Oral Language Proficiency in Distance English-Language Learning

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Abstract

Online learning environments are changing the landscape of education, with evidence supporting their efficacy. However, research that focuses entirely on online distance English-language programs is sparse, especially in regards to oral proficiency. The purpose of this study is to investigate the efficacy of an online distance-learning program in helping students develop oral English-language proficiency as they prepare to attend a university in the United States. The curriculum for the distance-learning program was built upon Moore's transactional distance theory, with an emphasis on interpersonal dialogue as a key tool in promoting oral proficiency. Students participated in synchronous and asynchronous interaction with fellow students, tutors, and their instructors. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) computer-assisted Oral Proficiency Interview (OPIc) provided the pretest and posttest measures for this study. To supplement this data, course surveys provided information concerning student opinions of course activities. OPIc results showed that students made significant gains in their oral proficiency from pretest to posttest. In surveys, students rated interaction with other tutors

and teachers as instrumental in assisting them with their language learning, but rated interaction with their peers as less helpful.

Keywords: distance English-language learning, oral proficiency, online English language learning.

This study seeks to inform a gap in distance English-language learning inquiry. An extensive amount of research speaks to the effectiveness of online learning in various learning contexts (Bernard et al., 2004; Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2009), including language learning (Blake, Wilson, Cetto, & Pardo-Ballester, 2008; Hockly, 2015; Moneypenny & Aldrich, 2016; White, 2014). Unfortunately, few studies have looked at oral English-language proficiency development in fully online course experiences (Blake, 2015; Lin & Warschauer, 2015; Vorobel & Kim, 2012; White, 2006).

The courses in this study were created by an English-language program at a U.S. university to help international students improve their English-language skills before coming to campus. Language proficiency among international students is a growing concern for U.S universities (Larner, 2015). The International Institute of Education's Open Doors report found that 1,094,792 foreign students studied in the United States during the 2017–2018 school year (2018). This represents nearly a 100% growth of international students since the 2005–2006 school year (5.6 million). English proficiency is a major challenge for international students as they struggle to succeed at U.S. universities and it is closely related to international student success (Andrade, 2006; Bridgeman, Cho, & DiPietro, 2016; Kelly & Moogan, 2012; Zhou,

Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008). If language proficiencies can be feasibly developed through distance-learning, such programs could help universities extend language support to prospective international students even before they leave their native country. This study sought to answer if a distance-learning program can help students improve their oral proficiency—and if so, what course components might promote that proficiency. Research questions included:

1. Can students participating in a online distance English-language program significantly improve their oral proficiency?

2. What types of interactions in distance-learning courses do students value in developing their language proficiency?

Literature Review

As noted above, researchers have recognized the need to investigate oral English-language proficiency within the distance-learning environment. However, as distance-learning programs vary widely in their design and implementation, it is important to understand the theoretical and instructional design contexts of the courses investigated here. Such context can assist in replication as well as inform future research.

Moore's (1993) *transactional distance* theory formed the theoretical foundation for the distance-learning courses in this study. Moore borrowed the idea of transaction from Dewey and Bentley (1949) and defined transactional distance as the interplay of teachers and learners over the psychological and communicative gap formed by the separation between them. To overcome the potential misunderstandings inherent in such a gap, Moore believed that instructors and course designers must consider and reconcile three related variables: dialogue, course structure,

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and learner autonomy. According to Moore, dialogue and autonomy have a positive relationship with each other (i.e. the more dialogue, the more autonomy) but have a negative relationship with structure (i.e. the more structure, the less dialogue and autonomy). In distance learning it is important to find a balance between these three elements in order to effectively close transactional distance. The courses in this study sought to balance structure with high amounts of dialogue in hopes to appropriately scaffold learner autonomy.

Moore explained that dialogue must (a) be positive, (b) focused on student learning, (c) loosely structured, and (d) foster learner autonomy. Even though dialogue can happen among students (peer dialogue), Moore focused his attention on the dialogue between teachers and learners—which he saw as primarily important in closing transactional distance. The balance between the amounts of peer dialogue and teacher–student dialogue is an important question for distance learning stakeholders. In many online learning environments—as a way to reduce the need and cost of faculty—peer dialogue has become an oft-used substitute for teacher–student dialogue. For example, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) typically utilize experts to develop course content but eliminate their role in responding to students and providing feedback (Brinton et al., 2014; Clarà & Barberà, 2013). Instead, they rely heavily on peer-to-peer interaction. Many applaud such Deweynian approaches to learner autonomy. However, Basharina, Guardado, and Morgan (2008) noted that while many informal online learning communities encourage participants to perform various roles (facilitator, expert, novice), research shows that students benefit from the increased role of a teacher (O'Dowd & Eberbach, 2004; Ware & Kramsch, 2005).

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It is important to note that while Moore (1993) found inspiration in Deweynian ideas as he developed his transactional distance theory (Dewey & Bentley, 1949), he was more moderate in his views. He was not willing to hand the course experience completely over to learners, as Dewey suggested (1916). Instead, Moore envisioned an equilibrium between autonomy and structure. Moore posited that most learners—including adult learners—are not adequately prepared to be fully autonomous, and need support from teachers and tutors. In developing their distance-learning model, Andrade and Bunker (2009) agreed with Moore, stating that increased autonomy is best developed through interaction with more experienced teachers and tutors. Such ideas meld well with Vygotsky (1980), who believed that dialogue is primarily found in the practical sociocultural activity of learners. Interaction with more-experienced others, including teachers, provides opportunities for learners to solve problems beyond their current ability. Social interaction plays a vital role in helping learners move through the zone of proximal development and become fully autonomous and mature in the social norm or skill they are learning, including language. Ohta (2000) concluded that zones of proximal development are more easily navigated when the instructors are (a) attentive to student needs, (b) work collaboratively with them, and (c) remove assistance (scaffolding) as students improve in the language.

Language-learning research in face-to-face learning contexts also emphasizes the importance of learner–instructor dialogue. Lantolf and Aljaafreh (1995) investigated the role of zones of proximal development in preventing language regression. They concluded that the consistency and quality of instructor dialogue significantly affected student ability to correctly

formulate foundational ideas about language. Without that learner–instructor dialogue learners tended to create incorrect conclusions and devise incorrect language rules.

Two studies in online language-learning emphasize the importance of tutelage from more-experienced language users. Utilizing course surveys, Don (2005) and Madyarov (2009) found that language learners perceived interaction with their teacher as more valuable than conversations with their peers. Additionally, Don found that course designers agreed with the students in their ranking of important course elements. These findings reinforce Schullo, Hilbelink, Venable, and Barron (2007) who explained that rich instructor–student dialogue can "improve attitudes, encourage earlier completion of coursework, improve performance in tests, allow deep and meaningful learning opportunities, increase retention rates, and build learning communities" (p. 2).

Curriculum Design

Course designers used transactional distance as their design framework to scaffold learner autonomy through a course structure that emphasized dialogue. The first course focused on building listening and speaking skills. The second course focused on writing skills. The third course focused on reading skills. Courses ran over a 13-week semester. The average student workload was 11 hours per course per week, with the bulk of the work performed in the Canvas learning management system.

Even though learning activities varied between courses, students participated in similar amounts of oral dialogue in each course (see Appendix A). All students, regardless of course, participated in weekly individual synchronous online video chats with a single course tutor.

Tutors were paid undergraduate TESOL majors and were trained to be attentive to students, customize instruction as needed, collaborate with their learners, and remove assistance (scaffolding) as students improved (Andrade & Bunker, 2009; Ohta, 2000). During tutor sessions, students received help on course assignments, practiced their speaking and listening skills, and were given opportunities to ask questions. Each session lasted 30 minutes, took place 13 times in the speaking/listening course, and 11 times in the writing and reading courses. Synchronous tutor sessions were done using the Skype video chat platform.

Students further interacted asynchronously with tutors, teachers, and other students through video and text. However, the consistency and frequency of these interactions varied by course, especially with peer interactions. In the speaking/listening course peer discussions occurred only four times during the semester but they occurred more frequently in the writing and reading courses—nine times and 13 times respectively. All asynchronous communication was done in the Canvas learning management system.

The university—whose distance-learning courses were the focus of this study—has an unusually high percentage of international students. Nearly 50% of the student body are international students from over 70 different countries, the majority of whom return to their native country after graduation. To better serve this population, the university adopted an English as an International Language (EIL) approach to language development—as opposed to an English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) approach. For example, the student–student, student–teacher, and student–tutor interactions were with both native and non-native speakers and no preference was given to accent types (Jenkins, 2006).

Methods

Participants

Sixty-five students from 18 different countries enrolled in courses, with 56 completing. Forty-five students from 15 countries completed OPIc pretests and posttests. Fifty-three students completed one or more course activities surveys. Of the 45 students that completed OPIc pretests and posttests, 44 filled out course activities surveys. As noted, students enrolled in one or more courses that focused on particular language skills (see Tables 1 and 2). Using pretest data students were ranked according to ACTFL proficiency guidelines in the novice-mid through intermediate-mid proficiency ranges, with a majority ranking in the intermediate-low range (Swender, Conrad, & Vicars, 2012).

Table 1

Completing Participants by Courses and Number of Courses Enrolled

Total Enrollments	Speak/Listen Course	Writing Course	Reading Course	Totals
Enrolled in one course	10	10	3	23
Enrolled in one other course	10	12	4	13
Enrolled in all three courses	20	20	20	20
Totals	40	42	27	56

Table 2

Participants by Native Country and Pretest Level

Country	Completed OPIc Pretest & Posttest	Pretest ACTFL Level				Completed Activities Survey
		NM	NH	IL	IM	
China	8		1	6	1	11

Country	Completed OPIc Pretest & Posttest	Pretest ACTFL Level				Completed Activities Survey
		NM	NH	IL	IM	
Hong Kong	6		2	2	2	6
Indonesia	3			3		3
Japan	2		1	1		2
Kiribati	0					2
Macau	1			1		1
Malaysia	1			1		2
Mexico	1				1	1
Mongolia	13	1	2	9	1	13
Philippines	1			1		4
South Korea	2		2			2
Tahiti	2			1	1	1
Taiwan	2			2		2
Thailand	2			2		2
Tonga	1			1		1
Totals	45	1	8	30	6	53

NM = Novice-mid, NH = Novice-high, IL = Intermediate-low, IM = Intermediate-mid

Measures

The ACTFL computer-assisted Oral Proficiency Interview (OPIc) served as the oral proficiency instrument for this study. This online test shows considerable reliability and validity in comparison with the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (Swender et al., 2012). Questions were delivered by an avatar-style interviewer and student answers were blind rated by two certified OPIc raters. In order to perform quantitative analysis, the ACTFL ratings were assigned numeric values using Dandonoli and Henning's (1990) conversion model, which reflects the unequal intervals between ACTFL sublevels (see Table 3).

Table 3

Oral Proficiency Interview Rating Numeric Conversion, from Dandonoli and Henning (1990)

ACTFL Level	Score	ACTFL Level	Score	ACTFL Level	Score
Novice-low	.1	Intermediate-low	1.1	Advanced	2.3
Novice-mid	.3	Intermediate-mid	1.3	Advanced High	2.8
Novice-high	.8	Intermediate-high	1.8	Superior	3.3

In each course students participated in course-activities surveys, where they ranked the course as a whole and particular course activities. The survey used a five-point Likert scale, ranging from one (not helpful) to five (extremely helpful). To assist with data analysis, course activities were placed into one of four categories that aligned with Moore's (1989) types of interaction. The categories included: dialogue with teachers, dialogue with tutors, dialogue with other students, and course assignments (see Appendix B).

Analysis and Results

To answer whether students participating in a online distance English-language program can significantly improve their oral proficiency—the first research question—two repeated measures ANOVAs were run. Course enrollment variations were the between-subjects factors. Two enrollment variations were seen as potentially influencing results, including (1) whether a student was enrolled in multiple courses, and (2) whether a student was enrolled in the speaking/listening course, which specifically focused on oral proficiency. OPIc pretest and posttest scores acted as the repeated measures. The significance level for all tests was set at p = .05. Preliminary statistical tests showed these ANOVAs met the necessary assumptions—normality, homogeneity of variance, and sphericity. All quantitative tests were conducted using

the JASP software package, a statistical software developed by the European Research Council. G*Power was used to determine actual power for the ANOVA results.

Thirty-two students moved up in proficiency sublevel from pretest to posttest. One student moved up three ACTFL oral proficiency sublevels (novice-mid to intermediate-mid). Eighteen students progressed two sublevels (13 from intermediate-low to intermediate high; 5 from novice high to intermediate-mid). Thirteen moved up one proficiency sublevel (11 from intermediate-low to intermediate-mid; 1 from intermediate-mid to intermediate-high; 1 from novice-high to intermediate-low). Ten students did not improve and three students moved down one proficiency sublevel from pretest to posttest (see Figure 1).
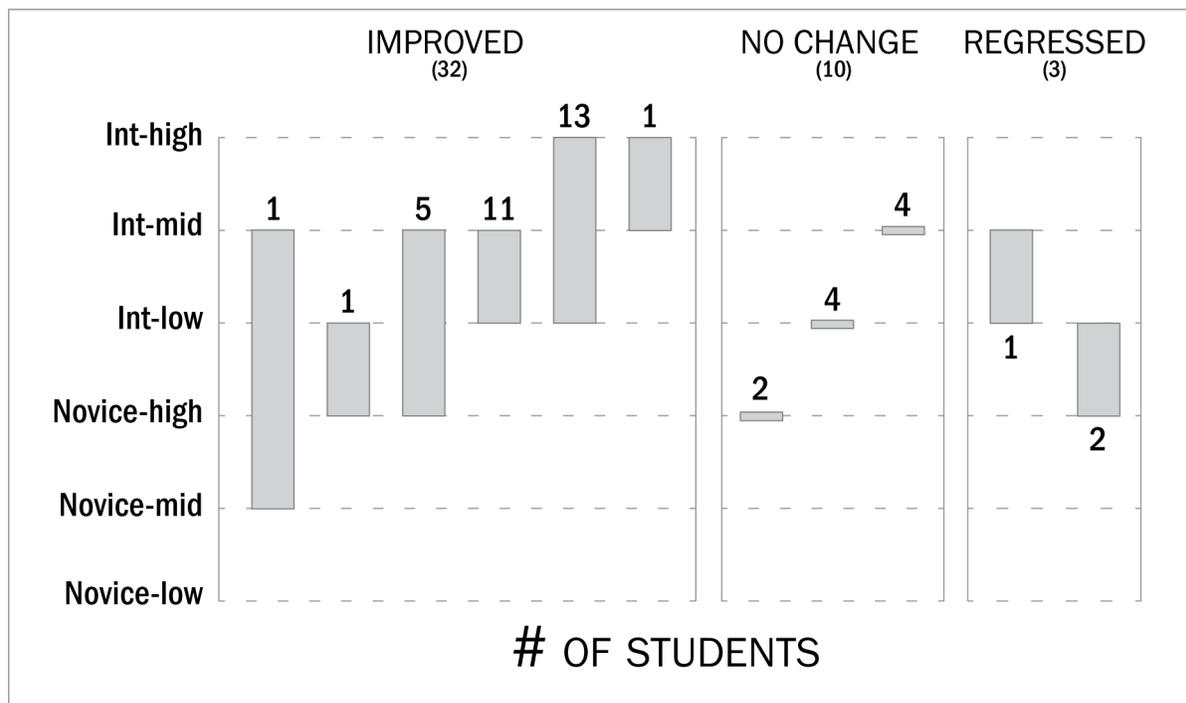

Figure 1. Change in oral proficiency score by number of students.

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Repeated measures ANOVAs revealed that students demonstrated significant improvement in oral proficiency from pretest to posttest, $F(1, 42) = 40.40$, $p < .001$. A G*Power analysis further showed that the effect was large in nature ($f = .97$). Students who enrolled in multiple courses showed slightly higher gains between pretest and posttest (one course, $MD = .27$; two courses, $MD = .32$; three courses, $MD = .38$). However, these differences were not significant, $p = .65$. Students who participated in the speaking/listening course showed gains over those who did not (in speaking course, $MD = .37$; not in speaking course, $MD = .16$). Though this difference was large and approached signficance, it did not meet the significance p-value for this study, $p = .052$.

To address the second research question, course activities were categorized to align with Moore's (1989) types of interaction, including dialogue with tutor, dialogue with teacher, dialogue with other learners, and course assignments. Student mean ratings were calculated by student across all three courses. Following Don (2005) and Madyarov (2009), mean scores of four or above represented significant perceived contributors to student learning. A repeated measures ANOVA was run to find if there was a significant difference in student perceptions of activities from category to category. Preliminary statistical tests showed that the course activities data did not meet the sphericity assumption. Thus, a Hyunh-Feldt correction was used for the ANOVA with Bonferroni adjustments for the post-hoc tests.

Overall, students perceived that the courses significantly helped their English in the skills specific to the course. In the speaking/listening course students perceived that the course helped them improve in their ability to speak English ($M = 4.45$, $SD = .65$) and listen to English ($M = 4.45$, $SD = .55$). Similarly, students rated the writing course ($M = 4.48$, $SD = .51$) and reading

course (M = 4.58, SD = .50) as helpful with those English-language skills. Of the four activity categories, students perceived that dialogue with the tutor (M = 4.67, SD = .45), dialogue with the teacher (M = 4.43, SD = .63), and assignments (M = 4.14, SD = .37) significantly contributed to their learning. However, dialogue with other students received a rank score below four (M = 3.87, SD = .84), thus failing to reach the significance threshold for this study.

The repeated measures ANOVA showed a significant mean difference between course activities scores, F(2.34, 121.89) = 21.91, p < .001, η^2 = .30. Post-hoc tests revealed significant differences between how helpful students perceived dialogue with tutors to be as compared to dialogue with other students (MD = .80, p < .001) and course assignments (MD = .52, p < .001). While there was a mean difference between how helpful students perceived dialogue with their tutors and dialogue with the teacher to be, the analyses did not show these differences as significant (MD = .27, p = .155). Post-hoc tests also revealed a significant difference between the perceived helpfulness of dialogue with teachers when compared with dialogue with other students (MD = .56, p < .001) and course assignments (MD = .29, p = .041). While there was a mean difference between course assignments and dialogue with other students, the difference was not statistically significant.

Discussion

The large change in oral proficiency among students in this study is noteworthy, with many students progressing one level or more in a 13-week semester. This is comparable to the Language Testing International (which administers the ACTFL test) expected progression for students who participate in intensive or immersion language programs (LTI, 2019). Generally,

the findings reinforce those of Madyarov (2009). However, there are some important differences between our study and that of Madyarov. First, the students in our study showed improvement when beginning at higher levels of proficiency. In Madyarov's study, only those that pretested at approximately the novice-high proficiency sublevel showed improvement. Those who pretested at higher levels of proficiency tended not to improve significantly. Madyarov's conjecture was that it is easier to make greater gains at lower levels of proficiency (Swinton, 1983). A majority of students that participated in our study tested into the intermediate-low level, with many progressing through multiple oral proficiency levels.

It is important to note that there are significant curricular differences between this study and Madyarov's (2009). While Madyarov did utilize oral tutoring, the tutors were unpaid volunteers, with no apparent language-training qualifications, and spread across multiple learning groups. The tutors in this study were paid undergraduate TESOL majors, assigned to students from a single course, and trained to provide support in line with Andrade and Bunker's (2009) recommendations—to provide and remove scaffolding in hopes of promoting learner autonomy.

A second important difference between our study and Madyarov's (2009) is that Madyarov used the paper-based TOEFL as the proficiency measure, thus excluding oral proficiency from analysis. Thus, it is hard to know how Madyarov's oral gains compared to the reported reading or writing gains shown on the TOEFL. Given this omission in Madyarov's study, and the dearth of full-course English-language-learning research in oral proficiency—particularly studies that use established testing measures (Blake, 2015)—it is difficult to adequately contextualize the study here with prior research.

Contextualization with other studies is further hampered by the diversity of participating students. Most studies sample students from a common first language (e.g. Madyarov's sample was exclusively Farsi-speaking students). One result of this diversity is that most, if not all of dialogue is done in English. Students cannot revert back to their first language when concepts become difficult—unlike many EFL learning contexts where homogenous L1 learners commonly dialogue in their native language.

Whether or not students participated in multiple courses did not appear to significantly influence their oral proficiency gains. At face value, this may be counterintuitive. One might assume that the more courses a student participates in, the greater the pace of their improvement. However, it is possible that this finding may be related to the amount of time students were required to spend on each course. It was typical for students to invest over ten hours per week in each course, a significant time commitment for a distance student. It may be likely that as students enrolled in more courses, their time on task decreased, lowering their performance gains per class.

Even though students who enrolled in the speaking course had greater oral proficiency gains over those enrolled in the other courses, our analyses showed these differences were not statistically significant. One possible explanation could be related to the amount of oral interaction required in all the courses. As mentioned, all courses sought to close transactional distance by providing ample opportunity for synchronous oral interactions (Moore 1993; Andrade & Bunker, 2009). Thus, all courses contained a significant oral dialogue component. Course tutors, who administered many of these speaking interactions, operated under similar

directions and training. Consequently, all students in all courses benefited from frequent oral interaction with their tutors.

In addition to the oral language improvement, this study showed that the students valued certain types of interactions over others (second research question). Madyarov (2009) and Don (2005) employed perception surveys to answer similar questions. Both researchers found that learner–instructor dialogue was perceived by learners as more valuable than interacting with peers. Likewise, students in this study felt that the interactions with their teachers and tutors were significantly more helpful than interactions with their peers. This supports Vygotsky's (1980) suggestion that learning is best mediated through social interaction with more-experienced others. While these results do not dismiss the importance of self-regulation or peer interaction, they may discourage a reliance on self-regulation and peer interaction by themselves—especially since there is no comparison group. Our study suggests that such activities may be more effective when accompanied by frequent interaction with teachers and qualified tutors, as recommended by Andrade and Bunker (2009).

It may be tempting to cut costs by reassigning tasks usually performed by teachers/tutors to peers, volunteers, or computer systems (Rhoads, Camacho, Toven-Lindsey, & Lozano, 2015). Such course-design innovations are not without their merits. However, stakeholders should proceed with caution. Transactional distance is an inherent danger in online learning, and remains a serious issue. Among students, online learning is associated with high rates of dissatisfaction, withdrawal, isolation, and attrition (Power & Gould-Morven, 2011). Even with the overwhelming amount of research that validates the efficacy of online learning, faculty continue to have their doubts (Pomerantz & Brooks, 2017). A primary complaint among these

skeptics is that faculty do not have opportunities to develop a relationship with their students (Vivolo, 2016). As much as it may cost to employ faculty and paid tutors—not to mention the effort of creating learning experiences where their shared dialogue is both high quantity and high quality—this type of dialogue remains an effective way to close transactional distance and help students succeed in their learning.

Conclusion

The conclusions of this study may be summarized as follows:

- Distance English-language programs can be a successful way of promoting oral proficiency.
- It may be vital for distance language programs to support oral language learning through frequent and meaningful dialogue with teachers and qualified tutors.

This study addresses lingering conerns of distance learning as a viable platform for oral language learning by demonstrating that students can make significant proficiency gains. In addition, course designers may need to avoid relying solely on cheaper peer-to-peer, volunteer, and computer-generated learning interactions. Students may be better served when courses provide ways in which they can consistently interact with teachers and tutors, effectively closing the transactional distance inherent in distance learning environments.

While these findings are informative, it is important to note that this study did not have a comparison group. Thus, while the analyses provided evidence that students can significantly improve their oral proficiency in an English-language distance learning course, this study does not show that these course designs are as good—or worse than—designs that do not rely on

similar activities. Second, the small sample size precluded the use of more complex and informative statistical analyses. A larger sample size would have allowed an ANOVA design that utilized multiple between-subjects factors. This would have made it possible to inspect interactions between multiple enrollment possibilities (e.g. multiple course enrollments and speaking course enrollments) and reduced the likelihood of committing a type I error.

To address the aforementioned limitations, it is recommended that future research utilize a comparative design with a control group. A control group could include students enrolled in courses that do not rely on learner–instructor dialogue. Second, it is recommended that similar research employ sample sizes that would allow the full range of statistical analyses. Finally, this study is quantitative in nature and could be better informed by the collection of qualitative data that gives voice to particular student experiences as they develop oral language proficiency online.

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Appendix A

Course Activity Descriptions

The course activities are divided by course with a short description, and frequency of activity.

Table A1

Activities for the EIL Speaking/Listening Course

Activity	Description	Frequency
Vocab activities	Students perform various exercises to help memorize words in their word list. Students also take a quiz to check their understanding.	3 times
Listening logs	Students listen to a recording of the word. Students then count how many syllables each word has in their word list and compare it to the actual answer.	6 times
Tutor appointments	The tutor talks with the student over video chat. Before every appointment, the student has to do a worksheet and prepare answers to questions that the tutor is going to ask.	13 times
Teacher communications	Teachers give feedback on homework assignments and quizzes. The teacher is also communicating with those who are struggling in the class to give them extra help.	Every assignment
Dictation	Students listen to a recording of sentences that contain words from their word list of the week. Students then need to write what they hear, including punctuation and capitalization, in a provided worksheet.	3 times
Reading	Students read a short article about whatever topic the teacher has chosen for the week. After reading the article, students take a short quiz about the article.	6 times
Videos posts	Students post a video to the teacher answering several questions provided by the teacher.	7 times
Documentaries	Students watch a short documentary on a topic. Students fill out a worksheet while watching the documentary.	2 times
Note-taking	Students watch a video on how to take effective notes. They practice by watching a lecture and taking notes. They submit their completed notes for feedback.	6 times

Activity	Description	Frequency
Discussions with students	Students post a video answering a question that was presented by the teacher. The students then need to respond to five other student posts.	4 times
Vocabulary activities	Students perform various exercises to help memorize words in their word list. Students also take a quiz to check their understanding.	3 times

Table A2

Activities for the EIL Writing Course

Activity	Description	Frequency
Writing assignments	Students write about a topic in a given time. Students are graded on their organization, content, grammatical accuracy, and fluency.	9 times
Fluency	Students are given a reading from a text. They are given questions and must answer in a given timeframe. Students are encouraged not to focus on accuracy, but to write as quickly as they can.	9 times
Tutor appointments	Students are to complete a worksheet before meeting with their tutor for the week. The students then have to prepare answers to some questions about course activities. They also have to write a basic paragraph about what was discussed in the tutor appointment.	11 times
Teacher communications	Teachers give feedback on homework assignments and quizzes. The teacher is also communicating with those who are struggling in the class to give them extra help.	Every assignment
Manage Your Learning	Course Journal. Students take a survey to see where they are in their writing abilities. The students then choose an area with which they are struggling and focus on that area by completing the MYL assignment.	10 times
Reading activities	Students read a short article and then submit a short writing assignment comparing their own lives to details within the article.	10 times
Video discussions	Students discuss with each other their ideas on the upcoming writing assignment to help them get a better idea of what to write about.	9 times
Vocabulary activities	Students are given a presentation about words that are in their readings to help them better understand the reading. They self-check their progress.	8 times

Activity	Description	Frequency
Sentence activities	Students view a presentation about sentence structure and then are quizzed about what they had just learned.	8 times
Grammar	Students watch a presentation on a certain grammar rule. After studying, they are required to take a quiz.	5 times
Writing assignments	Students write about a topic in a given time. Students are graded on their organization, content, grammatical accuracy, and fluency.	9 times

Table A3

Activities for the EIL Reading Course

Activity	Description	Frequency
Vocabulary activities	Students are given a vocabulary list from their book. The students have to find the definitions and meaning behind those words. They complete a quiz once on these words.	2 times
Timed reading	Students are to read the pre-reading questions about the article first and then time themselves on how fast they read the article. They mark how fast they read the article.	30 times
Tutor appointments	Students prepare by considering questions on a given topic. Students then discuss these questions with their tutors during the appointment.	11 times
Teacher communications	Teachers give feedback on homework assignments and quizzes. The teacher is also communicating with those who are struggling in the class to give them extra help.	Every assignment
Learner journal	Students reflect on what they are learning and write down their thoughts and ideas.	10 times
Short novel	Students read a short novel and are quizzed about what they have read. They are provided with a study guide to assist them. At the end of the course, students write a book review on this novel.	11 times
Student discussions	Students are given a topic to read about in their text book and then tasked to answer a few questions. They answer the questions in a video in the discussion board. Students listen and respond to at least two other student comments.	13 times
Reading/writing Assignments	Students are tasked to answer questions in their text book and then compare their answers in the back of the book.	21 times

Appendix B

Course Activities Survey

These Likert-style surveys were administered at the end of each course to gather data on student perceptions of English-language learning. Students were asked to rate the items from one (not helpful) to five (extremely helpful). For data analyses, these activities were grouped according to dialogue type (w/Teacher, w/Tutor, w/Students) or course assignments. These categorizations are noted in the last column of each table below.

Table B1

Course Activities Survey for the Speaking/Listening Course

Proficiency	Questionnaire Item	Categorization
Speaking proficiency	Did this course help you improve in your ability to speak English?	Overall
Listening proficiency	Did this course help you improve your ability to listen to and understand English?	Overall
English proficiency	Which course activities helped you learn English?	
	Vocab activities	Assignments
	Listening logs	Assignments
	Tutor appointments	Dialogue w/Tutor
	Teacher communications	Dialogue w/Teacher
	Dictation	Assignments
	Reading	Assignments
	Video posts	Assignments
	Documentaries	Assignments
	Note-taking	Assignments
	Discussions with students	Dialogue w/Students

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Table B2

Course Activities Survey for the Writing Course

Proficiency	Questionnaire Item	Categorization
Writing proficiency	Did this course help you improve in your ability to write English?	Overall
English proficiency	Which course activities helped you learn English?	
	Writing assignments	Assignments
	Fluency	Assignments
	Tutor appointments	Dialogue w/Tutor
	Teacher communications	Dialogue w/Teacher
	MYL	Assignments
	Reading activities	Assignments
	Video discussions	Dialogue w/Students
	Vocabulary activities	Assignments
	Sentence activities	Assignments
	Grammar activities	Assignments

Table B3

Course Activities Survey for the Reading Course

Proficiency	Questionnaire Item	Categorization
Reading proficiency	Did this course help you improve in your ability to read English?	Overall
English proficiency	Which course activities helped you learn English?	
	Vocabulary activities	Assignments
	Timed reading	Assignments
	Tutor appointments	Dialogue w/Tutor
	Teacher communications	Dialogue w/Teacher
	Learner journal	Assignments
	Short novel	Assignments
	Student discussions	Dialogue w/Students

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Proficiency	Questionnaire Item	Categorization
	Reading/writing assignment	Assignments