

**An Action Research Study of Learners' Perceptions of
Using Internet Activities Through
The Nicenet ICA in the
EFL Classroom In Ecuador**

by

María del Carmen Boloña López

**Thesis submitted to the
Centro de Estudios de Lenguas Extranjeras CELEX
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**Master
in English Teaching as a Foreign Language**

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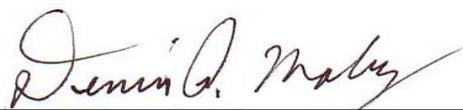
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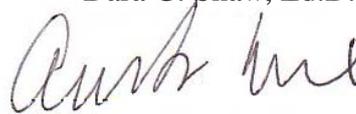
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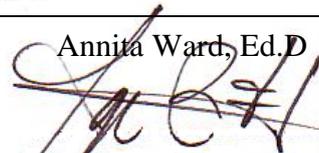
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Abstract

An Action Research Study of Learners' Perceptions of Using Internet Activities Through the Nicenet ICA in the EFL Classroom in Ecuador

María del Carmen Boloña López

The incorporation of Internet activities and Classroom Management Systems in the English teaching/learning process has increased popularity among teachers and learners of these Information Communication Technologies since computers became cognitive tools to enhance learning. As a result, teachers as well as learners are frequently using these technological tools for different purposes such as knowledge management, communication, interaction, participation, collaboration and cooperation when they are members of on-line English learning environments.

The aim of this study was to investigate learners' perceptions of the process, practice and use of Internet activities through the Nicenet Internet Classroom Assistant in order to discover how learners perceived the integration and application of these technologies in their English learning process. The study used qualitative and quantitative methods of action research: class documents, a survey, learners' journals and learners' comments in order to explore their reactions and perceptions to these two technologies. Two research questions were explored in this study: (1) How can learners' perceptions of the process of using technological tools for language learning be described? and (2) What are learners' perceptions of using Internet activities to learn English? Participants of this study consisted of upper intermediate university English learners who graduated from Ecuadorian public, religious or bilingual high schools. The findings indicate that there was a high learners' acceptance of the Nicenet ICA Internet activities when they interact, communicate, cooperate and manage knowledge to learn English through on-line collaborative English learning environments.

Dedication

To GOD, heavenly Father

To Jesus, loving Master

and to Maria, tender Mother

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First of all I would like to thank God for all his blessings and loving care. He has given me all: a family, friends, teachers, students, work partners and people to love. They all have inspired me and supported me through this project with their love and invaluable help. Special thanks to Marcelo and Elsa who have always been near and given me joy and sensible thoughts. I deeply thank Jesus for his model. He will always be the Master of my heart. I thank Maria Virgin for her kindness and tenderness in good and hard times.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

What is new on the Internet for English teaching? How do we know what can be right or not for learners when they learn on the Internet? What do English teachers and students need to create an enriching web learning experience? These are common questions English as a Foreign Language teachers (EFLT) regularly ask as they work to nurture and facilitate the teaching/learning process. In my role as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher, I have learned that new lessons need new ways of presentation to trigger learners' interest and to guarantee successful results for both EFL teachers and learners. The Internet, therefore, becomes a valuable tool for both teachers and learners who want to surf the net, explore, discover and learn.

At present, many EFL teachers are continuously integrating Internet English lessons into their class programs after experimenting with the numerous advantages offered by this learning medium. The Internet opens an endless supply of academic sources and teaching material for EFL teachers interested in incorporating them into their current programs as many advocates recommend them. Among them Warschauer, Shetzer & Meloni (2001) state that “authenticity, literacy, interaction, vitality and learners empowerment” (p.7) are main reasons for using the Internet for English teaching. Therefore, in this research study I explored the latest applications in Internet English teaching, and how they may be applied to the teaching/learning process. Afterwards, I examined and described how Ecuadorian learners in one upper intermediate university English class use the Nicenet, an Internet classroom assistant, to access information, learn, communicate, consolidate topics, and interact in English.

The Nicenet ICA is defined as “Free web-based learning environment for classrooms, distance learning programs and collaborative academic projects” (Dintenfass, 2005). Additionally, Edutools, a web based organization that provides information about e-learning software products to educators states,

Nicenet as an organization of Internet professionals who donate their time to provide services for the Internet community. One of the Nicenet’s primary goals is bringing communication tools and resources previously available only to those with large sums of money or substantial technical expertise to the education community.

English Foreign Language Teaching (EFLT) literature shows that an increasing number of English teachers are using Internet and Internet learning management systems in international computer based environments to support students’ web-based learning. They incorporate web-based learning activities to their programs to take advantage of the wealth of resources on the World Wide Web, and the Internet in order to access the multimedia resources of information communication technologies. Teachers use classroom management systems to integrate, organize, structure and manage students’ web activities through their virtual platforms. What is more, they are using these web-based tools to construct collaborative English learning environments where all participants including teachers and students are able to communicate, interact, collaborate, access information, construct knowledge and use technological resources on the Internet.

The main purpose of this study was to discover students’ perspective on the use of Internet English learning activities through the Nicenet ICA as a communication tool that supports academic programs on the Internet. The investigation followed action research procedures supported by quantitative and qualitative techniques to examine the

effects of Internet activities through classroom learning systems along students' interaction. Students' perceptions of the use, process and practice of Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA were gradually collected to discover the effects of these activities in students' upper intermediate English teaching-learning process. Students contributed their perceptions of English learning and Positive English Learning Environments as two of their initial Nicenet ICA threaded discussion topics. They used the Nicenet ICA to write about their expectations and learning needs at the beginning of the English upper intermediate university course. Students' perceptions were used to design and create a collaborative English learning environment through the Nicenet ICA. Students additionally gave written feedback about the effects of the Internet and the Nicenet ICA in journals and in the final Nicenet ICA project. Students' on-line activities were quantitatively measured to determine students' on-line participation levels. Finally they answered a post class survey that collected students' impressions of the Nicenet ICA on-line activities.

This study focused on CALL activities that integrated the use of Internet learning activities through the Nicenet ICA assistant to the English program. Thirty-six students took a 90-hour English program mainly aimed at developing communication skills. They engaged in lab activities to reinforce and consolidate learning points, develop on-line reading and writing skills, complete web based tasks, communicate and interact in the Internet as members of the Nicenet ICA. Students' perceptions of the effects of Internet English learning activities through the Nicenet ICA were investigated at the beginning, during and after their English course.

The organization of this study consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 is the Introduction. Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature. Chapter 3 presents the design and methodology used in this research study. Chapter 4 presents the study findings after

collecting the data and assessing results of student participants' perceptions, feedback and impressions of the effects of Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA into their English learning process. I discuss the findings in chapter 5; and, finally a conclusion is presented in chapter 6.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe how Ecuadorian university EFL learners perceive the integration of Internet learning activities through the Nicenet ICA in their English learning process.

Research Questions

- 1) How can Ecuadorian university EFL learners' perceptions of the process of using technological tools for language learning be described?
- 2) What are Ecuadorian university EFL learners' perceptions of using Internet activities to learn English?

The volume *How people learn* reports on experts' views regarding the beneficial effects of technology in learning. 'Several groups have reviewed the literature on technology and learning and concluded that it's great potential to enhance student achievement and teacher learning, but only if it is used appropriately (Dede, 1998, President's Committee of Advisors on Science and Technology, 1997; Cognition and Technology Group at Vanderbilt, 1996). Additionally, the preface of the volume remarks "it is not just technology or the language that is important, but a whole learning environment system that teachers can create with their students" (page. viii).

Following the above line of thought, teachers as well as students can create collaborative English learning environments through the Nicenet ICA provided these learning environments are designed, created and constructed according to principles, conditions and standards implied in the science of learning, language learning research

and CALL. Recent studies (Stern, 2001, Egbert 2005, Oxford, 1992, 1993) suggest that knowledge acquisition, structuring and scaffolding, autonomy, cognitive engagement, communication skill development, cooperation, metacognition and intellectual involvement among others are essential principles to build collaborative English learning environments characterized by knowledge management, interaction, communication, active participation, proactive research, on-line learning and collaboration.

Once teachers and students become members of collaborative English learning environments through the Nicenet ICA, they collaborate in the development of this kind of English learning environment through their contributions to this teacher-support communication tool. Documents, e-mails, reply messages, plans and assignments among other on-line postings add to the construction of an active on-line English learning environment where teachers as well as students interact, negotiate meaning, collaborate, exchange and manage information to construct knowledge, intercommunicate and communicate in the Internet.

This study collected and used students' feedback of Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA to incorporate students' views to the design, construction and development of a stronger collaborative English learning environment where their views lead to a wider understanding of participants' needs, expectations, and experiences of the English teaching learning process development through CALL technologies. As members of a collaborative on-line English learning environment through the Nicenet ICA, thirty- six upper intermediate university English students contributed valuable feedback when they gave their perceptions, impressions and feedback of Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA along their course. My next goal of a collaborative English learning environment in the Nicenet ICA will certainly use stronger blocks to

construct and satisfy students' English learning needs when they learn, collaborate and interact in the Internet.

Operational definitions

Provided below is a list of terms used in this study. These operational definitions reflect concepts associated with the action study of Learner's Perceptions of using Internet Through the Nicenet ICA in the EFL Classroom in Ecuador.

Asynchronous – Computer Mediated Communication. Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni (2001) define Asynchronous Computer Mediated Communication as communication that takes place in a delayed fashion; in other words, the people communicating do not need to be sitting at the computer at the same time. They explain that this type of communication implies that messages are somehow deposited to be read later. The electronic e-mail or e-mail is the most common form of Asynchronous Computer Mediated Communication according to these author.

Communicative Approach. *The Longman dictionary of applied linguistics* Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics defines the Communicative Approach as an approach to foreign or second language teaching that emphasizes that the goal of language learning is communicative competence.

Communicative Competence. *The Longman dictionary of applied linguistics* defines communicative competence as the ability not only to apply the grammatical rules of a language in order to form grammatical sentences, but also to know when and where to use these sentences and to whom. Beale states,

Communicative competence refers to 'the underlying systems of knowledge and skill required for communication according to Canale (1985:5). The four components of communicative competence can be summarized as follows: a) grammatical competence i.e. producing a structured comprehensible

utterance (including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling); b) sociocultural competence i.e. using socially-determined cultural codes in meaningful ways, often termed 'appropriateness' (e.g. formal or informal ways of greeting); c) discourse competence i.e. shaping language and communicating purposefully in different genres (text types), using cohesion (structural linking) and coherence (meaningful relationships in language); d) strategic competence i.e. enhancing for effectiveness of communication (e.g. deliberate speech) and compensating for breakdowns in communication (e.g. comprehension checks, paraphrase, conversation fillers). (Beale, 2004, p. 1)

Collaborative English Learning Environments. This study looked at collaborative English learning environment as an English learning environment supported by a Course Management System (CMS).

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). The term CALL became popular in the 1980s, Call embraces the communicative language teaching approach and interactive multimedia technologies, which support language teaching and learning Davies (2005).

English Class, English Class is a web based software application created by students of Informatics Business at Universidad Interamericana in 2002. They designed this application under the direction of Christian Estay, Coordinator of the Area of Business Informatics and María del Carmen Boloña, Coordinator of the English Area. English Class can be defined as an Internet tool that provides users space for on-line English learning. Users can use this tool for different Internet English learning activities such as information exchange, on-line filing, on-line interaction and communication. Its features include a bulletin board, file resources, group members, calendar and e-mail among others.

Internet. Enzer (2006) defines Internet as the vast collection of inter-connected networks that are connected using the TCP/IP protocols. Computers operating systems use TCP/IP software to connect to the Internet. Internet is the largest worldwide network of computers network .

Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni (2001) define the Internet as the largest Worldwide Network of Computers Network. These authors add that the Internet encompasses many different ways of communicating and exchanging information. For the most part, though, they can be categorized as asynchronous, computer-mediated communication, synchronous computer mediated communication and hypertext.

Internet English Foreign Teaching. This study looked at Internet Foreign English teaching as teaching English through Internet, Internet Classroom Management Assistants and Internet learning. Internet English teaching consisted of the design, creation, integration and assessment of on-line English learning activities through the Nicenet ICA.

Internet Classroom Management Systems. The following definition of is taken from Bitpipe Inc. (2005),

An Internet classroom or learning management system, is a software application or Web-based technology used to plan, implement, and assess a specific learning process. Typically, a learning management system provides an instructor with a way to create and deliver content, monitor student participation, and assess student performance. A learning management system may also provide students with the ability to use interactive features such as threaded discussions, video conferencing, and discussion forums. (¶ 1)

Internet English lessons. in this particular teaching situation, upper Intermediate university English students took Internet English lessons to reinforce learning points

studied in class. For this purpose, they used the Nicenet ICA to engage in on-line reading, on-line writing and web based research tasks. The Nicenet ICA is defined as a communication tool to manage academic projects. These students used this learning management system as a collaborative English learning environment where they accessed information, interacted, managed, shared and contributed knowledge.

Information communication technologies. The following definition is taken from the guidance in the QCA Schemes of Work for ICT (2005):

Information and communications technologies (ICT) are the computing and communications facilities and features that variously support teaching, learning and a range of activities in education. Such ICT-related activities include, for example, the use of: broadcast material or CD-ROM as sources of information in history; micro-computers with appropriate keyboards and other devices to teach literacy and writing; keyboards, effects and sequencers in music teaching; devices to facilitate communication for pupils with special needs; electronic toys to develop spatial awareness and psycho-motor control; email to support collaborative writing and sharing of resources; video-conferencing to support the teaching of modern foreign languages; internet-based research to support geographical enquiry; integrated learning systems (ILS) to teach basic numeracy; communications technology to exchange administrative and assessment data. The focus is on the subject being taught or studied, or the organisation being administered, rather than developing pupils' skills with, and knowledge of, the technologies themselves. (p. 1)

LearnLoop, the following definition is taken from learnloop.sourceforge.net
LearnLoop is defined as an Open Source (GPL) project. It is a groupware aimed to support education and collaboration. General management for learnloop.org is the

research group On-line-Learning-Communities (OLC) at the IT University in Gothenburg, Sweden. Users can use this CMS for several purposes as it allows them to create courses, groups, file resources, link resource, forums, bug tracking, easy translation for admin, guest login with limited permissions, normal login or integrated with Windows-server among others. This website supports students' on-line learning.

Multimedia. Learning Circuits (2005) defines it as a term that encompasses interactive text, images, sound, and color. *Multimedia* can be anything from a simple PowerPoint slide to a complex interactive simulation. Learning Circuits web page was launched by American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) as a source for e-learning.

On-line lessons, on-line lessons were integrated into the English class program to develop students' on-line reading, on-line writing and Internet research skills for project management. These lessons provided students English practice when they engaged in on-line reading, on-line writing, web-based research activities, web-based project management, on-line interaction, information access, collaboration communication and knowledge management.

On-line reading, the following definition is taken from Transliteracies (2005). On-line reading may be defined as the experience of "text-plus" media by individuals and groups in digital, networked information environments. The "plus" indicates the zone of negotiation—of mutation, adaptation, cooptation, hybridization, etc.—by which the older dialogue among print, writing, orality, and audiovisual media commonly called "text" enters into new relations with digital media and with networked communication technologies.

Transliterations is a UC Multi-Campus Research Group with funding from the University of California Office of the President as well as from its host campus with the UC system, UC Santa Barbara.

On-line writing. On-line writing may be defined as the process of writing by means of ICT such as the Internet, a LMS , computers, electronic agendas and web pages. Students engaged in on-line writing can use ICT electronic devices to write e-mails, CMS documents and/or postings, forum contributions, chat, e-cards, e-pal letters, e-contacts. On-line writing can be associated to the act of writing through any of the ICT tools listed above. Teachers or students engage in on-line writing activities may move from the traditional classroom environment to an on-line environment supported by technology.

The Nicenet Internet Classroom Assistant, Dintenfass and Archibald (1998) define the *Nicenet ICA* as,

... a free web-based classroom tool for teachers to use with their students. It is a free web-based learning environment for classrooms, distance learning programs and collaborative academic projects. *The Nicenet ICA* is a sophisticated communication tool that brings powerful World-Wide-Web based conferencing, personal messaging, document sharing, scheduling and link/resource sharing to a variety of learning environments. The ICA2 incorporates many new features and responds to requests we have received from our users. (¶ 1)

The World Wide Web (www). Learning Circuits (2005) defines it as a graphical hypertext-based Internet tool that provides access to web pages created by individuals, businesses, and other organizations.

Synchronous Computer Mediated Communication, Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni (2001) refer to synchronous computer-mediated communication as real time

communication for students sitting at the same time. According to these authors, this type of communication takes place live as on the telephone as messages are sent instantly. Communication can be either one to one or many to many as with asynchronous communication. These specialists state that Internet-based chat is the most common type of synchronous computer mediated communication which takes place in chat rooms found in Internet.

Web based course management systems, a Web Based Course Management System (CMS) is also known as Learning Management System (LMS). According to Bitpipe Inc. (2005),

A web based course management system is a software application or web based technology used to plan, implement and, assess a specific learning process. Typically, course management systems provide an instructor with a way to create and deliver content, monitor student participation, and assess student performance. A course management system may also provide students with the ability to use interactive features such as threaded discussions, video conferencing, and discussion forums. (p. 1)

Web based learning. Learning circuits glossary (2005) defines web based learning as,

Delivery of educational content via a Web browser over the public Internet, a private intranet, or an extranet. Web based learning often provides links to other learning resources such as references, email, bulletin boards, and discussion groups. Web Based Training (WBT) is another term for Web based learning. WBT may also include a facilitator who can provide course guidelines, manage discussion boards, deliver lectures, and so forth. When used with a

facilitator, web based training offers some advantages of instructor-led training while also retaining the advantages of computer-based training.

WebQuest, (March, 2006) defines a WebQuest as, “a scaffolded learning structure that uses links to essential resources on the World Wide Web and an authentic task to motivate students”. (¶ 9)

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

This chapter consists of four sections. The first section covers the fundamental learning principles for the design of active learning environments and language learning environments stated by experts of the science of learning and language learning specialists. The second section reviews studies and the commentary of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) specialists. The third section reports on on-line reading and writing academic research studies, and the fourth section reviews authors' views on computer anxiety as a major factor that influences using Internet for English Teaching through CALL.

Active Learning Environments: Fundamental Principles

The first section starts with a summary of research concerning fundamental aspects of learning and their implications for optimal teaching as stated in the volume *How people learn*. "This volume synthesizes the scientific basis of learning. Important scientific achievements include understanding of 1) memory and structure of knowledge; 2) problem solving and reasoning; 3) the early foundations of learning, 4) regulatory processes that govern learning, including metacognition and 5) how symbolic thinking emerges from the culture and community of the learner" (p. 14).

Research shows that English teachers can also use these principles when incorporating Computer Assisted Language Learning- CALL activities into the EFL classroom. To this respect, Egbert (2005) states: "I have assumed that good teachers teach well because they bear in mind certain principles about how they can best help learners to learn a language. Placing these principles at the centre of attention makes it much easier for teachers to concentrate on the question of what constitutes effective computer-enhanced pedagogy and why" (p. vii).

CALL

The next section focuses on Internet and Internet course management systems, as well as, current CALL technologies used at the moment for worldwide English teaching on the WWW.

First, CALL specialists present a comprehensive review of synchronous, asynchronous and hypertext computer mediated communication activities in order to examine how teachers as well as students participate in web-based activities for e-English learning. These activities enable students to interact, communicate and exchange information for English learning purposes as previously described. The review includes different types of computer-mediated activities such as e-mail and bulletin board for asynchronous computer mediated communication, chat for synchronous computer mediated communication and hypertext for WWW based activities. English teachers can incorporate computer based activities to their programs. They can use hypertext to integrate and apply web based activities such as web hunts, hot lists and WebQuests among others. They can use these web based tools as innovative pedagogical IC tools for English teaching nowadays.

After examining web-based activities in Internet, this section presents CALL specialists' views concerning the use of classroom management systems for the design of collaborative English learning environments in Internet. Authors discuss the pedagogical foundations for using classroom management systems as cognitive tools in constructionist- learning environments as reported by Reeves (1998) in "*The Impact of Media and Technology in Schools in the University of Georgia*". He treats the benefits of implementing multimedia constructive software as cognitive technological tools in

educational environments as this research report states “cognitive tools help learners to organize, restructure and represent what they know” (Reeves 1998, p.3).

Classroom Management Software

In this section I review information related to the implementation of a classroom management software system in The College of New Rochelle, New York. ANGEL, a New Global Environment for Learning, was institutionalised in this computer-based environment and assessed by academic staff and learners to test its effects.

Additionally, I look at articles on the implementation of www-based course management systems into educational settings in order to obtain information about former experiences of the application and effects of web based CMSs in foreign educational environments. This information focuses on phases, strategies and assessment procedures applied in the organization, structure, implementation and development of CMSs for educational purposes.

Incorporation of Computer- based Activities into Reading Programs

After that, I describe how ESL teachers in several language programs in universities in Europe, USA and Canada are incorporating computer based activities into their regular reading programs to teach learners to access information, communicate and develop critical thinking skills in the net as highlighted by March (2003). This section looks at research on the reading and on-line reading processes aimed at optimizing students' results.

Writing in English On-line

Next the third section examines the on-line writing process in ESL computer based environments in Poland, Finland, Taiwan and the United States and the integration of on-line writing activities to teach English. These studies have been important to know more about the on-line reading and writing processes, the effects of

on-line activities in learners' progress, the benefits of incorporating these activities into teaching practice and the pedagogical implications of these technological approaches to the English teaching/learning process.

Computer Anxiety and Resistance

Last, the fourth section deals with learner computer anxiety/resistance. It mainly reports on learners' psychological reactions to computer-based activities observed after the incorporation of web-based teaching approaches to education. In addition to observations of learners' reactions when they use computers to learn in the web, this section includes recommendations to avoid computer anxiety given by specialists in this subject matter. ELT specialists' recommendations are also included.

Overview of the New Science of Learning: Research Findings in the USA

According to recent research in the new science of learning published in the volume *How people learn*, "Learners need an active learning process where they can learn to think and read critically, to express themselves clearly and persuasively to solve complex problems" (p. 4). In other words, students need to develop critical thinking abilities, communication skills and strategies when coping with their learning tasks. Next I refer to several key findings included in the volume *How people learn*.

Research also shows, for example, that "the teacher must actively inquire into students' thinking, creating classroom tasks and conditions under which student thinking can be revealed" (p. 19). According to this, students need learning opportunities to explore their minds potentials when working their tasks out. For example, they need to be intellectually engaged in reasoning activities such as induction, deduction and inference among others when solving these tasks. To this respect, a broad overview of research on learners and learning also highlights the importance of knowledge structuring and knowledge scaffolding as fundamental

learning aspects. In this sense researchers have found out that students need to integrate prior knowledge to new knowledge. For instance students need to recall previous information and integrate it to their new learning experiences to facilitate their understanding. They also need to “have a deep foundation of factual knowledge” (p. 16) in order to develop their competence. This has to do with students’ abilities to “understand facts and ideas in the context of conceptual framework” (p. 16). As reported by researchers “Deep understanding of subject matter transforms factual information into usable knowledge” (p. 15). What is more, researchers state: “The enterprise of education can be viewed as moving the students in the direction of more formal understanding (or greater expertise). This will require both a deepening of information and the development of the conceptual framework for that subject matter.” (p. 17).

In addition, a fundamental observation in relation to cognitive development reported by specialists refers to what students need in terms of processes of metacognition. White and Frederickson (1998) state: “the teaching of metacognitive activities must be incorporated into the subject matter that students are learning. In addition “metacognitive practices have been shown to increase the degree to which students transfer to new settings” and they, therefore, help students to take control of their learning and their learning goals” as stated by (Lin and Lehman in press; Schenfeld 1983, 1984, 1991; Palincsar and Brown, 1984; Scardamalia, et al., 1984 and Schoenfeld, 1983, 1984, 1991” (p. 18). In other words students need to reflect on their own learning processes to progress. Research shows, for example, they can keep learning journals, study plans, study logs, diaries, graphic organizers among other learning resources for different learning purposes such as structuring and organizing information, getting feedback about their learning needs, strengths and weaknesses.

In summary, the science of learning has been using learning research in the educational practice in order to explore how people learn. Learning research has been essential to discover important aspects of human learning observed in several educational environments. This research is strongly orienting the educational practice towards the development of critical thinking skills.” The new science of learning does not deny the fact that facts are important for thinking and problem solving ” (p. 9). However, it also points out that “usable knowledge is not the same as a mere list of disconnected facts”(p. 9). This implies, that teachers are called, among other things, to help students to learn with understanding, think critically and to communicate meaningfully to be able to respond to future professional demands. For this purpose teachers should guide students to identify concepts, understand facts and ideas in contexts, organise knowledge efficiently and become aware of learners’ learning styles and strategies among other tasks. “Fundamental understanding about subjects, including how to frame and ask meaningful questions about various subject areas, contributes to individuals’ more basic understanding of principles of learning that can assist them in becoming self-sustaining lifelong learners”(p. 5). As expressed in this volume “ the goal of education is better conceived as helping students develop the intellectual tools and learning strategies needed to acquire knowledge productively” (p. 5).

Principles for Successful Learning

Research findings have been important for understanding how students learn. These findings have been structured into principles to optimise learning conditions that allow building up active learning. Learning principles have implications for the creation and the design of active English learning environments. Expertise, collaboration and knowledge management, among other features, mainly characterize teachers that design active learning environments while autonomy, motivation, cognitive engagement,

confidence and active participation on the other side characterize students that belong to these kind of environments. The new science of learning principally emphasizes “the importance of learners centred environments where learning with understanding should be supported by well-organized knowledge” (*How people learn* p. 24). Concerning the development of learners’ subject matter understanding, the authors state that. . . .

“expertise involves well organized knowledge that supports understanding, and that learning with understanding is important for the development of expertise because it makes learning easier.” (*How people learn* p. 24).

In addition, research shows that learning with understanding in pedagogical learning environments presupposes learners’ cognitive engagement, metacognitive activation and students’ autonomy among other supporting aspects of effective learning. To this respect, “Learners need an active learning process where they can learn to think and read critically, to express themselves clearly and persuasively to solve complex problems” (p. 4). In other words “Learners are expected to develop aspects of high literacy needed to successfully negotiate the complexities of contemporary life” (p. 4). These statements imply that teachers are expected to give full attention to students’ active learning development. They, for example, should support students’ learning process by providing them opportunities to build structured and organized knowledge. This involves paying attention to students’ pre-existing ideas or preconceptions to develop understanding of the subject matter and therefore, to structure knowledge. Learning research additionally shows that “ A critical feature of effective teaching is that it elicits from students their pre-existing understanding of the subject matter to be taught and provides opportunities to build on or challenge the initial understanding” (p. 15). Students, as a result, are able to scaffold and construct new knowledge.

Another important aspect refers to cognitive operations. Concerning this point, learning research shows that “experts, regardless the field, always draw on a richly structured information base. The ability to plan a task, to notice patterns, to generate reasonable arguments and explanations and to draw analogies to other problems are all more closely intertwined with factual knowledge than it was once believed” (p. 16). Therefore, active learning environments provide students with opportunities to engage in mental operations such as induction, deduction, and analogy among others to develop their critical thinking skills.

Additionally, learning research highlights the effects of metacognitive strategies to enhance understanding during cognitive processes as “new developments in the new science of learning emphasize the importance of helping people take control of their own learning”(p. 12). According to Brown, (1975) and Flavel, (1973) “ students can use these strategies to predict their performances on various tasks and to monitor their current levels of mastery and understanding” (p. 12). This statement implies that students’ participation is one of the key aspects of students’ learning development. Research shows, for example, that “students’ interest or engagement in a task is clearly very important” although “ it does not guarantee that students will acquire the kind of knowledge that will support new learning” (p. 24). Additionally, an active learning process gives students opportunities to collaborate and develop cultural awareness for communicative purposes.

Characteristics of Active English Learning Environments

Regarding English language learning concerns, language specialists have additionally shared views regarding the benefits of an active learning process (Egbert 2005, Stern, 2001, Oxford 1992, 1993, Richards, Platt and Webber 1985).

Stern (2001), for instance, examines and portrays the learning process, and learners participation when he refers to the conditions for effective English learning. This specialist emphasizes the importance of learners' intellectual, cognitive, social and affective engagement for an active learning process as described in the lines below.

Stern states that “the learning process is better understood as threefold, involving the learner a) intellectually and cognitively, b) socially and c) affectively” (p. 410). He distinguishes good learners from less efficient learners, and points out that good learners use learning strategies. This expert focuses on four basic sets of strategies that good learners use. According to Stern (2001), these strategies involve “active planning, academic learning, and social learning”(p. 411). “Good learning involves first an active planning strategy. In view of the sheer magnitude of the language learning task the good language learner will select goals and sub goals, recognise stages and developmental sequences, and actively participate in the learning process” (p. 411).

Stern (2001) additionally refers to academic learning strategies as strategies that students apply when they study and practice the TL. He states “language learning is, to some extent, a cognitive and perceptual task that require students' study, analysis and meta analysis of rules and relationships between forms and meanings” (p. 411).

Next Stern (2001) emphasizes the importance of social learning strategies when students develop and use communication strategies to interact in the TL. A communication strategy is “ a way to express a meaning in a second or foreign language, by a learner who has a limited command of the language” according to Richards, Platt and Webber (1985, p. 48).

Stern (2001) also points out that “good language learners become actively involved as participants in authentic language use” (p. 411). This implies that social learning has major positive effects for students' language acquisition in active learning

environments and therefore, students need to be encouraged to participate actively in communicative language practice. This practice can involve students in pairs, groups or class activities to get students engaged in task-based activities. During the process, students activate and develop critical thinking skills when they get intellectually involved in operations such as analysis, synthesis, induction and deduction among other intellectual operations when they complete their tasks as the new science of learning proposes.

Last, Stern states that good language learners use affective strategies to adapt to their language learning process and “cope effectively with the emotional and motivational problems of language learning” (p. 411). Additionally Richards (2001) states, “Learners, too, bring to learning their own beliefs, goals, attitudes, and decisions, which in turn influence how they approach learning. Learners belief systems cover a wide range of issues and can influence learners motivation to learn, their expectations about is easy or difficult about a language, as well as the kind of learning strategies they favour” (p. 53). For this reason, language teachers must create a supportive environment by nurturing learners’ confidence in the foreign language. They must understand their learners’ insecurity and anxiety while participating in this highly complex process and therefore, they must patiently contribute to build up learners’ confidence by paying attention to their learners’ individual affective needs as much as possible.

Due to the importance of strategies for optimal language learning, there have been other researchers who have examined them carefully and have concluded that they play a very important role in language learning in addition to Stern. These researchers have done studies to examine the effects of LL strategies in students’ learning process and therefore, contribute to the optimisation of language learning processes. Oxford

(1992, 1993) among them, for example, states: “language learning strategies are specific actions, behaviours, steps, or techniques that students (often intentionally) use to improve their progress in developing L2 skills. These strategies can facilitate the internalisation, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language”. Strategies are tools for the self-directed involvement necessary for developing communicative ability. (p.18). Her study highlights the importance of metacognitive strategies for language learning which she defines as “strategies that help learners exercise ‘executive control’ through planning, arranging, focusing and evaluating their own learning”. She specifically defines as strategies that “allow learners to control their own learning through organising, planning, and evaluating”. According to her, some examples of these strategies are: a) centering learning or linking new information with already known material; b) arranging and planning learning or setting goals and objectives and c) self-monitoring (p. 64). Students, for example, can use graphic organizers, concept maps, journals and diaries among other resources when they apply metacognitive strategies.

Constructing Active English Learning Environments

Active English Learning Environments set conditions for optimal learning as described in language learning literature. These conditions allow learners to interact in meaningful, social, interactive and creative language tasks as described by Egbert (2005, pp. 5, 6 & 7). According to this author, “language lessons should support conditions for optimal language learning environments regardless of the tools used” (p. 5). This author refers to conditions through which learners engage in a learning process that provides opportunities to interact socially and meaningfully in the target language. For example, learners should be provided with opportunities for interacting with an authentic audience, produce language creatively and develop autonomy.

Concerning the role of tasks in the English learning process, Egbert (2005) states,

Developing authentic tasks is the most important learning condition because the task influences all the others. She explains that, “an authentic task is one the learners perceive they will use outside of class in their real world or that parallels or replicates real functions beyond the classroom” (p. 6).

According to learning research in *How people learn*, “New developments in the science of learning also emphasize the importance of helping people take control of their own learning. Since understanding is viewed as important, people must learn to recognize when they understand and when they need more information” (p.12).

Learning research in *How people learn* adds, “the teacher must actively inquire into students’ thinking, creating classroom tasks and conditions under which student thinking can be revealed” (p.4).

Learning styles also play an important role in learners’ progress .They vary quite a lot of from one individual to another as a result of predominant intelligence types: interpersonal; interpersonal; verbal/linguistic; musical/rhythmic; logical/mathematical; visual/spatial or bodily/kinaesthetic (Gardner, 1991). This individual process of acquiring and processing knowledge explains why two students might learn the same vocabulary list in two completely different ways. For example, a student with a predominant visual/spatial type of intelligence might learn the words by writing them down, as he needs representing things graphically. On the other hand a student with a musical/rhythmic intelligence type might learn the same words by listening to a recording as he is more sensitive to sounds and he will probably acquire the new words by remembering how these words sounded or how they rhymed with the others. For this reason, specialists have grouped students according to their learning

styles, i.e. some students are visual while other students are aural. Specialists have also recommended that teachers try to identify their students' different learning styles and use this information to plan wider variety of activities that can expose students to different presentation styles when learning. What is more, the importance of the teacher's role in the way he incorporates and applies these psychological principles in the classroom has been greatly emphasised lately as latest research shows students are more benefited if/when their learning abilities are appropriately conducted and exploited.

Parallel to students' learning styles, learning strategies have also been recognised as important in the students' EFL acquisition process. Research shows that FL students need to identify and use their learning strategies to maximise their results. Concerning this point, EFL students can reflect on their reading process if they want to improve a particular weak area in it. For example EFL teachers can train students to process their readings by starting with vocabulary work once they choose a suitable graphic organiser from a wider choice. The provision of different kinds of formats can certainly be a way to develop EFL students' awareness of their different learning strategies as they can realise they can choose one that suits them better. What is more, English teachers can construct active learning environment in order to support learners' academic strategies and therefore, help them to acquire the TL. These environments fundamentally promote a dynamic activation of learners' critical thinking abilities to understand English systems as fostered by Stern (2001).

English teachers can contribute to students' understanding of English linguistic systems by providing students constructive learning opportunities through which to explore their minds potentials when working their tasks. They can enable them to

expand their English knowledge by scaffolding it on previous knowledge as proposed by the new science of learning.

English teachers can also ease their learners' language acquisition process by giving their learners opportunities to express their own experience when they acquire learning points. For instance, teachers can ask their learners to share their former concepts, ideas, and beliefs of TL forms. When teachers work on this particular area, they should carefully observe learners' acquisition process to facilitate their process, anticipate their learners' difficulties, analyse and clarify learning points and guide learners to relate their prior knowledge to new knowledge as suggested by the science of learning.

Technology is also increasingly creating opportunities to support an active teaching/learning process through innovative advances as latest research shows. All over the world teachers as well as students are using technology to take advantage of its benefits when they interact for educational purposes. They use technological tools to optimize time and maximize results for research, study purposes, collaboration and communication among others. English teachers, for example, are using technologies such as Internet and Internet Classroom Management systems as tools to support students' cognitive, metacognitive and social development when they interact .

Learning through Technology: Recent Findings

This section reports on findings concerning the use of technology to support learning as studies indicate.

The new science of learning provides important guidelines, which highlight the role of technology in schools. For example, there are

... uses of technologies that can help students and teachers develop the competencies needed for the twenty first century. The new technologies provide

opportunities for creating environments that extend the possibility of “old” but still useful technologies such as books; blackboards; and linear one way communication media, such as radio and television shows – as well as offering new possibilities” (*How people learn*, p. 206).

The new science of learning additionally emphasizes that “Emerging technologies are leading to the development of many new opportunities to guide and enhance learning that were unimagined a few years ago” (*How people learn*, p. 4) as a result of their supportive effects. For example, according to the new science of learning teachers as well as students can nowadays use modern software programs to centralize and organize bodies of knowledge.

According to learning research, “these technologies also provide access to a vast array of information including digital libraries, data for analysis, and other people who provide information, feedback and inspiration” (*How people learn*, p. 207) when teachers use computer based activities to support learning.

Reeves (1998) refers to the application of technologies and media more specifically on the report *The impact of media and technology in schools*. This report summarizes the evidence for the effectiveness of media and technology in K-12 schools in English speaking countries such as Australia, Canada, The United Kingdom, and the United States of America. Reeves (1998) refers to technology as “any object or process of human origin that can be used to convey media media is all means of communication, whatever its format and it includes symbol systems such as print, graphics, animation, audio and motion pictures” (p. 2). Reeves (1998) widens the concept of media with respect to education as “symbol systems that teachers as well as students use to represent knowledge while he refers to technologies as tools that allow teachers and students to share their representations of knowledge” (p. 2). Both

technologies can be used as tutors in educational communications according to this author. Reeves (1998) states,

In educational communications, information or knowledge is encoded usually or verbally in the symbol systems (media) that are enabled by various technologies. For example, animation is a form of media that can be delivered to students via a variety of technologies such as the World Wide Web or computers” (p. 8).

Concerning computers, Reeves (1998) states,

Computer-based cognitive tools have been intentionally adapted or developed to function as intellectual partners to enable and facilitate critical thinking and higher order learning. Examples of cognitive tools are databases, spreadsheets, semantic networks, expert systems, communication software such as teleconferencing programs, on-line collaborative knowledge construction environments, multimedia/hypermedia construction software, and computer programming languages (p. 3).

Reeves (1998) reports findings concerning the impact of computer-based (CBI) in education. According to this author, computers have beneficial effects on learning because they can increase students’ motivation and they enable students to complete work in less time than other traditional approaches. Concerning the author’s view, it seems fair to say that students use computers in their learning activities for a variety of purposes since these tools are commonly required for assignments in their educational settings. For example, they use computers for designing graphics, calculating, writing or reading assignments and listening audio files among other activities. They even have fun with them when they use them for entertainment. Therefore, students are aware of computers’ applications, technological effects and benefits in these days.

Defining Computer Assisted Language Learning – CALL

This section examines Computer Assisted Language Learning – CALL. Several specialists state key aspects of CALL. These aspects include: CALL definitions and technological standards for the construction of optimal CALL environments.

Levy (1997) defines CALL as “the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching” (p. 1). In addition, Egbert (2005) states that CALL means, “using computers to support language teaching and learning in some way” (p. 3). Egbert and Hanson- Smith (1999) characterized CALL basis as “optimal, technology-enhanced language teaching and language environments”. According to Egbert (2005), this statement implies “language and content settings in which technology was used as effectively as possible to support learning” (p. 3). This author includes laptop computers, personal digital assistants, digital audio recorders, modem and cable Internet access among most important CALL technologies.

Davies (2005) states,

CALL is a term that came into favour in the early 1980s, replacing the older term CALI (Computer Assisted Language Instruction). The term CALI fell out of favour because it became associated with programmed learning, i.e. a teacher-centred rather than a learner centred approach that drew heavily on behaviourism. Throughout 1980s CALL widened its scope embracing the communicative approach and a range of new technologies. CALL now includes highly interactive and communicative support for listening, speaking, reading and writing, including extensive use of multimedia CD ROMs and the Internet”. (Graham, Davies, 2005 ¶ 8).

According to Richards, Platt and Webber (1985) the communicative approach is defined as,

... an approach to foreign or second language teaching that emphasizes that the goal for language learning is communicative competence. Teaching materials used with a communicative approach often: a) teach the language needed to express and understand different kinds of functions, such as requesting, describing, expressing likes and dislikes among others; b) are based on a notional functional syllabus or some other communicatively organized syllabus; c) emphasize the process of communication, such as using language appropriately in different kinds of situations; using language to perform different types of tasks, e.g. to solve puzzles, to get information, etc; using language for social interaction with other people. (p. 48)

There is evidently a strong connection between CALL and the communicative approach to English learning as CALL uses a range of Information Communication Technologies such as computers, the Internet, Classroom Management Systems, Software Learning Programs and multimedia programs among others for information transfer. These technologies support language learning for communicative purposes as they are tools students can use them for different learning purposes when they interact, access and process information through CALL activities. CALL activities enable language learners to engage cognitively when they listen, read, write and speak for communicative purposes in the foreign language. They allow them to access information, interact, collaborate and communicate in English.

Davies adds, “ Warschauer (1996) distinguishes three phases of CALL, illustrating the development of an increasing number of different ways in which the computer has been used in language learning and teaching. This may be useful as a starting point in considering essential pedagogical and methodological issues. Following there is a summary of the three phases distinguished by Warschauer (1996).

- “1. Behaviouristic: In this phase the computer plays the role of a tutor, serving mainly as a vehicle for delivering instructional materials to the learner.
2. Communicative: In this phase the computer is used for skill practice, but in a non-drill format and with a greater degree of student choice, control and interaction.
3. Integrative: This phase is marked by the introduction of two important innovations: (i) multimedia , (ii) the Internet. The main advantage of multimedia packages is that they enable reading, writing, listening and speaking to be combined in a single activity, with the learner exercising a high degree of control over the path that he/she follows through the learning materials. The Internet has numerous advantages, building on multimedia technology and in addition enabling both asynchronous and synchronous communication between learners and teachers. A range of new tasks is made possible” (Graham, Davies 2005, ¶ 3 &4)

Guiding Principles for Using Technologies in English Environments

Egbert (2005) describes five guidelines for using educational technology in language classrooms after compiling and summarizing them from educational technology literature. In summary, Egbert recommends that language teachers 1) Use technology to support the pedagogical goals of the class and curriculum rather than designing instruction to use the technology and to learn technology skills (a techno centric approach). 2) Make the technology accessible to all learners by considering learners’ learning styles and types of intelligence. 3) Use the technology as a tool that supports learning in a wide variety of ways. 4) Use the technology efficiently so that students can learn better or faster using the technology than using the tools that would ordinarily be available. 5) Use the technology efficiently in order to accomplish learning

goals with less time and work for teachers and learners” (Egbert, pp. 5, 6 & 7).

This research study concentrates on two of CALL technologies for English learning as stated before. These technologies are: a) Internet for web based English learning activities and, b) classroom management system for web based activities through collaborative English learning environments managed in Internet. Both technologies are studied to learn about their applications and their effects when teachers use web-based based activities to support and enhance students’ English learning through computers.

Internet for Educational Development

Teachers and students are now using Internet in a large number of educational environments worldwide for different purposes such as information access, communication exchange, knowledge construction collaboration and academic research among the most important purposes that Internet specialists highlight. For instance, three international experts on on-line learning, Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni (2001) describe the major impact of the Internet in academic environments when they point out the beneficial effects of contacts between students and professors in the industrialized countries when they use “the Internet to share ideas, conduct research and collaborate in the production of knowledge” (p.2). These authors state:

Many schools in the developed countries are now wired for the Internet, inspiring grassroots efforts to reform education to take better advantage of information technology..... Many developing countries rightly view the Internet as a potential tool for leapfrogging to higher stages of information access and economic development. (p. 2)

Internet for English Learning

Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni (2001) state: “three major areas that are being

reshaped by Internet are: communication and collaboration, reading and research and writing and publishing” (p. 8). Therefore, students can work on these areas to develop their literacy levels, communication skills and research expertise when they interact on the Internet as these authors suggest.

According to these specialists, the Internet can be very beneficial for students’ English learning. Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni (2001) state: “Language learning is most successful when it takes place in authentic, meaningful contexts”. Students on the Internet “communicate in a medium that is flexible, multimodal, constantly changing and connected to real life needs” (p. 7). Consequently, students can use this medium for authentic communication and interaction if they use Internet formats such as the e-mail and the World Wide Web that are acquiring new features for information and communication applications. According to Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni (2001), e-mail messages can include “hyperlinks to other information, thus becoming a form of hypertext” (p. 7). These authors add that hypertext and software for sending and receiving messages characterize the World Wide Web. Students can take advantage of these features for 24-hour information access, authentic communication and publishing among other uses. They state,

Mastery of Internet increases the personal power of teachers and students. It allows them to become autonomous lifelong learners who can find what they need when they need it and collaborate with others to help construct new knowledge. By mastery of the Internet, teachers and students can become shapers of the multimedia future. (Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni 2001, p. 8).

In summary, these researchers highlight “authenticity, literacy, interaction, vitality and empowerment” (p. 7) as five main reasons for using Internet for English teaching and integrating Internet activities into the English teaching/learning process as

previously stated in the introduction.

Learning Domains and the Use of Internet

Cognitive, social, affective and cultural domains demand optimal learning conditions to support the TL teaching/learning process according to Stern (2001). What is more, learners mostly focus their needs on these domains when they write about their course learning expectations. Therefore, it would be advisable to focus on these domains to provide for learners' needs when they learn in Internet.

Concerning cognitive engagement, learning gives learners learning opportunities through which they can participate in task solving situations and as a result, engage in cognitive processes such as induction, deduction, contrast, inference, and analysis among others when they communicate through meaningful and purposeful tasks. The more advanced the level is, the more complex these cognitive processes are. In addition, this approach is likely to have motivating effects in learners' social and cultural interaction since learners are able to participate in communicative pair or group work activities either in class or in the Internet collaborative learning environment.

The Internet for Communication and Information Exchange

The Internet has undoubtedly become an indispensable communication medium for information exchange for academic purposes. For example, students regularly use the net to send e-mails when they contact partners or teachers, to do research and access it to do on-line assignments among other activities. To this respect, Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni (2001) state: "Internet encompasses many different ways of communicating and exchanging information. For the most part, though, they can be categorized as asynchronous computer-mediated communication, synchronous-mediated communication, and hypertext" (p. 2).

Asynchronous Computer-Mediated Communication

The electronic mail or e-mail is the most common form of asynchronous computer mediated communication according to Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni (2001). They define asynchronous computer mediated communication as “communication that takes place in a delayed fashion; in other words, the people communicating do not need to be sitting at the computer at the same time” (p. 2). They explain that this type of communication implies that “ messages are somehow deposited to be read later” (p. 2). These specialists add that students can use e-mails for different purposes such as sending simple texts or exchange formatted documents (including word processed documents, sound files, pictures, computer software, and even full motion video) as attachments (p. 3).

Students can exchange e-mails one to one or many to many through e-mail discussion lists. They add that “ on these lists, which can include anywhere from a handful of participants to tens of thousands, any participant can send a message that will automatically be forwarded to all others, thus facilitating group discussion” (p. 3). Egbert (2005) adds:

... electronic lists called listservs after a piece of popular proprietary software used to set up and run a list, are e-mail posting services created to facilitate the exchange of information. When e-mail is sent to a mailing list, it is automatically broadcast to everyone who is subscribed to the list. An example is La Trobe University’s Student Project List (<http://sl-lists.net/>). (p. 66)

Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni (2001) state that students also use asynchronous computer-mediated communication when they use “ bulletin boards accessed through the World Wide Web ” (p. 3). Students post their messages in bulletin boards in threaded form (i.e. organized by topic) on the site rather than in chronological

order as in e-mails or in e-mail discussion lists. . They use bulletin boards as members of collaborative learning environments to interact in virtual space, for example, by participating in discussion forums on particular issues, posting contributions about different topics and reading bulletin board news.

Synchronous- Mediated Communication

Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni (2001) refer to synchronous computer - mediated communication as real time communication for students sitting at the same time. According to these authors,” this type of communication takes place live as on the telephone as messages are sent instantly. Communication can be either one to one or many to many as with asynchronous communication” (p, 3). These specialists state, “ Internet-based chat is the most common type of synchronous computer-mediated communication which takes place in chat rooms found in Internet” (p. 4). Talk City, <http://www.talkcity.com> or the discussion forums found at Dave’s ESL Café, <http://eslcafe.com> are included among their examples of chat rooms.

Almeida (2002) defines chat “ a two-way form of computer-mediated communication (CMC), a dialogue in real time as we keyboard or speak our words, an on-line conversation between two or more people”. She refers to “ Tapped In <<http://www.tappedin.org/new>> and Yahoo Messenger <http://messenger.yahoo.com>> as two Web-based chat tools with different scopes and audiences”. She describes both tools and examines main differences between them. She states,

While Tapped In caters to a more specific and restricted group - people from the world of education -Yahoo Messenger is targeted to the general public.

Nevertheless, it can provide a level of privacy similar to that in a cyber office at Tapped In by enabling private conferences to which guests are invited, thus avoiding the danger of undesirable interferences. From a user standpoint, Tapped

It is free and easy to log into without need to install software. Yahoo Messenger is easy to download, install, log into and use (p.3).

Almeida (2002) highlights the advantages and disadvantages of using chat as a tool for maximizing English teaching for communicative purposes. She states that, chat, a very appealing device for students, can enhance language learning because it enables them to work with people in real time outside the classroom walls. Chatting can also contribute to language learning and teaching when instructors enable students to carry out purposeful and meaningful interaction through interviews, guest lecturers and class discussions through chat exchanges. Chat exchanges can be included in the class syllabus to build up a communication network that allows students to interact, collaborate or exchange information once teachers set conditions for chat programs. Concerning other advantages of chat applications for students' skill development, Almeida (2002) states,

... collaborative learning and teamwork and group skills development, increased computer literacy, the development of communicative skills (carrying on a conversation, interviewing and negotiating meaning), and development of social and socialization skills and proper etiquette (greeting others, introducing oneself, leave taking, stating and reinforcing one's own ideas, interacting politely and appropriately, showing respect and being responsible, making choices, helping, coaching, etc.)..... chat can also help students develop other skills that are essential in the active world, such as personal skills (independence and autonomy), interpersonal skills (asking, listening, interviewing, discussing, debating, suggesting, negotiating, helping) and organizational skills (setting objectives, time and project management) (p. 6).

Almeida (2002) outlines the disadvantages of using chat such as:

... language, project/session management and technical problems. The abbreviated, oversimplified, telegraph-type language that is coming more and more into use nowadays, especially among the younger generations, is obviously related to the new communication media such as email, instant-messaging, and cellular phones. The tendency - or is it rapidly becoming the norm? - is for minimum effort in minimum time': abbreviating everything so as to write the shortest text possible in the shortest time (p.7).

Hypertext

Additionally students use the Internet to access the endless source of information of the World Wide Web or www when they do research for assignments in their curricular programs' subjects. According to Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni (2001) " the Internet is more than a communication medium- it is also a worldwide repository of linked multimedia documents, brought together on the World Wide Web" (p. 4).

The glossary of Internet terms defines the www as " the universe of hypertext servers or servers that serve web pages to web browsers"

<http://www.matisse.net/files/glossary.html#www>. Concerning this definition, Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni (2001) add that the " World Wide Web is based on the principles of hypertext, a non-linear, linked or layered form of information organization whereby documents in a database are connected via hyperlinks" (p. 4).

March (2005) does not agree with Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni, he asserts, Although the web is like a superhighway of information when seen as a source of data, facts, and figures, this misses more powerful aspects. More than information, the Web is about people, ideas and sharing..... Evidence for this can be seen in the Web's ancestry. Long before the Web and even the Internet,

something called ARPAnet connected researchers via a communications network (the name denoted its funding source: the Department of Defence's Advanced Research Projects Agency)..... When the Internet came on-line, this sharing and collegiality carried on from the military sphere to higher education. With the birth of the Web's friendly user interface, the world has joined in, with everyone from primary school classrooms to rock bands and law firms wanted to connect with their communities". (¶ 4)

The Internet for Collaborative Web Based Learning Activities

Dodge (1995) at San Diego State University developed the WebQuest strategy in 1995. His goal was to help teachers integrate the web into the classroom regarding the multiple benefits offered by the World Wide Web in terms of information access, knowledge construction, communication and cognitive development. Dodge created a map to show the design process of WebQuests as provided by

<http://edweb.sdsu.edu/webquest/Process/WebQuestDesignProcess.html>

Dodge teamed up with professor Tom March to create the first WebQuests and put them on-line for teachers and students to use. March quotes Dodge when he defines WebQuests as "A WebQuest is an inquiry-oriented activity in which some or all of the information that learners interact with comes from resources on the Internet, optionally supplemented with videoconferencing" (¶ 1).

In another article, entitled, "What WebQuests Are (Really)" March explains how WebQuests can use scaffolding to enhance learning:

... a scaffolded learning structure that uses links to essential resources on the World Wide Web and an authentic task to motivate students' investigation of a central, open ended question, development of individual expertise and participation in a final group process that attempts to transform newly acquired

information into a more sophisticated understanding...the main critical attribute of a WebQuest is to facilitate this transformation of information into a newly constructed, assimilated understanding. A WebQuest prompts students to perform beyond their current cognitive skill set through scaffolding or procedural facilitation. Such scaffolding is at the heart of the WebQuest model. In fact, the integrated scaffolding of specific research-based strategies is “what happens” in the mysterious “black box” or transformation. The main strategies that WebQuests prompt are: Motivation theory, Questioning-Schema Theory, Constructivism, Differentiated Learning, Simulated Learning, Thematic Instruction, Authentic Assessment, Overt Metacognition and Learner centred psychological principles. (¶ 4 &5).

WebQuests challenge students to complete Internet research tasks in short or long term planned quests. They set research questions that engage students cognitively when they access interrelated links to complete research tasks to develop higher order critical development. According to Dodge (1997), there are two categories of WebQuests: Short Term and Long Term Web Quests as described at http://webquest.sdsu.edu/about_webquests.html. The first type of WebQuest correlates web activities around a topic while the second expands this topic to other study fields to induce students' collaborative work. Instructional goals vary from short term to long term WebQuests in terms of critical thinking development. In short term WebQuests, students are expected to acquire and integrate knowledge in two or three class periods once they develop topic understanding. In contrast, students are expected to engage in more complex thinking operations in long term WebQuests when they analyse information and they, therefore extend, refine and transform knowledge. These quests can last between one week and a month in a classroom setting.

Attributes of Short Term and Long Term WebQuests

Dodge (1997) classifies attributes of Short Term and Long Term WebQuests in two categories: critical and non-critical (p. 1).

Dodge (1997) has emphasized the importance of learners' time management when he states " WebQuests of either short or long duration are deliberately designed to make the best use of a learner's time". He adds that " there is questionable educational benefit in having learners surfing the net without a clear task in mind, and most schools must ration student connect time severely" (p.1).

This specialist refers to essential structural components of well-designed WebQuests when he states: "...to achieve efficiency and clarity of purpose, WebQuests should contain at least the following parts: 1) An introduction that sets the stage and provides some background information. 2) A task that is doable and interesting. 3) A set of information sources needed to complete the task. Many (though not necessarily all) of the resources are embedded in the WebQuest document itself anchors pointing to information on the World Wide Web. Information sources might include web documents, experts available via e-mail or real-time conferencing, searchable databases on the net, and books and other documents physically available in the learner's setting".

Dodge has links to search engines useful for finding special categories of information, e.g. literature in the public domain, primary source articles, images, biographies, maps, country profiles. For example, <http://www.ebay.com> is a link in Bernie Dodge's WebQuest. This link can be very useful for Business English (BE) students as eBay is presently considered as the world's largest virtual trading community for a wide variety of product ranges. As EBay sells products in a virtual auction or buy it now format, Business English teachers and students can use this link for a multiple variety of purposes during research. Some of these might include:

checking products' prices. For example, students can visit "Virgin Atlantic" to search for air flight tickets prices when doing research for air travel companies; collecting information about companies and/or products in E-bay to write short profiles, completing BE vocabulary exercises, i.e. they can browse specific products USP – unique selling points. BE students can also use eBay's searcher to study companies' marketing strategies in Internet.

- 1) A description of the process the learners should go through accomplishing the task. The process should be broken out in clearly described steps.
- 2) Some guidance on how to organize the information acquired. This can take the form of guiding questions, or directions to complete organizational frameworks such as timelines, concept maps or cause-and-effect diagrams as described by Marzano (1988, 1992) and Clarke (1990).
- 3) A conclusion that brings closure to the quest, reminds the learners about what they've learned, and perhaps encourages them to extend the experience to other domains". (p. 1)

Non-Critical Attributes of Short Term WebQuests

According to Dodge (1997) some other non-critical attributes of a WebQuest include these:

- 1) WebQuests are most likely to be group activities, although one could imagine solo quests that might be applicable in distance education or library settings.
- 2) WebQuests might be enhanced by wrapping motivational elements around the basic structure by giving the learners a role to play (e.g. scientist, detective, reporter), simulated personage to interact with via e-mail, and a scenario to work within.
- 3) WebQuests can be designed within a single discipline or they can be

interdisciplinary. Given that designing effective interdisciplinary instruction is more of a challenge than designing for a single content area". (p. 1)

Comparing Attributes of Short and Long Term WebQuests

The table below compares attributes Short Term WebQuests and Long Term WebQuests according to Dodge (1997).

Table 1

A Comparison of Short Term and Long Term WebQuests

<u>Attributes</u>	<u>Short Term WebQuests</u>	<u>Long Term WebQuests</u>
Time	One to three class periods	Between one week and a month in a classroom setting.
Dimension of Thinking	Student is expected to acquire new knowledge and incorporate it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student is expected to generate his own criteria after processing different information sources. • Creativity and originality can be important characteristics. • Thinking skills that a longer term WebQuest activity might require include these : Comparing, Classifying, Inducing, Deducing, Analysing errors, Constructing support, Abstracting and Analysing perspectives.
Student interaction	Student interacts with material in a single content.	Student interacts with material in different study fields.

Filamentality in Internet

Filamentality is defined as "a fill-in the-blank tool that guides you through picking a topic, searching the web, gathering good Internet links, and turning them into on-line learning activities" (¶ 1).

Filamentality is a tool available in Blue Web'n. This is an "on-line library of outstanding Internet sites categorized by subject, grade level, and format (tools, references, lessons, hotlists, resources, tutorials, activities and projects)" (¶ 1).

Filamentality's fundamental principle is to promote web-based learning by allowing teachers as well as students to create different types of Internet activities. They can access activities from any connected computer. All these activities facilitate work on Internet as they organize and structure the world of information provided by the World Wide Web in Internet. Every activity has a specific purpose and therefore, teachers as well as students can maximize their Internet work and obtain better results. Otherwise working on the net will certainly be too time consuming or unfocused as stated by on-line learning specialists.

Filamentality's menu allows users to start a new topic or return to an existing topic. Teachers can select a format from the menu to create an on-line activity. Formats include: hotlists, scrapbooks, hunts, samplers and WebQuests to meet teachers and students' needs.

The table below groups formats and main purposes of web activities available at Filamentality webpage <http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/bluewebn/apptypes.html>

Table 2

Types of Filamentality's On-line Activities Formats

<u>Type</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
Hot list	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a menu of sites
Subject Sampler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a community of learners to gather opinions about controversial/ intriguing topics by grouping sites around a specific topic. • It acknowledges users' opinions on a specific issue.
Treasure Hunt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a search through several web pages. • Teachers make a list of different sites. They pose questions in Filamentality and students search for information about hard facts.
Multimedia Scrapbook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a database of resources such as videos, pictures, etc. that can be downloaded by teachers as well as students by copying pasting them.
WebQuest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create reasoning activities that develop critical thinking about controversial or current events. • They can be introductory or full web quests. • At the end students can present information to world experts

Next section deals with Course Management Systems for web based educational purposes. It reports on the implementation of these systems for on-line learning activities in educational environments in the United States and the Netherlands after initial application stages.

Course Management Systems

A Course Management System (CMS) is also known as Learning Management Systems (LMS). “It is a software application or Web-based technology used to plan, implement and, assess a specific learning process. Typically, course management systems provide an instructor with a way to create and deliver content, monitor student participation, and assess student performance. A course management system or learning management system may also provide students with the ability to use interactive features such as threaded discussions, video conferencing, and discussion forums”

SearchCIO.com

Craig (2005), Director of Academic Computing Services at the College of New Rochelle in the United States, described course management systems in a study of the first phase of the implementation of a course system at college. According to this specialist,

Course management systems are relatively new arrivals in higher education learning environments and have gained a substantial following in the United States. The attractions are obvious: a standardized interface, an integrated suite of communication and collaboration tools, and the option to integrate these programs with administrative computing systems offer capabilities and features vastly different from the days when individual faculty Web pages were the

primary source of using technology in the curriculum...over a third of courses in higher education currently make use of course management tool (p.1).

He names Blackboard and WebCT as the most successful classroom management systems. He additionally quotes Matthew Pittinsky (2003), when he, as one of the founders of Blackboard, described classroom management systems and argued “They will be instrumental to focusing on the needs of students and the establishment of ‘ubiquitous web communities’ that will be the foundations of future learning environment” AACE Digital Library (p. 1).

Classroom Management Systems for Web-Based Learning Support

The Centre for Development of Advanced Computing in Mumbai provides a typology of web-based environments for on-line learning. This typology includes Blackboard, WebCT and Nicenet among classroom management systems commonly used for educational purposes.

According to this typology, “Blackboard is entirely web based and users do not need to install client software. It offers a number of interesting features to the instructor and students. It also allows all users to join the Blackboard communities where they may share their teaching and learning experiences. It also has assessment tools that help the instructors to create assignments and quizzes automatically” Educational Technology Group (p. 3).

Egbert (2005) also mentions Blackboard when she writes about discussion forums as communication and collaboration tools. This specialist states,

Commercial courseware packages such as Blackboard include electronic discussion forums that can provide asynchronous written conversation. Benefits of discussion forums include allowing students more time to think before they

post and posting in themed threads that may be easier to read and follow than chats”. (p. 66)

She refers to activities using on-line resources such as Blackboard to establish reading circles where “... students are required to post a weekly reading reflection to their class’ on-line conference. They are working with students at two other schools who are reading the same articles, as they are each week” (p. 63). According to her, these types of activities “support many kinds of communication and collaboration between on-site and off-site groups. (p. 62)

The Educational Technology Group of the National Centre for Software Technology at The Centre for Development of Advanced Computing in Mumbai includes WebCT among Web Based Environments for On-line Learning. Its typology of web based environments indicates that educators of British Columbia built WebCT, a web based tool for educational environments. This tool allows users to interact through the web for educational purposes. WebCT provides users course utilities, course components and tools that allow instructors to control the appearance of the course, manage students’ information, transfer course files to WebCT server. They can also use “e-mail, discussion forum, chat and whiteboard to communicate with students, post information and support students’ learning”. (p.3)

The Educational Technology Group of the National Centre for Software Technology (NCST) describes the Nicenet Internet Classroom Assistant (ICA) as another web based teaching tool. NCST(2000-2001) states, “ As the name suggests this Internet Classroom Assistant acts merely as an assistant to the course. ICA is browser based and can be use by anyone for free. ICA may be used as a supplement to an existing on-line course or to the traditional classroom course ” (p. 4). This tool was created and developed by Nathan Dintenfass and Ben Archibald who founded a non-

profit organization of Internet specialists called Nicenet. These Internet specialists developed this educational web based software system to support academic projects, distance learning programs and on-line learning environments. The Nicenet ICA provides professors and students a menu that has Conferencing, Links, Documents, Class Members, Calendar, Class members and Messages among some of its options. Teachers administrate this system once they create a class. They can register students or they can give students the class key to log in. The Nicenet ICA can be used as a communication tool as the system enables users to access information, collaborate and interact on-line for different purposes. For example, either teachers or students can post messages to threaded topics in Conferencing. Conferencing is a discussion forum that the Nicenet members can use to post and reply to issues related to the main topic. Link Sharing is another of the menu options. This option allows users to have a directory of the most useful web pages. The Nicenet ICA has also a messaging system that functions as intra e-mail among class members that can send and receive e-mails through the Messages function. Documents can be used to post texts that aren't related to assignments. Users can also use the course calendar that functions as an agenda to program events or assignments and the option Class members that gives a list of the registered group members.

Implementation, Development and Assessment of Course Management Systems

Craig, (2005), De Boer & Collis (2005) point out aspects related to the implementation, development and assessment of www-based course management systems. These specialists have gradually incorporated classroom management systems into their practices and assessed effects after their initial implementation phases. According to these specialists, research has revealed effects of the adaptation of these tools in their educational settings and as a result, has maximized their implementation,

integration, support and development. The next section describes how classroom management systems have been implemented.

Implementation of ANGEL, a CMS: Phases & Effects

Craig (2005) wrote on the effects of ANGEL, (A New Global Environment for Learning) as a course management system implemented at the College of New Rochelle. Research collected participants' impressions of ANGEL applications through a survey that was developed through interactions with teachers and students according to Craig (p.3) Participants included Faculty and students. They answered on-line surveys about most useful features of ANGEL, course learning importance and program learning difficulty after the first stage of the implementation of this CMS through the Academic Computing website. According to Craig (2005) research has provided new insights into strategies for integrating technology in learning. The findings indicate that faculty and students perceive and use the learning tools differently, though the surface acceptance of the tool masks the discomfort of the changes in the teaching learning paradigm.

In addition, Craig (2005) refers to subsequent phases of the implementation project at the College of New Rochelle. Craig (2005) asserts that the next phases of the research will face challenges, such as development of faculty technology skills, and keeping pace with a tech-savvy generation, which is "At home in a world of peer-to-peer networking, Web design, and near constant availability through e-mail and messaging applications, will they see faculty as essentially non-communicative regardless of how quickly their skills develop?"(p.5)

The Adaptation and Use of TeleTOP

De Boer and Collis (2005) state " At the Faculty of Educational Science and Technology, University of Twente, in Enschede / The Netherlands, the entire faculty is

involved not only in the use of a new WWW-based course management system (called TeleTOP) but more fundamentally in a new educational approach. In addition we are working with other faculties to support the same progression” (p. 237)

De Boer and Collis (2005) describe the TeleTOP Method and implementation model for the use of the TeleTOP course support environment for educational purposes. The TeleTOP was implemented at two different types of Faculties at the University: The Faculty of Educational Science and the new Telematics Faculty.

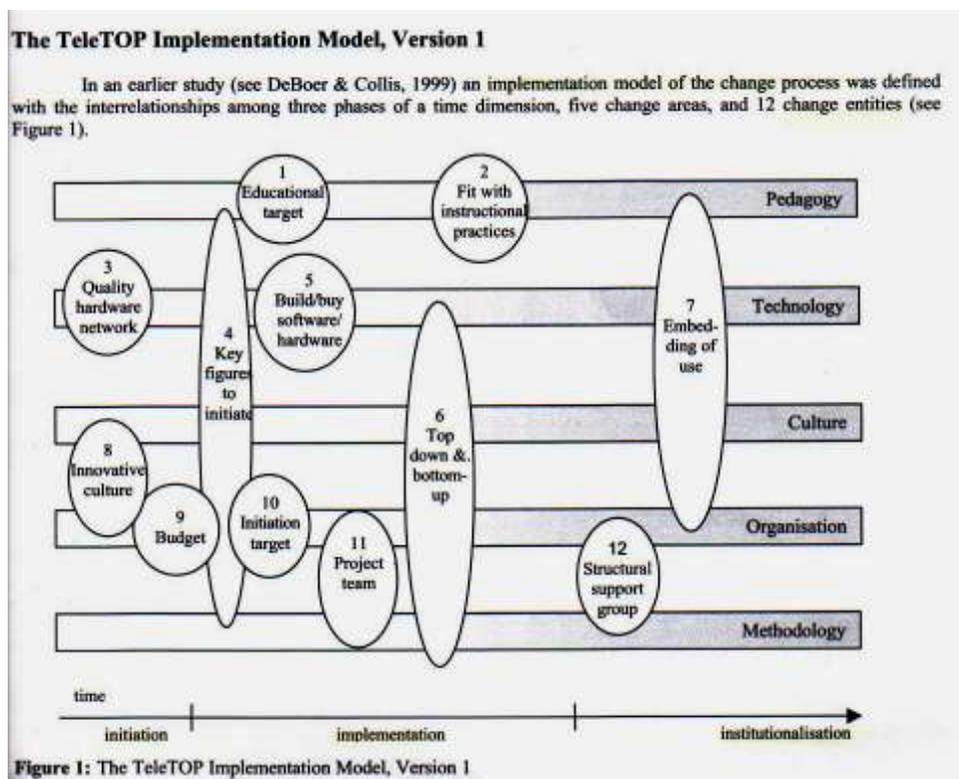
De Boer and Collis, (2005) state “Telematics is the European name for the branch of computer science involving the combination of information and communication technologies (in particular, related to the Internet and the World Wide Web (WWW)” (p. 237). De Boer and Collis (2005) use the term tele-learning to refer to the application of telematics applications to the teaching and learning process. In their definition, “ tele- learning does not necessarily imply distance education but instead emphasizes the increased flexibility that can come to the teaching and learning process through the combination of new possibilities offered by the WWW and new ways of teaching and learning” (p.237). These researchers also refer to this term as the combination of new possibilities offered by the WWW. Collis (1998) adds, “Our core ideas are extending the levels of activity and engagement of our students and extending the impact and influence of our good instructors” (237).

According to De Boer and Collis (2005), the Faculty of Educational Science and Technology made a decision in 1997. This decision involved a pedagogical and technological re-design process. The re-design process was gradual. After the first year and a half of implementation they began to influence other faculties. For example, they transferred the system and method to the Faculty of Telematics described as a technical faculty with many engineering and mathematical courses.

De Boer and Collis (2005) add that they needed “a technical platform and an implementation model that would fit a variety of courses and instructors” (p. 237). They built their own system because there was no existing system to meet the core set of requirements for the WWW- based course management system. This system was based upon a Lotus database. They also state, “However, no matter how elegant a system is, instructors must use it, and administration must choose to support its use and thus make resources available, the technical infrastructure already in the faculty must handle it, and software and hardware must be available” (p. 237).

According to De Boer and Collis (2005) there were three phases of a time dimensions in the TeleTOP implementation model: Initiation, Implementation and Institutionalisation. The model involved change entities and areas as indicated in the figure of the TeleTOP Implementation model Version 1 provided by these authors.

Figure 1: The TeleTop Implementation Model, according to DeBoer & Collis, 1999.



Requirements for Pedagogically Appropriate Use of Internet Classroom Management Systems

Among foreign institutions, The College of New Rochelle in the USA and the University of Twente, in Enschede in the Netherlands, for instance, have contributed valuable information concerning the incorporation of CMSs in their educational environments. Both institutions have implemented, developed and assessed course management systems in their educational environments as reported by Craig (2005) from the College of New Rochelle and De Boer and Collis (2005) at the University of Twente. Their studies imply key aspects of the incorporation, implementation and development of course management systems for educational purposes. These specialists have made valuable observations about the application of CMSs in learners' digital learning. They highlight the beneficial effects of CMSs to innovate the teaching-learning process when technological approaches are incorporated into curricular plans. In addition to reporting on CMSs implementation projects, they have also given perspectives for the adoption of CMSs as a result of their experiences. For example, De Boer and Collis (1999) pointed out the interrelationships among three phases of a time dimension: initiation, implementation and institutionalisation. They identified five change areas and twelve entities through these phases. Pedagogy, Technology, Culture, Organization and Methodology were top areas of the TeleTOP Implementation Model, Version 1. Educational target; Fit with instructional practices; Quality hardware network; Key figures to initiate; Build/buy software/hardware; Top down/bottom up; Embedding of use; Innovative Culture; Budget, Initiation target; Project team and Structural support group were among the twelve entities at different levels along the implementation process.

Adopting On-line Learning Programs Through Course Management Systems: Pre-planning Strategies at the University of South Carolina

Cooke-Plagwitz, Mimms & Hines (2005) examine, analyse and describe pre-planning strategies for on-line learning programs that use course management systems for the educational practice. These authors make valuable recommendations to optimise on-line learning programs through a course management system. Cooke-Plagwitz, Mimms & Hines' recommendations to optimise the effects of on-line learning programs are presented in lines below.

- 1) There should be preliminary steps to find out faculty criteria concerning web-enhanced or on-line learning programs.
- 2) Faculty assessment could inquire about computer interest, computer access and computer competence level among important technological aspects.
- 3) There should be an analysis of the educational value of on-line learning programs. For this purpose, it is recommendable to discover which could be a genuine, free paying audience for on-line education.
- 4) Financial planning needs including funding for staff learning.
- 5) Following a simple plan at the initiation stage to optimise the adoption of the on-line learning program
- 6) Recommendations for the first part of the plan include: blending strategies, introspective thinking, building basic capacity and fitness, professional development and establishing study groups. This plan will allow instructors to share knowledge of technologies, to analyse the educational benefits of new technologies, to make decisions focused on student learning and/or curricular changes.

- 7) Recruit technological coaches.
- 8) Focus on criteria for effective teaching and learning to support the system. (p. 754).

The next section looks at research on on-line reading comprehension in educational environments in Europe, USA and Canada.

Study of On-line Reading Comprehension

The section examines scientific research on Second Language (SL) on-line reading comprehension in educational contexts in Europe, USA and Canada. Researchers have investigated important aspects of the on-line reading process development to maximize English learners' learning progress through Computer Assisted Language Learning/ CALL activities.

This research reviewed here focuses on the process of on-line reading comprehension involving students from different levels of language proficiency, learning purposes, cultural and educational backgrounds in language programs in universities in Europe, USA and Canada. This section is divided into four parts. The first part examines differences between traditional SL reading comprehension and SL on-line reading comprehension after observing students' reading behaviour in multimedia environments. The second part examines different aspects of the SL reading comprehension process such as on-line reading comprehension, different types of readers and the use of supplementary reading aids in multimedia environments. The third part treats problems affecting SL on-line reading comprehension, and finally, the fourth part suggests applications for maximising SL on-line reading comprehension skills and pedagogical implications for English learning.

Reading Comprehension – An Overview

Chun & Plass (1997) after reviewing several authors on the topic of reading

comprehension state:

The process of reading comprehension in the first language (L1) is described in current models as an active process of constructing mental representations of the text information. This involves first the construction of a mental representation of a text's linguistic surface structure, then a construction of a proportional representation of the semantics of a text, and eventually the construction of a mental model of the subject matter described in the text with the help of existing cognitive schemata (Carrel, 1984b; Johnson-Laird, 1983; Schnotz & Grzondziel, 1996; van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). (p. 5)

Reading comprehension can be seen as the ability to process new information contained in a reading text. Readers use different kinds of texts according to their reading purposes. Some examples of reading texts are stories, articles and essays among others. These texts are usually components of printed material that readers choose when they decide to read. In the classroom teachers assess students' reading comprehension through questions, Yes/No statements and reading cloze tests among others. These tools assess the extent readers understand new information and as a result, generate new knowledge.

SL Reading and SL On-line Reading

According to studies on the process of reading a second language, SL reading comprehension implies the reader's ability to transfer information from a text to his/her mind after processing this information through the second language. SL reading presupposes that readers interact actively with the text by decoding graphic symbols such as letters, words, sentences, phrases, paragraphs and punctuation marks contained in the text information. Anderson (1999) states: "information is processed from letter features to letters to words to meanings" (p. 2).

What is more, SL reading comprehension requires processing new information through inferences which link events in a text or relate text information to prior knowledge to anticipate events. SL reading comprehension activates mental processes to discriminate information, store it and as a result generate new knowledge. To this respect, Stanovich (1980) explains that “the fluent reader is viewed as being actively engaged in hypothesis testing as he proceeds through the text” in the top bottom reading model” (p. 34).

Another way that SL reading comprehension can be understood is based on the readers’ dynamic interaction with the reading text; activation of reading skills to process new information, application of reading strategies and identification of clear reading goals in text based reading activities in an interactive reading approach. Chun & Plass (1997) state:

An interactive approach to reading is one that takes into account the contributions of both lower-level processing skills (identification or decoding) and higher-level comprehension and reading skills (interpretation and inferencing). It is widely believed that comprehension results from these interactive variables operating simultaneously rather than sequentially. (p.4)

Grabe (1991) additionally emphasizes, “A description of reading has to account for the notions that fluent reading is rapid, purposeful, interactive, comprehending, flexible and gradually developing”. (p.378)

Additionally, Lomicka (1998, p. 42) cites Lyman-Hager and a team from Penn State’s Educational Technology Services as contributors to a wider understanding of L2 reading. This author points out that Davis & Lyman-Hager (1997) define reading comprehension as a result of multiple interacting factors: word recognition (understanding individual word meanings), phonemic /graphemic decoding (recognising

words from aural or visual characters), syntactic feature recognition (understanding grammatical relationships), intratextual perception (linking statements to those that precede or follow), prior knowledge (awareness of knowledge brought to text) and metacognition (awareness of readers' own cognitive processes during the reading process).

On the other hand on-line reading comprehension in SL teaching moves from text based reading activities to computer based ones. These activities can be done through multimedia tools such as software SL language programs, the World Wide Web, Internet classroom assistants, e-mails and on-line bulletin boards among others. According to Yankelovich, Meyrowitz, & van Dam, (1985):

... when students use hypertexts, they can browse through linked, cross-referenced, annotated text in an orderly but sequential manner. They process information in hypertexts that link information through a corpus of related material. They can annotate existing texts, and take notes that point readers either to bibliographic data or to the body of reference material. (p. 18)

On-line readers process SL information in ways described above but they also have an increased ability to interrelate information as they read through virtual space in computer-based activities. In this sense, on-line readers' reading comprehension requires extra reading abilities such as the ability to browse through interlinked texts and the ability to categorise and sub-categorise information found in web menus among others. On-line readers do not only process text based information but they are likely to engage in complex mental operations while understanding and acquiring new information in virtual space as shown by research presented below

L2 on-line reading hasn't been as much explored as L1 reading. Concerning this point, Chun and Plass (1997) state that "most of current views of L2 reading have been

shaped by the solid and extensive body of research by cognitive psychologists on L1 reading comprehension as Grabe pointed out in 1991". What is more, this exploration has been supported by on L1 reading theories in studies of on-line reading comprehension in computers. For example, in a study of the effects of glossing in on-line reading comprehension, Lomicka (1998) cites the explanation-based theory that proposes that successful comprehension hinges on the generation of casual inferences according to researchers (Trabasso & Magliano, 1996 and Trabasso and Suh, 1993). Lomicka states, " a casual inference connects events in a text at a local or global level, allowing for integration of the text and leading to both comprehension and coherence" (p. 4). She then correlates the fundamental role of causal inferencing in comprehension with levels of mental representation of a text that were identified by Van Dijk & Kintsch in 1983. According to Lomicka "these levels occur during comprehension and interrelate linguistic processes, propositional meanings of textual constituents and integration of text base with background and other world knowledge" (p. 4). She concludes that:

... the on-line generation of causal inferences, integrating prior text information and causal antecedents across sentences with background and/or world knowledge, leads to the production of a coherent situation model and implies that comprehension is achieved at many different levels, not solely at the text base or surface level". (p. 4)

In addition, Tierney, Kieffer, Whalin, Desai, Gale Moss, Harris, Hopper (2003) state,

In recent years, with the advent of computers and innovative software enormous strides have been made in the evolution of textual spaces. Among the most intriguing advances has been the generation of software that allows for the

development of texts that are multi-layered, multimedia-based, and non-sequential—text that appears to have the potential for changing how we learn, what we learn, and the nature of community and communication”... As students create texts, they develop spaces for themselves and for the others. Just as an architect designs spaces in concert with the resources in hand, the environment, and certain goals, learners are constantly engaged in spaces that they create from their resources, frameworks, machinery at hand, and goals. (p. 2)

SL readers and SL on-line readers

SL readers, who do not use the Internet to access information, may use printed material contained in books, magazines, journals and newspapers among other print sources to process information in L2. In other words, readers process text based information. Individual reading skills, background knowledge, and proficiency level are important aspects that determine how they process text. Concerning this point, Chun and Plass (1997) state: “Beginning L2 readers are thought to focus on low-level process strategies (e.g. word identification), whereas more proficient readers shift attention to more abstract conceptual abilities and make better use of background knowledge; that is, they use textual information to confirm and predict the information in the text (Coady, 1997)” (p. 5). In addition, L2 readers may be influenced by other factors according to them. These factors may be as stated by these researchers : “a) Differences in background knowledge, that is, L2 readers start with a smaller L2 vocabulary knowledge than L1 speakers possess when beginning to read in their native language, but L2 readers start with greater world knowledge; b) differences in language processing, that is, the transfer effects or interference from L1 to L2 on the orthographic, lexical, syntactic, and discourse levels (cf. Koda 1993); and c) differences in the social context concerning literacy, that is expectations about readings and how

text can be used (Grabe, 1991)". Concerning students' background knowledge, Lomicka (1998) states: "Martinez-Lage suggests that student interaction with text facilitates understanding because students learn not only about language, but learn with language, thus promoting active reading". (p. 3)

In contrast, SL on-line readers have access to and may use the WWW for information access, collaboration, research purposes and ideas exploration. Tierney, Kieffer, Whalin, Desai, Gale Moss, Harris, Hopper (2003) state,

... hypertext allows for flexible exploration of ideas across several layers simultaneously. The set of navigational tools available to the developer allow for the development of intertextual linkages that suggest a view of the readers' engagement that is both multimodal and multilayered as well as menu like. (p. 7)

On-line readers may also integrate verbal and visual information in multimedia environments as investigated by Chun and Plass (1997). These researchers cited Mayer (1997) when they referred to text comprehension with multimedia. According to Mayer, "The generative theory of multimedia learning views the learner as knowledge constructor, who actively selects relevant words and images from the information presented, organizes the words and images into coherent mental representations, and integrates the newly constructed visual representations with one another". (p.8)

The table below illustrates a comparison of the traditional SL readers and on-line readers after examining research on Second Language (SL) on-line reading comprehension in foreign universities (Chun, 1997; Plass, 1997; Lomicka, 1998). The comparison focuses on two approaches for reading activities. The first one uses the traditional reading approach in text based reading activities and the second one uses computer based reading activities to acquire new information after several studies looked at the reading and on-line reading processes. The table describes differences

between SL readers and SL on-line readers pointed out in studies involving SL and SL on-line reading comprehension development.

Table 3

A Comparison of SL Readers and SL On-line Readers

SL Readers

SL on-line readers

<p>use text based reading.</p> <p>are limited to print and their own cognitive processes.</p> <p>tend to read sequentially</p>	<p>use computer-based readings</p> <p>may use advanced reading skills to link information</p> <p>can use images, sounds or animations.</p> <p>make more decisions and choices when negotiating meaning through hypertext.</p> <p>use multimedia annotations.</p> <p>can use textual spaces to read through non-sequential texts.</p>
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The next table indicates similar characteristics shared by traditional and on-line readers pointed out by specialists (Chun, 1997; Plass, 1997; Lomicka, 1998) as a result of on on-line reading comprehension studies in international multimedia environments. Their studies examine the SL reading comprehension process, cognitive processes involved in reading and learning processes with multimedia.

Table 4

Similarities in Traditional and On-line SL Readers

SL readers:

- become autonomous when they have to search for and read new information independently.
- identify personal reading goals and expectations
- develop cognitive processes such as inferring and associating
- transfer L1 skills and strategies easing their reading process
- may be influenced by differences in background knowledge
- start with a smaller L2 vocabulary knowledge than L1 speakers in the early stages of reading
- start with greater world knowledge
- learn not only about language, but learn with language, thus promoting active reading

On-line Reading Research Implications for Internet English Teaching

Research implications for Internet English Teaching are reviewed in this section on on-line reading comprehension in multimedia environments. These implications mainly highlight the usefulness of this medium when teachers organize, structure and integrate on-line reading activities for different English learning purposes. In addition, they highlight key pedagogical aspects to facilitate learners' on-line reading processes.

English teachers can use the Internet to design effective on-line reading activities targeted at developing students' digital literacy in the World Wide Web. Concerning the learning benefits of these activities, Tierney, Kieffer, Whalin, Desai, Gale Moss, Harris, Hopper (2003) state:

We would posit that the Web is an extension of hypertext and moreover would suggest that hypertext as learning and communication tool also is contingent on how well its features lend themselves to exploitation. The students we interviewed and observed seem to suggest that this tool affords opportunities to engage in ways of connecting ideas that otherwise would have been less possible with traditional texts. (p.7)

There are also important pedagogical implications for on-line reading lessons. To start, research shows that on-line reading lessons differ from text-based lessons as students engage in an on-line process through which students navigate in the Internet to contact web sites. During this process students need their teachers' support to facilitate their navigation in virtual spaces. For example, teachers can gradually induce students to develop their surfing skills in less demanding tasks before working on complex on-line reading tasks. This induction training will facilitate on-line reading processes and optimise students' learning as web based activities combine both computing and language skills.

Another important researchers' consideration refers to the degree of the on-line task difficulty, as on-line reading demands processing hypertexts when linking web-sites. Chun & Plass, (1996) and Martinez – Lage, (1997) assert that “the use of multimedia annotations may aid comprehension and the development of a situation model” (p.11). Multimedia annotations can integrate texts, sounds or visuals as supporting elements for the reading comprehension process. To this respect, Martinez-Lage suggests that “the student interaction with text facilitates understanding because students learn not only about language, but learn with language, thus promoting active reading” (p.3). Interactive factors correspond with different types of multimedia annotations according to Davis & Lyman-Hager (1997). Chun & Plass, (1996) and Martinez – Lage, (1997) cite these authors when they explain how students use a reading software program,

Students can click on words/expressions to obtain definitions in English or in the target language (word recognition). To prevent phonetic/graphemic errors, readers use the pronunciation feature in order to hear words or passages spoken by a native speaker. Further students can access grammatical notes and

explanations to enhance textual understanding (syntactic feature recognition). In an attempt to enhance global comprehension and to assist students in linking statements and ideas, readers are able to click on a question control button (intratextual perception). Cultural knowledge is provided to readers both during their reading (through a cultural reference button) and in the introduction to the text, to the author, and/or to the authors' country of origin. Finally, the tracking device allows instructors /researchers to obtain a log of reading strategies for gathering information (metacognition).

Davis & Lyman-Hager (1997) describe similar features of current educational web based software programs. For example, The California Department of Education's Adult Education Office in the USA, sponsors a web based learning program for basic adult distance learning. This program offers students a range of reading categories. Students can chose a category and find a list of related topics that are supported by multimedia aids such as video, audio, images and vocabulary. The program provides students a score record of results when they finish learning activities based on any of the available reading topics provided by the program. They can also report on their progress to their instructors by e-mail contact from California Distance Learning Program (CDLP) web page. This program uses image, sounds, cultural, historical references and guiding questions that help students approach the text more globally than linearly as they can to enhance comprehension as stated by Lomicka (1998, p. 2).

Students' learning styles and strategies also play an important role during on-line activities as pointed out by studies mentioned above; consequently teachers can facilitate students' work by creating awareness of their students' learning characteristics by helping students to identify them. For example, students can access web assessment resources to evaluate their learning styles. One of them is

<http://www.engr.ncsu.edu/learningstyles/ilsweb.html>

To this respect, Lomicka (1998) cites Martinez-Lage and Herren when they state that “Technology-based annotated texts present us with new opportunities to assist our students in getting beyond the mechanical aspect of the reading process and to provide them with a means of developing new strategies (pp. 146-147). Lomicka adds:

In order to demonstrate the complexity of the reading process, instructors could work together with texts with their students, constructing both text based and situation models. In differentiating between these two levels of representation, the process of co-construction could underscore the importance of moving beyond translation and paraphrasing” (p.10).

Time management also needs careful planning and coordination, as on-line reading activities can certainly be time consuming if tasks aren’t time limited.

Finally, there are technical issues such as availability of Internet connections, web pages accessibility, and software program limitations that might affect on-line reading activities if problems aren’t prevented as shown by research.

Poor On-line Reading Comprehension

Research on text comprehension in multimedia environments in the University of California and the University of New Mexico shows there can be several problems affecting SL on-line reading comprehension such as reading difficulties as a result of poor literacy levels in first language. Reading weaknesses are likely to make the SL reading process and the SL on-line reading process difficult when readers haven’t developed basic reading skills necessary for understanding. To this respect, Chun and Plass (1997) referred to the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, reading performance in a second language is largely shared with reading ability in the first language.

Another problem affecting reading comprehension has to do with low proficiency in second language. Observations show that it may be difficult for L2 readers to move from text based levels to hypertext interaction when they aren't fluent enough in L2. Researchers claim that SL readers must improve their proficiency in order to improve SL reading comprehension in order to be more prepared for on-line reading as "language is a key factor in reading" according to Chun and Plass (1997, p.4). These researchers cite the Linguistic Threshold Hypothesis that states that: in order to read in a second language, a level of second language ability must first be achieved.

Additionally, poor computing skills can prevent readers from efficient on-line reading comprehension as the SL reading process can result in making on-line reading tedious and demanding. On-line readers need previous orientation sessions targeted at familiarising learners with software programs and training them to develop their reading skills.

Improving On-line Reading Comprehension

On-line reading comprehension can become a challenging intellectual activity when readers are required to obtain new information from virtual sources. What is more, reading on-line demands more than text reading as readers move from linear texts to hypertexts when they read through links that categorize and subcategorise information as explained in former paragraphs. This explains why the development of cognitive processes together with the activation of reading skills and strategies to be able to read, process and assimilate new information must be carefully supported to facilitate students' on-line reading comprehension.

There are supplementary aids to increase SL reading comprehension as shown by research on SL projects in which students were introduced to hypertexts, on-line bulletin boards in virtual seminars and language programs in multimedia environments.

These aids might facilitate the on-line reading comprehension process by expanding SL knowledge according to specialists.

Research on the effects of reading software multimedia annotations on reading comprehension by Lomicka, Lara (1998, p. 9) at The Pennsylvania State University indicates, for example, that “ These annotations can be advantageous as students’ interaction with the text facilitates when readers are provided with short word definitions to explain vocabulary. Lomicka (1998) additionally states that “students’ interaction facilitates metasytem of meaning” (p.2).

Other technological devices such as control buttons, sounds, animations, images, geographical references, guiding questions can help readers to have a better control of their reading text and as a result, enhance their understanding and facilitate their learning as stated by Chun and Plass (1997).

Research Guidelines for Maximizing On-line Reading Comprehension

Research suggests that learners’ on-line reading processes may be maximized and facilitated if teachers exploit pictures, sounds, animated pictures or video in addition to text since these elements play an important and unquestioned role in vocabulary acquisition and in overall text comprehension

Chun and Plass (1997) are cited in Lomicka’s study on the effects of multimedia annotations in on-line reading comprehension. These authors state:

... multimedia environments allow for the addition of visual and auditory information to a text in order to improve comprehension. Visual information serves as an aid for text comprehension and functions as supplementary information that is added to the mental model of the text (p. 5).

Based on many research studies this is a list of suggestions for optimal on-line L2 reading:

1. Provide students with multiple information modes in order to enhance different facets of the comprehension process as suggested by studies of on-line reading comprehension and the effects of multimedia annotations on students' on-line reading investigated in universities abroad.
2. Differences in students learning styles should also be taken into account according to numerous research studies.
3. Use hypermedia annotated texts to enable readers to approach texts more globally than linearly (Martinez-Lage 1997). Lomicka (1998) cites them among other authors in her study of the effects of multimedia annotations in students reading comprehension when they used reading software in the Pennsylvania State University. According to her study multimedia annotations may aid comprehension and the development of a situation model. (pp. 9,10 &11).
Include glosses or short definitions to explain new vocabulary and/or work on meanings as fundamental linguistic elements of SL reading comprehension process as suggested by Davis, 1989; Jacobs, 1991 in Lomicka's study. (1998, pp. 1, 2)
Use of hypertext to promote students exploration, generation, extension and reconsideration of thoughts and therefore, support students' development of critical thinking skills as proposed by Tierney, Kieffer, Whalin, Desai, Gale Moss, Harris, Hopper (2003, p. 10)
4. Include on-line readings activities in the reading program to benefit students when there is active involvement and socialization of learning in individual and collaborative activities. Tierney, Kieffer, Whalin, Desai, Gale Moss, Harris, Hopper (2003).
5. Provide on-line reading activities to add language-learning variety as proposed by CALL specialists (Egbert, 2005, Warschauer, Shetzer & Meloni, 2000, Davies,

2005)

6. Provide on-line virtual spaces for reading and writing activities which allow students to be more thoughtful and less rushed when they work at their own pace as reported by Carey (1999) from the University of British Columbia in Canada\
7. Consider factors such as interest, background knowledge, the topic and approach, technology expertise, and available resources to assess the impact of the hypertext for English learning as proposed by Tierney, Kieffer, Whalin, Desai, Gale Moss, Harris, Hopper (2003).
8. Include on-line reading activities to give quieter students the opportunity to feel uninhibited as reported by ESL students in Carey's study. According to Carey ...students reported that contributing on the virtual seminar was far less anxiety inducing than contributing in the live seminar and unlike the live seminar it allowed them time to construct and verify their response to a message in a more productive way. It also allowed them to reflect on the question and to consult other resources and then to construct and edit an appropriate response" (p. 283).

On-line Writing

This section examines the on-line writing process as recent research shows that there is a growing number of ESL teachers who are incorporating computer based activities into their regular writing programs in order to develop their students' writing skills. E-mail projects, virtual communication forums, WebQuests and web pages are among the most frequent on-line writing activities ESL teachers create, use and integrate these activities when they when they use computers as the media to teach writing.

As on-line writing activities are now part of the ESL current teaching practice, this section summarises information regarding the process of ESL students' writing skills through on-line activities in ESL classrooms in international educational settings. This literature on the integration of on-line activities into the ESL writing program is examined first. According to Krajka (p. 13) ESL teachers' have a common interest in providing:

... students with choice, variety, authenticity and to give them a real purpose for writing, to allow them to experience the authentic written interaction with other people, to motivate them additionally through using computers and the Web, and to give them the feeling of self-confidence when seeing their works published on the class website" Krajka. (p. 13)

Next, the research on current on-line writing process pedagogy is examined in ESL computer based environments in Poland, Finland, Taiwan and USA

Incorporating On-line Writing In SL Programs: A Technological Approach

This section summarizes opinions of ESL researchers and teachers who are in favour of including on-line writing activities in their ESL writing programs. These opinions are mainly focused on the benefits of ESL on-line writing ; the role of the

ESL teacher in incorporating writing activities in the context of an on-line learning environment; general recommendations for on-line writing genres and general planning guidelines for ESL on-line writing activities. Krajka (2000) expresses opinions stated above when he “explores the issue of the Internet as a teaching aid or as a teaching medium, through which students are taught how to write different writing genres” (p.1).

The Benefits of On-line Writing Activities for ESL Students

ESL teachers engaged in on-line writing projects report that there are several benefits ESL teachers and students can receive if on-line writing activities are part of ESL writing programs. The following benefits can be listed when on-line writing activities are incorporated to the ESL program: 1) On-line writing activities provide information for both ESL teachers and students as they use the World Wide Web to search, compare, contrast or analyse material used during the writing process. According to Krajka (2002, p. 7), ESL students can use the web for analysing writing formats of different sample letters provided by several web pages when they are learning how to write formal letters. They can use these letters to create awareness of the TL grammatical correctness, lexical uses and appropriateness of styles when they compare their work with samples of real material provided in the World Wide Web. In addition, they can also use the web to expand information about a given topic to become more familiarised with the writing topic they have been assigned. This author cites <http://www.panda.org/home.cfm> for the Global Conservation Organization as a web source where students can read about real problems caused by pollution, deforestation and others that affect the world around them.

Concerning the use of web resources, it is also recommended, that teachers, as well as students, critically evaluate the quality of web resources, as sometimes papers published on the web are not in high quality.

According to Krajka (2000), variety and authenticity are two of the main characteristics attached to on-line writing activities as ESL users visit the World Wide Web as a generating source of information during their writing classes. If they do so, ESL topics are expanded beyond the textbook or other information sources provided by writing program contents. Instead, they can use a varied menu of web based choices to study different samples of genres such as descriptions and stories, and get ideas to suit their own teaching/learning interests.

Krajka, (2000) focuses on the importance of students' web interaction to create cultural awareness when participate in on-line writing activities:

Because by its very nature the Web is multi-national and without borders, the lessons with the use of the Internet serve best the goal of increasing cultural awareness, allow them to get to know and appreciate other cultures, giving the students the feeling of having the whole world right at their fingerprints and moving from one place to another without any obstacles or cost. (p. 4)

Another of the benefits of teaching with on-line writing activities is associated with ESL learners' autonomy, as students make their own choices when they connect on line for e-mailing, writing pal letters or posting messages through virtual bulletin boards to exchange information for specific discussion topics. During computer based writing activities, ESL students can create menus of favourite web pages and files. They can also use these menus for study purposes or information access. In this sense, ESL students' writing skills can be developed in computer-based environments when students use technological tools such as the word processor, the World Wide Web, classroom management systems to collect, organize and structure information according to their writing purposes.

Krajka's (2000) research also shows that on-line writing activities might also

have a positive psychological effect on ESL students if they become publishers for their own virtual bulletin boards or web pages. Publication of their work can not only give students recognition and acceptance but can also increase their confidence if they see that they can obtain good results when they write in their SL.

This author also specifically refers to the use of websites, e-mail and web publishing for on-line writing activities. This author proposes techniques for teaching writing genres with Internet. She highlights the benefits of using websites for “writing; e-mail as a key connection with students of their age, sending letters and web publishing for creating a students’ website where they can publish their own writing, serving also as a kind of bulletin board” (p. 6).

The Role of ESL Teachers / A New Writing Approach Using Technology

Advocates of this ESL writing approach suggest that once teachers decide to integrate on-line writing activities into their writing programs, they have to be aware that their roles change. This means that either teachers or students move from the traditional classroom environment to the on-line environment and as a result, they have to adapt to the new teaching and learning conditions demanded by this new environment.

The following are Krajjka’s (2000) general recommendations for ESL teachers employing on-line writing activities.

To start, it is advisable that ESL teachers become facilitators of their students’ on-line writing process by carefully planning ESL students’ writing activities to match their learning needs or personal interests. For example, ESL teachers’ can be more supportive if they inform students about effective web pages when/if they have to look at samples of different text types before their ESL writing process. Additionally, ESL teacher experience is very useful if they train students to exploit web material to identify

different writing purposes, conventions or styles for their ESL writing.

Another important recommendation has to do with the role of ESL teachers during a computer based activity to complete on-line tasks that can include word-processed texts, e-mails and post in virtual messages among other tasks. Experience shows that this technological new approach to teaching writing requires anticipating typical technological problems that result from failures to process information when working on net. As students might have problems when downloading or completing on-line activities, teachers need to have supplementary activities in case these problems arise. These activities can prevent students from wasting time if they fail to connect on line.

Learners' training for on-line successful writing lessons requires requesting that students save their work on diskettes, open files, create awareness of surfing skills and verify self-access to the lab among other tasks if/when connections aren't reliable enough. Results show that this training is extremely important to ease the on-line process and obtaining positive results along the development of this process.

Planning an ESL on-line writing activity

This part presents important considerations for planning and designing on-line writing activities. Krajka (2000) has provided important recommendations about how on-line writing lessons can be staged to maximize students' learning of different writing genres. She states, "As it could be seen from the discussion of each writing genre, I am in favour of devoting at least two periods to teaching one genre" (p. 13). She suggests that students can first work off-line on language analysis, vocabulary and writing skills development on a specialized writing book. This could save on-line time necessary for browsing, reading and digesting information from the Worldwide Web, and also while browsing the Internet sites, students would already have the knowledge of the formal

requirements of the genre, and could see how these work in practice. Time allowing, the on-line lesson should be followed by another off-line or on-line lesson, done after students wrote their pieces, the teacher corrected them and they were put on the class website, in order to discuss students' performance, to let them experience one another's writing, and to develop listening and speaking skills on the basis of the information gained during the on-line class. Therefore, it can be said that the on-line writing lesson proposed could be divided into a "pre-stage", a "while-stage" and a "post-stage", which is the same format as that of reading, listening or speaking activities. Next, there is a summary of Krajka's recommendations for planning on-line writing lessons:

This author suggests that on-line writing lessons can be divided into three stages. This means that ESL teachers might find it useful to divide their writing lessons into off and on line activities if they decide to incorporate the on-line element as one component of their ESL students' writing process. The table below describes

Table 5: Staging On-line Writing Lessons according to Karjka.

Stage 1 Off-line lessons focus on the writing process	Stage 2 On-line lessons focus on the process and the product	Stage 3 Off-line lessons focus on possible applications of students' work.
<p>Students develop writing skills in the classroom.</p> <p>ESL students can work on their writing textbooks, writing principles, analyse language and revise work.</p>	<p>Students work in the writing lab.</p> <p>Students can surf the web to look at samples of formats, writing text types, style and can engage in assigned on-line writing tasks such as e-mail projects, word processed texts, pal letters, e-cards, newspaper subscriptions, communication forums messages, and writing on their web pages.</p> <p>Students can have teachers' on-line feedback through electronic tools such as e-mail and bulletin boards among others.</p>	<p>Students work on post language analysis, error analysis exercises, peer correction, writing journal revision and class discussions among other collaborative activities.</p> <p>Students' edited work can be published as recognition of their achievement.</p> <p>They can either publish edited versions in bulletin boards after teachers' feedback or they can publish tasks in final written projects.</p>

SL teachers might also need to consider other important aspects such as time management, students' general language ESL knowledge and computing skills while planning their lessons as these can be determining learning factors in their ESL students. Any successful on-line writing lessons will depend on careful planning and preparation.

A summary of Research of the On-line Writing Process

This section refers to researchers work on the on-line writing process in ESL computer based environments in international educational settings including American University, The George Washington University, Feng Chia University and University of Kansas.

Researchers' work mainly focused on the on-line writing process and the development of SL students writing skills through computer-based activities. This section focuses on research on the effects of e-mails and word-processed texts in the ESL writing process, information about variations in SL language use when both academic writing and on-line writing are compared and applications of e-mail writing in the ESL classroom. There are also new insights into the on-line writing process provided by researchers after observing students in on-line writing lessons. These insights principally refer to important issues such as results of on-line writing activities derived from the use of the World Wide Web and the SL students' increase of cultural knowledge as a result of web-cultural exchanges in e-mail projects.

E-mail and Word-processed Texts Effects in ESL Academic Writing Skills

First there is information about research conducted in American University and The George Washington University. Biesenbach-Lucas and Wesenforth (2001) published an article entitled. "Email and word processing on the ESL classroom: How the medium affects the message". They investigated the effects of electronic e-mail

writing in the development of students' academic writing abilities. For research purposes fourteen students from two ESL classes participated in the study and responded to writing prompts using electronic mail and word-processed texts. These students belonged to two pre-academic intensive ESL courses and they were taught by two ESL teachers. The study explains to what extent students' use of e-mail and word-processed texts increase SL students' academic writing skills. There were students from diverse cultural backgrounds: five students were from Thailand, three from Taiwan, two from China, two from Korea, one from Indonesia and one from Saudi Arabia. Students were observed them in class. Researchers used quantitative methodology to tabulate information gathered when students used e-mail and word-processed texts and responded to writing prompts. According to these researchers, their study mainly indicated that 1) "e-mails resemble oral communication in that ellipsis and colloquialisms were more prominent in e-mail texts than in word processed essays" ; 2) that there was "a greater occurrence of cohesive lexical items...in word-processed texts"; 3) that there is a greater occurrence of cohesive lexical items in word-processed texts than in e-mails; 4) that e-mail writing is less contextual and organised than word-processed writing.5) that e-mail writing is affected by the context of the situation; 6) that factors such as topic or setting factors can affect e-mail writing production; 7) that "different patterns of grammatical and lexical cohesion were expected to emerge in e-mail and word processed text" ; that 8) " the students' on-line and offline text could not be distinguished in terms of the relative frequency of occurrence of the cohesive lexical items. " 9) that on-line and off-line text could be distinguished according to text length and contextualization. 10) that demonstrative noun phrases, were "...slightly more frequent in word- processed than in e-mail writing "; 11) that there weren't any noticeable differences in terms of the use of connectors in both e-mails and word-

processed texts;12) that "...the e-mail responses tend to be shorter than the corresponding word processed essays for all three topics on which students wrote" (p. 14)

Biesenbach-Lucas and Wesenforth examined Tella's study of Finish students' e-mail writing in their literature review. According to these authors Tella (1992) found that "the words count for e-mail texts to be lower than that for word-processed texts" (p.14). They indicate in their article,

Tella (1992) investigated cohesive structures, lexicon and rhetorical features (i.e., style, organization and phatic elements) in the e-mail writing of Finnish secondary students writing in English. The results suggest that e-mail texts resemble oral communication in that ellipsis and colloquialism were more prominent in e-mail texts than in word processed essays. A greater occurrence of cohesive lexical items was observed in word-processed texts. In addition, Tella found that in general the students' word processed texts were longer than their e-mail texts. (p. 3)

Biesenbach-Lucas and Weasenforth (2001) conclude, "It is not clear how writing in e-mail may benefit students in terms of academic writing (p.19). They add "...that the effectiveness of using e-mail during drafting and revising stages of writing should be questioned. They recommend that "students draft and revise their writing in a word processor and then upload / download it in the event that the writing were to be mailed" (p.19).

E-mail writing in Taiwan

Liao's (1999) research highlights the benefits of e-mail projects and suggests that ESL teachers should incorporate on-line writing activities once there has been evidence of Taiwanese ESL students' writing skills development at National Chung

Hsing University in Taiwan. It consisted of observing e-mail swapping programs between students in sophomore EFL Writing and foreign key pals from Romania, the Czech Republic, the United States, Ireland, Germany and Australia. Taiwanese students were aged 18 to 26, while the other pals were aged 12 to 60. Students were observed during five semesters. They answered packages of greeting e-mails and established contacts with their key pals through this medium. There were five different groups of National Chung Hsing University (NCHU) students in Taiwan that wrote e-mails to people from Australia, Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland, Romania, and the United States. The students were 18 to 26 years old and their key pals were 12 to 60 years old. Students' number ranged from 10 to 15 for groups. Professor Liao organized and coordinated students' e-mail exchange projects that allowed students to have key pals in international universities. Students used e-mail as a communication tool to improve reading and writing skills when they establish contacts with English speakers. Instructions are very important concerning organizational principles for e-mail exchange projects. According to Liao, instructions are very important or teachers can lose track of students' e-mailing program. There should be a systematic control to prevent problems. To this respect, Liao (1999) states, "During a weekly two-hour meeting, I returned corrected hard copies of students' and key pals' email and reviewed grammar based on the mistakes students made. We discussed what we had learned from key pals to enhance cultural understandings. I assigned the new topic for the week and discussed potential problems to avoid and how to enrich the content of their messages" (p.2).

This is a summary of Liao's (1999) research findings in his article, *E-mailing to Improve EFL Learners' Reading and Writing Abilities*. This author states,

I believe that the purpose of university EFL writing in Taiwan is to prepare

students for potential future needs to contact people who do not speak Mandarin or Taiwanese and have English as their foreign language, second or native language. E-mail allows my students to write to English speakers from other cultures, even if English is not their native language.... We understand our culture partly through understanding other culture (pp.2-3)

Liao (1999) asserts, 1) that “e-mails allow ESL students to write to English speakers” (p.2) and therefore, establish real contact on the basis of an authentic information exchange through English because “ they have real readers from other nations who do not understand Taiwanese or Mandarin” (p.3); 2) that there seem to be more EFL and ESL users than English native speakers and therefore e-mails become a valuable communication tool to widen communication channel which will be vital in the 21st century” (p.2). 3) He observed that Taiwanese students enjoyed establishing contacts with elderly people as they felt they could learn more from their experience and wisdom. He also observed 4) that Chinese may transfer their native language habits to EFL or ESL communications. Therefore, this transfer might affect SL students’ writing production. (p.1). This author observed that 5)for successful email swapping, teachers for Chinese EFL learners do not need to encourage students to ask questions because their pre patterned cultural background may prompt them to ask 10 questions in one email to a key pal” (p.7).

Intercultural Learning through E-Mail Writing

There have been studies in Germany, the United States and Taiwan to determine the effects of e-mail writing in SL learners’ increase of cultural consciousness when they participate in on-line writing activities. One of them was: *Understanding the “Other Side”: Intercultural Learning in A Spanish-English E-Mail Exchange* by O’ Dowd at University of Essen, Germany. Another was *The Effects of Electronic Mail on*

Spanish L2 Discourse by Gonzalez-Bueno at University of Kansas (1998).

These studies have assessed SL students' e-mail writing to find evidence of changes of SL students' personal attitude concerning their virtual peers' cultures. These students participated through e-mail projects in their educational environments. The e-mail project at University of Essen was intercultural and therefore, students interacted with their virtual peers through on-line courses. The second was implemented at University of Kansas to give students the opportunity to increase their participation grade by communicating in Spanish with their instructor via e-mail. The third project involved Sophomore English Foreign Language (EFL) Writing Classes students. They had e-mail exchanges with key pals from different countries such as Ireland, the USA, Australia, Germany and Romania among others.

Key information from these studies is summarised here. Liao (1999) states, "We understand our own culture partly through understanding other cultures" (p.3) on his paper about the use of e-mail for reading and writing activities. When he met with his students to revise and correct students' e-mails to key pals during e-mail projects, he told them that "they discussed what they had learned from key pals to enhance intercultural understanding". In addition, O'Dowd (2003) points out that when students participate in ESL e-mail projects, they may develop intercultural communicative competence as e-mail writers' could transmit intrinsic cultural behaviour, attitudes or beliefs when they communicate through this medium. O'Dowd reported on a year long e-mail exchange between Spanish and English second year university language learners. This author states:

Students who were able to successfully develop intercultural communicative competence in this exchange had found a receptive audience for the expressions of their own cultural identity. They had been forced to look at their home culture

from a new perspective through the questions and comments of their partners, and through dialogue with their partner they had begun to understand the different ways a culture's product and practices can be experienced. They create awareness of their peers' cultural background. However, this project also revealed that intercultural exchanges which failed to function properly can lead to a reinforcement of stereotypes and a confirmation of negative attitudes (p.27).

O'Dowd recommends the area of intercultural e-mail exchange for further research and analysis. He also recommends that "greater investigation is needed into the question of how teachers can maximize the intercultural learning experience of e-mail exchanges" (p.27). As this investigation points out language production may associated with intercultural learning when/if we communicate intrinsic cultural behaviour, attitudes or beliefs through languages.

E-mail writing can also be quite positive if we value intercultural communicative competence for SL teaching/learning purposes. González Bueno, (1998) states,

The pedagogical implications of using Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) for improving first ,and second language skills could be 'enormous' (Ferrara et al., 1991; Warschauer, 1995). The possibility for FL learners to participate in sociocultural groups in FL is only one of many resources that the Internet has to offer. In his compilation of almost 100 L2 classroom projects and activities involving the Internet, Warschauer (1995, p.xv) has described a number of options available to FL teachers that encourage students to use the FL communicatively. Its benefits are assumed to be obvious, and there seems to be ".....little doubt that on-line communication is an important new tool for language teaching" (p.14)

As O'Dowd (2003), Liao (1999), González Bueno (1998), Warshauer (1995), Ferrara (1991), Krajka (2000) have pointed out, on-line writing activities can be a new alternative in teaching English writing if we consider benefits mentioned before.

The research I reviewed indicates that on-line communication has also to do with ESL students' ability to function in the TL as a result of their awareness of cultural differences between L1 and L2. Communication involves a deep cultural understanding of the TL in order to respect and understand it as shown by research. Successful communication, in my opinion, can be possible if SL students learn that languages reflect cultures and establish communication channels for understanding.

Integrating these on-line writing activities into students' writing program as an extra component of the EFL writing program is worthwhile provided there is previous analysis of students' learning needs and careful lesson planning to guarantee students' pedagogical conditions for students' writing skills development as proposed by Krajka (2000). On his paper, he refers to Warshauer and Whittaker (1997) when they recommend that "clarifying course goals is, thus, an important first step toward the use of the Internet activities" (p.4). These activities could be integrated into EL teaching practice provided they are carefully planned and adapted to the students' learning needs on the basis of considerations to their time management, computing skills and language knowledge. For example, Krajka suggests a considerable number of writing tips for pre-on-line writing, while on-line writing and after on-line writing stages when students use different writing genres such as descriptions, narrations and letters according to their interests.

Finally this literature review suggests that on-line activities can be integrated to English learning programs to integrate language skills since technological tools such as multimedia programs allow them to read, write, listen and even speak English as

pointed out by Warschauer (1996) when he refers to the advantages of multimedia technology to integrate students' English learning skills. Students can access these programs on the Internet and take advantage of their beneficial effects not only in terms of writing skills development but in terms of higher order thinking development as well. For example, they can develop language skills through e-mails, discussion forums, chats, video conferencing, web-based activities and English learning software programs among other technological options as a result of their applications of current Information Communication Technologies for Educational Technology.

According to this review, O'Dowd (2003), Liao (1999), González Bueno (1998), Warschauer (1995), Ferrara (1991) are in favour of incorporating on-line activities into English learning programs to develop students' language knowledge, intercultural awareness, communicative competence, autonomy, knowledge management and social skills when they interact through Information Communication Technologies.

Specialists are constantly proposing new arguments as a result of priceless research that has undoubtedly widened our understanding of Educational technological principles, conditions and standards to maximize students' English learning.

Computer Anxiety / Resistance

This section deals with learner computer anxiety/resistance and learners' psychological reactions to computer- based activities.

This section first refers to scientific research on computer anxiety/resistance reported at Michigan State University. This research provides feedback from undergraduate education students. Worthington & Henry (1998) conducted this research and drew valuable conclusions related to the relationship between undergraduate education students and computer performance. Their research implies the importance of

paying attention to students' individual experiences, needs and beliefs when adopting technological approaches. Included here is an overview of aspects such as motivation, confidence and computer attitude analysed by Bohlin (2005) from California State University, Fresno. This author recommends valuable strategies to help students to overcome computer anxiety. Additionally, there are recommendations to maximize web-based learning from English teachers.

Worthington & Henry (1998) refer to computer anxiety as “fear of working on computers”. They examined computer anxiety/resistance in a study of 50 undergraduate education students. According to these researchers students answered a computer anxiety survey that had short answer responses and open-ended questions. In addition, students were interviewed about expectations using technology, specifically the Internet. Worthington & Henry refer to several studies which agree that:

Results indicate that the traditional definition of computer anxiety (Cohen & Waugh, 1989; Dukes, Discenza & Couger, 1989), which links it very closely to actually working on the computer, is limited in its capacity to explain the experiences and beliefs of these students. Rather than fearing that they would not be able to perform specific functions on the computer, the participants reported more general fears that the use of technology, specifically the Internet, would conflict with their capacity to teach in the way they felt was most meaningful for students. (p. 1)

Moreover, these authors mainly state, that “these results suggest that it is important to consider the context in which technology is expected to be used” (p. 1)

Bohlin (2005) states, “A computer anxious learner is one who is nervous, distracted, and physically and emotionally uncomfortable in the presence of or under the expectation of interacting with a computer”. In contrast, “A motivated computer user is

one who willingly and intrinsically chooses to use computers in a number of ways even under adverse condition” (p.2).

Bohlin (2005) states, “anxiety is a very serious problem during computer instruction for learners with a fear of computers because these learners are faced with the problem of having to learn while actually working directly with the very technology that they fear” (p.2). In his paper, he refers to Tobias’s (1979) model that “suggests that anxiety interferes with learning before and during information processing by the learner. Before processing, anxiety acts as a diversion to attention. During processing, anxiety directly interferes with the cognitive processing by the learner. Post processing anxiety obstructs, though to a lesser degree, later retrieval of content mastered (especially physical skills) during instruction. Based on this model, Tobias makes recommendations regarding instruction that is expected to reduce the effects of anxiety on learning. He asserts that “instruction for anxious learners should allow learners to repeat content and reduce the extent to which learners must rely on memory” (p.2). In other words, teachers can provide students opportunities to experience successful results when working on computers so that they can be desensitized to the anxiety produced by these technological tools. According to this author, students’ anxiety may decrease if students’ successful experiences increase.

Bohlin (2005) focuses on motivation, confidence and computer attitude as they can influence students’ performance. This author asserts, that 1) motivating instruction is to gain and maintain the attention of the learner” ; that 2) instruction can take advantage of students’ interest and curiosity by using humour, variety and enthusiasm; that 3) instruction must have perceived relevance to the immediate or long-range personal needs of the learner; that 4) these personal needs can be met by matching the instruction to learners’ goals, making the benefits clear, keeping the challenge level

appropriate; that 5) the instruction must provide for the confidence and the learners' expectancy for success, which influences the actual effort and performance, and can be increased by strategies such as clearly indicating the requirements for success, providing a low-risk environment, and giving accurate feedback; that 6) instruction must also provide individual satisfaction in order to facilitate continuing motivation; 7) that learners must perceive the rewards gained as fair, equitable, and consistent while meeting their expectations; that 8) learners' satisfaction can be promoted by providing appropriate recognition for success, giving informative and corrective feedback (p. 3).

Concerning computer attitudes Bohlin (2005) states,

... a person who actively avoids computers has a negative attitude towards them.

In general, an individual will tend to avoid computers because of his or her conceptions (beliefs and cognitions) about them...A change in the individual's attitude toward and response to computers will require a change in the individual cognitions about them. (p. 4)

Bohlin's paper presents a list of strategies to help students deal with computer anxiety. This author also recommends these strategies as prescriptive resources and/or teaching resources to meet learners' needs or improve computer methods courses. These strategies foster learners' interest, relevance, satisfaction and attitude change towards computer learning (p. 4).

Concerning students' reactions to EL web-based activities, Krajka (2000) states, "some students might feel a little intimidated by computers and the Web, and it is the responsibility of the teacher to remove these psychological barriers (either through giving necessary assistance or mixed grouping)" (p.4). This author cited Warshauer and Whittaker (1997) in his concluding points after research about important aspects of Internet projects planning and implementation. He highlights Warshauer and

Whitaker's arguments concerning common problems both teachers and students can find when they engage in web based English learning activities. Krajka (2000) summarises these authors' arguments when he states,

The teacher should be aware of all the complexities of the on-line learning environment, such as difficulties in scheduling the access to the computer lab, or students finding computers outside the class time to continue their activities, malfunctioning hardware and software or problems with students' schedules not allowing them to return to the computer lab at a time when computers are available to complete their assignments. When having an e-mail exchange, the partner class might have absent students, or might not meet in a particular week due to holidays or other activities in that location, and the students might have differences in background language and experience. The last two general guidelines on doing on-line lessons are that necessary support from the teacher should be given to students, so that they do not feel lost or overwhelmed by technology, and students should be involved in decisions about the content of their learning, which is possible given the variety and abundance of materials on the Web" (p.3).

This literature review has undoubtedly widened my vision of ESL on-line reading, on-line writing, and computer anxiety and resistance. In the next chapter, I will present the Methodology I used for my study.

Chapter 3

Design and Methodology

I followed action research guidelines found in Johnson (2005) to collect and systematically record information on upper intermediate English learners at Universidad Interamericana / Campus Guayaquil. According to Johnson, “ Action research is a systematic and orderly way to observe their practice or to explore a problem and a possible course of action according to Dinkelman, 1997; MacNiff, Lomax & Whitehead, 1996 ” (p, 21).

Johnson also cites Hensen, 1996; McTaggart, 1997; Schumuck, 1997 when they define action research as “the process of studying a real school or classroom situation to understand and improve the quality of actions or instruction” (p, 21). Johnson (2005) states that the action research process involves five essential steps or parts that are fundamental for the study. I followed Johnson’s steps. These steps were: “defining an area of exploration, making decisions concerning data collection procedures, analysing data and reporting on findings” (p, 21).

I collected, categorised and analysed students’ perceptions of the application of Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA to discover how students perceived the application of Information Communication Technologies during their English communicative learning process.

I used action research to gather learners’ views interconnected with Internet learning activities and the Nicenet ICA while students were taking a ninety hour upper intermediate English course. In this particular situation, action research seemed to be the best approach for this thesis study, for exploring and observing learners’ reactions to Internet activities and the their use of the Nicenet ICA in their English on-line learning process. I focused on students’ interaction as members of the Nicenet ICA collaborative

English learning environment as they became engaged in Internet activities to learn English and develop their information communication skills.

I used The Nicenet ICA as a communication tool to gather students' perceptions of students' pre-conceptions, course expectations, interests and learning needs among other aspects of their English teaching / learning process. I collected students' feedback through this tool and afterwards, I integrated students' feedback into the design and construction of the collaborative English learning environment through the English teaching/learning process when I selected, graded, organized and integrated on-line learning activities and a directory of on-line learning resources. The on-line learning resources included multimedia such as web pages and power point presentations for English learning purposes.

This chapter presents the purpose of this study, states the problem and describes the research process and the action research methodology I used to carry out the study. It includes the data collection and techniques used for the present study, as well as the procedures for analysing the data. It also describes setting and participants and the role these played.

I focused this study on two research questions: 1) How can learners' perceptions of the process of using technological tools for language learning be described? and 2) What are learners' perceptions of using web-based activities to learn English?

Setting and Context

The English area of the Universidad Interamericana, Guayaquil Campus is part of this private university located in Guayaquil on the coast of Ecuador. This university was established for students who want to specialize in technology and science. This university is dedicated to more than fifty technical fields such as engineering, architecture, physics, and chemistry among others. The Universidad Interamericana,

Guayaquil Campus offers business-oriented majors. They include Graphic Design and Visual Communication, Business Informatics, Commercial Engineering, Marketing Engineering, International Business Management and Economics. These majors are offered to students who want to graduate in Ecuador . In Guayaquil/Ecuador students take an English Program to fulfil graduation requirements required in the curricular plan in Universidad Interamericana .

Universidad Interamericana / Campus Guayaquil instituted an English Area in 2001 to administrate English programs on site since an external service company had been in charge of English teaching since 1997. This company managed Business English programs from 1997 to July / 2001 but not all students took courses continuously . Some of them had interrupted courses because the English program wasn't integrated into the university curriculum yet. As a result, there was a considerable number of students that hadn't taken English to fulfil graduation requirements because they had either interrupted their Business English Courses or they hadn't taken any of them.

I was first responsible for restructuring, reorganizing and controlling the administration of existing English programs. One of the first steps was to implement a data base that was created to structure and organize learners' academic English records. The data base was created by the Informatics Services Centre in coordination with the English Area Coordinator. In my role as Director of the Area, I am in charge of English curricular development, administrative tasks, logistic control, teacher training and material design among other work activities.

In my capacity as Director, I was responsible for the administration of former Business English programs that had been running in UI since 1997. These programs were initially introduced by the service company in charge of English teaching activities

from 1997 to 2001. Initial Business English programs were effective for students graduated from private schools but weren't suitable for students that didn't have enough knowledge of the target language to process Business English content. Although the number of students graduated from bilingual high schools was higher during the first years, the number of students graduated from religious and/or public high schools started increasing gradually. Students graduated from religious and/or public institutions didn't have the same English background knowledge and learning experience as students graduated in private high schools that generally take more intensive English programs.

I structured a new English Program in two areas: General English and Business English. This program replaced the original courses ran by the service company. I designed this program to give academic support to an increasing number of students graduated from religious and state schools that needed to develop their English communication skills. At present, this area runs a 360-hour English Program. This program is included in the university curricular plan. Learners take four levels in the English program. They take three levels in General English and one level in Business English. Each level is covered in 90 hours per trimester. Once second year students join the program, either as elementary English learners and/or more advanced learners after the New Interchange Series Language Placement Test, are expected to finish the course without interruptions as this is a four-trimester program which only offers one level per trimester during the academic year.

The mission of the English Area is aimed at guiding and motivating learners towards successful and high educational, social and intellectual goals. English faculty believes that this mission will be accomplished by creating a challenging teaching/learning process. This process is expected to develop learners' knowledge and

learning skills through communicative English class activities. English faculty also believes that these activities will create a true feeling of value and purpose for English and as a result, learners will be able to use this language as an international tool. Therefore, students will become effective communicators in their professional fields and social lives. (Boloña, Ringger & Sánchez, 2001).

The goal of the English Program is to develop learners' communication skills to an upper intermediate English level. As a result, learners will be able to use this language as a tool to process information in English when they take higher business oriented academic courses. As this information is provided by different sources such as English speakers, Internet, articles, financial magazines, this program enables students to optimise communication skills. Learners are also expected to develop their speaking activities gradually as a result of their active participation in group/pair work activities. This goal presupposes that communication skills are developed in a learner centred approach. This promotes following aspects: learners' autonomy through English learning activities oriented by the principle of learning by doing; teachers as facilitators and motivators of the teaching/learning process; careful syllabus design and staff pedagogical analysis in pedagogical meetings on a weekly basis. By the time learners finish this program, they have developed English knowledge and communicative skill to an upper intermediate level. (Boloña, 2001).

This program uses the *Interchange Series* in General English. This series has three books written by Jack C. Richards with Jonathan Hull and Susan Proctor in 1998. These books are used in levels 1, 2 and 3 correspondingly. *The Interchange* is a communicative program based on a skill-based syllabus that integrates listening, reading, language use, writing and speaking tasks. They cover 16 topic-based units. All

units present topics concerning current life events such as interpersonal relationships, job skills, and cultural differences, among others. This material has been designed for adult English learning and therefore, topics are expected to match learners' interests as they deal with useful and practical issues. There is a plan that distributes work in 90 hours in twelve weeks per trimester. Learners take Business English in level 4. This course is taught to learners who have either finished first three levels in General English or have been placed in Business English (level 4) by the New Interchange Placement Test. Business English teaches learners commercial vocabulary, language use, communication strategies and Information Communication Technologies applications in commercial contexts such as products, company history, corporate identity, and finance among others.

This English program uses the Nicenet ICA for CALL activities in a collaborative English learning environment in General English subjects according to the communicative orientation of the English curriculum (see Appendix A). The Nicenet ICA was introduced in General English to provide students on-line space to develop their communication skills through on-line reading, on-line writing and Internet activities. (see Appendix B). Before the introduction of the Nicenet ICA, students had used two other Internet classroom assistants: English Class and the LearnLoop. Students had used these two Internet systems for on-line English Learning at Universidad Interamericana since 2001. After experiencing these systems for General English and Business English on-line activities during the administration of several programs, I thought that the Nicenet ICA was a better application for General English lower level learners considering the fact that the design, structure and organization of the Nicenet ICA was going to have positive effects on learners' communication skills development as learners could use this tool to interact and communicate through threaded discussion

topics, reply to documents posted to these discussion topics, send messages, receive e-mails and access documents among other applications. Additionally, I thought that this system demanded fewer computing skills than more complex CMSs such as English Class or the LearnLoop and it, therefore, facilitated learners' English learning.

According to the Nicenet ICA founders,

Nicenet is a volunteer, non-profit organization dedicated to providing free services to the Internet community. Nicenet's primary offering, the Internet Classroom Assistant (ICA) is a free web-based learning environment for classrooms, distance learning programs and collaborative academic projects. The Nicenet Internet Classroom Assistant is defined as a sophisticated communication tool that brings powerful World-Wide-Web conferencing, personal messaging, document sharing, scheduling and link/resource sharing to a variety of learning environments (Archibald & Dintenfass, 1998, p.1).

I was first introduced to The Nicenet ICA through an on-line Computer Assisted Language Learning course under the direction of Professor Dennis Maloney in the EFLT Master's Program at Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral. This tool was used during his CALL workshop for academic activities such as "on-line discussions among workshop's participants, Internet access and exploration, Internet search techniques training, Internet EFLT techniques training and web-based EFLT activities design among other activities required on the syllabus" (Maloney, 2004).

The Nicenet ICA was incorporated for on-line English teaching at university level due to its fast access, menu applications, users' friendliness when participants work on-line, interact and communicate through the net. In this particular teaching situation, this tool was more suitable for lower English learners, as it demands from them fewer computing skills than other Internet assistants used for teaching purposes in

higher General English or Business English levels.

The Nicenet ICA platform and structure is easy to introduce to learners as it, for instance, has a learner's menu that is organized in three main areas. The first area of the menu has these options: Conferencing, Link Sharing, Documents and Class Schedule. Conferencing is a bulletin board where users can post threaded discussion topics, reply to them or send messages to the teacher related to that particular topic. Conferencing gradually integrates discussion topics through the bulletin board. Link Sharing is a directory of web pages that allows learners to collect and use a list of web based resources such as web pages or web based documents according to teaching purposes. The Document Section allows learners to post and access documents that aren't related to assignments. Class Schedule organizes and programs assignments and, it reminds learners of assignment deadlines. The Classroom members section has Nicenet members. This section provides a list of all class members and their e-mail addresses. The Send Personal Messages area has an e-mail system that allows learners to contact the Nicenet's members. The second area of the Nicenet menu has Personal Messages. Personal Messages has two options: View and Send. Users can use this system for communication purposes among the class members. They can use View to read messages and/or they can use Send for sending messages. The third area of the Nicenet's menu has the Classes. The Classes area also has options such as Join, Create and Drop for administrative purposes when they start, create or finish courses. This area also has Edit User Profile where users can update personal information data. The Classes area offers users ICA FAQ. Users can find here a list of the most frequently asked questions about the Nicenet ICA.

In contrast to the Nicenet ICA learner's menu, the Nicenet administrator menu includes features that are only available for administrators. They can use Class

Administration in Classes to update information related to system management. The Classes area also has the option Delete for class administrators. This option allows them to delete classes. Pictures below correspond to two types of users of the Nicenet ICA's menu: learner and administrator.

Enter New Class is an option of both the learner's menu or the administrator's menu. They can use it to change classes within the Nicenet ICA system.

Images below correspond to the Nicenet ICA Menus: Administrator and Learner.

Figure 2: The Nicenet ICA Menus for Administrator and the Learner.



I used The Nicenet ICA to develop upper intermediate English learners' on-line reading, on-line writing and Internet web-based research skills. Learners interacted through this learning management system to construct and consolidate English knowledge, develop communicative competence and Internet research skills, access Internet learning resources and search the web for information.

Throughout this research study, I used the Nicenet ICA to teach learners to interact on the Internet for different learning purposes such as sharing information through conferencing topics, posting messages, replying to messages or intercommunicating, organizing and facilitating Internet research links during project work, accessing information for on-line tasks and communicating.

Participants

The participants in the study consisted of thirty-six upper intermediate English learners. These learners study Economics, Commercial Engineering, Graphic Design Management and Visual Communication, and Business Informatics at Universidad Interamericana / Campus Guayaquil in Ecuador.

Seventeen (49%) of the learners started the English program at levels I and II in the first two trimesters of 2004, fifty one (51%) of learners took the New Interchange Series English Language Placement Test published by the University of Cambridge and started in Level 3 (Upper Intermediate). The learners who began at levels I and II graduated from Ecuadorian religious or public high schools, and the learners who took the placement test graduated from Ecuadorian bilingual high schools. Twenty (55%) of the learners were girls and sixteen (45%) of the learners were boys. They were aged between 18 to 20 years old.

Participants took ninety English hours in the upper intermediate English level. They spent seventy class hours to study the course content presented in the New Interchange Book 3 (see appendix C). In addition they took twenty lab hours to do Internet based activities programmed in the course syllabus (see appendix D). Learners had web-based lessons in the university computing lab once a week. They used the Nicenet Internet classroom assistant during a two-hour lab session through ten weeks.

I allocated two hours a week in their English program for lab activities that

reinforced topics seen in class. Students completed these activities in their computing lab after I had introduced topics in class. In addition, they had to do project research for class power point presentations. They managed projects in groups and used the Nicenet ICA to access information concerning deadlines, lab plan instructions and/ or web based resources. Students could access the Internet in their computing lab; however, some students reported that they used the Nicenet ICA at home.

I used The Nicenet ICA to create a collaborative English learning environment in Internet. I integrated the Nicenet ICA to students' Upper Intermediate English learning program to provide students on-line space for English practice for communication and Information Communication Technologies applications. This communication tool enabled the teacher and learners to interact in virtual space through Internet. I used it to manage on-line English lessons programmed in the syllabus for Internet activities. Learners used this tool to access Internet assignments delivered and collected through different options of the Nicenet ICA menu.

All web-based learning tasks had the common goal of developing and strengthening learners' communication skills through two Information Communication Technologies: Internet and the Nicenet ICA. Learners used these tools to develop their English learning process to engage in on-line learning tasks. These web-based tasks were integrated into the upper intermediate English learners' learning process to consolidate topics studied in class. Learners first saw topics in class. Then they reinforced these topics through the Nicenet ICA on weekly lab sessions. Web-based lessons allowed learners to practice vocabulary, grammar and developed learners' on-line reading, on-line writing, and web search skills. Learners followed a sequence of lab plans on the web that organized and structured web based tasks. This plan gave learners instructions to complete web-based tasks. Instructions included the purpose of

the lesson, tasks and web resources.

Data Collection

I collected the data for this study during the third trimester of the academic year at Universidad Interamericana, Guayaquil Campus. Thirty-students took the upper intermediate English level in ninety hours.

The data sources for this investigative study were class documents, institutional documents, observation notes and a post class survey. The class documents grouped two of the learners' initial Internet postings and learners' written comments about their Internet activities, and observations that influenced how the course progressed.

I used the Nicenet ICA learners' postings to explore learners' initial perceptions of English learning and aspects of an English learning environment at their educational institution. Learners posted their responses about these two topics to the Nicenet ICA, and I used their feedback to focus on their needs along their English learning process either in class or in the Internet collaborative English learning environment. I also studied the learners' contributions to explore their views and engagement through the Nicenet ICA during this study. According to Johnson (2005),

Websites can be used to create a living, dynamic classroom entity. Students can log on to a specific site and read and respond to what others have said on a given topic. The transaction can be printed for use as a data source. (p.79)

I used learners' documents posted through the Nicenet ICA during the first two weeks of the course. Learners posted these documents to give their opinions of English learning and an active English learning environment after a learners' orientation session in the first week. I asked learners to write about these topics after they attended a power point presentation in class. Its purpose was to introduce learners to the design of the English learning environment they would be using. Therefore, this presentation

informed learners about goals, methodology, technological components, materials and general characteristics implied in the design of this type of learning environment (see Appendix E).

After this training session, learners started their on-line interaction through Conferencing. Conferencing is one of the options in the Nicenet ICA menu. They wrote, posted and read their answers to these on-line topics. I revised and made some corrections to learners' documents after learners posted their first documents. I also gave them editing instructions to improve their initial versions. For example, I asked them to use an error correction code posted to the Nicenet ICA to identify language aspects such as spelling, word order, vocabulary, punctuation, grammar, sentence structure and tense uses generally identified for error correction. Learners edited their documents after instructions. These topics were two of learners' initial documents to Conferencing. They posted their documents to this discussion forum to contribute and share opinions about these topics. Their opinions focused on views of English learning and an English learning environment and their expectations, priorities, goals and wishes for their English learning process.

Learners used the Nicenet ICA once a week in the computing lab and followed a sequence of lab plans to complete on-line task based activities. Learners engaged in these activities to learn grammar, vocabulary and develop on-line reading, writing and web search skills. They also used this option during their course to post their contributions to threaded discussion topics. Learners used Conferencing to post their on-line activities (see Appendix F). Learners also used Link Sharing (see Appendix G) to find web resources, Documents (see Appendix H) to post assignments and Messages (see Appendix I) to send or reply to messages. Link Sharing, Documents and Messages are other options in the Nicenet ICA's menu.

I also used learners' written comments about Internet activities. Learners wrote a fifty-word note in class to give their opinions about Internet activities in the Nicenet ICA (see appendix J).

Learners also gave overall impressions about their learning interaction in the Nicenet ICA final project. The purpose of this project was to gradually develop learners' writing process which included planning, drafting, revising, editing and publishing writing activities. I compiled and published all learners' tasks posted in the Nicenet ICA in the last stage of learners' on-line writing process.

The institutional document was the class grade record. This record is a grade breakdown of students' achievement during 90 hours of English instruction. Students' achievement is graded over 100 marks during the trimester. (see Appendix K).

I used the grading record as an institutional document to examine levels of learners' participation in Internet activities. This record included students' grades for Internet activities. There were two categories for Internet English learning activities: on-line activities and group/pair work for PPP based on web based research projects. Students' on-line work consisted of on-line writing and reading task based activities while students' group/pair work PPP based on web based research projects. Learners' overall English achievement was graded over 100 marks as indicated below.

Quiz 1: 5 marks; pop quiz 1: 5 marks; project & PPP: 10 marks; mid term exam: 10 marks; quiz 2: 5 marks; pop quiz 2: 5 marks; final project & final oral presentation: 20 marks; final written exam: 20 marks; on-line work: 10 marks; group /pair work PPP based on web based research projects: 10 marks.

A post class survey was finally used to gather learners' impressions of on-line activities in the Nicenet ICA (see Appendix L). I used the survey to have students' direct feedback of on-line English activities after using the Nicenet ICA as a learning

environment to access and process information, communicate, interact and do web based research projects among other tasks.

I designed this survey after I read about the implementation of a course management system in the College of New Rochelle (Craig, 2005). This study used an on-line survey to collect faculty and learners' perspectives in this implementation project. I adapted this survey to explore learners' impressions of Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA within their English learning process. Additionally, I integrated learners' views of Internet activities into the survey. Learners' views were provided in class documents and I used them to identify aspects of their Internet learning process, on-line practice, communication exchange and collaborative interaction through the Nicenet ICA. Learners responded to five questions and ranked their answers on a grading scale to indicate levels of usefulness, effectiveness and difficulty of the Nicenet's on-line activities according to their own degrees of perception.

The Process of Data Analysis

I used the Nicenet ICA at the beginning of the course to gather learners' feedback about their perceptions of English learning and aspects implied in the creation of a positive English learning environment. Learners posted their comments through threaded discussion topics in Conferencing.

I first used Internet discussion thread postings to analyze learners' feedback concerning their initial perceptions of the English learning process and the active English learning environment, their learning expectations and their learning needs for the teaching/learning process when they posted contributions to two topics. These topics were: What is English Learning? and Creating a Positive English Learning Environments. They expressed their perceptions of English Learning when they gave

their opinions to the first topic. In addition, they gave their impressions about important characteristics of a positive English environment when they wrote about characteristics of positive English learning environments. Learners' answers to the second topic also included comments about their expectations and learning needs. They wrote about these two topics right after they participated in an orientation session in the first week of their English course. The purpose of this session was to create students' awareness of the communicative orientation of their English course. Therefore, during the session, I gave students an inductive power point presentation that focused on major characteristics of their English learning environment. This presentation mainly provided students information about the course's goals, main characteristics of the English learning environment, the roles of the teacher and the learners in this environment, the importance of learning styles and strategies, the role of technology and the benefits of Internet activities, core program guidelines and course materials.

I used learners' grades for on-line work and web based research projects to determine overall percentages of the learners' participation level during their 90-hour course. These percentages were used as indicators of learners' participation levels in on-line reading, writing and searching activities. They were worth 20% of learners' achievement. Quizzes, pop quizzes, written and oral exams were equivalent to 80%.

I used learners' grades to identify learners' participation levels for on-line writing activities, on-line reading activities and web-based research projects through the Nicenet ICA. They accessed the Nicenet ICA when they engaged in web based lab assignments that developed their on-line reading, on-line writing and Internet search skills. Learners accessed the Nicenet ICA and used its menu applications to access to lesson plans instructions, post their assignments and access links for web search when they worked in Internet. Learners received written feedback about their Internet

activities to guide their on-line writing, on-line reading and web based project activities. Learners published these activities in a final written project at the end of the course. I also used grades to inform students about their on-line work progress. During the course I kept grading records of learners' on-line learning activities in the Nicenet ICA that were used to grade learners on-line work and inform learners about their on-line performance.

I also gathered data about learners' feedback of Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA in class documents. I used learners' documents as part of the data analysis. These documents belonged to two kinds: a) learners' overall impressions about Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA and b) learners' impressions of the Nicenet ICA's final project. Learners wrote comments about their impressions of Internet activities and the Nicenet ICA to give feedback about their on-line English learning interaction. They first gave initial feedback about Internet activities in a graded paragraph and then, they included final feedback about the Nicenet ICA in the conclusions of their final written project. This project compiled on-line writing, on-line reading and web based research tasks learners had completed in their upper intermediate English course as described in the syllabus of Internet activities. Both types of learners' documents provided learners' insights of the effects of Internet activities and the Nicenet ICA into their English learning process. The analysis focused on aspects of the Internet interaction through the Nicenet ICA described by learners.

I finally ran a post class survey at the end of the course. I analyzed and tabulated learners' survey's answers at the end of their 90-hour course. The purpose of this survey was to collect information about learners' impressions of Internet activities in the Nicenet ICA. Twenty-eight out of thirty six learners answered the survey during class time. There were eight absent learners. There were five questions in the survey.

Questions focused on aspects of learners' on-line learning process through the Nicenet ICA as illustrated in the diagram of learners' on-line process (see Appendix N). The questions asked learners about these aspects: a) usefulness of the Nicenet ICA menu options; b) usefulness of the learning activities; c) on-line activities learning difficulty; d) the effectiveness of the Nicenet ICA postings and e) effects of the Nicenet ICA in learners' communication skill development. Each question included different items or choices students ranked on a grading scale according to their individual perceptions. The number of items for each question was different. Question 1 had seven items, question 2 had five items, question three had eight items, question four had four items and question five had nine items. I decided to use a graded scale for each question to measure the degree of learners' individual variation in each of the questions' items and as a result, widen learners' feedback. Learners used number one to represent the highest level on the graded scale for each question

I designed the survey after reading the article *Swimming in the Rapids/ Faculty and Student Perspectives in the Implementation of a Course Management System*. Craig (2005), Director of Academic Computing Services at the College of New Rochelle in the USA wrote this article. This specialist introduces it as a "brief study of the first phase of implementation of a course management system at this college" (p. 1). This study used a survey to assess students and faculty's experience with Angel/ A New Global Environment for Learning at the College of New Rochelle in the United States. This survey focused on students' perceptions to Angel's most useful features, the importance to learning through Angel and the program learning difficulty. I designed the survey to learn about upper intermediate English students' perceptions of Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA at the end of the course after identifying aspects such as usefulness and difficulty that were assessed in Angel's. I used this survey as a model

to develop questions that were suitable to the study of students' perceptions of the Nicenet ICA's on-line activities. Angel and the Nicenet ICA are different Internet systems and I, therefore had to adapt information provided by the survey used at the College of New Rochelle in the United States to focus on learners' impressions of the Nicenet ICA's on-line activities. The post class survey focused on these aspects: a) the Nicenet ICA's menu options usefulness; b) on-line activities effectiveness; c) on-line activities difficulty; d) on-line postings effectiveness and e) the Nicenet ICA's effects in students' communication skill development.

I read in Craig (2005) study that the survey's questions were developed through "interactions with faculty and students" (p.3). I followed this procedure when I included learners' written comments about Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA on-line interaction in the survey design. Learners made these comments in two class documents that gathered their overall impressions about Internet activities and the effects of the Nicenet ICA in their learning.

Learners' comments were integrated into the survey to focus on their personal feedback. Their comments were used to identify common variables of their on-line interaction through the Nicenet ICA after learners highlighted variables of their on-line interaction in class documents mentioned above. Learners' written comments served for research purposes as they highlighted notorious aspects of the interrelation of the Nicenet ICA and learners' communication skill development. For instance, learners' comments focused on variables such as time management, information access, data base organization, technological applications, communication interaction, training, research and skills development.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

In this chapter I report on the findings pertaining to the upper intermediate English learners' perceptions of using Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA. I outlined this in Chapter 3.

I grouped data into five categories: learners' perceptions of the English learning process; learners' perceptions of a positive English learning environment, learners' feedback on the effects of Internet activities in their English learning process, learners' impressions of on-line activities in the Nicenet ICA and learners' on-line engagement levels through the Nicenet ICA.

Learners' Perceptions of English Learning

Learners expressed their perceptions about this topic when they posted responses to the question "What is English Learning at Universidad Interamericana?" They used Conferencing in the Nicenet ICA to post their answers to a writing assignment after they had an orientation session at the beginning of their English course. The purpose of this presentation was to provide students general course guidelines. After students attended the orientation session, I asked students to write opinions about what they thought English learning was. They first wrote their assignments in class. I gave students editing instructions to improve their initial versions after I gave them feedback about their work. For example, I asked them to use an error correction code to identify language aspects such as spelling, word order, vocabulary, punctuation, grammar, sentence structure and tense uses among other aspects for error correction. Finally I asked students to post their edited answers to Conferencing. This topic was one of the initial topics posted to this discussion forum to contribute and share opinions through

the Nicenet. In this particular case, they used Conferencing to share their expectations, priorities, goals and wishes with course members.

One theme that emerged, and that was repeated by many of the students was the importance of English for professional development. A representative statement was: “English learning is learning a language to connect with people from other countries and to do business between international companies to develop our country. Nowadays English is very important for professional life”. Another representative statement was: “English learning is learning English through several skills and tools of learning and teaching. In addition, English learning is very important for the professional because English is an added value that adds competitive advantages as English is the globalization language”.

Another theme that recurred in the data was the advantages of this language in terms of communication, information access, cultural awareness, international contacts and globalisation. For instance, a learner wrote that English learning is very important and useful. He also wrote that knowing this language allows him to communicate with people from other countries with different cultures. He wrote: “English learning gives us the opportunity for new jobs, having this tool presents an advantage from people who don’t know it”. Another learner wrote that learning English is preparing him to access a real universe of information. This learner added that English is a tool that we must all have and learning English makes him starting to know people from different places and cultures. He wrote: “English is a tool that we must all have. It may open a lot of opportunities to us if we have it; but if not, it may restrict our chances to get a good job”. According to another learner, English learning is improving communication skills by using another language. This learner said that “English learning are different activities that we have to do to speak, listen, write and understand this language”.

Another theme was related to future English applications for commercial activities. Concerning this theme, a learner wrote that English learning is very important to do excellent businesses in the future. She said that “English learning is very important to do excellent future businesses with people from other countries, etc. Another learner wrote: “English has become even essential to all of us because we will be using it after university during negotiations”.

More than half of the learners described their English learning needs. Collectively, they commented on learning activities variety for skills development, grammar, vocabulary, resources and cognitive engagement for English learning when they referred to what they needed to do to learn English.

Learners highlighted the importance in having English learning activities variety through their learning process when they described their learning needs. A representative statement was:

... students could develop their ideas by writing short poems, making stories, playing games, having video lessons, creating songs and other activities that would be helpful for us to stimulate our linguistic development. It is important to learn English because we live in a world with multiple cultures, languages, etc. but the most important thing, is that we need to learn English because we have to communicate with people.

Another representative statement was,
English learning is the way I can learn English. This implies the materials that I am going to use, the way the class is going to be and how I am going to study. For all these requested things, the best choices are listening to cassettes; watching videos, trying to speak thinking in English and sometimes studying and remembering from books. An important point is paying attention in class

because this will be the main reason why we would and would not learn together many words from vocabulary or grammar functions. Lastly, English learning is also about using helpful materials in order to understand the language and not understand it word by word. This implies the materials he is going to use, the way the class is going to be and how he is going to study.

An additional representative statement was:

In my opinion, English learning means learning the language in a productive way. For example, by interacting with my classmates and teacher, by writing essays, giving presentations, etc. In this way, I will learn more about the language, learn how to speak in front of my classmates, learn to trust in what I know and learn to trust my classmates.

Many learners gave their views about the importance of learners' cognitive engagement when they learn English. A learner wrote:

I think that English learning is not having another language to study as a hobby, if not, is the language that everybody should and must speak, because it is the international language and one of the keys to get into the global world. We can learn English by talking, speaking and writing. In this course the most important is to be positive and always prepared to be interactive with your brain while thinking in English and to be interactive with your tongue while speaking what you're thinking.

Another representative statement was "English learning has to do with acquiring skills to help us to learn how to communicate with another person in English. For example: essays, speaking, etc."

Learners also commented on the role of materials when they referred to their learning needs. For example, a learner wrote:

English learning is improving our communication skills by using another language. By using several resources we can easily learn English, for example books and a dictionary are useful resources. By knowing a second language we can communicate with foreign people". Table 6 indicates learners' answers for learning needs.

Table 6: Learners' Learning Needs

Learning needs	Students' answers number
Learning activities variety for skill development	16
Cognitive engagement for English learning	14
Grammar	10
Vocabulary	9
Resources	8

Several learners identified English learning as a process. A learner stated, English learning is a very necessary process to provide people knowledge of a different cultural process that will give us the key to many areas because languages always contain idiomatic expressions that help us communicate differently from other countries even though we speak the same language.

Learners' Perceptions of A Positive English Learning Environment

Learners contributed their perceptions of a positive English learning environment to this threaded discussion topic in the Conferencing feature of Nicenet ICA. Their responses were highly descriptive.

Most learners highlighted the importance of affective conditions to build up an English learning environment. Here is a representative statement:

It is very important to have a positive English learning environment because you have to be comfortable with your friends so you can speak without fears. You have to trust in the people that are with you in your class Because if someone laughs at you while you are speaking, that can make you feel bad and you will never want to speak again.

Another representative statement was:

To have a suitable learning environment is very positive; it helps us to accomplish the purpose of learning and improving our English. An example of this is to feel confident with our classmates, having a good teacher-student relationship as well; this would make us feel free and fearless to express our opinions when we communicate.

According to learners, there were aspects such as communication, participation and interactivity that are important to build up a supportive environment where learners can learn English. A learner said,

A positive learning environment is made by people who always keep participating, a teacher who gives ideas and understands students. It's important to have a positive learning environment because it makes easier learning English, and that will be better for us, we would feel comfortable.

Some learners responded that good physical conditions such as light and silence are important for effective learning. Learners responded that a positive English learning environment should be free of distractions, noise and interruptions. According to learners, they need good physical conditions in a class. They mainly said that that the class has to be a nice room with enough light so they could be comfortable and learn at the same time. Here is an example of a student comment that captures this theme:

The English Learning Environment is very important for our development such as business people. The environment in class should not be: not noise and not distractions. We have to speak in English all time (always), we have to pay attention too. The schedule of class is important too, I prefer at morning like now. Because there isn't sun, heat, etc. It's more amusing".

A considerable number of learners wrote comments that highlighted communication and interaction. They used words like interactivity, participation, self-expression and attention are important characteristics of positive English learning environments to describe a good English learning environment. This student's words show the communication and interaction classroom component theme:

A positive English learning environment will be helpful to be confident about your speaking and writing process. This environment can be useful to get the knowledge you need in a specific time, teachers and students usually participate and interact together to get better results every time communication starts. When people develop themselves in a negative learning environment, it becomes difficult for them to express their feelings and ideas because sometimes they feel afraid to be punished for any mistake they have done. In the other hand, fun can be a very positive learning environment because it will create a confidence to

keep up the good work and not to feel embarrassed if we make any kind of mistake.

A group of learners responded that a positive English learning environment should provide a variety of materials to increase learners' motivation. A representative statement was: I think that a positive English environment is very important for the class because it gives us a comfortable feeling. We can use some kinds of tools like videos or movies, games and interviews to improve our English a lot.”

Some of the learners pointed out the role of learning areas such as speaking, pronunciation, and writing in their responses. Learners responded that a positive English learning environment is expected to support their learning in these areas. For example, a learner said:

Creating a Positive Learning English Environment is the best way to become a professional speaker. This environment is important too because we can work in teams (teachers-students or students-teacher), make new friends and lose the fear to speak in English with somebody else.

Learners' Feedback of the Effects of Internet Activities

This section reports on learners' perceptions of the effects of Internet learning activities. Learners reported about these effects in class documents and in their final class projects.

Learners wrote a fifty-word paragraph about the Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA in class documents. Their answers were as follows:

Most learners described Internet activities very positively. Learners described these activities as very good, really interesting, practical and useful for their English learning process. According to some learners, activities were very good and necessary to improve their English learning. For example, a learner wrote that learning about Pixar

and DreamWorks through the Nicenet ICA had been the best activities. A representative statement was:

What I can say about all the Internet activities we did during the course, is that they were very interesting. In my opinion the way we worked in Nicenet is an interesting and modern way of learning. It was very interactive also because it was not as usual as in class. I think it is an innovative and motivating way to learn more. To conclude I can say that this was a new way of learning. This way is innovative, motivating and very interesting for learning more about the language and its rules. Thanks a lot for this time we spent with us, teaching in a motivating and innovating way.

Another representative statement was:

As we are close to end the course, I want you to know my opinion about the on-line activities. Working with the Internet as a resource for our English course was a brilliant idea. In some way you encouraged us to do research and increased our knowledge. It's better because to do tasks there with the chance to edit them without wasting resources such as paper.

Most learners highlighted the effects of Internet activities in their English language learning process. A representative statement was:

I write you because I want to give my opinions about the Internet activities we have done in Nicenet. I think this is a very useful resource because it has helped us to be more organized in our assignments. I'm very happy because I learned to use it very well. I hope we can use it in the next level again. Thanks for teaching us.

Another representative statement was:

I have been thinking about our Internet activities on Nicenet and now that our Upper Intermediate Level has finished, I would like you to know how helpful it has been for my learning process. This dynamic tool has increased my vocabulary which was one of my English Learning expectations, by having fun surfing on the web.

Most learners gave feedback about the benefits of using Internet and the Nicenet ICA for English learning. These benefits included information access, interaction and communication exchange. For example, a learner wrote that it was incredible to communicate and interact with their classmates through the Nicenet ICA. Other learners wrote that they learned new things, accessed more information and saved time in Internet activities. Several learners described Internet learning as innovative, modern, didactic entertaining and motivating. Some learners gave their opinions about their results after using Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA. These learners wrote they were more familiarized with Internet after doing searching activities.

Most learners referred to the Nicenet ICA as a tool and/or resource when they completed Internet activities. They used the words like great, brilliant, and best in their descriptions. Their descriptions imply the learners' awareness of the utility of this tool for communication, research, and language learning on the Internet. Here is a student statement that represents much of the student feedback:

Nicenet has been a good resource for me. It helps me to do a research in English and to be more familiarized with English web pages. Before I used Nicenet I hated English web pages, because I couldn't understand them. But now I know more vocabulary and I understand clearly what they are talking about. Also Nicenet helps me to practice reading.

A group of learners made technical recommendations for the Nicenet ICA.

These recommendations included adding colour fonts and an e-mail inbox to facilitate their work. A learner wrote: “one aspect that would make their written communication better would be possible by adding colours to the fonts”. Another learner wrote,

About Nicenet activities, I think it's a good idea to have this resource available for us. They gives us the chance to check everyone's job. So we can get ideas or get more instructions in order to complete tasks. But there is one thing. I don't really understand when a new assignment is completed. This system could be like an e-mail inbox so when we have completed the task, it should disappear or check or something that shows that the task is completed.

Several learners associated Internet to professional development and pointed out the advantages of this medium in terms of business, work activities and/or communication. For example, a learner wrote that Internet is at present a huge key to be a good professional. He added that Internet activities helped learners to learn how to use this key. Another learner wrote that using computers and Internet for some class activities was amazing and didactic. He wrote:

I would like to thank you because of giving me and my friends this powerful tool called Nicenet. I think it was amazing and didactic to use computers and Internet for some class activities instead of actually being in class. All the documents, links, activities and also your opinions were very valuable for our improvement because of them me and my friends improve our skills and our use of language. Thank you again.

In addition to class documents, learners wrote about the effects of Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA in their final class projects. They included all on-line assignments in their projects. There were different categories of assignments: on-line

writing tasks, on-line reading tasks, web based tasks and discussion topics. Learners published their on-line English learning tasks in the last stage of their writing process according to established formats. They went through other writing stages during the upper intermediate English course. These stages were: planning, drafting, revising and editing. Learners also worked on projects graphic design to obtain communicative effects. They used graphics to illustrate their tasks. Their conclusions focused on the following aspects:

There were learners who wrote positive comments about teamwork in their conclusions. They highlighted the role of teamwork for project management. They wrote that they had worked in groups and learned to manage projects and communicate. They also wrote that they are preparing themselves to deal with any kinds of projects and problems if they use technological tools. They also wrote that they had learned many useful things that would help them to manage many situations in life. A representative statement was:

We've almost finished this level and now you know how we reached this. We have been almost 90 hours working as a team, with managers who have helped us to improve our English level. We have completed activities such as conversations, presentations, reading and other tasks. As a conclusion I can say that for some students, it's been hard because they did not know much English, and for others, it's been a reinforcement of what they've acquired among the years.

Another representative statement was:

This course was excellent for me, because I improve my English knowledge using Nicenet as an important tool for learning and practicing. Team Work was the most important kind of work for me. Almost every activity we have done

was based on Team Work and that was another tool for me to learning and practicing a lot, especially for communication.

Learners also focused on the positive effects of technology in their English learning development. A representative statement was:

I can conclude that having the opportunity to use and have the Nicenet as a tool for research, as a source that contributes in our English language improvement it's a luxury and advantage. It has eased our work for Pixar and DreamWorks presentations; it's been another way of working in tasks avoiding the monotony of doing assignments. It has also helped us in becoming more skilled in the use of internet as a research source or tool.

There was a learner who wrote that a virtual class had to be useful and practical. This learner agreed with using Internet to improve her skills but she disagreed with the publication of the Nicenet ICA project. She pointed out that if they had to do the work again, publishing was an inefficient use of resources because tasks were already published in the Nicenet ICA. She said:

It is very important to development writing skills. It is necessary to communicate in other language. A virtual class have to be useful and practical. I'm agree if we improve our skills using internet, but I'm not agree if we have to do the same work again, It is a bad use of resources. A virtual class has been created to optimise the time and facilitate the work. If we have to repeat the work, we don't optimise the time.

There were some learners who wrote about the effects of Internet activities for skill development in their notes. They wrote they had improved their writing skills in Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA. There were also learners who wrote that they had improved their writing skills and searching through Internet activities.

Most learners wrote about the usefulness and effectiveness of using technological tools for English learning in their projects' comments. According to many of them, there was nothing better than learning with technology. They also pointed out that the way they worked was important and useful because the entire world is using more technology. There was a learner, for example, who wrote that activities showed that all were capable of doing interactive activities, developing language and communicating through the world technology. In addition, the majority of learners referred to the beneficial effects of the Nicenet ICA in their learning. In general, learners described these effects in positive terms. They described the Nicenet ICA as a very useful tool for their English learning. Learners highlighted the Nicenet ICA technical features in their descriptions. These features included: users' friendliness, usefulness and benefits. For instance, a learner wrote that Nicenet was one of the most effective tools that they could use for their learning because it was very useful and easy to use. Another learner also wrote that the Nicenet ICA made her work easier because it helped her to access and organize information for her assignments. There was another learner who wrote that she had used this tool to communicate with her teacher and classmates. She added that her teacher had helped them by checking mistakes and helping them to improve their language knowledge. Some learners focused on their learning achievements. They wrote about their results. For example, a learner wrote that she has learned grammar in her edited versions. She added that she has learned to write good essays and edit her mistakes. Another learner wrote that she has learned a lot of vocabulary and grammar. Additionally, a learner wrote that working hard as she did in the last part was one of the best ways of learning English because she practiced and learned a lot.

Learners' Impressions of the Nicenet's On-line Activities

Learners answered a post class survey at the end of their upper intermediate English level. Learners responded to five questions about their impressions of on-line activities through the Nicenet ICA. Each question had items learners ranked in a grading scale. The number of items varied in each question. Learners used number one to indicate the highest level of the grading scale in their responses. Twenty-eight learners out of thirty-six responded to this survey. Eight learners were absent.

Table 7: Learners' impressions of the usefulness of the Nicenet ICA menu options.

What options in the Nicenet's menu were most useful for you?		
Scale	Options	Response
1	Conferencing	75%
2	Link sharing	29%
3	Documents	29%
4	Reply messages	36%
5	Sending personal messages	25%
6	Class schedule	43%
7	Class members	50%

In the first question, twenty-eight learners were asked to rank the various options of the Nicenet menu in terms of usefulness to them. These options included: Conferencing, Links Sharing, Documents, Reply messages, Sending personal messages, Class schedule and Class messages. Results were as follows:

Twenty-one (75%) of learners ranked Conferencing in first place of usefulness. Eight (29%) of learners ranked Link sharing in second place of usefulness. Eight (29%) of learners ranked Documents in third place of usefulness. Ten (36%) of learners ranked

Reply messages in fourth place of usefulness. Seven (25%) of learners ranked Sending personal messages in fifth place of usefulness. Twelve (43%) of learners ranked Class schedule in sixth place of usefulness and fourteen (50%) of learners ranked Class members in the last place of usefulness.

Table 8: Learners' Impressions of the Usefulness of On-line Activities in their English Learning Process.

Which of these activities helped you most to improve your English learning?		
Scale	Options	Students Responses
1	On-line writing tasks	39%
2	On-line resources applications	21%
3	On-line reading tasks	32%
4	Web based research activities	39%
5	Information sharing among class members	54%

In the second question, learners were asked to rank on-line writing tasks; on-line reading tasks; web based research activities such as web quests and web hunts; on-line resources applications such as dictionaries and search engines and information sharing activities among class members. According to results, eleven (39%) of the learners indicated that on-line writing tasks were useful to improve their English learning, six (21%) of the learners ranked on-line resources applications in second place on the grading scale. Nine (32%) of the learners ranked on-line reading activities in the third place. Eleven (39%) of learners ranked web based research activities in fourth place.

Fifteen (54%) of the learners ranked information sharing activities among class members in the fifth place.

Table 9: Learners' Impressions of On-line Learning Activities Difficulty.

Which of these on-line learning activities did you find More difficult?		
Scale	Options	Students Responses
1	Grammar based activities	39%
2	Final WebQuest projects	25%
3	Communication interaction	21%
4	Vocabulary activities	21%
5	Evaluating power point presentations	18%
6	Task based activities	21%
7	Publishing the Nicenet's tasks activities	18%
8	Exploring the web	32%

In the third question, learners were asked to rank on-line activities in terms of the difficulty to them. These on-line activities included: grammar based activities, the final Webquest project, communication interaction, vocabulary activities, power point presentations evaluations, task based activities, publishing the Nicenet's task based activities and exploring the web. Results were as follows:

Eleven (39%) of the learners ranked grammar based activities in first place of difficulty. Seven (25%) of the learners ranked the final WebQuest project in second place of difficulty. Six (21%) of the learners ranked communication interaction in the third place of difficulty. Six (21%) of the learners ranked vocabulary activities in the fourth place of difficulty. Five (18%) of the learners ranked evaluating power point

presentations in the fifth place of difficulty. Six (21%) of the learners evaluated task based activities in the last place of difficulty.

Table 10: Learners' Impressions of the Effectiveness of Postings in their Class Organization.

Learners were asked to rate postings in terms of effectiveness to their class organization.

Which of these postings were more effective for your class organization?		
Scale	Options	Students Responses
1	Having information about projects	54%
2	Having on-line lessons instructions	32%
3	Having general information about the course	36%
4	Course general announcements	39%

Fifteen (54%) of the learners ranked projects information in the first place of effectiveness. Nine (32%) of the learners ranked on-line lesson instructions in the second place of effectiveness. Ten (36%) of the learners ranked general information about the course in the third place of effectiveness. Eleven (39%) of the learners ranked course general announcements in the fourth place of effectiveness.

Table 11: Learners' Impressions of The Nicenet's ICA Effects in their Communication Skill Development

Learners were asked to rank the usefulness of several aspects of the Nicenet ICA in the communication skills development.

Which of these aspects of the Nicenet influenced your learning process to develop communication skills?		
Scale	Options	Students Responses
1	Skill development	25%
2	Research	18%
3	Communication interaction	25%
4	Information access	21%
5	Training	21%
6	Technological applications	18%
7	Data base organization	43%
8	Time saving	39%

Seven (25%) of the learners placed skill development in the first place of usefulness. Five (18%) of the learners placed research in the second place of usefulness. Seven (25%) of the learners placed communication interaction in the third place of usefulness. Six (21%) of the learners placed information access in the fourth place of usefulness. Six (21%) of the learners placed training in the fifth place of usefulness. Five (18%) of the learners placed technological applications in the sixth place. Twelve (43%) of the learners placed data base organization in the seventh place and eleven (39%) of the learners placed time saving in the last place of usefulness.

Learners' Participation Levels in Internet Activities through the Nicenet ICA

Learners' English learning achievement was measured over 100 points. The class average was 75.43/100. This result indicated a high level of learners' achievement in a thirty six-learner class that grouped two categories of learners: learners graduated from bilingual high schools and learners graduated from religious or public high schools. Learners' achievement in tests and projects was equivalent to (80%) of the total class grade and learners' on-line learning activities achievement was equivalent to (20%) of the class grade.

According to grade records (64, 73%) was the class average for written and oral tests and projects. Tests were supplied by New Interchange 3 teacher's book and (13,78 %) was the class average for on-line learning activities. Learners' on-line work corresponded to two categories: on-line learning activities and web based research projects. On-line learning activities included on-line writing tasks, grammar based activities, on-line reading tasks and vocabulary tasks while web based research projects grouped class web based projects learners presented in power point class presentations after they did web based searching activities, interacted, communicated and worked through the Nicenet ICA when they managed projects.

Learners completed ten writing tasks that required planning, drafting, revising editing and publishing. They published these tasks in the Nicenet ICA final project at the end of the course. I graded each on-line writing task over 10 points. (6.39 %) was the class average for on-line writing tasks. (See Appendix O)

Learners managed projects in groups. They had to complete on-line tasks and web based research when they collaborated through the Nicenet ICA to prepare class presentations in power point or complete on-line assignments that were aimed at

creating learners' communication and interaction. (7.39 %) was the class average for web-based research projects. (See Appendix P)

I used learners' grades for on-line writing tasks and web based projects to find out the extent to which learners had participated in Internet activities in the Nicenet Internet classroom assistant. I used a scale to calculate learners' Internet participation percentages in three levels: high, average and low. Learners placed in the first level of the scale were those learners that had obtained on-line work grades that ranked from 75 to 100 because they had completed all or most of their on-line work with high quality. Learners placed in the second level of the scale were those learners with on-line work grades that ranked from 50-75. These learners had missed on-line assignments or they hadn't followed edition instructions. Learners placed in the third level of the scale were those learners that had the lowest grades because they didn't do their on-line assignments.

Table 12: Scale for Learners' Internet Participation Levels

Internet participation levels	Scale
High Internet participation	75-100
Average Internet participation	50-74
Low Internet participation	49 or less

I used percentages as indicators of learners' engagement when they did on-line learning activities through the NICA as planned in the Internet course syllabus. Results are as follows:

Results indicate that (17%) of learners had a high participation, (72%) had an average participation and (11%) had a low participation for on-line writing activities.

According to results, (39%) of learners had a high participation,(55%) had an average participation and (6%) had a low participation for web-based projects.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This chapter contains the discussion of the findings of this research study. This study examined learners' perceptions of Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA.

The discussion of the findings corresponds to the five categories presented in chapter four. These categories were: initial learner's perceptions of a communicative English learning process at their educational institution; initial learners' perceptions of an active English learning environment; learners' feedback of Internet activities; learners' impressions of the Nicenet ICA's on-line activities and learners' Internet activities involvement levels.

I have organized the findings according to categories mentioned above. The findings for initial learners' perceptions of a communicative learning process at their educational institution are sequenced according to the themes: the importance of English for professional development; the advantages of this language in terms of communication, cultural awareness, international contacts and globalisation; future English applications for commercial activities and learners' English learning needs. The findings for initial learners' perceptions of an English learning environment are organized according to the following sequence of themes: affective conditions; communication, participation and interactivity; good physical conditions; English learning materials variety and the role of English learning areas. The findings for learners' feedback of Internet activities are reported as follow: learners' acceptance of Internet activities; Internet activities effects; Internet activities benefits and Internet advantages. These findings also include learners' impressions of the effects of Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA and positive effects of technology in learners' English learning development reported on learners' final projects. Learners compiled all

tasks posted to the Nicenet and published them in the Nicenet ICA project at the end of the course. The findings for learners' impressions of the Nicenet ICA's on-line activities are organized according to learners' answers to a post class survey. Learners answered about five aspects of the Nicenet on-line activities in this survey: the usefulness of the Nicenet ICA menu options, the usefulness of on-line activities in their English learning process, on-line learning activities difficulty, effectiveness of postings in their class organization and The Nicenet ICA effects in learners' communication skill development. Finally, there are findings for learners' Internet activities involvement levels.

Findings connect learners' perceptions of the process, practice and use of Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA. I first discuss learners' initial perceptions of their English learning process at Universidad Interamericana and a communicative English learning environment collected through the Nicenet ICA postings. Learners contributed postings to the Nicenet ICA to share their views of English learning at UI and aspects implied in the English learning environment after orientation sessions at the beginning of their course.

Learners' postings show on-line learners' interaction through two initial Nicenet ICA's threaded discussion topics at the beginning of their English course. Learners provided valuable perceptions of English learning and a positive English learning environment through their postings. They shared them among class members in Conferencing. Postings mainly reflected learners' needs, learners' course expectations and learning experiences and they were therefore valuable sources to focus on learners' needs when I designed their English learning environments either in class and / or in the NICA. After I discuss learners' impressions of the effects of Internet activities into learners' English learning that were reported on the Nicenet ICA final projects and

learners' written comments. In general learners' responses described the effects of Internet activities in their English learning in addition to the effects the Nicenet Internet classroom assistant. I follow discussing learners' impressions of on-line activities through the Nicenet ICA collected through a survey. I discuss all the survey's questions results. Finally I discuss learners' involvement levels of Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA.

Learners' Initial Perceptions of the English Learning process at UI

Learners were aware of the following characteristics of the English learning process at their educational environment at the beginning of their course as shown by the various data sources for Research question 1. Learners used the Nicenet ICA to contribute research data sources.

Learners are aware of the role of English for professional development. To this respect, they described English as a communication tool and highlighted its important role for contacts, negotiations and cultural exchange.

Most of the learners in this study seemed to be concerned with the communicative orientation of their learning process. For instance, they used communication, interaction and participation as key words to describe their individual perceptions of the communicative purposes of their English learning program at UI

According to the findings, learners also perceived their individual learning needs and therefore, made recommendations for their English process in terms of activities, resources and learning approaches preferences. Some learners have preconceptions about their English learning. Some of them, for instance expressed they need to lose fear of speaking English.

Learners' Initial Perceptions of an English Learning Environment

Learners described cognitive, affective and social conditions of an English learning environment in their initial perceptions. This study showed that learners expect to have support for their cognitive development. They, for example, highlighted the importance of learners' thinking engagement when they said English learning implied ideas exchange and self expression when they communicate. Learners initially perceived their English language learning needs in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary among other learning areas. They clearly focused their learning expectations on these areas. Learners' responses imply they were applying metacognitive strategies such as self-reflection and/or focusing on their needs to improve their learning.

Affective conditions are also important in a positive English learning environment according to the learners' views. According to their answers, this kind of environment should provide psychological support for the class members' affective needs. For instance, learners highlighted the importance of principles and values such as respect and trust in members' relationships to build up a healthy atmosphere. They also focused on the roles of social engagement, class members' interaction and active participation for English practice. Learners also considered that physical conditions such as temperature, light and silence are necessary to keep a positive English learning environment free of distractions.

Learners initially perceived the effects of resources in their English learning development. They included videos and films as multimedia resources, books and dictionaries when they gave their opinions. According to learners, these resources would increase their learning motivation. Learners also perceived the importance of organization of material for effective results.

Learners' Feedback on the Effects of Internet Activities

This study revealed a general concurrence among learners' perceptions of Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA. Their perceptions were highly positive and they mainly focused on learners' acceptance of the Internet and the effects, benefits and advantages of this medium in their English learning development.

In general learners' perception of the benefit of Internet activities was very positive. This perception revealed learners' interest, enjoyment and acceptance concerning the integration of Internet activities into their English learning.

A considerable number of learners perceived beneficial effects of these activities in their reading, writing, web searching and skill development. What is more, learners also perceived collateral effects of these activities in terms of their professional development. For example, according to the findings, learners perceived Internet applications as part of their future professional activities and therefore, they recognized their importance.

Learners' perceptions of Internet activities benefits were in terms of information access, communication and information communication technologies applications. Findings demonstrated that learners positively perceived the Internet activities when they were kept interactive, and communicative, as well as when they were able to access information among other applications during their learning process.

Learners perceived the integration of Internet activities and the management of the Nicenet ICA as a different approach to their English learning. They are highly in favor of using the Internet and the Nicenet ICA for English learning activities. According to the learners in this study, technological applications brought variety to their English learning process.

Findings showed that learners' perceived time management important when they did Internet activities. Although learners perceived the benefits of Internet activities and the Nicenet ICA in terms of time saving when they accessed information on the net, some learners perceived that publishing the Nicenet ICA on-line tasks was a time consuming activity as they had to publish tasks that were already posted through the Nicenet ICA.

Additional findings indicated that learners perceived the Nicenet ICA as an effective communication tool for their English development. Findings demonstrated that learners perceived this tool as highly beneficial for project management, organization, communication and teamwork, when they did their final web-based projects. According to the learners, either Internet activities or the Nicenet ICA built up life skills.

Learners' Impressions of the Nicenet's On-line Activities

Survey results demonstrated that learners used several options of the Nicenet ICA menu such as Conferencing, Links and Documents to do on-line writing, on-line reading and web based project activities through their interaction, communication exchange and information access for Internet English learning. Therefore, there is an evident connection between the survey results and the other data collected from the student documents of the Nicenet ICA. The Nicenet ICA recorded, structured and saved learners' results of on-line reading, writing and web based activities as the learners' interaction. An examination of both the survey results and the Nicenet ICA learners' results revealed the same patterns of learners' on-line interaction. These patterns focused on learners' on-line reading, on-line writing and web based project management activities.

The results for the first survey question revealed that most of learners (75%) perceived a high level of usefulness for Conferencing. In addition, learners (29%)

perceived Link Sharing and learners (29%) perceived Documents as useful menu options of the Nicenet ICA, according to the survey results. Learners mainly used these options through their web-based learning process in their upper intermediate English level. The examination of the Nicenet data sources indicated that and therefore, supported learners' responses. Some learners' that had a high frequency of use gave more positive responses. Learners' frequent use alone, could also be interpreted as an indicator of learners' high perception of the usefulness of certain features of the Nicenet ICA options usefulness.

The results for the second survey question indicated that (39%) learners perceived on-line writing tasks and (32%) learners perceived on-line reading tasks at higher degrees of usefulness in their English learning improvement in comparison with information sharing among members, web based activities and on-line resource applications.

According to the survey's results, nearly half of the learners perceived higher levels of learning improvement when they did on-line writing and/ or readings tasks than when they did web-based research activities or used web based on-line resources. In contrast to the perceptions of high levels of on-line learning task usefulness for on-line reading and writing, information sharing among class members had the lowest ranking on the grading scale in terms of usefulness for learners' English learning according to the survey's results. An examination of the Nicenet ICA data showed that learners sent or replied to their classmates' messages only occasionally.

The results for the third survey question demonstrated that (39%) learners perceived grammar-based on-line activities at the highest level of difficulty for on-line learning.

There is a connection between learners' initial learners' feedback collected through the Nicenet ICA and learners' responses in relation to learners' grammar

learning process. Learners focused on this area in either their comments about their grammar learning needs at the beginning of the course and in their impressions of grammar highest level of difficulty in the results of the survey. According to this study, nearly half of the learners perceived grammar based on-line learning activities as difficult.

Learners (25%) also perceived the final web-based project as difficult. This project required learners to work in groups to create a promotional brochure of different tourist places of Ecuador after collecting information about these places on the web. (See Appendix P). The final web project also required learners to promote these places in final power point presentations. Learners' final web-based project was evidently difficult for learners considering learners had to cope with time restrictions, group management coordination and academic requirements. So, it isn't conclusive, that the use of NICA was the principle reason for the perception of difficulty. What is more, according to Dodge (1997) web based projects demand learners' higher order thinking skills, knowledge management, interaction and communication to create a new product. (See Appendix Q & R) for examples of the power point presentations that received the highest and lowest marks.

Communication interaction followed the final web based project in terms of difficulty for several learners. This might have had to see with the fact that 49% of learners' English levels was at either an elementary English or intermediate English when they started their English program. They were placed in their English levels by the New Interchange English Placement Written Test. According to academic records, these learners graduated from religious and/or public high schools where English programs aren't as intensive as they are in bilingual schools.

Web based search activities were perceived as the least difficult on-line learning activity by learners. There might be factors affecting learners' responses to this question item. They are likely to include: learners' regular use of Internet search for academic purposes, learners' technological habits and learners' familiarization of web search activities for project management.

The results for the fourth question showed that learners (54%) found information about projects as the most effective postings for class organization. Learners were able to access information about their class projects through the Nicenet ICA. Learners' responses might indicate the effectiveness of this tool in terms of project management and communication. In contrast, learners (39%) found general course announcements as the least effective postings for class organization. These announcements dealt with general issues such as instructions for the Nicenet ICA, reminders and messages among others. Apparently, learners did not find a strong association between these postings and their class organization.

The results for the fifth question demonstrated that learners (25%) for skill development, (18%) for research and (25%) for communication interaction perceived them as top aspects that influenced their learning how to develop their communication skills although these items did not collect a high number of responses. Individual learning styles and/or learning strategies might have influenced learners' responses.

Information access, training and technological applications did not seem to influence this group of learners' development of communication skills in the same degree as skill development, research and communication interaction. Learners ranked these items lower on the scale. In addition, there were a considerable number of learners' responses for data base organization and time saving as the least influential aspects of learners' learning for communication development.

Overall findings demonstrate learners perceive Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA highly useful and effective for their English learning development. They perceive the usefulness, effectiveness and benefits of these technological tools when they engage in on-line English learning activities as evidenced in data sources. They also perceive the beneficial effects of these tools in terms of interactivity, communication, information access, information exchange, knowledge construction, professional development and dynamism when they do on-line reading and on-line writing activities or when they do web based research .

According to the findings of the post class survey, learners found Conferencing and Link Sharing among the most useful options of the Nicenet ICA menu when they interacted in Internet. Findings also indicate learners found on-line writing activities as the most useful activities for English learning while they found information about projects the most effective option for class organization. Learners ranked on-line writing activities as the most useful activities in the survey; however, the quantitative analysis of learners' participation levels for on-line writing activities revealed that most learners only reached an average participation for this type of on-line learning activities. Further research on on-line writing was suggested.

The survey's findings also indicate learners found skill development, research and communication interaction as the most useful aspects in their communication skills development as a result of the Nicenet ICA applications. However, there were small percentages of learners' responses for question five. Similarly, there were small percentages of learners' responses for other aspects of the Nicenet ICA usefulness for learners' communication skill development that included time management, information access, data base organization technological applications and training as a result of learners' ranking. None of these aspects reached high percentages according to learners'

ranking. Overall findings probably indicate those learners' perceptions of the usefulness of the Nicenet ICA for communication skills development may respond to factors such as learners' experience, motivation, language proficiency, computing skills, learning styles, research skills, time management styles and learning needs. These factors may have influenced learners' perceptions.

Learners' Internet Participation Levels

According to grading records, most learners participated through the Nicenet ICA to either complete on-line reading, on-line writing activities and/or web based research projects. Grading records indicate that learners' Internet participation levels resulted in 14% out of 20% of the total course grade.

I calculated learners' Internet participation levels for two types of assignments: on-line writing and web based research assignments. Results for learners' participation for on-line writing activities differed from learners' results in web based research activities. According to these results, learners participated more when they did web based research projects than when they did on-line writing activities in their computing lab. Despite these learners' participation levels differences, all learners completed their on-line writing activities, edited them after revision and published them in their final project at the end of the course. Most learners seemed to have been aware of the supportive role of Internet activities and the Internet classroom assistant to their English learning as indicated by the class average percentage (13,78 %) for on-line work. Class averages for on-line writing activities (6,39%) and web based research activities (7,39%) indicate that learners participated in Internet activities although their participation levels varied as indicated below.

Despite the fact that learners' on-line writing participation levels revealed that the percentage (72%) of learners that reached an average level of participation were

considerably higher than the percentage (17%) of learners that had a high participation, the study shows that all learners published their on-line writing tasks in the Nicenet project at the end of the course. This project compiled all writing tasks. Although all learners turned in their Nicenet ICA final projects to fulfil an academic requirement, the study shows that several learners missed on-line assignments or they didn't edit their on-line writing assignments to improve quality. In contrast to results for on-line writing, there wasn't a big difference in learners' Internet participation level for web based research projects that required communication, interaction and collaboration through the NICA. According to percentages, the percentage of learners (55%) that reached an average level of Internet research participation wasn't much higher than the percentage of learners (39%) that reached a high level of participation. The study also shows that there was a minimum percentage (6%) of learners that didn't participate in Internet web based research..

Even though the analysis shows that learners' participation levels differed mainly from an average level to a high level according to the class grading grid, all learners evidently used these technologies to participate in on-line English learning tasks when I put and analyzed all data sources together. This study showed that they gradually used the NICA for different purposes. They first used Conferencing to post messages to initial discussion topics that reflected their views of the English learning and the most important conditions of an English learning environment. After that they regularly used the Nicenet ICA to access information such as course announcements or assignments instructions among other uses, communicate or do on-line writing, reading and web based research activities. They also used the Nicenet ICA to access links for study and/or research purposes.

Learners' feedback for Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA was highly positive and it therefore, revealed a general acceptance of Internet activities for English learning. In general, findings reveal that learners perceived the usefulness, effectiveness and benefits of Internet learning activities through the Nicenet Internet classroom assistant during their collaborative interactions in this English learning environment.

The analysis of data sources: learners' grades, learners' Nicenet projects, learners' class documents, learners' Nicenet's postings and learners' survey's results leads to the interpretation of findings as learners' perception of the usefulness of either Internet activities or the Nicenet Internet classroom assistant as two useful and effective technologies during their English learning process and learners' active on-line engagement through these tools.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This study explored learners' perceptions of Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA in an upper intermediate English class to reach new insights of the process and practice of Internet English learning activities through classroom management systems.

I examined perceptions of thirty-six learners in level three (upper intermediate) level of their English program in order to discover how learners perceived the integration of Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA in their English learning process and English practice for communicative purposes.

I collected learners' views at the beginning, during and at the end of their English learning process. Learners' views were then integrated into this study to describe learners' perceptions of Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA in a ninety-hour upper intermediate English course. Here, in this section, I will summarize the results, of the study according to the research questions, and I will state my conclusions. The research questions for this study were:

- 1) How can learners' perceptions of the process of using technological tools for language learning be described?
- 2) What are learners' perceptions of using Internet activities to learn English?

Learner perceptions of technological tools for language learning - research question 1

The findings of this study demonstrate learners' high acceptance of two modern technologies for English learning: Internet and the Nicenet ICA. Learners' feedback revealed their perceptions of the benefits and positive effects of these Information Communication Technologies for English learning through learners' class documents, learners' survey answers and the Nicenet ICA learners' documents. The majority of

learners expressed their views of the benefits of these technological tools in terms of innovation, interactivity, communication, information access and utility.

In addition, a good number of learners recognised the positive effects of these tools in their English learning process when they referred to the value of the Internet and the Nicenet ICA when they do web based research projects, engage in on-line English learning activities, generate and explore ideas when they do Internet assignments. Learners' responses also revealed that they are aware of the technological advantages of these ICT tools. According to learners, some of these advantages have to do with assignments' organization, dynamism, activities variety, communication exchange, interactivity as a result of the usefulness, effectiveness and utility of ICTs. There was also a pattern of commentary from the data on their perceptions of potential positive collateral effects of the use of technologies for application in their future professional lives.

Internet and the Nicenet ICA allow learners to access, structure, integrate, organize, transfer and use information for communicative purposes when they are in the net. Warschauer (1996) points out that Internet is effective for learners' English learning development as it enables learners to integrate learning skills through Internet activities. For instance, learners can do WebQuests, Web Hunts and on-line task based activities that integrate receptive, productive and research skills in a single activity and, as a result develop communication skills through higher thinking cognitive engagement. In the same way, this study indicates that the Nicenet ICA supports learners' English learning for communicative purposes as a result of the effects of this CMS menu applications through learners interaction when learners use Conferencing, Link Sharing, Documents and Messages among other options to complete communicative activities such as accessing information, posting forum contributions, sending or replying messages and

using Links as a directory of web pages among other applications. Learners found this interaction evidently beneficial for the development of their communication skills as they included comments about the usefulness, effectiveness and benefits of these two technologies in the Nicenet ICA projects when they did on-line reading, on-line writing and web based research activities. Some learners, for example, referred to the effects of on-line writing activities when they reported they were able to write better as a result of ideas selection and organization for their writing tasks and grammar knowledge improvement.

Learner perceptions of using Internet activities to learn English – research question 2

According to findings, most of the learners perceived Internet activities through the Nicenet Internet classroom assistant as useful and effective in terms of their English learning development, target language practice and communication skills improvement. The findings also indicate that most of the learners in the study increased their awareness of the role and importance of English for their future professional lives.

Learners in the study became members of a collaborative English learning environment through the Nicenet ICA to engage in Internet learning activities in their computing lab for the twelve week duration of the class. Learners did Internet learning lab activities through the Nicenet ICA once a week to consolidate learning points seen in class. They used this tool for different purposes. For instance, they used it for Internet learning activities such as on-line reading activities, on-line writing activities, web based searching activities such as web hunts or web quests, on-line skill based learning activities that focused on grammatical, lexical or functional skills

Learners first had topic-based lessons in class through their learning in upper intermediate English level. They studied these lessons in ten units of their required text, *New Interchange 3* to develop their grammatical, lexical, functional, productive and

receptive skills. They built up communicative competence, developed higher-level comprehension skills and created cultural awareness either in class or in the Nicenet ICA according to the communicative orientation of the English program at Universidad Interamericana.

At the beginning of the course I collected learners' initial perceptions of their English learning process and characteristics of a positive English learning environment to identify learners' needs and course expectations. I collected them through the Nicenet ICA after learners attended orientation sessions about English course guidelines and building aspects of a positive English learning environment. Learners started interacting through the NICA to share their views of their English learning process and conditions for English learning environments. Learners' views became significant sources of information, when I designed and constructed the Nicenet ICA collaborative English learning environment because they revealed cognitive, social, affective and cultural learners' needs and learners' expectations. Therefore, I used them for different purposes to satisfy learners' learning needs and expectations when learners interacted, communicated, accessed information and completed web based lesson plans.

I integrated learners' view to on-line learning tasks planning, on-line resources selection and on-line collaborative conditions design. For instance, I included grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing activities suggested by learners. I also selected and posted links such as on-line dictionaries and on-line grammar web pages among other on-line resources to facilitate learners' English learning process. Learners' views also contributed to create a positive atmosphere through the Nicenet ICA collaborative English learning environment. The findings from the on-line information exchange, demonstrate that learner views had a highly positive tone, when expressing their reactions to the web based learning environment. The findings show that learners read

class members' postings and found them useful for information access and information exchange.

During their English learning process, I kept records of learners' Internet learning activities. These activities focused on on-line reading, on-line writing and web-based projects. I used grading records of learners' Internet activities as indicators of learners' on-line interaction. Although they weren't direct sources of information of learners' perceptions, they showed learners' engagement levels which seemed to be associated to learners' perceptions of the acceptance and usefulness of Internet activities and Internet classroom assistants in their English learning process. Overall findings indicated that learners had an active participation during the course. However, they indicate that learners' on-line writing participation levels were lower than learners' participation levels for web-based projects.

At the end of the course I obtained learners' feedback of the process, practice and use of Internet activities and the Nicenet Internet classroom assistant through the Nicenet ICA final project and class documents. Overall findings indicated that learners perceived Internet activities or the Nicenet ICA as highly beneficial in their English learning process. In general, learners found either Internet activities or the Nicenet ICA effective for their language development in terms of communication, information access and interaction variety. However, some of them weren't in favour of the publication of the final Nicenet ICA project. Learners had to turn in this project at the end of the course. They were required to edit, compile and print all the Nicenet ICA activities to publish the project. Some learners found the publication unnecessary and time consuming. According to their views, technological tools such as the Nicenet ICA had to be practical. They added that publishing wasn't necessary because the Nicenet ICA kept on-line records of their Internet activities and the publication was a waste of time.

Finally I conducted a post class survey to gather learners' impressions of the usefulness, effectiveness Internet and difficulty of on-line activities through the Nicenet ICA. Overall key findings from the final survey adapted from a study done at the College of New Rochelle (Craig, 2005) indicate that learners portrayed their on-line interaction through their answers. They ranked Conferencing and Link Sharing as the most useful options when they did on-line learning activities. They also pointed the usefulness of on-line writing activities for their English learning process and the effectiveness of project information for class organization. Skill development, communication interaction and research were integrated to learners' answers even though in small percentages. In contrast, the data collected through the Nicenet ICA corroborates learners interacted through Conferencing to do Internet activities. These activities focused on on-line writing, on-line reading and web-based search. Learners additionally used Link Sharing to access to web pages for information searching purposes.

Another key finding of the post class survey had to do with learners' perceptions of the level of difficulty of on-line grammar based activities and web based projects. Findings indicated that learners ranked them as the most difficult on-line learning activities.

Implications for Teaching

This study has implications for teaching that may inform about the process, practice and use of technological tools for English learning. These findings may have implications for the English teaching/learning process, Internet English teaching, Internet Classroom Management Systems applications and CALL activities in educational technology as summarized in paragraphs below.

To start, this study suggests, at least based on the results of the perceptions of one group of learners, the possible benefits of incorporating learners' views, into the process of designing and constructing active English learning environments either in class or in virtual space. Needs analyses, surveys, class documents and CMS sources among other data collection techniques can be very effective for gathering learners' feedback on their English learning process and as result, widen teachers' understanding of the perceptions of their students.

This study demonstrates that these research techniques can also be extremely useful for reflection leading to increased knowledge about learners' needs when teachers incorporate Internet activities in their English learning process. For instance, teachers can enquire into learners' background knowledge and/or experience of using technological tools to incorporate learners' perspectives of technology in their teaching/learning process. Learners' opinions, feelings, prior-knowledge and experiences are important when we need to know about their perspectives concerning their aims, expectations, metacognitive strategies and learning strategies for active English learning.

This study suggests that learners' views could be useful for identifying their needs for becoming adept at the use of those technological tools, which are increasingly more common in education, and other professional fields. Learners' feedback on their reactions, interests and suggestions can reveal key aspects of learners' Internet learning process and communicative interaction in collaborative English learning environments. Information from learner feedback can certainly prepare teachers to make adjustments or innovative changes in favour of an active learner centred Internet process. In fact, the present study indicates that learners contributed valuable views of the process of using technological tools such as Internet and the Nicenet ICA in the English

teaching/learning process. For instance, they gave valuable insights about the impact of these technological tools in their English learning development, communication and skill development among others aspects when they wrote about Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA.

According to this study, learners' views can also generate collateral positive effects in the atmosphere of an Internet collaborative English learning environment if/when learners contribute opinions about their learning expectations and class goals when they post on-line contributions to discussion forums. Through this information exchange and communicative interaction, learners can become acquainted of their partners' views and as a result, are likely to increase awareness of additional learning needs and/or raise their learning motivation. Here we can see in a new light, what Canale in 1983 called, "[T]he underlying systems of knowledge and skill required for communication" (p.5).

This study indicates that learners find the Nicenet ICA a valuable tool for communication and information access when they interacted, integrated information or exchanged knowledge as a result of web based research group projects, Webquests, and/or class power point presentations (See Appendix S). The results of this study seem to concur with learning research that was published by the volume '*How people learn*'. According to research,

Technology has become an important instrument in education. Computer based technologies hold great promise both for increasing access to knowledge and as a means of promoting learning. The public imagination has been captured by the capacity of information technologies to centralize and organize large bodies of knowledge; people are excited by the prospect of information networks, such as

the Internet, linking students around the globe into communities of learners (p. 230).

This study suggests that this group of learners' affective needs should be taken into account in the construction of a positive English learning environment.

Friendliness, warmth, emotional support and encouragement may be among valuable aspects of either physical or on-line English learning environments to provide for affective learners' needs. These aspects may have positive effects in learners' on-line interaction, collaboration and contributions during their English learning process. They may increase learners' confidence when they start familiarizing with new technological tools such as CMS or more advanced educational software programs for English learning. This study indicates that learners expect to join English learning environments characterized by positive relationships built on friendship, trust and respect. Their responses imply the importance of these values to build supportive conditions for communication and cooperation. To this respect, information provided by the volume *'How people learn'* states,

What has not yet been fully understood, or documented, is that computer-based technologies can be powerful pedagogical tools, not only just rich sources of information, but also extensions of human capabilities and contexts for the social interactions which support learning. The process of using technologies to improve learning is never solely a technical matter, concerned only with properties of educational hardware or software. Like a textbook or any other cultural object, technology resources for education – whether software since simulation or an interactive reading exercise- function in a social environment, mediated by learning conversations with peers and teachers. (p. 230)

This study additionally implies the importance of principles, conditions and standards to design an optimal collaborative Internet English learning environment for learners. These principles, conditions and standards merge to support this group of learners' Internet English learning process as stated by specialists (Egbert 2005, Davies, 2005, Warschauer, Shetzer & Meloni , 2002, Reeves, 1998). This group of learners became constructors and/or managers of knowledge when they structured, organized and applied knowledge through Internet learning. They engaged in Internet activities in a learner centred process to structure, activate, accumulate and/or transfer knowledge to learn English. Learning research points out that the construction of knowledge is the core aspect when designing curricula at present times as learning research shows that students learn when they construct their knowledge. This study shows that the teacher and this group of learners used the Nicenet ICA to collaborate in the construction of knowledge through on-line teaching /learning activities. This group of learners built up knowledge through on-line collaboration when they completed on-line assignments, did web based research and used on-line files through this tool. They activated higher order thinking operations when they engaged in web based activities such as WebQuests and web hunts. They also applied strategies such metacognitive, cognitive and social ones among others when they accessed, structured, organized and shared on-line tasks through the Nicenet ICA features.

The benefits of the Internet and the Nicenet ICA as a CMS are multiple as experts point out. These Information Communication Technologies can evidently contribute and facilitate this group of learners' communication skills development if learners' English teaching/learning process is supported by conditions, principles and standards recommended by CALL specialists. Conditions, principles and standards for Internet English learning are, therefore, highly important to build collaborative English

learning environments where teachers and students can participate in meaningful, purposeful, social and interactive activities as suggested by experts.

Another important implication for teaching in this study is that Internet and the Nicenet ICA are two valuable Information Communication Technologies for the English teaching/ learning process. These technologies can potentially address some of the cognitive, social, cultural, affective and communicative aspects of learning when participants become members of the collaborative English learning environments of the Nicenet ICA.

Solid pedagogical principles, technological standards, a strong culture, organization and effective English teaching approaches are expected to support the Internet English teaching/learning process according to Craig (2005) from the College of New Rochelle and De Boer and Collis (2005) at the University of Twente. The use of the Nicenet ICA, in this study, was aimed at incorporating the same aspects.

According to findings of this investigative study, either the Internet or the Nicenet ICA may enhance this group of learners' English learning for communicative purposes as they can use these tools for authentic information exchange while they interact and access information. Therefore, an implication of this study can lead us to think that an Internet syllabus is expected to focus on communication goals. " These are defined as the general communicative activities in which learners will engage (or in the case of foreign or in the case of foreign language learning learners, could potentially engage) in real-world target language use" (Nunan, p. 25). Content selection and grading, together with information organization, information structure and technological infrastructure become building aspects of Internet learning and CMSs. Internet task planning, for example, needs careful attention when grading on-line reading, on-line writing, web based searching processes, vocabulary, on-line task based grammar based

activities as they demand learners' effort, time and engagement when they have to use language and computing skills simultaneously.

I think that learners are always in need of challenging SL activities to enjoy their English learning. One way they can do this is through Internet activities where they can challenge themselves in multiple EL web pages that offer a wide variety of on-line resources to study grammar, practice on-line reading and writing, learn vocabulary among other on-line learning activities. On-line reading activities, for example, can increase students' interests as they are based on technological resources that promote a higher level of thinking through interactive and collaborative language activities. These language activities are skill based and therefore, combine reading and writing skills for language development. The California Distance Learning Project is, for example, a free on-line site for adults who want to develop reading and life skills through on-line reading lessons that integrate other English Learning (EL) activities such as vocabulary, spelling and writing. Apart from on-line reading, spelling and listening activities through audio or video files, on-line answers are requested at the end of on-line activities. Learners have to write an answer related to the topic they choose. Learners learn to summarize information in key answers by engaging cognitively when they infer, induce, deduce, contrast and analyze ideas among other higher order thinking skills when they develop their English communication skills. This site is organized in topic-based units. Every unit offers different on-line topic related lessons that provide for different learning needs. What is more, the effects of this on-line site can be very positive for students' development of autonomy as it fosters independent learning. For example, learners can use this site as a self study tool as it allows them to be informed about their on-line English learning progress as this site provides users a report of total instructional time calculated in on-line learning achievement percentages.

This research has, for example, shown me that on-line reading activities can fulfil students' expectations in different ways, as students need different modes for information presentations to satisfy their individual learning differences. The Internet and different English software programs, as shown by research, combine a wide variety of multimedia elements such as animations, visuals, colours and sounds among others that adapt to different students' learning styles.

According to research, students need induction sessions to explore software programs and learn how they can use their technological functions to optimise their effects. English learning software programs require users to become familiar with their applications to ease on-line reading comprehension and maximize learning. In addition, students need a solid knowledge of software programs to avoid frustrations, computing difficulties and time waste during the learning process as research indicates.

I have personally read my students requests for computer activities when they feel they need a change into their classes' routine or when they want to search extra information for an assignment. If this is the case, I have regularly included on-line activities through their virtual classes to reinforce learning points, induce them to Internet searches for projects and assignments. I can say that these activities, in general, generate positive results as they maximise students' learning time and work. As a result there is a shared feeling of satisfaction and enjoyment in our lab classes.

In a Business English class, students, for example, use English Class a virtual learning loop that was created by students in Business Informatics. This learning loop has different functions such as an on-line bulletin board, professors and students' communication forums and on-line resources to create files, case studies, and a web pages directory among others. We use English Class to coordinate final BE projects and at the moment it concentrates more on information transfer to complete tasks

although this CMS also provides other functions such as information transfer from web sites to professors and/or students' files.

In addition, I think that the research presented in the literature review supports the idea that on-line writing activities might promote authentic communication exchanges. This is priceless if we think that we are teaching our students to be themselves and let the others be real through English as the common language code. For example, e-mailing seems to be an excellent way to free ourselves of the usual barriers that prevent a real communication exchange such as fear of judgement, distant interaction or reserve of our essence. In addition, other on-line activities such as web based tasks, e- assignments and e- discussion forum messages can also be integrated to the ESL writing core programs as effective ways to promote English for communicative purposes as learners apply their English knowledge when they read and/or write on-line. On-line activities such as the ones mentioned before can be rather beneficial for learners' development of communication skills as they create learners' intellectual engagement for on-line interaction by eliciting learners' on-line responses, contributions and on-line work.

Recommendations for further research

This initial study of one group of learners and their perceptions of Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA has explored key aspects of learners' interaction through two modern technologies: Internet and Internet classroom assistants. As a result of findings, I suggest three key areas for further research related to the application of Internet activities and Internet Classroom Management Systems for English Learning: time management, Internet syllabus design and Internet content assessment of the learner's work.

Research on Internet content design and time management could have significant impact on learners' Internet learning processes and communication skills development. For instance, this study indicated that this particular group of learners ranked on-line grammar based activities and WebQuests as the most difficult on-line learning activities. Therefore, further studies on these activities and their effects in learners' English teaching/ learning process could certainly be important for providing insight for learners' needs when they are engaged in on-line activities. In addition, research on learners' perceptions of on-line writing may also be valuable for learning more about learners' needs. For example, this study shows that learners only reached an average level of participation in on-line writing activities; therefore, it would be useful to investigate which factors might have influenced their on-line performance. Learners might have had to deal with content difficulty, time restrictions and other curricular academic requirements throughout the course.

In addition, it would be important to investigate time management to discover its effects on learners' English learning process and communication skills development. Finally, research on learners' assessment of Internet content can certainly be an important contribution to discover methodological principles to measure learners' on-line work.

The main purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of English learners' process, practice and use of Internet activities through the Nicenet Internet Classroom Assistant. Therefore, it explored learners' perceptions of Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA in their ninety-hour English course. The main goal of this course was to develop learners' English communication skills to an upper intermediate English level.

During this course, learners took class lessons and lab lessons. They had seventy class hours and twenty lab hours. They used the lab to engage in Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA. Internet activities were integrated to the learner's English learning process to develop learners' communication skills when they use Information Communication Technologies such as Internet, Internet classroom management systems and English learning multimedia programs such as the California Distance Learning Program among other technological applications.

Learners used Information Communication Technologies such as the Internet and the Nicenet ICA to consolidate topic-based lessons previously presented in class. They used the Nicenet ICA to engage in Internet activities, interact, access information, communicate and collaborate in a virtual English learning environment. More specifically, Internet activities aimed at developing learners' lexical, functional, grammatical, on-line reading, on-line writing and web based searching skills.

This study focused on learners' perceptions of the process, practice and use of Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA within their English learning process. As a result, it mainly described learners' preconceptions, views, impressions and reactions to the effects of Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA.

Findings imply the role of research for the adoption of classroom management systems for educational purposes. To this respect, studies related to the implementation, development and assessment of web based course management systems at the College of New Rochelle and the University of South Carolina in the USA and at the University of Twente in the Netherlands indicate that the incorporation of these technological tools require careful planning, coordination, research, communication, management and users' training among other important aspects.

De Boer and Collis (2005), for example, indicate that Pedagogy, Technology, Culture, Organization and Methodology were change areas of the TeleTOP implementation model at the University of Twente in The Netherlands. The present study seems to concur with De Boer and Collis (2005) investigation as it also reveals the importance of blending these areas for implementing effective web based English learning programs and maximizing learners' Internet participation levels as evidenced below.

Overall findings show that the main purposes of the Nicenet ICA were: a) consolidate topics seen in class; b) develop students' on-line reading and writing and Internet search skills; c) develop students' autonomy; d) facilitate students' Internet work; e) provide students information about valuable Internet resources; f) develop students' communication skills through cognitive activation and analysis; g) provide computing practice; h) provide students a technological learning environment where they can experience the enriching technological effects of Internet.

According to findings, Pedagogy, Methodology and Organization, for example, play fundamental roles in Internet Syllabus Planning. They are obviously essential to support learners' English on-line learning skills. Developing learners' on-line reading, writing and web based research skills certainly require teachers to prepare a syllabus to select, grade and assess learners' Internet work. Teachers can plan topics, objectives, skills and web based resources according to learners' cognitive needs. These resources can include web based dictionaries and on-line English learning web pages. They can also include web-based tools such as Filamentality that provides a variety of formats to design WebQuests, web hunts and hotlists among other Internet activities to teach English through the net. Teachers can use these tools to design on-line lessons to support English learners' learning process. They can post them to a classroom

management system to provide for learners' on-line learning needs as they can be useful tools for Internet activities planning. Teachers can use these tools to integrate web-based content after they select, grade, structure and organize web based content. They can enable learners to use these tools to learn English on-line and facilitate their learning process.

This study indicates that creating a culture among learners was also part of the implementation of the Nicenet ICA. In this particular case, learners were already familiarised with the use of classroom management systems because they regularly use the LearnLoop in other subjects of the curricular plans of Business Informatics, Commercial Engineering, Economics, Graphic Design and Visual Communication, Marketing and International Business Management. However, learners needed orientation, training and information to learn how to use and maximize the effects of the Nicenet ICA when they started using this tool as the LearnLoop and the Nicenet ICA are different CMSs and as a result, they have different menus. For this reason, learners needed training to learn how the system and its features worked. They had initial training in their lab or they received instructions through the Nicenet ICA. Creating a strong culture may have positive effects in learners' perceptions of the utility of technological tools such as the Internet and the Nicenet ICA. For example, it may increase learners' motivation and confidence or it may reduce learners' computer anxiety levels when they start using the system. The active participation and involvement of academic staff may also generate positive effects in the culture of participants of CMSs applications as it may increase learners' awareness of the utility of CMSs for their communication skills development. This study implies that professors' role seems to be a key aspect of CMSs applications as they are the ones that use these tools to design, structure and organize English learning environments. They

can, therefore, use CMSs to create collaborative English learning environments where learners can gradually develop awareness of the effectiveness of these ICTs.

Concerning technological aspects, before learners start or restart using the Nicenet ICA, professors need passing information about its applications until learners learn to use all their features. Professors are required to schedule lab on-line lessons in order to prevent problems such as unavailability of Internet or computers.

Time management is an important aspect to program when designing Nicenet ICA communicative activities. Internet activities may demand more time than planned as learners have to cope with technical problems if connections aren't fast enough or they aren't familiarised enough with the Nicenet ICA. There were learners' complaints about technological issues such as these through this study.

The investigation of learners' perceptions of Internet activities through the Nicenet ICA reveals learners' high acceptance of both technologies for English learning. Both can certainly become valuable tools to design and construct active on-line English learning environments where teachers and learners can participate, communicate and interact on-line provided learners' needs are integrated into the process through Internet syllabus design. Teachers can use these tools to design and construct communicative English learning environments, facilitate learners' e-learning and contribute to their cognitive engagement and English learning needs for professional development.

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Appendixes

Appendix A
Universidad Interamericana
English Curriculum

Universidad Interamericana
English Program for International Communication
English Curriculum

Mission Statement

The mission of the English Area is aimed at guiding and motivating learners towards successful and high educational, social and intellectual goals. English faculty believes that this mission will be accomplished by creating a challenging teaching/learning process. This process is expected to develop learners' knowledge and learning skills through communicative English class activities. English faculty also believes that these activities will create a true feeling of value and purpose for English and as a result, learners will be able to use this language as an international tool. Therefore, students will become effective communicators in their professional fields and social lives. (Boloña, Ringger & Sánchez, 2001)

Purpose

The premise of this curriculum is deeply linked to the value of English as an international tool of communication. This curriculum fosters the idea that this tool will enable students for an educational, scientific, human, technological and social transfer when coping with present challenges in their international activities. The present curriculum will mainly contemplate the students' educational and training needs for their future professional lives and as a result, it will responsibly lead them to acquire new knowledge and skills through this language. Its purpose will be to educate and train students in English so they can be qualified professionals that can respond to the national development of Ecuador inside and outside its borders.

Educational Scope

According to this curriculum educators are students' mentors. They are mentors and believers of students' potential thinking abilities. Educators are called to guide students to discover their minds as what they are: potential minds to imagine create and grow. This curriculum fosters an educational system through which students can develop their cognitive functions by emphasizing students' learning styles, learning strategies and critical thinking development.

Additionally, this curriculum will guide students through a process of self-discovery to develop their personal confidence, their awareness of individual self-value and their adaptation to reality.

This curriculum also believes that education should take students to understand the value of real communication for solid relationships. Communication implies deep understanding of the other people's differences and in addition, tolerance and respect to these differences. This curriculum considers real communication as a common code shared by people that understand, respect and accept each other. In EFL learning, this curriculum is aimed at developing students' communication skills and therefore, their functional knowledge of the TL. This implies EFL students will be able to function efficiently in the TL in either social or commercial activities such as negotiations, social contacts, academic events, relationships, etc. when they develop understanding and respect of cultural differences expressed in the TL.

This curriculum is intended to establish a balance between an EFL teaching /learning process and the students' achievement outcomes as a result of this process. Following there are main goals and objectives of this curriculum in relation to its process and results.

Goals

This curriculum will foster the mission of the English Area. This mission is aimed at forming effective English communicators capable of using English as a tool of communication in social, academic, commercial or work environments.

In this curriculum, communication is defined as the ability to negotiate meaning and reach understanding in English. Following the philosophy of this curriculum, students will be able to use English as a channel of communication to negotiate meaning in interactions characterized by: a) information transfer, b) cultural awareness, c) negotiation skills; d) interpersonal qualities and e) leadership abilities.

Its vision is to teach students to open channels of communication in international contexts so that they can contribute to the social and economical development of Ecuador by sustaining solid international relationships.

One of the main goals of this curriculum is it fosters the importance of the development of the Education in English. This curriculum presupposes that Educating in English should be regarded as a formative system in a student's educational growth. The main goal of this system will be to transmit information, experiences, knowledge and opportunities of professional growth to students through this foreign language. Therefore, this curriculum was planned to guide students to internalize the educational system acquired through their English learning and consequently, to appreciate its value for their professional development.

Another educational goal regarded important in this curriculum is that education should support the students' individual learning differences. For this purpose this curriculum will build a teaching/learning process targeted at developing students' communicative autonomy and responsibility. This teaching/learning process will be

mainly characterized by interactivity, dynamism, meaningful and purposeful English learning tasks, solid social relationships, freedom of thinking and autonomy.

Objectives

This curriculum will principally develop students' autonomy in such a way that they can use English as a tool of communication during and after the teaching / learning process. Following this objective, this curriculum will enable autonomous communicators in the TL. It will train communicators that can maintain their personal and cultural identity when they use this tool as a tool to establish authentic written or oral contacts.

This curriculum will strengthen the students' principles of respect and tolerance to cultural differences as fundamental principles to establish authentic and solid channels of communication in English.

It will also develop students' strong characters and healthy personalities by emphasizing fundamental principles such as honesty, sincerity, transparency and good will.

In addition it will develop the students' communicative skills in a dynamic social interaction carried out in pair or group activities. For this purpose it will train students to complete functional tasks such as giving opinions, expressing agreement or disagreement and confirming information among others. In other words this curriculum will give emphasis to the functional aspect of the TL to create the students' awareness and understanding of cultural differences expressed in the TL.

This curriculum considers that English teaching should find a balance between the development of the students' basic skills in listening comprehension, reading, writing or speaking and their communication skills. For this reason it will train students

to use the TL for meaningful and purposeful activities during and after the teaching learning process.

This curriculum will build students' awareness of environmental issues such as protection of species, environmental care and control of pollution among others. It will train students in problem solving situations and analysis of these environmental matters to make the planet a better place to live.

This curriculum will optimize students' presentation skills in gradual development, i.e. from elementary to more advanced levels. For this purpose it will promote a constant communicative English exchange through pair or group class activities.

It will train students to discriminate valid and reliable resources provided by the Internet.

It will develop students' skills through on line reading and writing tasks. These tasks will be aimed at fostering Internet research, topics evaluation, problem solving situations and communication skills development among others.

Content

At the moment this curriculum is using and adapting communicative EFL teaching material contained in Interchange Series after a careful analysis of the students' needs and curriculum's goals and objectives. This material matches curricular goals and objectives for the following reasons: a) topics included in these books are suitable for communicative purposes as they engage students in purposeful and meaningful activities to practice functional aspects of the TL; b) topics promote the study of matters related to cultural differences, environmental issues or professional development; c) topics guide students to acquire a human vision of social development; d) there is useful information for students' professional development as it overviews economic,

technological or academic advances including statistics, reports, articles, etc. e) topics are appropriate for students' interests and ages as they present interesting facts and information.

Additionally this curriculum will urge teachers to design and create their own task based teaching materials to develop students' communicative skills, critical thinking development and social interaction. This teaching material will create the students' need to process information in English and therefore, get engaged in an intellectual process in the TL.

Curricular Implementation and Management

The English Area will be academically responsible for implementing this curriculum after aligning it with the university's curriculum.

The English Director will carefully analyze present teaching situation, students' academic and future professional needs and current economic conditions prior a report to academic authorities in Universidad Interamericana.

The English Director will be in charge of implementing, managing and adapting this communicative curriculum according to the university's general educational plans.

Teaching/Learning Process

This curriculum presupposes that the students' communication skills are developed, strengthened and consolidated through an interactive teaching learning process characterized by interactive pair or group activities. These activities will promote students' real communication exchanges through the TL. For this reason, this process will provide students numerous opportunities to practice and be actively exposed to the TL. In this process, EF teachers facilitate students' learning when they follow teaching principles such as: a) planning ahead carefully to determine students' needs; b) applying pedagogic teaching techniques in class to make teaching a more

memorable experience; c) distributing work so that there is a balance between the teacher's and students' participation and d) efficient time management.

According to this curriculum the teaching learning process will be characterized by interactivity, dynamism, active and cooperative class interaction, project work, team work, oral presentations, lab work, use of technological resources such as learning loops or computer based activities to promote English learning.

Another important aspect of the teaching learning process is that students are considered as producers and generators of knowledge. For this purpose the teaching learning process will be supported by a strong educational system promoting cognitive and social development through active involvement in task based activities, problem solving situations and a learn by doing approach.

Educational Experiences

This curriculum will include the following activities to develop and strengthen the students' communication skills.

It will promote cultural exchanges in person or in virtual space. These exchanges will be extremely beneficial to provide students authentic experiences of the TL and as a result develop their awareness of cultural differences expressed through the TL. For example, e-mail contacts through the World Wide Web could build not only awareness of the TL but awareness of other cultures.

It will incorporate research activities through the World Wide Web. These activities will be targeted at creating the students' need to use English as a communication tool in information transfers.

This curriculum will incorporate technological resources such as learning loops or films, interactive CDs as multimedia elements to foster communication. For instance

learning loops will be used to promote real communication exchanges between members of the educational community: teachers and students.

Evaluation

The evaluation of this curriculum will determine students' communicative standards established in a standard scale of functional development. This scale will establish general communicative functions to assess students' communicative competence; i.e. the students' skills to function in the TL. In addition to this functional assessment, this curriculum will require the evaluation of specific instructional objectives pre-determined by Interchange Series.

Professional Development

The implementation, application and adaptation of this curriculum requires administrators and teachers to work closely to reach its goals and objectives. Therefore, professional development requires working on the following aspects:

- Induction sessions to inform about the curriculum's communicative orientation.
- Teaching training
- Regular pedagogical meetings to analyze the students' progress.
- Periodical communication meetings to discuss current teaching situation and students' learning needs.
- Revision of the mission and vision of the English Area in USM to make necessary adjustments to improve the educational system.
- Academic consultancy to superior authorities in order to align curricular plans: university and English curricula.

Materials and Resources

As explained before this curriculum is supported by Interchange Series and in house material. Textbooks are only resources and information sources and they are

supported by in house material to create students' learning needs and facilitate their foreign language acquisition process. In house material is based on a task based approach that stimulates students' cognitive activation by developing students' critical thinking abilities such as inference, deduction, induction, etc.

In addition, there is a constant revision of communicative teaching material in Internet as students do research and on-line activities. This is why computer based activities such as web quests, web hunts, Internet research are highly recommendable to achieve this curriculum's communicative goals.

English Area / Creation and Implementation

Background information

First the English Area was responsible for restructuring a four level Business English Program run in Elementary, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate and Advanced Business English courses in Universidad Interamericana. This program was offered until the new General/Technical English Program started in 2002. It was mainly given to students who had studied in bilingual schools here and/or had studied in schools abroad. The English Area administered this program from July 2001 to March 2002. Results showed that this program was highly effective for students who had a good command of English and had previous knowledge of commercial vocabulary; however it didn't satisfy learning needs of those students who had graduated in state schools and religious schools. This is explained if we consider the fact that there are serious limitations to English teaching in Ecuador as a result of the high level of poverty affecting the quality of the public educational system. On the other hand English teaching time is limited to only a very few teaching hours in religious schools as generally known.

Communicative goal

The goal of this English Program is to develop students' communication skills to an UI technical English level. As a result, students will be able to use this language as a tool to process information when they take higher academic courses. As this information is provided by different sources such as English speakers, Internet, articles, financial magazines, this program enables students to optimize English communication skills. Students are also expected to develop their speaking abilities gradually as a result of their active participation in group/pair work activities.

This goal of this program presupposes that communication skills are developed in a student centered approach. This promotes following aspects: student's autonomy through English learning activities oriented by the principle of 'learn by doing'; teachers as facilitators and motivators of this teaching/learning process; careful General English syllabus application and staff pedagogical analysis in pedagogical meetings on a weekly basis.

Program Description

At present the English Area runs a 360 hour English Program. This program is offered to undergraduate students in the fields of Commercial Engineering, Informatics of Business, Graphic Design and Economics. According to this program, undergraduate students take 3 levels of General English and 1 level of Business English. This program has four courses: 3 courses in General English and 1 course in Business English. Each course is covered in 90 hours per trimester. Once undergraduate students join in this program either as beginners and/or more advanced students after a placement test, they are expected to take it continuously as this is a four-trimester program which only offers one level per trimester. Its goal is to teach students to use English as a communication tool for further applications in higher academic courses.

Both the General and the Business English programs are aimed at developing students' communication skills and language acquisition up to an Upper Intermediate Business English level. This results from a teaching/learning process which stresses the role of teachers as facilitators and motivators of the process; students' autonomy in learning activities fostering the principle of 'learn by doing'; the application of technology by means of 'English Class' – an innovative English learning loop created by four USM students in 2001; careful General/Business English curricular design and faculty teamwork.

General English

There are three levels in this area: Elementary, Intermediate and Upper Intermediate. This area uses The New Interchange Series. This series has books 1, 2 and 3. These books are used in levels 1, 2 and 3 correspondingly. The New Interchange is a communicative program based on skills based syllabus which combines listening, reading, language use, writing and speaking. There's structural grading in all books. They teach 16 topic-based units. All units present topics concerning current life events such as interpersonal relationships, cultural differences, etc. These topics match students' interests as they are practical and useful. Time is controlled in work planners for each level. This plan distributes work in classes of 1 ½ periods from Mondays to Fridays.

Business English

There is one course in Business English. This course is taught to Upper Intermediate English students. These students have either finished first three courses of General English or have been placed in Business English in New Interchange Placement Test.

This course teaches English Principles in the context of Products, Company History, Corporate Identity, and Finance among others.

Additionally, it develops students' knowledge of technical commercial vocabulary and improves students' presentation skills when students engage in business projects.

English Program Methodology

This English program uses a communicative approach that develops English acquisition and communication skills to an UI technical English level. This methodology emphasizes the principle of 'learn by doing'. As a result this teaching/learning process, students participate in:

Pair/group work

Power point presentations

Class discussions

Task based activities presented in listening, reading, writing and speaking exercises.

Projects

Online activities

Internet research

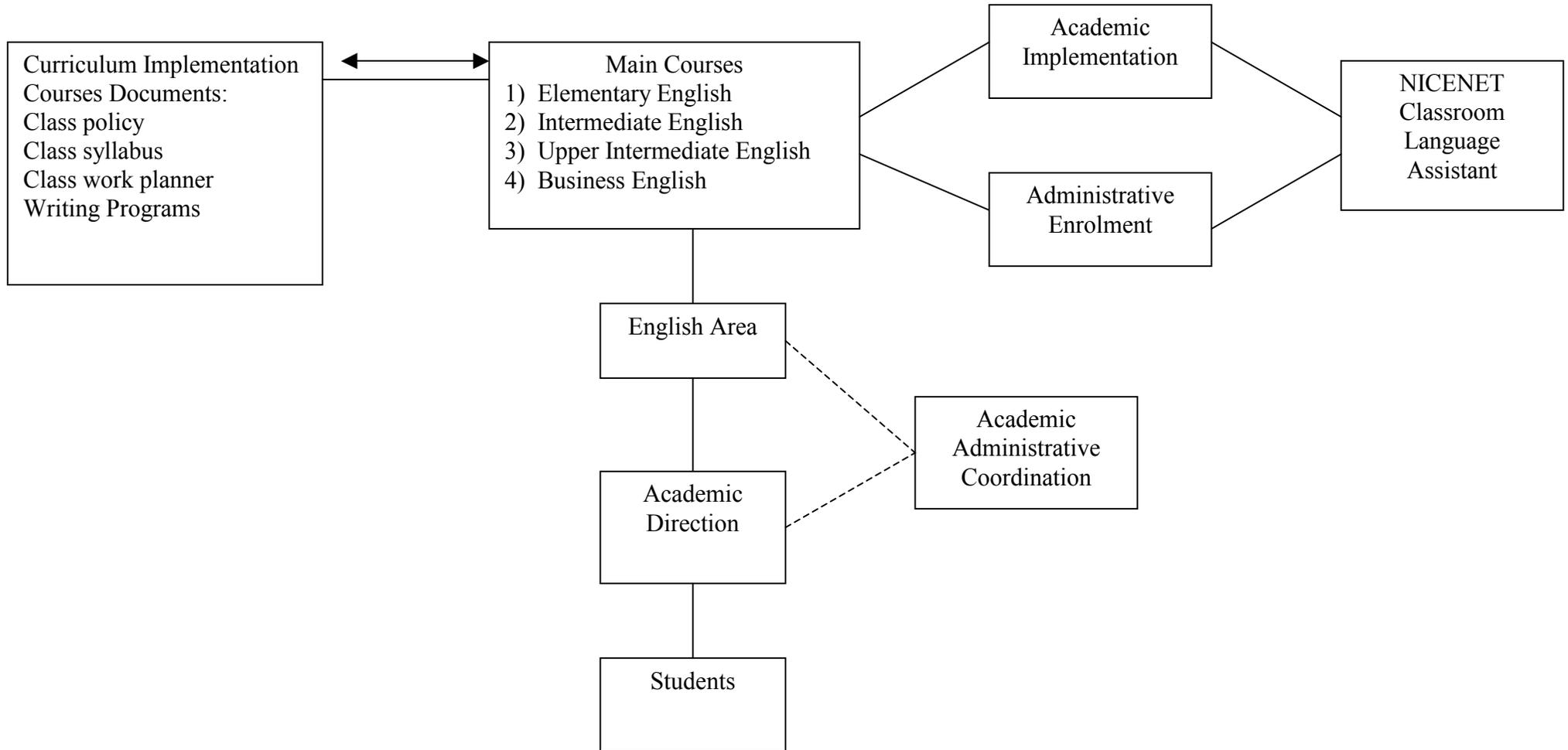
María del Carmen Boloña

English Director

Appendix B

The Nicenet's ICA Implementation Diagram

Nicenet Implementation in the EFLT Program at UNIVERSIDAD INTERAMERICANA 2003 - 2006



Appendix C
English Program Content

UNIVERSIDAD INTERAMERICANA - ENGLISH PROGRAM
NEW INTERCHANGE I, II AND III
TOPIC, GRAMMAR AND FUNCTION

BUSINESS ENGLISH

NEW INTERCHANGE				First Insights into Business
Unit	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	
1				
Topic	Please call me Chuck	A time to remember	That's what friends are for!	Customer
	Introductions and greetings	Childhood & reminiscences	Relationships	
Gr	Wh-questions/yes-no questions/short answers with be	Past Tense	Relative pronouns as subjects and objects	Direct and indirect questions forms
Func	Introducing yourself/exchanging personal info	Introducing yourself/remembering your childhood	Describing personalities	Making offers; customer care
2				
Topic	How do you spend your day?	Caught in the rush	Career moves	Companies
	Occupations and daily schedules	Transportation	Job skills	
Gr	Simple Present	Adverbs of quantity with countable and uncountable nouns	Gerund phrases as subjects and objects/comparisons with -er;more;less than and as...as	Present Simple and Present Continuous
Func	Describing work & school	Talking about transportation & transportation problems	Describing & comparing jobs	Presenting information about companies
3				
Topic	How much is it?	Time for a change!	Could you do me a favor?	Travel
	Shopping & prices	Lifestyle changes	Favors/informal and formal requests	
Gr	Demonstrative	Evaluations & comparisons	Requests with modals and if clauses	Present Continuous for future
Func	Buying & selling things	Making comparisons & talking about lifestyle changes	Making requests and leaving messages	Introductions and talking to new colleagues
4				
Topic	Do you like jazz?	I've never heard of that!	What a story!	Troubleshooting
	Entertainment	Food	The media	
Gr	Simple Present	Simple Past vs Present Perfect	Past Continuous and Simple Past/Past Perfect	Should, ought to
Func	Invitations & excuses	Talking about food	Narrating a story	Giving business advice

5				
Topic	Tell me about your family	Going Places	Crossing Cultures	Company History
	Family life	Vacations	Cultural comparisons & cultural shock	
Gr	Present Continuous	Future with be going to and w	Noun phrases containing relative clauses	
Func	Describing family life	Describing vacation plans	Describing expectations	Giving presentations on company histories
6				
Topic	How often do you exercise?	Sure. No problem!	What's wrong with it?	Retailing
	Routines	Complaints, excuses & apologies	Everyday problems	
Gr	Adverbs of frequency	Two-part verbs	Past Participle as adjectives, verbs and nouns	Defining relative clauses
Func	Describing routines & exercise	Complaining, apologizing & giving excuses	Describing problems	Market research role-play
7				
Topic	We had a great time!	What's this for?	The world we live in	Products
	Vacations	Technology	The environment and world issues	
Gr	Past tense	Infinitives & gerunds	Passive in the Present Continuous and Present Perfect	Comparative & superlative adjectives
Func	Talking about past events	Describing technology	Identifying & describing problems	Presenting a product
8				
Topic	How do you like the neighbourhood?	Let's celebrate!	Learning to learn	People
	Stores & places in a city	Celebrations	Education	
Gr	Prepositions of place	Relative clauses of time	Would rather and would prefer	Going to for future plans & intentions/will for the future
Func	Describing locations of places	Describing holidays & special events	Talking about learning methods	Talking about jobs
9				
Topic	What does he look like?	Back to the future	Self-Improvement	Business Environment
	Appearance & people	Life in the past, present & futu	Unusual services & recommendations	
Gr	Questions for describing people	Time contrasts	Gerunds, infinitives, base form verbs	Modal verbs/present passive
Func	Identifying people	Comparing time periods	Talking about things you need to have done	Describing trends in cinema attendance
10				
Topic	Have you ever ridden a camel?	I don't like working on weekends!	The past and the future	Finance
	Past experiences	Abilities & skills	Historic events and the future	
Gr	Present Perfect vs Past Tense	Gerunds	Future with will, be going to, future continuous and future perfect	Transitive and intransitive verbs
Func	Describing past experiences	Describing abilities & skills	Talking about historical events; giving opinions about the future	Discussing companies' financial decisions

11				
Topic	It's a very exciting city!	It's really worth seeing!	Life's little lessons	Corporate Responsibility
Gr	Adverbs and adjectives	Passive with by/passive without by	Time clauses	Conditional 1/gerunds and infinitives
Func	Describing cities, travel & tourism	Describing countries	Describing regrets about the past	Negotiating
12				
Topic	It really works!	It's been a long time!	The right stuff	Competition
	Health problems	Information about someone's past	Advertising	
Gr	Modal verbs	Past continuous vs Simple Perfect	Infinitive clauses & phrases of purpose	Present Perfect
		Past/Present Continuous		
Func	Talking about health problems	Asking about someone's past	Describing the purpose of something	Interviewing
13				
Topic	May I take your order, please?	A terrific book, but a terrible movie!	That's a possibility	
	Food & restaurants	Entertainment	Common mysteries & unexplained events	
Gr	So, neither, too & either	Participles as adjectives	Past modals for degrees of certainty	
Func	Expressing likes & dislikes	Describing movies & books	Describing hypothetical events	
14				
Topic	The biggest and the best!	So that's what it means!	Behind the scenes	
	World geography	Nonverbal communication	The media and entertainment industries	
Gr	Comparatives & superlatives	Modals & adverbs	The passive to describe process with be and modals	
Func	Describing countries	Interpreting body language	Describing how something is done	
15				
Topic	I'm going to see a musical	What would you do?	There should be a law!	
	Leisure-time activities	Predicaments	Social & controversial issues	
Gr	Future with present continuous	Unreal conditional sentences with if clauses	Recommendations with passive modals	
Func	Plans & making invitations	Describing a predicament	Making a recommendation	
16				
Topic	A change for the better!	What's your excuse?	Challenges and accomplishments	
	Plans for the future	Excuses, invitations, "white lies"	Assessing your life	
Gr	Present Tense, Comparative, Past Tense, Present Perfect	Reported speech	Tense review	
Func	Describing changes & talking about plans for the future	Reporting what people say, making invitations & excuses	Describing challenges, frustrations and rewards	

Appendix D
Internet Course Content

Nicenet Internet Classroom Assistant Content

	Communicative Purpose of Nicenet's activity	Language Focus	Skills Development	Vocabulary	Menu Options & Resources	Resources
Unit 1 Personalities and Qualities	Sharing information about preferences according to personalities traits	Relative pronouns	The writing process Sentence writing Likes and dislikes	Expressions for likes, dislikes and complaints.	Conferencing	Textbook
Unit 2 Visiting Studios	Getting information about studios	Gerund phrases as subjects and objects; comparisons	On-line reading On-line writing	Vocabulary related to companies profiles and business activities	Conferencing Links	Web sites
Unit 3 Contacting Studios	Requesting specific information to Pixar and Dreamworks websites	Requests	On-line reading	Job specifications	Conferencing Links	Web sites
Unit 4 Editing Creative Stories	Publishing edited versions of stories	Past tense forms	On-line writing	Vocabulary activation for personal stories	Conferencing Replies	Web dictionaries
Unit 5 Crossing Cultures	Publishing movie reviews	Adjectives & Noun Phrases	On-line writing Movie Reviews	Descriptive adjectives	Conferencing Links	Web sites
Unit 6 World Problems	Combining skills before posting documents	Nouns	On-line reading and writing skills development	Nouns related to world problems	Conferencing	Web dictionaries Textbook
Unit 7 Learning Styles	Expressing preferences and sharing information about personal learning styles	Would rather Would prefer	On-line reading and writing skills development	Vocabulary related to learning styles	Conferencing	Web dictionaries Textbook
Unit 8 The Hurricane Moral Qualities	Giving opinions about a particular issue	World Builder	On-line reading and writing skills development	Vocabulary related to moral qualities	Conferencing Links	Textbook
Final Web Quest	Designing and producing a brochure after managing a web project involving on-line reading/writing/Internet search	Consolidation of learning points seen in the course	On-line project management to consolidate communicative functions such as giving information, describing a place, highlighting characteristics, suggesting places, recommending	Places Descriptive adjectives Comparatives Prepositions Active & Passive Voice	Conferencing for information Links	Web Project PP Presentations

Appendix E

Welcome to your English Learning Environment PPP

UIA

**Welcome to your
English
environment!**

Professional Skills

- Problem solving
- Communicative
- Interpersonal
- Cultural
- Technological: data applications
- Presentational

Communication skills

- Transmit and receive clear messages
- Negotiate meaning
- Develop abilities to function: persuade, inform, explain, report, interview, etc
- Present information: focus interaction, management

Learning Environment

- Class work
- Group / pair work
- Atmosphere / team work
- Practice
- Self – study
- Interactivity

Learning styles

- Visual
- Auditory
- Musical
- Analytical / Reproductive
- Convergent / Divergent

Learning strategies

- Steps for learning
- Journals
- Conceptual maps/graphic organizers
- Work planners
- Learning logs
- Diary books
- Research & projects

Creativity & Innovation

- Research / Internet / Textbook
- Project work
- Communication skills
- Presentations
- Essays
- Graphic designs

Technology

- The Nicenet ICA
- Search engines
- Online activities
- E-mail contacts

Internet benefits

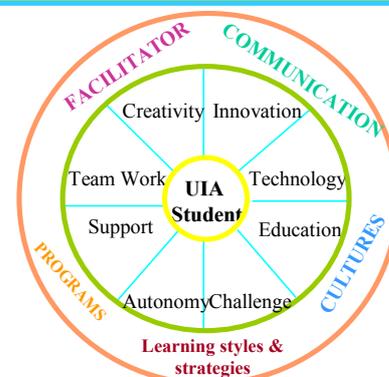
- Ease your work
- Updated information
- Skills development
- World wide web
- Information sources

Core programs

- Work planners
- Class policy
- Online activities
- Syllabus

Class methodology

- Management
- Professional training
- Supportive tutoring
- Academic support
- Challenging topics
- Fun



Materials

- Interchange 3 by Jack Richards
Textbook + Workbook
- Listen Series 3 by Peter
Harrington and Peter Gravier
- Folders
- Binders

**What is
English
learning?**

Appendix F
The Nicenet's ICA Menu Options
Conferencing



Maria del Carmen Boloña L.

Internet Classroom Assistant

Upper Intermediate English

[Home](#)

[Conferencing](#)

[Link Sharing](#)

[Documents](#)

[Class Schedule](#)

[Class Members](#)

Personal Messages :

[View](#) | [Send](#)

Classes :

[Join](#) | [Create](#) | [Drop](#) | [Delete](#)

[Class Administration](#)

[Edit User Profile](#)

[ICA FAQ](#)

Enter New Class:

Upper Intermediate E. . .

[Change Class](#)

PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY:

[LOG OUT](#)

Conferencing Topics

[[Add New Topic](#) | [Post New Message](#)]

View All Topics

Go

All Topics :

- [Welcome to Nicenet!](#) - (1 message posted)
updated 03/28/05
[\[post\]](#) | [\[edit\]](#) | [\[delete\]](#)
- [My Personal Philosophy of Education](#) - (1 message posted)
updated 03/28/05
[\[post\]](#) | [\[edit\]](#) | [\[delete\]](#)
- [Upper Intermediate Assessment Policy](#) - (1 message posted)
updated 03/28/05
[\[post\]](#) | [\[edit\]](#) | [\[delete\]](#)
- [What is Language?](#) - (1 message posted)
updated 03/28/05
[\[post\]](#) | [\[edit\]](#) | [\[delete\]](#)
- [Error Correction Code](#) - (1 message posted)
updated 03/28/05
[\[post\]](#) | [\[edit\]](#) | [\[delete\]](#)
- [What is English Learning at UI?](#) - (27 messages posted)
updated 03/28/05
[\[post\]](#) | [\[edit\]](#) | [\[delete\]](#)
- [Creating a Positive Learning Environment](#) - (28 messages posted)
updated 03/28/05
[\[post\]](#) | [\[edit\]](#) | [\[delete\]](#)
- [Being Aware of How You Learn](#) - (1 message posted)
updated 03/28/05
[\[post\]](#) | [\[edit\]](#) | [\[delete\]](#)
- [Essay Writing](#) - (1 message posted)
updated 03/28/05
[\[post\]](#) | [\[edit\]](#) | [\[delete\]](#)
- [On-line Activities: Unit 1/ Personalities and Qualities](#) - (20 messages posted)
updated 03/28/05
[\[post\]](#) | [\[edit\]](#) | [\[delete\]](#)
- [On line Activities: Unit 2/ Visiting Studios](#) - (7 messages posted)
updated 03/28/05
[\[post\]](#) | [\[edit\]](#) | [\[delete\]](#)
- [On line activities: Unit 3/Contacting Studios](#) - (47 messages posted)
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[\[post\]](#) | [\[edit\]](#) | [\[delete\]](#)
- [Class Presentations](#) - (1 message posted)

- updated 03/28/05
 - [\[post\]](#) | [\[edit\]](#) | [\[delete\]](#)
- [Project Work 1](#) - (1 message posted)
 - updated 03/28/05
 - [\[post\]](#) | [\[edit\]](#) | [\[delete\]](#)
- [Quizzes](#) - (1 message posted)
 - updated 03/28/05
 - [\[post\]](#) | [\[edit\]](#) | [\[delete\]](#)
- [Developing Editing Skills/ Unit 4 /Stories](#) - (20 messages posted)
 - updated 03/28/05
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- [Developing Editing Skills / Notes](#) - (20 messages posted)
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- [Developing Different Skills](#) - (1 message posted)
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 - updated 03/28/05
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- [Lab Job Plan for January 7/2005](#) - (1 message posted)
 - updated 03/28/05
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- [On line Activities/World Problems/Unit 6](#) - (37 messages posted)
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- [Reminder: Answer Key for On line Activities /World Problems](#) - (1 message posted)

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- [On-line Activities: Unit 8/ The Hurricane](#) - (32 messages posted)
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 - [\[post\]](#) | [\[edit\]](#) | [\[delete\]](#)
- [On-line Activities: Unit 8 /Learning to Learn](#) - (34 messages posted)
 - updated 03/28/05
 - [\[post\]](#) | [\[edit\]](#) | [\[delete\]](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions/Unit 8](#) - (1 message posted)
 - updated 03/28/05
 - [\[post\]](#) | [\[edit\]](#) | [\[delete\]](#)
- [Interactive Internet Activities Binders](#) - (1 message posted)
 - updated 03/28/05
 - [\[post\]](#) | [\[edit\]](#) | [\[delete\]](#)
- [Web Quest](#) - (1 message posted)
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 - [\[post\]](#) | [\[edit\]](#) | [\[delete\]](#)
- [Nicenet Answer Key](#) - (1 message posted)
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Appendix G
The Nicenet's ICA Menu Options
Link Sharing



Maria del Carmen Boloña L.

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Internet Resources

[[Add a Link](#) | [Add a Link Topic](#)] [[Show URLs](#)]

Other Links

[[Add a Link](#)]

- [Learning Styles Questionnaire](#) [[Edit](#) | [Delete](#)] [Posted By: mbolona]
Web page - important information to know about your learning style.
- [Search Engine](#) [[Edit](#) | [Delete](#)] [Posted By: mbolona]
This is one of several search engines to find information in Internet. Use it to learn different topics.
- [Adult Learning Activities](#) [[Edit](#) | [Delete](#)] [Posted By: mbolona]
Use this free site to build your reading and life skills!
- [Pixar](#) [[Edit](#) | [Delete](#)] [Posted By: mbolona]
This site provides information about one of the most famous animation studios in USA.
- [Dreamworks](#) [[Edit](#) | [Delete](#)] [Posted By: mbolona]
"Dreamworks is a leading producer of live- action motion pictures, animated feature films, network, and cable television programming."
- [Ecuador A Land of Discoveries - Final Project](#) [[Edit](#) | [Delete](#)] [Posted By: mbolona]
An Internet WebQuest on Traveling in Ecuador
- [Cambridge Online Dictionary](#) [[Edit](#) | [Delete](#)] [Posted By: mbolona]
Useful on line resource for word building activities.
- [Wordsmyth Dictionary-Thesaurus](#) [[Edit](#) | [Delete](#)] [Posted By: mbolona]
Welcome to Wordsmyth! Please help us grow and develop our educational resources. We are working on new tools and new resources, and your input is important. Try out our study tools - the Glossary Maker and the Vocabulary Quiz Maker - and share your views in the Talk section.
- [My Brochure Maker / Brochure Layouts](#) [[Edit](#) | [Delete](#)] [Posted By: mbolona]
This site is useful to get ideas for your brochure.
- [How to design a communicative brochure !!!](#) [[Edit](#) | [Delete](#)] [Posted By: mbolona]
This is a useful link for brochure tips if you are getting ready for your final project.
- [The Hurricane Movie Review](#) [[Edit](#) | [Delete](#)] [Posted By: mbolona]
This is a good description of 'The Hurricane' a drama movie that pictures Rubin Carter's real story. He was sentenced to life prison in the prime of his boxing career. His story inspired a teenager from Broklyn and three activists to join forces with Carter to prove his innocence.
- [Seven Steps for Better Searching](#) [[Edit](#) | [Delete](#)] [Posted By: mbolona]
Would you like to ease your Internet search. Go to this site

and explore a number of options to find what you look for in Internet. There are valuable search tools and techniques you can discover. Self Training for Internet Search

- [Guide to Grammar and Writing](#) [Edit] [Delete] [Posted By: mbolona]

This site is extremely useful for grammar learning. It provides study and practice material for grammar and writing. Search and find what you need to improve your English learning.

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Appendix H
The Nicenet's ICA Menu Options
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Upper Intermediate E. . .

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Documents

Other Documents (Handouts, etc.)

(These are documents **not associated with a particular assignment**)

[\[Add a Document\]](#)

- [learning styles](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [learning to learn](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [The Hurricane](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [The Hurricane](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [Learning to Learn](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [Unit 8/ The Hurricane](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [LEARNING STYLES](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [Unit 8, Learning Styles](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [Unit 8 /Learning to Learn](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [Unit 8/ Learning Styles](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [Unit 8/ The Hurricane](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
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- [Creating Cultural Differences Awareness](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [On line Activities/January 7](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
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- [Asking for Information about Next Mid Exam](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [Internet Activities](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [Cesar Z.](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [Unit 7](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [On line Activities/January 7](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [essay and note](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [Note](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [Story](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [ESSAY QUIZ # 1](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [ESSAY EXAM MIDD TERM](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [learning expectations](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [Internet Activities: Lesson 1](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [Presentations](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [English environment](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [Learning English](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [Internet activities: Lesson 1](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [Lesson 1: Movie, Actors, fun and other things!](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [About Myself](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [Presentations](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [My name is.....](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [Positive English learning environment](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [What is English learning?](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [Internet activities. Lesson 1](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [What is English Learning at USM?](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [Homework: what is english learning?](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [What is English Learning at USM?](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [Creating a Positive Learning Enviroment](#) - [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
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Appendix I
The Nicenet's ICA Menu Options
Messages



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Upper Intermediate English

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Change Class

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FROM: Maria del Carmen Bolona (7/29/05 4:57PM)

SUBJECT: Interacting through ICA

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Dear all,

The Nicenet Internet Classroom Assistant will be a very important tool for reasons described below.

- 1) You can easily access it whenever you need to do Internet activities.
- 2) ICA provides users virtual space to organize and structure information that you can access anytime you need it again. For example, you can read your or your classmates' posting before exams if you need to revise material.
- 3) ICA facilitates your English learning as you own a site where you can access links, find documents, share your assignments, do your on-line homework.
- 4) Your professors will use ICA to maximize your time. Remember that time is gold.
- 5) ICA will certainly improve your English learning if you explore it to learn its system, use it regularly, follow your assignments instructions and make the best of your learning.

Good Luck

María del Carmen

FROM: (2/11/05 9:20AM)

SUBJECT:

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Please go to your email to check our money account management in English Upper Intermediate Level.

FROM: (1/13/05 6:00PM)

SUBJECT: cahnge of topic

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Miss,

We would like to ask you if it is OK to choose another country because Bahia seems to be a little more difficult to get information. We have chosen Quito as the capital of Ecuador... Please let us know if there is any inconvenient on this issue.

Thank you very much.

Greetings,

FROM: (1/13/05 11:05AM)

SUBJECT: the hurricane

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Task 1

1) Who was Rubin Carter?

He was a boxing champion

2) What happened to him?

He was unfairly accused on the murder of William Marins.

3) Who helped him?

Lesra Martin helped him to be free again.

4) What did he do in prison?

He worked out, tried to get his body into a weapon; and he also wrote a book and it was published.

5) Which skills did he develop when he was held prisoner?

I guess he developed communication skills, stating that words are keys to help us open doors if we are able to use them correctly.

Task 2

He showed communication skills, competitiveness, courtesy, perseverance, self-confidence and tolerance while he was on prision

Task 3

If you were designing a national educational program for prisons , which of these activities would you select for prisoners' training.

I would choose:

§ auto repair

§ carpentry

- § landscape
- § photography

Task 4

Why did you choose answers in task 3. Give brief arguments for two activities.

§ Carpentry because I think it is useful and they can use wood to create things and then exchange them for something they would need. And later on when they had already done their time, it would help them to start working in the civilisation.

§ Photography would be something new for them, and in that way they would be able to apply some of their artistic skills.

Task 5

What did you admire most in Rubin's character and what did you admire most in the teenager's attitude?

I admired in Rubin's character his strength to be realistic and think about what would really happen not dreaming on something that wasn't real. Also the way he expected the best for her wife and family keeping them away from him. I admired in teenagers their ability to believe and have faith, they were also sure about themselves and didn't hesitate not even once

FROM: (1/7/05 12:40PM)

SUBJECT: RE: On line Word Building/ Reading Skills
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TASK 1

Word Building

First activate your knowledge of vocabulary words to talk about World Problems. Writing a word list could be a good idea to start. Then complete the words listed below.

- 1) Acid Rain
- 2) Cancer
- 3) Crime
- 4) Drug trafficking
- 5) Drunk driving
- 6) Dumping

- 7) Famine
- 8) Global warming
- 9) Government corruption
- 10) Homeless
- 11) Incurable diseases
- 12) Inflation
- 13) Overcrowding
- 14) Overfishing
- 15) Political unrest
- 16) Pollution
- 17) Poverty
- 18) unemployment

Drug Trafficking.

Famine

Global Warming.

Government Corruption

The Homeless

Incurable diseases

Inflation

Political unrest

Poverty

TASK 2/ On line Reading Skills

Read sentences below. Can you guess which problem is described?

Match words you completed above with each problem listed down.

One thing to do about it is not to give bribes to bureaucrats Government Corruption

Another way to solve this problem is to contribute to international organizations as UNICEF the homeless

The best way to prevent these serious problems is to run vaccination campaigns worldwide Incurable diseases

The best way to prevent this is to increase the country's productivity. Inflation

Another way to change this situation is to accuse smugglers. Drug Trafficking.

One thing to do about it is to be engaged in social construction projects such as the ones run by Americans in poor areas in Guayaquil

Poverty

One excellent thing to do about it is to eat healthy food Famine

One thing to do about it is to include clauses

for Diplomats in foreign countries. Political unrest

TASK 3/ Interactive Reading

Resource: New Interchange Textbook

3/Reading Text on Page 45/ The Threat to Kiribati

Instructions for word search.

Read the text 'The Threat to Kiribati' on page 45 to search for words defined below. You must search for words in paragraphs indicated below.

For example, definition 1 corresponds to the expression 'in the not-too-distant future' found in paragraph 1.

Paragraph 1

At a future time – but not very far in the future.

Their country will disappear from the face of the earth.

Moved quickly.

These tide, which swept across the island

To become filled or covered by water.

Has been flooded by a sudden high tide

According to the most basic meaning of a word or expression (here, this word emphasizes the true definition of disappear)

Paragraph 2

To make something become larger

Global warming

Substances that make air, water, soil dangerously dirty.

When fuels like oil and coal are being burned

Large areas of ice that move slowly over an area of land

Melting glaciers

To prevent something such as water, dirt, heat from escaping or spreading

pollutants

Areas of thick ice that always cover the North and South poles.

Polar ice caps

Paragraph 3

To experience something bad

Bangladesh, might lose one-fifth of its islands

A hard colored substance that grows in warm

sea water.

Covered completely.

Coral Island

To experience something very unpleasant.

The loss of these coral islands would be everyone's loss

Paragraph 4

Walls of earth, stones, used tires made to break the force of the waves and to protect the shore.

Seawalls

FROM: (12/8/04 5:18PM)

SUBJECT: RE: Writing Creative Stories

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miss, i've got severe troubles about what exactly we have to do.. at the end of the class , i thought that we were supposed to post in nicenet the edited essays.. i mean, the essay from the mid term exam, and the letter of the quiz. But, now, that i`ve come to the lab to conect to nicenet, i have not found yet where we have to post it. And exactly waht we have to do..

I have read about the new presentations that are going to start next week, that `s clear even if the dates are not correct; there is no Tuesday 16 or Monday 15.. so that`s not clear. I was wondering if you could clarify to me this.

Thanks for your cooperation.

pd: i really appreciate what you make for us, even if sometimes I think there is too much to do, I know this will help us for our future. I`m really sorry for what happened today,

FROM: Ben Archibald (12/6/04 1:58PM)

SUBJECT: Fundraiser Follow-Up / New Way to Support Nicenet

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Thank you to the large number of you who chose to donate to Nicenet during our recent fundraiser. This note is a follow up and marks

the completion of the formal user fundraiser for 2004. We do - of course! - always accept donations at [our donations page](#) via Paypal or via check and we encourage you to visit this page if you missed out on the initial email!

Also, for those interested in supporting Nicenet we have introduced an easy way to do so via an Google affiliate search page at <http://www.nicenet.org/search.cfm>. This allows you to support Nicenet when you perform standard google searches and then click on advertisements (the same advertisements when you perform a search at Google.com). We encourage you to use this as your standard search page! You can find out a little more information about how this work and why Nicenet is doing it on our [Nicenet search info page](#). Thanks again for all your support. We hope you continue to find the ICA a valuable resource in your teaching.

FROM: (11/16/04 6:06PM)

SUBJECT: RE: RE: Task 1

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Thank you too! I will always be pleased to help you anytime... And I'm sorry, I thought that was the link I had to post my online tasks... =)

FROM: (11/16/04 6:00PM)

SUBJECT: RE: Five- paragraph essay

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Miss, I would like to know if we need to write an essay about this topic "What I have lived for" and when the deadline is, please because today in class, I saw many people delivering this essay as homework but unfortunately I have just been able to open nicenet and I've read this message and I really don't know wether it is a task or not...

Thank you so much

Greetings,



FROM: (11/16/04 1:46PM)
SUBJECT: RE: RE: What is English Learning at USM?
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Appendix J
Class Documents for
Learners' Compositions

Students' Written Feedback of Internet Activities in Nicenet

Dear Maria del Carmen,

I would like to thank you because of giving me and my friends this powerful tool called Nicenet. I think it was amazing and didactic to use computers and Internet for some class activities instead of actually being in class. All the documents, links, activities and also your opinions were very valuable for our improvement because of them me and my friends improve our skills and our use of language. Thank you again.

Hi Maria del Carmen

I think Nicenet is a very good tool for acquiring learning skills because it is very easy to use and it is always clear what we need to do. Nicenet helps us to work organized and patient with our works. I think we need Nicenet for our learning. Thanks

Ma del Carmen

About Nicenet activities, I think that it's a good idea to have this resource available for us. They give us the chance to check everyone's job, so we can get ideas or get more instructions in order to complete the tasks. But there is one thing. I don't really understand when a new assignment is completed. This system could be like an email inbox so when we have completed the task, it should disappear or check or something that shows to us that the task is completed.

During the English class we can learn about how necessary is the Internet activities because we can develop our ability of searching. In my opinion when you read and investigate about something you can learn more than in class.

At present Internet is a huge key to be a good professional and the Internet activities help us to learn how we can use this key.

Dear Miss María del Carmen

I want to give you thanks because you help me every day. In these last two weeks, I had little time because I was very busy, but I took a day for studying English because this language is important for me.

I checked my Nicenet account and I began to do all my Nicenet homework. First, I couldn't understand how we had to do in the activities but now I like these on-line activities and why not! And enjoying places. Really I like to do my activities in this site. I think that Nicenet is very interesting and I like to enjoy sites. I learn a lot every day when I visit these pages and the links. Thanks for all.

Hello Maria del Carmen!

I think that my Internet activities in Nicenet were good. In Nicenet I can practise vocabulary, grammar and develop abilities.

You know that I don't like to work in Nicenet but in this level, I changed my thinking because Nicenet is a resource for learning English. Nicenet helps me to write in English and be more fast.

Good morning, Dear Miss Maria del Carmen. I'm writing this note to give you my opinions about my Internet activities in Nicenet. I think it's a great idea to use this kind of tool because it's easy to work with it, also we can learn from the work of our classmates and always be updated with the class material. So I really enjoy every single activity that we did in Nicenet.

Hi Dear Teacher:

About my experiences in Nicenet and Internet activities, I think I develop more abilities to do quick homework. and all my purposes were covered in that course because of these two important points: working in group as teacher and students together on the web. In fact if students found information and uploaded it every day to help and build up abilities of other people, it were terrific. At the end I can say: The new world is in the next second, the way to do it is on the web so we have to work with these activities and we could be great business managers.

Dear teacher

I'm writing this note because I want to express my opinions about Nicenet's activities. I really think they help us to develop writing and reading comprehension skills, I just only think it's not too necessary to print them because they are already on the net. Thank you!

Dear teacher

I wrote this note because I want you to know that the activities in Nicenet were really interesting and they helped me a lot in my English learning and also the Nicenet Binder, my vocabulary and grammar have an improvement which is really satisfactory to me because it shows that the course works, also I want to tell you it was really a pleasure to have you as a teacher because you make me realize that I'm not a student that puts all in class and my homework papers need more attention from me and that communication interaction is really, really difficult. Thankfully.

Dear Maria del Carmen

I'm writing to you to give you my opinions about the activities we are doing in Nicenet every week. I think this is a very good idea for developing our research skills, reading skills and writing skills. But there are some activities that we would better practice in class. Thank you.

I think that working in Internet was very practical, it is a good way to develop skills, but I'm not sure if it is necessary to print the Nicenet folder.

When you explained about the writing process some ideas were clearer. I think it is necessary to develop other ways to use the virtual class. For example, it would be interesting if we developed and worked with more web quests.

Hi miss,

Nicenet has been an interesting resource for our English improvement. By writing, posting, editing and posting again, we have learnt a lot. Though, I think there were some topics in Nicenet that can be changed, in order to be more efficient with our time. Political topics could be a great idea.

My opinion about my Internet activities in Nicenet:

Nicenet has been a good resource for me. It helps me to do a research in English and to be more familiarized with English web pages. Before I used Nicenet I hated English web pages, because I couldn't understand them. But now I know more vocabulary and I understand clearly what they are talking about.

Also Nicenet helps me to practise reading.

Hi, María del Carmen

I want to tell you that using Nicenet as a tool of learning was an excellent idea! It was very interesting and practical for me.

I could manage this option as better as I could. All the activities were very good and necessary to improve my English.

I want to thank you because of all the time that you give us and I'm proud of having a teacher like you! Nicenet was the most important tool for my learning!

Congratulations!!

I think that my English teacher is a good person. She is very patient with the class. She is always working hard so that we can improve our English.

The activities in Nicenet are a good resource to learn English, because we are learning new things every day with Internet.

And I think that the Internet activities in Nicenet help more than other resources.

Hi Maria del Carmen

How are you? I hope you had a nice weekend. The reason I'm writing this note is for telling you thanks! I really appreciate the work we have done in Nicenet. I think this new way for communication helps us in our process because we interact with you.

Well, thanks a lot for everything.

Hi Maria del Carmen

Along these 3 months we have developed many activities, I think the most interesting and useful was the use of Nicenet. It was incredible to communicate and interact with our classmates by Nicenet. It also made us improve in a academic way because we learned many things. I hope that we still use this tool to learn more in the next trimester. Kisses.

What I can say about all the Internet activities we did during the course, is that they were very interesting. In my opinion the way we worked in Nicenet is an interesting and modern way of learning. It was very interactive also because it was not as usual as in class. I think it is an innovative and motivating way to learn more.

To conclude I can say that this was a new way of learning. This way is innovative, motivating and very interesting for learning more about the language and its rules.

Thanks a lot for this time you spent with us, teaching in a motivating and innovating way.

The internet activities were very interesting and fun, the best was when we learned about Pixar and Dreamworks. The Internet activities are very useful to learn how we can get more and important information in short time. I think Nicenet is a powerful tool to develop our skills for communication in Internet and the world.

Hi Maria del Carmen,

I'd like to give you some opinions about Nicenet activities. I think those activities help us to improve our language, our writing and our reading skills, also Nicenet is a tool which permits us to share our opinions with other students. I really liked doing my Internet activities in Nicenet because they increased my vocabulary level.

Have a nice day!

Hi Maria del Carmen,

I write you because I want to give my opinions about the Internet activities we have done in Nicenet. I think this is a very useful resource, because it has helped us to be more organized in our assignments. I'm very happy because I learned to use it very well. I hope we can use it in the next level again. Thanks for teaching us.

I consider that Internet activities in Nicenet has been an excellent skill for our development. The Internet activities in Nicenet is a communication system too. And you can check our progress in English such as communication skills because we write a lot of essays. It contains grammar, vocabulary, spelling, building words, etc. I have never worked with a skill like this. It has been excellent help for me. Good skill!!

Hi Miss Maria del Carmen,

I'd like to tell you that the Nicenet is a great tool for the English courses because their Internet activities improved and developed my English.

I'm very thankful of you because you give us the big things for the learning. Bye!

Dear Ma del Carmen,

I have been thinking about our Internet activities on Nicenet and now that our Upper Intermediate Level has finished, I would like you to know how helpful it has been for my learning process. This dynamic tool has increased my vocabulary which was one of my English Learning expectations, by having fun surfing on the web.

The only aspect that would make our written communication in Nicenet better would be by adding color to the fonts. In this way, all of my classmates and me would easily notice them when a posted message needs to be edited.

That would be all concerning my opinions on Internet activities in Nicenet. Greetings!

Greetings,

Dear Miss,

I am writing to you to make you know my personal opinion of the Internet activities in Nicenet. This is not the first class that I use Internet as a learning tool, and that's why I can tell that is one of the best ways of learning, because we optimise time and we learn together with technology, but we can improve it, by optimising more time. very grateful!

Miss,

I think the Internet activities in Nicenet were very useful for all of us, because we could learn a lot of grammar and vocabulary by searching. Also, I think this is a very good idea to keep our interest in the subject and I hope you continue using this tool.

Thanks for your attention.

Hello, María del Carmen

I'm writing to you to tell you how much this class has improved. I feel more confident of my English and I think it is because of the on-line activities in Nicenet so to end this letter I'd like to thank you. Thanks for the support.

During this course we did a lot of Internet activities in Nicenet and this helped us to improve our English and I like it. That methodology was very interesting and fun because I could learn more things about the Internet and English. Finally I have many expectations for the Business Level.

Hello, María del Carmen

As we are close to end the course, I want you to know my opinion about the on-line activities. Working with the Internet as a resource for our English course was a brilliant idea. In some way you encouraged us to do research and increased our knowledge. It's better because to do tasks there with the chance to edit them without wasting resources such as paper.

Nowadays, Internet communications for me are very important. You can do homework, find anything you want and get it without going out. In this way, having a connection or communication with you in the Internet Nicenet activities is wonderful because anytime that I need to talk to you, Nicenet is enough. It was a really helpful tool for me. I recommend it.

Miss María del Carmen, I am going to give you a note with my opinions about the Internet activities because my opinions are important to perform the way to use it. Well, I think Internet activities in Nicenet are a good way to learn more English and Informatics because you have to use a computer and I prefer the lab than the class but I think that we have to post the works and you have to correct them there and we don't have to print them a lot or we don't have to spend money printing them a lot of times.

The activities in Nicenet are very important for the development of communication. This is the correct form to send a message to another person and you can organize your ideas, plans, objectives, etc in the best way.

Nowadays this tool would be very useful for many people in the world, would connect many kind of tasks, homework, etc. Nicenet gives the opportunity of making the process of work more quickly.

My Internet activities in Nicenet were lower than in other courses, because in the beginning I felt insecure with my language, but the tasks and the system are creative, because the student needs to work with a technological resource, in fact when he will work in an office, his tasks will be very easy.

Appendix K
Upper Intermediate
Grading Breakdown

Universidad Interamericana
English for International Communication

Professor: María del Carmen Boloña
Level: Upper Intermediate
Trimester: III

#	Student	Pop Quiz	Quiz 1	Project + Oral Presentation	Midterm Exam	Pop Quiz 2	Quiz 2	Final Project + Oral Presentation	Final Written Exam	On line Work Writing Tasks	Online Writing Participation	Achievement	Research Projects	On line Research	Achievement	Final Grade	Total Achievement
		5	5	10	10	5.00	5	20	20.00	10	100		10	100		300	
1		2.50	3.13	8.50	6.50	4.37	4.00	16.00	15.00	5.30	53.00	Average	7.20	72.00	Average	72.50	Average
2		2.87	4.15	9.60	8.40	5.00	4.47	16.25	19.00	6.50	65.00	Average	9.00	90.00	High	85.24	High
3		0.00	2.10	7.00	3.65	3.12	3.30	16.00	0.00	6.55	65.50	Average	5.80	58.00	Average	47.52	Low
4		0.00	3.90	10.00	8.20	5.00	4.70	20.00	19.00	6.50	65.00	Average	7.50	75.00	High	84.80	High
5		2.87	2.08	7.20	4.40	5.00	4.00	18.00	12.00	4.85	48.50	Low	7.20	72.00	Average	67.60	Average
6		0.00	3.90	9.60	8.85	5.00	5.00	19.00	20.00	8.70	87.00	High	10.00	100.00	High	90.05	High
7		2.87	2.00	7.60	4.50	3.75	2.70	15.00	12.00	7.60	76.00	High	7.20	72.00	Average	65.22	Average
8		3.28	2.88	9.60	6.00	5.00	4.00	19.00	17.00	6.50	65.00	Average	7.25	72.50	Average	80.51	High
9		4.10	2.88	9.50	5.55	3.75	3.32	19.05	15.00	6.90	69.00	Average	5.00	50.00	Average	75.05	High
10		3.28	3.95	9.80	7.95	5.00	4.12	16.25	19.00	6.55	65.50	Average	10.00	100.00	High	85.90	High
11		4.51	2.28	7.00	5.30	4.37	2.45	17.00	10.00	5.80	58.00	Average	8.60	86.00	High	67.31	Average
12		2.50	2.90	10.00	6.60	5.00	4.17	19.00	14.00	5.80	58.00	Average	6.55	65.50	Average	76.52	High
13		3.00	3.30	9.40	7.35	4.37	3.77	18.30	16.20	5.65	56.50	Average	7.10	71.00	Average	78.44	High
14		0.00	3.00	9.10	6.10	5.00	3.55	16.00	10.20	5.40	54.00	Average	9.20	92.00	High	67.55	Average
15		0.00	2.85	9.40	3.70	1.87	3.52	16.10	14.00	4.40	44.00	Low	5.80	58.00	Average	61.64	Average
16		2.50	3.95	9.80	8.15	5.00	4.45	19.40	16.00	8.85	88.50	High	9.30	93.00	High	87.40	High
17		4.51	3.50	9.50	6.90	5.00	3.72	18.00	16.00	5.80	58.00	Average	7.60	76.00	High	80.53	High
18		3.69	3.88	9.90	6.60	5.00	4.25	19.00	17.00	7.55	75.50	High	10.00	100.00	High	86.87	High
19		3.69	3.99	7.90	8.10	3.12	4.45	17.00	18.00	7.50	75.00	High	9.20	92.00	High	82.95	High
20		0.00	0.63	8.50	0.00	3.12	2.65	16.05	8.00	4.35	43.50	Low	4.25	42.50	Low	47.55	Low
21		2.50	4.38	10.00	8.85	5.00	4.90	20.00	20.00	8.85	70.00	Average	8.75	87.50	High	91.38	High
22		2.50	4.28	9.20	8.20	5.00	4.30	19.00	19.00	5.25	52.50	Average	5.20	52.00	Average	81.93	High
23		0.00	3.67	9.90	7.60	5.00	4.60	20.00	17.40	5.50	55.00	Average	6.40	64.00	Average	80.07	High
24		3.28	3.88	7.70	5.55	5.00	4.20	19.05	18.00	7.90	79.00	High	7.00	70.00	Average	81.56	High
25		4.10	0.00	8.10	7.00	5.00	4.02	18.30	16.00	5.95	59.50	Average	6.50	65.00	Average	74.97	Average
26		0.00	3.28	9.80	6.40	5.00	4.05	19.05	16.20	5.25	52.50	Average	4.00	40.00	Low	73.03	Average
27		2.87	3.90	7.50	5.70	3.12	4.00	13.45	17.00	7.25	72.50	Average	9.80	98.00	High	74.59	Average
28		4.00	3.55	9.00	9.00	5.00	4.62	17.00	19.00	7.20	72.00	Average	9.30	93.00	High	87.67	High
29		4.10	3.43	9.00	5.45	5.00	4	17.00	16.00	8.30	83.00	High	9.30	93.00	High	81.58	High
30		0.00	3.93	10.00	8.30	4.37	4.5	19.00	0.00	5.15	51.50	Average	5.40	54.00	Average	60.65	Average
31		4.10	4.00	10.00	7.75	5.00	4.15	19.00	17.00	6.10	61.00	Average	7.20	72.00	Average	84.30	High
32		3.28	2.15	7.20	4.75	3.12	3.2	19.00	12.00	7.40	74.00	Average	5.60	56.00	Average	67.70	Average
33		0.00	0.00	9.70	6.50	5.00	4	18.00	17.00	4.15	41.50	Low	6.40	64.00	Average	70.75	Average
34		1.64	3.70	9.00	6.00	3.75	3.59	18.05	17.00	7.20	72.00	Average	8.55	85.50	High	78.48	High
35		2.87	3.18	6.60	4.55	2.50	3.55	16.40	14.00	7.35	73.50	Average	7.00	70.00	Average	68.00	Average
36		1.64	1.93	6.30	4.30	5.00	3.7	19.00	14.00	5.90	59.00	Average	5.95	59.50	Average	67.72	Average
	Averages	3.95	3.25	8.83	6.73	4.41	3.94	17.83	15.79	6.39	63.86	Average	7.39	73.92	Average	75.43	High

Appendix L
The Survey of On-line Activities
Through the Nicenet's ICA

SURVEY OF LEARNERS' IMPRESSIONS OF NICENET'S ON-LINE ACTIVITIES

The purpose of this survey is to collect information about your impressions of on-line activities in Nicenet.

After reading each statement, follow instructions below each question to indicate your answer.

1) What options in Nicenet's menu were most useful for you?

Please rank all the answers on a scale from 1 to 7 to indicate level of usefulness.

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| a) Conferencing | <input type="text"/> |
| b) Link sharing | <input type="text"/> |
| c) Documents | <input type="text"/> |
| d) Class schedule | <input type="text"/> |
| e) Class members | <input type="text"/> |
| f) Reply messages for online interaction | <input type="text"/> |
| g) Sending personal messages | <input type="text"/> |

2) Which of these activities helped you most to improve your English learning?

Please rank all the answers on a scale from 1 to 5 to indicate level of usefulness.

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| a) On -line reading tasks | <input type="text"/> |
| b) On-line writing tasks | <input type="text"/> |
| c) Information sharing among class members | <input type="text"/> |
| d) Web based research activities such as web quests, hunts, etc | <input type="text"/> |
| e) Online resources such as dictionaries, search engines, etc | <input type="text"/> |

3) Which of these online learning activities did you find more difficult?

Please rank all the answers on a scale from 1 to 8 to indicate level of difficulty.

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| a) Task based activities | <input type="text"/> |
| b) Communication interaction | <input type="text"/> |
| c) Exploring the web | <input type="text"/> |
| d) Grammar based activities | <input type="text"/> |
| e) Evaluating power point presentations | <input type="text"/> |
| f) Vocabulary activities | <input type="text"/> |
| g) Final web quest project | <input type="text"/> |
| h) Publishing Nicenet's tasks activities | <input type="text"/> |

4) Which of these postings were more effective for your class organization?

Please rank all the answers on a scale from 1 to 4 to indicate level of usefulness.

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| a) Course general announcements | <input type="text"/> |
| b) Having general information about the course | <input type="text"/> |
| c) Having information about projects requirements, exams guidelines and exams timetables | <input type="text"/> |
| d) Having online lessons instructions | <input type="text"/> |

5) Which of these aspects of Nicenet influenced your learning process to develop communication skills?

Please rank all the answers on a scale from 1 to 9 to indicate level of usefulness.

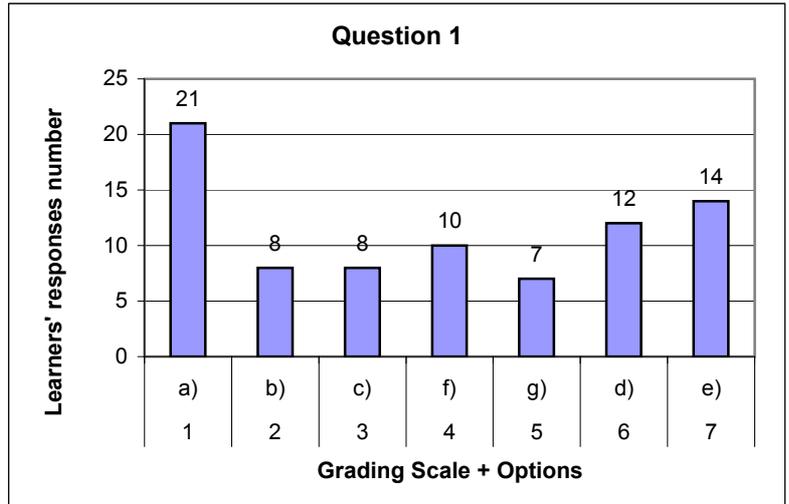
- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| a) Time management | <input type="text"/> |
| b) Information access | <input type="text"/> |
| c) Data base organization | <input type="text"/> |
| d) Technological applications | <input type="text"/> |
| e) Communication interaction | <input type="text"/> |
| f) Training | <input type="text"/> |
| g) Research | <input type="text"/> |
| h) Skills development | <input type="text"/> |
| i) Updated information availability | <input type="text"/> |

Appendix M
Survey Results

QUESTION # 1

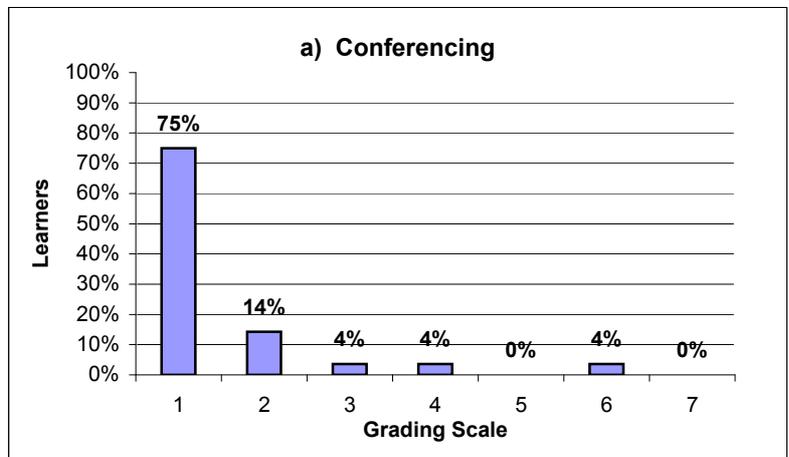
What options in Nicenet's menu were most useful for you?

Scale	Options	Learners' responses number
1	a)	21
2	b)	8
3	c)	8
4	f)	10
5	g)	7
6	d)	12
7	e)	14



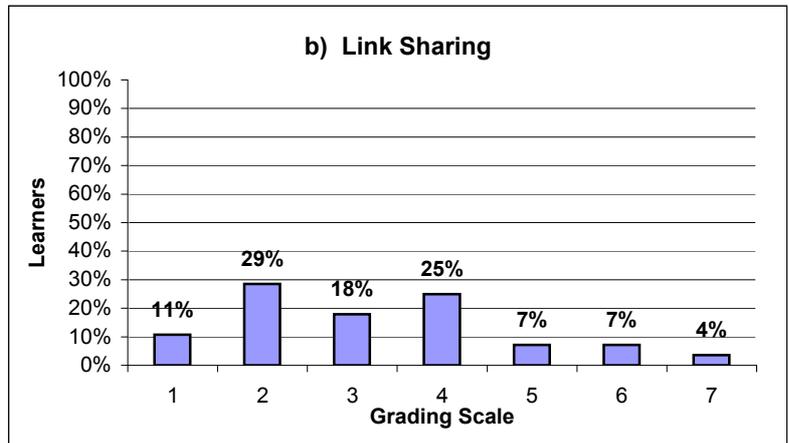
a) Conferencing

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	21	75%
2	4	14%
3	1	4%
4	1	4%
5	0	0%
6	1	4%
7	0	0%
28		100%



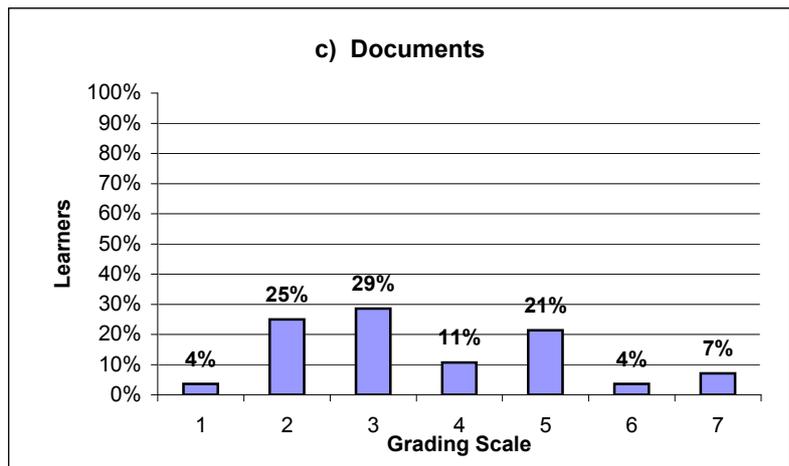
b) Link Sharing

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	3	11%
2	8	29%
3	5	18%
4	7	25%
5	2	7%
6	2	7%
7	1	4%
28		100%



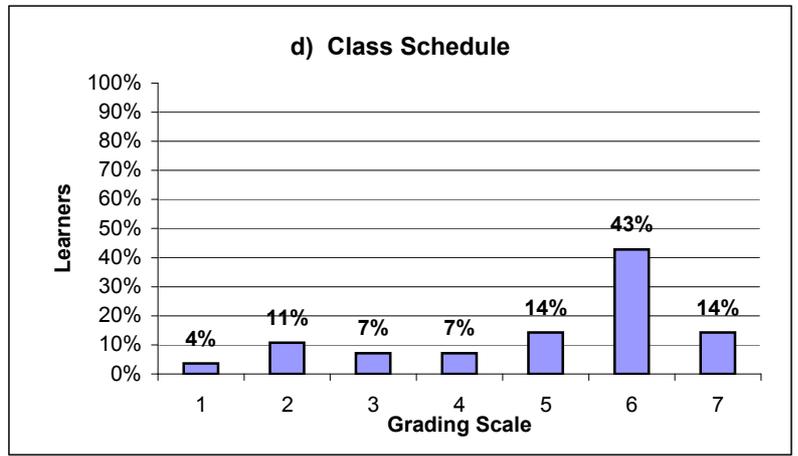
c) Documents

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	1	4%
2	7	25%
3	8	29%
4	3	11%
5	6	21%
6	1	4%
7	2	7%
28		100%



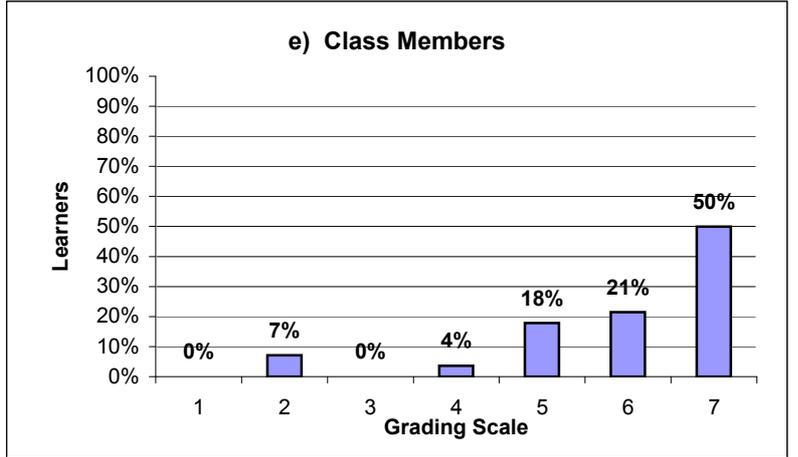
d) Class Schedule

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	1	4%
2	3	11%
3	2	7%
4	2	7%
5	4	14%
6	12	43%
7	4	14%
28		100%



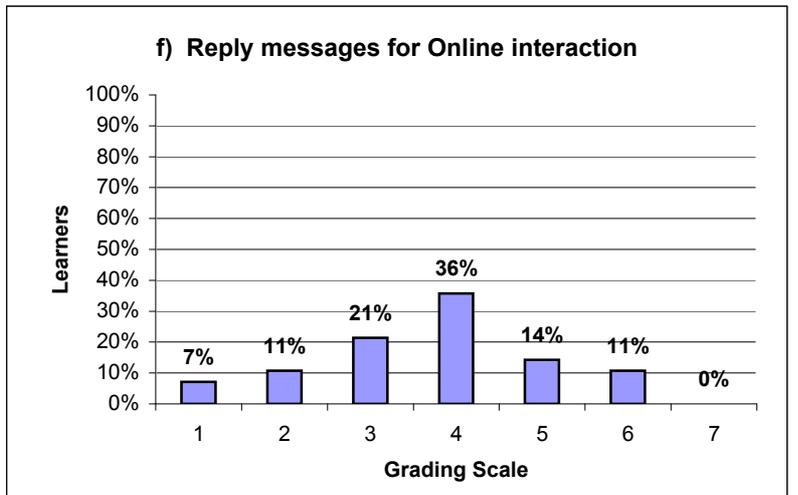
e) Class Members

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	0	0%
2	2	7%
3	0	0%
4	1	4%
5	5	18%
6	6	21%
7	14	50%
28		100%



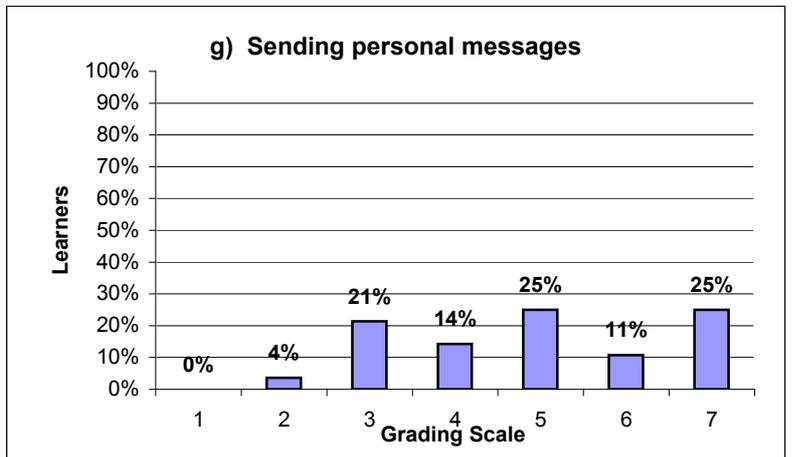
f) Reply messages for Online for Online

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	2	7%
2	3	11%
3	6	21%
4	10	36%
5	4	14%
6	3	11%
7	0	0%
28		100%



g) Sending personal messages

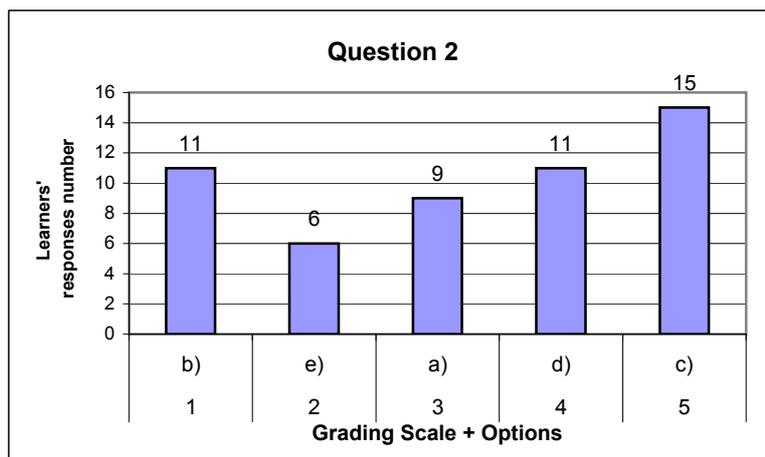
Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	0	0%
2	1	4%
3	6	21%
4	4	14%
5	7	25%
6	3	11%
7	7	25%
28		100%



QUESTION # 2

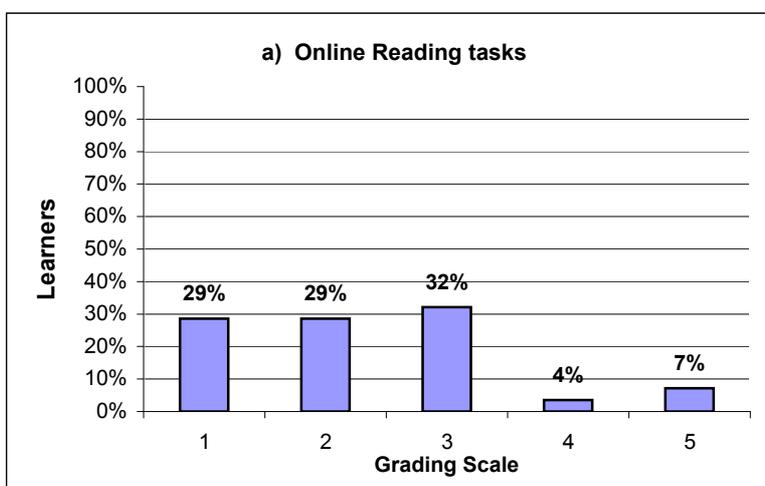
Which of these activities helped you most to improve your English learning?

Scale	Options	Learners' responses number
1	b)	11
2	e)	6
3	a)	9
4	d)	11
5	c)	15



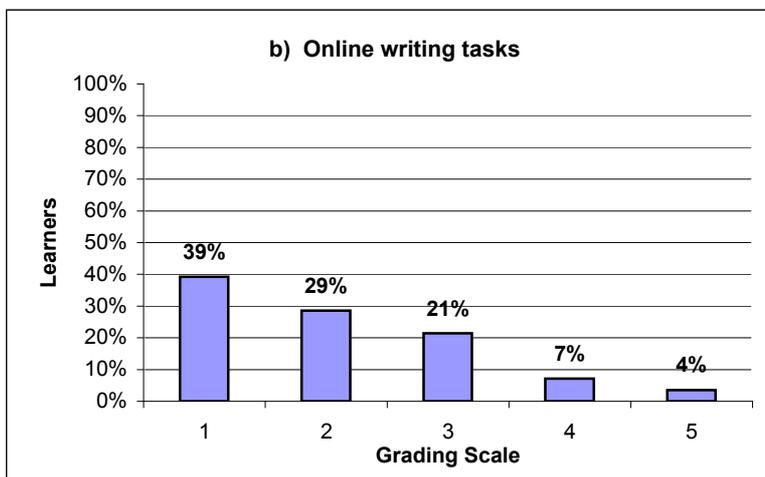
a) Online Reading tasks

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	8	29%
2	8	29%
3	9	32%
4	1	4%
5	2	7%
	28	100%



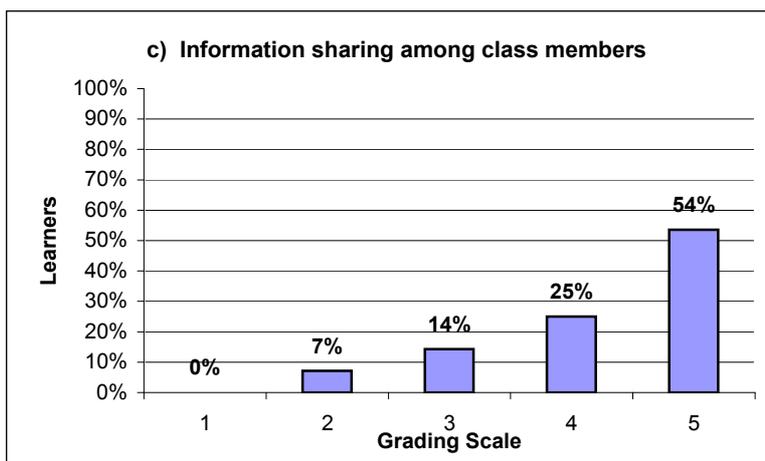
b) Online writing tasks

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	11	39%
2	8	29%
3	6	21%
4	2	7%
5	1	4%
	28	100%



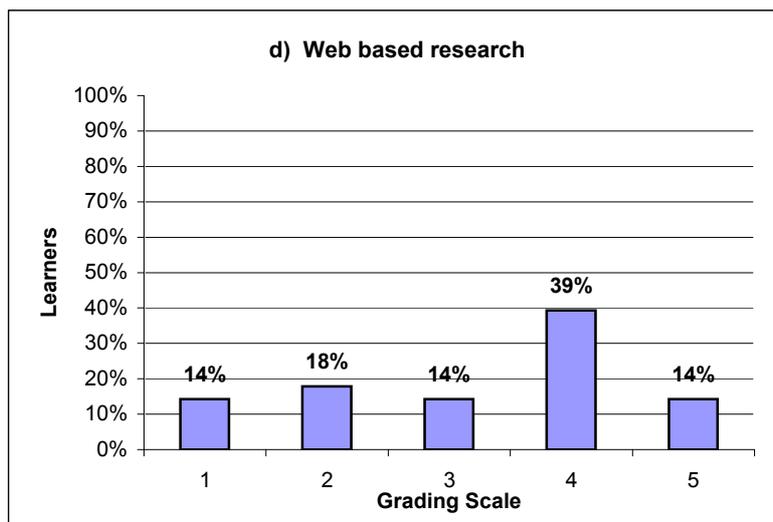
c) Information sharing among class members

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	0	0%
2	2	7%
3	4	14%
4	7	25%
5	15	54%
	28	100%



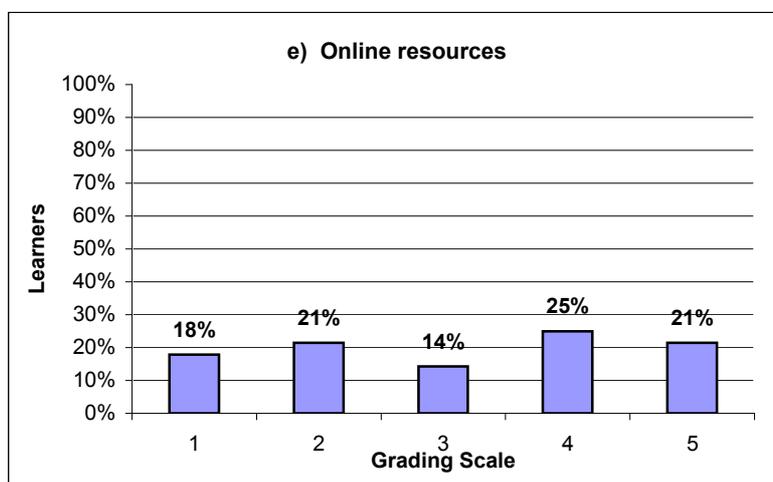
d) Web based research activities

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	4	14%
2	5	18%
3	4	14%
4	11	39%
5	4	14%
	28	100%



e) Online resources such as dictionaries

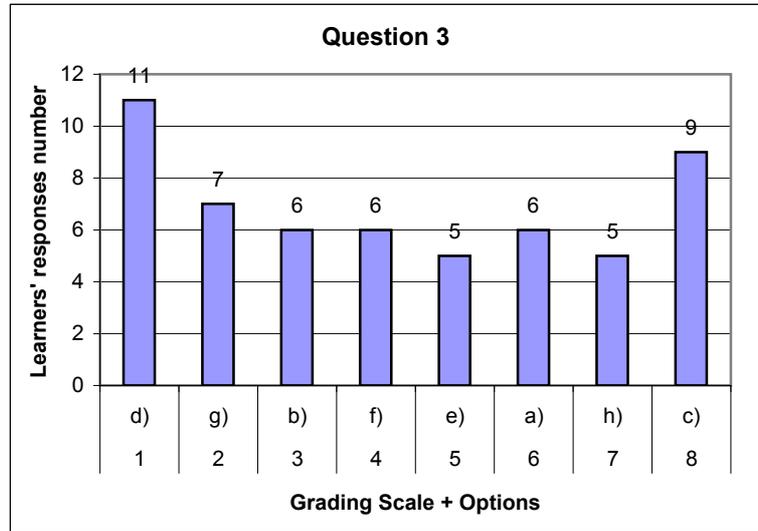
Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	5	18%
2	6	21%
3	4	14%
4	7	25%
5	6	21%
	28	100%



QUESTION # 3

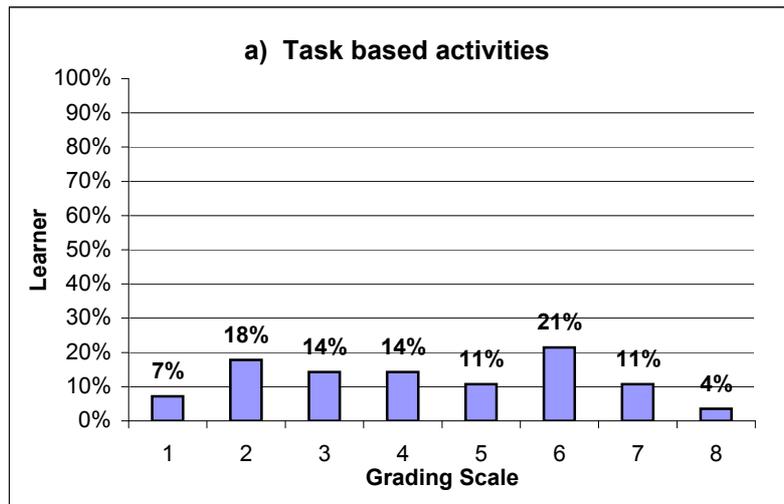
Which of these online learning activities did you find more difficult?

Scale	Options	Learners' responses number
1	d)	11
2	g)	7
3	b)	6
4	f)	6
5	e)	5
6	a)	6
7	h)	5
8	c)	9



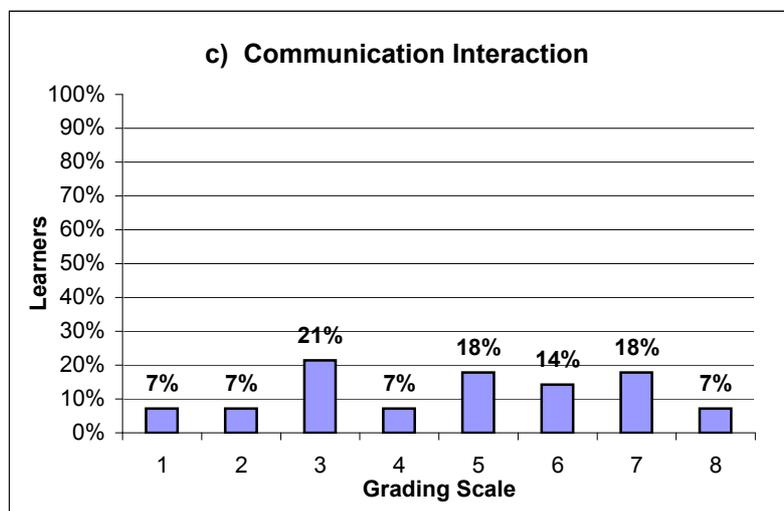
) Task based activities

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	2	7%
2	5	18%
3	4	14%
4	4	14%
5	3	11%
6	6	21%
7	3	11%
8	1	4%
28		100%



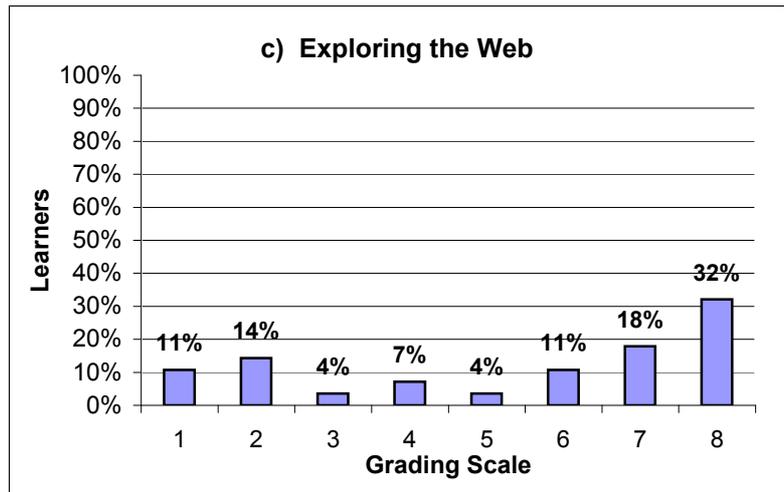
b) Communication interaction

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	2	7%
2	2	7%
3	6	21%
4	2	7%
5	5	18%
6	4	14%
7	5	18%
8	2	7%
28		100%



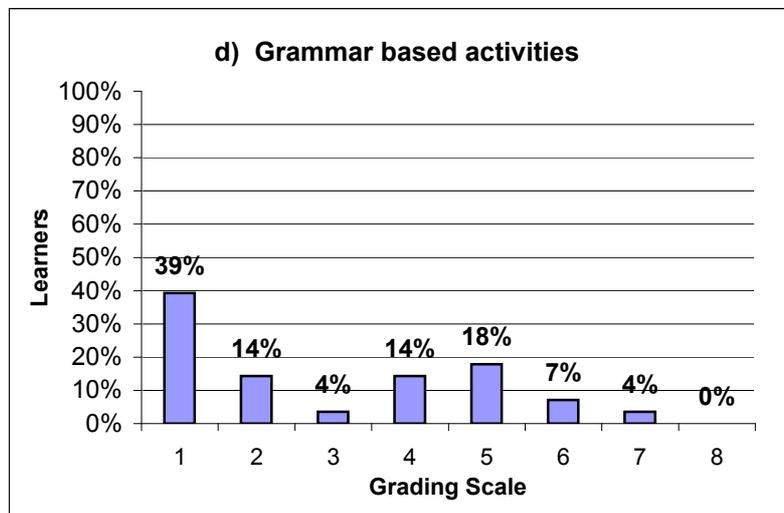
c) Exploring the web

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	3	11%
2	4	14%
3	1	4%
4	2	7%
5	1	4%
6	3	11%
7	5	18%
8	9	32%
	28	100%



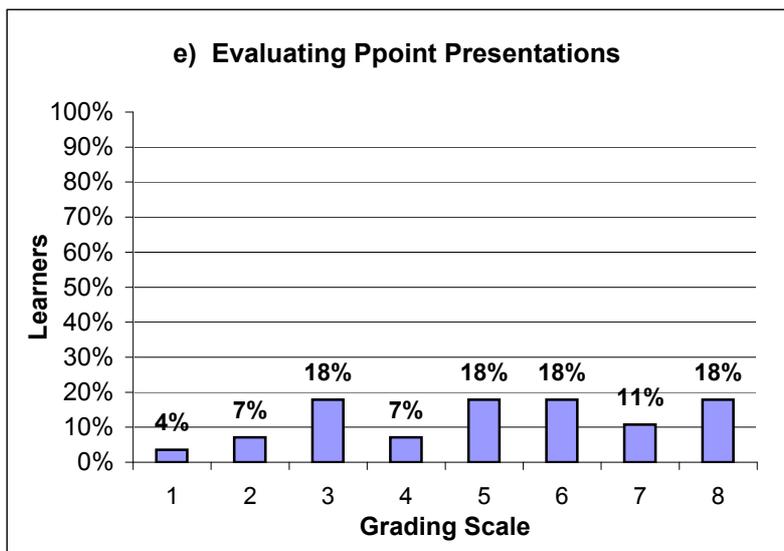
d) Grammar based activities

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	11	39%
2	4	14%
3	1	4%
4	4	14%
5	5	18%
6	2	7%
7	1	4%
8	0	0%
	28	100%



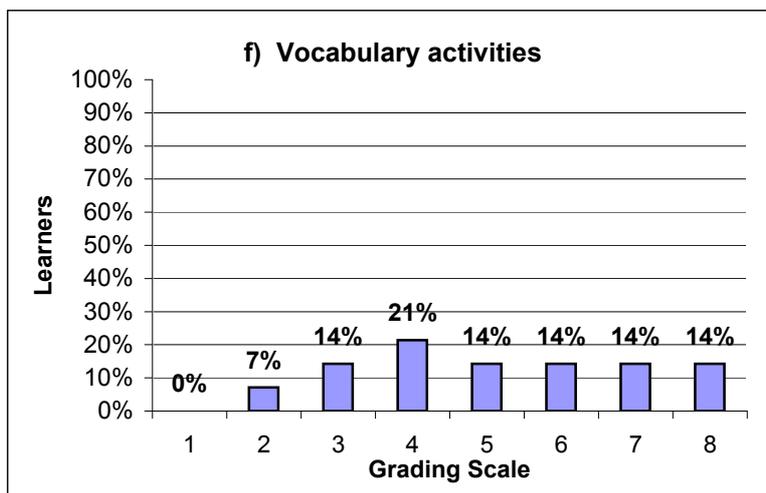
e) Evaluating Ppoint

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	1	4%
2	2	7%
3	5	18%
4	2	7%
5	5	18%
6	5	18%
7	3	11%
8	5	18%
	28	100%



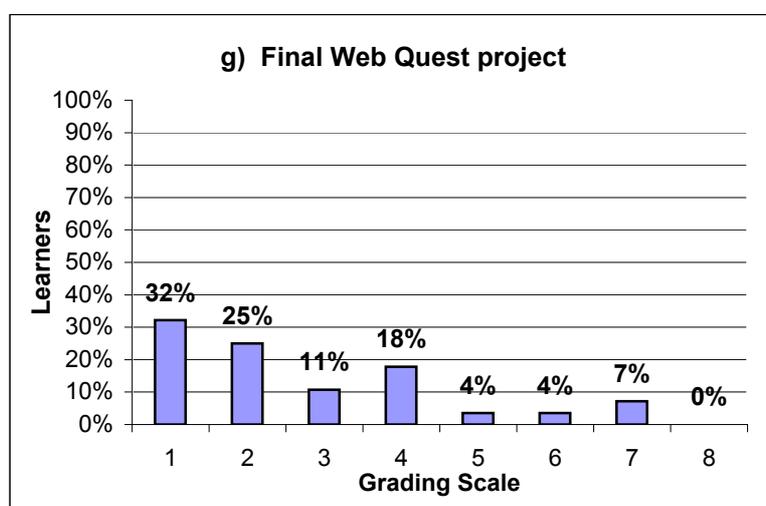
f) Vocabulary activities

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	0	0%
2	2	7%
3	4	14%
4	6	21%
5	4	14%
6	4	14%
7	4	14%
8	4	14%
	28	100%



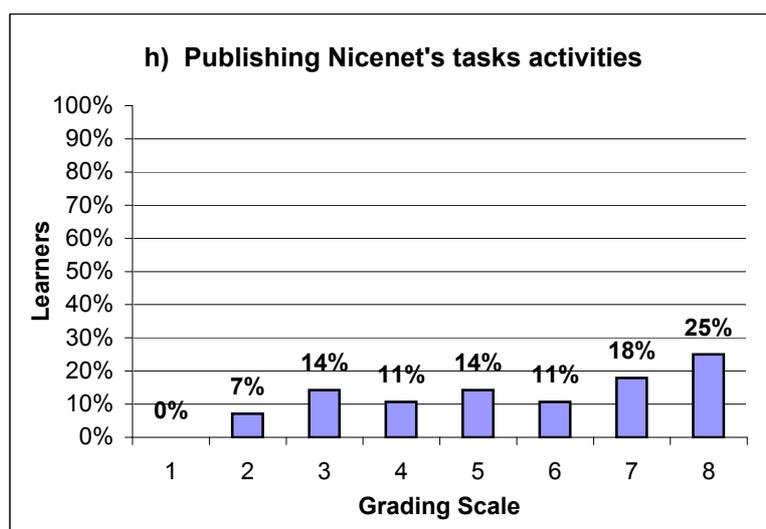
g) Final Web Quest project

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	9	32%
2	7	25%
3	3	11%
4	5	18%
5	1	4%
6	1	4%
7	2	7%
8	0	0%
	28	100%



h) Publishing Nicenet's tasks

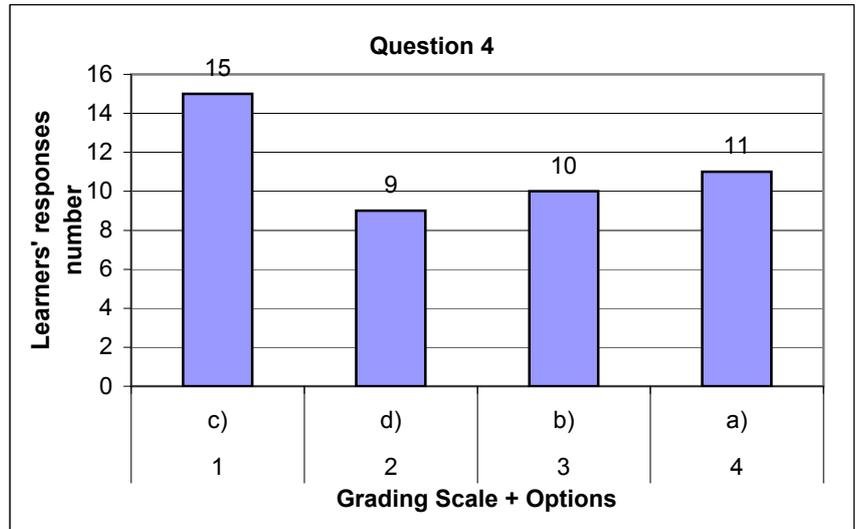
Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	0	0%
2	2	7%
3	4	14%
4	3	11%
5	4	14%
6	3	11%
7	5	18%
8	7	25%
	28	100%



QUESTION # 4

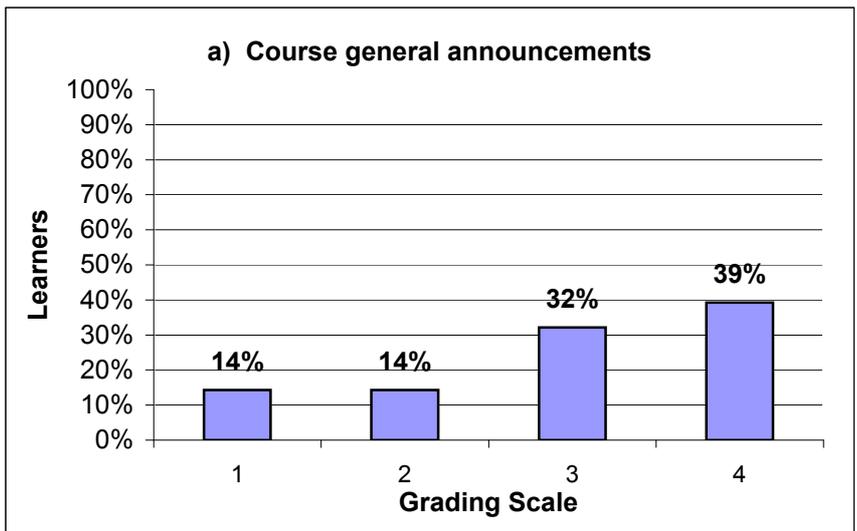
Which of these postings were more effective for your class organization?

Scale	Options	Learners' responses number
1	c)	15
2	d)	9
3	b)	10
4	a)	11



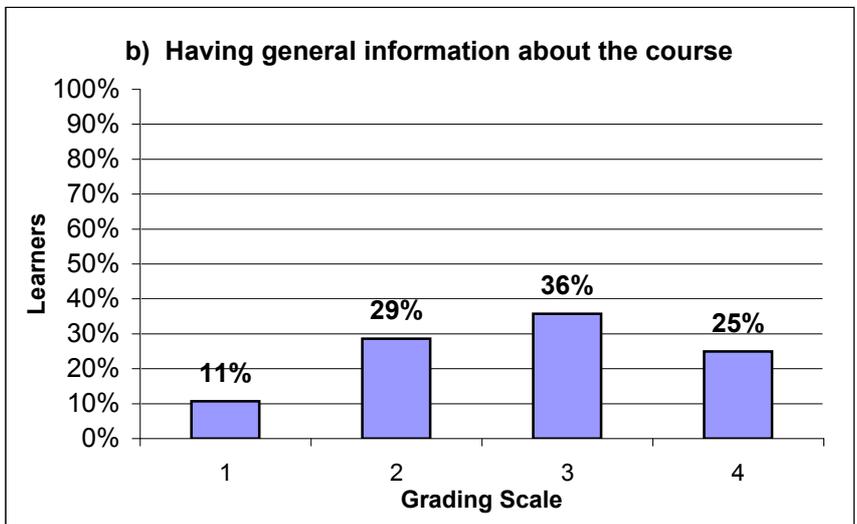
a) Course general announcements

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	4	14%
2	4	14%
3	9	32%
4	11	39%
	28	100%



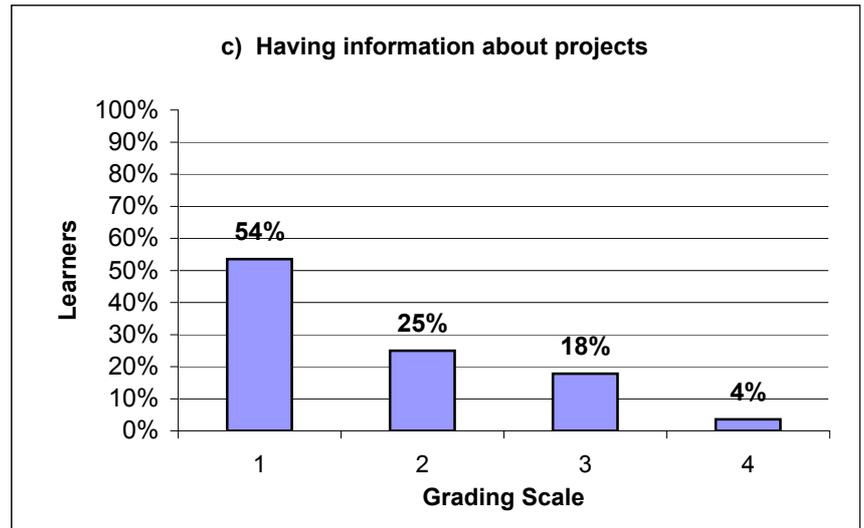
b) Having general information about

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	3	11%
2	8	29%
3	10	36%
4	7	25%
	28	100%



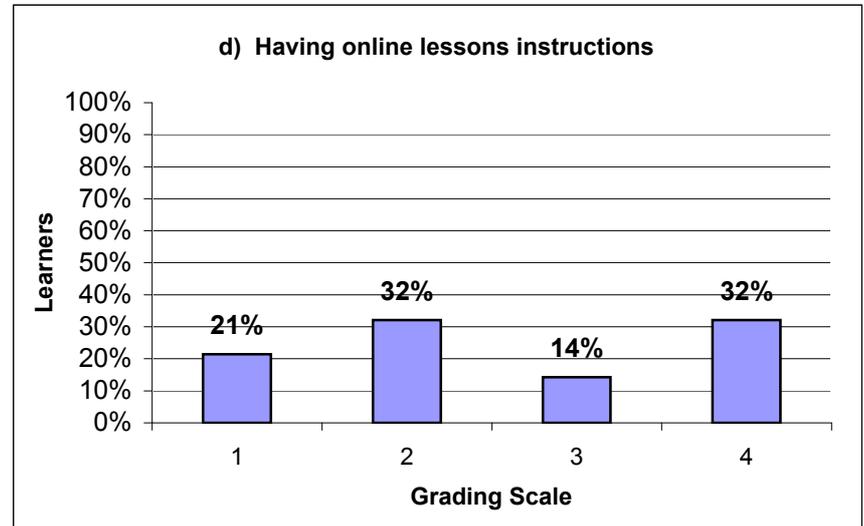
c) Having information about

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	15	54%
2	7	25%
3	5	18%
4	1	4%
	28	100%



d) Having online lessons instructions

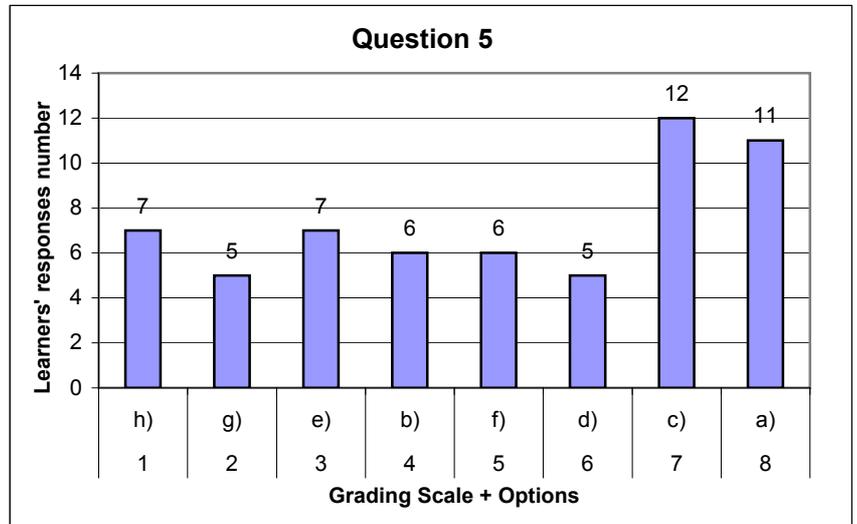
Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	6	21%
2	9	32%
3	4	14%
4	9	32%
	28	100%



QUESTION # 5

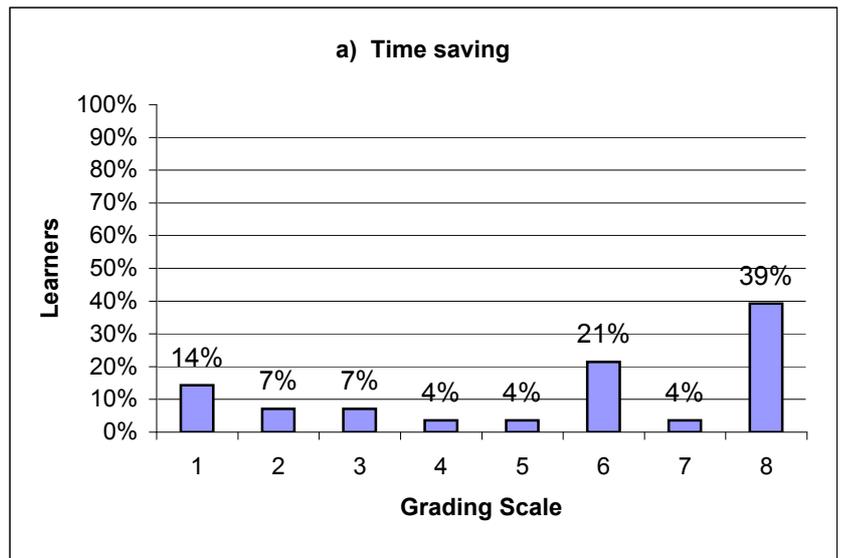
Which of these aspects of Nicenet influenced your learning process to develop communication skills?

Scale	Options	Learners' responses number
1	h)	7
2	g)	5
3	e)	7
4	b)	6
5	f)	6
6	d)	5
7	c)	12
8	a)	11



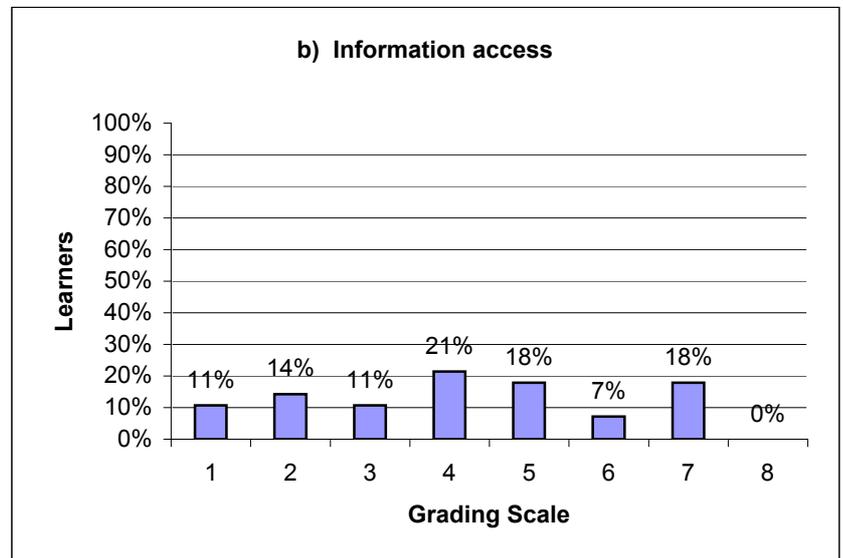
a) Time saving

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	4	14%
2	2	7%
3	2	7%
4	1	4%
5	1	4%
6	6	21%
7	1	4%
8	11	39%
28		100%



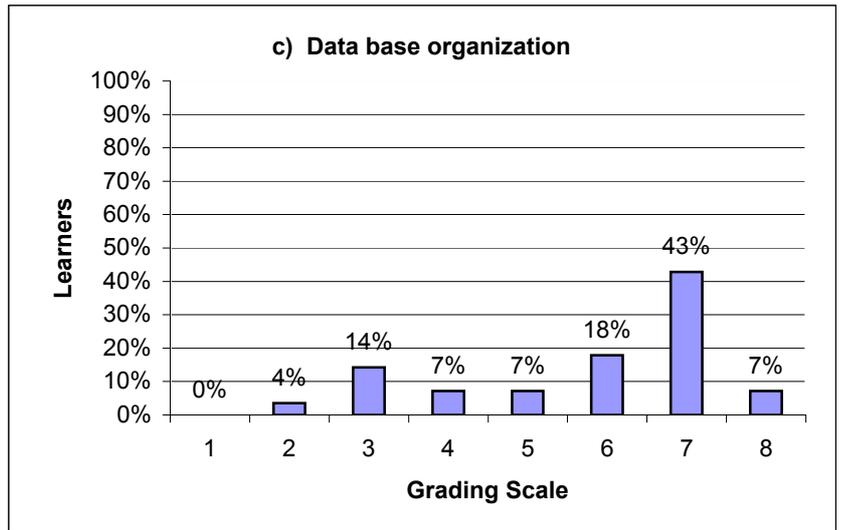
b) Information access:

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	3	11%
2	4	14%
3	3	11%
4	6	21%
5	5	18%
6	2	7%
7	5	18%
8	0	0%
28		100%



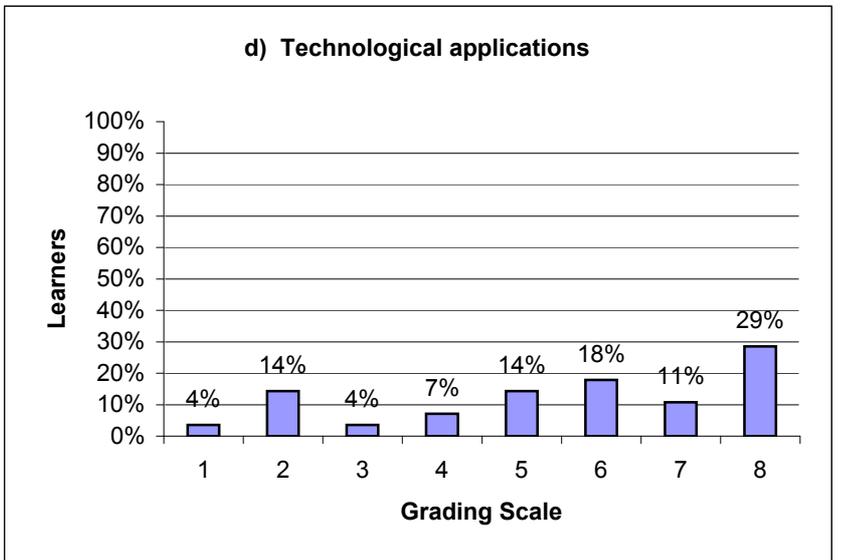
c) Data base organization

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	0	0%
2	1	4%
3	4	14%
4	2	7%
5	2	7%
6	5	18%
7	12	43%
8	2	7%
	28	100%



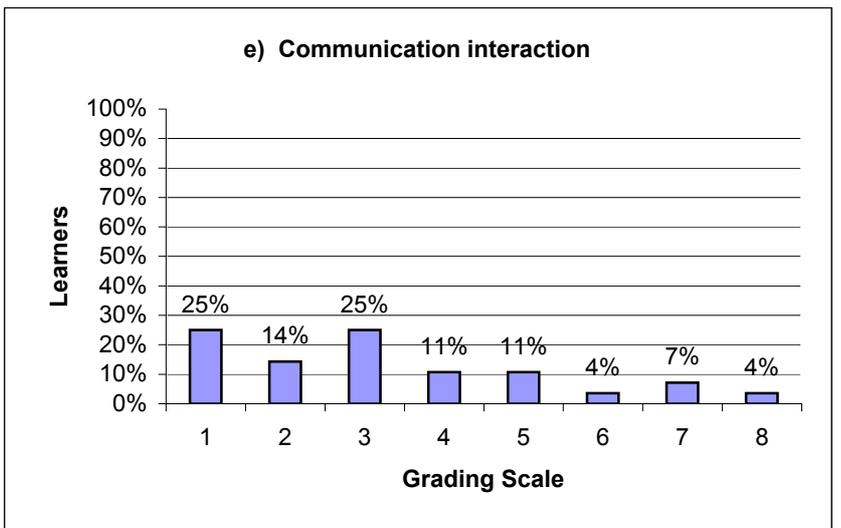
d) Technological applications

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	1	4%
2	4	14%
3	1	4%
4	2	7%
5	4	14%
6	5	18%
7	3	11%
8	8	29%
	28	100%



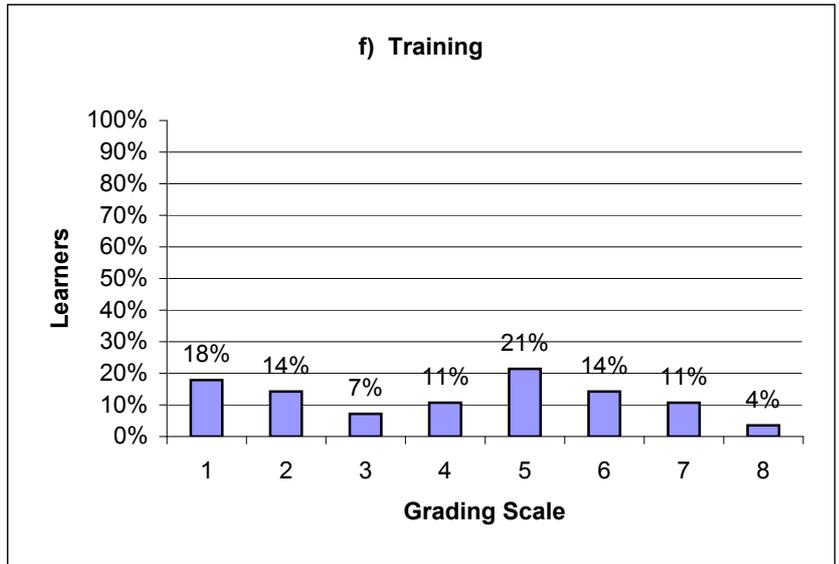
e) Communication interaction

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	7	25%
2	4	14%
3	7	25%
4	3	11%
5	3	11%
6	1	4%
7	2	7%
8	1	4%
	28	100%



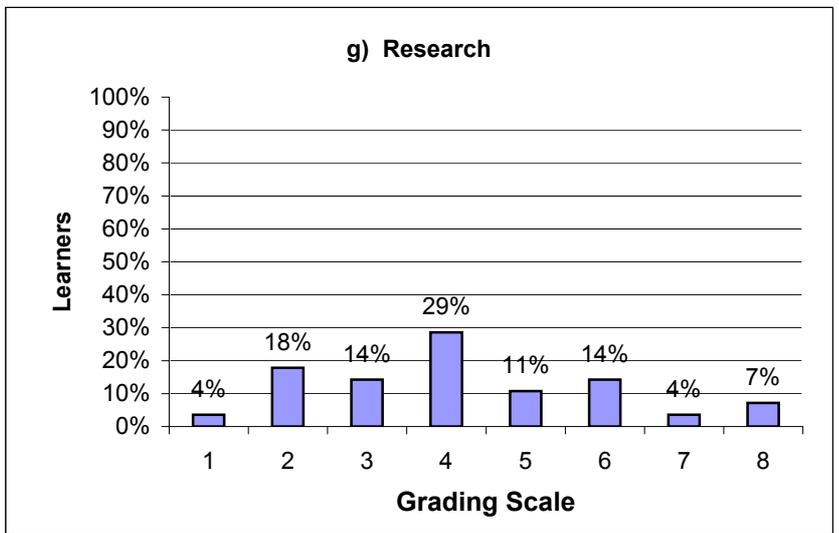
f) Training

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	5	18%
2	4	14%
3	2	7%
4	3	11%
5	6	21%
6	4	14%
7	3	11%
8	1	4%
	28	100%



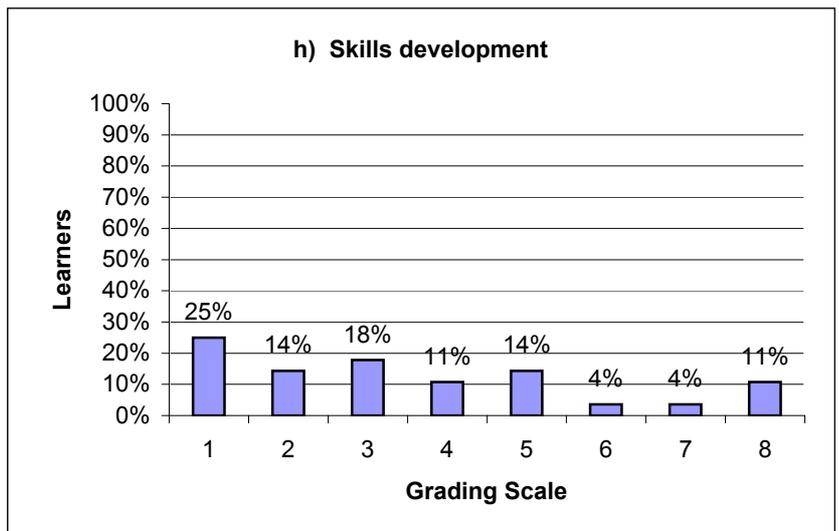
g) Research

Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	1	4%
2	5	18%
3	4	14%
4	8	29%
5	3	11%
6	4	14%
7	1	4%
8	2	7%
	28	100%



h) Skills development

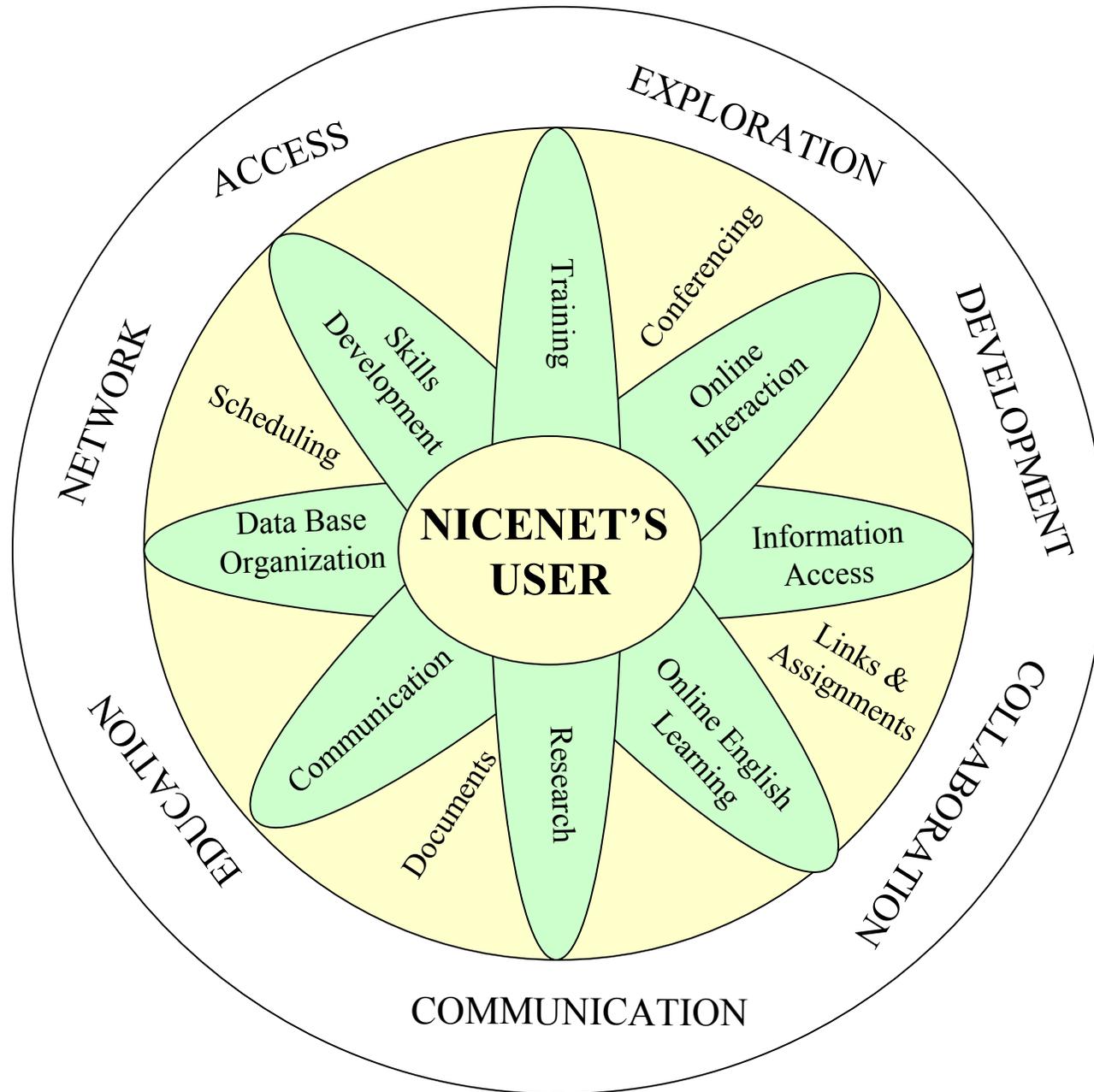
Scale	Learners	Percentages
1	7	25%
2	4	14%
3	5	18%
4	3	11%
5	4	14%
6	1	4%
7	1	4%
8	3	11%
	28	100%



Appendix N

Diagram of Learners' On-line Process

USERS' INTERACTION



Appendix O
On-line Writing Tasks
Learners' Grades

UPPER INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH

On-line Writing Tasks

Writing Process: Planning, Drafting, Revising, Editing, Publishing

#	Student	Arguments /10	Contrast /10	Essay /10	Posters /10	Letter /10	Review /10	Opinions /10	PPP /10	Notes /10	PPP /10	Sub Total /100	Total /10
1		0	0	7	10	0	10	9	10	10	7.00	63.00	6.30
2		10	7	9	10	0	10	10	10	10+	9.00	75	7.50
3		7	7	6	0	0	8	8	10	10	9.50	65.5	6.55
4		8	0	9	10	0	10	10	10	10	8.00	75	7.50
5		8	9.5	0	0	0	8	10	5	0	8.00	48.5	4.85
6		8	9	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10.00	97	9.70
7		8	8	8	9	0	5	9	10	10	9.00	76	7.60
8		7	9	0	10	10	10	9.5	10	0	9.50	75	7.50
9		9	8.5	8	10	0	10	5	10	10	8.50	79	7.90
10		9	7.5	0	10	10	10	10	10	0	9.00	75.5	7.55
11		9	6	0	10	0	10	8	5	10	10.00	68	6.80
12		0	0	7	9	0	10	9	5	10	8.00	58	5.80
13		8	0	8	10	0	6	5	0	10	9.50	56.5	5.65
14		0	0	0	9	10	10	8	10	0	7.00	54	5.40
15		8	9	8	0	0	8	4	0	0	7.00	44	4.40
16		8	9.5	10	10	10	6	10	5	10	10.00	88.5	8.85
17		0	0	9	10	0	10	9	10	10	10.00	68	6.80
18		9.5	6	0	10	10	10	10	10	10	10.00	85.5	8.55
19		10	9	9	9	10	5	9	5	10+	9.00	75	7.50
20		0	0	6	0	10	8	0	0	10	9.50	43.5	4.35
21		8	0	8	9	0	10	10	5	10	10.00	70	7.00
22		8	0	0	10	10	6	5	5	0	8.50	52.5	5.25
23		0	0	0	9	10	10	8	10	0	8.00	55	5.50
24		8	9.5	9	9	0	5	9	10	10	9.50	79	7.90
25		9.5	0	9	9	0	5	10	10	10+	7.00	59.5	5.95
26		0	0	0	9	10	10	5	10	0	8.50	52.5	5.25
27		8	8.5	0	10	10	10	9	10	10	7.00	82.5	8.25
28		8	5	9	10	10	6	10	5	10+	9.00	72	7.20
29		8	7	8	10	10	6	10	5	10	9.00	83	8.30
30		8	8.5	10	0	0	8	0	0	10	7.00	51.5	5.15
31		0	6.5	9	10	0	0	7	10	10	8.50	61	6.10
32		8	4.5	7	10	10	6	5	5	10	8.50	74	7.40
33		0	0	9	0	10	8	0	5	10+	9.50	41.5	4.15
34		8	0	8	9	10	10	4	5	10	8.00	72	7.20
35		0	6	6	9	10	5	9.5	10	10	8.00	73.5	7.35
36		0	0	6.5	9	5	5	5	10	10	8.50	59	5.90
	Averages	5.78	4.46	5.90	8.00	5.14	7.89	7.47	7.22	6.39	8.67	66.92	6.69

Appendix P
Web Based Research Projects
Learners' Grades

Universidad Interamericana
UPPER INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH
Web based Research Projects Learners' Grades

#	Student	Pixar & Dream	Movie Posters	Writing Tests Self	Job Skills PPP	Internet Activities	Online	Research	Total	Total	Total	Gran Total
		Work PPP		assessment		Nicenet Draft	Activities	Projects				
		Project 1	Project 2	Project 3	Project 4	Project 5	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
		/10	/10	/10	/10	/10	/50	/50	/100	/10	/10	/10
1		10	10	0	10	8	38	34.0	72	7.2		
2		10	10	0	10	10	40	50.0	90	9.0		
3		10	10	0	10	8	38	20.0	58	5.8		
4		10	10	0	10	10	40	35.0	75	7.5		
5		10	10	0	10	8	38	34.0	72	7.2		
6		10	10	10	10	10	50	50.0	100	10.0		
7		5	10	0	8	9	32	40.0	72	7.2		
8		10	10	0	10	10	40	32.5	72.5	7.3		
9		10	10	0	10	0	30	20.0	50	5.0		
10		10	10	10	10	10	50	50.0	100	10.0		
11		10	10	0	10	7	37	49.0	86	8.6		
12		5	10	0	10	8	33	32.5	65.5	6.6		
13		5	8	0	10	8	31	40.0	71	7.1		
14		5	10	10	10	8	43	49.0	92	9.2		
15		10	10	0	10	8	38	20.0	58	5.8		
16		5	8	10	10	10	43	50.0	93	9.3		
17		10	10	8	10	8	46	30.0	76	7.6		
18		10	10	10	10	10	50	50.0	100	10.0		
19		5	10	10	8	9	42	50.0	92	9.2		
20		10	10	0	10	0	30	12.5	42.5	4.3		
21		5	10	10	10	10	45	42.5	87.5	8.8		
22		5	8	0	10	4	27	25.0	52	5.2		
23		5	10	10		4	29	35.0	64	6.4		
24		5	10	0	8	8	31	39.0	70	7.0		
25		10	10	0	8	8	36	29.0	65	6.5		
26		5	10	0		0	15	25.0	40	4.0		
27		10	10	10	10	8	48	50.0	98	9.8		
28		5	8	10	10	10	43	50.0	93	9.3		
29		5	8	10	10	10	43	50.0	93	9.3		
30		10	10	0	10	4	34	20.0	54	5.4		
31		10	10	0	10	8	38	34.0	72	7.2		
32		5	8	0	10	4	27	29.0	56	5.6		
33		10	10	0	10	4	34	30.0	64	6.4		
34		5	10	10	10	8	43	42.5	85.5	8.6		
35		5	10	0	8	8	31	39.0	70	7.0		
36		5	10	0	8	4	27	32.7	59.69	6.0		
	Averages	7.64	9.67	3.56	9.11	7.25	37.22	36.70	73.92	7.4		

#	Names	Communication skills (12)			Knowledge of topic 2	Presentation skills 2	Oral grade /10	Written Project /10	Final Project and Oral Presentation /20
		Language Use 2	Pronunciation 2	Fluency 2					
1		1.75	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	9.75	9.80	20.00
2		1.25	1.25	1.70	2.00	1.70	7.90	9.80	18.00
3		1.25	1.50	2.00	2.00	2.00	8.75	9.80	19.00
4		2.00	1.75	2.00	2.00	2.00	9.75	9.80	20.00
5		1.00	1.00	1.30	1.50	1.80	6.60	9.80	16.40
6		1.25	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	8.25	9.80	18.05
7		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.20	1.50	5.70	9.80	16.00
8		1.50	1.50	2.00	2.00	2.00	9.00	9.80	19.00
9		1.00	0.75	1.50	1.50	1.50	6.25	9.80	16.05
10		1.50	1.75	1.75	1.75	1.75	8.50	9.80	18.30
11		1.50	1.75	2.00	2.00	2.00	9.25	9.80	19.05
12		1.50	1.50	1.25	1.75	1.75	7.75	9.80	18.00
13		1.20	1.20	1.50	1.50	1.50	6.90	8.70	16.00
14		1.30	1.50	1.40	1.50	1.50	7.20	8.70	16.00
15		1.80	1.80	2.00	2.00	2.00	9.60	8.70	18.30
16		1.40	1.30	1.20	1.50	2.00	7.40	8.70	16.10
17		2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	10.00	8.70	19.00
18		0.80	0.80	0.75	1.20	1.20	4.75	8.70	13.45
19		1.50	1.50	2.00	2.00	2.00	9.00	9.90	19.00
20		2.00	1.75	2.00	2.00	1.75	9.50	9.90	19.40
21		1.75	1.50	1.75	2.00	2.00	9.00	9.90	19.00
22		2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	10.00	9.90	20.00
23		1.25	1.50	1.50	2.00	1.75	8.00	9.90	18.00
24		1.25	1.30	1.30	1.50	1.50	6.85	9.90	17.00
25		1.25	1.75	2.00	2.00	2.00	9.00	9.80	19.00
26		1.50	1.75	2.00	2.00	2.00	9.25	9.80	19.05
27		1.50	1.75	1.75	2.00	2.00	9.00	9.80	19.00
28		1.25	1.50	2.00	2.00	2.00	8.75	9.80	19.00
29		1.50	1.75	1.75	2.00	2.00	9.00	9.80	19.00
30		1.75	1.75	2.00	2.00	1.75	9.25	9.80	19.05
31		1.25	1.25	1.25	2.00	1.75	7.50	7.50	15.00
32		1.50	1.75	1.75	2.00	1.75	8.75	7.50	16.25
33		1.50	1.50	2.00	1.75	2.00	8.75	7.50	16.25
34		1.75	1.75	2.00	2.00	2.00	9.50	7.50	17.00
35		1.75	1.75	1.75	2.00	2.00	9.25	7.50	17.00
36		2.00	1.75	2.00	2.00	1.75	9.50	7.50	17.00
	Averages	1.48	1.53	1.73	1.85	1.84	8.42	9.25	17.83

ECUADOR A Land of Discoveries WebQuest
An Internet WebQuest on Traveling in Ecuador
created by Maria del Carmen Boloña, Alda Formenti, Deanie
Zevallos

[Introduction](#) | [The Task](#) | [The Process & Resources](#) | [Conclusion](#) |
[HyperText Dictionary](#)

Introduction

Ecuador can certainly be an enchanted place full of mystery and beauty for all types of travellers.

Golden beaches caressed by crystalline seas, perennial islands inhabited by mysterious sea creatures, exotic forests refreshed by beautiful waterfalls are waiting for adventure and discovery.

Can you challenge travellers to discover this land?

The Quest

You work for a prestigious Travel Agency in this city. Some of your responsibilities include hosting tourist events, fostering your country's cultural values and promoting Ecuador's tourist image. After working in this field for several years, you are convinced that Ecuador is an extraordinary tourist source for tourists searching for exciting adventures. Your task will be to design an eye catching brochure to encourage travellers to discover Ecuador. These travellers can be foreign or local tourists and visitors in general. You will then present your brochure to the Travel Agency staff in a Power Point Presentation as you have been requested to submit the brochure to the Ministry of Tourism as a contribution to your country's development.

The Process and Resources

Designing an attractive brochure needs creativity and a good selection of information. For these reasons, we have included a list of steps to guide you through your work. All these activities will help you in your task.

1. Make facts charts. Write a list of any information you can remember.
2. Make a chart showing the most important places to visit: hotels, attractions, activities, entertainment, etc.
3. Collect and classify pictures according to the charts.
4. Write a summary report of each category.
5. Sequence the categories.
6. Make a strip showing the sequence of categories with pictures included.
7. Write short descriptions for selected categories.
8. Make a draft brochure with the collected information, highlighting Ecuador's features.

Resources

To what resources concerns, there are web sites available for every member in the team. These resources have been carefully selected to make your Internet visit worthy. They will give you information as well as ideas for your brochure.

Evaluation

Your brochure will be evaluated as follows:

Excellent A

- 4 Highly creative task design.
- 4 Advanced communicative language use
- 4 Excellent use of writing skills
- 4 Clear evidence of team work/Cooperation/Deadlines
- 4 A 3 minute highly persuasive presentation

Very Good B

- 4 Very creative task design.
- 3 High Intermediate communicative language use
- 3 Accurate use of writing skills
- 3 Some evidence of team work/delays
- 3 A 5 minute persuasive presentation

Good C

- 3 Simple task design
- 2 Intermediate Communicative language use
- 2 Satisfactory use of writing skills
- 3 Little evidence of team work
- 3 An 8 minute presentation

Fair D

- 1 Task design definitely needs improvement
- 1 Low communicative language use
- 1 Poor use of writing skills
- 1 No evidence of team work
- 1 Aimless presentation

Phase 1 - Background: Something for Everyone

This task requires group work. There will be teams of four students led by team managers. Every student has a specific role and is expected to contribute to the task by doing Internet research as suggested. Students are expected to finish their brochure in three weeks. Distribute work in weeks 1, 2 and 3 as follows.

Week 1: Visit all available web sites to gather information about Ecuador. Geographical locations, historic places, information sources, factual records need to be researched to enlighten you to design your brochure. This will be time for information search and note taking activities.

Here you will find highly interesting sites for your search.

[Directory-Regional-country: Ecuador](#) - General info

[Ecuador Images.com](#) - A visual trip through the country

[ECUADOR - A Country Study](#) - General info

[Your window to Ecuador](#) - General information

[Lonely Planet – Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands](#) - General information

[South America for visitors - Ecuador Food, Drink, Nightlife, Shopping](#) - General information

[Enjoy travel Ecuador](#) - Traveling to Amazon basin

[Nation by Nation](#) - Ecuador Geography

[Embassy of Ecuador](#) - Ecuador Geography

[Ecuador Links](#) - References and links about Ecuador

[Recipes of Ecuador](#) - Ethnic food and preparation

Phase 2 - Looking Deeper from Different Perspectives

Week 2: Visit web sites again in case you feel you miss something important for your brochure. This is the time to organise your notes and select your material. Get together to share opinions about your research. Exchange ideas and build up common knowledge.

Planner

This participant will develop a plan to co-ordinate search and resources. The rest of participants will use this plan for their search. They will contact him/her during research work to check deadlines and jobs. You must gather all the information in order to work with them in the designing of the Brochure.

Explorer

As the name suggests, this participant will explore Ecuador geographically to find places of tourist interest for travellers in general. While there, you will be searching some valuable information about the different places to visit in all the provinces, including their varieties of animals, plants, and climate. You will learn many exciting facts about the people that live in the different regions there. After you have collected your information work with the Planner in the designing of the Brochure.

[ECUADOREXPLORER.COM](#) - Cultural tours in Ecuador

[ECUADOREXPLORER.COM](#) - Ecotourism in Ecuador

[Official site Ecotourism Ecuador](#) - Ecotourism in Ecuador

[Enjoy travel Ecuador](#) - Traveling to Amazon

[ECUADOREXPLORER.COM](#) - Ecotourism in Ecuador

[Official site Ecotourism Ecuador](#) - Ecotourism in Ecuador

[El Oriente](#) - Describing the Ecuadorian Amazon basin

[Selva sin frontera](#) - Describing the Ecuadorian Amazon basin

[Hotels Ecuador](#) - Extensive range of Ecuadorian Hotel industry

[Ecuador tours on line](#) - Ecotourism in Ecuador

[Tribes travel](#) - Ecotourism in Ecuador

[Ecuador Galapagos travel tour](#) - General information and links about Ecuador

[Trekking in Ecuador](#) - Ecotourism in Ecuador

Historian

This participant will gather information for travellers interested in the history of Ecuador.

He will go to museums, art galleries, National libraries, to collect factual information about places and people. He will research about national heritage and aspects that influenced the evolution of Ecuadorian Society.

[Ecuador Art and Culture / Pre-Columbian Art](#) - Art and Culture in Ecuador

[Lonely Planet – Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands](#) - Focusing on Ecuadorian history

Anthropologist

The cultural anthropologist will study the cultural and social diversity of human communities. He'll also investigate the strategies for living that are learned and shared by people as members of social groups. Your work will be to research for customs & entertainment, traditions, ethnical food, handcrafts, archaeological sites and the country's treasures for travellers in Ecuador. After you have collected your information about people of Ecuador you should work with the Planner in the designing of the Brochure.

[Lonely Planet – Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands](#) - Focusing on Ecuadorian attractions

[Ecuador travel – Dinning in Ecuador](#) - Ethnical food

[Ecuador Food and Drinks: Foods in Ecuador](#) - Ethnical food

[ECUADOREXPLORER.COM](#) - Traditional Foods - Food Preparation Vocabulary

[Lonely Planet – Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands Focusing on Ecuadorian cultures](#) - Focusing on Ecuadorian cultures

[Ecuador's Culture Colorful and Classical Societies](#) - Ecuador's Culture Colorful and Classical Societies

[Recipes of Ecuador](#) - Ethnic food and preparation

[Ecuador Nostalgia: recetas](#) - Ethnic food and preparation

[The Ethnic Shop: Ecuador](#) - Ethnic crafts and traditions

Phase 3 - Debating, Discussing, and Reaching Consensus

Week 3: All of you have learned about different aspects of Ecuador, while travelling through the net.

Now all the group members get together with the planner to revise the information collected during the search.

You should now design your travel brochure and Power Point Presentation.

Use information, pictures, movies, facts, opinions, etc. from the WebPages you explored to convince your team-mates that your viewpoint is important and should be part of your team's answer to the Task.

Phase 4 - Real World Feedback

You have presented an incredible brochure to foster tourism in Ecuador. You know the brochure design will attract travellers to discover a land full of beauty and magic: their ethnic groups, beautiful landscape and customs. After completing your task, you are ready to write a letter to the Ministry of Tourism in your country to present your brochure as requested. It's a special moment for all team members as you are sure your brochure will move people to discover your land.

Your letter should be formal and respect all writing conventions such as style, tone, language use and content.

Your Contact is: The Ministry of Tourism.

Your Contact is: the designated contact

Conclusion

By this time you will have certainly challenged yourselves by an incredible journey in Ecuador to design an interesting brochure for your country. What you discovered and how you presented this information are certainly two valuable learning experiences for your professional development. Was a brochure what you thought it was or it was something different? Is Ecuador in your brochure? Are Ecuadorian traditions, customs, values and beliefs reflected in your brochure?

Content by Maria del Carmen Boloña, Alda Formenti, Deanie Zevallos, eslwebquest@yahoo.com
<http://www.kn.sbc.com/wired/fil/pages/webtravelinma.html>
Last revised Wed Jan 7 14:22:30 US/Pacific 2004

Appendix Q
Learners' Final Project PPP
Highest Grade



Bahía de Caráquez



Bahía de Caráquez is one of the major Ecuadorian beach resorts. Bahía has been declared an "eco-city".

Where is Bahía located?

Bahía is located in the middle of Manabí
From Guayaquil to Bahía: 188 Km
From Quito to Bahía: 223 Km



- Low commercial movement
- Excellent nonflying structure in telecommunications, road service and tourism



Bahía: An 'eco-city'

- In 1997, Bahía was affected by 'El Niño'
- In 1998, Bahía was spanked by an earthquake



It was born again but now as an 'eco-city' by consequence of this natural disasters in February 23rd, 1999.

Bahía: An 'eco-city'

Rickshaws are one of many environmentally sensitive ways that try to avoid repeating the ecological mistakes of the past.



What to do in Bahía...



- Observation of the whales (temporary)
- Organic shrimp fishers
- The tropical dry forests of "La Reserva de Cerro Seco"
- Archaeology site and the beaches of Chirije
- Mangrove swamps
- Observation of the birds from "La Isla de los Pájaros" and "Heart Island"
- Excursion to the environmental route- all of the ecological projects of Bahía de Caráquez
- Visits to the animals and the peaceful Saiananda park

What to do in Bahía...

Around Bahía, excursions can be done in the estuary of the Río Chone to the following islands:

- Isla Corazón
- Isla Fragatas



Other interesting places to visit around the area are: Punta Bellaca, a beautiful beach on the way to Chirje close to the Cerro de las Orquídeas hill.

The Principal Park

Principal Park:

It is located in downtown, we could say that this is the point that separates commercial and residential zones.



Do you like seafood?

Viche de pescado

Ingredients:

- 1 pound of fish fillet (washed and chopped)
- 4 oz. of peanut (toasted and liquated with milk)
- 2 maqueños
- 2 corns cut in slices
- 1 pound of yucca chopped
- 3 branches of white onion chopped
- 2 tablespoons of perejil and cilantro
- 1 pepper chopped in small pieces
- 1 garlic clove crushed
- salt, wild marjoram, cumin, pepper



Are you still thinking about it...?



Join us!
1800-BAHIACT
www.bahiacitytours.com

THANKS!!!



Visit Bahía de Caráquez

Appendix R
Learners' Final Project PPP
Lowest Grade

MONTANITA



* INTRODUCTION

- Why?
- Location → Santa Elena, Guayas
- Weather



BROCHURE

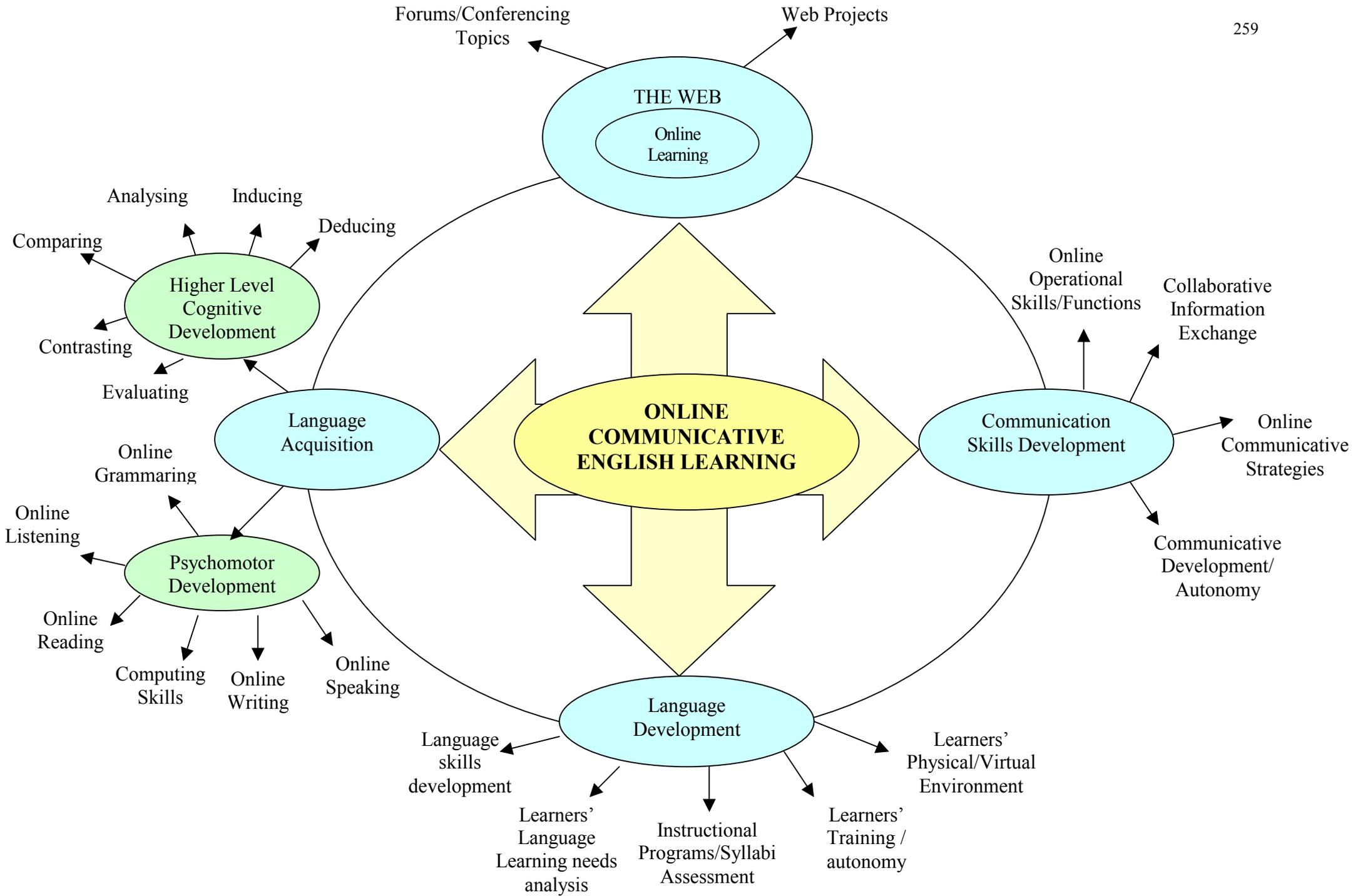
- Focused on
 - Tourism
 - Why
 - Target
 - Needs
- Design



- ... CONCLUSIONS

Appendix S

Online Communicative English Learning



Appendix T
Letter of Consent

La Garzota, Mzna, 103 Villa 1
Guayaquil
Tel: 2241694

July 19, 2005

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Academic Director
Universidad Interamericana

Dear Sir,

I am writing to request your permission to conduct a research study on learners' perceptions of using Internet activities through the Nicenet in Upper Intermediate English level for my master's thesis. I proposed to explore this area to study how learners perceive web based activities when they participate and interact in this Internet classroom assistant through a 90 hour English course. Learners complete these activities to consolidate topics seen in class, develop on-line English reading and writing and Internet research skills. In addition, my research explores how these learners perceive the use of the Nicenet Internet classroom assistant for on-line English learning activities.

This study will follow the action research guidelines found in Johnson. Consequently its research methodology will be based on a post-class survey, interviews, results of web based activities, learners journal entries, learners class work, teacher and institutional documents. The participants for this study are Upper Intermediate English learners from the specializations of the faculties of Economics, Commercial Engineering, Graphic Design and Visual Communication, and Business Informatics. Some of these learners started the English program at level I in their first trimester, others took the New Interchange Series English Language Placement Test published by University of Cambridge and started in Level 3 (Upper Intermediate English).

I have selected this target population because it has learners who have been using the Nicenet Internet classroom assistant since elementary English level and learners who are starting using it. These learners haven't used the Nicenet but they have interacted in Universidad Interamericana learning loop in other subjects. For data gathering purposes, this

research will employ interview and survey methodologies. I will need to run a survey to collect information about learners' impressions of on-line activities through the Nicenet and I will also select five learners for a follow up interview. This interview will approximately last twenty minutes and it will be audio taped. I will ask these learners to compare the Nicenet Internet classroom assistant and Universidad Interamericana learning loop uses to know about the effects of classroom management systems.

In conclusion, I'd like to ask your permission to study upper intermediate learners' interaction through the Nicenet Internet classroom assistant. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this letter or my research, please contact me. You may also want to contact Master Dennis Maloney, major professor, at CELEX, ESPOL.

Sincerely yours,

María del Carmen Boloña

Master Candidate