all play a role at varying degrees of participation in knowledge transmission processes. According to Rogoff (2003), “[u]nderstanding development from a sociocultural-historical perspective requires examination of the cultural nature of everyday life. This includes studying people’s use and transformation of cultural tools and technologies” (p. 10). Such orientation of cultural development is useful for learning how university students come to understand what knowledge is expected of them to be able to communicate and participate
appropriately in higher education courses of the 21st century. I believe that by examining how students adapt and keep up with rapid technological change is crucial to our professional development.

**Language socialization**

As mentioned earlier, language is an aspect of culture and is integral in learning processes. Where cultural transmission as a concept explains how we learn the norms, expectations, and rules for behaving appropriately, language socialization as a concept best explains the knowledge learners need to participate appropriately through interaction in a given context (Cazden, 1988; Duff, 2010; Ha, 2010; Lam, 2008; Saville-Troike, 2003; Peele-Eady, 2011). It is useful to approach how academic language socialization processes take place in university contexts, especially for the participants in this study, who are ethnically, racially and linguistically diverse undergraduate pre-service student teachers in multilingual and multicultural classrooms. Participants were tasked with understanding the current context and language development theories shaping their teaching perspectives and practices, but also shaping these perspectives and practices were their own socialization experiences. As Duff (2010) asserts:

> also affecting students’ experiences of socialization is the way newcomers and their histories and aspirations are viewed and by how they are positioned—by themselves, by others, and by their institutions—as capable (or incapable), as worthy, legitimate, showing potential for fuller participation or membership (or not), as insiders (or outsiders), and so on.” (p. 176)

The online learning context offers a unique space to socialize students to participate in written asynchronous modes of communication because participants are not required to be present at the same time or the same place to communicate. Unique aspects of asynchronous written
communication include, but are not limited to, the ways in which participants develop their identities as competent students, gain technological skills, observe their more competent peers’ ways of interacting online, and reflect on their own communication (Duff, 2010).

The online asynchronous and f2f contexts are each different and give rise to the ways in which norms, expectations, and rules are negotiated or contested in learning processes. Learners’ and teachers’ ideas may not converge, especially regarding how to communicate. The nature of a hybrid course further complicates this, especially if the instructor highly encourages and expects that communication only take place during our f2f sessions and our asynchronous online space. Saville-Troike (2003) reminds us about various repertoire people draw on to communicate in a given context. By repertoire, I refer to the social identities speakers project in a communicative context that are “associated with a number of appropriate verbal and nonverbal forms of expression” (Saville-Troike, 2003, p. 17). Furthermore, Saville-Troike maintains that it is “essential to identify the social categories recognized in a community in order to determine how these are reflected linguistically, and how they define and constrain interpersonal interaction in communicative situations” (p. 17). Given the reality of current multilingual and multicultural classrooms, then, an analysis of how a diverse group of learners and their instructor co-construct meaning through social interaction in a hybrid course is a timely and much needed direction for this study, for it examines both f2f and online learning processes. But first, I begin with a discussion of the f2f learning context as it has implications for online learning.

**Face-to-face learning contexts**

This section discusses learning that happens in university f2f contexts, according to my own experiences. As the instructor for this course, I normally carry out her lessons according to a syllabus, which dictates the norms, expectations, and rules for classroom conduct. Students are
expected to attend class and prepare to discuss the material, submit their homework on time, turn off their cell phones, and respect everyone in the class. The syllabus might also convey the norms, expectations, and rules for constructing and submitting assignments, participating in whole class discussions, and working in small groups or pairs. The instructor evaluates students’ learning in the form of grades or evaluative means that communicate whether a student has displayed correct or incorrect responses. Through the syllabus and other communicative means, the teacher applies what Spindler and Spindler (1997) call a “calculated intervention in the learning processes” (p. 52). Other communicative means may include verbal reprimand or affirmation of what is considered appropriate behavior and participation. In today’s world of communication technologies, instructors may communicate or reinforce class norms and expectations, and reprimand or affirm behaviors, through email.

Wolcott (1997) suggests that those who carry formal responsibilities, such as educators, can be “regarded as strangers or friends…, [but they have] traditionally been cast in the role of stranger” (p. 326). Especially in the formal educational institution, often the instructor is expected to be the authority who imparts knowledge, creating social distance and power dynamics between teachers and students through language. For example, the university instructor plays the major role in communicating what cultural knowledge is legitimate for her course in her syllabus. She may use language that intends to maximize social distance through public criticism or to reduce it through use of politeness strategies (Cazden, 1988). What is important is the interplay between language and social distance and how these play a significant role in building or not building community and “co-membership” (Cazden, 1988, p. 169) in a classroom.
Indeed, the teacher is a key agent in communicating the preferred culture for the class, but students play an important role, as well, in negotiation of this culture. While they do not play a major role in the grading process, although they may take part in evaluating peers’ work in the forms of rubrics or informal responses, they communicate with one another explicitly or tacitly about what is appropriate behavior for the classroom and how to carry out learning tasks. Often our understanding of what is appropriate emerges from the consequences of behaving inappropriately. For example, if there is a student who tends to be talkative and who takes away other students’ opportunities to contribute, other students may roll their eyes, let out a sigh, or explicitly tell the student to relinquish the floor and give others a chance to talk. When students are silent in group work, others will try to encourage participation and perhaps show disapproval and overtly state, “We all have to contribute!” The teacher may also intervene and explicitly state that everybody needs to participate. Although students and teacher may attempt to communicate what they believe is inappropriate conduct, we only know if the intended receivers of these messages understand when they have rectified their behavior. In this sense, learning takes place and results in “a change in relations between persons and their situation in a way that allows for the accomplishment of new activities” (McDermott, 1997, p. 127).

**Online learning contexts**

The Internet revolution of the latter part of the 20th century gave rise to changes in the ways we understand communication, relationships, learning and knowledge (Harasim, 2012; Wilson & Peterson, 2002). We see this in the ways computer-mediated communication has become embedded in our daily lives through social media such as Twitter, Facebook, and Wordpress. As of September 2013, 73% of Internet users (n = 5,112) used social networking sites (Pew Internet Research Project, 2013). Online courses are delivered through learning
management systems (LMS) such as BlackBoard, WebCT, and Moodle. Allen & Seaman (2014) report that “an increase from 1.6 million students taking at least one online course in fall 2002 to 7.1 million for fall 2012 represents a compound annual growth rate of 16.1 percent” (p. 15).

Although the use of online social media is on the rise and online learning is gaining momentum in K-20 education, we must not assume that all learners who take online courses are prepared to communicate interpersonally and participate in formal virtual learning contexts.

**Knowledge co-construction**

Just as teachers and learners are parties to learning in the f2f context, they are in the online context, as well. In fact, online courses draw heavily on social constructivism (Harasim, 2012), which emphasizes that learning happens through language in collaboration with the teacher or more “expert peers.” First, the instructor has the same “calculated interventions in the learning processes” (Spindler & Spindler, 1997, p. 52) as in a f2f class: directives are given through a syllabus or verbally to the class. The instructor can repeat in a variety of ways the instructions on group projects or individual work in real-time. The instructor can orchestrate a discussion by calling on students who have not contributed, or even interrupt those who attempt to frequently take or hold the conversational floor. These look different online, however. A syllabus, which is downloaded, is provided and contains directives for when the assignments are due and how they should be uploaded to the appropriate link. The syllabus, course introduction posts and announcements provide directives on how to participate in online discussions and carry out individual or group assignments.

Group work is to be carried out in private group forums and real-time web conference space, and whole class discussions will entail the response to a discussion question and to peers’ responses in another forum. “Communication protocols that describe how to participate in
academic discussions, how language and discourse are used, what is negotiable and non-negotiable, and institutional expectations are posted at the beginning of the course” (Gunawardena, 2014). What is not available in the online discussion forums are the physical cues that take place in a f2f classroom. Students and teachers do not draw on each other’s gestures, eye contact, sighs, or facial expressions. Rather, they are expected to relate interpersonally by building on the ideas of others through quoting others’ words and using emoticons. What is also lacking in the online learning context is the overlapping speech and interruptions that could take place in f2f contexts. In the online learning environment, which depends heavily on written communication, learners are afforded time to reflect on one another’s communication, the course content, and their own communication.

However, if the online learning space is unfamiliar or yet uncomfortable for students, they may face alienation from the learning community. Communication in the online space is mediated by the technologies within the course learning management system (LMS). Taking the place of physically entering a classroom, taking our seat, and raising our hand to speak, online links allow teachers and students to enter discussion forums where we click on “reply” and “submit” buttons to construct and send our response to a question or to another peer’s response. In real-time communication, we might agree or disagree with what someone has to say by interrupting or simultaneously talking. Online communication is organized in threads of message posts, marked by date and time. Learners and teacher are working together in creating the context for learning, communicating, and participating, and when students do not contribute as expected, the teacher and sometimes peers draw attention to them. What is communicated is that these learners are not fulfilling their collaborative roles in the learning context. Learners are also aware of the constant surveillance taking place online, and this surveillance space shapes
communication and participation (Develotte, 2009; Caruthers & Friend, 2014). When learners understand the instructor can be anywhere in the online asynchronous space and at any time, it could affect how a learner interacts with others. Sometimes learners behave in ways expected by the instructor or even reference the instructor when communicating with their peers. However, others will not interact as expected online and resort to other means of communication.

So, what does silence mean for learners in an online learning space, and in what ways will learners begin to engage with the teacher and students collaboratively? If silence is an indication of feeling alienated from the course, Mann (2005) suggests that we can gain understanding of this online, not by looking at the learning community, but by exploring it as a “communicative event” (p. 43). The author also argues that learners may behave “to be good; for fear of breaking assumed norms about what is appropriate behaviour; and for fear of potential disharmony in the group” (Mann, 2005, p. 50). New learners may simply not understand how to express their ideas, make meaning of the discussions, relate, and disagree when necessary. The numerous message threads a learner must read can be cumbersome and overwhelming. Lastly, risks of appearing incompetent are real to many new learners and affect their participation. This is true for both face-to-face and online; however, in the online asynchronous written context, the writer’s communication exists throughout the life of the course, making available the writer’s thoughts and potential grammatical errors for everyone to read.

Collaborative learning. Collaborative learning is key to understanding the importance of relationships in learning processes. Models of communities of practice (CoP) were first advanced by Lave and Wenger (1991), who posit that learning is situated and that a CoP should meet three important criteria: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire of actions. Legitimate peripheral participation entails a process in which a newcomer participates in
a CoP alongside a more expert member, creating a mentorship or apprenticeship relationship. To give a simple example, by participating in an apprenticeship, the newcomer in automotive mechanics learns appropriate terms, processes, and techniques in the CoP by observing and actively doing automotive mechanics alongside her or his mentor. The newcomer who participates actively in authentic tasks and is successful eventually is accepted as a full member of the CoP.

Social context, interaction, apprentice-mentor relationships, and shared concerns about a topic are key to the learning process. Because of shared concerns, members in a CoP engage in and sustain knowledge-building activities in order to form a shared repertoire from which members can draw in pursuit of problem-solving or development of ideas. While CoPs are very useful in understanding how ideas become consensual, we should remain cognizant of the processes of disagreement, including how disagreement is communicated among peers during group work and what the outcomes are. Even though the instructor has given directives to work in groups and expects students to complete the work, student peers may have a mismatch in expectations with one another and the instructor about how group work is carried out.

Given the social constructivist models used in many online courses, it is instructive to begin with how knowledge is co-constructed through social interaction. The zone of proximal development (ZPD), a concept from Vygotsky’s (1978) work in sociocultural theory, involves the stage between learners’ current level of development and their potential level of development with the guidance of a more experienced person, be they peers, caretakers, teachers. The role ZPD plays in the context of this research study is of utmost importance as learners rely heavily on social interaction with their peers and myself. Not only will learners in my course participate in learning activities regarding the course content, but also about navigating the online and f2f
aspects of the hybrid course. Harasim (2012) notes that online collaborative learning theory (OCL) rests on key assumptions that “learners become knowledge builders” (Harasim, 2012, p. 89) and are expected to participate in a knowledge community which is guided by instructors, facilitators, or mentors. Important to OCL is the idea that there is conceptual change in this knowledge construction process. This process includes four stages: the generation of ideas, the organization of ideas, convergence of ideas, and conceptual change. These processes in OCL are reminiscent of CoPs in that the group of learners engage in knowledge-building activities in order to pursue problem-solving activities or develop ideas. However, OCL adds the layer of learning technology as inherent in the learning process. Learning environments that draw on tools of collaboration rather than unidirectional transmission of information (e.g. podcasted lectures or videos) are essential for online collaboration to take place.

**Threshold concepts**

The processes learners undergo in negotiating the unfamiliar with the familiar in learning contexts are complex and rarely unidirectional. To explore these complexities, I draw on threshold concepts such as liminality and Third Space, which I will use interchangeably throughout this paper (Bhabha, 1994; James & Busher, 2013; Gutiérrez, 2008). This liminal or “third” space is a temporary one and allows for learning growth, role development, and understanding of how things operate within a new learning context. Although liminality might be conceived of as a moment that creates uncertainty and “letting go of customary ways of seeing things, of prior familiar views” (Land, Rattray, & Vivian, 2014, p. 200), it should not be understood as negative to the learning process; rather, liminality brings about new ways of meaning-making. According to Gutiérrez (2008), in Third Space, learners are able “to reconceive who they are and what they might be able to accomplish academically and beyond” (p. 148).
Especially given the collaborative nature of group work, Gutiérrez (2008) found Third Space to be an instructive concept in extending the notion of zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in Gutiérrez, 2008). Through time, learners are provided the necessary scaffolding to participate in learning activities and to communicate appropriately in a given context. It is within this Third Space, then, that learners undergo processes of conceptual change and engage in “new forms of participation and activity that change both the individual and the practice, as well as their mutual relation” (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 152). In the context of my study, I wondered how my course might trigger not only conceptual change in my students’ understanding of how language is developed, but I also hoped conceptual change would impact their teaching practices or envisioned teaching practices in their multicultural and multilingual classrooms.

I find such concepts useful for explaining, then, how learners “are confronted anew with rediscovering-figuring out for themselves-how their social environment ‘works’” (Wolcott, 1997, p. 320). In the context of practitioner inquiry, Hulme, Cracknell, and Owens (2009), draw on the concept of third space or hybridity to explain how professionals develop “a common language and shared understandings” (p. 539). They use three concepts within the third space:

1) the recognized space, in which professionals could “hang the confusion and chaos” of the workplace for a time while they thought through their practice (Britzman, 2003, as cited in Hulme, Cracknell, & Owens, 2009, p. 541);

2) the navigational space, a platform that allowed for travel in between and into different discourse communities and associated professional knowledges; and
3) as a *conversational space*, where cultural, social, and epistemological change takes place as competing knowledges and discourses are translated, contested and drawn closer together (Hulme, Cracknell, & Owens, 2009, p. 541).

In the context of this study, I wanted to know how threshold concepts would help me gain insight into my undergraduate learners’ and my own identity-development, communication and participation in a hybrid university course on language development?

**Reflexivity**

Teachers and learners may be involved in the continual process of reflecting on their learning, their own communication processes, and how their practices affect those of others and possibly change the way we approach problems. In Fairbanks and LaGrone’s (2006) study of knowledge construction in a teacher research group, the authors found that their participants’ reflective dialogue about teaching practices highlighted “the potential of exploratory talk to help teachers address the questions and dilemmas that arise from the specific contexts of their practice” (p. 14). Although reflection or self-awareness is key to learning processes, reflexivity entails much more than reflection. Reflexivity deals with continual critical reflection, as well as how the researcher/teacher, students, and the setting affect one another in the research (Copland & Creese, 2015; Edge, 2011; Kaplan-Weigner & Ullman, 2015; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). In the context of this study, I sought to investigate the learning processes, communication and identity development through continued participation in the course.

Throughout the course of inquiry, I, as practitioner researcher, take a reflexive stance by considering not only my student participants as the object of study, but myself as well. “Turning in upon ourselves prevents us from removing our selv(es) from our research process, from our connections with our informants, or from our written translation of data to text,” (Chiseri-Strater,
Furthermore, I take seriously what my students ask or the concerns they communicate to me and one another, meanwhile questioning my own assumptions as I address these concerns (Glesne, 2006). These processes influence and guide my students, even as their processes and changes influence and guide me, as well as the context in which we mutually interact. By the same token, conceptual change can and almost certainly will occur through truly reflexive processes.

**Conceptual change**

Drawing on patterns of talk is instructive for understanding how educators might engage in reflection, transformation and reorganization of their teaching practices (Fairbanks & LaGrone, 2006). In the online context, I build on Caruthers and Friend’s (2014) study of Thirdspace in the online environment where “learning is not about the transmission of knowledge or the close readings of texts” (Caruthers & Friend, 2014, p. 15). Learners and instructors are active participants in co-creating knowledge and bringing about conceptual change. The authors note that obligations were put in place so that all learners would share their experiences related to social justice in education in this online space. The authors discuss an Hispanic participant who shared his experiences in a predominantly White school, and an African American participant who talked about her experiences feeling “invisible” and undervalued in the class of a “matronly-looking White woman” (Caruthers & Friend, 2014, p. 28). While these participants do not reveal whether or not they would have been able to share these experiences in a f2f context, the authors posit that this Third space online environment afforded everybody the opportunity to communicate with the class their significant experiences in ways that might not be possible in a f2f classroom setting.
Online learning is said to promote the reflection on one’s subjectivity, thus affecting how one communicates experiences (Caruthers & Friend, 2014). When an African American participant was asked what she understood to be a result of the online course (Caruthers and Friend 2014), she stated that she had changed her idea that colorblindness was a positive thing to it “actually be[ing] detrimental to the success of a student of color” (pp. 28-29). The authors, however, noted that a limitation of their study was the lack of responses to these statements, responses that I feel are necessary for investigating the interplay of roles, communication, and participation.

Other studies show us the ways students engage in reflective processes in the online context. In McQuiggan’s (2012) study of faculty development through online teaching, she explored the ways that online teaching may be a context that promotes rethinking personal assumptions about teaching and learning, permitting/encouraging a shift away from traditional models of knowledge that would entail unidirectional transmission from the teacher to those models of knowledge co-construction among teachers and student peers. When these teachers used online teaching methods, they felt students had more ownership over their learning, and if they used online discussions in conjunction with f2f activities, they felt there was more connectedness within the class.

I find McQuiggan’s (2012) work particularly relevant to my own online teaching experience. In past semesters, when I taught the course in this study, the majority of my learners were aspiring educators of multilingual and multicultural populations, and it was of great interest to me to observe how conceptual changes occurred online about teaching and learning through social interaction with the teacher and classmates. Our discussions about language and identity, and learning in the home and school, prompted some students to express how they always
thought children’s/students’ parents were at fault for learners “not knowing how to read.” Some of my students lamented not having understood the extent to which retaining one’s home language while learning the language of the school had serious impact on identity. Around the middle of the semester, we held a discussion about whether learning with technology could be socially interactive. Students who initially did not appreciate the collaborative nature of online interaction expressed that they were, indeed, interacting in their own online course and expressed how it brought about new ways of social learning. In my view, these online interactions have likely impacted these students’ knowledge development and their developing expertise about language and their own identities as emerging teachers.

Ha (2010) points out in her study on language socialization processes that second language learners who take courses online are afforded the space to communicate their expertise, communicate disagreement with peers, take time to link the content to their own lives, and reflect on and respond critically to their peers’ positions. This space also allows for deliberate reflection on learners’ written communication, what it may convey to others, and possible conceptual changes that may take place in the learning process. As one participant in Lamy and Goodfellow’s (2009) study put it, “The discussion forum at the university is thus another perturbing element in my cognitive process, since its goal is to be a system of exchanges of doubts and questions that are written” (p. 83).
Chapter 3: Methodology

Research questions

1) In what ways do my upper level undergraduate teacher education students new to an online or hybrid learning context become competent members of the class?

2) What evidence of learning do I see through the class’ communication in both the face-to-face and online asynchronous learning contexts over the course of a 16-week semester?

3) How do both learning contexts in this hybrid course play a role in the following:
   a. my students’ identity-development and transformation, both as learners and future teachers?
   b. my own identity-development and transformation as a practitioner researcher and instructor?

4) How do students and instructor make sense of the messiness of a new learning and research space?

5) How does my learning as the practitioner researcher influence my future teaching practices?

Brief background

Communication technology has led to innovative ways of sustaining social ties, adapting language, and exchanging knowledge (Harasim, 2012; Keating, 2006; James & Busher, 2013; Wilson & Peterson, 2002). In effect, education in the 21st century has been affected by such technological trends to accommodate larger classes and to reach a larger student population, including online courses with the number of learners comparable to that in a traditional course or to a massive open online course (MOOC) with upwards of 20,000 students enrolled. Educational institutions, in general, offer valuable opportunities for exploring the mutually-influencing
interactions among faculty, administrators and students. Educational institutions are also where we learn what these interactions mean in a sociocultural and political context. Looking at how language and communication affect and are affected by teaching and learning within an online learning context adds another dimension to such explorations. We gain insight into how learners and instructor work together through an electronic medium to develop their roles and identities in and beyond our small Discussion Circle groups and the overall course itself, to develop their relationships with one another, the course content, and institution; and to co-construct knowledge over time. DC refers to discussion circles that are a specific grouping technique used throughout the course and as my analytic focus for this study.

Inquiry-based and collaborative-based models used in online classes are a departure from traditional brick-and-mortar classes in several ways. To start, in online classes, instructors and learners must navigate the learning space and maintain dialogue differently. For example, figuring out which buttons to press to create, submit, or reply to posts in a discussion forum, or even locating the relevant discussion forum, can be daunting tasks for any newcomer to online learning. The next step would be locating a post and then responding to it. Do people use formal or informal language? How long should the post be? Is a citation convention required in a post? If I, as a student, disagree with a peer or professor or am offended, how do we communicate that? The sense-making process within an unfamiliar learning medium can prompt a person to deeply reflect on her or his ways of teaching and learning. A common argument for online learning is that it “could lead to higher levels of learning (e.g., critical, creative, and complex thinking)” (Kreber & Kanuka, 2006, p. 120), which is important for developing reflective classroom teachers, university faculty, and practitioner-researchers alike. As the practitioner researcher for this study and course, I intended to see what this critical, creative, and complex
thinking would look like. I assumed it would emerge from students engaging in an “uncomfortable, unstable but potentially very productive third space” (Hulme, et al., 2009, p. 548).

In the context of my research project, I had the privilege to research my own university undergraduate course on first and second language development in cultural contexts for a 16-week semester during spring of 2015. By this time, I had previously taught the same course on first and second language development in cultural contexts in the fully online format for three semesters and one time in the hybrid format. Each semester I became increasingly perplexed by the hardships students and I encountered while participating in both mediums. It was clear to me these hardships were attributed to the online process. Students would consistently ask for help on accessing certain “rooms,” creating and posting messages, or uploading assignments in the learning management system (LMS). By LMS, I refer to the Blackboard learning platform used by the university. Although asking for assistance is not out of the ordinary, it seemed no matter how much I believed I had broken down my help step-by-step, I still sensed student frustration, which frequently led to my own. Perhaps I was not consistent or clear enough in my communication. However, I maintained, to the best of my ability, contact by checking my communication every 48 hours and responding. Most importantly, I worried that the time and energy we used figuring out the online aspect of the class were distracting us from the content of the class.

I seriously began to question my merit and capabilities to teach effectively face-to-face or online, but as a language educator and researcher, I was obligated to reflect on what was happening. I realized that observing learning processes and communication was crucial in my pursuit. I thought about how my students behaved in groups online. When they sustained
communication, I could see ideas unfold over time. Meanwhile, I envisioned how my students’ knowledge and their learner and teacher identities would transform over time. One example was when students discussed the course readings on bilingualism and language loss. Many students posted about their “A-ha” moments as they posted about their own generational language loss, the process that occurs when a language is lost over time due to language policies, such as the English-only policy in the United States and institutional practices to reinforce monolingualism. From this, I saw the potential of asynchronous online communication functioning as a space that is not only a repository of our personal ideas, concerns, and realizations, but potentially a space that allows learners to become conscious of social issues affecting their future students. For instance, in asynchronous online communication, students and instructor are able to see their words emerge in real time as they respond to others in the class or when reflecting on written prompts. Because this communication is available throughout the life of the course, students and instructor can review older written posts to refresh their memories of course concepts or undergo conceptual change as the course progresses. I became more curious about what this space looked like, and what and how students were learning from these online interactions with their peers.

I interrogated the idea that it was solely the instructor’s responsibility to make sure learning took place. No doubt, the instructor sets the ground rules for the course in her syllabus, provides ongoing feedback, and ultimately, assigns the grades. But these alone are not the only factors influencing students’ learning processes. Social processes, such as peer learning and language socialization, are key elements to learning (Cazden, 1988; Duff, 2010; Ha, 2010; Lam, 2008; Peele-Eady, 2011; Saville-Troike, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). As the instructor and practitioner-researcher, I am a key participant in the language socialization process and a key participant in the research process. How am I helping to socialize my students to become
participating members in this course, and how am I facilitating higher order thinking in unfamiliar terrain? All this led me to investigate how students new to an online learning context overcome their struggles, may experience apprehension to participate, and have feelings of frustration and alienation. Conceptual tools guiding me in this process were threshold concepts advanced by scholars like Bhabha (1994), James & Busher (2013), Gutiérrez (2008), Hulme, Cracknell and Owens (2009) and reflexive practices by Edge (2011).

**Practitioner inquiry**

First, I ground this research project in practitioner inquiry, which facilitates my understanding of my role in the learning processes of my undergraduate, upper level teacher candidate students in my hybrid course on language development in cultural contexts, and my role in addressing issues as they arise. As the practitioner-researcher, I engage in “the systematic examination and analysis of students’ learning juxtaposed and interwoven with systematic examination of the practitioners’ own intentions, reactions, decisions, and interpretations” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2004, p. 622). As classroom-based instructional problems arise, it is the practitioner who must be the constant, moment-by-moment problem solver. Practitioner research allows us to investigate and document how the practitioner’s problem-solving is accomplished. For Schön (1983), the idea of solving problems is not about merely the ends but about the “problem setting, the process by which we define the decision to be made, the ends to be achieved, [and] the means which may be chosen” (p. 40).

An important aspect in qualitative research, especially in practitioner inquiry, is reflexivity, “the ongoing, mutually-shaping interaction between the researcher and the research” (Edge, 2011, p. 35). Throughout the course, my role and that of my students underwent changes as we interacted; likewise, our learning and my teaching adapted. Documenting my
understandings of such processes was crucial throughout the research process. When referring to reflexivity in journal or memo writing, Edge (2001) asserts that “there is a mutually-influencing relationship between the writer and the writing” (p. 34). As I wrote journal entries or quick memos, I reflected on what I observed in class, both face-to-face and online, and noted my general impressions and assumptions. But the function of these notes does not stop at the reflections, for they function as a tool that guides my learning throughout the research process. These notes are a reminder that who I am influences the research contexts, my noticings, and what I choose to report. Reflexivity means understanding the “reciprocal and iterative reactions between [me] and [my student participants] in the setting” (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 47). I, as the researcher, control what and how voices are accounted for (Copland & Creese, 2015), and for practitioner researchers, great care needs to be taken to account for power dynamics.

Mentioned previously, I am a key participant in the research process; I do not have the luxury of insulating myself from critique in any stage of the research process. Practitioner inquiry considers the researcher as the primary instrument for collecting data, an integral role in her study, and one who “theorizes [her] own work, the assumptions and decisions [she] makes, and the interpretations [she] construct[s] about [her] own students’ learning” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2004, p. 618). My position as the practitioner-researcher affords me both insider and outsider perspectives. As the instructor of this course, I am a cultural participant in the classroom and have already formed assumptions about the course under study because I planned the content and syllabus of the present course and also had taught the same course for four semesters in both online and hybrid format. However, this does not mean that I was automatically granted insidership with my students; after all, I am still the instructor who makes the final decision on their grades, no matter how much I attempt to equalize our relationship throughout the course. I
was part of the class but still the instructor and researcher of the course. While embedded in the research as the teacher, I was nevertheless still the “outsider observer who makes meaning about the community under study” (Anderson, Herr & Nihlen, 2007). Throughout the course, however, it was very difficult to distinguish between these two perspectives, and to delineate the roles of instructor, researcher and participant, all three of which held authoritative roles responsible in the exercise of power. Balancing these roles was destabilizing at times throughout the research process.

**Practitioner role**

As the instructor of the course, my responsibility was to carry out the syllabus and ensure all learning objectives were met through individual and group-led learning activities, both online and face-to-face. Most importantly, course expectations, course content, and course textbook, e-articles, and videos were listed in the course syllabus, an extension of myself as the instructor. In fact, the course syllabus is what both instructor and students refer to for readings, video clips, whole class discussions, or Discussion Circle deliverables. I issued grades and feedback throughout the course, facilitated in class and small group discussions online and face-to-face, regularly emailed students, and met with students during office hours to discuss course progress or to clarify my feedback on assignments.

**Researcher role**

As the researcher of my study, I maintained a research journal with reflections on my general impressions of the Discussion Circles interactions, detailed later in this chapter, that took place during the f2f classes and during the online sessions. Maintaining a research journal helped me keep track of any methodological noticings unique to my practitioner researcher role, as I anticipated there would be difficulties separating my roles as instructor and researcher. In chapter
5, I will discuss this, along with the constant process of moving back and forth between f2f and online learning spaces, and the impact this had on my interactions with my students and on my overall development as an instructor and researcher.

**Ethnography of communication as a methodological tool**

Linguistic ethnography is considered a conceptual umbrella term that recognizes interdisciplinarity and includes several research traditions concerned with “investigating communication within the temporal unfolding of social processes that involve” (Rampton, 2007, p. 2) people and their multifaceted traits, abilities, statuses; situated encounters, such as events, genres, types of activities; and institutions, networks, and communities of practice.

Ethnography of communication is a research tradition recognized under the above-mentioned umbrella term linguistic ethnography and is informed by the disciplines of anthropology and linguistics. The tradition emerged in the 1960’s and 1970’s when anthropologists reflected on how their discipline played a role in imperial and colonial practices. Ethnography of communication stems from Hymes’ (1962) earlier work associated with the Ethnography of Speaking, which called for a move from privileging the examination of language structure to language use in contexts. As a response to Chomsky’s work in the 1960’s and 1970’s which focused on the notion that we have an innate knowledge of language rules and structure, laying the groundwork for the formalist paradigm of linguistics, Hymes (1972a) extended the idea of language to reflect how speakers understand the normative rules of speaking in a community. Hence, the concept of *communicative competence* emerged and is based on the premise that knowing the structures of language is not enough to be a competent speaker; instead, competence requires knowing what to say in conjunction with how to say it and to whom in a particular situation (Saville-Troike, 2003).
Ethnography of communication works in tandem with practitioner inquiry since my learning processes and patterned communicative practices are also under investigation. To be clear, I do not claim that this study is an ethnography of any sort. Rather, I rely on the analysis of discourse, using ethnography of communication as a methodological tool to “strange the familiar,” that is, to seek answers to my questions buried beneath the mundane operations in my course. I am concerned with the mundane because the familiar tends to go unchallenged. In my case, having taught the course several times, I was at risk of missing important communicative events or acts that took place in the course Discussion Circles. The way we teach and learn was passed down by those preceding us and therefore becomes deeply entrenched in our practices. Wisniewski (2000) points this out clearly when he states that “[m]ost of us are unconscious of the power and repeated messages of our institutional cultures, much in the same way that we are unconscious of our need for air” (p. 19).

Specific to ethnography of communication (Hymes, 1972; Saville-Troike, 2003), I am concerned with the ways my students and I understand and co-construct the norms of communication in the context of my hybrid course. By norms of communication, I include interactional norms both in face-to-face (f2f) and online contexts, and the use of specialized academic concepts learned throughout the course. I am also interested in understanding what beliefs and values guide our communicative behaviors in my hybrid course on first and second language development in cultural contexts. I draw on the ethnography of communication’s units of analysis outlined in Saville-Troike (2003) to analyze both f2f and online spaces. These are:

1. Communicative situation: context where communication takes place.

2. Communicative event: An event bounded by the following elements:
   a. general purpose and topic of communication,
b. same participants,

c. same language variety,

d. same tone or key and the same rules for interaction,

e. terminates whenever there is a change in the major participants, their role-relationships, or the focus of attention (p. 23).

3. Communicative act: generally coterminous with a single interactional function, such as a referential statement, a request, or a command, and may be either verbal or nonverbal (p. 24).

The figure below is a visual representation of the units of analysis within the context of my own work and analysis of what took place in Discussion Circles, which I detail later in this chapter.

**Figure 1**

*Units of Analysis*

It should also be noted that the elements of the learning management system, such as links to enter an online discussion board, links to upload assignment attachments, submission
buttons to post messages on a discussion board, or even the overall visual layout upon entering the online course, should be considered as part of the communicative situation, and all carry meaning and affect communication events and acts.

**Research setting**

The research site was a four-year urban university located in the US Southwest; the research period was during the spring 2015 semester (January to May 2015). The following demographics were taken from the institution’s report for the year: 25,816 was the reported total population for the main campus. The racial demographics of the student body consisted of almost 40% Hispanic, 39% White, 5.15% American Indian, 3.32% Asian, 2.36% African American, .15% Native Hawaiian, 3.12% two or more races, and 2.06% unknown. There were 746 undergraduate students enrolled in education, 1,028 graduate students in education, and 1,513 education enrollees of non-degree status. There was a reported total headcount of 8,056 students taking online courses. Bear in mind, attrition can affect these numbers and might not have been accounted for at the time of publishing such demographic information. For the 2014-2015 academic year, 1,521 Bachelor’s degrees were awarded to Hispanics, 1,487 awarded to Whites, 183 to American Indians; 107 to Asians; 87 to African Americans; and 7 to Native Hawaiians.

The communicative situation I investigated was my course on first and second language development in cultural contexts. The demographic composition of this course included three monolingual English speakers, 6 heritage Spanish speakers, and six bilingual English-Spanish speakers, and one heritage Spanish speaking student who also self-identified with the Lakota tribe. Most of the students in the class were between their early 20s to early 30’s. There were two Hispanic women who were over 40 years old. Of the 15 students in the course, only three were
male. This course examined theories used to describe first language, bilingual, and second
language development. Two major objectives for this course were that students could

1) describe and analyze the role sociocultural context plays in language development;

and

2) compare and contrast factors that influenced first and second language development
   across different ages and cultural contexts.

This was the second time a hybrid version of this course had been delivered. The fully
online version of this course went live only two years before the start of this research study, so
any online delivery of this course was still considered quite new at the time for the department
and for myself. This course was offered through a department within the College of Education at
this Southwestern university. The course is required for advanced undergraduate teacher-
candidate students who are working toward their state teacher licensure and who intend
additionally to receive their endorsements in bilingual education or in Teaching English to
Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in the K-12 education system. The course was delivered
both in f2f and online formats, roughly 25% and 75% of the time, respectively. We had five f2f
meetings throughout the semester. Constant and consistent communication, participation, and
collaboration were emphasized and reiterated both online and f2f throughout the course. Figure 2
below captures the research setting of this study displaying the university demographics at the
top base of the inverted triangle narrowing down to the bottom tip of the triangle which shows
the general makeup of each Discussion Circle group.

Figure 2

Research Setting
Course schedule

Table 1 displays the course schedule we followed over the 16-week course, along with research interventions, such as f2f meetings and post-course interviews. Whole class discussion questions, individual written assignments, and due dates were not relevant, so they were omitted from the table. The course was structured by modules, each module lasting two weeks and dedicated to a particular topic. F2f meetings took place in weeks 1, 6, 10, 14, and 16, and the rest of the course was conducted online. The last week of the course functioned as a course wrap-up and took place online. Noted in the table below are audio-recordings that were uploaded immediately after f2f meetings. This means that I uploaded my files to a secure cloud and accessed them remotely, using a virtual private network (VPN) to maximize the privacy and safety of my data. DC refers to discussion circles, focus groups that were central to my study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Jan 12-25</td>
<td>Introduction What is language?</td>
<td>RESEARCH COLLABORATOR DISTRIBUTED AND OBTAINED CONSENT FORMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>WK 1 (1.14.15): Face-to-face (f2f) meeting</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Jan 26-Feb 8</td>
<td>Language Development Theories (L1 development)</td>
<td>• <strong>Researcher journal (ongoing)</strong> of general impressions about what is happening in asynchronous and f2f communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 1/26/15: Emailed class about the creation of their Discussion Circle (DC) groups according to research collaborator’s formations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Feb 9-Feb 22</td>
<td>Bilingual Development &amp; Socialization</td>
<td>• Journal of asynchronous communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>WK 6 (2.11.15): F2F meeting</strong></td>
<td>• Journal of f2f class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Audio-recorded DC groups’ interactions and uploaded to secure cloud via virtual private network (VPN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Feb 23-Mar 8</td>
<td>Language &amp; Cognition</td>
<td>• Journal of f2f class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Audio-recorded DC groups’ interactions and uploaded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Mar 9-Mar 22</td>
<td>Second Language Development</td>
<td>• Journal of asynchronous communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>WK 10 (3.18.15): F2F meeting</strong></td>
<td>• Journal of f2f class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Audio-recorded DC groups’ interactions and uploaded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Mar 23-Apr 5</td>
<td>L2 Learner Language Language</td>
<td>• Journal of asynchronous communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Apr 6-Apr 19</td>
<td>Learning the Academic Language in L2</td>
<td>• Journal of asynchronous communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>WK 14 (4.15.15): F2F meeting</strong></td>
<td>• Journal of f2f class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Audio-recorded DC groups’ interactions and uploaded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Apr 20-May 3</td>
<td>Different Abilities &amp; Language Development Issues</td>
<td>Journal of f2f class and DC groups’ interactions and presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>WK 16 (4.29.15) F2F meeting</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 4-9:</td>
<td>Course Wrap-up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 25, 2015:</td>
<td>gained access to consent forms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 28 through June 15, 2015:</td>
<td>conducted post course semi-structured interviews with 5 out of 8 consented participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 27, 2015:</td>
<td>began transcription of audio-recordings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To gain a deeper sense of the course, I will outline the five course goals stated in the syllabus and aligned with state teacher TESOL and bilingual competencies and those of the university.

1) Study major theories on first and second language development;
2) Articulate beliefs on language development;
3) Study specific cases on how context plays a role in first and second language development;
4) Study factors that influence first and second language development at different ages and in different cultural contexts; and
5) Develop awareness of diversity in students’ abilities, languages and cultural backgrounds to support their language development.

This section provides a brief description of the course content and the role it played in our course discussions and the details of the Discussion Circle (DC). Thereafter, brief descriptions of the course modules follow.

**Discussion Circle groups and tasks**

Central to my study is the learning, communication, and identity-development that took place in DC groups. What follows are details of DC groups taken from pages 10-13 in my course syllabus.

**DISCUSSION CIRCLES**

A discussion circle format will be implemented throughout this course. The goal is to integrate collaborative learning, independent reading strategies and to promote high level thought and discussion. This model of Discussion Circles is based on Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student Centered Classroom by Harvey Daniels.

**Process:**
1) Discussion Circle group discussion forums will be arranged for you early in the semester.

2) Meet your group and begin discussing role assignment and meeting times.

3) When you meet, you will each discuss the following Discussion Circle questions, “What do we learn when we learn languages, how do we learn languages, and what does language mean to us?” We will allot some time for you to meet during three (3) of our face-to-face class meetings, but you must maintain constant communication outside of these times. You will have your own Discussion Circle group forum to communicate asynchronously.

4) Keep in mind due dates for peer reviews, instructor feedback, and compiling and rehearsing your group presentation.

5) Submit presentation and final written products to appropriate link in Module 8 by April 29th, 11:30 PM.

6) Deliver your group presentation on our final face-to-face meeting, April 29th.

Discussion Circle Format:

1) Once groups have been arranged, four specific roles will be assigned within each discussion circle group through negotiation of group members. Individuals will be responsible for this role during this assignment.

2) Each person in the group should: (a) read relevant course material(s) or outside material prior to the discussion; (b) prepare in advance their written product for their role (draft and final ideas) by due dates; and, (c) present her or his ideas and product to their group during discussion time. These discussions will take place during face-to-face class time or online.

3) Discussion circle groups will meet four times during our face-to-face meetings for approximately 30-minute sessions. During twenty minutes of this time, each member will have 5 minutes to discuss ideas or work prepared for the group. Then the discussion leader will lead a 10-minute discussion on any material that is relevant to the group’s goal. The remainder of your communication will take place in your online forum. To ensure you’re on the right track, I may participate in your group face-to-face and online discussions. If you meet outside of the online discussion forum or face-to-face class meetings, the discussion director is
responsible for posting a report of your discussion and who was presenting your Discussion Circle group forum.

4) Each Discussion Director will be responsible for making sure the group meets peer review or instructor review deadlines. The Director is also responsible for making sure the work is ready to be presented to the entire class by the due date and that each member contributes.

5) Presentations should be no more than 15 minutes long. Presentations are meant to provide the class with a creative snapshot of your group’s discussions, findings, and products related to the Discussion Circle questions. These are normally done in PowerPoint, but other formats are welcome. Feel free to discuss with me!

6) All written products and presentation will be uploaded to the appropriate link in Module 8 by April 29th at 11:30 PM. Each Discussion Circle group will deliver the presentation during our face-to-face meeting on April 29th.

**Role Descriptions:**

**Discussion Director**

A discussion director serves as facilitator or group leader. The principal responsibility of this role is to engage the group members in thoughtful and stimulating conversation during the discussion time. It is also the responsibility of the director to make sure that all members (director included!) are meeting their responsibilities to the rest of the group. **If one or more persons are not meeting their responsibilities, it is up to the discussion director to notify the instructor as soon as possible.** The director should turn in a one-page written product that summarizes the discussions held on this topic. The discussion director will also be responsible that people contribute their part to the presentation and for uploading all written products and presentation to the appropriate link in Module 8.

**Illustrator**

An illustrator provides an original graphic representation of the essential concepts from the reading in the form of a diagram, chart, flow chart or illustration. A written description of this graphic form is also required (about 1 page).

**Highlighter/ Connector**

This role combines two jobs within a single product.
1. Highlighter identifies three short selections **from the course readings** to present to the group. Passages may be chosen because they are informative, controversial, thought provoking, etc.

2. A Connector of Ideas creates a list or outline of connections made between the reading material and the outside world (especially as they pertain to the educational realities of New Mexico). Concepts may be related to the realities of the classroom, educational system or other theories, ideas, issues discussed in class.

**Product:** A copy of the highlighted selections and a list or outline of connections.

**Investigator**

An Investigator further researches one to two elements of the readings and provides supplemental information/sources on the topic to the group. The Investigator must find one to two articles dealing with the elements decided upon by the group. These articles must be from reputable sources -journals, books, and appropriate web sites. The Bilingual Research Journal and TESOL Quarterly are good sources. The National Association for Bilingual Education, and the Center for Applied Linguistics have interesting and pertinent sources and you can find them on their web sites. The goal is to provide additional information, authors, theories etc. to the reading material that will deepen the group’s understanding of the readings.

**Product:** A one to two page summary of the investigator’s findings. Provide a copy for each group member and turn in an annotated bibliography with your summary.

Online asynchronous forums were created and functioned as a space for DC groups to carry on continuous discussions about the three DC questions each DC group was tasked with collectively answering. These discussions were based on the course material and their own observations and/or experiences in the K-12 education system. It should be noted that I added two activities, described below, which required DC groups to analyze speech and transcribe what they heard. This was meant to help ease group members into their first structured online group discussion and the idea-sharing process. It was also to prepare them for written assignments later in the course, done individually, that required them to analyze longer speech from audio-recordings of a first language learner and another of a second language learner.
Modules

The first two modules dealt with the nature of language; the components of language, such as phonology, morphology, syntax, and pragmatics; and language development theories, including behaviorism, innatism, cognition, and sociocultural theory. The first two DC group activities required students to listen to speech, transcribe what they heard, and analyze the language components of their transcriptions. DC group members compared and discussed their work with one another.

In module 3, we learned about and discussed bilingual development, language socialization practices in differing cultural contexts, and the social consequences for the bilingual student in our K-12 classrooms. In module 4, we discussed the interplay between language and cognition, and the proposed stages children move through as they develop.

Modules 5 and 6 focused on second language (L2) development, individual differences that factor into L2 development, and the role differing learning contexts play in L2 development. Module 7 dealt with learning academic language for L2 learners, approaches to academic language instruction, and social consequences of not becoming competent in academic language. In the last module, Module 8, we learned about and discussed language development issues, such as language impairment. We read about different learner profiles and talked about how to understand if a learner has an actual language impairment or is simply developing language at a pace that does not match the expectations of the teacher.

Discussion Circles as analytic focus

My analytic focus was on communicative events taking place in Discussion Circles (DC), both in the f2f and online contexts of my hybrid course. All students in the course were arranged into unique DC groups and remained in this group throughout the semester. I learned to use
Discussion Circles from my mentor professors, one whose course I took and another whose course I interned in. The model of DC originates from Harvey Daniels’ (2002) work on Literature Circles, which has influenced the field of literacy. Literature Circles were designed to be learner-centered book clubs of peer-led discussions around the same piece of literature, such as short stories, poems, myths, and so on. Each peer member was meant to read the piece and later return to the group with her or his impressions. In order to provide members initial structure and guidance and to facilitate autonomy, role sheets were devised. Roles could include but are not limited to an illustrator, questioner, or connector. My own adaptation of Literature Circles follows.

There were 15 participants in the class, divided into three DC groups of five members each. Each member had a specific role: director, investigator, highlighter/connector, and illustrator. Two of the three groups agreed to have two co-directors who shared duties; the other group settled on having one director, and two members shared the role of highlighter/connector, one being the highlighter, and the other being the connector. The job of the director was to bring members together online and off, direct and redirect discussions as needed, and ensure the group was on task, as well as summarize the DC discussions throughout the semester. The task of the investigator was to search for materials outside of the course’s required reading material that were relevant to any emerging themes the group deemed important. The highlighter/connector’s role entailed finding quotes from the course’s required readings and making direct connections to the current education system. These quotes were discussed and agreed upon by the group as to their importance and relevance. Last, the illustrator was charged with creating one graphic organizer that captured the essence of the group’s discussion throughout the semester.
In a purely f2f course format, the Discussion Circle roles would alternate throughout the semester. The first time I taught this course, it was fully online, and I was mentored by an experienced TESOL and Bilingual Education professor. We alternated Discussion Circle roles in this fully online course, and it presented many challenges for students, such as assigning roles, coordinating meetings, and figuring out how to submit their Discussion Circle product. Because of this experience, I decided that keeping the same roles throughout the semester would be more streamlined for my hybrid course. Regardless if the course format was f2f or online, it was imperative that throughout the semester each DC group engaged in multiple discussions regarding three key questions for their final project:

1) What do we learn when we learn languages?

2) How do we learn languages?

3) What does language mean to us?

To be clear, these questions were for DC groups to respond to and were not related to my study’s research questions. By discussing the above questions, each group member created written products specific to their role for each DC session. In the final project, each group presented in the form of PowerPoint® presentations a creative snapshot of its discussions, findings, and each member’s written products. The written products varied according to each role. The director was tasked with summarizing all of the DC group’s discussions over the semester into a one-page report. The investigator’s one or two-page written product offered a summary of one to two articles that were related to a topic decided upon by the group. The highlighter/connector’s written product was meant to take three passages from any of our course readings and make connections to the educational realities of the Southwest.
Although a majority of the communicative events analyzed for this study relate to the three questions of the DC, I included what I initially considered “non-related DC activities,” such as activities requiring students to transcribe excerpts from video clips and to compare and discuss their transcriptions with their peers. Another “non-related DC activity” involved students in creating a handout about articles we read on second language learning, and each group would distribute their product at one of the five face-to-face meetings. These activities were not directly related to the three DC questions, but they involved learning and group discussion and were quite relevant to this study. This way I could explore if there were diverse ways dialogue about different learning tasks mediated each group’s learning process. For example, were interactions about the small transcription assignments noticeably different from those chiefly focused on the three DC questions?

The figure below depicts the interdependence of DC group members’ roles in responding to the three DC questions for their final presentation. Each member was tasked with creating a written product according to his or her unique role. The role’s product was meant to be a distillation of recurrent themes that emerged from DC discussions in approaching each of the three questions below.

**Figure 3**

*Discussion Circle Questions & Member Roles*
The next figure illustrates the progression of discussions over the 16-week course. Notice how the process begins with several circles of different sizes, but through each phase, the number of these circles lessens, and their sizes become uniform. It begins with the initial “sense-making” stages, where students are figuring out how to navigate the online space, asking for clarification about the DC project components, deciding who will occupy roles, talking about their own experiences related to the course materials, and negotiating how all of these ideas can be narrowed down into written products. The next phase, which I call “coalescence,” depicts students emerging from the difficult stage of trying to make sense of new information and this hybrid format. At this juncture, groups are noticing recurrent themes from their discussions, which help groups refine their ideas to form their written products, leading them to the “creative snapshot” phase. This phase entails the DC groups’ final presentations and, ultimately everyone’s key takeaways from the course.

**Student participants**
Because the research participants for this study were my own students, they were chosen through convenience sampling. Although Glesne (2006) warns this type of sampling runs the risk of low credibility, I minimized the risk as the practitioner researcher through constant reflection and self-interrogation while maintaining my journaling and memoing. Additionally, I communicated with a critical friend who helped me initially invite students to consent for the study, and who also interrogated my taken-for-granted ideas.

Over the semesters of teaching this course, the student population had generally been composed of undergraduate students and non-degree graduate students with varying degrees of multilingualism in languages, including but not limited to Chinese, Navajo, Spanish, and Zuni. Students in these courses generally had little to no experience in the online learning environment, either through hybrid or entirely online courses. In this study, most of my participants were advanced undergraduates or upper-level undergraduates. They represented a combination of language backgrounds, including English monolinguals, Spanish-English bilinguals, Spanish heritage speakers, and native English speakers who were second language learners of a European language other than Spanish. Most of the students were in their mid-20’s; there were two female students who were significantly older than the rest of the class. All were taking this course as a requirement and most expressed interest in teaching in the future in a multilingual classroom.

The goal of this study was to research my own communication and learning in the f2f and online spaces in my hybrid course and those of my students, namely eight consented learners who met the following criteria. It should be noted that criteria “d” through “f” look at online learning experience because this may still be new for students and therefore played a role in their learning, communication, and identity-development throughout the course. Here, it is assumed that any online learning experience would include hybrid learning.
a. at least 18 years of age;

b. advanced undergraduate teacher education students;

c. expressed interest in teaching in multilingual contexts;

d. had no more than two semesters of online learning experience; or

e. had no more than one semester of online collaborative learning experience (online groupwork); or

f. had more than two semesters of online learning experiences, but NO online collaborative learning experience

**Consent process**

Researching one’s own class runs the risk of preferential treatment or undue influence to participate. Therefore, measures were taken to minimize these issues. At the latter part of the first face-to-face meeting on January 14, 2015, a research collaborator visited the class and conducted the consent process in my absence. I gave her the completed demographic questionnaires (see Appendix A) that students completed during class. The questionnaire asked about students’ name, gender, academic status, language background, program, and online learning experience. For my own instructional purposes, I quickly noted each student’s demographic information on my roster before releasing the questionnaires to the research collaborator. Afterwards, I immediately left the premises. She read a consent script (see Appendix C) to the class, outlining the nature of the study and consent form (see Appendix B), and reiterated that participation in the study was not mandatory and would not affect grades. She informed students that I would not know who consented until after the final grades had been posted at the end of the semester. She distributed the consent forms, collected them in their envelopes, and they remained with her until she processed the information. Below is the script she read to the class prior to distributing the
forms. Any identifying information has been blacked out to preserve anonymity of the research collaborator and the institution where the study took place.

“Hi, my name is [redacted], and I am a PhD candidate from the [redacted] department. I am here this evening to invite you to participate in a research study that will be carried out by your instructor, Anni Leming. She is interested in learning about how the new hybrid format of the [redacted] course on language development impacts her students’ and her own learning, communication, and participation in the course. The results from the study will help in bettering instruction, deciding future iterations of this course, and contributing to discussions about online learning in 21st century education practices. I am also here to inform you that in order to minimize any perceived coercion, your participation will remain unknown to the instructor until after final grades have been posted in May. This way you receive full benefits from the course, whether or not you choose to participate in the research study. If you decide to opt out of the study at any time during the semester, please contact me at ehulse@unm.edu.

I am going to pass out a manila envelope with a consent form and demographic questionnaire enclosed. Please read through these forms. If you decide to participate, complete both forms, write your email on the consent form and return them in the manila envelope and seal it. I will email you a copy of your consent form.

If you decide NOT to participate, do not complete the consent form, but please complete the demographic form. Simply seal the envelope with the empty forms inside. When you are finished, hand the sealed envelopes to me. PLEASE DO NOT WRITE ON THE ENVELOPE!

By signing the consent form you agree to participate in the research study; however, you may cease your participation at any time. Contact me if you decide to change your mind, or if you have any questions throughout the semester.”

After she processed the necessary information from completed consent forms, she made pdf copies and emailed them to the research participants. Her email on 1/21/2015 follows:

“Hi,

I’ve attached the copy of your consent form for Anni Leming’s study of the hybrid course, [redacted].

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Please remember if you have any questions about the study (not course content), do not hesitate to email me. I usually check my UNM email several times a day and should be able to get right back to you!

Thanks so much and have a great semester!

Study Member”

As noted in the email above, students were invited to email the research collaborator directly if they required more information regarding the research part of the course. Using the demographic forms and inclusion criteria, the research collaborator worked hard to arrange DC groups on my behalf, while also making sure the three males in the course were in separate groups and that, where applicable, at least one group was made up of 5 qualifying consented participants. The whole process was nerve-wracking because I worried that there might only be one or two students who consented out of the entire class, which would have made this study very difficult! Once the groups were formed, all demographic and consent forms were kept in sealed envelopes and remained safe in the administrative office until my final grades were submitted on May 25, 2015, when I gained access to the consent forms. I asked the research collaborator if anyone had withdrawn from the study, but she did not report any withdrawals. I eliminated any participation data of specific students who did not consent and/or were not qualified to be in the study based on the selection criteria.

A total of 15 students were in my course; however, only eight students consented so only these students’ were research participants and only their data were included in this study. Of the eight participants, three, whose pseudonyms were Adam, Loretta, and Maria, did not complete the end-of-course interview despite my efforts contacting them. I decided not to push too hard, as there is a fine line between persistence and perceived coercion, regardless if the interviews were
held after the course had ended and grades were submitted. There were three males and 5 females who consented. Most report having a monolingual English background although this self-report tends to change over the course. The non-consented participants indicated being bilingual in Spanish and English to varying degrees. The following table presents only a snapshot of the participants. More about the participants will be revealed in the analysis sections.

**Table 2**

*Consented Discussion Circle Group Members*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant (pseudonym)</th>
<th>Language background</th>
<th>Discussion Circle role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emily, female, early 20's</strong></td>
<td>Self-identified English monolingual, Spanish as heritage language, new to online</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Isabella, female, over 40</strong></td>
<td>Self-identified English monolingual, Spanish as heritage language, new to online</td>
<td>Illustrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Liam, male, early 20's</strong></td>
<td>Self-identified English monolingual, Spanish language loss, Lakota tribe, new to online</td>
<td>Highlighter/Connector (shared role)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maria, female, early 20's</strong></td>
<td>Bilingual Spanish/English, new to online</td>
<td>Highlighter/Connector (shared role)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loretta, female, over 40</strong></td>
<td>Bilingual Spanish/English, new to online</td>
<td>Investigator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linda, female, early 20's</strong></td>
<td>Monolingual English, ≥ 2 semesters online, no online collaborative experience</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hale, male, early 20's</strong></td>
<td>Monolingual English, new to online</td>
<td>Investigator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adam, male, early 20's</strong></td>
<td>Monolingual English, ≥ 2 semesters online, no online collaborative experience</td>
<td>Co-director</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Practitioner researcher**

As mentioned earlier I have taught this course both in fully online, f2f, and hybrid formats. As the instructor of this course, I am biased in my beliefs about how the course should be taught and how students should learn.

Let me begin with my multilingual and biracial background. I have always been concerned and perplexed about language and language learning processes. My mother is Filipina
who immigrated to the United States with my monolingual Anglo father during the 1970’s. Although Tagalog was communicated in the home, English became my predominant language. It was a difficult process navigating a bilingual identity in a time and space when English was valued more in the home and school (and it still is!) and among Tagalog speakers whose competency and fluency in that language surpassed my own. I grew up in a household with Tagalog speakers who rented space in our home, but my father discouraged me from learning Tagalog. I also went to school with Tagalog-speaking peers from elementary school through high school. I treaded lightly in most communicative situations, believing that my participation in English or Tagalog could be devalued at any moment, destabilizing my sense of self and sense of belonging. I disclosed this reality to the students in my language development course with a bilingual caution sign that read “Mag-ingat, bawal pumasok! Caution, no trespassing!” This caution sign serves as a reminder of what language means to me and why it behooves others to take seriously its power and its ability to transmit messages through time and space. I ventured to learn Spanish through high school and the university and have developed a functional competence in Russian during a teaching program for a private institute and in the English Language Fellow program. I have taught English as a Second Language for over 11 years in the western part of the United States and English as a Foreign Language in Ukraine, and Azerbaijan.

Through my own experiences with language, I have developed a keen sensitivity to and enduring preoccupation with language and its learning processes, a fascination with navigating liminal spaces, and an urgency to learn about and engage in reflexive practices. I decided the combination of practitioner inquiry and discourse analysis was compatible with my lived experiences.

Data collection
To establish trustworthiness, I used several data sources for triangulation. Audio-recorded group discussions, audio-recorded interviews, and asynchronous group communication in the university’s online learning management system were all dated and uploaded to a secure cloud using a virtual private network. My journal entries were accompanied by annotated f2f agendas and memos about my processes at any time during data analysis. Such entries and memos were kept secure and organized by date, as well. The following matrix displays each data source, whether it was meant for online or f2f contexts, and its rationale for the study.

Table 3

**Data Sources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Online, f2f, other</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audio-recording of DC groups</strong></td>
<td>F2f in class</td>
<td>Investigate the real-time communication of each DC group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asynchronous group communication</strong></td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Investigate the online asynchronous communication of each DC group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(physical and temporal presence are unnecessary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audio-recorded semi-structured interviews</strong></td>
<td>F2f in office</td>
<td>Understand [consented] participants’ “knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences, and interactions [that] are meaning properties of the social reality” (Mason, 2002, p. 63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Journal entries, memos, annotated class materials</strong></td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Maintain an ongoing account of my “changing thoughts and new ideas and the progression of learning” (Anderson, Herr, &amp; Nihlen, 2007, p. 208)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critical friend discussions</strong></td>
<td>F2f</td>
<td>Help me interrogate my taken-for-granted assumptions about participants and processes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Audio-recorded f2f group communication**

I used mini audio recording devices to record each f2f group discussion and a digital audio editor to help me filter out background noise and distinguish participants’ voices. Each audio recorder was assigned to its own group for the whole semester. Each audio-recorded DC
interaction took place toward the end of every f2f class session. Regardless of who consented, all three groups were recorded three times throughout the semester. The decision for recording all three groups was to minimize perceived preferential treatment. Each recording time ranged from 23 minutes to 30 minutes. After every f2f class session, I uploaded the recordings to a secure cloud using a virtual private network (VPN), ensuring each recording was labeled according to group and date. I did not listen to nor begin transcribing the recordings until after I submitted grades on May 25, 2015 and obtained consent forms. This decision was made to minimize any undue pressure students might feel throughout the course and avoid disrupting the natural flow of the course. Only the data of the participants who consented and met the criteria above were included in this study. Any references to data from other participants were not included in the study.

Asynchronous group communication

During the course, all students’ f2f and online interactions occurring in DC groups were considered and journaled about. I did my best to avoid specific references to any student and recorded general understandings of what was happening across all three of the groups. To account for instances when I directly referenced a student, pseudonyms were assigned to every student from the beginning of the course. I eliminated any specific reference or direct quote I may have used if it indexed an unconsented participant immediately after gaining access to consented students on May 25, 2015. All asynchronous communication in DC groups was downloaded as a document and archived to a secure cloud via a (VPN). Each discussion file was labeled according to the name of the forum, whole discussion board, group number, and date. There were approximately 188 pages of asynchronous DC communication.
Once I gained access to consent forms, I could see that my research collaborator created one group that fully comprised consented qualifying participants; another group comprised two consented qualifying participants; and the last had only one consented qualifying participant who, unfortunately, did not interview with me after the course ended. There were three students who consented but did not meet one or more qualifiers for the study.

*Journal entries, memos, annotated class materials*

In order to continue interrogating my own assumptions about the teaching, learning and communication going on in this course, I wrote journal entries after each f2f class and at random moments while analyzing asynchronous communication. I wrote about my impressions and how I was experiencing the interactions because I could not listen to the audio files in case students disclosed they had consented to be part of the study. I examined the online asynchronous DC group discussions and took notes of my impressions. I had to be particularly careful about writing down any specific words or making specific references to students. Pseudonyms were assigned to all students and were used throughout the journaling process. After gaining access to the consent forms, any specific links to non-consented participants were not going to be used in data analysis. Not only did the journaling aid me in chronicling my students’ and my participation and communication; small memos and annotated class materials like the agendas were useful, too. They helped jog my memory specific to the topic of discussion. I took notes about dates, time, seating arrangement of speakers during f2f recorded discussions, and general impressions of students’ interactions. There are other crucial considerations in the journaling or memoing process. Numerous times throughout the research process ideas would take me by surprise. In order to accommodate these random moments, I tried to be prepared with a notepad and post-its or the audio recording function on my phone. In cases when I was unprepared, I
jotted down brief notes on anything I could find and write on, or I would audio record my thoughts and later convert them into text.

**Audio-recorded semi-structured interviews**

As mentioned previously, I did not want to know who consented to my research during the semester to minimize the risk of undue pressure to participate and to reduce perceived preferential treatment. My research collaborator was instructed not to release any consent information until after final grades were submitted on May 25, 2015. Once I submitted grades, I accessed consent forms. I invited via email the eight consented qualifying student participants to interview with me, so I could ask them to reflect on communication, participation, and learning in this hybrid course. The interview was semi-structured, using an interview protocol (see Appendix D). I used the same mini audio recording device and digital audio editor as I did with the f2f meetings. These audio-recorded interviews took place between 5/28/15 to 6/15/15 in my on-campus office. Unfortunately, only five out of eight participants interviewed with me; three simply did not reply to my email invitations. Only one of the three who did not respond did not pass the course, so I assume this person chose not to interview for this reason. It is unclear why the other two did not respond. The interview times ranged from roughly 45 minutes to an hour and 20 minutes. In each interview I asked questions related to the following:

- assumptions about online learning;
- expectations about the course;
- effects of the course on learning, communication and participation;
- how challenges were managed, if any;
- the effect of working in groups (or “a group”) on learning;
- the effects of the hybrid course on learning course concepts;
• the effects of the hybrid course on learner and teacher identity; and

• suggestions for improvement.

There were times I asked the interviewees related questions about specific moments I observed during their f2f and online interactions. To illustrate this, the following interview excerpt references a comment a participant made online to her group members:

1. Anni: I remember reading that, right you said um. You know, another part of this is to practice communicating=

2. Emily: =ya

3. Anni: Um, I was I was intrigued by that comment when you said that online. I don’t know if you remember but=

4. Emily: =ya =

5. Anni: = you said this is a hybrid class and, you know, tha- that the intention as well is to learn how to communicate. What’d you have in mind when you said that to your group members?

6. Emily: I think it’s because they were so adamant about meeting and doing all our work outside of class. And I thought it was important you signed up for a hybrid class and we’re talking about languages. Well, online communicating is almost a different type of language. (Interview, 6/11/2015)

It was necessary for me to maximize my own preliminary understanding of what was happening at the time of interaction and to compare this understanding with that of the research participant. By doing this, I represent the participants and their ideas as accurately as possible in this study and maximize credibility of the research study itself (Glesne, 2006; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Both semi-structured interviews and f2f group recordings were transcribed and analyzed for patterns of communication pointing to the interplay of learning, communication, and identity-development within a social context.

Critical friend
Due to my subjectivity as both instructor and researcher, I came to this study with prior knowledge about the course under investigation. For many practitioner-researchers like myself, “we have accrued a lot of information, which needs to be welcomed and questioned” (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007, p. 160). Therefore, I took additional measures to interrogate my assumptions about what I believed was going on in the data. Throughout the course of data collection and analysis, I engaged in discussions with a critical friend who posed questions intended to “interrogate [my] own ways of knowing” (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007, p. 130). This critical friend was vital to my study because she has years of insider knowledge related to language development pedagogy and research. I focused our discussions on ideas I generated from my researcher’s journal. When referencing these discussions in my study, I used the critical friend’s pseudonym. These exchanges were informal and ranged from only minutes to a few hours. At times, I did not realize our exchanges were relevant to my work until after the fact. I jotted down ideas from our discussion in my journal or on any piece of paper I could find. I regret not recording these conversations. She helped redirect my attention to social factors influencing learning instead of focusing on an individual student or myself. She reminded me to consider my own linguistic history and how it shaped what I see as important. Reflexively, the stories of my learners and my own mutually influenced one another.
Chapter 4: Introducing the research participants

A couple days leading up to my first face-to-face (f2f) meeting with my class on January 14, 2015, I had the opportunity to read some of my students’ introductions on Blackboard, which was the learning management system (LMS) used at the university. Before reading these, I remember the anxiety I felt about the students and the future dynamics of the course. My mind was barraged with questions. What would these students be like in this course? How would they react to being asked to participate in a research study with me? Would there be tension throughout the next 16 weeks because of this study? What if nobody consented, and I found out at the end of the semester? These questions were constant and debilitating, but I decided to move forward and acquaint myself with my students.

It was a late Monday morning on January 12, 2015, when I decided to start an online discussion that would invite student responses. In any online course I teach, I set up a forum for introductions. This morning, I typed the university’s learning management system’s website address into my browser and entered my login credentials. Once I entered the course, I clicked on the “Class Discussion Board” link on the left side of the screen and created a forum that read “Introduce yourself to us!” I created a thread named “Anni Leming’s intro!” I realized every time I created these threads that the subject lines were so dry. I began by explaining how “[t]his class appeals to me because of my own bicultural/bilingual upbringing in English and Tagalog. However, English has become my dominant language due to factors we’ll discuss as the course progresses.” It was important for me to learn why a course on language development would appeal to my learners. For most, it was because this course was normally required for students who pursued their TESOL or Bilingual Education certification, but over time the course functioned as more than a program requirement, which I will discuss later.
I moved on to discuss my research interests in “adult learning, multilingualism, e-learning, and discourse analysis.” I continued on, “I hope you can help me understand more about the interplay of all of these things. I'll say more about my research project in our f2f meeting this Wednesday.” I wanted to disclose just enough to put my research on my students’ radar but to leave room for details when we met the upcoming Wednesday. Last, I concluded my introduction with my interest in my pets, hobbies and sports. I always add this at the end, hoping others will follow. Learning about the things that consume my students’ time offers me a glimpse into a more holistic person. I made it a point to model in my post what I expected in return from my students.

I was pleased that nearly half of the class posted their introductions before our first f2f meeting! After reading the introductions, I felt a sense of calm and enthusiasm. So far the students’ introductions included a mix of academic backgrounds, career goals, and leisurely interests. I noticed students’ communication was polite and a bit formal, but some showed enthusiasm and were interactive with their classmates, but not with me. “Oh well!” I thought. In my experience, students tend to respond to one another rather than to the instructor. Was it a power dynamic, or am I really that boring? Whatever the reason, I believed the responses were very good signs. Also, I wanted the whole class discussion forum to be a space predominantly for student interactions. I was not fully absent; rather, I would interact intermittently to summarize a module’s discussion, redirect a discussion, or invite a non-posting student. I could not wait to meet my class!

The first face-to-face class meeting

Wednesday late afternoon on January 14, 2015, I entered an almost silent classroom. The class was set up in a teacher-centered fashion - long tables facing the front of the room, where
the whiteboard and computer console were. This arrangement bothered me, because it was not conducive to group work. In my experience, when I had full classes, it was a hassle to arrange tables to accommodate group work. Fortunately, the class was not full, so the students had more freedom to arrange themselves.

These first meetings always made me so nervous, and even more so because this class was my research context. I thought about my responsibility for delivering this course, but my positionality as a practitioner-researcher weighed heavily on me. I committed to accomplishing simultaneous roles and responsibilities, moving back and forth across boundaries, which made me conscious about how I moved within and across thresholds, for a threshold “contain[s] both entries and exits; they are both/and. A single threshold can be not only an entry way, but also an exit; therefore, the structure itself is not quite as linear and definitive as one might think” (Jackson & Mazzie, 2012, p. 6). Again, I wore two hats, that of the researcher and that of the instructor, but to complexify my movement across thresholds, I was still a doctoral candidate and Teaching Assistant, not a professor, by any means. Alongside my students, I got to reconceptualize my identity and capabilities while boundary-crossing. Ultimately, I did what I knew how to do best in a classroom, and that was learn and teach; my researcher role would always be operating in the background. That was my hope, anyway.

To start the class, I greeted everyone, turned on the computer and screen at the console, and distributed my agenda, a document that became an important guide for each of our f2f sessions. I organized it in two columns, the left one for the focus of the course and the right for notes and details. I read through each of the five points on the agenda to the class: useful class terms, course expectations and documents, Discussion Circles (DC), quotes from the first
I began with key terms for the course. By doing this, we minimize confusion and frustration with unfamiliar terms, and we could be consistent when referring to course activities and processes. I included terms, such as synchronous/asynchronous, DC (Discussion Circle), DQ (Discussion Question), M1, M2 (module 1, module 2), and so on. Introducing these terms offered a starting point for observing how we would develop over the semester a type of shared knowledge and a set of norms for interaction unique to our class. Especially for the online aspect of this course, students new to this medium “need to learn appropriate roles, registers, and
technical skills to participate in asynchronous, threaded, bulletin board discussions related to course content” (Duff, 2010, p. 184).

I moved on and distributed questionnaires that asked about their language background, online experience, program of study, and interest in teaching in multilingual classrooms. Then I projected the course syllabus on the screen and reviewed the course expectations. I displayed on the screen our online classroom space and demonstrated how to access the different areas students would need to become familiar with for our course. I showed them the classroom forum, email, modules and how to access each module’s overview and reading folders. Next, I introduced the Discussion Circles project, outlined at the end of the syllabus. I informed the class that we would continue throughout the course to grapple with the three DC questions:

1) What do we learn when we learn language?;
2) How do we learn language?; and
3) What does language mean to us?

I also emphasized the importance of maintaining communication in DC groups, as this would determine the success of the group’s project. At this point, I wondered how my students were making sense of the DC project, especially those completely new to the online environment or to group work online. Since our class only met f2f five times throughout the semester, most communication would take place online. I immediately directed my attention to two older female students and anticipated they would need more online support than the other students in the class. I had made this assumption because of their age. This will be discussed later in this section.

I added to the agenda to watch and analyze part of a movie to give them an idea of the type of discussion activities we would have throughout the course, but the time came for my research collaborator to conduct the consenting process. After noticing her near the doorway, I
explained to the class that I was interested in researching f2f and online learning, communication and participation processes in our course, and that I was not to be in the vicinity during the consenting process. I informed them that the research collaborator would explain in more detail the nature of my study. I felt that if I had spent more time explaining the nature of my study, it might have been perceived as coercive, a risk I could not afford to take. So, I took leave, exited the classroom, had a brief exchange with the consenter, and released the completed questionnaires to her. I immediately exited the building.

As I left the building, I began to worry, and I hoped my intention to research my own class would not create any tension for the rest of the semester. If I triggered mistrust, it would be very difficult to earn my student research participants’ trust and establish rapport with them. I reflected on how I introduced key terms, course expectations, and the DC project. As the instructor, my intention was to begin the course by displaying my commitment to helping students with “the language, skills, support, and opportunities they need to participate with growing competence” (Duff, 2010, p. 176). I hoped this was the impression I left on them the first day of class.

**Consented discussion circle group members revisited**

After a couple of weeks settling into the course, my students and I progressively became familiar with one another as the class continued participating in the Introduce yourself to us! forum, posting DQ responses, and engaging in their DC groups. By the second module, the consenter sent me the DC groupings, and I created the private online DC group spaces for each of the three groups of five members. I created a forum titled “Discussion Circles,” which was a forum specifically for DC-related activities, such as negotiating roles, planning peer-review of
written products and presentation, and so on. DC group members would meet each other for the first time in this online space.

When I gained access to the consented participants after submitting final grades on May 25, 2015, I discovered that one DC group had 5 consented participants with minimal to no online experience; another group had two consented participants with minimal online experience or some online experience but no online group work experience; and the third had one consented participant with minimal online experience. Only five of the consented eight participants showed up for the end-of-course interviews: Isabella, Emily, Liam, Linda, and Hale. I am unsure if this is related, but Maria, Loretta, and Adam did not show up for the interviews and did not participate in the course as much as the other five. Except for Loretta, the remainder of the consented participants received passing grades for the course.

The table below is similar to the one in chapter 3; however, the one here not only illustrates those participants who consented, but also displays which group they belonged to; light orange rows represent those who did not interview with me.

**Table 4**

*Consented Discussion Circle Members & Groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Learner background</th>
<th>Discussion Circle role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>GROUP 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda, female,</td>
<td>Monolingual English, ≥ 2 semesters online, no online collaborative experience</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>early 20’s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hale, male,</td>
<td>Monolingual English, new to online</td>
<td>Investigator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>early 20’s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GROUP 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily, female,</td>
<td>Self-identified English monolingual, Spanish as heritage language, new to online</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>early 20’s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This section is meant to provide a snapshot of each of the consented DC members. I would like to establish a sense of each person’s role, her or his contribution to the group, and a glimpse into the development of their identity and knowledge throughout the hybrid course. Payne (2009) asserts that “…the transformative potential of blended learning and Third Space […] [allows for] “learning how to teach and learn differently” (p. 67). Bear in mind my representation of each holistic individual is shaped by my own worldview and my own analytical pursuit. The quotes I chose were ones I believed captured the essence of each of my participants. Except for Maria, Loretta, and Adam, the quotes I chose to characterize the participants were taken from the final semi-structured interviews. For participants who did not interview with me, quotes were taken from audio-recordings or asynchronous communication of DC groups as they were available.

**Emily, DC group 2 director**

“I thought it was important you signed up for a hybrid class, and we’re talking about languages. Well, online communicating is almost a different type of language” (Emily, interview, 6/11/2015)
Emily, female, early 20’s | Self-identified English monolingual, Spanish as heritage language, new to online | Director

In the quote above, Emily talked about the students in the class consciously enrolling in a hybrid course and therefore students should have understood what signing up for a hybrid course should entail. My most prominent memory of Emily was during our second f2f meeting where our DC members met one another for the first time in a physical space. As soon as I walked in the room, I heard Emily and her group toward the left rear of the classroom. From Emily’s red face, I sensed she was either embarrassed or livid. As I caught bits of the conversation, I realized she was upset. I heard some talk among the group members about coordination of time and a need for more communication. I felt tension like a thick cloud hovering over us and started to get nervous about the outcome of both my research and my class. I wanted to see if anyone else shared my discomfort, so I scanned the room for other students’ reactions. A few students sitting at the front of the class with wide eyes slowly turned their heads away from the group. As I reflected on this uncomfortable moment, I was not surprised because days leading up to this f2f meeting, Emily had posted in her group forum, “It does not seem like many of our group members are participating. It is making this a little difficult.” Since that post, I had a sinking suspicion that minimal or lack of communication online would be a recurring issue with this group. As the semester progressed, I learned that two members persisted in meeting f2f outside of class, which would affect the group dynamic.

I empathized with Emily since she was the director. In fact, she was the first to take up the role once the forums became available. Throughout the course, I noticed her working very hard to engage her group members to communicate in the DC group space for the sake of generating ideas. Like me, she nudged her classmates to minimize the use of out-of-class f2f
meetings and to use the online DC space to communicate about anything related to DC tasks. During learning activities that took place in the online DC space, Emily responded to her peers and used encouraging phrases, such as “I really like how this conversation is going” (3/11/2015). She even offered her assistance with individual assignments and upcoming DQ posts that were not part of the DC activities. Again, DQ or discussion questions were questions posed to the whole class in the online asynchronous discussion board; these were not part of DC learning tasks. In the closing paragraph of a post Emily wrote during spring break, she stated, “I know being in an online class can be difficult especially for those who are not sure to them [sic], but if we keep the communication up we can all be successful!” (3/13/2015).

There were moments I sensed and even shared Emily’s frustration and maybe desperation that her group members’ participation did not meet her expectations. I became aware of my own anxiety levels as I watched Emily’s asynchronous communication shift from warm and enthusiastic to stern, curt, and even demanding. Compare her first post communicating her concern on 2/2/2015, “It does not seem like many of our group members are participating. It is making this a little difficult,” to the one above from her 3/13/2015 post. One DC forum she labeled “Answer by Wednesday!” Despite Emily’s varied efforts to encourage all members to consistently participate online, she finally resorted to texting and emailing the group as the predominant mode of communication. From what I gathered, she did this to accommodate the elder members Isabella and Loretta. Emily had mentioned that the generation gap affected the group’s communication online. A common complaint about communicating in the DC group was that there was no signal when a new message was posted. Texting offered a quicker form of communication as did emailing, especially when email was linked to the phone. Before interacting with her group members, Emily did not have her email linked to her phone. I really
commended her determination in seeing the DC group project through. Overall, she remained positive and mentioned that learning from different people was beneficial for her.

Regardless of the hurdles associated with the DC project, there seemed to be light at the end of the tunnel. A little more than halfway through our interview, Emily mentioned how at the end of the course, while watching everyone’s presentations, she “got it;” she realized the goal of the DC project. When I asked how she knew she had gotten it, she said, “Once I started making the connections to myself and my family, that’s when it clicked with me that I see this in my family or see this with myself, or I feel this way or other people feel this way. It kind of connected you to a community.” She continued, “These are the people I want to support.” “These people,” I assume, are the students who experienced what she had regarding language loss and its impact on belonging to a community. I say this because in the beginning of the course, Emily self-identified as a monolingual English speaker. However, as the semester progressed and Emily read more about bilingualism, her views of her linguistic background evolved from that of a self-identified monolingual English speaker to one with a more complex linguistic history and one for whom Spanish is a heritage language. Her previous quotes about making connections to herself and family suggest this knowledge development.

**Isabella, DC group 2 illustrator**

“What it boils down to face to face or online is that we want to find a home or friends or colleagues or comfort in a group.” (Isabella, interview, 6/5/2015)

| Isabella, female, over 40 | Self-identified English monolingual, Spanish as heritage language, new to online | Illustrator |

Isabella had absolutely no experience with an online course and said she was afraid entering our course because it was her first online class. She was one of the older students between her 40’s and 50s, compared to her counterparts who were mostly in their 20’s. I initially
became concerned about this lack of online experience and how this would affect her online participation and, in effect, her relationship with her group members. She was not a timid student in our f2f meetings; she offered her opinions and willingly shared her experiences both in whole class and in groups. However, she frequently displayed insecurities about her writing and processing of ideas. She mentioned how she preferred specific instructions on what to do and how to do it rather than searching for things because it was frustrating. On a couple of occasions, she mentioned wanting to drop my class because of the time and frustration it cost her to construct a DQ post (4 to 7 hours!). During our interview, she talked about her literacy skills developing in her early adulthood, but up until this point, she had heavily relied on her peers to explain to her what was said or written. I imagined her developing these coping skills and related them to one of my family members who copes with limited literacy skills in her L1 and two L2s. Instead of seeing Isabella’s literacy development and idea-processing as shortcomings, I was impressed by how Isabella managed such hurdles.

Relying on Isabella’s peers is a strategy that she transferred to her online learning. Now that her literacy skills are developed as an older adult, she learned how to be productive online by watching her classmates’ asynchronous communication. Isabella said she was constantly online and became so meticulous that she monitored not only what her peers posted, but also the time and the number of lines in each message. When I asked her why these were of interest, she asserted, “My response would need to be comparable.” Isabella mentioned gauging her peers’ efforts by the number of lines in their post! These comparisons cannot be made in f2f sessions because she says they are “not there,” referring to the written communication not existing in real-time talk. I realized how fortunate I was to have witnessed a woman who initially was unsure if her reading and writing skills were sufficient for our class, especially the online aspect of it. Yet
she overcame these insecurities through observation and the modeling her peers provided her. Her online skills had developed to a point where she was critiquing posts against criteria that made sense to her. She reported that she liked the online medium better than our f2f meetings because she could spend more time to focus on the class at home and whenever. I believed Isabella had finally taken ownership of her online learning, albeit later in the semester. She made a point that entering the university’s Learning Management System was “a pain,” so she relied much more on texting and emailing her group members. At first, I was annoyed by this, but it did not prevent the completion of the DC project. Her adaptation of technology aligns with Wilson and Petersons’ (2002) claim that “speakers incorporate new technologies of communication from existing communicative repertoires” (p. 459).

Not only did I witness Isabella’s change in online learning skills, but, like Emily, she self-identified as a monolingual English speaker in the beginning of the course. From the discussions about bilingualism, Isabella’s conception of her own language history transformed. “I learned a lot about me,” and continued, “my heritage is gone and how I’m cheating my grandchildren. It made me aware.” She was referring to her loss of Spanish and how she wanted to recuperate this loss. Isabella reported, at the time of the interview, that she began to speak Spanish with her mother and her grandchildren through code-switching, which she hoped will facilitate her Spanish competence over time. In the middle of the semester, Isabella asserted, “When we only know one language we are limited to a portion of the world.” It appeared she is on a mission to broaden both her own world and that of her grandchildren through Spanish.

**Loretta, DC group 2 investigator**

“OK, so now, um, let’s first try to figure out when’s a good time to get together again.”
*(Loretta, f2f, 2/11/2015)*
In our first f2f meeting after the research consenter sent me the DC group arrangements 1/26/2015, Loretta seemed to lead the group. Emily left class early before the audio recording began. However, once the recording began, it captured an interesting tension as Loretta started the conversation, “Emily’s the director, but Emily had to leave. You know who Emily is?” with a final rising intonation. Isabella giggled and she and Maria say simultaneously /ye::eh/. I had not captured this exchange in my journal entry after the class session, but after listening to the audio months later, I realized throughout the rest of the semester that I had focused on what I considered Loretta’s contentious relationship with Emily and what seemed like her contentious relationship with the online asynchronous aspect of the course.

Immediately she began coordinating tasks, asking Liam, “Now will you do the writing? And will you also do the emailing to everybody?” Then she asked everyone, “Does everybody know their role?” From our very first f2f class after the DC groups were formed, Loretta appeared to me as the ringleader of meeting outside of regular classes and the online DC space. Almost immediately after her coordination of who would take notes and email everyone in the group, just two minutes into the conversation, she wanted to know when the group could get together in a f2f meeting outside of class. When I approached her DC group while circulating the room, I made it clear that f2f meetings outside of class and our DC space should be done sparingly, as the online asynchronous discussions were integral to the course. It was frustrating that I had specifically asked everyone to try to limit themselves to communicating in the asynchronous discussion forum, and Loretta kept pushing back, seeking f2f out of class conversations.
I noticed Loretta and Isabella seemed to become close throughout the semester, or, at least, they seemed to work a lot together. I sometimes saw them in the computer lab as I was rushing to make my final copies for class. In fact, they were the two students who communicated frequently outside of our scheduled f2f meetings instead in the online asynchronous DC group.

**Liam, DC group 2 highlighter**

“I guess just being exposed to other people’s st- like um stories of them like feeling the same way, I was like, oh, OK, like it’s a normal thing.” (Liam, interview, 06/15/2015)

| Liam, male, early 20’s | Self-identified English monolingual, Lakota tribe, Spanish language loss, new to online | Highlighter/Connector (shared role) |

From struggling with the frustrations of helping his peers navigate communication technologies, to mediating communication breakdowns, and to listening to stories about language loss, Liam found valuable learning in all his interactions with people in the class. The above quote was taken from our interview conversation about the shame he felt not being proficient enough to speak Spanish, so he only spoke it with his grandmother because he felt safe. After engaging with the course material and listening to his classmates talk about their similar experiences of having underdeveloped Spanish, he reported feeling a bit relieved that these feelings were common and that he wasn’t “so crazy after all,” a comment he made during our final day of presentations. I reflected on these experiences with my own Tagalog development. I harbored feelings of shame and resentment for not being a “good enough” Tagalog speaker and Filipina. Yet at the same time, I understood that English carried more value than Tagalog anyway, so what was the problem? To borrow Liam’s phrasing from a mid-semester post, Tagalog was being labeled my “home language as a ‘lesser’ language instead of a potential strength.” Students like Liam, Emily, and Isabella were constant reminders of my own
story and why I entered this field in the first place. Liam also identified being part of the Lakota tribe, but he did not talk about his use of the Lakota language.

Liam found other ways to draw on his peers through their DQ posts. In the beginning, he reported having anxiety posting online, with thoughts such as, “Here are my ideas; I hope they’re good enough.” However, he learned from his peers through observing how they structured their posts, and he compared them to his own formatting and determined whether he correctly addressed topics. Liam used his peers’ posts as “benchmarks” to measure against his own. Being able to refer back to the online communication was useful for Liam, “You don’t get that in like a full face to face class because once you say something, it’s like, either you write it down or it’s gone.” Later he added that the online resource was good for those with poor memory skills. Using his peers and online communication as resources helped Liam progressively gain confidence participating in whole class Discussion Question forums online. As for referring to posts within his own DC group, Liam stated that he did not want to rely only on one or two members’ posts because most of the time it was Emily he would interact with most. Only when discussions were sustained online were they beneficial to him and participating in sustained discussions increased his comfort level with the group.

For Liam, the struggles he faced in dealing with people’s conflicting learning experiences and personalities benefitted him. He asserted that in all the frustration, it was a good way to learn to work with people, and this learning is applicable to his future potential students, as well. He said, “These people, kinds of people, these kinds of situations, they aren’t gonna go away, so it’s better to come up with like solutions to like deal with it.” I reflected on Liam’s solution-oriented take on approaching a problem and found this statement instructive for my own teaching and learning.
Liam’s concentration was in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and he wanted to introduce this field to youth on the reservation and somehow link what he learned about language development. I suspect his future goals are greatly influenced by his heritage and being part of the Lakota tribe and noticing the decline in their youth maintaining their heritage language. It was not clear, however, what his level of Lakota use was. From what I learned about Liam, his resourcefulness and ability relating to others’ experiences will help him achieve these goals.

**Maria, DC group 2 connector**

“*Language means to us, who we are. Without language we would be lost. What I mean by this is that language hold our identity, how we express ourselves, what we enjoy or dislike.*” (Maria, online, 3/25/2015)

| Maria, female, early 20’s | Bilingual Spanish/English, new to online | Highlighter/Connector (shared role) |

Maria participated much less than her counterparts both online and f2f. While listening to the audio recordings, I could barely hear her voice. I wondered if it was maybe the quality of the recording, but my journal entries recorded this noticing, too, during our f2f meetings. However, participation was noticeable in the online asynchronous space when the topic was about the intersection of identity and bilingualism. She chose the role of connector in the DC group. In the DC group discussions and her connector product, it was clear she decided that she wanted to focus on the environment within the bilingual programs offered in our K – 12 school system. With her limited participation, it was difficult for me to gain a sense of her as a learner and teacher, but I assumed that her participation in the discussions around bilingualism was due to her own self-identified bilingual identity. If it were me, I would have connected with this bilingual segment, as well, since it problematizes bilingual education and simplistic notions of
what bilingualism was. Was she connecting with this segment of the course because of her own experiences as a student in the K–12 school system? I really wish I could have explored this more, as I did not have the opportunity to interview her at the end of the course.

**Linda, DC group 1 co-director**

“It wasn’t just prior knowledge affecting my- the new knowledge I was gaining. It’s my new knowledge that made me go back and think ‘huh,’ do I still believe this theory?”

(Linda, interview 6/3/2015)

| Linda, female, early 20’s | Monolingual English, ≥ 2 semesters online, no online collaborative experience | Director |

Throughout the semester, I witnessed Linda’s enthusiasm for learning and consistent engagement with her DC group members both online and f2f. At first, she preferred not to be director; in fact, in the earliest posts within her DC group, she wrote, “I think I would like the role of illustrator…I would feel more comfortable with this role than with the role of director.” During our interview conversation, Linda mentioned how her semester was full and she preferred not to take on so many responsibilities. However, none of the other group members offered to take on the director’s role, so she ultimately became the director. I thought she was very people and task-oriented and, as director, she took great care to examine each of her member’s strengths and to use this knowledge to optimize her group’s learning experience. One example she gave was about two female group members whose written and spoken communication differed; one was more articulate when writing, and the other, when speaking. She decided that for future communication with these two, she would rely on emailing the former member, and calling the latter member. This way, she gets the responses she wants in the most articulate and efficient manner. I thought to myself, “I need to adopt this mindset!” According to Linda, she gained a lot
of experience for her future teaching by learning about abilities and personalities of her DC group members.

Similar to her peers outside of her DC group, Linda took advantage of the online communication. In carrying out her director role, she believed the asynchronous aspect of our online discussions helped mitigate power relations as she made sure each of her DC group members were on task to complete their written products. Also, she had the time to process content and how to plan. Linda mentioned that she would not have had the courage in a f2f meeting to delegate, for example, written products for peer review. She referred to both the communication in her own DC forums and the whole class DQ forums. She admitted that in the DQ forums, she focused more on what her own DC group members posted and whose ideas were relatable and comprehensible to her. Anyone else’s she did not bother to read. In fact, she said, “Sometimes I was reading and could not understand what they’re trying to say.” I reflected on this comment and how the online medium might mitigate or magnify the perception of being ignored. Linda’s choice in not reading and/or responding to people in the whole class DQ forum would not have the same impact as if she were in a f2f class where there is more obligation to respond to someone’s comment. At least, this is what I believed at the time of our interview. Within small groups, however, silence or gaps in communication were less tolerated by some students and myself.

In the weeks leading up to the DC presentations, where each DC group had to deliver a 15-minute snapshot presentation of their DC discussions and written products to the class, Linda began to use quotes from her group members’ DQ posts in her own DC posts. She also searched through previous posts to identify recurrent themes her DC members might find relevant for their project. At one point, Linda quoted Hale’s older post, “Hale describes memory as a part of
cognition that works in union with language learning.” She continued with Hale’s quote from one of our textbooks, Piper (2007), “…that the more specifically someone is able to categorize something the more likely they are to remember it.” I wrote a note to myself about this excerpt, “In what ways did categorization play in your summarization?” This group, or at least Linda, was carrying out the same concept she was describing about language development in her own work summarizing recurrent themes.

Linda’s enthusiasm to become a TESOL teacher was inspiring but at the same time a bit troubling. This was especially displayed when she talked about noticing the written work of one of her members who learned English as a second language. Linda described reading “her writing and it’s beautifully articulated,” and went on to say, “I’ve been speaking English my entire life. I don’t speak any other languages. My academic language is not at her level.” Shortly after, she asserted, “I want my students to be like that.” I thought about this last comment and related it to her decisions not to read DQ posts if she “could not understand what they’re trying to say.” For a moment, I worried that she might allocate preferential treatment to only those whom she could understand, and in doing so, would she be perpetuating the multilingual ideologies we, as educators, seek to dismantle? I really hoped that Linda’s constant thirst for knowledge and willingness to relate to others would dispel these concerns.

**Hale, DC group 1 investigator**

“Over the course just like realizing how important social interaction is through language learning and just making those connections in, you know, my own language learning and other people’s and trying to, you know, understand better how to teach.”

*(Hale, interview, 5/28/2015)*

| Hale, male, early 20’s | Monolingual English, new to online | Investigator |
Hale came to this course with minimal experience in online learning and self-identified as a monolingual English speaker, although he reports having learned some Spanish. When online DC forums became available, he opted to be the investigator. He, Linda, and another group member were very active online. Hale noticed that communication in DC forums was less formal, while that of Discussion Question (DQ) forums was more academic. This observation indicated to me that Hale was conscious of the roles each online discussion board played on one’s communication and participation. It also reminded me of the role I play as the teacher and online course designer. The formality of the DQ board, therefore, is not a surprise; I established rules for how to post DQ responses, one of which is stated in the syllabus: posts “…may include quotes and proper citations of the readings and invited others to make connections to these quotes” (p. 4). Pre-established norms for my course guide the students’ behaviors as part of the socialization process, and my own participation as the instructor should guide the students’ participation, as well. However, there is always room for students’ adaptation to these norms. It also states in the syllabus that students must respond to a classmate’s DQ post, and most did. However, on the few occasions I posted, I rarely received a response! This was the case, as well, in the small DC groups and when introducing ourselves in the beginning of the semester. To me, this was very curious behavior. I wondered why my students did not respond to me and how they perceived my responses.

Between Hale and Linda, there were frequent displays of concern for “getting things right.” The group, in general, spent much time on organizing and planning for the DC project. I asked Hale about this during his interview, and he responded, “I have to like really understand something before I you know like start working on it, I guess.” This comment would suggest that someone’s need for explicit rules and structure leaves little room for one to explore and figure
things out. On the contrary, Hale and his group members were not like this. They appeared comfortable working things out in order to get things right. Hale liked the combination of individual assignments, small group work and whole class discussions. For him, each learning format helped his academic discourse, as he stated during our interview:

“I was able to like individually try and learn certain things, and in the group it was more intimate and we were able to communicate more informally, and so that was kinda prepared us f-for the full class where we could sound more academic.” (5/8/2015)

Through dialogue Hale could not only learn the content of the course and how to communicate online, but he could also develop an awareness of what was acceptable academic discourse amongst his peers. Develotte (2009) talks about how online learning offers learners time to think through communication before they produce a message or post. This is especially useful for those learners like Hale, Liam, and Isabella who were analytical in their search through posts and course materials. Did Hale’s need for correctness equate to a need to project an ideal and capable self (Duff, 2010) to the rest of the class? Looking back at some of his online contributions in his DC group, he offered a few articles that related to phonology, memory, and overgeneralization errors. Although he pulled these articles and related their topics to previous posts by his group members, they were not very accessible; in fact, they were very jargon-heavy. He admitted one he posted about on 3/13/2015 was “very academic” but he thought he could locate “some of the more relevant parts.” He evaluated another article in his post to his DC group online on 3/25/2015 as “seem[ing] intuitive but [he] wanted to be sure that more current research didn’t dispute this study.” Indeed, he was the investigator, and his role was to find articles relevant to the group’s discussion, but I found his preoccupation with developing academic language and
getting things right very curious. Was there something more about his identity he wanted others to see?

Adam, DC group 3 co-director

“I probably wouldn't be good for this role. I honestly never read the full articles or chapters. With all my other readings from my other classes and this class, I'd be reading for days. I skim through the readings and just focus [sic] on the main points. However, I wouldn't mind doing this if no one wanted it.” (Adam, online, 1/26/2015)

| Adam, male, early 20’s | Monolingual English, new to online collaborative experience | Co-director |

The above quote was my first impression of Adam. I recall in my journal noticing that he does not read the full articles, and it was concerning, but throughout the course, his contributions indicated he was well read, which are included in later chapters. Adam’s post above was the second of five of his posts that took place on January 26, 2015 between 10:55 pm and 11:11 pm. Group 3 was in the process of negotiating which DC roles were suitable for each member. In his first post, he offered to be the director if nobody wanted the role. In his second post, which was noted in the above quote, he made it clear he did not want to play the highlighter/connector role because he “honestly never read[s] the full articles or chapters.”

In Adam’s third post about the investigator role, he wrote “This seems like an interesting role. I wouldn't have a problem with doing a little research.” This was interesting because for this role, the investigator must read two articles outside of the course readings, understand their content, and create a written product that summarizes them. He was sure in his fourth post to opt out of the illustrator role, noting he was “not very creative.” Adam wrote a final post that concisely listed his DC role preferences in rank order. When I circulated to DC group 3’s table
during our f2f meeting on February 11, 2015, Adam and another member had finally decided to be co-directors.

Unfortunately, Adam was the only consented participant in the DC group 3, so it posed challenges to use his quotes, unless they could stand alone, such as the one above. I also did not have the opportunity to interview Adam after the course ended.
Chapter 5: Findings

Admittedly, this project proved to be 16 weeks of self-doubt as I constantly questioned my merit as a competent instructor and researcher. I felt frustration when I felt students were not following directions, needed my “nudge,” or did not participate in the online asynchronous forum as I would have liked them to. However, I felt relief as I listened to each DC group’s final presentation, the snapshot of the discussions that took place in each DC group. I felt the pivotal point in the semester was the bilingual module of the course where we began to read about the complexities of bilingual development, such as generational language loss, different types of bilingual development, and the consequences when bilingual identities were not acknowledged in the K-12 classroom. I started to see students engaging with one another and the content. I reflected on this change and began my examination of our learning, communication, and identity development in my hybrid course on language development. To recall, I set out to investigate the following:

1. In what ways do my upper level undergraduate teacher education students new to an online or hybrid learning context become competent members of the class?
2. What evidence of learning do I see through the class’ communication in both the face-to-face and online asynchronous learning contexts over the course of a 16-week semester?
3. How do both learning contexts in this hybrid course play a role in the following:
   a. my students’ identity-development and transformation both as learners and future teachers?
   b. my own identity-development and transformation as a practitioner researcher and instructor?
4. How do students and instructor make sense of the messiness of a new learning and research space?

5. How does my learning as the practitioner researcher influence my future teaching practices?

I drew on the phases depicted in figure 3 in the methodology chapter to guide my writing of the current chapter. These phases were sense-making, coalescence, and snapshot. In every context, participants have their own ways of making sense of unfamiliar content and contexts. Through collaborative and dialogic learning tasks like those in DC groups, my students and I co-constructed new knowledge to accomplish our tasks. And finally, after our ideas have coalesced, DC groups created a final product. In the context of this study, DC groups completed written products according to their individual group roles and a final group presentation responding to the three DC questions: 1) What do we learn when we learn languages? 2) How do we learn a language? and 3) What does language mean to us?

In addition to making sense of unfamiliar content and fulfilling course expectations, my students and I were also tasked with navigating a new space composed of the online and f2f contexts of the hybrid course. As the practitioner researcher, I had to learn to navigate this completely new research context.

To this end, I intend to unpack four themes that emerged from my data: self-disclosures; legitimacy of self and others; relatability; and our story. I did not attempt to force these themes in particular phases, but some themes may be aligned more in one phase than others.

**Self-disclosures**

Roughly 25% of the course was spent f2f in a classroom, and 75% was spent in the asynchronous online space. The opening of the course was online. Many of us were trying to
figure out how to navigate the online site, learn what clicking on links would do, and understand how to submit assignments in the university’s learning management system (LMS). This LMS proved very frustrating, if not intimidating, for some people in the course, especially if they were completely new to the online learning context.

“Tech-talk” was common in the beginning of the course. Students expressed confusion and frustration with LMS interface and its functions. Tech-talk functioning as an excuse for being late posting online was typical. Below are some examples of self-disclosures taking place in the online asynchronous DC group after Emily and Loretta expressed concern that other members were not participating online. It is worth noting that later in the course, I saw Loretta hold a different view about participating online. Excerpts taken from the online asynchronous DC groups are labeled online with the date they took place. Times are added if related posts were written on the same day.

“Sorry I have not responed [sic] to "this group email"; although [sic], I have wrote [sic] back everytime a group member has email [sic] me through [sic] UNM email.” (Isabella, online, 2/8/2015, 17:47)

“I’d like to apologize for the late contact I have been having a heard [sic] time finding my way around our website, but finally got some help.” (Liam, online, 2/8/2015, 23:39)

Also, in the beginning of the course there were displays of uncertainty or insecurity about whether students did something “right” or adequately understood something, which could also have functioned as an excuse or advance apology if something was poorly expressed or misunderstood. The following are examples of statements at the end of posts that required group members to include transcriptions of brief video excerpts.

*I'm not sure if I did this correctly, but hopefully this is what we're supposed to do.*

(Adam, 2/2/2015)
“I’m sure I made a few mistakes so i’d appreciate any corrections” (Hale, 2/4/2015)

The following excerpt is from an exchange between Loretta, Isabella and Emily tape-recorded during a f2f DC meeting on 3/18/2015 about themes emerging from their DC discussions, the importance of maintaining dialogue, and detailing each DC member’s role, such as Isabella, the illustrator creating a graphic organizer, Loretta, the investigator, summarizing two articles outside of the course materials related to DC discussions, and Emily, the director, distilling the discussions into a one to two-page written product. F2f exchanges included in this chapter will use the following broad transcription conventions. The bolded text in excerpts are mine and represent important concepts for this chapter.

XXX incomprehensible
... pause
:: elongated vowel
wor- truncated word
[overlapping turns]
= latching turns
(transcriber’s comments)
bolded text researcher’s link to key concepts

1. Emily: I think you pick two articles *(addressing Loretta)*, and then say how these two articles are relating to all we’re talking about OK in one page, and mine is a summary of everything we’ve said.

2. Loretta: OK, which I think you do a very good job at summarizing.

3. Isabella: Well, i-I, if you like tell me what to do, I go do it, really. But I, if you like pulling shit outta me, I can’t *(group laughter)*. Like what questions XX me that I don’t know. I’m gonna take weeks tryin to figure out that, but I’m gonna go back *(laughter)*

4. Emily: You can do it. Well, that’s another thing is maybe other people answering them will give you those ideas.
11. Isabella: Yeah

12. Emily: You know what I mean?

During the exchange between Loretta and Emily as they are clarifying what the investigator needs to produce in lines 1-4, Isabella jumps in in line 5 immediately after Loretta affirms Emily’s summarizing skills. Isabella does not continue the exchange about clarifying what her role is, but she appears to disclose that being asked to come up with ideas to create a graphic organizer from her DC group’s discussion is a mismatch with her own learning preference. The expression “pulling shit outta me” in line 6 emphasizes what does not work for her and that she requires concrete directives to accomplish tasks. The expression could also be an indirect but abrasive pushback toward Emily, perhaps because of how Emily was carrying out her director role. I, of course, did not confirm this, but if it was pushback, it seemed to only occur toward Emily and not toward the other group members. It is noteworthy that Emily responds with an encouraging statement in line 9, “You can do it,” and follows up with the comment in lines 9-10 that “other people answering them will give you those ideas.” By “them,” Emily refers to the 3 discussion circle questions each DC group is meant to answer by engaging in discussion. So, the idea is that the ideas Isabella needs to accomplish her learning task will emerge from the discussions that take place in her DC group.

I thought about the pitfalls of teaching methods that rely heavily on group discussions. What should I have done to make discussions less daunting for my learners? How should I have created an environment that truly invites students to admit that they are lost or seeking help? Or how should I have made clearer that groupwork and discussions are integral to the learning process in my course? I was convinced I had been very clear and insistent that we participate online and communicate with our group members consistently. However, it occurred to me to
review my syllabus, and when I did, I realized I included only cursory statements on online
discussions and groupwork.

This course will entail individual written assignments and group work. The discussions
are meant to help us connect the course materials to our experiences and the local
realities of language learners and teachers. It is encouraged that we draw on our peers,
teachers, and other helpful resources as they contribute to learning. This is a web-
enhanced course, so we will use Learn for materials, online discussions, announcements,
and uploading assignments. Although you must purchase the required course textbook,
additional reading materials will be accessible in their respective modules. Furthermore,
there may be a few cases that require students to participate in online discussions in
Learn. (Course syllabus, Spring 2015)

Additionally, as I reflected on how I could have made groupwork and group dialogue
clearer, I recalled a statement Liam made during our interview that resonated with me, “It’s easy
to say we’re OK.” When I asked him the last interview question, “What worked for you in this
hybrid course, and if you were the instructor of this course, what would you change?,” he
suggested that I offer clarity of tasks and expectations, provide models and tutorials, and scaffold
learning. In fact, I noted in a journal entry I wrote right after our post-course interview, “Liam
for sure provided lots of feedback on technical and theoretical stuff.” Liam’s statement was
instructive for me as an educator and reminded me that we need help, check-ins, and explicit
step-by-step explanations. I reflected on the function of the word “OK” and my reactions to it. I
realized in our f2f meetings or any traditional brick-and-mortar class I have taught in the past, I
would circulate the classroom and ask students how they were doing; if they said they were fine
or OK, I moved on with no follow-up questions. So, I appreciated Liam’s candor because it is, in
fact, easy to say we’re “OK” and forego the labor to discuss where we may be stuck or admit we
inadequately interpreted directions or were simply inattentive.
Self-disclosures seemed to function as a way to figure out how to participate in a new space with new peers, relate to others’ experience, or assert one’s knowledge or preferences in a communicative situation. In the beginning of the course, we saw Isabella and Liam enter the conversation online the same evening after Emily and Loretta made comments about others not participating. Isabella and Liam used “tech-talk” as an excuse for their tardy entrance into the discussion, but perhaps the “tech-talk” was a way to see if others in the group were experiencing difficulties. Also, in the beginning of the course, Adam and Hale used structures, such as “I’m not sure if I did this correctly” or “I’m sure I made a few mistakes,” marking uncertainty and even a level of self-deprecation perhaps to display modesty in what they know. Isabella, while not explicitly prompted, disclosed how she needed to be told “what to do,” but not to expect to pull “shit” out of her. Her comment caused laughter in the group, but could this function as a way to pre-empt criticism of the language or work she produces or even seek acceptance for what she perceives as learner shortcomings? Self-disclosures like those above should not be overlooked as they could be communicating that students need more clarity of learning tasks, seek help, or require more encouragement to participate.

Legitimizing self and others

This section examines how my students and I found ways to legitimize others’ and our own knowledge and resources in order to accomplish course goals. I will also discuss how we, perhaps unconsciously, worked to de-legitimize the same.

Displays of competence and confidence

From the beginning of the course, Isabella displayed a strong sense of insecurity with her academic and online learning skills. In her final interview with me on 6/5/2015, we talked about the group holding additional f2f meetings outside of scheduled class periods and how
communicating in the online asynchronous group was preferred. She explained that she and Loretta, being older than the rest of the group members, preferred to meet f2f and “were probably more productive f2f” since that was how they learned. However, immediately after, she noted that in our class she “learned how to be productive online” by “constantly staying online” and “not checking out.” In the previous chapter, I described how Isabella would observe the content of her peers’ posts and even counted how many words were in each, so she could produce work that was comparable to that of her peers. Over time, Isabella had overcome her fears of the online aspect of the course and learned to take ownership of her online learning. I was surprised, as this was a notable departure from the fear she expressed at the beginning of the course.

**Whose language use is worthy?** In the previous chapter, I described Linda’s choices to read or ignore her peers’ posts. I also noted her enthusiasm for becoming a TESOL teacher, but I also expressed concerns in the chapter about the type of English learner she was inspired by – her fellow group member whose work Linda described as “beautifully articulated.” Linda commented that she herself, a monolingual English speaker, had “been speaking English [her] entire life… [Her] academic language is not at her level.” “I want my students to be like that,” Linda asserted. At the time of the interview, I wanted to ask her if she would give preferential treatment to students whose English was “beautifully articulate” and dismiss students who did not produce the same. However, I decided against asking this question because I worried it might shut down the rest of our engaging interview. I also worried about her impression that L2 learners do not typically produce “beautiful” and “articulate” work.

Blackledge (2005) asserts that our individual attitudes about language use are not the only explanation of language ideologies; rather, “they include the values, practices and beliefs
associated with language use by speakers, and the discourse which constructs values and beliefs at state, institutional, national, and global levels” (p. 32). In hindsight, I should have engaged her regarding her views on L2 learners, for she could be one of many teachers who have similar beliefs and attitudes that could lead to precisely the exclusionary practices DC groups discuss in their final presentations.

**Negotiating control**

I had a strong determination to get students to use online asynchronous discussions and minimize f2f meetings outside of the already scheduled meetings because as the researcher in the course I knew these data were paramount to my study. In fact, my insistence was echoed by Emily and Liam both in the online asynchronous DC group and during f2f meetings when Isabella and Loretta were present. Emily repeated concerns about people in the group relying on f2f meetings throughout the course. Why was she so insistent as well?

The following exchange took place on 2/15/2015 between Liam and Emily online in their DC group. The exchange was prompted by Liam, who agreed at their most recent f2f meeting on 2/11/2015 to post notes of their discussion online. In chapter 3, Loretta turned to Liam and asked that he be the notetaker and post the notes online to the DC forum. What follows is Liam’s online contribution and Emily’s response. I redacted the classroom they would meet in to protect the anonymity of the course participants.

1. Liam: Happy Sunday group! I thought that I'd take a quick second to post the notes I took from class last week in case anyone wanted to look over them. Let me know what you think and have a great day.
2. In our face-to-face meeting this past week we discussed several things;
3. • Individual roles within the group
4. • A possible face-to-face meeting within our group at 4:30
5. Wednesday, 2/18/15 in our LLSS 451 classroom (1 hour max)
6. • **We were reminded not to rely on face-to-face meetings** (online, 2/15/2015, 13:03)
9. Emily: Thank you for posting Liam. This is intended to be a **hybrid course so I do**
10. agree that **f2f meetings should not be put together** unless necessary. Just a
11. reminded [*sic*] our post is due this Wednesday and another one Sunday. Try and get
12. those in as soon as possible. Thanks. (online, 2/15/2015, 19:55)

In lines 6-7, Liam listed “a possible face-to-face meeting,” but afterwards included a
reminder “not to rely on face-to-face meetings” in line 8. Recall in chapter 4, I described DC
group 2’s first f2f meeting on 2/11/2015 and Loretta’s push to have their group hold additional
f2f meetings. The reason for Liam’s bullet points in lines 6-8 is unclear but including the
reminder to not rely on f2f meetings would seem to de-legitimize the previous point and perhaps
de-legitimize Loretta’s persistence to get her DC group to meet f2f outside of our regular course
meetings and the online asynchronous space. Later that evening Emily agreed with Liam’s point
“that f2f meetings should not be put together unless necessary.” Loretta did not respond to the
exchange.

Below is an exchange between Emily and Isabella, which occurred during our f2f
meeting on 3/18/2015. This exchange highlights the importance of discussions in creating new
knowledge. In this case, three members are talking about a missing theme and Liam’s response
to revealing it.

1. Emily: You can do it. Well, that’s another thing is maybe other **people answering**
2. **them will give you those ideas.**
3. Isabella: Yeah
4. Emily: You know what I mean? Throughout all this, identity, big theme.
5. Isabella: And environment.
6. Emily: And environment, which identity, which those are what we talked about. I
7. think. I feel like we’re missing one theme, but I don’t know what it is, but I just have a feeling we’re missing something.

9. Liam: Yeah, and it and it could come out when we’re carrying our discussions, for sure, yeah.

The assertions Emily and Liam make in lines 1-2 and 9-10, respectively, suggest their understanding of the role of discussions. “People answering [the DC questions] will give you those ideas.” When Emily expresses concern for a missing theme in line 7, Liam responds by saying that “it could come out” through discussions. Isabella asserted in the previous section that she needed to be explicitly “told what to do,” which is the exact opposite when we consider the process of generating ideas through dialogue. I posit that both Emily and Liam are asserting dialogue needs to take place to answer the three DC questions, which, to me, communicates directly to Isabella to fall in line with their DC group expectations.

Liam and Emily appear to have bought into the concept that discussions would generate ideas. Although it was not explicit in my data how this happened, I assume that Emily’s role as DC group director was one reason. During my interview with Liam after the course ended, he expressed a preference for time to “experiment” and “get lost” in the online learning space and relied on both the DC group communication and whole class Discussion Question forum to (re)read his peers’ ideas and also how his peers’ formatted posts, which would suggest a motivation to engage both with the learning management system and with the class in online asynchronous discussion forums in order to succeed in the course.

Knowledge is co-constructed in concert with the instructor and peers through dialogue, and this concept is heavily embedded in online courses (Harasim, 2012) and language use plays a significant role in the co-construction of knowledge. The concept of language socialization tells us that through what is said and written, we learn not only the meaning of words, but also what is
acceptable participation and interactional behavior, and what is not. The following phrases or their permutations not only evidence Emily’s and Liam’s learning of interactional norms, values, and expectations, but they also show how Emily and Liam were modeling the hybrid course rules of engagement. These communicative acts of suggestions, agreement, or validation function to socialize peers on how to participate in the course.

“people answering will give you those ideas”

“it could come out when we’re carrying our discussions”

“not to rely on face-to-face meetings”

Isabella and Linda expressed how their peers’ online written communication served as a model for how to communicate. Isabella was very meticulous in observing her peers’ posts, so hers were comparable to theirs. On the other hand, Linda talked about her peers’ communication as a model for her own future students, uplifting her view of an “ideal” language learner. Isabella’s use of her peers’ online communication not only evidenced language socialization, but also displays Isabella’s metacognitive activity, meaning she had the capacity to be self-aware of her own language production online.

Worth noting is my role as the instructor of the course who had “calculated interventions in the learning processes” (Spindler & Spindler, 1997, p. 52). The syllabus and course expectations were not a static object, they were an extension of me as the instructor. Problematic, however, was asserting my position as the researcher and my potential coercion of students to use the online asynchronous space chiefly for the purposes of this study. By prioritizing online asynchronous communication, I dismissed other strategies students used for communicating and accomplishing learning tasks. So, what is communicative competence if students are not behaving according to established norms and rules for interacting with one another?
At first, I felt my words, suggestions, and sometimes demands for online interactions were legitimized by my students, such as Liam and Emily in DC group 2. Through my persistence, they reminded their peers about the importance of constant communication, and because we only met 25% of the time f2f, the online asynchronous DC forum was the space where group members were encouraged to participate – constantly. However, as I continued to analyze these interactions, I noticed Loretta and Isabella participated less online. Despite less online participation, I still noticed that Isabella made great strides in her online learning. Loretta, unfortunately, did not, nor did she succeed in the course overall. This finding leads me to believe I did not interrogate my assumptions about my students’ behaviors or interrogate my own teaching practices and communication; self-awareness and self-interrogation are imperatives in practitioner-research.

**Relatability**

I noticed an uptick in participation across all DC groups when we began our discussion about bilingualism beginning February 9, 2015. In DC group 2, where all members were consented, their DC group 2’s forum “Answer by Wednesday” by far had the most posts by every group member. Each post was substantive, and the gaps in time to respond to one another were, on average, no more than a day. Group members also validated one another’s previous statements or questions marked by phrases, such as “I really liked what you said about,” “I agree that,” “I think you brought up such a good point,” “I think it’s interesting that you.” Although the students were interacting more with one another in their online DC groups, appearing as if they were connecting more with one another. However, what I observed was the content on bilingualism was responsible for the increased interaction. What DC members talked about was how the content on bilingualism resonated with their own experiences and observations.
As mentioned earlier, Maria participated very little throughout the course, but she was active during the segment about bilingualism. Recall her post about the meaning of language in her online post on 3/25/2015. She posited that “[l]anguage means to us, who we are. Without language we would be lost. What I mean by this is that language hold[s] our identity.”

During my interview with Emily, we talked about all three DC group’s final presentations. She made the statement in line 1 that she “gets it,” that she saw her family and herself in the bilingual experiences of language loss that groups talked about. “Getting it” was the indication of how she viewed her own bilingual identity at that moment compared to how she described herself as a monolingual at the beginning of the course. Later in the exchange, she mentioned how she wanted to support people who went through the same language development processes she did.

1. Emily: In the end, I was like I see now. I get it. The reasoning. I see now. I get it.
2. There’s a purpose.
3. Anni: How’d y’all get it? Like how did you know you were getting it? Like, OK, at first it’s frustrating they’re so broad, but -
4. Emily: Once I started making the connections to myself and my family, that’s when it clicked for me. That I see this in my family or see this with myself. (Interview, 6/11/2015)

Take another example from DC group 1, when Linda was peer-reviewing her group member’s illustration product, she referred to her peer’s discussion about the effect of language loss on one’s identity or fragment of one’s identity. Her peer referred to a moment in our f2f meeting when I talked about my own language loss experience, and my being referred to as a sort of “half-ass.” Below is an excerpt of Linda’s post reviewing her peer’s written product. She used her peer’s direct quote in her own post, and because her peer did not consent to be in the
study, I paraphrased this non-consented participant’s direct quote to maintain the flow of the
excerpt.

1. I also think that one can illustrate a point with words. [pseudonym] did a great
2. job of this when she talked about not knowing the native language of our cultures.
3. She said that we did not connect with our racial identity because our language
4. learning was disrupted (researcher’s paraphrase). She goes on to say how our
5. professor felt about her language abilities, [redacted] states, as Anni mentioned, people
6. considered her a “half-ass” because she was not fully competent in her home
7. language (researcher’s paraphrase). This is a very visual statement and including the
8. actual words that our professor used made the statement seem more human and
9. relatable. (Linda, online, 4/4/2015)

Several days later, I responded to Linda’s post.

1. I'm gathering that you're in the works of revising your final written product
2. according to Linda’s comments. I didn't realize how my comment "half-ass" really
3. resonated with you, especially regarding what language means. My plan in using such
4. a strong term was to dispel myths about bilinguals having a deficit repertoire.
   (Anni, online, 4/12/2015)

Of course, using profanity in the class is not the norm for me, but I wanted to show my
vulnerability, precisely to be “more human and relatable,” as Linda stated in lines 8-9, and to
drive the point that language and identity are inextricably linked in my mind. I did not think
anyone in the class would reference this, but Linda’s group did. Her group had only two
consented participants. It was validating for me both as the practitioner and researcher because I
did not believe I created the conditions I should have for everyone to connect with one another in
the class, nor did I feel the students could connect with me. As the instructor, I am often
preoccupied with making sure students meet the course goals versus being “more human and
relatable,” just as students often express being more concerned with passing the course than with
forming bonds with their peers or instructor.

Creating conditions for peers to relate with one another and the course material is crucial
in learning. The online asynchronous aspect of the course offered this opportunity because
throughout the life of the course, students could return to previous posts and take the time to digest what people in the course were communicating. Therefore, students could really relate to others’ comments and questions about the course material. However, it should be noted that it was not until the 4th module on bilingualism that began on February 9, 2015 that students started to interact more online. I also believe that talking about my own disrupted bilingual development resonated with students, especially for DC group 1 and perhaps legitimized the experiences of those who also experienced a disruption in their bilingual development.

**Our story**

During my data analysis, I met with my critical friend a second time and she reminded me of why we do this work. In my case, the question was, why did I choose to be a practitioner researcher? “We do the work we do because it’s our story,” she said. At this juncture, I realized why my students’ discussions about their own bilingual histories resonated with me. I saw my bilingual experiences in them, and I hoped they had reflexively seen their experiences through mine. And by reflexively, I refer to the critical reflection on how the researcher/teacher, students, and the setting mutually impact and change one another in a given context. This topic on bilingualism in the middle of the course struck a chord in most of us as we read through, talked about, and related to bilingual profiles in our course materials. We learned about not only the disruptions in our bilingual development, but also the disruption in our sense of identity. By listening to my students and reading through their written products and online asynchronous communication, I learned that the common themes resonating with them throughout the course also resonated with me.

In the methodology chapter, I described my positionality using the metaphor of a Tagalog-English bilingual caution sign that read “Mag-ingat, bawal pumasok! Caution, no trespassing!”
I talked about how this caution sign reminded me of what language means to me and why I take seriously its power, its ability to harm or support people, and its durability across time and space. I also emphasized my feeling of being positioned as the “half-ass” bilingual in both English and Tagalog speaking communities. Grosjean’s (1985) piece on the competent bilingual is one I return to when I lament my language loss. My competence in Tagalog and English has developed “to the extent required by [my] needs and those of the environment” (Grosjean, 1985, p. 471).

What was the impact of my linguistic history on my students’ understanding of their own? Students became aware that language loss was not so uncommon in our families. As Liam put it, “Oh well, maybe I’m not so crazy after all,” referring to the fact that many people experienced disruptions in their bilingualism and effectively in their identity-development; we were not alone. While some of us have come to this realization, there are still students in the K-12 classroom who are feeling isolated because the language and culture of the classroom are unfamiliar and inaccessible, and their linguistic identities are not acknowledged. Ideally, my teacher-candidates would remember this each time they enter their future classrooms with learners whose L1 is not English and whose cultures are different from their own. While I did not assess the impact of my course on their future teaching plans in a systematic way, the DC groups’ final presentations and f2f and online communication reflected their awareness of exclusionary practices toward English language learners in the K-12 classroom.

**Figure 6**

*Baby Ducklings Image from Discussion Circle Group 2 Final Presentation*
The image above was used in DC group 2’s presentation, which captured the feeling of exclusion, yet yearning to belong in a community. It also projected a potential fear of producing language when one is not proficient in their L2 or their heritage language, or in the case of the image, the fear of not “sounding right.” When I first saw this image projected on the screen, it reminded me of the precautions I took when sharing my linguistic history. At the same time, it was a reminder that one should not feel like a “trespasser” in a world one has always belonged to, or in a world that one should belong to.

In the end, I wanted to share my bilingual story with my students as a tool for them to share theirs and to encourage them to bring their stories into their own classrooms and teaching practices, because their students, families, and communities have stories that deserve to be heard and uplifted.

The figure that follows is a visual synopsis of the themes discussed above and their associated concepts and examples. I also added the phases in which each of these themes emerged as I interpreted language use over the progression of the course. These phases were sense-making, coalescence, and snapshot. I noticed self-disclosures and the legitimization of self and others taking place predominantly in the sense-making phase as students navigated the
online learning space, dealt with their uncertainties and insecurities, and began to figure out what a competent participant in the course looked like. As students in the class gained more confidence and competence in their participation, ideas were beginning to coalesce, especially as more discussion took place about bilingualism and how its content resonated with the students’ own experiences and observations of language development. Finally, the snapshot, or the DC groups’ final presentations, is the phase where a shared story emerged about language loss, isolation, and discrimination, and how this shared story would guide our work as teachers in multicultural and multilingual classrooms.

Figure 7

Themes

A creative snapshot of our learning
So how did DC groups answer the questions: 1) “What do we learn when we learn languages?”; 2) “How do we learn languages?”; and, 3) “What does language mean to us?” We spent 25% of our time together in the classroom, and most of this allotted DC group meeting time of no more than 30 minutes was used to clarify members’ roles, coordinate due dates for written products and peer-reviews, and decide what to include in the final presentations. The remaining 75% of the course was in the online asynchronous space, a large portion of which was spent discussing course material and personal experiences in relation to the three DC questions. I included Adam’s director’s written product below, for I believe it does a good job reiterating not only common themes heard across all groups, but also it captures the process of how each DC group answered the three DC questions.

1. Throughout this semester, we have read some great chapters in the Piper textbook and read some very interesting articles. All of this information will be helpful when it is our time to be the leader in the classroom. Even if not everyone will be a teacher one day, we are all educators no matter what profession and this information is beneficial in and out of the classroom. The United States is becoming a minority majority country. The minority groups are growing and spreading across America, and we need to know how to properly educate the children who are new to this country.

9. For the main presentation of our group project, my group and I thought it would be interesting to have the topic of bilingualism. In many cases when it comes to immigrant children learning English in the classroom, their native language is completely ignored. English is thought to be the main attraction and steals the spotlight from what the immigrant children already know. How we could go about this is focusing on the positive outcomes of being bilingual. The theme could go in multiple ways such as comparing and contrasting monolingualism and bilingualism, the pro’s and con’s of being bilingual, or any other option that lead to explain how beneficial it is to know more than one language. No ideas or thoughts are permanent, so we are still hearing everyone’s suggestions on this theme and how we can make it work to the fullest.

20. My group and I do not have meeting times outside of class because we believe we
21. **can get the same work done in out [sic] group discussion board.** There has [sic] 
22. been a few ups and downs with communication and not knowing when people post or 
23. reply, but **this process has been a learn as you go sort of project.** The ladies in this 
24. group have discussed some excellent points that have been the **basis of our critical 
25. thinking.** These ideas include: **registers in language,** a child’s ability to easily go 
26. back and forth between two different native languages, attitudes and thoughts 
27. towards “having” to learn English, language and power, keeping ones native 
28. language/culture, and more. These have [sic] will be the building blocks on how 
29. **we will structure our final project.** (Adam, online, 4/4/2015)

Although DC group 3 did not have meeting times outside of class like Emily’s group, 
Adam expresses similar concerns with Emily on not knowing when “people post or reply” to 
their DC forums and characterizing not knowing as “ups and downs with communication” in line 
22. However, he also includes t 
the process being “a learn as you go sort of project” in line 23, 
which was precisely the process I intended for the DC discussions and final group presentation. 
In the end, all groups produced impressive presentations despite any struggles groups expressed. 

After DC groups gave their final presentations, I wrote a reflection on the DC groups’ 
final presentations and posted an adapted version online on May 4, 2015, for the whole class to 
read and respond to as they chose. When Emily and I talked about the final DC presentations 
during our interview on 6/11/2015, she sounded surprised and said she was impressed by how all 
the DC groups’ presentations had different perspectives and that “we weren’t sitting through the 
same presentation.” What follows are excerpts of my reflection with bolded words and phrases I 
believed were important findings, as well as common themes across each DC group.

1. Group 1 talked about several key issues, but I appreciated the talk about **cognitive 
2. development** taking place, but how **social interaction** is a necessary factor in 
3. extending the knowledge we accumulate in our memory. I also honed in on the 
4. discussion about **implicit learning** of values and appropriate behavior through 
5. cautionary tales, such as *La llorona.* These stories remain in our memory, and their 
6. embedded messages affect how we behave in social situations. **Language is the 
7. vehicle that transports these messages across time and space!** I will also carry 
8. with me the notion that language to one person is like her/his fingerprint. Has anyone
9. thought about what life would be had we not learned a language? This question has puzzled me since our meeting, and I anticipate it will continue to puzzle me. How would we figure out how things in our environment operated? How would we be able to identify objects, use them, and then communicate these things to others? As your group has mentioned, how do we belong to a group?

14. Group 2’s image of the yellow vs. black chicks really stayed with me. The yellow chick was looking up at the black ones, clearly indicating a power differential. Immediately, this conjured up imagery of exclusion, devaluing of “the other,” denying access to resources, lack of opportunities for social interaction, and ultimately, silence! This social interaction with others not only aids learning, but affords people the means for exchanging ideas and transporting important messages. How can we transform social inequities if we’re silenced from exclusionary practices? This is something we, as educators, can work to disrupt and make sure our learners are not silenced and are given the space to build their confidence and self-esteem, traits that your peers also mentioned! I also keep thinking about your comments, “Fear stops us from producing.” Feeling strange or embarrassed about speaking our heritage language because it might not “sound right” “is not so uncommon.” Indeed, for those of us who’ve felt this way, we’re not crazy. I only wished we were aware of these language issues way before adulthood! These reflections will prove useful in developing our own teaching philosophy!

29. Focusing on bilingualism for group 3’s work was equally illuminating. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VI, prohibited discrimination based on race and national origin. Even though linguistic identity was not part of this, it is not difficult to understand how the act became the impetus for bilingual education initiatives. Soon, the number of linguistic minorities flourished, but they experienced language barriers and, of course, could not participate in social functions, access resources, or experience social mobility. This realization gave rise to the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, Title VII, to assist the learning of English. As we can expect, the inception of this bilingual education law only sparked language attitudes (“foreign language = outsiders) that would be felt in the present day. In 2015, we’re still talking about the inequities ELL’s face in our classrooms. I appreciated how you pointed out the need for us to educate ourselves, so that we pass on the idea to educators and parents that there are benefits to bilingualism.

The following are excerpts of the replies my qualifying consented participants wrote shortly after I posted my reflections. Again, the bolded words and phrases are what I believe to be significant concepts that repeated throughout each DC group’s final presentation.
“From this class, I took away that more people around me have identity crisis' because of loss of language. I always felt like I was the only one who felt like I didn't belong. I now know many people feel that way. I was surprised and sort of saddened by this. I really thought each of the presentations were interesting because with the same questions we each brought up totally different ideas. I think it is so important we keep all these ideas we found and take it into our teaching.” (Emily, 5/4/2015)

“I have learned so much in this course, about how language is important to our culture and the generation to come. I feel this passion that everyone needs to become bilingual. Every school needs to be dual program; to teach children to be bilingual. Being bilingual is an honor and need to be treated as such. Everyone’s presentation was extremely informative and has enhanced my understanding on how I view other languages and cultures. Gracias a todos!” (Isabella, 5/4/2015)

“I took away quite a bit from our class, but mostly I learned about how eclectic the language learning process can be. We learned all about the components of language (morphology, phonology, semantics, syntax and pragmatics), and many of the language learning theories (eg. cognitive, innatism and social interaction theory). I also learned about embracing differences in the classroom and learning about students language learning history, and allowing for agency in their language learning process.” (Hale, 5/6/2015)

“From this class, I think the greatest thing I will take away is really getting to know your students. Since my major is not teaching, and I only want to teach English abroad, I think getting to know my students will be one of the most important things I do. If I were to teach here in the U.S., I think it would be a lot easier to get to know my students. But since I will only be teaching abroad, I really need to get to know my students before I start deciding what kinds of students they are.” (Adam, 5/7/2015)

Social interaction, language socialization, sense of belonging, and language ideologies resonated throughout the DC groups’ presentations. Just as creating opportunities for social interaction were important in the f2f and online asynchronous components of my own hybrid course, my students talked about the importance of this for learners and the potential consequences in the absence of these opportunities, such as being devalued, lacking access to resources, social functions, and social mobility. In my course, we, as the participants, learned that it was expected to interact online for 75% of the time instead of holding additional f2f meetings. My students displayed the same understanding that through language, we implicitly
learn values and appropriate behavior in our communities, such as we learn how we are positioned and where we do not belong, especially as bilinguals in a country that continues to privilege an English-only ideology.

As a class, we struggled through difficult conversations about navigating unfamiliar terrain of the online and f2f context in my hybrid course, the course content and difficulty unpacking theories and concepts, and making sense of the DC process to finally arrive at our final presentation. But I believe this struggle was precisely what gave rise to new ways of learning, communicating, and understanding how we move through the world as learners, teachers, and researchers. To recall Hulme (2009), together, my students and I were in an “uncomfortable, unstable but potentially very productive third space” (p. 548).
Chapter 6: Conclusion

Discussion

*Research question #1: In what ways do my upper level undergraduate teacher education students new to an online or hybrid learning context become competent members of the class?*

Through self-disclosures and legitimizing the self and others, my students became competent members of the course. Consented DC members all discussed how reading over their peers’ and my own posts helped them see different perspectives, examples of how to structure posts, and quoting others’ posts in their own. This exemplifies the importance of language socialization that learners require to understand how to participate appropriately through interaction in a given context (Cazden, 1988; Duff, 2010; Ha, 2010; Lam, 2008; Saville-Troike, 2003; Peele-Eady, 2011). Ensuring students are socialized into academic discourse and concepts is especially important, given that the teacher-candidates in my course were tasked with understanding theories around language development in sociocultural contexts, theories that would impact, hopefully, their teaching perspectives and practices. Furthermore, Ha (2010) reminds us that online courses afford learners the time to reflect on course content and relate it to their own lives, to reflect on and respond critically to their peers, and to seriously reflect on their own written communication and how others would respond to it.

Opportunities for dialogue and collaboration are key to mediating learning. Recalling the zone of proximal development (ZPD) advanced by Vygotsky (1978), learners are at the stage between their current level of development and their potential level with the guidance of a more experienced person, such as their peers, caretakers, teachers. By extension, it would be worth looking into how online discussion forums play a role in ZPD as learners reread their own and their peers’ posts and reflect on their conceptual change throughout the course.
Research question #2: What evidence of learning do I see through the class’ communication in both the face-to-face and online asynchronous learning contexts over the course of a 16-week semester?

Over the 16-week course, the evidence of learning I observed in my students’ communication really culminated in each DC groups’ final presentation or snapshot. This included an increased use of the terms in class, use of quotes from the material and the instructors’ and peers’ posts, and students making references to their own bilingual identity. Learning the rules of constant online engagement was also evidenced in students’ communication. In chapter 5, I noted the use of the following phrases or permutations of them:

“it could come out when we’re carrying our discussions”

“not to rely on face-to-face meetings”

In chapter 4, I describe how Linda quoted in her work one of Hale’s posts referencing Piper (2007) on language and cognition: “Hale describes memory as a part of cognition that works in union with language learning.” Here Linda not only displays her learning about the link between language and cognition, but she also shows her understanding of what quote to use, when to use it and in what situation. Especially for the students who connected personally to the bilingual module in the course, use of the terms code-switching, language loss, and linking language and identity were used in communication. The following is Liam’s response on 3/7/2015 to Emily’s post on code-switching. The bolded phrases are my own to show the concepts we learned in Module 4 and Liam’s connection to it and concepts that resonated with his group members as displayed in their posts about code-switching.

1. Hi Emily, I think what you said about the codeswitching across different languages would be a really interesting topic to look further into. Code switching would tie in nicely to the material we are talking about in Module 4 especially since we live in such a bilingual state as you pointed out. In Module 4 the objectives I really liked looking into were how language was learned at home and in schools as well as the perceived "power" that is associated with
7. **languages.** In my opinion these topics could tie into talking about
8. codeswitching. I have seen students made fun of for accidentally switching to
9. Spanish while speaking English. I could see this as being extremely
10. discouraging to English language learners while at the same time **labeling their**
11. **home language as a "lesser" language instead of a potential strength.** This is
12. just my opinion does anyone else have any other thoughts?

Quoting others’ posts, quoting course materials, and use of the concepts bolded in Liam’s
post above are evidence of students learning the rules of engagement and the academic
discourse expected in my course on first and second language development.

**Research question #3: How do both learning contexts in this hybrid course play a role in the following: a) my students’ identity-development and transformation both as learners and future teachers? and b) my own identity-development and transformation as a practitioner researcher and instructor?**

I claim there is good reason that the f2f component of the hybrid course enhances that of
the online because the instructor and learners can regroup and reground themselves in their group
learning tasks and connect with one another in real time. One disadvantage when communicating
in the online asynchronous space is that there is a “lack of access to immediate and meaning-
making cues” that would otherwise be produced when we are interacting in f2f contexts. For
some, this can shut down or discourage learners and instructors to make attempts to interact with
each other, limiting the opportunities to become competent learners and instructors. The lack of
meaning-making cues can be especially troubling for those who are unfamiliar with
communication technologies. The disembodied nature of the online asynchronous space in a
hybrid course is made real again when learners meet f2f.

The f2f context, however, does not allow for the time to be reflective and produce
thoughtful communication as one can in the online asynchronous space, nor does the f2f context
have the repository of one’s own and others’ ideas to return to during the life of the course. Of
course, our DC meetings toward the latter portion of the course were no more than 30 minutes,
so perhaps with more time there could have been time for reflection. The opportunity to chronicle one’s own and others’ learning is valuable and necessary to the metacognitive and transformational process inherent in becoming reflexive educators. Isabella presents a good example of how struggling through the online asynchronous space empowered her sense of capability as she took ownership of her learning by learning “how to be productive online” and “not checking out.” I believe her empowerment coincided with her conceptual change throughout the course about the complex development of bilingual identities, thereby developing her learner, teacher, and heritage Spanish language identity. I saw, too, this evidence in other participants’ development throughout the course. One example is Liam, who at first, expressed struggling with the online component, but he appeared to embrace the opportunity to figure out the online learning space operated. He also expressed going returning to, reading, and reflecting on his peers’ ideas that were posted in the online asynchronous forums to gain multiple interpretations of course materials. Last, he also learned that bilingual development can be disrupted and look different for everyone, leading him to reflect on his own experiences.

As the instructor of the course, I learned that online asynchronous communication could be used as a teaching tool in the f2f class. For example, I used it to reinforce discussions in our f2f sessions by uplifting students’ quotes and continuing discussions about these quotes when it was appropriate. As the researcher, I used asynchronous communication to follow up on interesting quotes my students wrote in their posts. The ability to regroup, reground, and reflect not only facilitates the learning process but also the process by which we change how we think and operate as learners, teachers, and researchers.

Both the f2f and online learning contexts allowed our unique bilingual stories to emerge and reinforce one another’s into a collective one. Last, I claim that by being able to access the
class’ posts throughout the life of the course, we have the opportunity to engage in critical reflection, conceptual change, and offline dialogue. In this course, critical reflection and conceptual change facilitated a deeper understanding of who my consented participants and I were as bilinguals who experienced some form of disruption in our bilingual development and our wholistic bilingual selves. Whether bilingual or not, the common agreement in my class was the need to connect and empathize with our students and take into account our students’ full identities.

Research question #4: How do students and instructor make sense of the messiness of a new learning and research space?

Creating conditions for students to own their learning can be empowering, even if it is slightly frustrating in the beginning. Liam made a point during our interview that he intentionally “allocated time” to “get lost” and figure out how things worked on the LMS. He attributed his learning how to navigate the LMS to “allocating time” to “get lost,” “experimentation,” and “more practice.” It is useful to offer ample opportunities for learners to test unfamiliar tools and unfamiliar space, whether in f2f contexts or online. In previous courses I taught at other colleges, I offered a syllabus quiz to ensure students reviewed course expectations and important information. Offering a no-stakes activity that allows students to explore the LMS might help to increase students’ ownership of their learning and their confidence and competence in navigating this space and accomplishing course goals. Even more, online asynchronous communication exists as a repository of knowledge that students can refer to anytime they need or want throughout the life of the course. It was expressed that this was a very helpful aspect of the online space for those who needed to remember what their peers said or to refer and quote their peers or instructor.
It is important that students draw on their own resources for learning, such as trusted peers and familiar communication methods to accomplish tasks. Realizing I was insistent on students not relying on additional f2f meetings might have hindered learning instead of facilitated it for Loretta and Isabella, two of the seasoned individuals who opted to use texting as a major mode of communication, especially when coordinating DC tasks. DC group 2 also relied on emailing, as well. This resourcefulness goes back to Wilson and Peterson (2003), who remind us about the “continuum of communities, identities, and networks that exist—from the most cohesive to the most diffuse—regardless of the ways in which community members interact” (pp. 456-457). Again, online and offline communication are not exclusive processes; they impact and enhance one another. Especially in a new context like that of the online learning context, relying on their offline resources, such as their friends, emailing or texting should be encouraged if we expect our students to accomplish learning goals laid out in our syllabi. In the previous chapter, I pondered what communicative competence meant if learners were not behaving according to the prescribed norms and expectations for interacting in the online space. Perhaps the concept of communicative competence looks differently in a hybrid course when compared to a fully online or fully face-to-face learning context, and perhaps communicative competence is even problematized. It would seem to me that Loretta and Isabella were still successful in accomplishing the end goal for the DC project by defying norms, rules, and expectations for interacting in the course.

Struggle creates opportunities for learning and ways for students to “reconceive who they are and what they might be able to accomplish academically and beyond” (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 148). When I met with my critical friend the first time, she asked me, “How does struggle play a role in learning?” And we talked about how we could encourage students to reflect on their
struggles, and what it is like for our children in the classroom, namely, our children whose L1 is not English. Unfortunately, my teaching practices in this study fell short of opportunities for reflection as a means to develop self-awareness and compassion for the students we teach. I assume these reflection activities might have helped Linda become aware of her language ideology of the “ideal English speaker-writer,” and the impact it would have on her future learners.

The function of self-disclosures and legitimacy of self and others is relevant to this section as we navigated this new hybrid terrain for learning, teaching, and researching. I noticed I was not paying attention to potential calls for help or expressions of frustrations, which could have impacted some of my students enthusiasm to interact with others in the course. Communicative acts that would indicate the legitimizing of self or others offer insight into how students are connecting with one another or the instructor and can help illuminate power dynamics that may hinder learning. So, while creating opportunities for learners to own their learning, draw on their own resources, and work through struggle, it is important not to take for granted the things that could be impeding students’ learning processes.

**Research question #5: How does my learning as the practitioner researcher influence my future teaching practices?**

Inviting teacher-candidates and the instructor to talk about what they are experiencing at a given moment and to discuss the reasons for these experiences could help us gain important insights into the impact that instructors’ behaviors have on students, and vice-versa. Anderson, Herr & Nihlen (2007) state that “mutual vulnerability and reflexivity, with implications for change on the part of both the teacher and the students, set the stage for all to strategize together on what might best help them improve the learning process” (p. 69). In listening to students’ concerns expressed directly to me and their communication about the course, I learned many of
my shortcomings as an aspiring university professor, such as the insufficient scaffolding I provided in our group activities or not providing clear and explicit examples and modeling. I took for granted how easy it was for students to “say they’re OK” when, in fact, they may be feeling lost and unsupported. I almost demanded that students not rely on additional f2f meetings, and I was convinced Loretta was being defiant when she was simply taking charge of her own learning to complete a major learning task. I set out to learn alongside and from my students, suggesting a more horizontal leadership structure, but conversely, I attempted to wield my instructor and researcher power.

Learners like Loretta and Isabella were considered non-traditional due to their age, so their experiences and needs showed up much differently in the classroom than many of their younger counterparts. So then, how are non-traditional learners like Loretta and Isabella accommodated in the undergraduate scene? By dismissing their familiar ways of learning, was I not transmitting, albeit unintentionally, the message that undergraduate course expectations were not for them? I recall Wisniewski’s (2000) statement that we are unaware of the “power and repeated messages of our institutional cultures, much in the same way that we are unconscious of our need for air” (p. 19).

Next, I purposely disclosed my disrupted bilingual development and sense of fragmented identity not only to connect my story to the course material but to underscore the consequences of such disruptions for language attitudes, practices and policies, and what we could do as a community of language educators to effect positive change for students. Furthermore, by interrogating our own practices, we invite the critique that is necessary for transforming our teaching practices instead of considering critique as a threat or an undermining of our teacher identity and our competence. Risk-taking and a tolerance of ambiguity are traits that should be
encouraged, especially if our teacher-candidates expect their own L2 learners to do the same.

Relatability is an important takeaway for my future teaching.

Implications

As a practitioner-researcher in this study, I have learned that making the familiar strange was much more difficult than I had expected. First, in the process of examining my students’ struggles in the course, I was able to reflect on my assumptions about what teaching this course should have looked like. The process of analyzing students’ online and f2f communication throughout the course really challenged me to interrogate my assumptions and teaching practices, practices that should have accounted for each learner’s language and learning history and their interests in learning about first and second language development. This course did not look at language development apart from the wholistic individual, which is articulated in the 5th goal below.

1) Study major theories on first and second language development;
2) Articulate beliefs on language development;
3) study specific cases on how context plays a role in first and second language development;
4) Study factors that influence first and second language development at different ages and in different cultural contexts; and
5) Develop awareness of diversity in students’ abilities, languages and cultural backgrounds to support their language development.

I believe that by taking each student’s history, I could adapt my materials and practices, accordingly, not only to accommodate each student’s unique language and learner history, but
also to model practices of compassion, self-interrogation, reflexivity, and transformation we hope our K – 12 teachers take on in their classrooms.

Although race and racism did not emerge as a recurrent theme in my work, it should be acknowledged because race and language are inextricably linked. When Linda quoted her peer during the written product peer-review process, her peer made a link between “not knowing the native language of our cultures” and “we did not connect with our racial identity” (Linda, online, 4/4/2015). In the same quote, reference was made to my experience as a “half-ass” bilingual. This made me reflect on my attendance of K-12 schooling that privileged English over other languages, communicating to English L2 speakers to assimilate; otherwise, they would face the social consequences, such as being made fun of or being excluded from participating in mainstream activities that would otherwise afford learners the opportunity to make connections and develop a sense of group belonging. However, for someone like myself, I was not an English L2 speaker, yet I was socially constructed as a non-Anglo and therefore, English L2 learner, a potential trespasser in an English-only zone. Even though I am a biracial Filipina with Anglo-American heritage, my skin color communicates my Filipina identity. These English-only practices upheld in the school system communicated my Filipino and other non-Anglo heritages as “less than.”

By equating race to one’s perceived L1, we participate in harmful exclusionary practices, perpetuate racial stereotypes that negatively affect our students’ language and identity development, and reproduce a system that continues to oppress communities of color. In my reflection of DC groups’ final presentations, group 3 mentioned The Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VI, which prohibited discrimination based on race and national origin and later leading to the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, Title VII. I wrote “As we can expect, the inception of this
bilingual education law only sparked language attitudes ("foreign language = outsiders) that would be felt in the present day" (Anni, online, 5/4/2015). It was important for me to reflect on and be reminded of the impacts of language ideologies and racism in our early childhood development through secondary school and later into the broader social world.

Online instructors should seriously consider those who are non-traditional learners or those who require more time to learn the online learning space. We can account for learners’ experience online by providing the conditions to explore the online classroom, participate in practice discussion forums, and to make mistakes and problem-solve. This way, learners can develop a tolerance of ambiguity, take risks, and develop their dexterity to move between face-to-face and online learning contexts, while gaining the confidence and competence as participating members of the course. When provided such conditions, learners exercise ownership over their learning. It may very well be that learners choose not to solely rely on the online asynchronous space to communicate; rather, they may revert to communication technologies they are familiar with, such as phone texts or even forego technology altogether and opt to meet face-to-face. In the end, what is important is that learners meet the course objectives.

Instructors may be compelled to blame the “digital divide” for the experiences of Isabella and Loretta whose lack of experience with online learning played a role in their online participation. Digital divide refers to the idea that younger people were raised with communication technologies and, therefore, more proficient in their use, while older generations were not. However, we need to problematize this concept, for “every year brings differences in people’s familiarity with new media” (Barton & Lee, 2013, p. 10). Barton and Lee (2013) raise an important point that “[s]tudying people’s technobiographies serves as a way of understanding the impact and ongoing changes of language use online, which we are all part of’ (p.10).
Next, I would like to emphasize that learners are our teachers. They are active participants in the social construction of knowledge. I would not have learned about my teaching practices without the opportunity to reflexively engage with students’ face-to-face and online communication about this course. They have reminded me that in the phase when we are “figuring out the mess,” ideas will coalesce under conditions where social interaction is possible. In the case of my study, course content that is resonant with a class can result in discussions about one’s own language development experiences, a self-awareness of one’s teacher and learner identity, and how one moves through the world with new knowledge, such as realizing what language loss is and what its implications are. I owe it to my learners who visibilized the need for modeling certain learning tasks, creating space for learners to own their learning, and uplifting a shared experience on language loss and its social consequences. The process of listening, transcribing, and mining through Discussion Circle discussions, opened doors to learn only a snapshot of my students’ learning, communication, and identity-development, as well as my own. I would have liked to extend the timeline of this study to investigate my students’ classroom practices compared to what was said during our course.

Limitations

Any research study is not perfect, and it behooves me to state the weaknesses within my own project. As the practitioner-researcher, several limitations present throughout this study: a) my own instructor and researcher role creating bias and power differentials between my students and me; b) my lack of access to audio files during the semester and inability to jot notes during f2f sessions; c) “inadequate” number of research participants per discussion group; and, d) not attaining interviews from three consented participants.
While great care was taken to minimize power differentials between my student participants and myself, power was inherently there. I was the instructor, the authoritative figure who determined final course grades, who designed the course expectations, and who was looked to for course guidance and potentially for carrying out disciplinary actions. As the researcher, with the guidance and permission of a dissertation committee, I am the one who gathered my students’ data, interpreted them, and authored a final product that is considered “authoritative knowledge” on the subject in question. My students’ names are not associated with the final product, the researcher’s is. My role both as practitioner and researcher affected what I see and how I chose to interpret what I see.

Another means to minimize any perception of preferential treatment was not listening to any audio files throughout the semester. This way I could not hear the students potentially revealing whether they were part of the study. However, not listening to the audio files meant I relied heavily on my own memory and discipline to write my reflections after each f2f session. This proved very challenging, especially when my instructor role required me to frequently circulate to each group when they had questions, or I wanted to make sure groups were on task. As time progresses, we may forget, or our memories become less clear and accurate.

Last, there were 15 students in the course and three discussion groups. In one group, all five members consented to participate. In another group two members consented. And one discussion group had only one consented member. This last group was challenging because I could not include data from the other four non-consented members. To further complicate the issue, for this particular group, the only consented member did not participate much. Out of the eight consented participants, only five interviewed with me at the end of the semester: Emily, Isabella, and Liam from DC group 2 and Linda and Hale from DC group 1. Without Loretta and
Maria from DC group 2 and Adam from DC group 3, it was difficult to gain a more wholistic understanding of the absent participants’ experiences in their discussion groups.

**Future Directions**

The preceding discussion and implications of this study has led me to discuss research possibilities in the areas of practitioner-research in the online and hybrid environment and accessibility. Something to consider when conducting a research study like this is to ensure that all groups have enough consented participants to be able to gather adequate communication data to deeply analyze each groups’ interaction. Not having a balanced number of consented participants across all DC groups constrained how much I could analyze and interpret from DC group 1’s data. Next is the idea that instructor and students have a shared vulnerability and openness to critique. I think this is especially important when working with teacher-candidates who will have multilingual students in their classroom. I realized I was vulnerable sharing my story of my bilingual development in the face-to-face context but not the online aspect of the course. I chose not to share my bilingual story online because my words would be “permanent.” If conditions were created where both instructor and teacher-candidates could safely share their experiences, reflect on their ideas and those of their peers, and perhaps interrogate their assumptions openly in the online aspect of a hybrid course, how would communication, learning, and identity-development look and what implications would there be for the practitioner-researcher? Last, in addition to taking demographic data that includes students’ language background, a technobiography may be useful in understanding a learner’s complex understanding and use of communication technologies.

Accessibility must be considered as online courses become normalized in our colleges and universities. Online courses can accommodate learners who live far from campus; however,
what happens when learners live in a location without broadband access? Because dialogue is crucial in the learning process, those who live without broadband miss out on opportunities to participate in discussions and collaborative work. Next, we are currently living in a global pandemic, which our state government responded to by issuing a stay-at-home order, resulting in workers who are permitted to work remotely. Indeed, the pivot to remote work has likely caused frustration, especially for those who knew little to nothing about communication technologies, such as a learning management system or video webconferencing, which was used for my own dissertation defense. Yet we can see that remote work is possible and can accommodate those with certain disabilities that prevent mobility – remote work should not be an option for only able-bodied persons.

“The need to use instructional-design methods in the online classroom often forces teachers to rethink and reflect on their current teaching practices and to engage in pedagogical problem-solving, which oftentimes results in their use of alternative instructional strategies” (Kanuka, 2006, p. 124). What would these alternative instructional strategies be? It would be interesting to conduct a study on the transition to online processes and how this has forced people to rethink their communication, learning, and work practices. How would relating with one another look like while we practice social distancing during this COVID-19 pandemic? What would the legitimization of the self and others entail as we “figure out the mess” in this transition online. What would our story sound like?

La “salida”

*The “salida” derives from “salir” to exit or go out, and in tango, this marks the first step or pattern as a couple begins to dance. However, the “salida” is also a transition into another pattern. Imagine two tango dancers seamlessly gliding on the floor to Osvaldo*
Pugliese’s “Derecho viejo.” The follower does her “ochos” backward, while the lead guides her with his hand near her shoulder blade. When she’s finished her “ochos,” he sends her in the direction he sees fit, twirls her, but she resists and communicates to him she’d like to move forward. They carry on in their catlike walk, pulling each other in different directions, embellishing their footwork as they go. This dance is beautiful, yet at the same time, it symbolizes the struggle to triumph over one another. (Leming, 2010)

I believed this tango metaphor would be fitting as a culmination of this paper. I was able to recall and recreate this description that I used as a metaphor in one of my first papers in the Education Linguistics program. As I circled back to this metaphor from the beginning of my academic journey, I realized what has continued to ground my work as a researcher, instructor, and wholistic person. This metaphor has represented for me the concept of struggle, movement across thresholds, and equitable opportunity for learners to succeed. I saw myself in this metaphor where I simply struggled to enter or leave, but I failed to understand that in the “salida” exist possibilities for conceptual change and transformation of one’s own teaching and social practices and personal development.
References


[Photograph of ducklings on a wall]. (n.d.).


Appendix A
Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your age?
   17 years or younger □  18 years or older □

2. Do you identify yourself as a (please check one)
   male □  female □  transgender □  prefer not to answer □

3. Do you identify yourself as a monolingual English speaker?
   yes □  no □

4. Do you identify yourself as a bilingual or multilingual speaker?
   yes □  no □

5. If you answered “yes” to #4, please list the language(s) you speak other than English:

6. How many semesters have you taken an online course before taking this hybrid course?
   (Please check one)
   none □  one □  two □  more than two □

7. If you have taken at least one online course prior to this hybrid course, did you experience group work in that course?
   yes □  no □  N/A □

8. Are you an advanced undergraduate student (3rd or 4th year)?
   yes □  no □

9. Are you in the College of Education?
   yes □  no □

10. Do you plan to teach in K through 12 classrooms that involve multilingual populations?
    yes □  no □

11. If you answered “no” to #10, please list your program of study:

12. Are you taking this course as a requirement?
    yes □  no □

13. If you answered “no” to #12, please list why you are taking this course:
The University of New Mexico
Consent to Participate in Research
November 2, 2014

Introduction

You are being asked to participate in a research study that is being done by Anni Leming, who is a PhD Candidate from the Department of Language, Literacy & Sociocultural Studies. Anni Leming is conducting this study under the guidance of Dr. Lois Meyer, the responsible faculty and Principal Investigator. This research is studying the communication, participation, and learning processes in a hybrid course on language development.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are enrolled in this hybrid course, may be relatively new to hybrid or online learning, have an interest in teaching in multilingual contexts and are an advanced undergraduate student. A maximum of eight (8) people will take part in this study at the University of New Mexico.

This form will explain the research study, and will also explain the possible risks as well as the possible benefits to you. We encourage you to talk with your family and friends before you decide to take part in this research study. If you have any questions, please ask one of the study investigators.

What will happen if I decide to participate?

If you agree to participate, the following things will happen:

- Your consent to participate in the study will not be known to the investigator until after grades have been posted;
- You will be placed in a Discussion Circle group of no more than five group members. This group arrangement will be done by Erin Hulse;
- Your online and face-to-face communication in your Discussion Circles will be recorded and analyzed for your communication, participation, and learning patterns;
- Your communication, participation, and learning will be documented in researcher’s journal as part of her normal educational practice; and
- After the course has ended, you will be invited to interview with the researcher about your reflections on the course. This interview will be recorded.

How long will I be in this study?

Participation in this study will take a total of approximately 40 hours over a period of the 17-week semester. However, participation in this study during the semester does not go beyond the normal educational practices of the course. You will be contacted to have a post-course interview with the investigator. This interview should take no more than an hour and will take place anytime between 5/25/2015 and 6/20/2015.

What are the risks or side effects of being in this study?
There are risks of stress, emotional distress, inconvenience and possible loss of privacy and confidentiality associated with participating in a research study. However, serious measures will be taken to minimize these risks so all students may experience the full benefits of the course. First, the researcher/instructor will not know who has consented, thereby minimizing issues of
coercion or preferential treatment. Your help is needed, however, in that you do not discuss in class or online about your consent to participate in the study. For more information about risks and side effects, ask the investigator Anni Leming’s your participation is no longer confidential.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please complete the consent form accordingly, place in manila envelope, seal it, and hand it to [Insert Name]. If you do not want to participate, please return the blank consent form in its envelope, seal it and you are welcome to leave the class. In both cases, do not write anything on the sealed envelope.

**What are the benefits to being in this study?**

There will be no benefit to you from participating in this study. However, it is hoped that information gained from this study will help our understanding in the following ways:

- decision-making about future iterations of this course in online or hybrid formats
- how a hybrid course influences or impacts students’ and instructors’ learning and teaching processes;
- how a hybrid course affects students’ and instructors’ communication, participation, and community-building;
- how hybrid courses function as a site of investigation;
- how online and hybrid learning can be adapted to suit the needs of our students and instructors in 21st century education; and
- how discussions about bilingual and TESOL education can be sustained and evolve to better suit our K-12 students

**What other choices do I have if I do not want to be in this study?**

Your choice to not participate will in no way affect your relationship with the instructor, with others in the course, or with the [University Name].

**How will my information be kept confidential?**

We will take measures to protect the security of all your personal information, but we cannot guarantee confidentiality of all study data. Study participants’ will be assigned pseudonyms. Interview data, online and face-to-face data will be saved to a password-protected network, and only the researcher will have access to these data. All data will be stored and processed in the researcher’s office, and all data will be destroyed one year after completion of study.

Information contained in your study records is used by study staff and, in some cases it will be shared with the sponsor of the study. The [Institutional Review Board (IRB)] that oversees human subject research and/or other entities may be permitted to access your records. There may be times when we are required by law to share your information. Your name will not be used in any published reports about this study.

Finally, you should understand that the investigator is not prevented from taking steps, including reporting to authorities, to prevent serious harm of yourself or others.

**What are the costs of taking part in this study?**

There are no costs for taking part in this study.
Will I be paid for taking part in this study?
There is no compensation for participating in this study.

How will I know if you learn something new that may change my mind about participating?
You will be informed of any significant new findings that become available during the course of the study, such as changes in the risks or benefits resulting from participating in the research or new alternatives to participation that might change your mind about participating.

Can I stop being in the study once I begin?
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to choose not to participate or to withdraw your participation at any point in this study without affecting your future course participation or other services to which you are entitled. Any data produced by you will NOT be included in the study. Please contact Erin Hulse at ehulse@unm.edu to cease participation.

Whom can I call with questions or complaints about this study?
If you have any questions, concerns or complaints at any time about the research study, contact Erin Hulse at ehulse@unm.edu, or the responsible faculty, Dr. Lois Meyer at lsmeyer@unm.edu. Anni Leming is conducting this study, and you may contact her after grades have been submitted. If you contact her during the study, please understand your participation is no longer confidential.

If you need to contact someone after business hours or on weekends, please contact Anni Leming at [redacted] or email her at [redacted]. Once again, your participation is no longer confidential if you contact her during the semester.

If you would like to speak with someone other than the research team, you may call the [redacted].

Whom can I call with questions about my rights as a research participant?
If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may call the [redacted]. The IRB is a group of people from UNM and the community who provide independent oversight of safety and ethical issues related to research involving human participants. For more information, you may also access the OIRB website at http://irb.unm.edu.
CONSENT

You are making a decision whether to participate (or to have your child participate) in this study. Your signature below indicates that you/your child read the information provided (or the information was read to you/your child). By signing this consent form, you are not waiving any of your (your child's) legal rights as a research participant.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and all questions have been answered to my satisfaction. By signing this consent form, I agree to participate (or let my child participate) in this study. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. Please make sure to include your email on this form.

_________________________________________________
Name of Adult Subject (print)

_________________________________________________
Signature of Adult Subject

_________________________________________________
Date

INVESTIGATOR SIGNATURE

I have explained the research to the participant and answered all of his/her questions. I believe that he/she understands the information described in this consent form and freely consents to participate.

_________________________________________________
Name of Investigator/ Study Team Member (print)

_________________________________________________
Signature of Investigator/ Study Team Member

_________________________________________________
Date
Appendix C
Script for Research Collaborator (Consenter)

Hi, my name is Erin Hulse, and I am a PhD candidate from the Language, Literacy & Sociocultural Studies department. I am here this evening to invite you to participate in a research study that will be carried out by your instructor, Anni Leming. She is interested in learning about how the new hybrid format of the LLSS 456 course on language development impacts her students' and her own learning, communication, and participation in the course. The results from the study will help in bettering instruction, deciding future iterations of this course, and contributing to discussions about online learning in 21st century education practices. I am also here to inform you that in order to minimize any perceived coercion, your participation will remain unknown to the instructor until after final grades have been posted in May. This way you receive full benefits from the course, whether or not you choose to participate in the research study. If you decide to opt out of the study at any time during the semester, please contact me at ehulse@unm.edu.

I am going to pass out a manila envelope with a consent form enclosed. Please read through this form. If you decide to participate, complete the consent form, write your email on it, return it in the manila envelope, seal it, and give it to me. I will email you a copy of your consent form. By signing the consent form you agree to participate in the research study; however, you may cease your participation at any time. Contact me if you decide to change your mind, or if you have any questions throughout the semester.

If you decide NOT to participate, do not complete the consent form. Simply seal the envelope with the empty form inside. When you are finished, hand the sealed envelopes to me. You may leave the class. PLEASE DO NOT WRITE ON THE ENVELOPE!

Your choice to not participate will in no way affect your relationship with the instructor, with others in the course, or with the University of New Mexico.
Appendix D
Interview Protocol

1. What assumptions did you have about online learning before you took this class?
2. What expectations did you have about this course?
3. How did the face-to-face and online components of this hybrid course affect your learning, communication, and participation with your peers and instructor?
4. What were some challenges you experienced in this hybrid course? How did you manage these challenges?
5. How did group work in Discussion Circles affect your learning throughout the course?
6. How did this hybrid course affect your learning of course concepts?
7. How did this hybrid course play a role in your own identity as a learner and aspiring educator in multilingual contexts?
8. What worked for you in this hybrid course, and if you were the instructor of this course, what would you change?