BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA

FACULTAD DE LENGUAS

The type of interactions that ELT students presented in a virtual community: Yahoo! Group.

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Languages

for the Degree of

LICENCIATURA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS

By: Laura Guillen Matus

PhD. Silvestre Angoa Amador

Thesis Director

Puebla, Pue. **April, 2014.**

The types of interactions that ELT presented

in a virtual community: Yahoo! Group.

This thesis has been read by the members of the

Thesis Committee of

Laura Guillen Matus

And is considered worthy of approval in partial fulfillment

of the requirement for the degree of

LICENCIATURA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS

Thesis Director

PhD. Silvestre Angoa Amador

Committee Member

MA. Leonel Ojeda Ruiz

Committee Member

BA. Eduardo Otero Marcial

Acknowledgements

A research project is never the work of anyone alone. Hence, all the contributions of different people have made this possible and to whom I am greatly indebted.

I would like to gratefully and sincerely thank professor Silvestre for his support, guidance and helpful suggestions. For helping me to shape my interests and life philosophy; he has introduced me in a new way of thinking and living. His ideas have allowed me to grow on professional and personal aspects. I also thank him for providing me an excellent atmosphere for doing research. He has let me to experience the research in an unequivocal manner. It has been an interesting and rewarding one.

I would like to express the deepest appreciation to professors Eduardo and Leonel for accepting to be part of my committee members. I appreciate the feedback offered by them; their brilliant suggestions and comments were an enormous help to improve this project.

I would also like to thank all of my friends from the research group who made a pleasant working environment and supported in writing through their useful observations. I am grateful for your encouragement and help throughout all stages of this project. Especially, Lupita who spent her time each time I had unclear ideas. She was always there listening to me and questioning me about those confusing thoughts. I thank her for her support, great patience, kindness and friendship.

Dedications

This project is dedicated to all kind people around me who have helped and supported throughout my life.

A special thanks to my dear parents, Elena and Esteban for all their unconditional love and support. They have always been encouraging me with their best wishes. I thank them for believing on me and their support in my decisions.

To my brothers, Francisco and Pedro, who have helped me in many ways to be a better human being.

To my sister, Sara, for being more than a sister, for all that I have learnt from her and for all great moments she made for me.

Table of contents

List of Tables

Abstract

This study investigated the type of interactions university students presented in a virtual community and the relation between the virtual interactions and the assigned task. It was applied at a language department of a Mexican public university which has a BA program in English Language Teaching (ELT).

The research followed a qualitative methodology. A questionnaire was administered to define the sample and the research data consisted of semi structured interviews. The total of students was fifteen enrolled in a Research Seminar course having as support of the class a virtual community: Yahoo! Group. Lastly, the participants were six undergraduate language students and the teacher in charge of the group.

The results revealed the lack of interactions in a virtual community and any relation of them to the assigned task. Hence, the manner students interact is determined by course design, objectives, tasks and strategies focused on computer as an integrated component of curriculum. As a consequence, findings may question how interaction and computers are conceived in the computer assisted education.

Last of all, it is recommended that further research be undertaken in aspects centered on teachers and students' philosophy about computer's use and how technology can be integrated into syllabus in interest of constructing knowledge through interactions.

Chapter I: Introduction

Nowadays, Information and Communication Technologies have a big influence on society. The effects of the use of Internet have several applications in everyday life, but one of the most significant is the use of technology in education, which has increased in the last few years. In the educational field, technology is a new language, the language of technology which needs integration in teaching and learning process, as Egbert and Hanson-Smith (1999) state. In this sense, the technology use is seen as a pedagogic tool which implies a change in the traditional way of teaching. Consequently, the technology use in education might be conceived as a new way of teaching and learning, and it has rendered many changes, such as implementing new methodology, new forms of teaching and learning in a class using virtual tools.

According to current educational models in Mexico, learners are expected to take an active part in learning bearing in mind the notion of learning as a social and collaborative process within a communicative approach based on Constructivism (Levy, 1997). Therefore, taking into account this requirement within an educational model based on the constructivism theory, the idea of using technology is not only to learn to use it; it is used to promote a meaningful learning in which teachers and students move from being passive consumers of information to creators of information through using social networking tools (Cennamo, Ross & Ertmer, 2010). According to Bates (1995) within computer assisted education field, one important use for this way of teaching is in open learning contexts, for instance, in North America, there are some adult basic education (ABE) courses aimed at adults who have not completed high school education. What is more, Warschauer (1999) mentions that intermediate ESL writing students at the University of Hawai'i use real-time

computer assisted discussion to achieve additional writing practice in class. The written interaction improves student participation and collaboration. In addition, this author explains that the learners join e-mail discussion groups in their own fields and also learn how to conduct research on the Web. In this case, computers help learners to share what they know to other learners who are not in the same space and time. Moreover, he expresses that the use of computers helps teachers to previously design the task, and facilitate learning process to the learners. The task-based activities could be performed online individually or collaboratively. Nevertheless, it seems that some teachers who use technology have not paid enough attention to this digital revolution in which teacher should not continue teaching in the same way like some years ago. In words of Mundy, Kupczynski and Kee (2012) although many schools have the latest instructional technologies, more than half teachers just use computer for administrative functions and only half of students use technology just more than once per week. It is said that there is a lack of technological proficiency in the use of technology.

On the other hand, there are some previous studies associated with this research, such as; a study focused on analyzing teachers' perceptions of technology use in the classroom. As reported by Mundy, Kupczynski and Kee, (2012) the analysis indicated that it is essential that faculty members learn to use technology at least in a basic level and also, to learn how to make an integration of technology into their curricula. What is more, the study showed newer teachers from digital native generations might be taught how their acquired skills could be used to integrate technology into the classroom curriculum.

Considering the points previously mentioned, in Puebla, the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla has developed a new educational model. It is based on

the social constructivism theory. Thus, having that in mind and the importance of interaction in educational process, this research is rooted in a conviction that learning as a social process is the result of interaction between learners and others in order to negotiate meaning. It is important to say that interaction is essential in a learning environment (Egbert & Hanson-Smith, 1999). As Long (1985) explains, the organization of tasks has a great impact on the learner's interaction result. It means that interactions that students might present are based on the assigned task. Specifically virtual written interaction helps to develop language, mainly in reading and writing abilities through using a virtual tool.

As a conclusion, it is not promising to continue thinking that this digital revolution in the world is going to keep everything in the same manner. **The integration of technology in education involves changes in methodology, strategies, instructional design, objectives, assigned task and interactions** (my stress). In this digital era it is not possible to work with technology without having enough knowledge about computers. It is necessary a new way of thinking about computers in order to understand the implications that technology has and its uses in the world and in our lives. Learning to use a computer is not only to learn to use a machine, but it is a new way of thinking and living having as a result a new manner of learning. Finally, if learning is the result of interaction among people, it is really significant to investigate the type of virtual interaction students present when they are using a virtual community; paying very close attention to what they do and how they are doing it in relation to the assigned task. Furthermore, it is important to know all aspects involved in the integration of technology in education.

1.1 Justification

Taking into account the importance of interaction within a constructivist educational model, this research project is important for following reason. In the Faculty of Languages which belongs to the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, there is a gap of research projects focused on the integration of technology in learning and teaching process, in which interactions as an essential aspect play a fundamental role within a communicative context. Thus, this study is focused on gaining an in-depth understanding of the type of interactions university students present when they are engaged in a virtual community in order to construct knowledge. In addition, this study attempts to shed some light on how a virtual community is used by university students as a support of a Research Seminar class and what aspects are needed to propitiate an interactional environment in order to help teachers to recognize what elements might be taken into consideration during the process of using technology as support of a subject.

1.2 Research Setting

This study was applied at a language department of a Mexican public university; this public university is situated in the center east of Mexico particularly in Puebla's state. In this setting, participants were enrolled in a BA program in English Language Teaching (ELT). For the citizens of the state, it is one of the most important universities because of its academic level. It was chosen due to the fact that some teachers have been using virtual tools to support their classes.

1.3 Significance of the Research

The results of the study provided significant information that teachers who use computer as support for any class and university students could take into account when they are engaged in a virtual community in order to obtain a significant learning and teaching. Also, this study added knowledge to this area, besides, it provided teachers with information about a better perception of the requirements and the importance of integrating technology to curriculum. Lastly, this study afforded information for future researchers who wish to investigate in this area. What is more, it is significant for the researcher as a future teacher who is reflecting on the integration of technology to the syllabus in order for students to develop certain skills.

1.4 Methodology

The present research project focused on a qualitative study of virtual interactions students present when using a virtual community. Qualitative approach was chosen having in mind that it is an inquiry process of understanding specifically effective in obtaining specific data of social or human issues about opinions, values, interactions or behaviors of participants. Thus, researcher may analyze a social process in a natural setting and reports detailed information of it (Creswell, 1998). Also, qualitative approach was chosen due to the features this project presents and its purpose which is to observe, identify and describe the type of virtual interactions students presented in order to gain understanding of them in relation to the assigned task. These undergraduate English language students were females and males from 20 to 28 years. Furthermore, this study was conducted in a natural setting having as administered instruments a questionnaire and an interview based on theoretical

framework. The first one to select the sample and the interview in the interest of describing how the process of using virtual community is in relation to interactions and the assigned task.

1.5 Aims

This research project aimed to identify the type of interactions university students present when they are involved in a virtual community as support of their Research Seminar course and how this process is. In addition, this project focused on analyzing students and teachers' role pursuant to the content in order to describe the established relations between the assigned task and virtual interactions.

1.6 Research Questions

This study aimed to answer the following research questions and hypothesis:

1. What kinds of interactions did university students who were taking a Research Seminar course present when they were in a virtual community as support for the class?

2. Which were the relations established by students and teacher in the virtual community between the planned task and the interactions presented?

1.7 Hypothesis

A hypothesis in qualitative studies is not the initial point, but it is generated, developed and adapted during the process of the study. This type of hypothesis is emergent and flexible because it is arised according to data and contextual circumstances. In addition, it is part of future research projects (Holliday, 2007; Hernández, Fernández & Baptista, 2006). In this

study the one emerged is that interactions that students show are influenced by the assigned task. In other words, they depend on the objectives of the instructional course design.

1.8 Key Terms

Interaction: The defining component of the educational process that occurs when the student transforms the inert information passed to them from another, and constructs it into knowledge with personal application and value (Anderson, 2003:1).

Virtual community: It is a social aggregation that issues from interconnected computer networks in which people carry on discussions with sufficient human feeling in order to form relations in cyberspace (Rheingold, 2000:5).

E-learning: "It is learning based on information and communication technologies with pedagogical interaction between students and the content, students and the instructors or among students through the web" (Sangrà, Vlachopoulos & Cabrera, 2012:3). Thus, "E-learning does not represent more of the same (…) [It is] about doing things differently" (Garrison & Anderson, 2003:7).

Chapter II: Literature Review

In order to do research, following the idea that knowledge building and learning process are part of everyday life within a community and that "keys to the learning process are the interactions among students themselves, the interactions between faculty and students, and the collaboration in learning that results from those interactions" (Palloff & Pratt, 1999:5). Thus, in this chapter the theoretical framework is presented in interest of discussing aspects related to the type of interactions that learners obtain when they are engaged in a virtual community.

2.1 Constructivism

Today in the educational field, the learning process focuses on learners participating socially to create knowledge. As it is reported by Cooperstein and Kocevar-Weidinger (2004), constructivism embraces that through social interaction and having as basis previous experiences it is possible to acquire knowledge. Therefore, constructivism has a crucial impact in the construction of knowledge. Constructivist learning theory is centered in the knowledge building through activities based on experiences that learners obtain by interacting with their world.

Moreover, as Twomey (1996) comments constructivism supports the proposal of how learning process is and also, how knowledge is. Following this thought of knowledge building, Hernández (2008) declares that constructivism is centered in authentic tasks. It might be said that tasks are required to have an important significance and application in real life. With this previous idea, as it is mentioned by Jonassen (1999, cited in Surgenor, 2010), there are some features that create a constructivist learning environment, such as,

representations of real life with emphasis in the construction of knowledge through authentic tasks within meaningful contexts by encouraging learners in thoughtful reflection of their experience. In addition, a constructivist learning environment allows context and content dependent of the construction of the knowledge. Finally, it supports collaborative building knowledge through social negotiation.

The main idea of constructivist theory is that learning is built through interactions with others and that new knowledge is acquired having as a basis past experiences in relation to authentic tasks in context. As it is expressed by Perkins (1991:20), "knowledge is actively constructed by learners as they are trying to make sense of their experiences". As a result, in words of Marlow and Page (1999), the constructivist learning process is an active process which implies to understand, analyze and apply knowledge in order to make representations of learning in relation to experiences with the world.

Williams and Burden (1997:39) affirm that Piaget held the idea that "From the time we are born we interact with others in our day-to-day lives, and through these interactions we make our own sense of the world". Taking into account this thought learners make sense of the world based on the process of learning rather than what is learned. In this process, learners make sense of everything in the world by participating as builders of meaning through interactions between learners and the environment (Carretero & Fairstein, 2001).

In other words, the sense of everything in the world is given through experiences, the relation between previous experiences and new ones. What is more, Duffy and Jonassen (1992) argue that knowledge of the world as a mental process is built up of intern manner

by everyone in interaction within a context. To be more precise, the meaning is based on the manner people interact in a meaningful way with the world. Hence, as it is explained by Daniels (2003) from a Piaget's perspective human knowledge is collective and in the building of knowledge the relation to the society is an essential aspect.

On the other hand, from Vygotsky's perspective, learning is seen as a social negotiation of meaning in which cognitive processes are the results of interactions between a couple of learners, novice or expert or collaborative pairs (Vygotsky, 1978). According to this author, knowledge is the result of an interaction process and as it is mentioned by Williams and Burden (1997:40) "learning lies in the nature of the social interaction between two or more people with different levels of skill and knowledge". Hence, interaction occurs in a social and cultural diversity. To conclude, taking into consideration learning as a social activity, Vygotsky proposed the social constructivism which "emphasized the importance of language in interacting with people" (Williams & Burden, 1997:40).

2.2 Collaborative Learning and Computers

"The basis of … collaborative … learning …is that knowledge is constructed and transformed by students" (Dooly, 2008:1). Collaborative learning is focused on the building knowledge process through learning as a result of interaction of a group centered in tasks (Scagnoli, 2005). Learners work in groups to achieve an objective (Thurmond & Wambach, 2004) through discussion, exploration and negotiation of meaning (Scagnoli, 2005). Therefore, collaborative learning allows learners to acquire and develop individual and group skills. As it is reported by Brindley, Walti and Blaschke (2009), in learning as part of

a group, students gain experience through collaboration and develop critical thinking skills, self-reflection, and co-construction of knowledge and meaning. In addition, "collaborative learning requires working together toward a common goal. Collaboration is more than co-operation. Collaboration entails the whole process of learning" (Dooly, 2008:1). In other words, when learners are working together in the construction of knowledge, students are teaching their classmates, the teacher and of course the teacher is teaching them. Thus, learners are in charge of their own learning and their classmates' learning having in mind that the purpose is to have a better understanding and construct knowledge together (Dooly, 2008).

The knowledge building in the e-learning environment is given through interaction and dialogue (Siemens, 2005). The online environment is mainly appropriate to work collaboratively giving emphasis on interaction because e-learning's environments are based on constructivist pedagogy having in mind that "collaboration is the key with using technology" (Friesn, 2011:1). In addition, one of the features of collaborative learning in online environment is that learners share knowledge to others while they are working on getting a common purpose. **Therefore, knowledge is co-created among them and the learning depends on contributions** (Brindley, Walti & Blaschke, 2009 [my stress]**)**.

2.2.1 Technology in Education

Trying to find a relation between social constructivism and computers in the educational process and having as a result that through technology students have the opportunity to get new learning experiences, since, it is possible to get activities focused on collaborative

work. Hence, all these characteristics allow learners to create their own knowledge having the teacher as a guide (Hernández, 2008).

Following this view of learning process, Hernández (2008) expresses that there are some aspects in the constructivist approach assisted by computers. In the words of Peters (2004), information is established in a non-linear form which allows learners surfing in it through of a dominium of pre-defined links among small pieces of information. Thus, the constructivist aspect here is that learner determines the learning sequence.

By contrast, technology in education is a complex process which involves an analysis of several aspects before using it in order to obtain an efficient integration of the use of technology in education. Firstly, technology in educational process requires teachers with good quality knowledge about what technology is and how to use it. However, that is not enough. Egbert and Hanson-Smith (1999) mention that the use of technology in education implies an understanding in the relation among teaching, learning and technology and high-quality pedagogy. In other words, if technology is used in the educational field, it should have a significant impact for each class or subject, "not just the sake for using it" (Friesn, 2011:1). Moreover, teachers are required to be able to identify which kinds of tools are needed to achieve their pedagogic objectives. Besides, it is really significant to choose and apply the appropriate tools to address needs, solve problems and enable students to use appropriate technologies (Cennamo, Ross, & Ertmer, 2010). In current education, the computer as a technological tool implies diverse forms of teaching using it. Ávila (1999) argues that computer changes the conventional system of teaching. First of all, it converts students into creators of information and then, it revalues teacher's role as a facilitator. Additionally, computer requires learners to interact with learning material and get feedback

on their performance. Also, the computer may use that information to guide learners in the learning process.

Furthermore, computer as a pedagogic instrument allows learners to have access to a lot of information. According to Ávila (1999), computers have different purposes: the first one, it is an instrument through which students obtain knowledge about informatics aspects; the second one is that computers support curricular contents; and finally, the computer is a medium in which learners could interact with their teachers and classmates. Nonetheless, computer is not helpful by itself; it implies the teachers' knowledge about certain aspects in order to get an effective learning and teaching process (Egbert & Hanson-Smith, 1999). Cennamo, Ross and Ertmer (2010:103) comment that "as a support for conversation, the computer software contributes to conversations among learners, and thus facilitates group and community learning".

2.2.2 Virtual Community

As a matter of fact, learning occurs socially within a community of practice (Williams & Burden, 1997). Thus, it is important to know what a community is. The word community comes from these Latin words "commune and communis" which mean, "in common, group of people committed to common and shared duties" (Rodríguez, 2007:113).

With base on the idea of what a community is, virtual communities are created in relation to the technological development in education (Rodríguez, 2007). As it is declared by Hochrath and Hochrath (1998), a virtual community is defined as the communities that just exist in the computer network and that virtual community is another term of cyberspace. Meanwhile William (1994, cited in Hochrath & Hochrath, 1998) reports that

cyberspace is a concept used to designate the interconnected computers networks that give place to a virtual place. Therefore, according to these authors, a virtual community is the result of interconnected computers which is given just in networks.

In contrast, Pfaffenberger (1994) affirms that a virtual community is a group of people who may never have seen each other, but share interests and concerns and they communicate through using email and newsgroups. People who are considered part of such communities gain a sense of integration and develop deep emotional bonds with the other participants, even when the relationships developed are mediated and may not involve a meeting face to face. For instance, virtual communities include forums, chat rooms, discussion boards, Usenet groups and Yahoo groups (Cook, Kenthapadi & Mishra, 2013).

Finally, Hunter (2002:96) describes a virtual community as "a group of people interacting with each other and learning from other's work, while simultaneously providing knowledge and information resources to the group in relation to themes on which there's agreement on mutual interest". Also, he explains that one main feature of a virtual community is that participants should not be receptors or service consumers; they should be contributors to the knowledge base of the virtual site. A virtual community is created having as a purpose that learners and teachers negotiate meaning through interaction mediated by computers. Hence, to communicate with others is essential and implies to share information in order to understand, create and respond with analyzed and more complex information (Allwood, 2007).

2.3 Computer Mediated Communication

Technology has changed the process in which people communicate each other. Nowadays, computer mediated settings as support for conversations among learners facilitate the community learning. In educational integration of technology, there are some approaches, such as, Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). In words of December (1997), CMC is a "process of human communication via computers, situated in particular contexts, engaging in processes to shape media for a variety of purposes". As it is expressed by Swan and Shea (2005), CMC encourages experimentation, sharing of ideas, increases participation, and collaborative thinking. Also, these authors state that in order for online discussion to be successful, it is required a social environment that encourages peer interaction facilitated by instructor. According to Bates (1995), in CMC students could be more in contact with teachers and other students. Moreover, Mason (1993) argues that when students' learning is based on computer mediated communication they develop reflective writing skills. CMC is used to develop writing skills and mainly to help students to reflect in a creative way on their own writings and in their classmates' writings (Bates, 1995). Hence, CMC facilitates an integrative approach in the use of technology in the educational field.

However, Bates (1995) states that computer-mediated communication is not essentially interactive, but depends on the frequency and nature of the messages posted. In other words, CMC offers the opportunity to obtain interaction; nevertheless, it is required that the learners publish messages with enough information for getting comments in order to create relations associated to the information. Thurmond and Wambach (2004) mention

that participation, response, provision of feedback and focused messaging are essential peer behaviors to obtain a meaningful learning in computer mediated settings.

2.3.1 Students' Role

As it was mentioned before, when traditional teaching changes because of the use of technology, it is required a change in the role that students play. With a good integration of technology in education, learners could collect information, plan and manage their own learning. What is more, they might create new information in projects guided by their teachers and use technology in support of collecting and synthesizing information, developing and demonstrating critical thinking, and solving authentic problems through the projects they propose. In addition, they would collaborate and communicate with their teachers and other learners (Cennamo, Ross & Ertmer, 2010).

2.3.2 Teachers' Role

As it is reported by Larsen-Freeman (1986), in the students' learning process, teachers as facilitators of learners take part in different functions, such as, establishing conditions to encourage communication among learners. Another function, as Moore and Kearsley (1996:128, cited in Ariza & Hancock, 2003) comment online teachers should present appropriate content and promote interaction between this content and the learner in ways that will cause the learner "to construct knowledge through a process of personally accommodating information into previously existing cognitive structures". Furthermore, teachers should facilitate and guide learners in the construction of knowledge and promote creative thought. Also, they are the ones who select technologies and other resources that support student learning experiences. Consequently, they design and personalize

instructional activities in response to learners' learning styles, preferences, skills and content requirements in order to lead with complex problems with multiple answers or solutions in real world (Cennamo, Ross & Ertmer, 2010).

In addition, the teacher's responsibility is to maintain the learners' interest and support them as they interact with the content by giving them individualized attention because it attends to the needs, motivation, and performance of each individual learner. Moreover, the teacher's answers to learners' request of content are seen as especially valuable, as they provide constructive feedback concerning learners' achievement of instructional objectives (Ariza & Hancock, 2003). All this in order to get students develop questions, propose solutions, and provoke feedback in their own learning. In other words, teachers provide opportunities to learners in which they demonstrate their skills and knowledge. However, this aspect will occur just having a well structured instructional design course with objectives focused on promoting interactions. Furthermore, Prawat (1992:24) claims that "active involvement in constructing knowledge of teaching implies that teachers as educators or facilitators are to be a partner in the construction of knowledge rather than a giver of knowledge".

2.3.3 Instructional Course Design

"The old paradigm was that teachers must use the technology to teach technology. The new paradigm of eclectic education involves learners using technology to learn" (Forsyth, 1998:17). Before using technology in education it is essential to be aware that teachers should not teach as teachers did in past; it is not promising to continue teaching in the same way because technology is playing an important role in current education.

When students use technology to learn it is fundamental to have an instructional course design. As it is expressed by Swan (2002), the course design is a vital aspect in e-learning environments which determines the quantity, quality and type of interactions. In other words, the interaction that learner present in relation with content, instructors or peers depends on it.

Therefore, following the constructivist approach the curriculum is not seen as a set of knowledge and skills, it is seen as a program of activities (Català, et. al., 2002) through which knowledge is constructed and skills are acquired. What is more, Nunan (1989) suggests communication at the centre of the curriculum having as purpose learners capable of using language to communicate with others. To accomplish this purpose it is essential specific and significant activities because "when learners are given the opportunity to engage in meaningful activities they are compelled to "negotiate for meaning", that is, to express and clarify their intentions, thoughts, opinions, etc., in a way which permits them to arrive at a mutual understanding. This is especially true when the learners are working together to accomplish a particular goal" (Lightbown & Spada, 1999:122).

2.4 Task – Based Approach

In a virtual community learners are asked to achieve an assigned task in which it is necessary to work collaboratively having in mind that a community does not work by itself; it is needed the interactions of participants to its development. In words of Richards (2002) tasks facilitate communication and interactions in order to get significant learning by using language. As it is stated by Willis (1990:127) a task is "an activity which involves the use of language". Also, this author affirms that tasks are activities focused on specific

outcomes. Thus, "a task usually requires the teacher to specify what will be regarded as successfully completion of the task" (Nunan, 1989: 6). Then, the significance of task is to provide learners opportunities to use language in order to communicate and interact with others and achieve a task (Seedhouse, 1999). Hence, "the use of a variety of different kinds of tasks …is said to make … teaching more communicative" (Nunan, 1989: 6). As it is reported by Lee (2000), tasks are activities focused on meaning exchange in interest of attaining an objective through interacting among participants having as requirement students to comprehend and produce language.

2.4.1 Strategies in a Virtual Community

Interaction defined as active learning engages "students in doing things and (have students) think about the things they are doing" (Bonwell & Eison, 1991: iii). Thus, active learning strategies must accomplish this purpose in the virtual learning process. Mescia and Austin (2001) affirm that active learning occurs in a virtual learning environment if the interactions that could happen are established in objectives of the course syllabus and teacher uses the correct strategies to encourage those interactions.

"Active participation strengthens learning" (Harasim, Starr, et. al., 1997:29); in other words, if learners do not work together by making comments about the tasks' content, interaction could not happen. For this reason, in order to get learners interacting, Mantyla (1999:83) comments that activities in the virtual learning environment must "1) have a definite beginning and ending; 2) have a clear purpose or objective; 3) contain complete and understandable directions; 4) have a feedback mechanism". Consequently, teachers which use technology in their course have the responsibility of planning activities that

support learning objectives, but structure them to work online, because of the fact that teachers and learners will be working through a virtual site (Mescia & Austin, 2001). Additionally, active learning strategies must be focused on a variety of learning styles, promote student achievement, enhance learner motivation, provoke learners to learn more (Astin, 1985) and mainly to allow them to be responsible for their education (Mescia & Austin, 2001).

2.5 Computer Assisted Language Learning

In the knowledge or information society, younger people, the generation among cero and 20 years, is called as digital generation or red generation. These people take part of it because of information technology. In addition, in this revolution of computer assisted education, one of the main uses of it has been in the language teaching field (García & Casado, 2000).

The recent advances in technology have developed the Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) which had its first application in the 60's. According to García and Casado (2000) and Warschauer (1996), since CALL started to be applied in the language teaching it has had three phases: Behaviorist CALL, communicative CALL and integrative CALL (multimedia). Behaviorist CALL, as its own name says, was supported in the behaviorist theory of learning. This type of program focused on repetitive language drills named as drill and practice. It implied repeating the same material as many times it was helpful providing instant feedback in each activity. However, the behaviorist approach was weakening because drill and practice programs did not allow authentic communication

and the computer moved forward to a field of possibilities. In consequence, this phase had to move in a complex phase of CALL.

The second phase called communicative CALL was centered in the communicative approach. As Underwood (1984) explains, communicative CALL focuses more on using content; teaches grammar implicitly rather than explicitly and allows and encourages students to generate original utterances rather than just manipulating prefabricated language. The communicative programs comprise educational software (courseware) for paced reading, text construction and language games. Nevertheless, as it was expected in this changing society, many educators look for a new model of teaching which integrated different aspects of the language learning process. In this finding and replacing an integrative approach to CALL was proposed.

Then, the integrative or multimedia CALL emerged with the development of the Internet and multimedia computers. This last one comprises a variety of media such as text, graphics, sound, animation and video. All these multimedia resources linked together give place to Hypermedia in which learners may navigate by creating their own path, thus, they would go forward and backwards to different parts of the program. Another advantage for language learning of Hypermedia is that it is focused on the content; then, it is possible to create an authentic learning environment with learners having control over their own learning (Warschauer, 1996).

2.5.1 The Importance of Interaction

Interaction is crucial in the e-learning process in order to get a meaningful learning. Many authors believe that to obtain a meaningful learning in the teaching and learning process, it

is necessary the interaction between learners and others. Vygotsky (1978, cited in Egbert & Hanson-Smith 1999:17) mentions that "human learning is mediated through interaction with others". What is more, Forsyth (1998:2) claims that "interaction is one of the higher order levels of feedback that behaviourists and cognitivists agree are important in the educational process". Feedback about a specific task might be provided by teacher or a learner.

As Pica (1994) and Long (1985) argue, conversational interaction makes the learning process possible. In addition, Long (1985) expresses in his interaction hypothesis that interactions that learners acquire are based on the assigned task in relation to the given roles to each learner. When learners interact in order to accomplish an assignment is because the negotiation of meaning increases the input comprehensibility (Ariza & Hancock, 2003). Thus, Long (1985) assumes that there are two indispensable components in the interactional process, the negotiation and input process in which it turns into comprehensible. Pica (1994:495) defines negotiation as "modification and restructuring that occurs when learners and their interlocutors anticipate, perceive, or experience difficulties in message comprehensibility". However, the input is not only a fact to be listened; it means that learners should not be inactive when participating in a conversation in order to negotiate meaning (Long, 1996).

In addition, to get significant interactions it is important to make contributions in all the learning activities in order to achieve a goal. Forsyth (1998) declares that according to the content and material, the learner's ability to interact changes because the availability of interaction could be from one-on-one, one to many, between a tutor, or a class or tutorial group. As it is reported by Zañartu (2003), learning activities require frequent interactions,

since it is a process of a dialogue built among content, students and teacher. Teacher as a participant of this process guides the intellectual leadership of learners' learning as a social phenomenon in which new knowledge acquisition is the result of interaction among people taking part of a dialogue.

In contrast, interactions in virtual communities occur synchronously or asynchronously. Synchronous interaction is the kind of interaction that occurs at the same time and the exchange of information is done in real time such as instant messages known as chat and asynchronous interaction occurs at different times for instance the use of e-mail in which interaction is delayed over time. In other words, asynchronous interaction is when students communicate with others in different real time. It means that interaction between learners is not given at the same time and date. Something really significant is that when students are engaged in this kind of interaction they may share information, make some comments about a particular activity or just provide feedback to their classmates (Egbert & Hanson-Smith, 1999). In a comparison about perceptions of two groups of learners engaged in asynchronous learning, Richardson and Ting (1999) mention that learners' learning through written correspondence with teachers was more concerned with instructor feedback, whereas learners learning online felt that all interactions with instructors mattered.

Finally, as it expressed by Nugroho (2011:56) in "the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings or ideas between the participants, resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other" there is a classification of types of interactions that could occur: learner-learner, learner-instructor and learner-content (Moore & Kearsley, 1996, cited in Ariza & Hancock, 2003).

2.5.1.1 Learner- Learner Interaction

In a distance learning environment learners' interaction with their classmates contributes to learning (Moore & Kearsley, 1996, cited in Thurmond & Wambach, 2004). Different types of learner-learner interaction should be thoughtfully planned to address goals. These authors comment that online learner-learner interaction is described as "interlearner interaction, interaction between one learner and other learners, alone or in group settings" (Moore & Kearsley, 1996:131 cited in Ariza & Hancock, 2003). In addition, inter-learner interaction in group settings encourages reflection about content in collaborative projects. Ariza and Hancock (2003) state younger learners may find this more stimulating and motivating than adult and advanced learners. Thus, learner-learner interaction focuses on encouraging a better understanding of the course content and motivates critical thinking (Thurmond & Wambach, 2004). In conclusion, this type of interaction encourages the development of skills by working collaboratively; hence, it increases motivation and collaborative social relations among learners (Johnson, 1995).

2.5.1.2 Learner- Instructor Interaction

Learner-instructor interaction is "regarded as essential by many educators and highly desirable by many learners" (Moore, 1989: 2, cited in Su, Bonk, et. al., 2005). Also, this kind of interaction sets up a setting that helps learners to comprehend the content in a better manner. As Moore and Kearsley (1996, cited in Ariza & Hancock, 2003) affirm, in virtual learning settings learners assume this type of interaction as indispensable.

On the other hand, learner-instructor interaction allows learners to solve doubts and clarify specific aspects about the information presented in the course (Thurmond &

Wambach, 2004). Moreover, in the learner-instructor interaction, the instructor as facilitator guides and helps learners in aspects related to the content in ways focused on encouraging learners in the learning process (Ariza & Hancock**,** 2003).

2.5.1.3 Learner - Content Interaction

Learner- content interaction is described as "the process of intellectually interacting with content that results in changes in the learner's understanding, the learner's perspective, or the cognitive structures of the learner's mind" (Moore, 1989: 2 cited in Su, Bonk, et. al., 2005). According to the type of contents are the required interaction patterns. This kind of interaction occurs when learners examine and study the course content and make contributions about it (Moore & Kearsley, 1996 cited in Thurmond & Wambach, 2004). However, in interest of this type of interaction occurs, learners must understand the content in order to discuss it because if content is not comprehensible, interaction could not be presented (Ariza & Hancock, 2003).

This online discussion is not only a way to show learner-content interaction because learners comprehend the content presented by taking into account their classmates' participation by discussing it. Additionally, the learning process is important how learners interact and their attitude with the content because some studies showed that learners who consider that participation in discussions improve learning; for them, the more they think the more they learn (Thurmond & Wambach, 2004).

Such interaction must be focused on motivating learners to acquire knowledge and develop abilities. Besides, "to textual materials used to present subject matter via distance learning, a wide array of options exist such as audio and video recordings, computer

software, radio and television broadcasts, and interactive media such as CD-ROM and videodiscs" (Ariza & Hancock**,** 2003:2). **The use of multimedia helps learners to understand the content in a better way. Also, multimedia is useful according to the learning method of each learner** (Ariza & Hancock**,** 2003[my stress]**)**.

Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter describes how methodology was applied, along with participants, instruments and the procedures to collect and analyze data. As it was expressed before, this study aimed to explore the type of virtual interactions university students presented in a virtual community and the relation of these interactions to the assigned task.

3.1 Participants

Within qualitative studies, participants are described in detail since they provide purposeful data according to the needs of the research (Morse, 1991). The broad knowledge of their background enhances understanding of the phenomenon under study (Bravo & Zaragoza, 2013) in order to find an answer to the research questions (Sargeant, 2012). That is why it is important to mention that this research project was conducted at a Language Department in a Public Mexican University which is situated in Puebla City. The participants were six undergraduate English language students and a teacher in charge of a Research Seminar course, having as support of the class a virtual community called: Yahoo! Group. The total of students attending this class was fifteen. They were 11 females and 4 males. The range of ages was from 20 to 28 years old. It is important to mention that some of the participants had previous experience utilizing a Yahoo! Group, others had experience with a similar community called Gmail and a few of them were novice in the use of a virtual community. The reason why only six students were chosen was to investigate in a deep way the interactions that they could present. To finish, for teacher in charge, it was her first time in using a Yahoo! Group to support this specific class. However, she has some experience in a Yahoo! Group as a participant of courses that she took with other teachers.

3.2 Research Methodology

This study is focused on describing the types of virtual interactions university students present and their relation to the assigned task. This study also attempts to explain how this process of using a virtual community is. Hence, this research followed a qualitative approach. According to Creswell (2007), a qualitative study occurs in natural settings to obtain knowledge of human behavior or events. It is an attempt to understand the nature of a particular setting, circumstances and interactions within a specific context (Merriam, et. al., 2002). Due to its nature, Burns and Grove (2003) state that qualitative approach is used to describe situations and experiences in order to give them meanings. These meanings are socially constructed by participants in interaction with their world, therefore, the methodology is centered on the manner in which people make sense of their reality and add meaning to it (Merriam, et. al., 2002).

Consequently, the methodology determines strategies and methods to achieve an aim. Then, this study focused on case study as a strategy of inquiry because it centers on a specific group. As it is expressed by Merriam, et. al. (2002), a case study is a description and analysis of a social phenomenon. In agreement, Creswell (2007:15) states that in a case study "the researcher explores in depth a program, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals". Therefore, the instruments used were a questionnaire and two interviews with open-ended questions which aimed to inquire how students interacted and how a Yahoo! Group was performed. In addition, this project followed a particular pattern in interest of seeking the stated objectives.

3.3 Instruments

According to Creswell (2009), data is collected through observing behaviors, analyzing documents or interviewing the participants. Additionally, questionnaires may be used. In this research, the first instrument consisted of a questionnaire designed by the researcher in order to select a sample from the total amount of students. It was designed taking into account the main characteristic of a questionnaire which is open-ended questions (Hernández, Fernández & Baptista, 2006). Consequently, the aim of the questionnaire was to obtain specific information and in this manner define the sample of the research project. Thus, participants were purposefully selected taking into consideration as main aspect how students interacted in the virtual community.

Then, to gather valuable data in this study it was essential to create two semi structured interviews. This type of interviews is characterized by a flexible topic with a structure of open-ended questions in interest of exploring attitudes and experiences (Al-Busaidi, 2008). They were based on a guide of questions in which the interviewer has the freedom to include additional questions in order to obtain deep information about the topic or specific concepts (Hernández, Fernandez & Baptista, 2006). The first interview aimed to inquire the kind of interactions university students using a virtual community presented and how the process was. The second one focused on knowing the objective or objectives in which teacher based her decision of creating a virtual community to support her class. These interviews were designed by taking into account data presented on theoretical framework already discussed. In addition, the students' interview consisted of four open questions and the teacher's interview consisted of three open questions. They were open-

ended questions to obtain different points of view in relation to interactions, the assigned task and how a Yahoo! Group was used.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

At this point, the data collection procedure was based on the following steps. The first step to achieve the data collection was to administer a questionnaire. It was answered by the total of students who took the Research Seminar course and took part of a Yahoo! Group. It was administered in order to select the sample. After having the sample, it was relevant to interview the six participants; one by one. Finally, the second interview was administered to the teacher who used the Yahoo! Group as support for her class.

It is important to mention that before each interview took place, the participants were given the guarantee that all the data collected would only be used for the purpose of the research project and that personal identities would be confidential. In order to explain in a deep way all the participants' replies, the interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

3.5 Data Analysis

The transcriptions, which resulted from two interviews, went through a process of analysis. During the data analysis process certain steps were followed as they are explained in next lines. Firstly, a chart was created to categorize each answer according to the structure of the interviews. Then, answers were analyzed in order to find similarities and differences among them. In order to have clear answers, both similarities and differences were placed in a second chart. After that, answers were again analyzed in order to make observations and interpretations to be presented in following chapter.

It is important to take into account all the details, interactions and events. Hernández, Fernández and Baptista (2006) argue that observing implies to look at the valuable information in a deep way about a social situation. Therefore, the researcher was also added to the Yahoo! Group to examine and describe all messages that were posted in the virtual community. At this point, to analyze virtual interactions and their relation to the assigned task. Then, it was indispensable to use an interaction analysis model determined by certain categories based on Chou (2002), Gunawardena, et. al., (1997) and Zhu (1996) interaction analysis models and adapted in relation to the research questions and the theoretical framework.

In addition, a chart was used to categorize the kinds of interactions that participants presented and to see if they were related to the task. Finally, all the data obtained from the instruments and virtual community provided a good understanding of virtual interactions and how participants used the Yahoo! Group.

Chapter IV: Results

This chapter focused on analyzing all the information collected from the administered instruments. The data obtained from virtual community and interviews was examined with the determination of finding the most significant information. In order to reply to the research questions of this project when collecting all the information required it was essential to take into account the research purpose which was to identify what type of interactions ELT students presented when they were engaged in a virtual community: Yahoo! Group and how this process was. Also, this research focused on analyzing learners' and teachers' roles in relation to the content in interest of describing the established relations between assigned task and virtual interactions.

4.1 Virtual Interactions Results

In this section, in order to reach the first research question, obtained data from virtual community and administered instrument was carefully analyzed. As it was discussed on the theoretical framework, computer facilitates the development of different skills; however, skills are only developed when students interact synchronously or asynchronously in order to negotiate for meaning and build knowledge.

In addition, in these interactions the language use is required in interest of achieving a task collaboratively. Therefore, to realize virtual community analysis, it was necessary to take into account information from table 4.1, which provides virtual interactions characteristics and skills acquired through them.

Table 4.1 Types of Virtual Interactions and Skills Acquired through them.

TYPES OF INTERACTIONS	DEFINITION	ACQUIRED SKILLS
Learner-learner	Interaction between a learner and more learners in order to understand better course content.	⦿ Critical thinking and self-reflection. ⦿ Co-construction of knowledge and meaning. ⦿ Individual and group skills. ⦿ Address needs and solve problems. ⦿ Use appropriate technologies. ⦿ Get experience in collaborative work by building knowledge through social negotiation. ⦿ Interact with learning material and get feedback on their performance. ⦿ Determine the learning sequence.
Learner-instructor	Instructor as facilitator guides and helps learners to comprehend the content, to solve doubts and clarify specific aspects about the course content.	
Learner-content	Learners understand the course content and make contributions about it. Content is discussed in order to have a better understanding by taking into account others' participation.	

Designed by the researcher (2013) based on Ariza and Hancock (2003), Brindley, et. al., (2009), Cennamo, et. al., (2010), Moore and Kearsley (1996, cited in Thurmond & Wambach, 2004), Jonassen (1999, cited in Surgenor, 2010), Ávila (1999), Peters (2004), Thurmond and Wambach (2004) and Johnson (1995).

4.1.1 Learner-Learner Interaction Results

In this section, learner-learner interaction performance is examined having as basis information shown in table 4.1, which exhibits how this type of virtual interaction is. Even though learners were expected to interact among them, interaction did not occur in interest of understanding course content. Consequently, students did not contribute to others' works**.** They took part in the virtual community by uploading the assigned task, checking other works or task format to make sure what they needed to do before uploading it. Then, the manner how students participated in the virtual community was in interest of knowing how others were carrying out the assigned task. As a matter of fact, learning is an active process of understanding, analyzing and applying knowledge through interaction as it was mentioned by Marlow and Page (1999). Nevertheless, students are still being information receptors since they are not contributing in any manner to build knowledge together.

According to Johnson (1995) learner-learner interaction promotes the development of skills acquired by interacting collaboratively. Then, if this interaction was not presented among students, as a consequence, they did not develop their critical thinking skill as it is expected within an educational constructivist model (Thurmond & Wambach, 2004) and reflection about content in collaborative works as it is mentioned by Ariza and Hancock (2003) to get a better understanding. In addition, as it is shown in table 4.1, learning depends on contributions to build knowledge together and develop as many skills as possible.

As a final point, students did not seem to be interested in helping others or learn from others. Also, it seems they were not concerned on exchanging meaning or building

knowledge by interacting. Probably this might affect their learning process because in words of Thurmond & Wambach (2004), students' attitude and how they interact with others in interest of comprehending content help to the construction of knowledge and improve learning.

4.1.2 Learner - Instructor Interaction Results

Learner-instructor interaction takes place when teacher, as facilitator helps students to understand better the content and he conducts them to task achievement through language use as it may be seen in table 4.1. When the virtual community was examined, this type of interaction was not found; there was no evidence that students were guided through site to achieve any task. As it is expressed by Thurmond and Wambach (2004), teacher answers doubts and clarifies any aspect related to content course through using the virtual community. However, there was not any question made by students or questions made by teacher that could propitiate interaction among them. In addition, there was not guidance and help as it is stated by Ariza and Hancock (2003), in order to encourage students in the whole process through the virtual community. At the same time, it is true to say that there was no virtual evidence that students were helped to comprehend the content in a better manner to build knowledge.

On the other hand, only a testimonial interaction took place, it was a message written by teacher. The purpose of the message was to tell some students who had not uploaded their assigned task that they were required to upload it as soon as possible. Then, many students answered to this message by uploading it. But one of them wrote a message to teacher. The student's message had as objective to let teacher know that he had already

uploaded the file and that he was working on his project. Nonetheless, the student's message was not answered. Hence, it might not be taken as learner-instructor interaction, since new knowledge was not built as it is mentioned in the literature review. It was only to remind learners what they were missing to do. Accordingly, learner-instructor interaction did not occur during the whole use of this virtual community. And testimonial interactions did not focused on encouraging learners to acquire knowledge and develop skills as it is expressed by Ariza and Hancock (2003).

4.1.3 Learner - Content Interaction Results

As it has been mentioned before, it was essential to administer an interview in order to know in a deeper way how learner- content interaction was performed. One of the questions focused on how learners interacted with content. Students' answers were taking into account, such as participant 3's reply who indicated the following:

> *"I had many many doubts about how to write my first chapter, and I realized that some people had already uploaded their work, so I entered to the Yahoo! Group and I started to check the work that they had already done and it was useful because I got clear what I had to do for my first chapter" (AUD003 – line 4).*

In addition, participant 1 mentioned:

> *"I check some of my classmates' documents because you know it's useful to, it's really useful to see others works; so we may get an idea what you have to do or how you need to do" (AUD001 – line 7).*

Following on these comments, learners read their classmates' pieces of writing to solve some doubts about how to write the required chapters, mainly focusing on the way their

classmates were working on their papers. They took some examples of how to write and how the work was asked to hand it in.

Having in mind that this kind of interaction is a content interaction process in which results are learners' understanding about content (Moore, 1989: 2 cited in Su, Bonk, et. al., 2005). It is possible to state that only testimonial interactions that took place in the virtual community, it was when students checked others classmates in order to have an idea of what they were asked to do but it is really irrelevant because they checked just the format or how other people were doing the assigned task.

In addition, this interaction occurs when students observe and study the content and make contributions about it (Moore & Kearsley, 1996, cited in Thurmond & Wambach, 2004); in other words, students discuss about content (Ariza & Hancock, 2003). Nonetheless, learners did not interact with content to build knowledge together since they did not analyze it to make contributions. They just checked it to know what they should do. However, it is not possible to know in a deep way how students interacted with the content and how often they did.

Hence, learner-content interaction is not presented according to the theoretical framework because there was no meaning negotiation as learners did not contribute to others' works by giving feedback. The symbolic interaction with content has shown such unspectacular success, given the content is only put as evidence in an electronic format of students' piece of writing. Also, it could be assured that content do not stay in the mind for a long time and collaboration does not exist in students' minds.

Taking into consideration the types of virtual interactions students might present in the virtual community and all skills they could acquire presented in table 4.1, it is possible

to say that none of the three kinds of interactions discussed in chapter II were presented regarding task objective and the whole process to achieve it.

However, there were testimonial interactions in order to let others know that they were there making use of a virtual community. These testimonial interactions were not close to the virtual interactions presented in table above. They were mainly focused on giving information about attendance class, in contrast to interactions' purpose which is knowledge building (Siemens, 2005) through using language in a collaborative manner.

4.2 Virtual Interactions and Assigned Task Results

Moreover, to analyze virtual interactions in relation to the assigned task, an adapted virtual interaction analysis model was used based on Zhu (1996), Gunawardena, et. al., (1997) and Chou (2002) models as it may be seen on table 4.2. Having in mind the three types of interactions discussed in the theoretical framework: learner – learner, learner- instructor and learner – content interaction (table 4.1) and also, the characteristics of the tasks as it is shown in table 4.3.

Table 4.2 Virtual Interactions Analysis Model

VIRTUAL INTERACTIONS		
ANALYZED ASPECTS: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS/MESSAGES		
ASSIGNED TASK	**VIRTUAL DOCUMENTS**	**VIRTUAL CLASS**
Information about assigned task (CONTENT/PROCESS)	Topic/content -related information	Information about virtual class
Directions about assigned task or remind information about task.	Information about missing information.	Technical information
Answer questions related to assigned task (Doubts about process or content)	Share general or specific information	Group virtual interaction: Participants look for experts to get information/answers
Help, information, clarification, confirmation, directions or suggestions to guide students using Yahoo! Group.	Help, information, clarification, confirmation, directions or suggestions to guide students using Yahoo! Group.	Help, information, clarification, confirmation, directions or suggestions to guide students using Yahoo! Group.
Assessment, goals adjustment and learning objectives	Opinions and/or observations to propitiate a discussion.	Answer individual/personal questions.
Feedback, feelings or personal information	Information about class documents	Individual/personal social interaction Participants express their ideas in the Yahoo! Group

Designed by the researcher (2013) based on Zhu (1996), Gunawardena, et. al. (1997) and Chou (2002) models.

Table 4.3 The Characteristics of the Tasks

TASKS
⦿ Specific and meaningful activities focus on negotiating meaning in order to attain an objective by interacting among participants having as requirement students to comprehend and produce language. ⦿ Tasks provide learners with opportunities to communicate and interact with each other in order to achieve a goal in which it is necessary to work collaboratively and to encourage learners in thoughtful reflection of their experience in order to get a significant learning. ⦿ Have a definite beginning and ending; a clear purpose or objective; contain complete and understandable directions; have a feedback mechanism. ⦿ Require frequent interactions, since it is a process of a dialogue built among content.

Designed by the researcher (2013) based on Hernández (2008), Richards (2002), Seedhouse (1999), Mantyla (1999), Lee (2000), Nunan (1989), Zañartu (2003), Willis (1990), Forsyth (1998), Siemens (2005) and Jonassen (1999, cited in Surgenor, 2010)

In addition, to examine any relation between the assigned task and the virtual interactions it was also necessary to pay attention to the task given by the teacher, syllabus objectives and message purpose according to table below 4.4. It is important to mention that not all the tasks were analyzed because as it was expressed in paragraphs above virtual interactions did not take place. Conversely, when virtual site was explored, 16 messages were found on principal page, 14 messages were written by the teacher and just two messages by two students, a message per each one. Then, only testimonial interactions such as messages giving information were taken into account because they were associated in any way to the assigned task. In order to have a better description of any association between the assigned task and virtual messages posted table 4.4 was created.

Table 4.4 Virtual Messages' Purposes

VIRTUAL MESSAGES				
SYLLABUS OBJECTIVE	**TASK**	**DUE DATE**	**DATE**	**PURPOSE(S)**
⦿ Research questions ⦿ Mind map working title. ⦿ Write research questions. ⦿ Personal feedback	4 The first draft of the introducti on.	Sept 11th	Tuesday Sep-25th-12	⦿ Information about attendance class. ⦿ Suggestion about some articles.
			Wednesday Sep-26th-12	⦿ Give and ask for information about attendance class. ⦿ Information related to assigned task and give directions about it. (Guideline chapter 1) ⦿ Information about class documents. ⦿ Express feelings about the process of writing a thesis.
⦿ Personal feedback (Online & personal feedback).	7 First draft literature review.	Nov. 22nd	Saturday Nov-24th-12	⦿ Information related to Feedback. ⦿ Remind information about assigned task (Upload a file) ⦿ Suggestion and confirmation.
			Sunday Nov-25th-12	⦿ Remind information about task (Upload a file)

As it may seen on table 4.4, there is not a relevant relation between the assigned task and testimonial interactions since only one of the messages gave students pertinent information to perform the assigned task. Nevertheless, it was only a passive reply because students followed a direction given by the teacher. And another message had as purpose to remind learners to upload their work. In other words, students knew they should upload it because there was a due date to do it as it was presented on course syllabus. In this case, when teacher wrote in main page, students answered to message by uploading their work, though the answer was delayed, because just one student did the same day and another one the second day after the message. Besides students could reply to these messages, however nobody did it. Therefore, it means that they read the guideline to do the assigned task, though this interaction is not applicable as it is stated by Moore and Kearsley (1996, cited in Thurmond & Wambach, 2004) who state that to get meaningful interaction it is essential to collaborate in all the learning activities. Thus, to be an active participant in each message posted or document uploaded/downloaded, it is necessary to contribute to it. In this case, students were asked to write the first draft of thesis introduction and to upload it to the Yahoo! Group in order to receive teacher feedback and teacher could have evidence of tasks. Even though virtual interactions did not take place on the virtual community, task was uploaded by each student as it was asked; nonetheless, knowledge was not built among them through language use. This latter allows to answer the second research question focused on the relation between assigned task and virtual interactions.

4.3 Yahoo! Group Use

With the purpose of knowing in a deeper way how students understood the virtual community's use, one of questions focused on what learners think the virtual community's objective was. As a result, four participants said that main purpose was to upload documents in the Yahoo! Group in order for the teacher to be able to check and grade them. Two participants answered that it was to check their classmates' papers in order to have a better idea of what they have to do. Also, two of the participants replied that the purpose of the Yahoo! Group use was to compare their works with others. On the other hand, talking about the fact of interacting, one participant mentioned:

> *"The objective was to interact on the net, you know, to upload documents, to share information, to share documents" (AUD006 – line 10).*

A similar question was asked to teacher, having as an answer that the virtual community was created to have a site work where everybody could see everybody's pieces of writing. She mentioned that perhaps feedback could be helpful not for the student's paper she checked but also for the whole group. Another one was to share some articles because some students found articles that might be helpful not only for their topic but also for other students' topic; however, this purpose was not accomplished.

As a consequence, the main activity was to upload in the Yahoo! Group all chapters and documents required for the thesis development. Secondly, when they signed in the virtual community they checked the feedback given by the teacher. Moreover, another use of the Yahoo! Group according to the majority of the participants was to check or compare their classmates' pieces of writing. The purpose of checking them was to get a better idea

of what they had to do and how they could do it. For instance, participant 5 mentioned the following:

> *"I compared the two works, then, I took some ideas from the others and from mine if I was writing correctly" (P5).*

By contrast, the main problems presented during the use of Yahoo! Group were the following according to the participants. At the beginning, they did not know how to upload documents. Two participants said in a general sense that the virtual community use was complicated for them because they did not know in which folder they could find the required file or the folder in which they should upload their assigned task. Only one participant expressed that she did not know how to use Yahoo Group, so she had to learn to use it first. In other words, she explored all functions that this virtual community has in order to learn more about its use and avoid problems.

Finally, learners were asked about how they solved any problem or doubt about assigned task or Yahoo! Group use. The most common answer was that they signed in virtual community to check other's works and to get an idea. A few of them sent an e- mail to teacher, but sometimes they preferred to ask her face to face because they felt if they asked her in class, they would have a better and quicker answer than the virtual community or sending an e-mail.

Chapter V: Conclusions

This chapter provides summarized data and general conclusions based on the main findings discussed previously on chapter IV. Moreover, limitations faced on this study are considered and suggestions for further research projects are presented.

5.1 Virtual Interactions Conclusions

This study focused on identifying the types of interactions that ELT students presented in a Yahoo! Group and how this process was. Also, it centered on analyzing students' and teacher's roles associated to the assignment in order to describe relations between virtual interactions and the assigned task by taking into account the three types of interactions: learner–learner, learner–instructor and learner–content. Virtual interactions did not take place during the whole use of the virtual community in interest of negotiating for meaning and building knowledge together.

On the other hand, some virtual messages were posted on the main page, but they were only nominal testimonial manifestations of interaction contrasted to how interaction was considered. The use of this virtual community was limited to upload and save documents as a copy for a future purpose, which could have occurred or not. Also, it was utilized to keep academic information and present it to students electronically. However, electronic evidences of students' work do not make difference of application to paper format if learners do not achieve a task collaboratively. Learners usually signed in the Yahoo! Group when they needed to upload or download an assigned task in order to solve doubts or get a better idea of what they had to do and how they were supposed to work on. Others virtual activities that students performed were to check and compare their

classmates' works centered on writing layout. Alternatively, some issues were presented when learners had to upload a file. They did not know how to perform it; in other cases they did not find the correct folder to upload it. This aspect is considerable since it illustrates a technological lack of computer use. It probably proceeds since there is not an interest or necessity of overcoming basic uses. Nevertheless, this is alarming since current technological educational model demands competent application on computer use in order to be prepared for future generations.

As it was shown in chapter IV, there was not any attempt to propitiate interaction. This probably means that there is not a clear conception of the importance of interaction in the learning and teaching process. Learners construct knowledge through interactions focused on meaning negotiation. Subsequently, if virtual interactions did not take place and students did not work together to understand content better and to achieve a task, they did not develop all skills mentioned before and any relation between interactions and the task could not be established. At this point, if virtual community gives some alternatives to interact in there, it is really significant to understand why interactions are not presented; having in mind that in the learning process interaction is an indispensable factor. In view of that, to get virtual interactions centered on building knowledge, some features are required such as a course design in which technology is an integrated component of the curriculum.

5.1.1 Virtual Community

In a promising educational model based on computer assisted education, computer is purposeful. When the computer is used to support classroom instruction, an objective is implied. The way how computer was used follows a conventional teaching method. The traditional model is still present since the use of this virtual community followed a pattern centered on teacher as knowledge source. In addition, making use of computer must have a significant purpose; it is not only because it is necessary to utilize it as a school requirement or to try to be a contemporary teacher. It is true that computer facilitates the manner how information might be presented, but that is not enough in this technological generation. It should not be used as a requirement of a constructivist model, making use of it to storage and present information in which learners are only receptors. This antiquated idea of computer use is a basic and conventional application of computers to support any class. Hence, using computers in this way is hardly the manner to instill in a constructivist model. Then, the development of thinking and all skills students could acquire are stunted because they do not have enough opportunities to develop them. This probably means that there is a lack of computer conception and how to integrate technology into the curriculum.

Technological tools are not interactive by themselves and they are not essentially utilized interactively as a support for any class. Then, if teaching and learning process is not centered on an interactive model, it is likely to consider that technological implements are used to support a conventional teaching method. Consequently, it is possible to assume that there is not a training about teaching and learning with computers in which process focuses on knowledge building through interactions. In point of fact, the virtual community was not used as a pedagogic communicative implement because it is incorporated into curriculum

but it is not integrated into it. When technology is integrated into the syllabus, it is essential to be aware of all changes that the use of the computer implies. Firstly, teacher should be aware of that computer entails to work in a diverse manner; however, computers do not change automatically teaching and learning process. If the computer is not used effectively, learners will not construct knowledge and will not acquire needed skills. It is considered justification enough for thinking in all benefits that computer has taking into account how software might be integrated into activities of the curriculum in order to get meaningful effects of it. In other words, an integrative curriculum design of the course may demand clear objectives and specific interactive tasks in order to negotiate meaning and build knowledge through language use. As it is well known, computer is the educational revolution but it is not the key to everything that it is not working well. It must have a valuable use; if it is not used in this manner there is not any good judgment to use it.

If computer is integrated into the instructional course design as an essential element for computer assisted teaching and it is applied for an authentic use, learners could develop the most valuable skills for their learning process. Moreover, all activities proposed should be related to the curriculum having in mind that they will be worked online. Subsequently, it is promising to reflect upon the way this new educational technology generation changes methodology in the learning and teaching process. Current educational model demands to develop critical thinking and other skills but before moving forward on how to integrate technology into curriculum, teachers and students should start to reflect and believe on a different computer conception. Computers are complex educational process which should be planned carefully thinking on them as integrated implements to build knowledge collaboratively.

5.2 Limitations

In this research project, limitations were presented. Firstly, all findings were supported on only one virtual community use. In other words, analyzing more virtual communities as a support for any class may give more precise and generalized data. In addition, in this virtual community not all messages were visible. Even though, as it was expressed by participants in the interview, some messages were sent to the teacher by e-mail asking her a doubt or a question, probably focused on any task. However, there was not a manner to know all related to those messages. Also, one more limitation was the instrument. Even though it provided useful data, it was not enough to gather data in a deep way of how students' activities related to achieve the assigned task were performed.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research

For future research projects in this area, it is suggested to investigate on teacher and students' philosophy about computer's use and how technology might be integrated into curriculum in order to get a significant learning and teaching. In addition, in which manner an integrative technological course design could be used focused on online activities. Alternatively, investigate teachers' conception of the interaction and on strategies that can be used to propitiate interactions in order to negotiate for meaning and build knowledge through language use collaboratively. Finally, explore on the way the interactions that students present depend on the objectives and tasks of the instructional course design.

References

Al-Busaidi, Z. (2008). Qualitative Research and its Uses in Health Care. Sultan Qaboos University Medical Journal. Available on http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3087733/

Allwood, J. (2007). *Activity based studies of Linguistic Interactions.* Sweden: Gothenburg 1 University. Dept. of Linguistics.

Anderson, T. (2003). *Getting the mix right again: An updated and theoretical rationale for interaction.* The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning. Available on http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/149/230

Ariza, E.N., & Hancock, S. (2003). *Second Language Acquisition Theories as a Framework for Creating Distance Learning Courses*. Florida Atlantic University, USA. Available on http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/142/222

Astin, A.W. (1985). *Achieving Educational Excellence: A Critical Assessment of Priorities and Practices in Higher Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ávila, P. (1999). *Aprendizaje con nuevas tecnologías paradigma emergente.* Available on http://investigacion.ilce.edu.mx/panel_control/doc/c37aprendizaje.pdf

Bates, A.W. (1995). *Technology, open learning and distance education.* New York: Routledge Studies in Distance Education.

Bonwell, C. C., & Eison, J. A. (1991). *Active learning: Creating excitement in the classroom.* Washington, DC: ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 1.

Bravo, W., & Zaragoza, R. (2013). *A case study: Teacher-student's verbal interaction issues of 4th semester students from LEI.* Publishing in Process. BUAP, Mexico.

Brindley, J., Walti, C., & Blaschke, L. (2009). *Creating Effective Collaborative Learning Groups in an Online Environment.* Available on http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/675/1271

Burns, N., & Grove, S. (2003). *The practice of nursing research.* St. Louis, Mo.: Saunders/Elvesier.

Carretero, M., & Fairstein, G.(2001). *La teoría de Piaget y la educación. Medio siglo de debates y aplicaciones.* Trillas: El legado de la pedagogía del siglo XX para la escuela del siglo XXI. Madrid, Graó.

Català, M., Cubero, R., Díaz, J., Feu, M.T., García, E., García, J.E., Jiménez, M.P., Pedrinaci, E., Pujol, R.M., Sanmartí, N., Sequeiros, L., Solsona, N., Vilà, N., Vilches, A., & Zabala, A. (2002). *Las ciencias en la escuela: teorías y prácticas*. Barcelona: Graó.

Cennamo, K., Ross, J., & Ertmer, P. (2010). *Technology integration for meaningful classroom use: a standards-based approach.* Belmont, California: Wadsworth.

Chou, C. (2002). *A comparative content analysis of student interaction in synchronous and Asynchronous learning networks.* Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences. Available on http://courseweb.stthomas.edu/ccchou/triennial/Publications/HICSS35.pdf

Cook, J., Kenthapadi, K., & Mishra, N. (2013). *Group chats on twitter*. International World Wide Web Conferences Steering. Available on http://research.microsoft.com/pubs/184112/groupChatsOnTwitter-www2013.pdf

Cooperstein, S.E., & Kocevar-Weidinger, E. (2004). *Beyond active learning: a constructivist approach to learning.* Available on http://www.unc.edu/~bwilder/inls111/111beyondactivelearningWED.pdf

Creswell, J.W. (1998).*Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J.W. (2007).*Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J.W. (2009).*Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (3rd ed.). United States of America: Sage Publications.

Daniels, H. (2003). *Teoría vygotskiana y educación*. Barcelona: Paidós.

December, J. (1997). *Notes on Defining of Computer-Mediated Communication.* Available on http://www.december.com/cmc/mag/1997/jan/december.html

Dooly,M. (2008). *Telecollaborative Language Learning.* A guidebook to Moderating Intercultural Collaboration Online. Bern: Peter :Lang

Duffy, T. & Jonassen, D. (1992). *Constructivism and the technology instruction*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Egbert, J., & Hanson-Smith, E. (1999). *Call Environments Research, Practice and Critical Issues.* Alexandria, Va.: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.

Forsyth, I. (1998). *Teaching and learning materials and the Internet.* London: Kogan Page.

Friesn, J. (2011). *Tips for success with Technology in the Classroom.* Technology in Literacy Education Special Interest Group (TILE-SIG). Available on http://www.reading.org/general/Publications/blog/teachingliteracy/rty/2011/10/07/Tips_for_Success_with_Technology_in_the_Classroom.aspx#.UvUCQGJ5NXU

García, M. L., & Casado, J. (2000). *Consideraciones didácticas sobre la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras asistida por ordenador.* Didáctica: Lengua y Literatura. Available on http://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/DIDA/article/viewFile/DIDA0000110067A/19622

Garrison, D.R., & Anderson, T. (2003). *E-learning in the 21st century. A framework for research and practice.* London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Gunawardena, C.N., Lowe, C.A., & Anderson, T.(1997). *Analysis of a global online debate and the development of an interaction analysis model for examining social construction of knowledge in computer conferencing.* Journal Educational Computing Research. Available on http://auspace.athabascau.ca/bitstream/2149/772/1/ANALYSIS_OF_A_GLOBAL.pdf

Harasim, L., Starr, R.H., Teles, L., & Turoff, M. (1997). *Learning networks: A field guide to teaching and learning online.* Cambridge, MA: Massachussets Institute of Technology.

Hernández, R., Fernández, C., & Baptista, P. (2006). *Metodología de la investigación.* México: McGraw-Hill.

Hernández, S. (2008). *El modelo constructivista con las nuevas tecnologías: aplicado en el proceso de aprendizaje.* Available on http://www.academia.edu/1462952/Influencia_de_las_redes_sociales_en_la_educacion

Hochrath, E., & Hochrath R. (1998). *Diccionario Internet inglés – español*. Barcelona: Océano Grupo Editorial, S.A.

Holliday, A. (2007).*Doing and writing Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE.

Hunter, B. (2002). *Learning in the Virtual Community Depends upon Changes in Local Communities.* In K. A. Renninger & W. Shumar (eds.). Building Virtual. Communities. Learning and Change in Cyberspace. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Johnson, K.E. (1995). *Understanding Communication in Second Language Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Larsen-Freeman, D. (1986). *Techniques and principles in language teaching*. New York:Oxford University Press.

Lee, J. (2000). *Tasks and Communicating in Language Classrooms*. New York: McGrawHill.

Levy, M. (1997). *Computer-Assisted Language Learning: context and conceptualization.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lightbown, P.M., & Spada, N. (1999). *How languages are learned*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Long, M.H.(1985). *Input in Second Language Acquisition*. New York, United States of America: Gass.

Long, M. (1996). *The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition*. In W. Ritchie & T. Bhatia (Eds.), Handbook of second language acquisition San Diego: Academic Press.

Mantyla, K. (1999). *Interactive distance learning exercises the really work*. Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training and Development.

Marlow, B., & Page, M. (1999). *Creating the constructivist classrooms.* California: Corwin Press Inc.

Mason, R. (1993). *Introduction: written interactions*. In R. Mason (ed.). Computer conferencing: the last word. Victoria, BC: Beach Holme Publishers Ltd.

Merriam, S.B., & Associates (2002).*Qualitative Research in Practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. San Francisco, Cal.: Jossey-Bass.

Mescia, N.D., & Austin D. (2001). *Strategies to incorporate active learning into online teaching.* Internat. Conf. on Ed. And Tech. Conf. Proc., ICTE Secretariat, Grand Prairie, TX. Available on http://www.icte.org/T01_Library/T01_245. pdf

Morse, J.M. (1991). *Strategies for sampling.* Qualitative nursing research: A contemporary dialogue. Newbury Park,CA:Sage.

Mundy, M.A., Kupczynski, L., & Kee, R. (2012). *Teacher's Perceptions of Technology Use in the Schools.*SAGE journals. Available on http://sgo.sagepub.com/content/early/2012/03/05/2158244012440813

Nugroho, K.Y. (2011). *Interaction in English as a Foreign Language Classroom (A Case of Two State Senior High Schools in Semarang in the Academic Year 2009/2010).* English Education Journal, North America. Available on http://journal.unnes.ac.id/sju/index.php/eej/article/view/148/138

Nunan, D. (1989). *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom.* Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Palloff, R. & Pratt, K. (1999). *Building learning communities in cyberspace.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Perkins, D.N. (1991). *What constructivism demands of the learner.* Educational Technology, 39(9), 9-21.

Peters, O.(2004). *Distance education in transition – New trends and challenges*. (4th ed.). Oldenburg: Bibliotheks-und Informationssystem der Universität Oldenburg.

Pfaffenberger, B. (1994) *Que diccionario para usuarios de computadoras.* México: Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Hispanoamericana.

Pica, T. (1994). *Research on Negotiation: What does it reveal about second language learning conditions, processes, and outcomes?* Language Learning, 44(3), 493 – 527

Prawat, R.S. (1992). *Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching and Learning: A Constructivist Perspective Views of Learning.* American Journal of Education.

Rheingold, H. (2000). *The Virtual Community*.Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier. Cambridge, Massachussets: MIT Press. Available on http://www.rheingold.com/vc/book/intro.html

Richards, J. (2002). *Methodology in language teaching: an anthology of current practice.* United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Richardson, J., & Ting, E.(1999). *Making the most of interaction: what instructors do that most affect students' perceptions of their learning*. College Park, MD.

Rodríguez, J.L.(2007). *How virtual communities of practice and learning communities can change our vision of education*. Sísifo. Educational Sciences Journal, 3, pp. 113-120. Available on http://sisifo.fpce.ul.pt/?r=12&p=113

Sangrà,A., Vlachopoulos,D., & Cabrera, N.(2012).*Building an Inclusive Definition of E-Learning: An Approach to the Conceptual Framework.* Catalunya, Spain: Universitat Oberta. Available on http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ983277.pdf

Sargeant, J. (2012). *Qualitative Research Part II:Participants, Analysis, and Quality Assurance*. Journal of Graduate Medical Education. Available on http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3312514/

Scagnoli, N. (2005). *Estrategias para Motivar el Aprendizaje Colaborativo en Cursos a Distancia*. Illinois Digital Environment for Access to Learning and Scholarship. Available on http://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/10681/aprendizaje-colaborativo-scagnoli.pdf

Seedhouse, P. (1999). *Task-based interaction*. ELT Journal Volume 53(3), 149-156. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1. Available on http://203.72.145.166/ELT/files/53-3-1.pdf

Siemens, G. (2005). *Connectivism: Learning theory for the digital age. International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning. Available on* http://www.itdl.org/Journal/Jan_05/index.htm

Su, B., Bonk, C.J., Magjuka, R.J., Liu, X., & Lee, S. (2005). *The Importance of Interaction in Web-Based Education: A Program-level Case Study of Online MBA Courses.* Volume 4. Journal of Interactive Online Learning. Available on http://www.ncolr.org/jiol/issues/pdf/4.1.1.pdf

Surgenor, P. (2010). *How Students Learn 4.* UCD: Dublin. Available on http://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/ucdtlt0019.pdf

Swan, K. (2002). *Building communities in online courses: the importance of interaction*. Education, Communication and Information, 2(1), 23-49. Available on http://www.academia.edu/399302/Building_Communities_in_Online_Courses_The_Importance_of_Interaction

Swan, K., & Shea, P. (2005). *The development of virtual learning communities.* In. S. R. Hiltz & R. Goldman, Asynchronous Learning Networks: The Research Frontier. New York: Hampton Press, 239-260. Available on http://rcet.org/research/publications/chapter_11.pdf

Thurmond, V., & Wambach K, (2004). *Understanding Interactions in Distance Education: A Review of the Literature.* International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning. Available on http://www.itdl.org/journal/jan_04/article02.htm

Twomey, C. (1996). *Constructivism. Theory, Perspectives, and Practice*. New York, NY. Teachers College, Columbia University.

Underwood, J. (1984). *Linguistics, computers and the language teacher: a communicative approach*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in Society.* Edited by M. Cole, V. John- Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Warschauer, M. (1996).*Computer Assisted Language Learning: an Introduction*.In Fotos S. (ed.). Multimedia language teaching (pp.3-20). Tokyo: Logos International. Available on http://www.ict4lt.org/en/warschauer.htm

Warschauer, M. (1999). *Electronic literacies: Language, culture, and power in online education.* Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Williams, M., & Burden, R.L. (1997). *Psychology for Language Teachers a Social Constructivist Approach.* Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Willis, D. (1990). *The Lexical Syllabus*. London: Collins.

Zañartu, L. M. (2003). *Aprendizaje colaborativo: Una nueva forma de diálogo interpersonal y en red.* Revista Digital De Educación y Nuevas Tecnologías, 28. Contexto Educativo. Nueva Alejandría Internet. Available on http://tic.sepdf.gob.mx/micrositio/micrositio2/archivos/AprendizajeColaborativo.pdf

Zhu, E. (1996). *Meaning Negotiation, Knowledge Construction, and Mentoring In A Distance Learning Course*. U.S. Department of Education. Educational Research and Improvement. Education Resources Information Center (ERIC). Available on http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED397849.pdf

Appendix A: Participants Sample Questionnaire

The objective of this questionnaire is to obtain necessary information related to the use of a Yahoo! Group. The obtained information will be used to define the sample of a research project. To get this objective it is very important your answers, thank you for your collaboration.

Name: _____

1. How often do you sign in Yahoo! Group?

_____

_____

_____

2. What activities do you do in the Yahoo! Group?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. What problems have you faced using the Yahoo! Group? (***Technical problems** such as: You could not upload a file because the site was not available. ***Problems related to the assigned task** such as: (The task was to make observations to your classmates 'task) you did not understand your classmates' observations.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix B: Students' Interview

The objective of this interview is to obtain information to know how students interact in a virtual community.

1. At the beginning of the course did you know the objective of using a yahoo group?

   If yes: Which was?

   If not: In your opinion which was the objective?

2. When you enter to this virtual site what do you do? Explain

3. What are the benefits of using a virtual site?

4. When you have a problem or doubt about an assigned task in the Yahoo! Group how do you solve it?

Appendix C: Teacher's Interview

The objective of this interview is to obtain information about Virtual Community's use and objectives to create it.

1. Which was your objective(s) to create a Yahoo! Group for your Research Seminar course?

2. Is there a way to know if this objective(s) was accomplished?

3. Do you have a suggestion to improve the use of this virtual site?