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**E-learning, Language Education and
the Role of Writing: A Case Study**

Doctor of Education (EdD)

The Open University

Centre for Research in Education and Educational

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List of contents

i	Abstract	p.	08
1	Introduction	p.	10
	Background and rationale for the study	p.	15
	The Cases	p.	20
	The research questions	p.	24
2	Literature review	p.	26
	Introduction	p.	26
	Chronology and definitions of e-learning	p.	28
	New Literacy Studies – a theoretical framework	p.	30
	A theoretical framework	p.	30
	Multimodality, multiliteracies and multiple literacies	p.	32
	New pedagogies	p.	36
	Theoretical concepts and data analysis in the study	p.	37
	New literacy practices and skills	p.	38
	Digital literacy	p.	38
	New social and communication order	p.	45
	Digital competence and accessibility	p.	47
	Writing as a communicative tool	p.	49
	E-learning, pedagogy and institutional policy	p.	59
	Summary of literature review	p.	64
3	Methodology and methods	p.	68

	The case study approach	p.	68
	Considerations of issues related to replicability and generalisability	p.	73
	Analytical frameworks	p.	75
	Data collection	p.	75
	Sampling	p.	79
	The Questionnaires	p.	80
	The Interviews	p.	84
	Procedure for analysis and coding of data	p.	87
	Ethical considerations and the position of the researcher	p.	89
4	Findings and discussions	p.	95
	Teacher questionnaires	p.	96
	Student questionnaires	p.	105
	Data from interview sessions with the teachers	p.	116
	Practitioners' understanding of e-learning and blended learning and perceived suitable activities	p.	117
	Changing digital literacy skills and practices - issues of transfer	p.	124
	The role of writing	p.	132
	Writing as a sociocultural construct	p.	132
	Communication and the roles of speaking and writing	p.	136
	Collaborative writing as talk	p.	142

5	Findings and discussion on the role of the teacher and the institution	p.	149
	The role of the teacher	p.	149
	Teaching presence and autonomous learning	p.	150
	Challenges and responsibilities	p.	153
	The roles and responsibilities of the institutions	p.	159
	Responsibilities for innovation	p.	159
	Access	p.	161
	Training	p.	163
	Upgrading the profession	p.	165
6	Conclusions and recommendations	p.	169
	Research question 1	p.	169
	Research question 2	p.	170
	Research question 3	p.	173
	Research question 4	p.	175
	Implications of the study	p.	179
	Implications for policy	p.	179
	Implications for pedagogy	p.	179
	Implications for teacher development	p.	180
	Contributions of this research to the field	p.	181
	Final conclusions and recommendations	p.	184
7	Reflections on research process	p.	189
	Issues concerning the literature review	p.	190
	Issues concerning methodology and techniques	p.	192

	Issues relating to the insider-outsider role of the researcher	p.	196
	Key theoretical ideas	p.	198
	Issues related to my own practice	p.	201
8	Implications for wider professional practice	p.	204
	Implications for pedagogy	p.	206
	Implications for policy-makers	p.	208
9	Further research and dissemination of findings	p.	210
	Further research	p.	210
	Dissemination of findings	p.	214
10	References	p.	216
11	Appendices	p.	233
	Appendix 1 - Pilot study questionnaire	p.	233
	Appendix 2 - Letter of invitation	p.	238
	Appendix 3 - Background to study provided to teachers	p.	239
	Appendix 4 - Questionnaire delivered to teachers	p.	241
	Appendix 5 - Questionnaire delivered to students	p.	245
	Appendix 6 - Issues guiding semi-structured interviews	p.	249
	Appendix 7 - Example of coding of interview data	p.	252
	Appendix 8 - Consent form	p.	261

12 List of tables

Table 4.1:	Profile of teacher respondents by gender, age and geographical location	p.	97
Table 4.2:	Acquisition of digital skills	p.	98
Table 4.3:	Frequency of computer use in teachers' private and professional lives	p.	99
Table 4.4:	Length of time teachers have been using computers	p.	100
Table 4.5:	Reasons why teachers use computers privately and professionally	p.	101
Table 4.6:	Online activities considered suitable in an EFL context	p.	102
Table 4.7:	Sources for teaching materials	p.	103
Table 4.8:	Institutional access to computers and the internet	p.	104
Table 4.9:	Profile of student respondents by gender, age and geographical location	p.	105
Table 4.10:	Students' levels of English and reasons for learning English	p.	106
Table 4.11:	Acquisition of digital skills	p.	107
Table 4.12:	Frequency of computer use in students' private and language learning spheres	p.	108
Table 4.13:	Reasons why students use computers in their private lives	p.	109
Table 4.14:	Use of computers and the internet by		

	learners for improving their English	p.	110
Table 4.15:	Online activities considered suitable by learners for improving their English	p.	112
Table 4.16:	Length of time students have been using computers	p.	113
Table 4.17	Students' perceived usefulness of computers and the internet for language learning	p.	113
Table 4.18	Students' perceived importance of learning writing skills as a result of increased digital literacy practices	p.	114

i Abstract

This case study of a Swiss adult-learning institution investigates changing literacy practices and skills in adult foreign language education with relation to e-learning and with reference to the role of writing. Aspects concerning autonomous learning, teaching presence, and factors influencing the e-learning adoption-innovation process including access, pedagogical and policy-making implications were examined. The study uses both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. It is underpinned by thinking in the New Literacy Studies tradition and hopes to fill an existing gap in research, as much of the available literature seems to focus on children or higher education.

The main results indicate that currently there is a mix of, on the one hand, low digitally skilled and reluctant teacher-adopters and, on the other, highly enthusiastic and digitally motivated ones. There is also an indication that access to simple infrastructure, with a relatively small investment, could produce good results in helping practitioners move along the path from innovation to adoption. Digital literacies and changes in literacy practices tend to put writing at the centre of communication. Writing is intended both as a subject area and as a means of communicating digitally. The results also reveal that the role of writing is closely linked to whether practitioners and learners alike consider the communicative value of writing to be on par with communication using the spoken word, i.e. whether collaborative writing in particular can be considered 'talk'.

The data points to a joint need by policy-makers and practitioners to

acknowledge new digital literacy practices and to include them in a holistic way in local contexts and curricula. It also points to the need for institutions to take responsibility for providing links between research and practice and to provide integrated training in the field of e-learning and blended learning.

Key words: e-learning; literacy practices; digital; adult foreign language; writing; policy.

1 Introduction

This case study addresses the awareness and transfer of digital literacy practices from private and professional use for other purposes to language learning and teaching. The investigation relates to adult English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching and learning. This is an educational process where according to Mercer (2000), 'weight' is put more equally on both the learner and the teacher and 'education becomes a guided process of thinking with language....But this process is unlikely to happen if teachers and students have not developed a joint understanding of the appropriate ground rules for talking together' (p. 43). This also applies to e-learning. The aim of the study is to explore the attitudes of teachers and learners, their joint understanding of the appropriate ground rules and their expectations and hopes for or resistance to e-learning in language education, with particular reference to writing.

The study makes a geographical distinction between schools (part of the same overarching institution present nationwide) in different parts of Switzerland. The geographical split, north and south, follows an already existing cultural, linguistic and financial line. The rationale behind analysing the data making this geographical distinction lies in the potential differences the sociocultural and economic backgrounds may have on perception of e-learning and digital literacy practices, as well as the adoption-innovation process as a whole. The study explores aspects of access, training and responsibility for professional development. It

investigates how the understanding of, and partaking in, changing social practices affects the language learning scenarios, with implications for pedagogy and policy-making.

The study looks at skills and practices through the lens of New Literacy Studies (NLS), discussed in chapter 2, and these terms deserve some clarification as they are central to concepts of literacy or literacies. Moreover, the term 'practice' or more usefully 'practices' has been the focus of a lot of discussion within the NLS. It is also worth examining how the definitions of literacy skills, practices and events transfer to the digital environment.

Skills are understood as competencies, the ability to do something. They can be considered generic (e.g. time-management skills) and applicable to different domains and contexts or subject and domain specific, i.e. pertaining to a particular professional or academic scenario. According to Scribner and Cole (1981) a skill is part of any practice and 'a practice, then consists of three components: technology, knowledge and skills' (p.236). They further define literacy as 'a set of socially organized practices which make use of a symbol system and a technology for producing and disseminating it' (p.236). Later definitions of 'practice' have tended to focus more on its social recognition in a given setting and less on the technology and the skills aspect.

Literacy as a skill and literacy as a practice also deserve some further clarification. An example of the first would be the ability to code and

encode text, i.e. reading and writing skills. The second would include ways of doing things (e.g. keeping in touch with friends and family or applying for a job) based on cultural contexts. These are what Street (1984; 1988; 2003), one of the most prominent writers within the NLS, calls the autonomous and ideological models of literacy (further discussed in chapter 2).

In the past literacy was the domain of schools and of reading and writing with books whereby readers and writers had to be familiar with and deploy a set of acquired skills to encode and decode text. NLS challenge this view of literacy as acquired skill, as neutral elements. Literacy is present in all spheres of life, at school, in the streets, at work, at home (Pahl and Rowsell, 2005; Street, 2003a). NLS consider literacy as socially situated practice or practices, and social practices involving language are literacy practices. By adopting a broader perspective, a wider range of practices can be drawn into the equation which might otherwise be missed, thus providing an incomplete or distorted view (Street, 2003a). Street (2003a; 2003b) also defines literacy practices as 'particular ways of thinking about and doing reading and writing in cultural contexts' (p.5).

It is literacy practices in this sense that is referred to in the study and it draws on the writings of the NLS.

Another focus of attention linked to the above is the difference between 'literacy events' and 'literacy practices'. A literacy event can be considered the focus of the action and is often confined to classroom settings. A

literacy practice on the other hand, occurs with regularity, and can be observed, as a social practice outside classroom settings. Pahl and Rowsell (2005, p.12) offer the following example of what is a literacy event and a literacy practice: the event being the observed event, e.g. signing the bank cheque; the literacy practice that of form filling and the social practice that of banking. According to Roberts (2001, p.215), 'practice' or more usefully 'practices' are more than action and events. In the case of literacy practices, 'they include both the literacy event and the knowledge and assumptions about what this event is and what gives it meaning'. This view puts literacy practices in close relation to identity, social position and social context. Most importantly, 'by putting a name on the practice, the event can be analysed' (Pahl and Rowsell, 2005, p.21), which holds implications for analysis as well as pedagogy.

The above definitions of literacy skills, practices and events also transfer to the digital environment. Lankshear and Knobel (2006) identified two main categories of definitions for digital literacy which they refer to as 'standardised sets of operations' and 'conceptual definitions' (p.243). The first refers to an attempt to operationalise what is involved in being digitally literate in terms of certain tasks, performances, demonstrations of skills, etc. and to render these as a standard set for general adoption' (p.22). At a basic level digital skills could be the ability to use a mouse, a programme and different applications. The second refers to competencies that go

beyond the operational and technical, i.e. the skills. They enter the sphere of critical ideas and social practices. Gilster (1997) is one of the first to define digital literacy as 'the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide variety of sources when it is presented via computers (p.6).

In line with the earlier definitions of literacy and literacies, digital literacy exists in the singular and the plural literacies form. Digital literacy can be considered the set of skills and competencies that allow access to digital information and to take part in communication delivered via computers and the internet. Digital skills for instance include computer skills such as text manipulation and web-searching skills as well as the ability to make informed judgements about online resources. The plural 'digital literacies' refers to social practices, i.e. literacy practices involving digital technologies. Chapter two discusses these differences in more detail in relation to other writers' work. In addition the concepts of multiliteracies and multiple literacies are dealt with in the discussion of differences between strands of NLS literature.

According to Lankshear and Knobel (2006), digital literacies are 'socially recognized ways of generating, communicating and negotiating meaningful content through the medium of encoded texts within contexts of participating in discourses' (p.72).

By drawing on other writers' work and widening the context of application,

this study complements existing findings and contributes to the understanding of how literacy practices can inform today's pedagogy with reference to adult foreign language learning. It might help institutions and practitioners position themselves along the innovation-adoption continuum and understand some of the implications involved in the changes in today's social practices and point them towards pedagogical applications in their own context of operation. This study might contribute, on a very practical level, towards policy-making decisions that incorporate rather than ignore, that anticipate rather than follow trends.

Background and rationale for the study

The investigation relates to adult language teaching and learning with particular reference to English as a foreign language (EFL). The research questions have arisen out of a personal and professional need to link research to practice and to promote greater integration between a best practice approach based on intuition and personal experience (which seems to be typical in this relatively new field of e-learning in EFL contexts and particularly in the context of the study) and supporting theory and research in distance learning. This need is felt by other writers in the field. Kellner (2002) for instance identifies a need to theorise computer literacy and to put it in Thompson's words (2007), there is a need to 'integrate theories and empirical finding across domains, cultures and methods' (p.169).

A perceived tension between digital and traditional resources in language learning and teaching has underpinned the rationale for the research. This tension seemed present at the adult learning institution where the case study was carried out. At an intuitive level and from personal and professional experience, the understanding and adoption of e-learning is not a straightforward process for either learners or teachers, on the one side, and institutions and pedagogy experts, on the other. Professional experience indicates that although different literacy practices are engaged in by both students and teachers outside the classroom, these do not always transfer easily to language learning and teaching. Transfer, in fact, seems to be a complex process and depends on the intersection of the many agents involved. These agents include teachers and teaching presence (Garrison and Anderson, 2003; Anderson, 2008). Teaching presence is part of a model of online teaching and learning which includes cognitive presence, social presence and teaching presence. Cognitive presence refers to the learning of a subject; social presence relates to the setting or the environment in which the learning takes place; and teaching presence includes the role and position of the teacher to promote and guide the learning experience through interaction and discourse. This can be summed up as designing and organising the learning experience, designing and implementing activities, and thirdly adding subject matter expertise through a set of instructions. Hernandez-Serrano and Jones (2010) present a diagram with innovations to the traditional teaching triangle of learner, teacher and content. The new scenario sees teacher and

learner mediated by the internet and the open knowledge this provides, shifting the role of the teacher to one of support and guidance. In their view 'learning is a process that needs to be previously mediated, provided or strategically taught by a teacher, who then relinquishes her control and promotes a self-sufficient and independent use of the Web as a lifetime learning resource' (Hernandez-Serrano and Jones, 2010, p. 5). Other factors involved at the intersection of transfer are cost of hardware and software, infrastructure, teacher training for 'instructors to acquire a comfort level in a blended learning environment' (Coryell and Chlup, 2007, p. 264), philosophical tensions, personal and institutional perceptions.

The tension between digital and more traditional resources was confirmed by a pilot study which indicated that this research is both timely and relevant. The work done for the pilot study also confirmed that the awareness and use of new digital technology and digital literacy practices as well as the transfer from the personal to the language learning and teaching context is still a haphazard and uneven occurrence at both levels. This initial enquiry was not intended as a source of results but rather as a means to fine tune the questions in the main study. Moreover, as the pilot study also identified tension between the changing roles in communication of writing and speaking, this led to a specific research question on the role of writing being added. The pilot study is discussed further in the methodology and data collection sections.

The case study involves academic study in an educational institution, so it is

important to clarify at the outset that 'academic literacies' are not the focus of the study. Nevertheless, an overview of what is understood by 'academic literacies' is thought important to identify the links to pedagogy and professional development on the one hand, and help position the writing the students in the study do on the other. The most immediate distinction to make is the 'common-sense' way in which the term is used to suggest academic writing and familiarisation with genre writing in higher education as opposed to the 'analytic way' to indicate a framework for exploring and theorising writing and literacy.

EFL writing is often assumed to involve academic literacy in its 'common-sense' meaning. This is not so in this case study. This research focuses on adult foreign language education in a non-English speaking lifelong learning context. The standard language courses offered are the lower end of the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR), generally covering levels A1 to B1, where the aim is not to enable learners to function within academic contexts.

'Academic literacies' as an analytic framework for exploring and theorising writing and literacy is closely linked to issues of identity and writing and the supporting pedagogical choices and the theoretical stance institutions and practitioners adopt. It builds on broader traditions, e.g. NLS studies, and considers reading and writing as social practices (Goodfellow, 2005; Lea and Street 2006; Lillis and Scott, 2008; Goodfellow and Lea, 2007; Street, 2010). It originates in the UK in the early 1990s in response to the need to

move away from the 'deficit' approach in writing, which presumed a lack that could be filled with induction. Within NLS thinking 3 overlapping models or approaches can be identified as alternatives to the deficit model (Lea and Street, 2006; Russell et al., 2009; Street, 2010). These are: a) a skills approach, following from Street's autonomous model, which considers skills as individual and cognitive practices and easily transferable between context. The skills model falls within a 'common-sense' understanding of academic literacies, is mode specific and normative (Archer, 2006; Lea and Street, 2006; Lillis and Scott, 2008; Street, 2010); b) an academic socialisation approach which implies acculturation into subject-based discourses and genre (Street, 2010, p.359); c) an academic literacies approach which includes the processes involved in the acquisition and usage. It is the last model or approach that comes closest to NLS thinking and Street's ideological model of literacy (discussed in more detail in chapter 2).

The rationale for the above overview lies in the positioning the writing the students in this case study do (exercises and short texts that help consolidate newly acquired structures and vocabulary or help students become familiar with genres albeit at simple levels) as falling within the first two categories above (mainly a) and providing a context for pedagogy and professional development issues in this research.

The study draws on existing literature that identifies on-going tension between traditional and digital resources (Coryell and Chlup, 2007;

Papadopoulou et al., 2008; Lea and Goodfellow, 2009) in education. In fact, the current work builds on Goodfellow and Lea's (2007) and Lea and Goodfellow's (2009) work in as much as it expands on issues of digital literacy skills and practices and the role of writing through the lens of a literacies approach. In particular the project draws on work done by Lea and Jones (2011) and expands the context of application to adult foreign language learning and teaching, thus making a practical contribution to the field of adult foreign language acquisition and partly filling the gap in existing literature and research.

The Cases

My interest in investigating the questions raised in this case study was sparked by my own professional needs and the choice of cases to examine is a consequence of my direct involvement as a practitioner within a particular institution. Personal professional experience and awareness of existing differences in social and literacy practices within culturally and geographically diverse educational contexts helped contextualise the investigation. The background to this research, is formed by national and local histories, socio-economic and cultural developments as well as political vision (Burgess et al., 2006). This background also applies to the regions in this particular case study. It was initially planned to carry out the research within two institutions known to the researcher, a Swiss adult

learning institution and a UK based college of further/adult education. My roles within the Swiss institution are those of adult foreign language teacher, teacher-trainer and pedagogical consultant. I have, for periods of time, worked both at administration and policy-making levels as well as in the classroom. Lately my role has been mainly as a practitioner in the field. The UK college is where I started off my teaching career after my initial teacher training and where I gained experience teaching all levels in both EFL (English as a foreign language) and ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) contexts. The sites were thought to be potentially interesting in as much as they might have pointed to sociocultural differences. However, as accessing the UK institution was not feasible, the sample comes from teachers within Switzerland (nationwide but linked to the same institution). As work progressed, it became clearer to me that the perceived gaps in terms of access to the infrastructure for public and private use of digital technology, cultural perceptions and institutional policies, that existed between the Swiss and the British contexts might also exist between one area of Switzerland (German speaking, richer and supposedly technologically more advanced) and the others (Italian and French speaking parts). In fact, even within schools, which are part of the same overarching organisation, there seemed to be some obvious geographically and culturally determined differences. Some institutions have classrooms equipped with interactive whiteboards, PCs and internet access available to language students, while in others (including where I work) there is very limited access, if at all, to PCs and the internet and there are no interactive

whiteboards (as yet, although they might be introduced in the future). This could have provided an initial drawback to the transfer of technologies from outside into the classroom and from private to language learning spheres. Extending the case study to include not only schools (belonging to the same overarching institution) in the Italian speaking area, but also the German and French speaking areas was thought to add interesting insight in terms of the extent to which digital literacy practices can be affected by geography, through culture and levels of technological awareness and use. I also considered including teachers of languages other than English, as I felt that attitudes and approaches to technology and writing could be more easily explored with relation to gender and nationality if the sample was more culturally varied. However, this approach was reconsidered as the focus was on EFL and applications to teaching English. It would have raised the question of how to deal with data in different languages and how to compare data referring to scenarios other than those of ELT contexts.

All the teachers that took part in the project are proficient in English, therefore no language filters that could have impeded or hindered communication were in place during the data collection process. Each school within the overarching case study institution has classrooms equipped with boards and audio equipment. The availability of other equipment, such as projectors, video equipment, cameras, televisions, computers and internet access, varied. In all the schools teachers are able to book equipment, but none have systematic access to computers for

language tuition. Moreover, the institution does not have a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) in place. Although there have been haphazard attempts at introducing Moodle as a platform for communication, this was restricted to limited areas and selected groups of teachers.

From my experience of teacher training and professional development activities based on the philosophy of the institution, its expectations do not seem to go beyond traditional methodology, within a communicative approach that is learner-centred and aims to develop oral communication (particularly at the lower levels). Exam preparation courses are different in as much as they are geared towards language and strategy building in preparation for the final exam. E-learning is still in its infancy and Web 2.0 tools for communication have not been introduced either amongst practitioners or for communicating with learners. Communication between the schools and the teachers occurs mainly via email or telephone.

E-learning has not entered the pedagogical areas of discussion, except for using technology as a tool for doing things faster, finding additional materials e.g. printing material off the internet, downloading files.

The research questions

The research questions in this study have been narrowed down several times as a result of the pilot study and the ongoing literature review, thus giving a sharper focus to the study as a whole. The wealth of data collected during the interviews gave rise to a further question. The final research questions are:

- ➔ To what extent are language teachers aware of different digital literacy skills, i.e. text manipulation, information searching on the web, communication and networking (involved in the use of digital resources versus more traditional ones) leading to 'digital competence', 'digital usage' and 'digital transformation' (Martin, 2009).
- ➔ To what extent are new digital literacy practices used in personal spheres being transferred to language learning and teaching?
- ➔ To what extent is writing central to digital literacy practices in the language learning environment?
- ➔ What are the roles of the teacher and the institution with reference to pedagogy and policy-making.

These questions concern themselves mainly with established and changing literacy skills and practices. Further aspects concerning autonomous learning, teaching presence, the role of writing as a tool for communication

and how the learning and teaching of 'writing skills' in English develops with particular reference to e-learning environments, were used in the analysis. Similarly, aspects concerning teacher training and financial investment were enmeshed in the discussion on pedagogical and policy implications to provide guidelines for managerial decision-making.

2 Literature Review

Introduction

The main focus of the literature review was to consolidate the rationale for the research by identifying existing writings and studies on the subject and locating the current study in relation to existing research.

The literature review aimed to map out significant thinking in the area of e-learning, particularly with reference to language learning, as a result of the spread of new digital technologies. The areas of literature identified as relevant concerned a historical overview of e-learning via various definitions and conceptual underpinnings; a review of writings in the New Literacy Studies (NLS) tradition, as the underlying theoretical framework for this research; new literacy skills and practices (e.g. digital literacy and writing) also linked to cultural, age related and economic influences concerning access and affordances. Writing (both as a subject area and as a means of communicating digitally) is central to issues of digital literacy practices out of and inside the classroom and related areas concern transfer, agency and empowerment (from the learners' and the teachers' points of view).

The literature review also sets the conceptual framework into which to insert this study. It draws from writings mainly from the Anglo-Saxon tradition and schools of thought.

An important point of reflection concerns the date of publication of various writings. In fact, one of the criteria for choosing relevant reading material to be included in the study is the date of publication. Seminal studies and theoretical and ground breaking work seem to be less susceptible to dating, but the process of identifying what constitutes 'dated literature' is not a straight forward one. What constitutes a dated piece of writing is not necessarily universally so. In other words, while in academic circles, research contexts or more technologically advanced geographical and social areas a certain theory or concept may be dated, its application may not have reached many institutions, practitioners and learners elsewhere. As an example, I am thinking of the interview with Gilster (in Pool 1997) and Gilster's work itself (1997). It dates back to 1997 and considering the speed of change in the area of digital technology, it is legitimate to assume that some points mentioned are no longer innovative. However, it makes one wonder if the comment '(w)e don't need a top-down decision to put a computer on every student's desk. We need a computer on every teacher's desk. We need to encourage teachers to become digitally literate' (Gilster in Pool, p.10) does not still hold true. Not all practitioners taking part in the case study have access to a computer in their classrooms, nor are they all digitally literate. Therefore, contextualisation and the gap between theory and application can justify the inclusion of material and ideas at different points on the innovation-adoption continuum.

Chronology and definitions of e-learning

Castells (2010, p. 29) considers information technology 'at least as major an historical event as was the eighteenth-century industrial revolution' that has permeated and transformed all aspects of society and to which learning is not immune. The definitions of e-learning move on a continuum between technology as a tool to process and deliver information more efficiently, to changes in social practices as a result of technologies. Realistically, both practitioners and learners find themselves at an intersection of technology and language learning and the English Language Learning (ELL) scenario still lacks clear definition of what e-learning comprises (Coryell and Chlup, 2007 and Chapelle, 2010).

An evolutionary process of e-learning is often traced via correspondence study, study modes characterized by the mass media (e.g. television), synchronous technologies (e.g. video and audio-conferencing) and computer conferencing, to the world wide web, resulting in a contemporary use of all dimensions in current educational contexts (Anderson and Elloumi, 2007, in Thompson, p. 160; Papadopoulou et al., 2008; Uhomoibhi, n.d.). In fact, the recently foregrounded term 'blended learning' is a term with a fairly consistent meaning and refers to the conjunct use of different delivery modes. These include the more traditional print-based and face-to-face delivery and e-learning with its digital and anywhere-anytime features afforded by new technologies (Macdonald, 2006; Andrews and Haythornthwaite, 2007; Coryell and Chlup,

2007; Snyder, 2007 ; Chappelle, 2010; Davies, 2011).

There is an implicit risk in adopting definitions that use single words to describe concepts and processes. Thompson (2007) argues that 'electronic' and 'on-line' education simply implies the means in which the process occurs with no reference to distance and place or the many new wireless options available today. 'Education' as opposed to 'learning', she argues, includes different players in the process and not just those at the receiving end. In fact, the terms 'e-learning' and 'on-line learning' or 'on-line education' often focus on the learners and learning to the exclusion of other agents. The multiple agencies present in learning and teaching make education a process that includes different players and where responsibility is spread among them.

More recently e-learning has been seen to have networking and social connectivity at its core. Meredith and Newton (2004, p.44) define e-learning as 'learning facilitated by internet and www technologies, delivered via end-user computing, that creates connectivity between people and information and creates opportunities for social learning approaches'. Hiltz et al., (2007) look at the field of asynchronous learning networks (ALN), a major type of e-learning, and define it as 'integrat[ing] social and technical aspects; it depends upon technologies such as the internet to link together teachers and learners, but it is an effective means of learning only when collaborative social/pedagogical processes emerge from the communication that is supported by the technology' (p.55).

It can be said, therefore, that definitions of e-learning range from a situation of just being digitally literate and using digital technologies to do much the same things as before, just faster and more efficiently, to one of engaging with digital users in ways that give rise to different social practices. E-learning as defined in the latter category emphasises connectivity and collaboration which implies a change in social practices and pedagogy.

For the purpose of this study, the terms 'learning' and 'education' imply the presence of different variables that interact with one another generating different impacts. E-learning not only adds digital technology as a variable, but sees transformation in social practices and pedagogy taking place. One of the aims of this study, in fact, is to identify some of the variables at play and how they interact within the current changes in social practices through the use of digital technologies.

New Literacy Studies

A theoretical framework

New social practices in the context of the NLS provide the conceptual framework for this study. NLS can be seen as a network of independently produced work covering disciplines from anthropology to history and socio-linguistics among others. NLS can be broken down into two categories, those focused on literacy as social practice (Street, 2003a; Street, 2003b; Pahl and Rowsell, 2005; Gee, 1996) and those concerned with new

literacies, i.e. the post-typographical literacies, as discussed by Lankshear and Knobel (2006) who consider NLS as a new theoretical and research paradigm for looking at literacy.

The idea of 'new' also connects to the arrival and spread of digital-electronic technologies and the transformation of social practices that have ensued and the profound influence these have had on social and cultural relations as a result of being more participatory, more collaborative, more distributed, less published, less individual, less author-centric (Lankshear and Knobel, 2006, p.25), in other words reflecting different mindsets. In short, NLS sees literacy (or literacies) as social practices embedded in the cultural, historical and economic fabric of society and always embedded in relations of power. It is multifaceted and in constant evolution.

The NLS paradigm described above, while being accepted as one of the main theoretical frameworks has also been critiqued for its limitations. The main ones lie in the need for standard terminology and an analytic framework to ensure greater comparability and transferability and the lack of concrete applicability to practice (Kim, 2003). However, Pahl and Rowsell (2005), although focused on children, also put forward a counter criticism that echoes Street's (2003b) call and offers interesting examples of how the multi-literacies framework has transformed practice and how to bridge local and global literacies. This is particularly relevant to adult foreign language education in this case study and the multi-literacies both teachers and learners are having to deal with. This study is located within the NLS

paradigm with the aim of investigating a local context and possibly providing some overarching generalisations for agents in similar contexts to draw on. It is in line with Street's view (2003a) and the need to bridge the local micro with the macro to allow 'up-scaling' to take place and for policy-makers and funders to support literacy programs (p.85).

Multimodality, multiliteracies and multiple literacies

The changes can be related not only to social practices but also to different literacy practices (discussed below). Although globalisation 'makes the visual a seemingly more accessible medium' (Kress, in Snyder, 2003, p.266), the more recent transition to electronic multimedia communication encompasses shifts that are far wider reaching than previous changes. Digital texts are often multimodal (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996; Van Leeuwen 1999; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001; Kress, 2003; Jewitt, 2008) and accessing them requires the skills to deal with text and images and the meanings therein presented in a non-linear fashion. Multimodality includes design and discourse to include the visual not just the verbal or written mode of communication. It is often, but not only, associated with the post-typographical strand of work within NLS and seeks to rethink literacy beyond language (Jewitt, 2008). Meaning-making becomes a dynamic process that involves dealing with a mix of modes (images, text, hypertext, sound among others) and this opens up new perspectives for pedagogy, referred to below.

Halliday (2001) explores literacy from a linguistic point of view, in particular within the framework of functional linguistics and his social semiotic theory of communication. He argues that as members of a culture we have at our disposal networks of options which constitute the meaning potential of a culture. As opposed to traditional semiotics in which meaning making and learning involve using given resources in a socially deemed acceptable way, social semiotics adds the element of change. In other words, the use of resources is mediated by mutating social constructs and in this dynamic process, the choices made by the users can lead to social change.

This position is supported by Snyder (2003; 2007) who also explores the technological revolution through the perspective of 'New Literacy Studies' and in the context of the Digital Rhetorics study (Warnick, 2002; Zappen, 2005) informed by research in the area of literacy as social practice. Snyder (2003; 2007) also adds 'agency' to the notion of literacy. This implies that meanings can not only be encoded and decoded but they can also be created, shaped and transformed by language users. The concept of agency is also elaborated on by Lankshear and Knobel (2006) who replace the 'how to' knowledge of literacy with a model of literacy that 'complements and supplements operational or technical competence by contextualizing literacy with due regards for matters of culture, history and power' (p.16). In this instance it seems that they are drawing on both categories of NLS mentioned above.

The notion of multimodality as seen in the more post-typographical strand

of work within NLS, is also central to the New London Group (1996), or Multiliteracies Project. Here it is argued that any one mode of communication can convey only a partial meaning of the whole message and that the author has at his disposal an array of possibilities to convey meaning using different modes. At the core of the multiliteracies concept is the need and the ability to access and decode messages conveyed using different modes. 'The theory of multiliteracies draws, at least in part, on the research of Kress.....and resonates with related research and scholarship in the area of computers and composition (Hawisher and Selfe, 2007, p.89). Following arguments with texts that are joined by hyperlinks, typical of blogs and online news for example, challenges the linear construction of argument in writing requiring new skills and resulting in new literacy and social practices. Archer (2006) concludes that the NLG (1996); Kress (2010); Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001); Jewitt and Kress, 2003b) amongst others advocate multimodality as both a theory of communication and a particular approach to pedagogy (see below) in order to deal with a changing semiotic landscape (p.451).

Street (1998) has contrasted the notion of multiliteracies with that of multiple literacies. The former has been criticised as being associated mainly with digital technology. His view is shared by Abbott (2002) and Kellner (2002) who also looks at the term 'multiple literacies' as pointing 'to many different kinds of literacies needed to access, interpret, criticise and participate in the emergent new forms of culture and society. The key root here is multiple' (p.163).

What happens in the sphere of changing literacies and practices can also be seen through the lens of what Street (1984; 2003a; 2003b) calls autonomous and ideological models. The autonomous model sees change as a neutral top-down event that will permeate different strata of personal, public and professional lives through a process of filtering down the social strata. The alternative, ideological model of literacy, offers a more culturally sensitive view of literacy practices as they vary from one context to another. According to this model, literacy practices are socially embedded and constructed according to how people apply knowledge and identity, and in social practices such as wider work-related or educational contexts. Different literacies will thus be perceived as being important to acquire and different practices will be engaged in (Street, 2003a, pp.77-78). It could be argued that the autonomous model at best leads to passively perceived best practice in the field and that for transfer from private spheres to language learning spheres to occur, there has to be a degree of agency as a result of critical thinking in terms of pedagogy and contextualised changing literacy practices. In other words, for transfer to occur between private and professional spheres, a degree of direct agency as opposed to passive absorption would be required on behalf of practitioners as well as institutions and policy-makers. Moreover, according to Whitworth (2007), not only educational organizations, but also governments and ICT companies, for instance, have a stake in e-learning or otherwise influence its development (p.203).

New pedagogies

Multimodality, shifts in technology and practices also hold implications for pedagogies and curriculum. According to Kellner (2002), 'while traditional literacies concern practices in contexts that are governed by rules and conventions, the conventions and rules of multiliteracies are currently evolving so that pedagogies comprise a new although bustling and competitive field' (p.163). Education has to reconsider its goals, the roles of the teachers and the means of classroom instruction in order to enable learners to integrate skills and practices and become critically empowered. Changing social and literacy practices also require pedagogies to include practices outside the classroom and acknowledge multiple identities and learning environments (Pahl and Rowsell, 2005; Jewitt, 2008). In other words, they envisage a multiliteracies framework and situated practices 'grounded in real-life experience where students use their prior knowledge from home, from school, from communities and from culture, to contribute to their language learning' Pahl and Rowsell, 2005, p.82). These practices include filling in worksheets, using pcs, accessing websites, listening to audio files, chatting online and so on. Street also supports a multiplicity of teaching methods as 'there is no necessary one to one relationship between a specific theory of literacy and a specific teaching method although NLS does point in some directions that challenge current orthodoxies' (Street, 2003b, p. 84). The following statement sums up this point well. 'Whatever form it [teaching] takes, it has to be able to take

account of the variation in literacy practices amongst students and to give value to their different backgrounds and the different literacies they employ in their home contexts' (Street, 2003b , p.85). Although multimodal research and multiliteracies are often strongly associated with the introduction of digital technologies, they are not exclusive to the digital domain (Jewitt, 2008). In other words, implications for pedagogy lie in the premise that school literacy remains but one of many literacies.

Theoretical concepts and data analysis in this study

Notions of literacy as social practices (Street, 2003a; 2003b; Pahl and Rowsell, 2005; Abbott, 2002; Kellner, 2002; Snyder, 2002) and post-typographical literacies (Lankshear and Knobel, 2006), as well as multimodality and changing literacy skills (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996; Van Leeuwen, 1999; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001; Kellner, 2002; Kress, 2003; Jewitt and Kress, 2003a; Jewitt and Kress, 2003b; Jewitt, 2008; Walsh, 2010) have supported the analytical framework within which the data of this study has been analysed. The above notions are used in data analysis as one of the aims of the research questions was to evaluate to what extent different practices used outside the classroom by teachers and students alike have been transferred to language learning and teaching. A second aim was to contextualise how learners and teachers in an adult foreign language education context are dealing with changing literacy skills and

multiliteracy practices, while a third aim was to investigate (possible) changes in pedagogy and implications for teachers and institutions.

New literacy practices and skills

Digital literacy

In line with the NLS way of thinking, Martin (2009) also situates digital literacy within a wider social context. 'Digital literacy is the awareness, attitude and ability of individuals to appropriately use digital tools and facilities to identify, access, manage, integrate, evaluate, analyse and synthesize digital resources, construct new knowledge, create media expressions, and communicate with others, in the context of specific life situations, in order to enable constructive social action; and to reflect upon this process' (Martin 2006, in Martin 2009, p.8; Martin and Grudziecki, 2006). In turn he identifies three levels: digital competence (the precursor to the following two levels), digital use and digital transformation. At the first level he includes skills like word processing, electronic communication, finding information on the web, processing digital images and so on. This is an operative level which requires greater or lesser mastery of the tools and techniques. Digital usage, on the other hand, needs to be embedded in a social activity, where other social, technical and professional expertise come into play alongside digital competence. At this level 'situational embedding' (Martin, 2009, p.9) is a key concept. Usage is seen as specific to

a context and a group of users. At the digital transformation level, social changes take place as a result of critical reflection and the understanding of the effects of digital actions upon human behaviour and social practices. The act of critical reflection that occurs at the transformation stage is an act of empowerment. By way of example, students who create an e-portfolio instead of a word-processed CV are practising digital transformation. In a similar way blogging, where creating links is key to communicating in that uniquely digital environment, falls within the digital transformation level. In other words, communication exploits the affordances of digital texts. According to Martin (2009, p.7), it requires awareness of 'the role of the digital in the [user's] own development, and [the ability] to control it, that is, to place the digital at the disposal of their own goals and visions'. Gilster (1997), one of the earlier researchers using the term digital literacy, also considers critical reflection and not digital competence as the core of developing digital literacies. In other words transformation implies creativity and innovation through awareness of social practices and language learning in a digital environment. These different levels of digital literacy are part of the underpinning criteria against which the data of the pilot study was analysed. One of the aims of the current study is to further identify the levels of awareness of digital technology and digital literacy of the learners and teachers and how this influences and interacts with other variables to aid or hinder transfer of digital literacies to the language learning environment.

Martin (Martin and Grudziecki, 2006; Martin, 2009) is a highly significant

theorist in this study. By looking at digital literacy within the three levels outlined in his study, namely digital competence, usage and transformation he moves along a continuum with skills at one end and literacies at the other. As mentioned earlier, and in line with NLS thinking, he argues for 'multiple literacies' and sees these as an evolution 'from a skills focus through an applications focus towards a concern with critique, reflection and judgement, and the identification of generic cognitive abilities or processes, or meta-skills' (Martin and Grudziecki, 2006, p.253).

He addresses digital literacy in the wider society including literacy practices that fall outside the more confined academic context. Also in line with NLS thinking he sees literacy practices as transformative of, and influenced by, social practices through the initial acquisition of skills. He considers (digital) technology as 'the tool, the medium and the reflection' of social change (Martin and Grudziecki, 2006). He situates literacy 'within the context of a digital society as, at one level functional, at another engaged with the social context, and at a third as transformative' (Martin and Grudziecki, 2006, p.250). Martin's framework while underpinned by writings in the NLS tradition outlined earlier in this chapter, also provides a framework for analysis of the data in this study. Moreover, it calls for direction and a move towards 'student-centred pedagogy as the appropriate vehicle for literacy activities through a shared understanding of what constitutes digital literacy and how it can be mapped out in educational practice 'in terms of both curriculum and personal development' (Martin and Grudziecki, 2006, p.254) as digital literacy is an ongoing element in identity formation.

One of the intended outcomes of this study is to provide theoretical underpinning for sound pedagogical policy-making decisions. Another one is to raise awareness of different options and opportunities available to allow practitioners and policy-makers to make informed choices based on their own social contexts and the social practices therein.

Prensky (2001) coined the expressions 'digital natives' and 'digital immigrants' to refer to a generational gap that leads to differences in the way digital skills are acquired and used by people of different ages. In other words, digital natives are those generations (also called the Net generation) that have been born into the digital world (between 1980 and 1994) and have acquired the social practices like they have acquired their mother-tongue. Digital immigrants on the other hand are the people belonging to the generations that preceded the digital revolution or that were born in a period of transition. These people had to acquire the necessary skills like they might a foreign language, often retaining and mixing features of non-digital and digital literacies and social practices. The notion of digital natives and immigrants has been widely debated and while there are significant changes in communication practices and literacy skills required to participate in them, the question of whether this alone affects education today is being questioned (Bennet et al., 2008). Bennet et al. argue for the need to 'call for considered and rigorous investigation that includes the perspectives of young people and their teachers, and genuinely seeks to understand the situation before proclaiming the need for widespread

change' (p.784).

All the teachers and the majority of the students that took part in this study can be classified as digital immigrants and can be considered representative of the population working and studying within the case study. However, the student population also has a minority representation of digital natives. The perceived differences in social and literacy practices within the two groups has prompted the need for voices from both to be heard in order to allow policy-makers to be better tuned to the contextual pedagogical and social needs.

While definitions are not universal, the need for strengthening digital competence and literacy is widely felt. Wallace (2003); the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (Becta) Report (2008); Lea and Goodfellow (2009) and Newlry and Veugelers (2009) stress its importance in order to overcome the risk of exclusion (personally and nationally speaking) at economic levels (as e-consumers) and social levels with increased social inequalities.

In the context of developing digital skills in a work related context, Van de Bunt-Kokhuis and Bolger (2009, p.1) refer to digital competence as 'the capacity to find, select, judge and evaluate good quality on-line content' and then add that the 'new learning generation also needs to be equipped with the skills to "fully participate in civic life", i.e. they need to be able to understand and negotiate social and cultural differences. Wetzel (2009) and Hernandez-Serrano and Jones (2010), in line with the French sociologist Bordieu, who considers as 'capital' all those resources that can empower

and lead to social, cultural and economic success, also see the need to acquire digital and Web 2.0 skills outside the educational setting and transfer them into the professional sphere. In their opinion these skills transfer to the working world in most areas and go beyond education in its strictest sense and become a skill for life. This study, by focusing on awareness of literacy practices and how they are changing through the use of digital technologies, in and out of language teaching and learning environments, harnesses professional 'capital' and increases options and opportunities for practitioners and policy-makers to make informed decisions that lead to successful pedagogical and professional outcomes.

In agreement with Martin's (2009) level of digital transformation, Lankshear and Knobel (2006, p.16) consider new communication technologies not only as changing communication on a larger scale, but as changing demands on learners. They refer to a 'challenge of mindsets' which sees a move from a first mindset, a simple increase in the use of technology to do things more efficiently and faster, to a second mindset, with fundamental changes to the world and social practices as a result of the new technologies. These include Web 2.0, networking, blogs, multi-tasking using different interfaces, a more collaborative nature to sharing information and creating information. Davies (2011, p.14) also stresses the social aspect of learning in the Web 2.0 networking world and relates this major paradigm shift to the need and importance of policy-makers and practitioners to respond. In addition, Newlry and Veugelers (2009) warn that acquiring digital literacies is an on-going process that has to

continuously renew and adapt itself to changes in society. The Becta Report (2008) supports this long-term outlook and in line with the position taken by Newlry and Veugelers (2009) and Snyder (2002, 2003, 2007) it states that 'the pace of social and technological change is unrelenting, and the educational and training sectors cannot and should not be isolated from this' (p.19). The report is a long-term forecast of trends and strategies related to the use of digital technology in education, with implications for pedagogy and institutions. It looks at education and training from a comprehensive perspective including areas of primary, further and higher education and considers the inter-relationships between factors.

The above issues concerning awareness of and participation in changing literacy practices and learning with digital technologies and Web 2.0 networking opportunities (with differing levels of competence), critical reflection, transfer between language learning and non-language learning contexts form the conceptual background to the first two research questions, particularly with reference to the factors that can hinder practices that lead to personal and social development and, for language institutions, to pedagogical and economic success. This study also addresses the issues of digital literacies as being not only context specific but also in constant evolution and the need for critical and context specific awareness to make informed decisions.

New social and communication order

Digital technology offers powerful tools for learning and self-expression. This also encompasses learning another language and communicating through it using modes typical of particular social practices. 'While technology does not create social order, it is complicit in social change' (Martin and Grudziecki, 2006). A practical example of this move towards a new communication order is given by Netgrrl and Chicoboy26 (2002) in the light of communication and consumer evaluation within e-Bay's community of practice. Being a member of the e-Bay community means understanding the ground rules of its social practices and having the necessary literacy skills to take part. This means being digitally literate and understanding the importance of giving feedback. In fact 'e-Bay's community feedback and ratings system is an illuminating microcosm of literacies and social practices at large' (Netgrrl and Chicoboy26, 2002, p.29). Understanding these practices is also important from the point of view of forming personal identities. These practices in fact do not only rate the quality of the service or product, but help create an online profile of respectability and reliability of the seller.

While identity is not the focus of this study, it deserves a brief mention as it is often at the root of people's beliefs and actions and creates links to social practices, including digital literacy practices. The issue of identity is also relevant to the language teachers' perspective. How they see themselves as individuals, and the social practices they are involved in, with

reference to digital practices in and outside the classroom, may point to a mix of perceived identities. These can range from practices strongly rooted in traditional forms of communication to practices engaging in newly developing ones. In fact, Castells et al. (in Snyder 2007, p.403) recognise a form of hybridisation of practices rather than a real break from the past. Snyder (2002, p.71) also calls for the recognition of a new communication order which involves 'global networking and local identities', which in turn has relevance to the use of English as the global networking and communication language. However, discussing identity in too much detail remains outside the scope of this study.

Much work has been carried out in the area of digital literacy and e-learning in higher and primary education. However, the need to negotiate multiple literacies in English is not exclusive to these categories of students, especially if we consider the functional, professional and social uses of the language. Warschauer and Kern (2000) and Warschauer (2002) are among the few writers to focus on digital technologies in (adult) language learning, an area which includes a significant section of society and cuts across different social strata. In the area of critical literacy, which also includes foreign language learning and teaching there are writers like Wallace (2003) and Morgan and Ramanathan (2005), who call for the need to 'see through' the layers of culture, identity, gender bias, institutional and commercial powers in the multifaceted use of globalised English.

Students of English (as those in this study) are often faced with the task of

managing multiple literacies in English. This ties in with the need to reconsider writing (addressed in the section below on writing as communication) as part of the EFL curriculum and the need to reconsider agency, reciprocity and teaching presence in language education. E-learning, networking and asynchronous communication in general are heavily dependent on the written mode making writing more central to learning. How learners negotiate these digital technologies and skills in English also depends on the role of the teacher and the kind of teaching presence they are able to offer, in a reciprocal two-way process. Thus this study looks at the role of writing and whether it has become more central to communications using digital means. It then relates this to institutional policy and pedagogy.

Digital competence and accessibility

Among the factors that drive change in educational communication practices is the delivery of education any time (asynchronous mode) and anywhere (global reach). The most evident benefits seems to include flexibility, independence of time and space, ad hoc delivery and learning, as well as speed of delivery, more choices and links to valued work skills (Coryell and Chlup, 2007; Snyder, 2007; Papadopoulou et al. 2008). While e-learning can encourage learners to become more autonomous, they are not the sole agents in the learning and educational processes (Garrison and Anderson, 2003; Coryell and Chlup, 2007; Chapelle, 2010). Other agents

include teachers with teaching presence (Garrison and Anderson, 2003) and available resources, among others. Institutional orientation also plays an important role and introduces further variables, often constraining factors, such as access to hardware and software, infrastructure, teacher training, philosophical tensions, personal and institutional perceptions, age and gender (Coryell and Chlup, 2007; Snyder, 2007; Thompson, 2007; Lea and Goodfellow, 2009; Chapelle, 2010; Uhomobhi, n.d.). The multiple agency present in learning and teaching makes education a process that includes different players and where responsibility is spread among them.

Among the main factors affecting access to digital technologies for (language) learning are personal issues (both on the part of the learners and the teachers) which range from fear of technology, lack of digital competence and lack of awareness of opportunities on the one hand, to overload of computer use leading to 'burn out', financial burden (both personal and institutional) and technical and design limitations on the other (Coryell and Chlup, 2007; Wong, 2007; Van de Bunt-Kokhuis and Bolger, 2009; Uhomobhi, n.d.).

In other words, access to infrastructure, different social literacies, cultural influences and personal perceptions as well as a lack of access to research can act as barriers to the adoption and transfer of digital technologies in adult foreign language learning and affect true global on-line communication. Access in its broadest sense is the key to the adoption of digital technologies, whether by individuals or institutions. The above literature points to a digital divide with those who can access digital

technology on the one side and those who cannot on the other, with varying degrees of access in between. Access to e-learning in its broadest sense is an important aspect of this study which focuses not only on the technological aspect but also on awareness and perception of the benefits to the users and providers of education through digital technology. In this study, as mentioned in the description of the cases, there are differences in existing school infrastructure (like laptops, Wi-Fi areas, internet access for the students, interactive whiteboards and so on) as well as institutional approaches to e-learning and teacher awareness of it.

Writing as a communicative tool

In a blended learning approach to language teaching and learning, 'writing skills' are both a subject to be taught in an e-learning environment and a tool for learning in a digital environment. More traditionally, however, writing skills focused on the product of a cognitive process that resulted in the graphic representation of utterances and sounds, the stringing together of sentences and the pursuit of specific functions using appropriate register and genres in the written mode. The implication for teaching writing skills was that it became very much 'a linguistic exercise' (Kern, 2000, p.238). In the last few decades EFL pedagogy has tended to push writing to the background in favour of oral communication.

The communicative approach to language teaching, as opposed to a more structural approach, has become an umbrella term to underpin the

functional aspect of language teaching, i.e. to encourage real and purposeful communication, through a variety of activities. What constitutes a communicative approach, especially in the earlier stages of foreign language learning, seems to have been for a long time the exclusive development (to various degrees) of speaking and listening skills. According to Kern (2000, p.19),

communicative teaching programs have largely succeeded in their goal of promoting learners' interactive speaking abilities. They have tended to be somewhat less successful, however, in developing learners' extended discourse competence and written communication skills.

Writing was seen more in terms of peripheral support skills, a secondary activity to help consolidate previously-learned language, practise structure and comply with cultural expectations for functional purposes through the required genres (e.g. short transactional letters or emails). However, even the latter was practice in an artificial context, maybe simulating authenticity, but for an audience that was not the target of the communicative content of the writing, i.e. the teacher (Kern, 2000). The scope for writing also depends on the usage. If the main purpose of language remains oral communication (whether using digital tools or not) then the scope for writing is reduced. However, while digital technology does not exclude speaking, the written mode of communication tends to be foregrounded. E-learning, networking, asynchronous communication and

so on are heavily dependent on the written mode making literacy practices using written text more central to learning. With the more recent changes in communicative and social practices using digital technologies, writing is claiming a more prominent role, even within a communicative approach to language teaching and learning. How learners negotiate these practices also depends on the role of the teacher and the teaching presence (Garrison and Anderson, 2003; Anderson, 2008) they are able to offer, in a reciprocal two-way process. There can also be added value to improving writing skills through digital networking, in terms of learners' increased awareness of the syntax and semantics of the language.

Mercer's (2000) idea of an intermental development zone (IDZ), which expands on Vygotsky's concept of zone of proximal development (ZDP) whereby collaboration with more capable peers encourages learning and development (Vygotsky, 1978, in Lillis and McKinney, 2003, p.31), puts the 'weight' more equally on both the learner and the teacher. Garrison and Anderson (2003) also point to the dialogic nature of the writing process in a text-based discourse as this can lead to a higher order of thinking through the process of articulating thoughts using the written language.

Literacy practices are not context neutral and how practitioners and institutions conceive of them will have a bearing on the way they are taught and on the innovation-adoption process of changing literacies. At the one end there is literacy practice using reading and writing 'as an important nexus where language, culture and thought converge' (Kern,

2000, p.23), while at the other end what practitioners identify with is reading and writing as separate skills to be taught alongside speaking and listening skills. With the introduction of digital technology new communities of practice have emerged. Communities of practice are what Wenger calls 'groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis' (Wenger, 2004, p.2). In most areas of everyday life, and in particular with the expansion of communities of practice using Skype, blogs and other social networking platforms, writing has undergone an important shift, from which English as a second or foreign language (L2) learning and teaching is not absent. Writing in online collaborative tasks takes on the same role of talk in meaning making. Writing as talk shares many features of face-to-face or speech mediated talk. It includes turn-taking, interacting, applying strategies more typical to spoken language, rapid topic changes and digressions. Moreover, in functional terms, 'chats' are often equivalent to the spoken 'talk' (Kern, 2000). The real added value of collaborative writing as opposed to individual writing as a language exercise is that it tends to increase students' level of participation and motivation and it is not transitory like the spoken word. A key concept of a sociocultural approach is that of 'scaffolding', which is the term used to refer to the guidance or support offered by adults or more capable peers. Mercer (2000) in turn, develops the idea and calls it 'the guided construction of knowledge' referring to the ways of acquiring school-based knowledge through the medium of talk. Sun

(Sun, 2011, in Davies, 2011, p.15) also concluded, in his study of language-learners' speaking skills using voice blogs, that 'this social matrix has brought learning through interaction to a completely new level where individuals can scaffold on each other in a virtual environment'. Communication is a sociocultural construct but neither speaking nor writing can occupy the whole spectrum of possibilities. Speaking and writing become complementary modes. The above seems to corroborate the views that oral and written modes of communication are interdependent and that 'if literacy has to do with written language and visual forms, it nevertheless cannot exclude spoken language' (Kern, 2000, p.27), just like communication cannot exclude writing.

The rethinking of literacy practices in the foreign language profession is part of a cultural construct that fits into the development of other literacy contexts. As discussed above, digital literacy can be counted as one of the most recent literacies. New digital technologies have blended communication through oral speech and communication through written text. In particular Web 2.0 technologies have given new emphasis to the role of writing, and the communities of practice who centre communication around digital technology have endorsed its significance.

In view of this shift in skills and literacy practices, Jewitt and Kress (2003a) and Snyder (2003) in line with Halliday's social semiotic theory of communication (Halliday, in Butt et al., 2001), emphasise the critical need to 'read' and 'write' using a multimodal approach. This carries twofold

implications for teaching writing skills, on the one hand the need to teach writing (in English) as a mode of communication, and on the other hand the need to improve digital literacy skills to maximise access to resources available in digital environments and to increase learners' potential for participating in a new form of communication.

Nevertheless, the role of writing in L2 development is still an area where little research has been carried out and where little conclusive evidence has been found (Elola and Oskoz, 2010). This is partly the result of the nature of the writing process itself, the focus on tasks and genre writing rather than on writing as 'talk'. With new technologies it has become easier to record and study written forms of communication and as a result it has been easier to monitor different stages and patterns of development. In fact, studying the patterns in the development stages of oral communication has its own limits and to a certain extent, collaborative writing through the use of digital technologies (which make recording easier) has bridged this gap (Elola and Oskoz, 2010). Moreover, the more recent shift towards writing as focusing on collaborative communication using written text has widened recognition of the role of writing as a communicative tool by researchers like Hawisher and Selfe (2007) and Abu Bakar (2009), amongst others, and practitioners. Authors who have specifically researched collaborative writing in foreign language education include Warschauer and Whittaker (1997); Kern (2000); Warschauer and Kern (2000); Chapelle (2007); Goodfellow and Lea (2007); and Elola and Oskoz, (2010). This aspect of

writing, the ensuing of new literacy practices and the consequent implications for foreign language teaching is one of the areas being investigated in this study.

Garrison and Anderson (2003, p.26) also argue that higher-order learning 'through text-based media such as computer conferencing' (p.26) can be achieved thanks to the process of better articulating thoughts using the written mode of communication and so add value to it. Collaborative writing as opposed to individual writing should be seen from a sociocultural perspective (Kern, 2000; Zhao, 2003; Hawisher and Selfe, 2007; Abu Bakar, 2009; Elola and Oskoz, 2010) which underpins its value and reinforces the need for its inclusion in L2 language learning and teaching.

Garrison and Anderson, 2003 and Kern, 2000 also point to the dialogic nature of the writing process in a text-based discourse. Garrison and Anderson clearly state that 'writing has long been used as both a process and product of rigorous critical thinking' (p.26). It enables recall and encourages reflection. At the same time collaborative writing allows students 'to focus more strongly on structure and organisation' (Elola and Oskoz 2010, p.53). The asynchronous nature of much digital communication allows for greater articulation of thought and complex use of structures as 'the asynchronous possibilities of exchange between learner and teacher, and between learner and co-learners, enables reflection to become an integrated part of the actual dialogic interaction between the participants while in the process of learning' (Kern, 2000,

p.26).

Kern (2000) further argues that the internet has brought back a certain level of 'epistolarity' via the use of writing and meaningful exchanges using the written mode of communication. The speed and ease with which digital technology allows exchanges of personal information, attachments of photos and other artefacts and documentation, favours and fosters dialogue and cross-cultural exchanges. This brings with it a high motivational value as the nature of this epistolarity is dialogic and has a real audience. It is functional, with a real purpose on the one hand, while it increases reading comprehension and reflectivity on the other. Foreign language learning is closely tied with the understanding of other cultures. Thus this form of epistolarity could constitute a valid support in terms of social exchanges and motivated communicative practices as well as providing scaffolding and opportunities for critical thinking. With reference to the current case study this shift could also support and underpin the need to re-consider writing as an important communicative aspect of language teaching, within the more recent development of digital technology and literacy practices using digital communication.

Wallace (2003), the Becta Report (2008) and Newlry and Veugelers (2009) among others have also stressed the importance of digital literacy and writing as part of the language learning process. They stress the importance of developing digital literacies and warn against the risks of social exclusion as in the rise of inequalities and economic exclusion in

terms of e-consumers. If one of the aims of learning a language is to take part in a certain community of practice (for personal or professional reasons) then this aspect should not be overlooked.

An important shift inherent in these new literacy practices is the change in the dynamics of the initiation and response patterns of teachers and students, for example, with considerable implications for pedagogy and the role of the teacher. This study addresses this aspect by identifying the level of awareness teachers and students have of how digital literacy practices and language acquisition form an integral part of society and social practices more in general.

Theoretical underpinning and relevant literature on collaborative learning and writing skills has been identified in the writings of Andrews and Haythornthwaite (2007). Thompson, (2007) also advocates the need to build on the research carried out so far to back findings in this new field with solid foundational theories.

If written texts become more central to communication and literacy practices, then this should be reflected in the way developing these skills is approached. There is further call for researchers to continue the work carried out by writers like Kern, (2000); Chapelle, (2007); Goodfellow and Lea, (2007); Abu Bakar, (2009); Lea and Goodfellow, (2009), and in particular Warschauer and Kern (2000) and Warschauer (2002) who are among the few writers to focus on digital technologies in the (adult) language learning field. This study also hopes to make a contribution in this

respect. Contemporary texts often require different ways of reading than do conventional books, with their linear and ordered reading paths. Communicative social practices are revaluing the use of writing and writing in a multimodal setting, as mentioned in the earlier section on multimodality, multiliteracies and multiple literacies.

Goodfellow and Lea's (2007) and Lea and Goodfellow's (2009) research looks into practices using digital technologies in higher education. It considers issues of digital literacies and investigates issues of transfer between private and curricular spheres and links literacy practices to issues of pedagogy. In addition, Lea and Jones's (2011, p.10) study provides evidence 'for the relationship between writing, reading and meaning-making in the process of knowledge construction in digitally mediated environments. They add that while 'traditionally, academic literacies research has focused on student writing.... technologies have rarely been foregrounded in examining the processes of meaning-making'. The role of writing in foreign language acquisition and therefore in meaning-making in a foreign language is a core element of this study and is brought into the discussion in the data analysis section.

Warschauer's (Warschauer and Kern, 2000) study investigates links between new technologies in and outside the classroom. His quantitative ethnographic study looks into the interaction of complex social and cultural phenomena and individual factors and how they shape language learning

experiences. He reports one of the most striking findings to be 'how implementation of new technologies varied from classroom to classroom, influenced by the general institutional context and the particular beliefs of each individual teacher' (Warschauer and Kern, 2000, p.43). The study also points to a common thread in all 4 cases as students were reported to perceive technology 'not as an aid to second language learning; rather they saw themselves as developing new literacy skills in a new medium of critical importance for their lives' (Warschauer and Kern, 2000, p.45). This research has also informed the current study as it inserts social practices and literacies into local contexts and defines multiple scenarios and multifaceted realities, where different agents are at play.

E-learning, pedagogy and institutional policy

Developments in digital technology, more intuitive software, greater involvement in digital social practices have led to the development of digital learning environments ranging from simple digital support for existing practices to complex VLEs. As Warschauer (2002, p.12) states, 'technologies use new teaching/learning paradigms but also shape them'. This notion is very much in line with work done by the NLG (1996) and writers in NLS, as referred to earlier). In turn these social practices shape literacies and new literacies are required to be part of new developing communities of practice. In the past literacy was very much limited to reading and writing text. Today, the potential for the use of new

technologies also sets 'a challenge to develop new strategies for teaching and learning and raises fundamental questions about the learning process' (Meredith and Newton, 2004, p.43).

Students too can lead change through a bottom-up approach which creates a different demand. Davies (2011) argues that '[t]oday's learners, who have access to the Web and who use social software, often construct meaning through bottom-up, self-directed learning approaches' (p14). This too impacts on the role of the teacher and educational pedagogy in general. Moreover, being able to integrate digital skills and learning brings learners closer to bridging the gap between learning and transferring skills to other lifelong learning and professional spheres (Wetzel, 2009; Hernandez-Serrano and Jones, 2010). In fact this study also aims to look at how these issues and concerns play out in practice by examining the learner perspective.

E-learning carries with it opportunities for more autonomous learning given the potential for learning in one's own time and using a variety of resources, in a combination of approaches. Autonomous learning is not an easily definable concept as it is often confused with self-study. Little's (online, n.d.) definition below, is based on

broad agreement that autonomous learners understand the purpose of their learning programme, explicitly accept responsibility for their learning, share in the setting of learning goals, take

initiatives in planning and executing learning activities, and regularly review their learning and evaluate effectiveness.

This however, does not imply that teaching is not involved. In fact, Garrison and Anderson (2003); Snyder (2007) and Hernandez-Serrano and Jones (2010) among others, reiterate the importance of the teaching element in the learning experience.

Moreover, while net-generation-learners are often more adept at using new technologies and 'outstrip the technical competence of their teachers, when it comes to vital digital literacy skills, the need for good teaching remains as strong as ever ' (Becta, 2008, p.21). With new technologies, new learning spaces are made available through the integration of more formal or more informal settings. These are often mediated by digital technology but learner autonomy has to be contextualised into practices of use and learning using technology as a literacy practice (Warschauer, 2002; Lankshear and Knobel, 2006). Snyder (2007) too encourages a 'critical pedagogy of literacy, technology and learning' (p.411). Yellowlees Douglas (2002); Macdonald (2006); Chapelle (2010); Davis and Fletcher (2010); and Davies (2011) among others, point in the direction of blended learning as a flexible approach where the values of face-to-face education can be combined with the benefits of asynchronous modes that enhance criticality, learner autonomy and empower through identity development. Lastly, as mentioned earlier, many digital literacy practices occur via the medium of the written text, making implicit the need to re-consider the pedagogical value of teaching and writing English. As discussed in the

section on writing as a communicative tool, writing is both a subject area and a means of communicating digitally. It is thus central to issues of digital literacy practices out of and inside the classroom and relates to issues of transfer, agency and learner and teacher empowerment.

Institutional policies are an important aspect in driving innovation and change. According to the Becta Report (2008) 'the fast development of digital technologies means there is not yet robust, longitudinal evidence of the value of mobile devices for learning' (p.20). While m-learning has been excluded from this study, the example fits other learning scenarios using digital technologies. On the one hand, the use of resources made available by digital technologies 'often precipitates questions concerning cost, training, and effectiveness' (Chapelle, 2010, p.29). On the other hand, institutions may prefer to 'ponder' until the benefits of their investments are more clearly supported or engage in vision to be at the forefront of change.

Innovation and change can be driven by bottom-up or top-down approaches. Collins (1997, in Meredith and Newton, 2004), presents a staged scenario where a bottom up model is pioneered by a few practitioners, supported by volunteers and leads to policy formation only once a significant positive change becomes apparent. The opposite of this is a form of top-down management, the formation of 'a clear strategic aim to move into the e-learning arena and, alongside this, the provision of technologies and support to enable it to happen' (p.50). According to the Becta Report (2008, p.19) 'while there are likely to be significant shifts in

curriculum and pedagogy, these are likely to be within an education system that is evolving rather than undergoing a fundamental revolution. Freire (2008, p.1) speaks of 'bottlenecks' of adoption and difficulties in 'scaling from the individual to the institutional level. He identifies some hindering factors as rejection by users, both teachers and students; lack of incentives; access to web 1.0 and web 2.0 technology and institutional aversion to innovation and entrepreneurship.

A driving force for change can be the perceived need by institutions for more flexible learning formats to increase learning success or develop market share (Meredith and Newton, 2004; Coryell and Chlup, 2007). However, actual implementation may not always be at the same stage of maturity and may not go hand in hand with training and pedagogical development. In fact, the latter, according to Meredith and Newton (2004) tends to be at the discretion of and within the individual faculties. The need for improving digital literacies and providing access to teacher training in the field of digital technologies is important to fill the void that otherwise gets created. Moreover, a work environment that fosters development and transfer of a variety of social and literacy practices could be a driving force towards supporting changes in social practices and facilitating transfer to language teaching and learning contexts. In other words, an environment that is more collaborative and gives teachers the opportunity to engage in different (digital) practices first-hand, such as communicating using a set of different skills while engaging in different practices, i.e. making joint decisions via a school-provided platform or engaging in Web 2.0 practices

for professional purposes, could also speed up a shift towards integrating traditional school literacy and social literacies for language learning. In turn this could encourage a move in the direction of pedagogies using multiliteracies and multiple literacies.

This study looks at the teachers' perception of their roles in relation to the recent changes in social practices and literacies using digital technologies and their awareness of potential impacts on pedagogy. It further relates pedagogical issues to the 'system' as a whole, which includes, policy-makers, the institution, practitioners, learners and researchers.

Summary of Literature Review

The literature review has been a process of collating significant thinking on the subject of e-learning and more specifically on its applications to adult foreign language learning and teaching. It has helped identify a gap in the literature and research carried out so far with reference to adult foreign language learning and teaching, as most work relates to the contexts of learning and teaching in further, higher and child education.

The key points from the literature review with reference to this case study concern the identification of work carried out in the areas of NLS, both as post-typographical literacies (Lankshear and Knobel, 2006) and literacy as social practices (Street, 2003a; Street, 2003b) as the theoretical background into which to insert the study. The key points from the literature review with reference to this case study concern the identification of work carried out in the areas of NLS, both as post-typographical literacies (Lankshear

and Knobel, 2006) and literacy as social practices (Street, 2003a; Street, 2003b) as the theoretical background into which to insert the study. This theoretical background was used as a framework for data analysis. In addition, the work of Martin (2009) in particular provided more detailed criteria for analysing the data in this study. The literature review has foregrounded the need to situate digital literacy in a new social and communication order and to address digital competence and accessibility as important factors in the adoption-innovation process. This part of the literature review helps contextualise the first two questions (below) being addressed by this study and focuses on the dynamics of the innovation-adoption process and the transfers from private to language learning spheres.

- To what extent are language teachers aware of different digital literacy skills, i.e. text manipulation, information searching on the web, communication and networking (involved in the use of digital resources versus more traditional ones) leading to 'digital competence', 'digital usage' and 'digital transformation' (Martin, 2009).
- To what extent are new digital literacy practices used in personal spheres being transferred to language learning and teaching?

A further key point from the literature review concerns work done on writing as a communicative tool seen through the NLS lens and exemplified

by changing communities of practice. It has explored the area of writing skills, both as a subject area and as a means of communicating digitally. This provides the background and the theoretical underpinning for research question three below

- To what extent is writing central to digital literacy practices in the language learning environment?

The literature review provides a context for exploration of issues concerning implications for pedagogy and institutional policy in research question 4 below

- What are the roles of the teacher and the institution with reference to pedagogy and policy-making.

In line with the NLS way of thinking, e-learning and education using digital technologies have to be understood as social practices. E-learning cannot be considered simply a delivery mode but a process involving many agents, and in which teaching and teaching presence are essential part. Nor should it be thought of as spontaneously generated. It is in fact shaped by organized activity, which also makes it a political process.

The literature review includes reference to work by other writers on e-learning, NLS, digital literacy and digital literacy practices, and in particular to research carried out in the field of foreign language learning and the role of writing in language learning. By drawing on other writers' work and

widening the context of application this study complements existing findings and contributes to the understanding of how literacy practices can inform today's pedagogy with reference to adult foreign language learning.

3 Methodology and Methods

The case study approach

Much educational research falls into an interpretative paradigm. This study is no exception and, in line with Bassey's (2007) argument that teaching depends on too many variables to support research options based on testable hypotheses, it adopts a case study approach.

Case-studies can be used in research that aims to evaluate issues in a particular setting and context and to relate them to existing theory and research. Burgess et al. (2006, p.59) provide a broad definition of a case-study which 'involves seeking different kinds of evidence, which are to be found within the case setting, to provide the best possible answer to your research question'. One of the advantages of case-study research is the uniqueness of each case and its capacity for understanding complexity in particular situations. According to Sturman (1997, in Bassey 1998, p.2),

the distinguishing feature of case-study is the belief that human systems develop a characteristic wholeness of integrity and are not simply a loose collection of traits. As a consequence of this belief, case-study researchers hold that to understand a case, to explain why things happen as they do and to generalise or predict from a single example requires an in-depth investigation of the interdependencies of parts and of the patterns that emerge.

Moreover, a case-study approach is flexible in as much as the design structure is not fixed and pre-determined, while at the same time not as loose as a traditional ethnographic approach might have it. In fact case-study research can include both quantitative and qualitative approaches and a range of techniques including observation, structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, survey questionnaires and other documentary evidence. However, given the low level of generalisability of case-studies, researchers need to apply particular rigour to support the internal validity of their work. It is hoped that case-studies, while rarely leading to further studies totally replicating the original, will stimulate further research which may replicate parts of the original work (Schofield, 2007). According to Schofield (2007, p.199), 'a consensus appears to be emerging that for qualitative researchers generalizability is best thought of as a matter of the "fit" between the situation studied and others to which one might be interested in applying the concepts and conclusions of that study'. The scope of the current study in fact is to gain insight into specific contexts and particular circumstances, rather than producing highly generalisable data. This study investigates what language teachers and learners think or perceive, set against different social, cultural and institutional backgrounds. The different backgrounds provide the variables that shape the subjects' experiences with digital technologies both inside and outside the classrooms. The design is exploratory and descriptive on the one hand, i.e. trying to find out what happens in the chosen contexts with reference to the research questions,

and confirmatory on the other, i.e. seeking to confirm and elaborate on writings in the NLS tradition. In fact this choice of approach may shed light on some issues concerning the existing infrastructure, i.e. the cultural, economic, institutional backgrounds that form the contexts in which teachers and institutions exist and operate and the potential implications for further developments.

The rationale and design of this study also reflect the functional nature of educational enquiry and the study aims to link research to policy-making and evidence-based practice. Trying to address policy is felt to be an important aspect of the work carried out and according to Bassey (2007, p.147) it is the criteria for doing educational research as 'educational research aims critically to inform educational judgements and decisions in order to improve educational action'. The study aims, on the one hand, to provide information to support the case study institution and those in similar positions in their decision-making and on the other to act as a source of awareness raising catalyst for the practitioners that took part in the study. On a wider scale the study might have a wider professional impact and contribute towards re-professionalisation of the profession within the context of the study, through formal evidence-based pedagogical knowledge (Gough, 2004; Hammersley, 2007a; 2007b) and by stimulating further research in the area.

Before deciding on a case study approach, the option of doing action

research was taken into consideration. Action research also falls into the category of qualitative approaches to educational enquiry. In Kemmis's (2007, p.168) words

action research is a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social (including educational) situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, their understanding of these practices and the situations in which the practices are carried out.

In a similar way, Burgess et al. (2006, p.60) define action researchers as 'interested in reflective practice, professional development and empowerment, and institutional change through democratic process'. Their definition goes beyond 'understanding' towards 'action' and 'change'.

Although there are similarities between case study and action research, I felt that the nature of my study was less collaborative and more an enquiry into perceptions and practices than an attempt to directly empower participants through its results. While empowerment and change are aims of this study too, it is felt that they would, to a great extent, be mediated by policy-making and that there was a need to present policy-makers with information to assist their decision-making.

Case studies allow an in-depth account of events and situations and allow

for a combination of both quantitative and qualitative data to be considered (Burgess et al. 2006). In fact the two approaches should be considered complementary to each other. Qualitative and quantitative research has been discussed widely (Creswell, 1998; Bryman, 1998; Silverman, 1993; Robson, 1993; Hammersley, 2007a; Hammersley, 2012) and mixing them offers the advantages of approaching data collection in a flexible way and providing analysis in different ways, with different assumptions and possibly for different purposes. Hammersley (2012) amongst others, also warns against the risks and difficulties of mixing methods, which is not always unproblematic given the ideological foundations on which the two methods rest. He argues that research questions are based on assumptions about the phenomena being investigated and assumptions about the social world are built into research strategies. Therefore, through the excessive pragmatism of using mixed methods (choosing methodologies and methods that best answer the research questions) there is a risk of underestimating the differences in methodological philosophy that is built into different research strategies.

This case study takes advantage of both methodologies but with attention to the inherent risks. The choice of using both questionnaires and follow up interviews is guided by this flexibility and by the research questions themselves. These in fact aim to gain better insight in order to make practical propositions to policy-makers. The quantitative data provides the background context of the sample (e.g. age, gender, years of learning and teaching English, taking part in social practices using digital technology).

The qualitative enquiry through the use of semi-structured interviews hopes to gain insight into perceptions, reasons why and choices all of which need to be articulated better than simply ticking a box and need to be elicited and framed in discourse.

Considerations of issues related to replicability and generalisability

The objective of this study is to contribute to existing knowledge and to enable improvement of practice through research by providing policy-makers and practitioners with a better understanding of how literacy practices can inform adult foreign language acquisition pedagogy in the context of the case study. Greater critical awareness could also lead to greater empowerment of teachers and learners. The challenge is to suggest ways of narrowing the divide between some of the resistance revealed in the pilot study and the desirability for agency and empowerment suggested in the literature (relevant both at individual and institutional level).

As mentioned earlier in the methodology section, the nature of case studies is not to provide universally generalisable results.

This project aimed to investigate contexts critically and by adopting Bassey's 'fuzzy logic', (1998, p.1) where generalisation may occur at the

level of over-arching principles and theory, to provide elements of comparison and usefulness to others in similar situations. According to Bassey (1998, p.1)

(t)he theory of fuzzy logic suggests a way of encapsulating the claims to educational knowledge of qualitative empirical research. A fuzzy generalisation replaces the certainty of a scientific generalisation ('it is true that...') by the uncertainty, or fuzziness of statements that contain qualifiers ('it is sometimes true that...').....Fuzzy generalisation invites replication and this, by leading to augmentation and modification of the generalisation, contributes to the edifice of educational theory.

While the findings of this case study do not allow for wide-ranging generalisations, some interesting themes have emerged for consideration by the institution in the case study and those operating in similar contexts. Moreover, investigation of the teaching and learning of writing skills in an e-learning environment, the transfer of digital literacy skills from personal to language learning spheres and the role of the teachers and institutions can be replicated in further research.

Analytical frameworks

The final framework for analysis draws on the theoretical framework provided by NLS and in particular the analytical tools provided by Martin's levels (2009), namely digital competence, digital usage and digital transformation. This analytical approach provides a realistic prospect for applicability given the cohort and the nature of the study. The fine-tuning of the analytical framework for this study in fact led to the decision not to include other models and theoretical frameworks, namely social and informational informatics, rhetorical theory, the contextual co-evolutionary model provided by Andrews and Haythornthwaite (2007). Although these models and theories are extremely interesting, given the cohort and the nature of this study, they would create too much diversion and add complexity beyond realistic applicability to this project.

Data collection

The main study built on the initial small-scale pilot study which was carried out to investigate personal and professional perceptions relating to awareness and usage of digital technologies for language learning. This initial study confirmed the need for and the timeliness of research in the area of transfer of digital literacies from the private to the language learning spheres and addressed the challenge of narrowing the gap

between some of the resistance revealed and the desirability for agency and empowerment suggested in the literature (relevant both at individual and institutional level).

The key findings were as follows:

- Learning in the digital environment includes agents, skills and purpose.
- Digital literacy is an acquired skill or *modus operandi* and there still appeared to be significant differences between the use of digital technologies in the teachers' and learners' private and professional lives.
- The following themes were identified: the role of the teacher, the scope for writing skills and autonomous learning within the context of e-learning in language learning.
- Martin's (2009) levels of digital literacy provided a good framework for analysis.
- Preliminary implications for pedagogy and institutional policy were also identified. The initial impression was that the teachers flow in and out of the levels of usage and transformation (both a conscious and unconscious levels). Moreover, the institution's lack of support in this area makes digital literacy practices within classroom lives a rather haphazard happening.

- There appeared to be some tension with regards to the role of writing.
- A number of contradictions emerged which seem to point to the complexity of the concept of e-learning and the confused perceptions on related issues.

The pilot study was carried out using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. It confirmed the viability of a mixed methods approach and justified the choice of using questionnaires for gathering more quantitative data and interviews for more qualitative information in the main study too.

This pilot study was not intended as a source of results but rather as a means to fine tune the questions in the main study. In fact, the original pilot study questionnaires (appendix 1) were longer and included some of the more open ended questions that were then transferred to the semi-structured interview sessions in the main study. The interview questions were piloted too, following up on the questionnaire. As the questionnaire was very long, the interview did not provide new material but an opportunity to deepen the discussion. The interview questions for the main study were refined. They provided new data not covered by the questionnaires and were interlinked to help avoid the pitfalls of simplistic single strand cause-effect enquiries (Andrews and Haythornthwaite, 2007, p.5)

As the results of the pilot study showed some tension regarding the role of

writing in the learning of a foreign language, this led to the formulation of a separate research question on writing in the main study. There seem to be further implications for pedagogy and in particular foreign language pedagogies as a result of the foregrounding of the written mode of communication. The transition to electronic multimedia communication encompasses shifts in skills and literacies that are far wider reaching than any previous changes (except perhaps the introduction of print). Multimodality is a key feature in today's communication patterns (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996; Van Leeuwen, 1999; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001; Kellner, 2002; Kress, 2003; Jewitt and Kress, 2003a; Jewitt and Kress, 2003b; Jewitt, 2008; Walsh, 2010) and the use of the written text, rather than the spoken word, carries implications for the need to employ 'writing skills' more often as a part of learning. Moreover, the process is reciprocal as it helps to learn as well as teach writing skills and engage in literacy practices using written text. The pilot study pointed towards the perception that writing helps process certain information and enables more accurate production, but not necessarily as an integrated part of networking, or the collaborative creating and sharing of information. The data pointed to the fact that most teachers who include e-learning in a blended approach, with writing as a communicative tool, do so of their own accord, rather than as a result of following the institution's or pedagogical guidelines. The above considerations have led to a focus on the role of writing as well as on the roles and responsibilities of the teachers and the institutions, in the main study.

Sampling

The sample was drawn from the teachers and students working and studying at the selected schools (part of the same overarching parent-institution) during the data collection period (January – August 2011). The choice of participants was thus, to a certain extent, both random and opportunistic. However, teachers were not 'hand-picked' for any other reason, such as experience or digital literacy. Initial interest was sought verbally, at work during individual conversations with teachers in the south and during a workshop held in Zurich with teachers in the north of the country. The teachers work for the same overarching institution, although they may be based in different 'units' or schools present throughout the country. This north-south divide follows an already existing geographical, cultural and linguistic divide along which many issues of national policy-making are measured and with which political and social issues often have to confront themselves (Gerster and Haag, 2003). It was thought that this might add additional insight into aspects of social practices and digital literacy practices. Colleagues taking part in the workshop seemed to provide a good sample for the study at hand as they represented different schools in different parts of the country. Verbal interest was followed by a questionnaire sent out electronically together with a covering letter explaining the project in some more detail and providing information on confidentiality and procedure (see appendices 2, 3 and 4 containing the letter with which teachers were officially contacted and the questionnaire that was subsequently sent to those who agreed to taking part). The aim of

the covering letter was to motivate respondents without creating an initial bias. Therefore, a fine-tuned balance had to be struck between providing teachers with enough information on the project to make them interested, without conveying perceptions and potential bias held by the researcher. In total 21 teachers were contacted to take part in the research.

The Questionnaires

The questionnaire for the main study (appendix 4) was similar to that administered in the initial pilot study. However, some specific adjustments were made, i.e. it was shortened; tick boxes were provided for the initial questions regarding more factual information; and overall the questions were revised so that the answers could be linked and tagged and provide analysable data linked to the research questions. The questionnaire was designed to meet criteria on different points of a structured-unstructured continuum which would leave open the possibilities for participants to influence the themes that could then be investigated further during the interviews.

Further information on the rationale behind the design of the questionnaire now follows. All the questions have tick boxes and provide numerical information. In the teachers' version, the first 5 questions are purely quantitative about gender, age, number of years in the EFL

profession and levels taught. Questions 6 to 12 (with the exception of question 10) and 14 gather quantifiable data on the frequency and number of years in which digital technology had been used in private and professional spheres, as well as the types of activities involved. Question 10 relates to institutional access to the internet while questions 13 and 15 relate to teaching materials and the acquisition of digital literacy skills. Overall these questions relate to research questions 1 and 2 on perceptions and awareness of different digital literacy skills and digital literacy practices used in personal and professional spheres.

All the questionnaires to teachers were administered electronically and most were returned via email. Only two were given back in paper format. In total 7 questionnaires from teachers in the southern part of Switzerland 8 from teachers in the northern part were collected. Approximately one third of those who showed initial interest subsequently failed to respond. However, there seemed to be a more or less equal number of people who were forthcoming and quick to respond or those who took their time or never returned the questionnaire on either side of the country. Even though the questionnaire had been piloted and answers could be provided by ticking boxes, many respondents still failed to provide complete answers or left out some questions altogether. Moreover, because of my insider role (based on Hellowell, 2006 and discussed further in a separate section on ethical considerations and the position of the researcher), there were a few instances in which I was aware that the answers provided were not totally

true or complete.

All the teachers who returned the questionnaire consented to being interviewed. Where possible the inconsistencies with the information provided in the questionnaires and the researcher's insider knowledge (Hellawell, 2006) were addressed and triangulated during the interview sessions. Only one teacher, who returned the questionnaire in an envelope, remained anonymous and could therefore not be contacted.

At the same time as sending out questionnaires to teachers, questionnaires were also administered to students. As I was worried that I might not get enough students to participate, as well as giving the questionnaires to some of my own students, I suggested teachers in the sample also distribute questionnaires to some of their own students. Only some teachers did so. Fortunately, I ended up with 50 responses (either electronic or paper formats). I considered the implications of giving questionnaires to my own students. There seemed to be a sort of role-reversal when I told them that I was a student working on a research project for the university. This role-reversal seemed to put the participants at ease and in a position of par or power. In a similar way I considered the implications of other teachers giving the questionnaires to their own students. While their role was not of direct involvement with the research (they could act as neutral intermediaries), their role as teachers nonetheless could have had an impact on students willingness to

participate. However, given the anonymous and unsupervised participation, I felt the impact would be minimal.

It was not possible to interview these students to follow up on the questionnaires, as most of them had left the school at the end of their courses. Therefore, this data provided mainly quantitative data that could be compared with the teacher sample in the study. On the other hand, it only provided indicative information on the position of the students in the sample with reference to the research questions.

The questions for the students were along the same lines as those for the teachers (appendix 5) only seen from a learner's point of view and experience. The aim was to create a student profile and to gain basic insight into their points of view using a more quantitative analysis. However, a specific question on the role of writing was added. Question 15 addresses research question 3 on the centrality of writing to digital literacy practices in language learning. As the questionnaires are the only opportunity to hear students' voices on the subject, it was felt important to sound them out on this as it closely related to research question 3 on the role of writing. The questionnaires were administered in English because as students come from different linguistic backgrounds there was no guarantee that Italian, German or French would necessarily have been a better or preferred choice. One of the reasons for making student questionnaires mainly quantitative was to allow students with different linguistic abilities to take part. Questionnaires were kept simple and questions were not open-ended.

With a number of questions the possibility of ticking an additional box with an open-ended 'specify' option was also provided.

In terms of procedure, unclear answers, evident contradictions or answers to questions that were clearly misunderstood were not recorded. Some questionnaires reported some identical sentence answers which raised the suspicion that students were working together or copying (possibly a reflection of the limits of learner English). In some cases my insider knowledge allowed me to identify their teachers, but this did not affect the outcome and I did not see a pattern of answers from any particular teacher's group. This identifying element was then lost as questionnaires got grouped and coded according to different criteria, i.e. age, years spend learning English or activities thought suitable for e-learning.

The Interviews

As in the pilot study, the initial data obtained from the teacher questionnaires was followed up using semi-structured forms of interviews. These were on a one to one basis, carried out in person or over the telephone or Skype at a mutually convenient time. All the interviews were carried out in English and recorded (prior to a consent form being signed). They lasted on average an hour and were approached with a list of possible areas to cover (appendix 6), which had partly arisen out of the data from questionnaires, but also allowed the interviews to take unpredicted

directions. Additional notes were often made which consisted in keeping a journal or recording thoughts and impressions, particularly after interview sessions. These were initial reactions and perceptions and often additions to what had been recorded during the interview, as sometimes teachers said interesting things 'off the record' once the recorder had been switched off. The task of transcribing interviews is a very time- and energy-consuming one. As the intended approach was to code them so that themes could emerge, the interviews were transcribed verbatim but without the attention to details required for discourse analysis (e.g. pauses, exact speaker overlaps and turn-taking). The questions were not transcribed but referred to in annotated form.

Initial results from the questionnaire analysis informed the interview questions. As some of the points I wanted to bring to the foreground required engagement and thought, they seemed better suited to the interview part of data collection. These points included perceptions of e-learning and blended learning, issues concerning digital technologies and literacy, the roles of speaking and writing for communication, the role of the teacher, and issues regarding institutional policy and infrastructure. The initial questionnaire analysis indicated areas to probe further and led to a more detailed and specific course of questioning. Research questions 1 and 2 were also addressed in the interview sessions. Here the questions on digital literacy, the skills required and how they are acquired were given further consideration. It was intended to shed light on teachers' perceptions of their own awareness and literacy as well as the perceived

need for changes at institutional levels. These perceptions concern changing needs and expectations of the language learning process and the merging or isolation of practices from the non-language learning to the language learning spheres. The interview questions were intended to elicit information from the teachers on how they thought institutions positioned themselves in terms of infrastructure and training with reference to the use of digital technologies in language teaching and how this might affect their own teaching.

In addition to this, during the interview, answers were sought to questions about the (changing) role of the teacher with reference to the adoption new digital technology and the (changing) role of teaching. The potential shift in the communicative skills needed to interact with new digital technologies and practices, with reference to the possibly more central role of writing, was also discussed providing answers to research question 3.

Issues of responsibility, training and access were also discussed in relation to pedagogical and institutional policies and related to research question 4. Access to digital technologies touched on cultural aspects as well as available infrastructure, but also considered responsibility in terms of who should provide the opportunities for access and to what extent practitioners would be free to ignore them.

Some questions during the interview sessions overlapped with the

questionnaire, such as activities considered suitable for e-learning or teachers' own professional engagement with digital technology, allowing for triangulation of the data.

Procedure for analysis and coding of data

Given the nature of the data collection and analysis process, which using Creswell's term (1998, p.57) follows a 'zigzag process', the researcher starts analysing collected data looking for themes, then collects some more data, refines his/her strategies, analyses new data and so forth, a case of work in continuous progress. Once the data collection phase was concluded, an initial analysis of the students' and teachers' questionnaires was made. As most of the information was quantifiable, it was sorted into small tables, presented and discussed in chapter 4. The data in the tables was presented in terms of numbers (---/n) rather than percentages. As mentioned earlier, the aim of this study was not to provide wider generalisation. In fact, the percentages while providing some means for comparison were based on too few participants for wider generalisation to be viable. However, numbers were useful for an initial comparison of quantitative data (e.g. age, number of years in the profession, frequency of usage and practices) and information that could be slotted into categories (e.g. activities considered suitable for e-learning or carried out by teachers and learners). This was followed by revisiting the literature review to find connections

between theoretical underpinnings, existing writings and initial data. I also revisited some important and relevant articles and expanded my reading.

The qualitative data had to be coded (see sample in appendix 7) to make it accessible and to extract meaning. For this I established initial categories that relate directly to the research questions and the sub-areas that I felt were significant to the discussion (the role of the teacher, learner autonomy, writing as a communicative tool, identity). I identified the same categories in the literature review and the specific articles mentioned above and the coding process consisted of an initial cross-referencing of data to these categories. This, together with personal critical reflection ensured a constant link between the research questions, the available literature and the collected data.

The data from the interviews was transcribed and coded. For the transcription I used a programme (AVS Audio Editor) that slowed down speech, which enabled me to type while listening, allowing me to transcribe verbatim. Themes from the transcripts were identified and colour coded, as a first step towards the analysis of the data (appendix 7). As with the data from the questionnaires, the themes relate to the research questions and their sub-themes and the information obtained this way was then cross-referenced with the literature identified in the review.

The identification of three levels and the layering of skills outlined in Martin's work (Martin and Grudziecki, 2006; Martin, 2009) proved to be a

very useful and practical approach in the analysis of the data from the pilot study. The 'three-phase development of ICT literacy, from skills through usage to reflection [whereby] the earlier phases remain as subordinate layers, so that literacy concepts become more complex and multi-layered as they develop' (Martin and Grudziecki, 2006, p. 251). This also echoes the work of many others, including Lankshear and Knobel (2006), Andrews and Haythornthwaite, (2007), the Becta Report (2008). In fact, part of the questionnaire was designed to provide answers mainly to the first two research questions using Martins' (2009) three categories. It was very helpful for looking at the personal and human aspect related to the use and transfer of digital literacy. It also helped identify some external elements (institutional policies and wider cultural and social influences) that impacted on personal choices and usage.

Ethical considerations and position of the researcher

Ethical issues include transparency and confidentiality. The data and the findings were treated in accordance with the British Association of Applied Linguistics' (BAAL, 2000) ethical guidelines. By providing as much information, description and reflection on the design, data collection and analysis, and the whole writing process I have tried to demonstrate my ethical responsibility as a researcher.

The other major ethical consideration throughout the study was to provide

anonymity and guarantee confidentiality to the respondents. Confidentiality of data is particularly important considering the work relationships of the participants, the researcher (also a colleague and the teacher trainer and pedagogical consultant) and the institution where the research is carried out. Providing anonymity extended from making it impossible to identify the names of the respondents to eliminating direct links to the schools in the case study by never overtly naming them.

All the student questionnaires were anonymous and therefore the respondents untraceable to anyone outside the research project. As teachers are identifiable by the researcher, in order to provide confidentiality, the names of the participants have been changed to codes throughout the study (e.g. TS5 or SN3, where S stands for south and N for north). No audio recordings were carried out without prior written consent (appendix 8) and participants could withdraw at any moment if they so wished.

The institution's name, the single schools and the respondents remained anonymous throughout the whole study. However, while it was possible to guarantee respondent confidentiality with reference to the data provided, there is a margin of possibility for identification of the overarching institution.

As a researcher I am also a person with a cultural, professional and personal background and both an insider and an outsider (Hellowell, 2006)

on different accounts. Where my role and my 'insider knowledge' were felt to have had an impact on the outcome I have stated this overtly. The insider-outsider aspect (Hellowell, 2006) varies in the chosen cases from being an insider on a micro level (everyday contact with participants, continuous on-site presence, knowledge of and participation in aspects of the decision-making processes) or macro-level (insider as in part of the profession but not the everyday lives of those involved) to being an outsider (operating outside the respondents work context, having little or no professional contact with them and having no direct contact with their schools). Moreover my separate roles of teacher and colleague, researcher and pedagogical advisor also influence the data obtained. Reflecting on this role as a researcher was an important process in the study, as personal experience and empathy proved valuable in understanding and interpreting the data. As mentioned above, because of my insider role, there were a few instances in which I was aware that the answers provided were not totally true or complete. As interpretation forms a great part of the analysis of the case study, greater accuracy was sought by allowing the researcher into the picture where appropriate. At times a more collaborative stance was sought. This meant engaging in informal discussions with practitioners in order to gain a wider picture and be in a better position to interpret the collected data. This of course, according to Burgess et al, (2006, p.37), meant 'loosening the power relationship between researcher and informant' which however resulted in a valuable trade-off.

As a researcher and practitioner I am personally involved on both fronts. This posed questions regarding my role and how those taking part in the research interpreted it and reacted to it. I made it absolutely clear that my role as colleague, supervisor, consultant were separate to my role as researcher. The teachers who took part did so of their own free choice. The optional nature of participation was made clear at the outset as was the opportunity to pull out. In fact the initial invitation went out to a larger number of teachers, some of whom took the option of not taking part in the study. Those teachers who decided to participate showed honest personal and professional interest in the work being carried out and were offered an opportunity to share the results of the study. I do not feel that my role has had any impact on participation. The driving factors were perceived as professional curiosity and respect. The participants' unfamiliarity with being interviewed and recorded was taken into consideration and built into the procedure and analysis. The first responses were triangulated with answers provided more freely when respondents felt more at ease. All the teachers taking part were given the opportunity to contact me to add information they might have thought of later or edit their original versions.

In line with the experience of other EdD researchers (in Burgess et al. 2006, pp.35-37) I had to maintain a high level of alertness to the 'sincerity' of respondents and the effect my role had on their responses. While not having to establish rapport in the same way one has to with strangers, it

was nonetheless necessary to establish rapport in view of the roles of researcher, colleague, trainer on one hand colleague and informant on the other. This in turn raised my awareness not only of my role but also of that of the informants, their willingness to assist me in their own time by exposing themselves to potential criticism.

Being personally involved also raised the issue of personal bias. Just by existing, operating and thinking in a particular social, cultural, generational context, we automatically have a bias. Like technology, bias is not inherently negative, but depends on what we are prepared to do with it. So, in terms of my own research, I probably come to it with a bias which is what sparked my interest, but I was aware I could change my mind in the process and looked forward to this possibility. Throughout the study I tried to approach data as honestly as possible. I tried to weave it into my own perspectives and vice-versa rather than consider it either similar or different. This process has proved valuable in keeping an open mind to different views and outcomes. For instance, at times my initial perceptions might have been that there was little awareness of innovation through digital technology in the field of teaching foreign languages in the context of the case study. However, the interviewing process opened possibilities towards different scenarios, beyond an 'either...or' vision of using technology in language education. As a researcher I had some preliminary thoughts on how variables might interact and create the conditions or the operative environment. However, through my research process I hoped to

find information to further clarify the situation or point to a totally different outlook and help formulate a possible way forward. In order to further check for reliability I triangulated some of the data obtained in the questionnaire with follow up questions of a similar nature.

The style of writing throughout this thesis is a combination of the style traditionally associated with academic writing and the style associated more with interpretative studies within the qualitative tradition. The former includes the passive form and distances the writer and the researcher from the writing while the latter, through the use of the first person, puts the researcher clearly in the picture and close to the data and the statements being made, making it therefore more personal. The first person was mainly used in the methodological and interpretative sections of the project and where the passive voice made points unclear.

4 Findings and Discussion

The chapter begins by presenting the findings from the teacher and the student questionnaires, followed by findings from the interview sessions with the teachers taking part in the study. The findings are then analysed and discussed in relation to research questions one to three below:

- To what extent are language teachers aware of different digital literacy skills, i.e. text manipulation, information searching on the web, communication and networking (involved in the use of digital resources versus more traditional ones) leading to 'digital competence', 'digital usage' and 'digital transformation' (Martin, 2009).
- To what extent are new digital literacy practices used in personal spheres being transferred to language learning and teaching?
- To what extent is writing central to digital literacy practices in the language learning environment?

Analysis and discussion of the data in relation to question 4 (below) follows in chapter 5

- What are the roles of the teacher and the institution with reference to pedagogy and policy-making

As mentioned in chapter 2, Martin is a highly significant theorist in this study. The analytical framework he provides is linked to and underpinned by theoretical work carried by other writers in the NLS tradition. It also looks for ways of bridging the gap between theory and practice by working

towards a pedagogy that encompasses educational practice at the curriculum and individual development levels.

Martin's analytical framework has been used in the presentation and analysis of the data in this study particularly with reference to the first two research questions in this case study, i.e. the extent to which language teachers are aware of different digital literacy skills and the extent to which new digital literacy practices are used in their personal and professional environments. Martin's framework has been used to position teachers and students on a continuum with skills (competence) at one end and engagement in new literacy practices at the other.

Teacher questionnaires

The teacher cohort of this case study totals 15 teachers, 7 from northern Switzerland (TN) and 8 from southern Switzerland (TS). As the teacher cohort for the study was rather small, the total numbers are given instead of percentages, as these could be misleading.

Table 4.1 shows that the gender split for teachers was in favour of male respondents in the south and female respondents in the north. In terms of age, the data shows that the highest numbers fall into the higher age groups. This seems to reflect the length of EFL teaching experience. This may affect the acquisition of new digital skills and their adoption in personal and professional fields.

	Total n=15	TN n=7	TS n=8
Gender			
M	8	3	5
F	7	4	3
Age groups			
23-30	2	0	2
31-39	1	0	1
40-49	5	3	2
50-60+	7	4	3
Years of teaching EFL			
less than 3	1	0	1
from 4 to 6	1	1	0
from 7 to 9	5	2	3
More than 10	8	4	4

Table 4.1: Profile of teacher respondents by gender, age and geographical location

Table 4.2 shows that all the teachers are digital immigrants (Prensky, 2001) and have acquired the skills mainly teaching themselves or learning from friends and relatives. More teachers in the north have attended personally financed training courses or professional training provided by the workplace than in the south.

How did you acquire the new skills required to use digital technology in your profession	Total n=15	TN n=7	TS n=8
Self-taught	15	7	8
Attending courses (personally financed)	4	3	1
Friends and relative	6	3	3
Professional training (provided by workplace)	4	3	1
Other (specify)	1	0	1

Table 4.2: Acquisition of digital skills

Table 4.3 shows that 14 out of 15 teachers claim to use computers in their private lives most days of the week. Nevertheless, when asked how often they use computers in their professional lives, TNs seem to use them more frequently than TSs.

How often do you use computers in your <i>private</i> life?	Total n=15	TN n=7	TS n=8	How often do you use computers in your <i>professional</i> life?	Total n=15	TN n=7	TS n=8
Not at all	0	0	0	Not at all	1	0	1
Once/twice a week	0	0	0	Once/twice a week	2	0	2
Three/four times a week	0	0	0	Three/four times a week	2	2	0
At the weekend	1	0	1	At the weekend	3	0	3
Most days/ everyday	14	7	7	Most days/ every day	7	5	2

Table 4.3: Frequency of computer use in teachers' private/professional lives

The length of time teachers have been using computers and the internet in their private spheres, as shown in Table 4.4, could be an indication of how, amongst other possible factors, proficiency and usage may influence transfer of the use of digital technologies to the classroom.

How long have you been using computers/the internet for private purposes?	Total n=15	TN n=7	TS n=8	How long have you been using computers/the internet for teaching purposes?	Total n=15	TN n=7	TS n=8
≥ 1 year	1	0	1	≥ 1 year	2	0	1
2-4years	1	0	1	2-4years	1	1	0
5-6 years	3	0	3	5-6 years	3	2	1
≤ 7 years	10	7	3	≤ 7 years	9	4	5

Table 4.4: Length of time teachers have been using computers

Writing e-mails, reading the news online and finding information on the web seem to be at the top of the list of private computer use for all the teachers as shown in Table 4.5. This private use of new digital technologies may have repercussions on their transfer to the professional field and on how teachers perceive the changing role of writing as a communicative tool. The lack of personal engagement in networking activities could be critical for the shift from individual to collaborative writing in the teaching and learning process, the role of writing as a tool for meaning making (Zhao, 2003; Abu Bakar, 2009; Elola and Oskoz, 2010) and the role of the teacher as a whole (Garrison and Anderson, 2003; Anderson, 2008; Hernandez-Serrano and Jones, 2010).

What do you use computers/the internet for in your <i>private</i> life?	Total n=15	TN n=8	TS n=7	What do you use computers/the internet for in your <i>teaching</i> practice?	Total n=15	TN n=8	TS n=7
Writing e-mails	15	7	8	Communicating with learners	11	4	7
Databases	5	2	3	Communicating with other practitioners	8	4	4
Spreadsheets	8	3	5	Blogging	1	1	0
Reading the news	13	6	7	Video conferencing	2	1	1
Finding information on the web	14	7	7	Professional forums	6	3	3
Blogging	2	2	0	Preparing activity worksheets for learners	14	7	7
Downloading films and music	6	4	2	Devising online tasks for learners	5	1	4
Chatting	3	2	1	Other (specify)	3	3	0
Buying and selling	6	6	0				
Games	1	1	0				

Table 4.5: Reasons why teachers use computers privately and professionally

About half the respondents answered by ticking the 'other' box and specified that they use the internet in their private lives for listening to music and communicating through Skype.

The main activities computers or the internet are used for in teachers' professional lives (Table 4.5) seem to be preparing activity worksheets for learners, i.e. using computers to prepare paper-based materials. This is followed by communicating with learners and practitioners and devising online activities for students. The lower numbers engaging in these uses seem to point to differences in the distribution of users. The numbers, however, do not show whether this is due to geography or gender and this aspect could perhaps be explored more fully.

Which online activities, in your opinion, are suitable in an EFL context	Total n=15	TN n=7	TS n=8
Vocabulary building	14	7	7
Grammar practice	15	7	8
Web-quests	9	6	3
Online chats	7	4	3
Blogging	7	3	4
Other (specify)	3	1	2

Table 4.6: Online activities considered suitable in an EFL context

Table 4.6 shows which activities teachers perceive as being the most suitable for online use. Vocabulary and grammar activities score the highest in the whole country. These are followed by web-quests and online chats in the north and by blogging and online chats in the south (albeit with smaller numbers). If looked at individually, the more networking and interactively communicative activities seem to come a distant second, but with very small numbers, to vocabulary building and grammar. However, if one were to group together different communicative activities like online chats, blogging and other exchanges, this would point to significantly higher figures. This could indicate a lower adoption rate, but it could also be indicative of a transition phase where innovation is taking root and moving along the innovation-adoption line. A corroborating element could be the fact that as well as using commercially available materials in class, teachers also get teaching material from the internet, as shown in Table 4.7.

Where do you get your teaching material from?	Total n=15	TN n=7	TS n=8
Commercially available materials	14	7	7
In-house materials	12	4	8
The internet	11	5	6
Design your own	12	6	6
Other (specify)	4	3	1

Table 4.7: Sources for teaching materials

As well as personal and cultural elements, access to the hardware in the workplace may be a further factor in the transfer process. Teachers were asked if the institution they work for provides them with access to computers and the internet. Table 4.8 below shows how uneven access is and gives an indication of cultural differences and perceptions. It also points to the fact that about half the digital technology use for professional purposes seems to be from teachers' homes and private computers.

Does your institution provide you with access to computers and the internet?	Total n=15	TN n=8	TS n=7
Yes	8	3	5
Please give details.....			
No	6	4	2
Not sure	1	0	1

Table 4.8: Institutional access to computers and the internet

Of course this quantitative data provides little information as to the reasons behind certain patterns of behaviour. Therefore, aspects of access, including perceived needs, hardware, skills and training were carried over to the interview stage of the data collection process. Responsibility for access and adoption is a central issue when considering transfer of digital technology from the private to the professional sphere.

Student questionnaires

The next step was to look at students' answers to the questionnaire. The total number of students taking part in the study is 50, of which 30 from the southern part of the country (referred to as SS) and 20 from the northern part of the country (referred to as SN). Gender ratios seem to be reasonably balanced. Among the differences between the different geographical areas shown in Table 4.9, are the age groups of those studying English as a foreign language, which is generally highest in the 31-49 age group in the south and in the 50-60+ age group in the north.

	Total n=50	SN n=20	SS n=30
Gender			
M	21	6	15
F	29	14	15
Age group			
23-30	12	6	6
31-39	12	2	10
40-49	15	3	12
50-60+	11	9	2

Table 4.9: Profile of student respondents by gender, age and geographical location

Table 4.10 looks at students' levels of English and their reasons for learning the language. The learners seem to be taking higher level courses in the northern part of the country than in the south.

In terms of the reasons for learning English as a foreign language, international diploma preparation seems to be absent in the south while a high number is learning for business reasons or work. This is contrasted in the north by high numbers of students learning for socializing and travelling. This could indicate considerable motivational differences driven by perceived need and age. In fact needs and motivation might be different if the participants are of working age, in mid-career or towards the end of their career into retirement age. Motivational differences seem to partly reflect the age groups into which the learners in this case study fall.

	Total n=50	SN n=20	SS n=30
What level are you currently attending?			
Low	15	0	15
Intermediate	28	13	15
High	3	3	0
Reasons for studying English			
International diploma preparation	3	3	0
For academic reasons/studies	3	1	2
For business reasons/work	21	3	18
Socializing/travelling	25	12	13
Other	9	5	4

Table 4.10: Students' levels of English and reasons for learning English

As table 4.11 indicates, a high number of participants has taught themselves or has acquired digital skills through friends and relatives. In the south this is followed by acquisition through professional training provided by the workplace.

How did you acquire the new skills required to use digital technology?	Total n= 50	SN n=20	SS n=30
Self-taught	24	9	15
Attending courses (personally financed)	8	3	5
Friends and relatives	22	9	13
Professional training (provided by workplace)	16	3	13
Other (please specify)	3	3	0

Table 4.11: Acquisition of digital skills

As can be seen in Table 4.12, both groups use computers in their private lives and for learning English with slight variations in frequency.

How often do you use computers in your <i>private</i> life?	Total n=50	SN n=20	SS n=30	How often do you use computers/the internet for <i>learning</i> English?	Total n=50	SN n=20	SS n=30
Not at all	1	0	1		34	19	15
Once/twice a week	4	1	3		14	6	8
Three/four times a week	10	3	7		4	2	2
At the weekend	1	0	1		6	3	3
Most days/everyday	32	15	17		3	1	2

Table 4.12: Frequency of computer use in students' private and language learning spheres

The interesting aspect, however, concerns the use of computers and the internet in their private lives. This is illustrated in Table 4.13 below.

What do you use computers/internet for in your private life?	Total n=50	SN n=20	SS n=30
Writing e-mails and documents	42	19	23
Databases	8	2	6
Spreadsheets	5	2	3
Reading the news	28	11	17
Finding information on the web	34	15	19
Blogging	2	0	2
Downloading films/music	13	3	10
Chatting	6	21	4
Buying and selling	14	6	8
Games	7	1	6
Other (specify)	4	2 Facebook office pack	2 graphics internet for travel

Table 4.13: Reasons why students use computers in their private lives

There is great similarity between the groups when it comes to writing emails, using office programmes, reading the news or finding information on the net. However, networking activities like blogging, chatting and downloading music and playing games seem to have a higher number in the south. Communicating with other learners online and blogging for improving English language skills also appears to happen more frequently in the south.

How do you use computers/the internet to improve your English?	Total n=50	SN n= 20	SS n= 30
Communicating with learners	4	1	3
Blogging	2	0	2
Video conferencing	1	1	0
Forums	4	2	2
Doing activity worksheets given by teacher	10	6	4
Other (specify) dictionary, reading and translating	19	11	8

Table 4.14: Use of computers and the internet by learners for improving their English

On the one hand the learners seem to remain teacher dependent for how to go about their learning (10 respondents ticked 'doing activity worksheets given by the teacher'). On the other, there seems to be greater autonomy

with reading and translating. A great favourite in both groups (south and north) seem to be the dictionary and translation resources available online. Among activities used by students to improve their English (listed under 'other') dictionary use, reading activities and translations feature high, followed by listening to CDs and podcasts and writing personal letters. The choice 'other' alone is almost equal to the sum of all the other options together. Nineteen students ticked 'other' and 21 students chose from one of the other 5 options available.

In general students seem to prefer using computers for doing activity worksheets given by the teacher. This could also reflect teachers' habits of assigning computer based work and web-quests (see interview data below). However, it could also be an indication of the fact that learners still adopt a fairly passive role in their learning experience. This is an interesting point and concerns the perception of what constitutes e-learning. Data from the interview sessions with teachers (discussed below) corroborates the impression of a lack of awareness of digital practices for language teaching. Students as well as teachers refer to e-learning practices and they seem to indicate using computers to create work that is then delivered on paper, without the use of computers by the students.

Table 4.15 further shows that online activities considered suitable for English learning are mainly vocabulary building and grammar practice, followed by web-quests and chatting, but mainly in the south.

Which online activities, in your opinion, are suitable for improving your English?	Total n = 50	SN n = 20	SS n = 30
Vocabulary building	37	14	23
Grammar practice	27	13	14
Web-quests	10	2	8
Online chats	8	2	6
Blogging	2	0	2
Other (please specify)	1	1	0

Table 4.15: Online activities considered suitable by learners for improving their English

As can be seen in Table 4.16, when it comes to the number of years students have been using computers and the internet for private purposes, students in the south seem to have a longer history, which could perhaps partly be explained by the different age groups. When considering the length of time computers and the internet have been used by students to improve their English, over twice as many students in the south seem to be new to this practice compared to the north.

How long have you been using computers/the internet for private purposes?	Total n=50	SN n=20	SS n=30	How long have you been using computers/the internet to improve your English?	Total n=50	SN n=20	SS n=30
≥ 1 year	2	1	1		19	6	13
2-4years	12	2	10		14	7	7
5-6 years	11	6	5		3	1	2
≤ 7 years	24	10	14		5	3	2

Table 4.16: Length of time students have been using computers

Although the numbers are small, in terms of usefulness of computers for English learning, Table 4.17 shows marginally more positive responses from the south, an aspect that could be investigated further, possibly in relation to age and gender too.

How much does the computer/the internet help you improve your English?	Total n=50	SN n=30	SS n=20
Hard to say	9	4	5
Not very much	10	5	5
A little	11	5	6
A lot	11	3	8
A great deal	3	1	2

Table 4.17: Students' perceived usefulness of computers and the internet for language learning

The students' questionnaires had an additional question on the role of writing. This was left as an open-ended question in the hope of encouraging students to provide their own opinion on the topic. However, mainly quantifiable information was collected as very few additional comments were made by the students as to why they thought writing had become more important. Table 4.18 summarises the data collected.

In your opinion, has learning writing skills become more important as a result of increased digital literacy practices (e.g. social networking outside the classroom; using online platforms and resources)? If so please explain why.	Total n= 50	SN n=20	SS n=30
Yes	5	4	1
No	6	6	0
Not sure	3	0	3
Very important	1	0	1
Only a bit	1	0	1

Table 4.18: Students' perceived importance of learning writing skills as a result of increased digital literacy practices

Only two students were forthcoming with additional information. One comment to support the importance of writing refers to the importance of the English language as a source of information and the need to improve digital literacy skills to access it, interact in blogs, ask and answer questions in forums. The other comment supports the view that writing has not become more important but states clearly that writing is useful at work and speaking is desired in class.

The next section gives a breakdown of the data gathered during the interviews followed by a discussion of the findings in relation to the research questions.

Data from interview sessions with teachers

The follow-up interviews provided data for the analysis and discussion of all 4 research questions. They had a twin purpose, on the one hand to corroborate and triangulate data from the questionnaires relating to research questions 1 and 2, and on the other to elicit further details. These, in turn, include what teachers currently do and how they perceive change or potential changes affecting the profession, also with reference to the perceived role of institutions. In addition, the interview sessions provided data for research question 3 on the role of writing, i.e. the extent to which writing is central to digital literacy practices in the language learning environment and research question 4 on the roles and responsibilities of teachers and institutions in relation to pedagogy and policy (discussed in chapter 5).

The interview questions have been devised following the questionnaires and cover broad themes which include: practitioners' understanding of e-learning and blended learning and suitable activities; communication and the roles of speaking and writing; changing digital literacy skills and issues of transfer. These themes are linked to the research questions and they provide the basis for gaining insight into transfer and the perceived desirability of transfer of digital technology and skills to adult language learning inside and outside the classroom. They also guide the reader towards a better understanding of the perceived role of communication

and the perceived role of writing in English in the context of the case study. Further themes such as the (changing) role of the teacher, the role and responsibilities of institutions, implications for pedagogy and policy-making are discussed in chapter 5 in relation to research question 4. Below is a thematic breakdown of the information gathered in the interview sessions (respondents names are coded, e.g. TN1, TN2/TS1, TS2 etc., to protect their identity).

Practitioners' understanding of e-learning and blended learning and perceived suitable activities

In this section the findings are discussed in relation to research question 1 on teachers' awareness of different digital literacy skills and practices. Many teachers within this study do not seem to be familiar with definitions of e-learning and blended learning and there is a general sense of confusion and a low level of understanding and interchangeability of concepts. This seems to confirm an existing view, held by writers such as Coryell and Chlup, 2007 and Chapelle, 2010, that the English Language Learning (ELL) scenario still lacks clear definition of what e-learning comprises. For most teachers e-learning involves electronic devices, computers, the internet, and blended learning involves a mixture of techniques used for teaching and learning. However, comments vary considerably and can be grouped into different categories of

understanding. Some teachers claim total unfamiliarity with the terms, e.g. 'I'm not familiar with e-learning....blended learning? No, to be honest it doesn't ring any bells' (TS1); others consider the concepts to be interchangeable, 'somehow blended learning [and e-learning] for me is....yeah absolutely the same thing' (TN11); while some acknowledge the terms and classify e-learning as doing online courses, e.g. 'not sure if I link e-learning to blended learning the way I understand it. E-learning, that would be people following online courses' (TN12); using CD-ROM and the internet as well as websites from the course-book publishers or the BBC 'as an extra to a course book' (TN8); 'using Moodle for additional exercises' (TN11) or for providing activities beyond the classroom, 'not something that could be easily used in our classes at the same time something people can access at home using their own computer, even indirectly' (TS5). Blended learning is seen by some as combining some sort of training with the learning of English or 'a mixture of class and online exercises' (TN8); 'combining "normal" methods with computer based materials' (TS3); 'mixing old and new' (TS4). TS4 also concludes that 'coming from the old school', old is more comfortable. These comments on blended learning seem to be along the lines of what other writers have suggested (Macdonald, 2006; Andrews and Haythornthwaite, 2007; Coryell and Chlup, 2007; Snyder, 2007; Chapelle, 2010;) and point in the direction of teacher's greater or lesser awareness of and confidence with the concept. When practitioners speak of e-learning in more abstract terms, many seem to forget about all sorts of activities that they then talk about with a lot of

enthusiasm when they do not think in terms of e-learning. It is worth pointing out that the researcher is aware of the fact that in most cases interviewees are thinking on the spot and possibly addressing issues and definitions for the first time in such an articulate way. This picture becomes fuller as teachers speak more freely of activities and what they do or would like to do if more technological infrastructure were in place. TS3 refers to the use of iPads: 'I use iPad. Have just bought it. Already have some material. I also have some parts of my book on the computer'. On a similarly enthusiastic note TS3 points to the use of roll up TVs that can easily be transported and act as monitor and screen for all sorts of activities including those requiring internet connectivity. In TS3's words, 'you can be much more creative and you don't have to carry around so much stuff. Talking about iPads, Skype, interesting applications where you can create your own flashcards, use TV screens, monitors, boards or whatever to display them'. This is an example of bottom-up development where practice would take place at the classroom level and teacher insight and motivation would make up for the lack of top-down infrastructural provision and policy.

Activities teachers consider suitable for e-learning and use include worksheets, articles, pictures and other printable materials they can access on the internet (TS4) as well as mechanical vocabulary and grammar learning activities (TS6). Below are some further examples of what seems to be considered useful: 'to have techniques up one's sleeve, to access

example role plays or expressions' (TS4); 'to find nice websites where you can find exercises that are not only but also fun to be used, like games, yeah basically games, where they can experiment with their knowledge of vocabulary and extend it too' (TS3); 'take websites with linguistically good examples and use them in class' (TS7). Online video or accessing listening and comprehension exercises are considered equally useful. According to TN5,

Videos, TV [are suitable]. I've used videos in the past, didactic videos of course. There are also other kinds of materials that we can use. Original language programs, fragments of films. Something you normally use for stimulating other activities which are not limited to the mere vision of the film. [This] could be expanded into something else. Just take this video example. You take video which shows episodes of daily lives which students have already studied. This could be a sort of feedback to reinforce their learning or just to know what people say in the real world.

This is echoed by TS11

[useful is] watching a video and answering questions. Listening to podcasts is actually also useful, you are doing listening comprehension exercises. Online tests and CD-ROM tests are useful. Test what you've learnt and apply it. Maybe this goes in an area of practice you can do at home. Obviously speaking activities,

communicative activities are not suitable because [students] get no feedback. They are talking to a machine.

At the opposite end of the spectrum comments include

those activities that are redundant are the ones that just duplicate the exercises you have in a book. They're boring, not dynamic and will gradually fade away. I think human dialogue is unpredictable and therefore it is better to do face to face or through Skype. Skype is literally in real time. You get instant feedback. That's exciting. That's communication (TS4).

From the data collected during the interviews, several teachers in fact use digital technology in class (e.g. DVDs provided with the course material, they bring in their own laptops, some use iPads and would like to be able to access the internet and project on wide screens), yet when talking about e-learning they tend to relegate it to something students just do for homework. In the words of TN11 'I would use e-learning to reinforce what I am doing in the classroom.....to generalise, this e-learning is something you do at home'. According to the interview data, much emphasis is also placed on student motivation and autonomy with the role of the teacher as advisor and guide (see discussion in chapter 5 on the role of the teacher). According to TS4 'e-learning could be useful for persuading students to practice not so much in the classroom but outside'. This view seems to be backed by the following statements: 'I see it as students having access to

certain websites, listening material and practice... more outside (the classroom)' (TS3); 'interactive exercises on their CDs and DVD-Roms they can do at home' (TN12); 'students do a certain amount on their own on the internet on their own initiative..... then they need the class experience, share web-based learning, to make the work they do at home valid' (TS7) or 'I give them something to research at home on the internet' (TN8). This however, does not isolate the learners as the sole agents in the learning and educational processes as talked about by Garrison and Anderson, 2003; Coryell and Chlup, 2007; Chapelle, 2010. The more autonomous nature of e-learning is nevertheless linked to the agency of teacher and teaching presence (Garrison and Anderson, 2003; Anderson, 2008) and the latter to the agency of institutions. This is discussed further in the analysis sections below.

For some, e-learning in the sense of accessing language and gaining exposure, whether through writing or speaking activities, can increase students' confidence. There is also the sense of language learning happening in the private sphere and digital technology, through its opportunities for networking, opening the door to social and collaborative learning, both synchronous and asynchronous, along the lines of what was said by Meredith and Newton, 2004; Hiltz et al., 2007; Castells, 2010. Social and collaborative learning can be seen as learning occurring as part of being involved in social practices other than doing language exercises per se. This means learners interacting socially using digital media and the

target language. Collaboration can be seen as interaction with the benefits of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). According to Mercer (2000), Vygotsky's conception of the ZPD embodied his view that intellectual development is something sensitive to dialogue.....and for a teacher to teach and a learner to learn, they must use talk and joint activity to create a shared communicative space (Mercer 2000, pp.140-141). This view of scaffolding and learning can be summed up by the following statements from the interviews: 'I know people that use chat rooms or other devices...if they come to class and start using words and expressions they have picked up from their chat rooms, messenger or the internet..this could be of some help, certainly' (TS5). The wealth of resources available to students through digital media is mostly considered positive and a great potential for speeding up language learning and improving skills. However, which activities teachers chose to use in class and how much they integrate digital technologies and blended learning is partly linked to practitioners' individual perceptions, awareness and skills.

Adoption of a more blended approach also seems to relate to time and institutional constraints. For instance TN11 says 'I have deadlines to meet because this is what students are paying for, certain number of pages and units to cover in one semester, that it leaves no room for anything else. I would like to use more digital technology but I have constraints'.

More technical constraints concern infrastructure, for instance TN8 and TN12 state that reserving equipment and hoping it works and facing

technological mishaps can be 'discouraging' and 'a lot of hassle'. Aspects of access, training and implications for institutions are discussed in chapter 5 with direct relevance to research question 4.

Changing digital literacy skills and practices and issues of transfer

The following section relates to research question 2 on transfer of new digital literacy practices from personal to language learning and teaching spheres. The answers to the interview questions suggest that the terms computer literacy and technical ability to use the new digital technologies are synonyms and support Kellner's (2002) call for a greater need to theorise computer literacy and to raise awareness of what it entails.

The way the teachers in the study relate to some key concepts discussed in the literature review, e.g.. digital literacy and multimodality also deserves some consideration. Generally, teacher's understanding of digital literacy seems to be along the lines of what Lankshear and Knobel (2006) identified as 'standardised sets of operations' (p.243) requiring a standardised set of skills to perform certain tasks using digital media. Digital literacy is generally understood in terms of skills needed to use computers and access information electronically and to perform tasks using digital resources, e.g. i.e. text manipulation, information searching on the web, communication

and networking. This is exemplified by TN11's statement. '[Living in the 21st century, teachers should be able to] use word processing programmes to generate documents, write emails. It would be ideal if the whole world were computer literate. But some are more than others. Let's talk about Switzerland. A certain level of computer literacy is important. You cannot function without it. Internet searches, timetables, tickets, etc. are part of our lives'.

There also seems to be great variation in how technologically skilled teachers perceive themselves to be. Comments along the line of teachers not being very technological are frequent. Some of the more negative comments were made by teachers whose computer literacy skills do not go beyond e-mail writing and printing Word-documents and include comments like 'the teacher would have to update to e-learning first, it would be my case' (TS6). At the other end of the scale are comments from teachers who seem to adopt Lankshear and Knobel's (2006) 'conceptual definition' (p.243) including competences that go beyond the technical and operational skills into Gilster's (1997) definition of literacy as the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide variety of sources when it is presented via computers (p.6). These teachers are more digitally literate and use iPads and respond positively to collaborative digital communication and include 'the internet is a real treasure trove [but] you have to know how to differentiate reliable websites' (TS2).

Here the researcher's position and inside knowledge play an important role in interpreting answers. For instance quotes with a similar meaning and apparent equivalent value can hide completely different personalities and digital literacy competences and practices of the teachers who expressed them. This information was accessible only through insider knowledge. For example, two teachers saying they were not computer literate could present completely different scenarios. These scenarios could range from a teacher just using computers to send and receive email, create Word documents or carry out simple internet searches, to a teacher not being fully up-to-date with the latest developments and applications in the field. Insider knowledge was corroborated by further information teachers provided on their digital literacy skills and practices and their perceptions on and use of digital technology in personal and professional spheres. This is an example of how perceptions count and can affect how people take advantage of opportunities. Some, even if they have a lot of skills and engage in digital literacy practices, downplay them as they may feel inadequate. This is where insider knowledge, further questioning, triangulation and interpretation helped me define a clearer picture.

However, there seems to be little awareness of the different definitions of (digital) literacy and (digital) literacies at conceptual levels (discussed in chapters 1 and 2). The data analysis has to take into consideration the differences in use and understanding of the key concepts by the practitioners and relate these to the conceptual framework outlined in the

literature review. The term 'digital literacy' used by the teachers is usually intended in its singular form associated with the concepts of skills and abilities mentioned above and presented in the literature review. Where there is a clear indication that digital literacy is intended as a social practice, thus going beyond the technical skills, this is stressed in the data analysis.

The data from the interviews seems to identify different levels of awareness of how evolving digital technologies and digital literacies impact language learning and teaching. This is in line with the NLS way of thinking and as expressed by Martin (Martin and Grudziecki, 2006; Martin, 2006, in Martin, 2009, p.8), digital literacy is culturally embedded and changes respond to developments in other spheres of social, political, economic and cultural lives. According to (TN11) 'a certain level of computer literacy is important as you cannot function without it....[digital technology] has changed the way we communicate, we have to make decisions faster (e.g. speed and frequency of email). 'As teachers in the modern age we have to be flexible in terms of technology. We cannot go back. Technology changes us and we change with it. We decide how far we want to go' (TN11). Moreover, 'the evolution of digital technology has been exponential. It is changing so rapidly that it is difficult for people to keep up with it' (TS1).

Data from the interviews seems to indicate that digital literacy is not currently a pre-requisite for teaching as 'we can learn language from our mothers – we need nothing to learn a language' (TS4). Nevertheless, there

is also recognition that 'it will become so in the near future.....and teachers should try to keep up with this trend' (TS2). What transpires here are concepts of evolution and adaptation to changing social contexts and demands. This seems to underline what Castells (1996) and Bolter and Gruisin (1999, cited in Snyder 2007, p.403) state, that this will occur through a hybridisation of practices rather than a real break from the past.

Digital competence and literacy practices permeate different areas of life, but for transfer from private spheres to language learning spheres to occur, there has to be a degree of agency as a result of critical thinking in terms of pedagogy and changing literacy practices.

While teachers' responses in the interviews showed some awareness of multimodality (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996; Van Leeuwen, 1999; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001; Kellner, 2002; Kress, 2003; Jewitt and Kress, 2003a; Jewitt and Kress, 2003b; Jewitt, 2008; Walsh, 2010) as the set of skills now required to function and communicate, or teach and learn, using digital technology, there seemed to be a lack of understanding amongst practitioners in the study of the concept of multi-literacies (NLG, 1996) and multiple literacies (Street, 1998; Abbott, 2002; Kellner, 2002; Snyder, 2002). Teachers made no reference to multi-literacies during the interviews, probably due to lack of familiarity with the concept and its absence from their professional discussions and discourse. From the interview data, it appears the concepts of both multimodality and multi-literacies have not been part of professional development, critical thinking and reflection on

the part of the practitioners. These themes relate to research question 4 and are discussed in chapter 5.

Digital competence and literacy practices are directly relevant to the first two research questions in this case study, particularly the extent to which language teachers are aware of different digital literacy skills and the extent to which new digital literacy practices are used in their personal and professional environments. What is happening in the sphere of changing digital literacies and practices in this case study can also be seen through the lens of Street's (1984, in Street, 2003b) autonomous and ideological models. The autonomous model at best leads to passively adopted 'ad hoc' practice in the field. This would require a top-down approach from the institution to create infrastructure and access and then rely on a trickle-down effect to permeate the various layers of users. However, for transfer to occur between private and professional spheres the ideological model has to 'fit' the local context and a degree of direct agency as opposed to passive absorption is required on all parts. Transfer is also closely linked to issues of responsibility for training, further development and access, relating to research question 4. Another aspect of the same issue of welcoming and adopting digital technology in class goes beyond aspects of digital literacy. If hardware is not provided and ready to use, then often what is required is technological skills that go beyond knowing how to use the devices, 'you have to be pretty darn computer literate....not even computer literate, but technologically minded (wireless, protocols). There

should be someone available on hand or not too far away' (TN12). These issues are discussed in greater detail in chapter 5 on the roles of the teacher and the institution.

New communication technologies also make new demands on the learners (Lankshear and Knobel, 2006; Dondi, 2009; Wetzel, 2009) and when asked about how they perceive student digital literacy and practices for language acquisition there seems to be mixed perception amongst the teachers interviewed. Comments range from 'I think students these days are computer literate' (TS7) to 'you have to think first of all if all the students can use e-learning, it depends on the age.....you would have to have a class with people more of the same age, interest and culture' (TS6). Moreover, there seems to be the perception that 'when you teach adults, a good 50% wouldn't consider using computers for language learning' (TS3) and that although many students are computer literate, 'there has to be a shift in people's attitudes to computers so that they can be used to learn something' (TS3).

With reference to the first two research questions, the combined data from the questionnaires and the follow-up interviews seems to position teachers (using Martins' categories, 2009) mainly in the category of digital competence and digital usage. In fact, most teachers do not see Web 2.0 technologies as directly linked to foreign language acquisition, although they see the benefits of students gaining access to English and bringing

new language to the classroom and to speaking practice in general, in a Vygotskian view of learning and acquiring language. 'Here [non L2 speaking country] students don't have that chance [expressing themselves in L1]. Through extensive Facebook activity, texting, emailing in English, it is going to come out in their spoken skills as well' (TN12) and 'whatever opportunities students may have to be exposed to the language is positive at the end of the day' (TS1). Questionnaire data from teachers and students and interview data confirm that vocabulary and grammar building activities score the highest in the whole county in terms of perceived suitability for online use. A great favourite amongst students also seems to be the dictionary and translation resources available online. There seems to be a certain degree of difficulty in moving towards being more participatory and interacting in Web 2.0 activities. Whether this is resistance to innovation or lack of awareness and experience is not clear. In other words, seen in the light of NLS, digital literacy is not yet accompanied by 'agency' (Snyder, 2003; Lankshear and Knobel 2006; Snyder, 2007). However, there seems to be an initial shift (although with differing pace and to different degrees) in the direction of Martin's transformation category. As mentioned earlier in the section on students' questionnaires, it appears that vocabulary building and grammar come before the more networking and interactively communicative activities such as blogging and chatting. However, if the latter are grouped together, there seems to be an indication of engagement and interest. This could suggest a lower adoption rate or a transition phase where innovation is taking root and moving along the innovation-adoption

line.

According to the student questionnaires, the learner also seems to remain teacher dependent for how to go about their learning. In general they seem to prefer using computers for doing activity worksheets given by the teacher. This could also reflect teachers' habits of assigning computer-based worksheets and web-quests. However, it could also be an indication of the fact that learners still adopt a fairly passive role in their learning experience. The transformation scenario which sees the learner as becoming more autonomous and the teacher as a facilitator and where 'learning is less about obtaining material carefully prepared by an expert, and more about who to ask, how to take control of an experience...' presented by Hernandez-Serrano and Jones (2010, p.5), seems to be still in progress.

The role of writing

Research question 3 on the extent to which writing is more central to digital literacy practices in the language learning environment is the main focus of the section below.

Writing as a sociocultural construct

The interview data suggests that literacy practices using the written mode of communication are considered, by many teachers and students taking

part in the study, as limited to specific situations (e.g. email writing in an office context) and that the spoken mode holds a more prominent role in communicating, especially in a foreign language. TN12 started a sentence with 'writing, they don't need' and ended with 'it doesn't take a lot....emails or Facebook, I don't think there needs to be that much classroom time devoted to that unless you wanted them to have interaction that way'. This seems to imply that interaction is or should happen using the spoken mode. According to TS2, 'the written language is fundamental but I'd like to push the students to speak' and 'I think students are more interested in spoken communication'. As mentioned elsewhere, the cultural construct and personal practices also influence what practitioners do and what they perceive. It would be worth investigating further to what extent teachers' personal perceptions match those of the learners. However, initial data from the student questionnaires seems to support the influence of the cultural construct. This also seems to come across when teachers favour face-to-face meetings and synchronous oral exchanges to virtual platforms and asynchronous exchanges. The sociocultural construct into which the case study fits deserves some clarification. Traditionally, speaking as opposed to writing appears to have been the preferred mode of communication throughout different social strata and across contexts, from everyday life to language learning in much of Switzerland, specially the Italian speaking part. This is confirmed by personal experience of living and working in the area. Similarly, schools and academia in Switzerland traditionally still endorse oral examinations. This oral rhetoric is deeply

rooted in the cultural fabric. Although the introduction of new digital technologies and the changing geography of communication are shifting oral towards written communication to a certain extent (in education and the commercial world), the spoken mode is still foregrounded. However, digital written communication, in its collaborative form, is often considered closer to spoken communication. Collaborative writing as opposed to individual writing fits into a sociocultural construct (Zhao, 2003; Hawisher and Selfe, 2007; Abu Bakar, 2009; Elola and Oskoz, 2010) and supports Street's (2003a; 2003b) 'ideological' model of literacy.

Nevertheless, to what extent resistance is a conscious and clearly thought out rejection of particular communities of practice and literacy practices using digital technology or whether teachers and learners have simply not been familiarized with them enough, is not clear.

The discussion on asynchronous communication and virtual platforms seems to distance the teachers from their perceived context. Part of this seems to be linked to speaking in abstract and theoretical terms, and part because these answers have not been preceded by much critical thinking on the subject. This indicates that as the perception of the definitions of concepts like e-learning or blended learning can be unclear, so concepts of synchronous or asynchronous communication on virtual platforms can be very misleading. What teachers think the definitions mean is not necessarily what they themselves think changes in language learning, with reference to digital technologies and new literacy practices, are all about.

This seems to come across in comments like 'written communication with other people on a platform is also one of the good things about the internet for example, chat-rooms, messenger. But I wouldn't necessarily include this in e-learning' (TN11). As said, the data points towards the fact that there is a need for more critical thinking on behalf of the teachers. This might be encouraged by the institution by creating joint access to information via initial workshops or seminars that might then lead to further discussions among practitioners or digital information in the form of a platform for communication. At present, inside information tells me there are no such opportunities. Cuts in funds have further reduced opportunities for institution-organised training and opportunities for teacher exchange. The personal perception of the need for greater critical thinking is backed by data like 'your question about writing made me think.....sometimes writing can be a good thing for them to do, specially collaborative writing' (TN12). The interviews have sometimes followed the teachers' thinking processes as shows in T2's comment, who 'never thought of networking as a way of teaching....but just instinctively I think it could work if carried out properly...[students] would gain confidence in using the language. Break through that barrier. Lose their inhibitions' (TS2). This 'thinking on the spot' on behalf of the teachers generally becomes clearer towards the end of the interviews, when they feel freer and more comfortable to express themselves more openly. This highlights the value of teachers having the time and opportunity to think about and discuss such issues.

The next sub-section looks at communication and the roles of speaking and writing and collaborative writing as talk.

Communication and the roles of speaking and writing

Most teachers in the study identify the teaching of EFL with the teaching of reading and writing skills as separately taught skills alongside speaking and listening skills. The data seems to point in the direction of a still rather sketchy conceptualisation of literacy skills and communicative practices using different 'skills' and mixing the modes of communication. In other words, as discussed earlier, digital literacy is often seen as a competence and not as a practice or as practices to make meaning using digital technology. This is clearly exemplified by the teachers' use of the expression 'writing skills' to mean the ability to write as opposed to 'communicative practices' which incorporate the written mode, highlighting the perceptions of most practitioners involved in the study and pointing to a divide between writing as a skill and communicative practices using the written mode. The transcripts from the interviews and the quotes included in the data analysis remain faithful to the expressions used by the teachers. It seems that the writing skills students in the case study are looking for, and exposed to, are secondary to spoken communication. Writing skills tend to be conceived of in terms of consolidation and achieving accuracy in spelling and syntax. An exception might be students with a particular focus

on written communication in work-related contexts. This takes the form of genre writing (mainly email and report writing).

At lower language proficiency levels, the learning process seems to meet students' more basic functional needs, i.e. coping in different everyday situations: 'something real like enquiring, asking for info and acting upon it' (TS3); 'read English if they go abroad. Read a menu and order food' (TS2). 'When I started teaching the sentence had to be perfect. For me the important thing was always communication. To go overseas and say you want a glass of water and not a glass of wine. Then things changed. Communication became more important than writing perfectly and so on, but I always try and keep the two things together' (TS6).

According to interview data, here the reflective role of writing seems to be limited to consolidating vocabulary, 'writing they have time to think of rules, vocabulary. So I think writing is valuable in that sense' (TN8) and for sentence structure, leading to more confident speaking. In TS3's opinion writing can be 'a moment of reflection. Think about vocabulary, the way they would use a certain expression. I use that as preparation then with their notebooks closed they speak more confidently'. Similarly, for TS6 writing helps organisation and aids recall. 'Writing is important because, in my experience, I can see that when they [students] write, especially adults of a certain age it is easier for them to remember things....so writing is important for adults'. What transpires is that communicative literacy practices concern 'speaking' and that 'writing' forms the support structure

that leads to increased oral proficiency, in line with what Kern (2000, p.238) considers 'a linguistic exercise'.

At higher levels of language learning, the interview data also seems to point towards a greater role for reflective critical thinking and reflection. According to TN8 '[when] writing, they have time to think of rules, vocabulary, check vocabulary. So I think writing is valuable in that sense'. This seems to be in line with Anderson's (2008) view that writing enables recall and encourages reflection (p,26) and Elola and Oskoz's view (2010) that writing helps focus on structure and organisation (p.53). When the role of writing as a tool for reflection and a higher order of thinking is recognised, the data also shows that teachers do make a link between the dialogic nature of reading and writing and also listening, speaking and writing, as exemplified by the following quote from the interview with TN11: 'reading is seen as language in use, learning vocabulary. It is also essential because you see how the language is used and can copy maybe some of that language into your writing. Listening is important too. All the skills are necessary to improve the language'. In other words, reading and writing are dialogic in nature and offer opportunities for scaffolding. This is supported by Kern's argument (2000) that the internet has been accompanied by a return of 'epistolarity' which brings with it a high motivational value as the nature of this epistolarity is dialogic and has a real audience. Similarly listening and speaking are dialogic in nature and offer

opportunities for scaffolding. If the kind of writing more commonly associated with informal writing and digital literacy practices such as social networking, Skyping or blogging are similar to talk (or spoken communication), then communication as a whole benefits from exposure to and practice in different skills across different modes. Also according to TS1 'if you want to improve your speaking skills or writing skills, I guess you have no choice but spend time improving your reading and listening skills as well'. TS1 says that people today are more likely to need to develop receptive and productive skills as 'one of the changes in our society is that people spend more time in front of the pc interacting with the rest of the world.....people are chatting or sending and receiving emails, reading and writing.....more than speaking face to face'. Similarly, TS7 sees an integration between reading and speaking as 'students who read learn good English. Reading and listening [are important]. Especially in a country where English is not spoken. It takes on a different importance.

Back to technology. Listening available is amazing. Take advantage of that'. TN12 also adds that 'the more students communicate, whether it's by email or Facebook or texting, anything, the more it's going to help develop their communicative skills. The transfer from their [e-mails, communication on Facebook or texting] to spoken English would happen as that is the way the brain works...the two go hand in hand'.

However, this view of 'writing' and teaching 'writing skills' still obscures the potential role the written mode is taking on in ever increasing literacy

practices using digital communication. With reference to the research question on the role of writing, there seems little indication that communicative literacy practices are seen as blending the various 'skills' and incorporating different literacies to accommodate modes and practices in an ever changing communication order.

Many teachers in the case study seem to think that by adopting e-learning or a blended learning approach, the focus on communication is lost as the following examples suggest: 'I see the internet as a great source of communication, passive. I don't see it as a great tool for speaking as students stay away from computers when they want to communicate' (TS3); 'students are interested in communicating orally' (TN11). Teachers also seem worried that the social aspect of learning a language has to be reduced or eliminated as 'nothing can replace being face to face with a teacher' (TS2). The above comments seem to be in conflict with the view researchers like Yellowlees Douglas (2002); Macdonald (2006); Chapelle (2010); Davies and Fletcher (2010) and Davies (2011) amongst others, who hold that blended learning can be a flexible approach where the values of face-to-face education can be combined with the benefits of written communication, collaborative writing and literacy practices using written text, both synchronous and asynchronous. As Kern (2000, p.237) states, 'computers are being increasingly used to facilitate, not to replace human contact'.

The data from the interviews further points to a split in the role of writing:

writing with a consolidating function and writing with a communicative function. The guiding element appears to be the perception of whether written communication is considered on a par with oral communication. The data seems to indicate that often it is not, unless it is for professional purposes, as mentioned below. According to TS7, teachers 'are using written communication so much more easily with students'. As this seems to be mainly in the form of emails, the potential of social networking and digital literacy practices using written text for language learning, however, is still rather sketchy. It is also often considered unsuitable for foreign adult language teaching as 'blogging...giving each other constructive criticism, it could work for universities' (TS2). Moreover, teachers seem to distance themselves from the pedagogical value of teaching writing in English. The role of writing as a result tends to be relegated to homework as a means of consolidating what done in class. 'The written reinforces the oral. They both have to work together' (TN11). In TS2's view students 'see the written language in class as a way to remember what they've been doing orally. A memo for them. Orally I can't remember everything. If I write it I can repeat it'. This seems to confirm the initial perception regarding the role of writing, as presented earlier, that for most of the students and the teachers in the sample writing was seen more in terms of a peripheral support skill, a secondary activity to help consolidate previously-learned language, practise structure and comply with cultural expectations for functional purposes through the required genres (e.g. short transactional letters or emails). As mentioned earlier, the exception may be students receiving private and ad

hoc academic writing lessons, familiarizing with different genres and their specific register, students preparing for the higher levels of the Cambridge suite of exams or students doing more work oriented courses.

Moreover, many teachers in the case study perceive written English to be 'strictly job related' (TS3) and needed by professionals like secretaries (TS5). These forms of writing seem to have a place but fall into the format of letter writing, e-mail writing, report writing which as genres have their own rules and structures. Teaching these 'skills' seems to imply recognising and applying the rules of the different text-based genres. These tasks tend to be given as homework. What seems to be left out are those digital literacy practices including genres typical of the networking sphere (webinars, web-based communication using Skype or other VoIP [voice over IP] protocols, professional blogs and digital presence on the internet; search literacies), which are also entering the working world and the professional scenes. These are electronically mediated and have their own genres and rules (Wetzel, 2009). Further investigation of this aspect falls outside the scope of this project but the issues could be revisited in further research and results presented as a separate study.

Collaborative writing as talk

It is true that Web 2.0 technologies have favoured the written form of communication and writers like, Jewitt and Kress, 2003a and Snyder, 2003

emphasise the critical need to 'read' and 'write' using a multimodal approach. TS4 also sees the writing with Web 2.0 technologies as a precursor to spoken communication through social networking and digital media. The teacher states that 'e-learning doesn't necessarily mean written work. I see my son playing with friends and it is all spoken. And I see this as a precursor of how things are going to be done in the future' (TS4). Along the same lines is TS6 'the role of writing is changing. If I do e-learning I should do speaking using the technology to do speaking, using a web cam or whatever'. This is also the case of using Skype for communication 'people are starting to use Skype in a way they never did. We are at the infancy of this' (TS4). TS3 also sees the role of Skype for aiding spoken interaction on the internet, particularly through professional sites that offer interaction with native speakers. TS3 also mentions '*Speak-up-Magazine*, which offers skyped connections', and a 'community in Canada that offers interactions with native speakers through Skype'. These examples go along with Sun's conclusion (Sun, 2011, in Davies, 2011) that scaffolding is not a prerogative of oral talk but can happen in virtual environments too and corroborates Kern's view (2000) that oral and written forms of communication are interdependent and not mutually exclusive.

However, when collaborative writing takes on the same role as talk in meaning making, views are divided on the benefits to language improvement. On the one hand there is recognition of these literacy practices allowing a stronger focus on structure and organisation and

providing scope for reflection and scaffolding, in line with Andrews and Haythornthwaite's argument, (2010) that asynchronous exchanges increase and encourage opportunities for reflection; on the other hand, there is fear of students leaning 'wrong English'. In fact, teachers in the case study seem to partially agree on the importance of exposure to L2, as 'it gives greater access to the possibility for dialogue, whether written Facebook or speaking games. It just means there's more volume, more opportunity to practice' (TS4) and 'through extensive Facebook activity, texting, e-mailing in English it is going to come out in their spoken skills as well' (TN12). In favour of writing being able to increase the ability to communicate effectively is also the argument that writing has to be clear as it has to balance out the lack of body language and intonation. According to TN11 'there are a lot of signals, body language, that are communicative. E-mail or writing a letter for example the language has to be clear because you are not there. In writing there is a lot more clarity'. Moreover, TS1 acknowledges changes in literacy practices and skills in today's communication.

'One of the changes I've seen happening in our society is people spend more time at home in front of the PC but interacting with the rest of the world. This is a new thing, a new development.....when people communicate most of the time they're actually communicating via PCs, chatting or sending and receiving emails, reading and so on rather than actually speaking face to face, reading

lips or being able to see any other kind of signals or signs that can make communication natural, body language' (TS1)

and the fact that 'if you write it is going to be there for a long time.....you want to make sure you do the job' (TS1). However, they seem divided on the point of quality of the language their students get (or would be exposed to) through social networking as 'a lot of blogs of native speakers...the English is atrocious' (TS2) or not good for scaffolding. TS3 comments on one of the main reservations often held by students about learning inaccurate language when interacting with non-native speakers. 'I think they would find it more interesting to do the same thing with their teachers, community of mother tongue speakers' (TS3). Moreover, considering the perceived reductionist way of communicating in writing, the teaching of this kind of writing is not considered a primary task for teachers and certainly not in the classroom. 'The risk of twitter of reducing everything to the minimum.....no idea how to construct a real paragraph.....risk of losing coherent extended English' (TS7).

With reference to research question three, the role of writing skills is consequent to the contextual teaching situations of the institutions in the case study and the perceived role of communication of the teachers. A parallel could be drawn with data about teachers' perception of e-learning and blended learning; the literacy practices in private and professional spheres and their transfer from one to the other. According to the interview data, writing and the teaching of 'writing skills' seems to fall within Martin's

(2009) categories of usage and competence. Usage and competence in the sense that writing improves the use of the language by improving vocabulary and sentence structure through exercises and narrative on the one hand, and fulfils traditional functions (either on paper or using computers in a similar way as a practice tool), e.g. transactional letter writing, report writing on the other. This activity can be at different ends of a continuum, with pure exercise at one end and task-based activity at the other. The results also seem to indicate that the clue to whether writing is relegated to a role for consolidation at home lies in whether it is perceived as communication or not and whether written communication is considered on a par with oral communication. The data seems to indicate that often it is not, unless it is for professional purposes, as mentioned above.

Martin's (2009) transformation stage has not been reached and the literacy skills needed to participate in the new communication order are not considered systematically by the professionals in the context of the case study. Communities of practice using writing have not informed pedagogy or changed the concept of communication through writing using digital technology much. However, as changes in digital practices are in a state of transition, so is the perceived role of writing. Overall the written mode for scaffolding and exposure to language is considered positive, provided the language students access is of acceptable quality. Lastly, the role of writing may become more central as digital practices using Web 2.0 technologies

inside and outside the classroom increase. Equally there may be a shift towards greater spoken communication using Web 2.0 technologies, as they evolve further. As discussed throughout this study, we have entered a century characterised by the increased development and use of digital technologies and this carries implications for pedagogy, the role of the teacher and institutions in general.

In terms of transfer to language teaching, the private use of new digital technologies for email writing, reading news and finding information on the web, may have repercussions on their transfer to the professional field and on how teachers perceive the changing role of writing as a communicative tool. The lack of personal engagement in networking activities could be a critical hindrance for the shift from individual to collaborative writing, the role of writing as a tool for meaning making (Zhao, 2003; Abu Bakar, 2009; Eloola and Oskoz, 2010,) and the role of the teacher as a whole (Garrison and Anderson, 2003; Anderson, 2008; Hernandez-Serrano and Jones, 2010). Cultural context may also be an influencing factor in the preference of the use of writing or speaking for meaning-making and communication. As opposed to Anglo-Saxon contexts, learning in southern Europe has traditionally followed a less essay-based and more oral line of transfer. The second contextual consideration is language learning in or out of the L2 country. This can affect the requirements of language learners, with more functional needs and the need for oral communication, which is less present outside the classroom, at lower levels, and higher educational

goals at higher levels.

5 Findings and Discussion on the role of the teacher and the institution

This chapter focuses on research question 4 below:

- What are the roles of the teacher and the institution with reference to pedagogy and policy-making.

The data collected during the interview sessions is analysed and discussed in relation to the roles of teachers and institutions. The chapter groups the findings into 2 main themes, i.e. the perceived role of the teacher and the perceived roles and responsibilities of institutions. The first theme has 2 sub-themes, namely teaching presence and challenges and responsibilities. The focus then shifts to the perceived responsibilities of institutions with sub-themes covering access, training and upgrading profession. The sub-themes have emerged from analysis of the interview data which has been recorded and colour-coded into thematic categories (see appendix 7 as well as an example of coding of interview data and the description of the procedure for analysis and coding of data in the relevant section in chapter 3).

The role of the teacher

This section links the data to research question 4 on the roles of the teacher. The interview data is further analysed within the 2 sub-themes

mentioned above.

Teacher presence and autonomous learning

What transpires from the interview data is that one of the main roles of the language teacher is to provide guidance to the student and keep up motivation (in line with Kern, 2000; Garrison and Anderson, 2003; Hernandez-Serrano and Jones, 2010). This in many respects seems to be good pedagogic practice, a role that is independent of digital technology. In TN12's opinion 'the basics of the teacher's role hasn't changed, whether he/she is using new technology or not.....be a facilitator.....The role is not changing...it's just another teaching tool' (TN12). Similarly, according to TS7 'the teacher still has the responsibility to guide the students and respond to what they do, not to lose the focus....still responsible for the structure of the course. This is in line with Hernandez-Serrano's (2010, p.4) comment that 'the primary task of teachers is offering informational strategies for learning'. Of course, digital technologies and e-learning provide the additional role of guiding through the wealth of digital information and 'sift through reliable and linguistically accessible sites' (TS2), a view shared by TS4 who believes 'the teacher obviously is a knowledge base. A teacher can assess the personality of the student and see the best way the student is going to learn and guide the student towards the best way he is going to learn'. Guidance also seems important to TS3 who states that 'the problem is overload of information, which website to go to, how reliable they

are...sometimes they [the students] come with printouts that are not reliable. So if teachers suggest websites, trust in teacher prompts the students to go and try'. Another view is that 'the role of the teacher is changing not only through new technology but also because of it. As a teacher you are not 'The' teacher any more who has access to material. Teachers and students are more on a partner-like relationship' (TN8). This also seems to be in line with Hernandez-Serrano and Jones's (2002, p.1) view that 'new relationships between teacher and learner are conceptualised, based on the idea of a self-sufficient student and a supporting teacher'.

Autonomous learning as defined in the literature review and seen as a more independent approach to learning using available resources, possibly under the guidance of experts, is one of the inherent aspects of the technological shift of language learning. Nevertheless, the data seems to confirm the Becta Report's (2008) view that using new digital technologies alone does not automatically lead to greater learner autonomy. Warschauer (2002); Lankshear and Knobel (2006) and Snyder (2010) amongst others in the NLS way of thinking, advocate that learner autonomy be contextualised into practices of use and learning using technology as a literacy practice. In terms of foreign language learning this would mean opportunities for teachers and learners and learners and learners to use new literacy skills (e.g. digital literacy) and engage in new literacy practices - both as a subject area and as a means of communicating digitally. This is

central to issues of digital literacy practices out of and inside the classroom. Related areas concern transfer, agency and empowerment (from the learners' and the teachers' points of view). In other words teachers should engage students in literacy practices that also have a language focus and can then be pursued autonomously by the learners.

For teachers in this study, guiding students through digital technologies also means ensuring they get the best possible access to English. 'Digital technology and computers are of course one of the most important elements and factors of English being all around you. I guess teachers should be aware of all these opportunities, suggest, promote' (TS1). This role as guide and facilitator must take account of the changing technologies to a greater or lesser extent. 'If you are tuned in you will spot possibilities. Digital technology and computers are of course one of the most important elements and factors of English being all around you' (TS1). The role of the teacher also bears heavily on research question 3 on the role of writing (discussed in chapter 4). New generations will not separate use of internet from language learning. In the future I think teachers will have to know what is on the market/internet and be a guide for the students' (TS3). This is echoed by TS2 who says 'teachers should try and always be at the forefront as far as possible'.

Teachers in this study seem to put much emphasis on spoken communication as 'teachers can be useful by bringing in a spontaneous kind of communication at whatever level' (TS4). In addition, as 'technology

is now taking communication away from the way we used to carry out conversation, what we teachers should do is get it back and get it back to earth....talk is what people really lack today' (TS5). A more balanced view seems to be that the guiding role of the teacher includes 'requesting that students go through certain activities in a communicative way, not just going on the internet and reading' (TS3). However, talk, as discussed in the literature review and the section on 'the role of writing' can be seen as communication through the spoken and the written medium.

Challenges and responsibilities

Developments in teachers' digital literacy levels and practices together with growth in teachers' awareness and confidence towards their benefits for language acquisition are possibly influential factors in the transfer from private to language learning spheres. In the words of TS7 'there is so much available but if you don't know how to use it your students are not going to want to use it and you are going to be detached from their reality'.

Views towards acquiring new digital skills are mixed. On the one hand, as TS2 states, 'practitioners should learn to use basic digital technology and should be able to teach themselves...as for support on how to use web-based resources....it is something a teacher can figure out for himself. I can't imagine the school spending money'. On the other hand there is the perception that the issue is more complex. For instance, TN12 perceives the

problem of the acquisition and training of digital literacy in a more articulate way. In the face of digital illiteracy, what is needed is 'more than a two-hour workshop... and I feel something should be done to help them. Yes, the school is responsible, to make it easier and provide a certain percentage of support' (further discussed in the subsection on training). It is worth pointing out the complexity of the situation and the fact that views are mixed. The teachers' often interchangeable use of digital literacy seen as digital competence and, as in the example above, digital literacies as practices, on the one hand seems to indicate a lack of awareness of the concepts and on the other points to different implications for development. While language teachers should be expected to develop their digital literacy skills, this should not be equated with becoming IT experts or 'technologically minded' (TN12). If hardware is not provided and ready to use, then often what is required is technological skills that go beyond knowing how to use the devices (further discussed in the sub-section on training).

Some teachers in this study consider acquiring digital technology and changing literacy practices as part and parcel of living and working in today's world. According to TS2 'teachers should learn how to use them [computers and web-based resources]. They don't have to become computer wizards but they have to learn at least the basics....Teachers should try and always be at the forefront as far as possible.....If you are a teacher you should be able to teach yourself. Teachers shouldn't be

spoonfed'. TN11 also believes that 'as teachers in the modern age we have to be flexible in terms of technology. We cannot live without it. We cannot go back....there has to be a shift in people's attitudes to computers that they can be used to learn something'. Others think that acquiring digital literacies often goes beyond simple skills development training as exemplified by TS6's statement. '.....using blended learning, the teacher would have to update to e-learning first, it would be my case.....you'd have to train me to use these skills [digital programmes]. Also according to TN12, what is needed is 'more than a two-hour workshop'. Being able to combine online learning and computer skills could be an important skill to have to allow transfer of their acquired knowledge to other spheres, including most careers. As one of the changing demands seems to come from the outside world, according to Wetzel (2009, p.1) 'the skills they must have include accessing, organising and evaluating information using technology.'

Even in a context like this case study, where demands from the outside world seems to be reduced as a result of wider cultural influences favouring more traditional communication practices, it seems that education including language education has to serve the students by allowing them to acquire and transfer skills. This is voiced by TS4's statement that 'the very fact that blended learning includes digital technology means you are developing a capacity to use digital media as much as you are learning a language'. The reluctance on the part of some of the teachers to try and combine computer skills and learning and teaching in the context of this

study could be related to the still uneven digital literacy skills and unreliable access to digital infrastructure.

The discussion in the following section focuses largely on digital literacy skills rather than digital literacies of practices. The sometimes apparently contradictory positions of the practitioners who have taken part in this study could also be linked to the fact that contextually they are in the infancy of awareness and change. This view also seems to translate into a need to upgrade the view held of the profession (often by institutions and professionals themselves) and its practitioners from a merely low-tech, low-skilled, low value profession to one with great competitive potential with the so called higher professions. Digital skills are not considered an integrated part of teaching yet as stated by TS2 'pre-requisite, not yet. But will become in the near future though'. TS3 recognises the need for training and investment into infrastructure and identifies one hindering aspects for institutions to invest in the fact that 'it can be costlyand it requires a certain amount of knowledge and how to use it and maintenance afterwards. Also training people would mean making them responsible for using the hardware. This is also important. Reluctant because not everybody treats other people's property how they should'.

Most teachers today, and particularly those who took part in this study, were not born into the digital world and have crossed the boundaries of old and new technologies. This is exemplified by TS4s statement on blended learning which emphasises the crossover between old and new ways of

doing things, 'blended learning must be a mixture of old and new I guess' and refers to the teacher's own situation as 'coming from the old school'. TN8 also makes a self-reference as being 'still quite old fashioned' referring to times before digital developments changed social practices. TS5 can be positioned at the extreme end of the continuum where digital technology is seen as superfluous for teaching languages, 'I really don't think I depend on devices to do my job. Can do without these things' and considers existing infrastructure within the school adequate, 'yeah, perfectly so [adequate]'. This carries strong implications for awareness raising, training and learning on the job as it influences how teachers perceive and seek professional development and the opportunities that are on offer to them. It seems that most teachers are learning on the job but without clear guiding pedagogical principles. According to TN11 'we are still in the process of learning. Learning by doing....But if you start to integrate all these things you have to adapt and integrate them into your own style'.

In foreign language education the changes to the traditional teacher triangle from teachers supporting learner operation with knowledge, to teachers assisting and aiding learners in operating with technologies and with open knowledge (Hernandez-Serrano and Jones, 2010) might lead to increased agency and learner empowerment through critical reflection (Gilster, 1997; Snyder, 2003; Martin, 2009). A positive aspect of such a hybrid position in teachers' perceptions lies in the power to decide. Practitioners have the opportunity to identify and harness good things

about older technologies as well as newer ones. This hybrid situation also carries the responsibility to a) be curious enough to look at options to best serve our students and b) be critical enough towards both digital and non-digital technologies and adapt, reject or combine them. This is a responsibility teachers carry because they are in a position to choose and to introduce. The danger would be to run towards something blindly without evaluating it, simply because it is available. Most teachers today are in a position where they have to develop and learn new skills to remain competitive, while on the other they are at the forefront of change, in a position to filter and blend it. There is always going to be change, but now we are at a turning point where there are big changes in social practices as a result of the ever increasing presence of digital technologies. The interview data seems to confirm that the context of the case study is one of conflict, innovation, resistance and in transition. The future of adult language teaching will also depend on the nature of this evolution. Practitioners today carry a huge responsibility towards the students of today, future students and the profession as a whole. Teachers, policy-makers and researchers have a joint responsibility for deciding which technology is best suited in foreign language teaching. Institutional support and training would provide an important stepping stone towards changes in teacher perception and practice and importantly in empowering them as professionals. Giving teachers the opportunity to experience learning in a blended, multimodal way would add to their cultural and professional baggage and help better understand the applications to practice and equip

them to transfer their skills.

The roles and responsibilities of institutions

This section examines the data in relation to research question 4 on the roles of the institution as seen by the participants.

Responsibilities for innovation

A common view that emerges from the interview data is that the responsibility for adoption of innovation seems to lie on both sides, with the practitioners and the institutions. This is sometimes expressed as a bottom-up approach with institutional backing or a top-down approach, where one of the roles of the institutions is to put practitioners in a position to make best use of existing and new resources. As stated by TS7, practitioners

should have the initial motivation to adopt new technology, with the necessary support in terms of training, skills development and available hardware and software on the part of the institution. If teachers don't update they would miss opportunities. It is also something that could be very motivating for the students...and I would be surprised if a very motivated teacher

would not use digital technology.

What transpires from interviewing teachers is that currently there is a mix of on the one hand low digitally skilled and reluctant adopters and, on the other, highly enthusiastic and motivated teachers willing to explore opportunities. On the other hand, time constraints make it difficult for teachers to look into the wealth of opportunities, but having some guidance and training from the institution, would mean practitioners can become familiar with new ideas and start implementing them and eventually become self-sufficient and critical. As TS1 states, 'I'd like to be able to get some more help from the school and if the school should arrange anything I'd make it my business to be there and seize this opportunity'. TN8 has a similar view, thinking that 'responsibility is on both sides, with teachers and institutions. Institutions provide infrastructure and initial training and the teachers have to be motivated and invest some of their time'. This is echoed by TS5 who also states that 'institutions have this responsibility.. but teachers have to be curious enough to look for a way to improve their skills'.

In terms of responsibility, there is another issue that comes to light. According to TS4, 'although the institution [in the case study] is still very much linked to physical places, whatever the definition is, it should be on the lookout for new trends in learning...and passing that down to the teachers. Institutions can no longer set programmes for a 10-year period'. This implies a more top-down approach and would require policy-makers to

engage with practice in terms of investigating change and making informed links with pedagogy. It would also allow bottom-up pioneering practitioners to find institutional support and provide greater adoption opportunities which might otherwise not be followed up as they would be too demanding on teachers' time. In other words, the institutions could absorb the negative implications this would have on individuals' availability of time and resources.

Although the responsibility for innovation-adoption seems to lie on both sides, what transpires from the interview data is that most teachers in the case study perceive one of the roles of the institution to be that of providing the necessary technological hardware, access and training.

Access

The data seems to indicate that if digital resources were in place within the institutions and training was available, this would positively impact teaching practices. As mentioned in the section above, access to infrastructure should be to a great extent the institution's responsibility. In terms of hardware and equipment, practitioners would welcome computers with internet access, i.e. 'a computer linked to a large screen which all the students can see and logged onto the internet' (TS2), large screens and possibly printers in every classroom, 'internet access, computers and projectors, probably on a fixed basis. Reserving in advance,

installing and putting away is a lot of hassle for a five minute clip' (TN8). In other words, 'institutions should provide the hardware because it is not possible for teachers to carry all this stuff around with them'. Moreover, digital infrastructure needs to be constantly upgraded and maintained and this should not be left to the devices of individual teachers, as it can be costly and time consuming (TS3). Teachers perceive the importance of having 'something available whenever you need it' (TS1). TS7 also states that 'it's having the equipment and good technical support, that is important [as] you can't expect the teachers to plan lessons using technology in a good way if they can't rely on using good equipment in the classroom'. Moreover, while language teachers should be expected to develop their digital literacy skills, this should not be equated with becoming IT experts. So, cost, time and technical constraints play a role in the adoption-innovation and transfer process. Additionally, some teachers would also welcome a platform where they can interact and share information without the constraints of time and place. According to TS1 digital technology might be able to 'fill this gap and give teachers an opportunity to share.....maybe on a virtual platform from home'.

The data also seems to suggest that access to infrastructure and the adoption of digital technology does not have to follow a linear step by step process. In other words, adoptions can occur in leaps, bypassing intermediate technologies that, while standard-setting, may be short lived and on the verge of becoming redundant. For instance, Interactive

Whiteboards (IWBs) are not universally available in the institution of the case study. Some teachers would welcome them and believe they could learn to use them with initial training provided by the schools within the study. However, TS3 would rather welcome large screens connected to computers and the internet. The use of iPads has been mentioned by several teachers during the interview (TS3, TN12, TS4). While TS3's idea of bypassing IWBs doesn't go as far as introducing iPads, TS4's view is that if 'the institution wants to be here in 10 years' time it should start renting out iPads to students, taking the Singapore army who issue iPads to all its soldiers, as an example'. It is this teacher's belief that 'if an army thinks using iPads is the best way the soldiers are going to learn, have quicker ways of communicating and access to data they need, then this is a good indication of an important change' also with reference to infrastructure and education. This kind of insight could provide valuable information to institutions wishing to look into changing social and literacy practices and find links to pedagogy and their own investment opportunities

Training

The interview data also seems to indicate that there is a generalized view that training and digital skills development is essential, along the lines of what Chapelle (2010) and Davies and Fletcher (2010) state. While teacher development partly features in the sub-section on challenges and

responsibilities for teachers, here the discussion is taken further and the focus is on the roles and responsibilities of institutions.

TN12 takes the issue of training beyond simple skills development training and perceives the problem of the acquisition and training of digital literacy in a more complex way. In the face of digital illiteracy, what is needed is 'more than a two-hour workshop... and I feel something should be done to help them. Yes, the school is responsible, to make it easier and provide a certain percentage of support'.

Another aspect of the same issue of welcoming and adopting digital technology in class goes beyond aspects of digital literacy. If hardware is not provided and ready to use (see section on access), then often what is required is technological skills that go beyond knowing how to use the devices, 'you have to be technologically minded' (TN12). TS3 perceives that

as for now everything is on the teachers when it comes to responsibility [for blended learning using digital technologies...However], in the future when the institution will see the need to officially implement the use of the internet in programmes, they will have to do their part. It would be nice to have guidelines.....it would be nice that the school had some platform (TS3).

TN8 and TN11 also believe that 'if institutions need teachers to use digital media (IWB, projectors, WI FI etc.), then it is their responsibility to train the

teachers'. Similarly, (TS6) thinks 'the institutions should give the teachers the opportunity to use all this technology. At school we don't have this technology.....and training, for sure'. This confirms the view that a driving force for change can be the perceived need by institutions (Meredith and Newton, 2004; Coryell and Chlup, 2007) and a shared stage of maturity between implementation, training and pedagogical development. Most importantly, policy-makers ought to bear in mind that education (which includes adjusting to modes and changes in social practices) and not just digital skills development has to be part of the equation at all levels. This may include adjusting to modes and changes in social practices and identifying and welcoming new literacies.

Different literacies will thus be perceived as being important to acquire and different practices will be engaged in (Street, 2003a, pp.77-78). These will hold implications for change and professional development and for policy-makers and institutions as they will create a contextual framework within which to make decisions. Being context-aware should be an active process that involves critical thinking and pedagogical considerations.

Upgrading the profession

Institutions' reluctance to invest monetary and time resources may be due to the uncertainty of financial returns as well as a distrust towards how co-workers would handle expensive equipment, thus a greater need for

training teachers and

'make them responsible for using the hardware. So maybe there is reluctance in investment because not everyone treats other people's property the way they should'(TS3).

This position also seems to translate into an opportunity to upgrade the view held of the profession (often by institutions and professionals themselves) and its practitioners from a merely low-tech, low-skilled, low value profession to one with great competitive potential with the so called higher professions (as discussed in the conclusions and recommendations chapter). There seems to be, in fact, a need to gain greater professional respect and attention for the ELT profession and its practitioners. Upgrading the profession could occur through creating awareness of how digital skills and literacies can inform pedagogies and how by transferring 'private knowledge' to 'professional know-how' teachers can be better equipped to incorporate a blended approach that integrates language and literacies. TS2 states that 'I never thought of networking as a way of teaching. I think it could work. Couldn't say how but just instinctively I think it could work if carried out properly'. Providing teacher training that bridges the gap between personal and classroom use of digital resources could be a valuable effort for transfer between private and professional spheres to occur. Awareness should encourage educators and educational policy-makers to provide resources and infrastructure needed to carry out the work at its best; help society at large to appreciate the profession and what

it tries to provide; and motivate the ELT professional community to see and transmit the values of language acquisition and cultural exchange and integration. To this extent, one of the concerns of policy-makers should be to ensure education stays in the equation. This can be achieved by keeping critical links between education, the changing roles of teachers and students, training and access. This study suggests that policy-makers should keep up with the changing roles of agents involved and understand the importance of research-backed training to move from an intuitive-approach to a better informed decision-making process for institutions and practitioners. This is in line with Freire's (2008) considerations on scaling from individual to institutional levels going through bottlenecks of adoption. The case study seems to confirm that a bottom-up process of introducing digital technologies into the spheres of language learning and teaching do not automatically lead to changes and support at institutional levels. In Freire's (2008, p.2) words, 'institutional, top-down, adaptations have been considerably slower or absent widening in many cases the digital divide' between uses in private and professional spheres. The gap between theory or desired outcome and application can be at different points along a continuum. On the one hand reducing the distance (even if it means using ideas at intermediate points on the continuum) may in some cases be the difference between any changes taking place or not. On the other hand, time, not distance, may be the factor leading to the adoption of change, not in a gradual fashion but as a leap bypassing intermediate stages of development (as mentioned above with reference to access). It is

important for policy-makers to be able to recognise which points they are at on the resistance-innovation continuum and understand the contextual factors at play.

Moreover, in line with what was said above on shared responsibilities, as Robertson (1998) puts it 'teachers also need to understand the changes so that they can learn how to use the new technologies efficiently, ethically and responsibly with a view to tapping their educational potential... (Robertson, 1998, in Snyder 2003, p.264). This relates back to the issue central to this study, i.e. the transition from digital competence to the recognition and adoption of learner and teacher digital literacy practices in EFL teaching.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

In this chapter I will present conclusions in relation to the 4 research questions followed by recommendations derived from them.

Research question 1

- To what extent are language teachers aware of different digital literacy skills, i.e. text manipulation, information searching on the web, communication and networking (involved in the use of digital resources versus more traditional ones) leading to 'digital competence', 'digital usage' and 'digital transformation' (Martin, 2009)

The case study draws on research carried out by other writers and in particular Goodfellow and Lea (2007); Lea and Goodfellow (2009) and Lea and Jones (2011) on aspects of digital literacy and skills. In terms of this case study and with reference to the first research question there seems to be a general unfamiliarity with definitions of e-learning and blended learning amongst the teachers interviewed. In many cases the two concepts are interchangeable and relate in a very generic sense to 'learning with computers'. The favourite activities considered suitable for e-learning in this sense, mentioned by teachers and students in the study, include accessing articles, worksheets and other printable materials online, using

online dictionaries for improving vocabulary, accessing websites for getting information and doing grammar exercises. Although there is also indication that some practitioners in the study use digital technologies in class (e.g. DVDs, iPads) there is still little awareness of how to use this technology in a more collaborative and participatory way for language teaching and learning reflecting literacy practices outside the classroom. There seems to be a certain degree of difficulty in moving towards being more participatory and interacting in Web 2.0 activities. It is not clear however, if this is a result of resistance to innovation or a lack of awareness and experience. Nevertheless, as observed in chapter 4 on findings and discussion, this places the respondents in the study mainly in Martin's (2009) 'digital competence' and 'digital usage' stages while the transition to the 'digital transformation' stage is not yet happening in an even and homogenous way.

Research question 2

- To what extent are new digital literacy practices used in personal spheres being transferred to language learning and teaching?

In line with Goodfellow and Lea (2007) and Lea and Jones (2011) the study considers aspects of digital literacy and skills and investigates issues of transfer between private and curricular spheres. Teachers' responses in this

study seem to place e-learning to a great extent in the private sphere of digital practices for language learning. Most teachers do not see digital literacy practices using Web 2.0 technologies as directly linked to foreign language acquisition although they see the benefits of students gaining access to English and bringing new language to the classroom and to speaking practice in general.

The study also indicates that the type of activities teachers chose to use in class and how much they integrate digital technologies and blended learning is partly linked to practitioners' individual perceptions, awareness and skills. What transpires from interviewing teachers is that currently there is a mix of on the one hand low digitally skilled and reluctant adopters and, on the other, highly enthusiastic and motivated teachers willing to explore opportunities. Moreover, the data shows that training of teachers, access to infrastructure and time constraints also seem to play an important role in the transfer of digital literacy practices from the personal to the language learning spheres.

The data further reveals that it is the teachers' perception that the responsibility for innovating has to be shared among practitioners and institutions. Teachers seem to welcome development but resent not having institutional support and guidance in what is a complex and time-consuming issue that goes beyond individual awareness and practice.

The study suggests that concerted efforts should be made to develop a pedagogy that integrates new digital literacies into the teaching and

learning of a foreign language. It also points in the direction of a joint effort needed between research, policy and practice for digital practices to be transferred from personal to professional contexts. In fact, as Warschauer and Whittaker (1997) amongst others also argue, 'little is usually gained by just adding random online activities into a classroom' (p.28). For this concerted effort to happen, a closer relationship between institutions, specifically in the institution in this case study, and research is important. By drawing on research carried out in other contexts that provides positive evidence for investment and change and by underpinning policy-making with theory and pedagogical insight as well as evidence-based practice examples, policy-makers would be better able to support teachers and enable them to best serve the profession.

As mentioned above there appears to be a divide between lower digitally skilled and reluctant adopters and enthusiastic and motivated teachers willing to explore new opportunities. It is this latter category that would provide the greatest and fastest drive if institutions were willing to provide access to hardware and infrastructure (things as simple as internet access, a monitor, a printer and a data projector). There is indication that sometimes access to simple infrastructure, with a relatively small investment, could produce good results and help practitioners move along the innovation adoption axes if they so wish.

If social practices are a social construct, then the institutional culture is a vital element in shaping them. Practitioners need opportunities for

development, where awareness of digital literacies, competences and practices for personal and professional use are raised. Professional forums and institutional platforms would provide a space for awareness raising and discussion and joint reflection as well as opportunities for first-hand experience at networking.

Digital literacy practices in the context of adult foreign language education go beyond the acquisition of a new language through the use of digital technologies. As Snyder (2007) states 'technology is part of life itself and not something that can be kept in a separate compartment. In other words, technology-practice has technical, organisational and cultural dimensions' (p.400). Being able to integrate new technology into social practices should be seen as a life skill. It should not be relegated to a tool for language learning as 'the ability to integrate online learning and computer skills could mean the difference between obtaining a new job or not' (Wetzel, 2009) or functioning well in a given social context, using a second language.

Research question 3

→ To what extent is writing central to digital literacy practices in the language learning environment?

This study examines the role of writing in foreign language acquisition and therefore in meaning-making in a foreign language, particularly with reference to digital literacy practices. It mostly draws on the writing of

Warschauer and Whittaker (1997); Warschauer and Kern (2000); Kern (2000); Warschauer (2002); Garrison and Anderson (2003); Chapelle (2007), Goodfellow and Lea (2007); and Elola and Oskoz (2010). It investigates the cultural and contextual factors influencing the adoption-innovation process, i.e. teachers', learners' and institutional beliefs and perceptions in the context of this case study.

The data shows a downplaying of the role of writing in English language learning and teaching, with emphasis on separate skills rather than integrated communication patterns. The spoken mode seems to hold a more prominent role in communicating, especially in a foreign language. Communication using the written mode seems to belong mainly to the contexts of email writing in office contexts and is considered above all job related.

The data also point towards a split in the role of writing. On the one hand writing has a consolidating function, and is done mainly at home. In this sense writing has the role of a peripheral support skill, a secondary activity to help consolidate previously-learned language, practise structure and comply with cultural expectations for functional purposes through the required genres (e.g. short transactional letters or emails). On the other hand, a more communicative function of writing is recognised by some teachers in the study, particularly considering writing as 'talk' foregrounded by much communication using Web2.0. Collaborative writing, while relegated to the private sphere, is considered beneficial in terms of language acquisition. A number of teachers in the study seem to recognise

that literacy practices such as communicating using social networks and blogs for instance, allow a stronger focus on structure and organisation providing scope for reflection and scaffolding. However, a number of teachers also worry about the quality of the language learners are exposed to.

Whether writing is relegated to a consolidatory support role or whether writing is an integral part of digital literacy practices seems to be linked to the perception of whether written communication is considered on a par with oral communication. The data seems to indicate that often it is not, unless for professional purposes, but also that there are signs of this perception shifting towards a greater centrality of the role of writing in line with changing digital literacy practices. To a certain extent, this follows on from what was said with reference to the previous two research questions. In other words, increased awareness of changing communication patterns using digital technologies and first-hand experience of networking in professional contexts is needed to facilitate the move to Martin's (2009) transition stage and encourage transfer to language learning and teaching spheres.

Research question 4

→ What are the roles of the teacher and the institution with reference to pedagogy and policy-making

The study reveals that one of the main roles of the language teacher is to provide guidance to the students and keep up motivation (in line with Garrison and Anderson, 2003; Kern, 2000; Hernandez-Serrano and Jones, 2010). This good pedagogic practice seems independent of digital technology, but the study reinforces the role of the teacher as guide in the light of new digital technologies and literacy practices. In other words, language teachers are not the 'owners' of information. Their role is to guide learners through the wealth of digital information, suggest sites, resources and strategies to access and handle the information learners need and are exposed to. Moreover, it seems to be the concern of teachers in the study that guiding students through digital technologies also means ensuring they get the best possible access to English.

Another aspect that transpires from the data is that while the technological shift of language learning carries implications for greater autonomous learning the use of 'new digital technologies alone does not automatically lead to greater learner autonomy' (Becta Report, 2008). For this to happen, learner autonomy has to be contextualised into practices of use and learning using technology as a literacy practice. In terms of foreign language learning this would mean opportunities for teachers and learners and learners and learners to use new literacy skills and engage in new literacy practices – both as a subject area and as a means of communicating digitally.

The study further reveals that pedagogical implications foreground the

changing roles of teachers and learners in this study in the context of new digital literacy practices and changing communication patterns. This also links to research question 3 on the changing role of writing.

The interview data seems to confirm that the context of the case study is one of conflict, innovation, resistance and in transition. The future of adult language teaching will also depend on the nature of this evolution. The challenge for the profession seems to lie partly in how perceptions change and how awareness guides needs. Developments in teachers' literacy levels and practices together with growth in teacher's awareness and confidence towards the benefits for language acquisition are possibly influential factors in the transfer from private to language learning spheres.

The study also suggests that institutions and policy-makers have the pedagogical and ethical need to consider bridging the gap between traditional and e-learning in a fashion suitable to the context in which they operate. The teachers in the study seem to suggest that although the responsibility for innovation-adoption lies with the teachers and the institutions alike, they perceive one of the roles of the institution to be that of provider of the necessary technological hardware, of access and training. According to the data, if digital resources were in place within the institutions and training was available, this would positively impact digital literacy practices for language teaching. While the need to have available and accessible infrastructure seems essential, the study also suggests that

the adoption of digital technology does not have to follow a linear step by step process. Policy decisions are also part of a sociocultural process and policy-makers and administrators have some degree of agency as to how they respond to change. Vision and the ability to identify the best way forward can lead to leaps forward in different directions rather than following adoption-innovation as a linear process. Change and innovation do not have to follow the same patterns everywhere. Those who are not at the forefront of change may be able to take advantage of the experiences of those that pioneered it and may be in a better position to make context informed choices. In terms of language teaching for example, it would not be necessary to adopt all intermediate stages of technological development but instead 'jump' straight to more recent innovations (e.g. iPads instead of wired computers stations). This holds implications for institution who wish to create links between social literacy practices and pedagogy and wish to make investments cutting out intermediate stages of technology, thus making a bigger leap along the adoption-innovation continuum.

In terms of policy implications and investment options it also raises the question as to what extent it is an advantage for good decision-making if policy-makers are also practitioners. Through my role as pedagogical consultant and in my administrative function, I have become convinced of the fact that having a direct understanding of what one tries to administer creates a good basis to make better informed choices.

Implications of the study

This section identifies implications across the whole study. These concern the areas of policy, pedagogy and teacher development.

Implications for policy

The results of the study encourage both bottom-up and top-down development. Although the institution in the case study is still very much linked to physical places, according to TS4, an institution should be 'on the lookout for new trends in learning...and passing that down to the teachers. Institutions can no longer set programmes for a 10-year period'. This implies a more top-down approach and would require policy-makers to engage with practice in terms of investigating change and making informed links with pedagogy. It would also allow bottom-up pioneering practitioners to find institutional support and provide greater adoption opportunities which might otherwise not be followed up as they would be too demanding on teachers' time. In other words, the institutions could absorb the negative implications this would have on individuals' availability of time and resources.

Implications for pedagogy

The study further points to Implications for pedagogy. These also move on a continuum between digital literacy and digital literacy practices. In order to move away from the simple skills and competencies level and achieve the transformation level, pedagogy would have to acknowledge that

learning is not confined to the classroom and that it occurs as a result of blending literacy practices from different contexts. In terms of pedagogy, by developing more interactive, more collaborative, authentic quests using multimodal approaches that are embedded in realities outside the classroom it would be possible to integrate single literacy events into literacy practices. For example, students could be asked to visit a given web-site, register on the site, download a podcast onto a CD or mp3 player for instance, listen to the podcast and complete the given task using posts, email or any other form of digital (multimodal) form of communication. Here the literacy event of filling in a registration form, listening to a dialogue or an audio extract, writing down some information would be integrated into a literacy practice that includes communication across media in a meaningful and connected way.

Implications for teacher development

The study also identifies elements of change that are necessary to move the profession onto a perceived higher level of social and professional acceptance, more on par with other professional spheres. If comparing the language teaching profession to other professions it seems that what is at present asked of the teachers in this study, is to have their own equipment and to constantly carry it round with them. This is something that is much less the case in other jobs (where equipment like for instance hospital equipment, lab equipment or even office equipment is generally provided by the workplace).

Contribution of this research to the field

Both Lee and Jones's (2011) project and this study, by foregrounding the importance of the institutional context, have a practical element and speak to researchers and practitioners. This study also fills an identified gap in existing literature on e-learning. The volume of articles and studies in this area is increasing but much of what there exists, is about children or higher education, which pose different contextual challenges as pedagogies differ (e.g. CLIL for children or a higher role for education for universities). Adult language teaching plays an important role in the educational process and holds very practical implications for personal and professional success and gratification. The need to not only increase language proficiency but also empower the language learners to live and function in different and changing contexts has to remain at the forefront of the teaching profession. The range of skills and literacies adult foreign language learners bring to the classroom is often far greater as a result of their personal and professional background, than that in higher education.

The gap in the literature discriminates against adult language learners and teachers in two ways: the needs of the subject of educational focus and the category of learners. Language learning in or out of the country where the language being learned (L2) is used can affect the requirements of language learners which in turn reflects the main perceived objectives. In non L2 speaking contexts, and in the context of this case study, there may be a greater need, particularly at lower levels of language acquisition, to focus

on more basic functional elements and oral communication practices. Table 4.10 on students' reasons for studying English shows that the main reasons are for socializing and travelling, followed by work related and business reasons. The language needs include being able to deal with everyday general situations such as travelling, shopping and conducting informal conversations and the functions involved include for instance requesting and providing information, giving opinions or accepting and refusing offers and the mode of communication tends to be that of speaking. By way of example, TS5 states that 'language is first of all something people use to talk.....When you start leaning it you start orally. I try to give priority to what really matters in communication. I think this is what people really lack today, the skills to communicate verbally'. This is also true for the second biggest category of L2 students whose reasons are work related (see table 4.10). Cultural context is an influencing factor in the preference of the use of writing or speaking for meaning-making and communication. In addition to this, in a context where L2 is not the language for communication what is often missing is the opportunity to practice L2 using the spoken mode. TS4 explains this as follows, 'people need English yesterday, and they need it for example in their private lives or for work to achieve specific objectives. They are not fussy about the grammar. They just want the person to understand the key point and if the English they use works that is going to be fine'. This often provides a crucial difference between meeting objectives and eventually transferring skills to the written mode engaging in different social practices. Finally, as discussed in the section on writing, as

this is often perceived as a separate skill to be learned alongside others, e.g. speaking, and not part of communication practices, the perceived communicative value is also reduced. Having identified this gap in the literature, one of the aims of this project has been to try and narrow it and provide some points for reflection for the language teaching world. With reference to the study, one of the aims was to place the institution under investigation on a point on the innovation-application continuum and, based on the findings, provide one or a series of projected scenarios that would enable it to move along on this continuum.

Lea and Jones's study (2011) indicated that students showed reluctance in blurring boundaries of spheres and

were evidently bringing their experiences of using a range of technological applications into the way in which they approached accessing resources for their university work. However, when it comes to exploring textual practice and its relationship to new forms of knowledge, the project findings suggest that it is the institutions themselves which largely determine what counts, with students' approaches being dominated by the rules and requirements of specific assessment procedures and practices (Lea and Jones, 2011, p.391).

Where this study differs is that rather than institutions guiding the students

through prescriptive procedures, it suggests they guide the teachers through policy and pedagogical prescriptions. The roles of the institution in this case study were discussed in terms of how they aid or hinder the adoption-innovation process through their policy and teacher support.

Final conclusions and recommendations

This study is not conclusive and given the small number of participants cannot be considered representative of the situation as a whole. The numbers while providing important means for comparison are based on too few participants for wider generalisation to be viable. In fact, the focus of this study is not on generalisability but on identifying possible scenarios. These can be identified by looking at the data through the lens of the chosen analytical frameworks. The findings can then be translated into potential scenarios and a positive change in perception might in turn have repercussions on policy decision-making and infrastructural investments as well as funding resulting in benefits for the learners, the practitioners and on-going research. The value of the project should be seen in this light and in the possibility of transferring data into projections for implementation of new projects, changes in existing investment opportunities and policy-making in general. Moreover, in a more abstract sense, comparisons might be made for application by a greater number of institutions and practitioners providing a useful way forward for professional practice in

more general terms. The value of the project also lies in the fact that it situates itself in a context with still limited research and data. Publication of the study, therefore, could be a small step towards filling this gap and encouraging further research in the area.

The data does not seem to support any clear claims for geographical differences in awareness of e-learning and transfer of digital literacy skills from private use to language learning spheres (for both the teacher and the student samples in this study). Nor does it support any significant age or gender related differences. The findings, however, have implications for pedagogy and teacher training, for the institution that took part in the research (on a nationwide scale) and, at policy levels they can provide backing for investment decisions into hardware and further professional training. By identifying themes and relationships, guidelines are put forward for good practice.

To sum up, the study contributes to theory and practice, with reference to this case study, in different ways.

- The data points to the need for theory to support practice and provide underpinnings for more informed decision-making.
- It also indicates the need for the institution and the practitioners to acknowledge new digital literacy practices and include them in a holistic way into local contexts and curricula.

- Practitioners in the study further identified the need for institutions to take responsibility for providing links between research and practice and providing integrated training in the field of e-learning and blended learning.
- The study seems to indicate an urgency to focus on developing practices using technologies rather than developing literacy in single technologies.
- Findings also point to the need to raise practitioners' awareness of changing communication patterns using the written mode and the need to incorporate them into language teaching. It also underlines the importance of first-hand experience in collaborative networking for changes to take place.

It seems that the challenge of this case study, at both individual and institutional levels, lies in suggesting ways forward that narrow the divide between some resistance from the Swiss adult education field, confirmed by the pilot study, and the desirability for agency and empowerment suggested in the literature. What seems to be lacking is grounded experience and supported information to make sound decisions on investment in technological infrastructure and the foreseeable future of pedagogical policies and professional training programmes.

Some concrete suggestions are made in terms of what can be done to

narrow the gap between literature and practice and increase awareness and understanding of the issues discussed, with reference to the case study. These include

- The creation of professional forums and institutional platforms to provide a space for discussion and joint reflection as well as opportunities for first-hand experience at networking. This experience should extend to using collaborative written communication in both synchronous and asynchronous forms
- Making informed policy decisions based on research and evidence-based practice
- Creating a work environment that fosters digital literacy development by providing the necessary infrastructure
- Taking joint responsibility for development by providing training and supporting pedagogies using digital technologies
- Supporting both top-down and bottom-up development

On the one hand these recommendations are case-specific and address the research questions in the study. On the other hand they provide a further link in the understanding of the complex dynamics of changing social practices, new literacies and language learning. This is especially important as policy-makers within educational settings are not always practitioners in the field they are not always aware of practical needs and changes in pedagogy. Also with reference to this case study, the recommendations put

forward have direct applications in decision-making by providing a theoretically supported comparative element.

7 Reflection on the research process

This section is a summary of the various stages of the whole research process and reflections on them. The choice of the first person as a narrator reflects the personal nature of the reflection and the subjective experience.

Carrying out this study has been a circular and on-going process with several intermediate stages and much reflection. As research, personal and professional interests interlink, the project has been very much an all pervading experience. Thoughts, impressions, experiences kept informing and feeding on each other. The spiral-like language learning process seemed reflected in the development of the research project, where ideas get drafted, confirmed, changed or consolidated, revisited, used, internalised, expanded on and so forth. Similarly, it seemed important to reflect and take time to let ideas simmer, while expanding others, in order to revisit them with newly gained insight.

In order to retain as much of the reflection process as possible and in order to revisit ideas and impressions, a digital recorder was used at times and a journal was kept. The writing took the form of note taking, key phrases jotted down to record impressions and considerations in more or less real time. Rather than simply discussing general issues relating to doing research, below is a thematic breakdown of some of the main points of reflection that occurred as part of this particular project.

Issues concerning the literature review

Although there were initial ideas to explore and questions to answer, the literature review helped to bring a sharper focus, provide the narrative for the research itself and identify gaps in the literature.

The literature review was the starting point of the whole investigative process. It was also constant work in progress as reading kept informing and directing the project. Paradoxically, it was also the finishing point, which gave a circularity to the project. The research questions informed the initial bibliography. This in turn led to further writers and existing research in the area, which then linked back to the initial questions and issues to be investigated. The project changed shape and focus as a result of expanding the literature review and further reading was selected to expand, complement and reinforce previous reading. Existing literature underpinned all stages of the research and findings were referred back to it. The process was very much a circular one of linking strands, ensuring all aspects mentioned in one section found their corresponding part in another. All the in-text references were cross-referenced with those in the literature review. The volume of literature consulted increased, so the design of the project got clearer. However, the impression of it remaining fuzzy at the edges was never totally overcome. Reading, on the one hand, informed and, on the other, raised further questions. I sometimes found myself thinking in different directions, considering issues to investigate, only to have to rethink the scope and the relevance to the work at hand.

The literature review constituted a never ending task and it will remain an active part of my professional life even after the conclusion of this project. It was both extremely interesting and at the same time frustrating as it seemed impossible to draw clear boundaries.

The literature review has not only helped me shape and structure the project, it has helped me become a more critical practitioner. I have been thinking carefully about how I am approaching new courses and have made links with wider issues of access, motivation and teacher presence discussed in the research. In some ways research has informed my professional practice by empowering me and enabling me to have a stronger and supported view through the writings of others. This was then fed back to research through experience. In other words experience has helped me better understand other scenarios and writings by other researchers and has provided valuable insight when making links with the study and my own teaching environment. The literature review and writings on the subject of e-learning have greatly impacted my own perception and thinking on how to ensure education stays in the equation of change and on how to keep critical links between education, the changing roles of agents, including teachers and students, and the importance of research-backed training to move from intuition-guided to information-guided decision-making approaches for institutions and practitioners. The literature review has reinforced existing beliefs and practices and has helped me address them more critically and with a more

solid empirical support. Extensive reading within the NLS tradition has strengthened my perception of the need to empower the language teaching profession. It has helped me critically position the institution in the case study on the innovation-adoption continuum and reconsider situated social practices with reference to theoretical support and analytical tools provided by writings in NLS and Martin's (2009) classifications of digital competence.

Carrying out this research study, has made me review the value of education in a broad sense and applied to language teaching and learning, i.e. moving from provider of information and materials to facilitator to help students take charge of their learning experience and be more empowered by it. It has made me think about my own ability as a teacher to embrace critically the changing roles of teaching and provide the necessary guidance to promote self-sufficient and independent use of resources.

Issues concerning methodology and techniques

Reading about how to carry out research seems to make more sense after first-hand experience of doing it. This also adds to the circular nature of the whole process: reading about how to do it, doing it and revisiting it, with reference to the initial reading and the gained experience. The circularity of the project also applies to the scope and breadth of the research in terms of its research questions and conceptual frameworks. Not only reading, but

also peer advice and supervisory support are a central aspect of this reflective process.

Adequate descriptions of the contexts, settings and procedures required careful consideration of the reality being investigated, in order to provide as truthful a picture as possible, enable the reader to best understand the context and guarantee transparency. Feedback on this was valuable as it helped overcome those instances where the information provided seemed clear to the writer (as a result of the insider and active participant roles) but lacked clarity or was ambiguous to an outsider. This was the case with the sample for this case study. To the writer, the geographical differences implied culturally established differences in many other areas of life. This element, however, was initially not made clear enough to the reader. While the case study concerned one overarching institution, these geographical differences seemed at times to be important, as they affect policy and perception, hence the reluctance to completely abandon the geographical divide.

The circularity of the process was also felt in terms of methodological choices and support. Critical reflection on the epistemology of this study meant finding links between the rationales for the study, the choices of a case study approach and combining mixed methods and then feeding them back into the research itself. The outcome of this critical reflection on research paradigms, epistemology and methodology could be seen not so much in the findings themselves but in the understanding of the process

that led to them.

While a positivist paradigm never seemed adequate to the research in question, the consideration of any one paradigm seems to fall short of a sense of practicality and realism. This study embraces elements of post-positivism, interpretivism and post-modernism. Elements of post-positivism can be found in the combining of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis. Qualitative data can be found in tables and provides numerical data. The interpretivist paradigm, which rests on communication, meaning-making and interpretations on the part of the people involved, also underpins the data collection through the perceptions of the participants and the data analysis through the interpretation of the researcher.

Downsizing the project also seemed to be part of work in progress. As mentioned elsewhere this was not meant to simplify the study, but to create a sharper focus. For instance the research questions in this study were revisited several times until they were narrowed down to 3, which provided a much sharper focus of analysis. The same happened with reference to the analytical framework. Many interesting theories or analytical angles were discarded as they would have made the project unmanageable.

Flexibility and willingness to reconsider aspects of the research were also important elements and were sometimes demanded by external factors. In

this case study external factors included the impossibility of accessing the UK institution and the (un)reliable nature of respondents. Teachers and students alike, often failed to read the questionnaire questions properly and provide full answers. Sometimes the answers were downright incorrect. Moreover, many agreed to take part in the research and then disappeared. This at times meant reviewing the time-frame for completion of certain stages of the project.

The circularity of the research process also applies to the data analysis part. A better understanding of how research is carried out is work in constant progress and in constant evolution, as every reading of the data collected can provide new slants, connections and interpretations. In terms of the data-collection and analysis process itself, there are a number of issues that, with hindsight and experience, could have been dealt with differently. One aspect could relate to making the process more participatory and cyclical for the practitioners involved. This would mean organising several informal occasions for talk and feedback on the data analysis, thus returning some of the ownership of the data to them. This however would have been time-consuming and logistically not easy to handle. The other aspect would be of a more practical nature by making more extensive use of software for organising data and recording references. Research questions and analytical frameworks were constantly fine-tuned. Designing questionnaires and interviewing are skills that have to be acquired through experience. While being aware of the importance of asking the right

questions in questionnaires or interviews, it is not until the data analysis stage that it becomes clear to what extent we have succeeded. On a couple of issues, I would have liked to probe further and get more details and information, particularly on practical teaching resources used by teachers (i.e. to get evidence of how they do what they do). I also realized that some of the data I collected systematically was not directly relevant to the research questions. In order not to lose valuable information, I decided to create a further discussion section in relation to a fourth research question (e.g. the role of the teacher and the institutions) into which to weave this data. Moreover, as the research questions and analytical framework kept undergoing revision, in particular with reference to the role of writing, this meant that the data which had already been collected, did not always provide optimum coverage of the issue. For example, the role of writing as a tool for communication in much of the literature and the perceived role attributed to it by teachers in the study could have led to further developments. In fact there seems to be a gap in the literature between writing as a communicative practice and what teachers perceive as 'writing skills'.

Issues relating to the insider-outsider role of the researcher

A point of reflection concerns the need for a regular review of the impact on the study of my role as insider and outsider (especially as personal and

professional motivations lie behind it). Doing research as both insider and outsider to the context being investigated posed a big challenge, i.e. finding the balance between insider knowledge and information from the data as well as minimising suggestive questioning. The insider position when analysing the data can lead to the researcher bringing in personal details that are not supported by the data. On the other hand, insider knowledge can help identify 'wrong' information or situations where it is clear that the respondent has misread the question. This is something I came across in my own work, with reference to answers related to the provision of infrastructure, for example. It became clear to me that in a couple of instances the replies referred to institutions that were not part of the case study being investigated. Where this information was obvious (i.e. on access to the internet or infrastructure or communicative practices using platforms) the data was not considered. However it provided a glimpse of other realities and contexts that operate differently, although in the same geographical and cultural settings. One explanation could relate these differences to infrastructure and practices in higher education contexts or professional companies as opposed to language schools or life-long learning institutes. Similarly, being an insider for some of the respondents, I was exposed to greater information that came through 'unofficial' channels, e.g. an informal chat in the corridor which, however, was extremely relevant to the study being carried out. I also had an informal conversation with a student who told me about her use of the internet, chats and blogs to achieve practical goals and communicate with relatives

all over the world. Her testimony to how the process of reading and writing is useful for language learning and thinking in another language, however, is 'lost' as she is not part of the study. Yet the information she provided is interesting and seemingly in contrast with what those students taking part in the study have reported. The data for the students comes exclusively from the questionnaires thus it has not been triangulated with data from interviews.

Key theoretical ideas

As I was gaining a better understanding of some of the theoretical concepts in the field of e-learning and education, I was able to make connections to my own professional practice and context. The theoretical underpinning provided strength and focus to the investigation as a whole and to my role as practitioner and researcher. It linked personal impressions with grounded research and increased awareness of the fact that study of e-learning has too often reflected 'the relatively superficial examinations that characterize a new field rather than the more robust studies that can be built on the foundational theories and research of a more mature field' (Thompson, 2007, p.168). My own instinctive understanding of professional practices and policy choices was reinforced through theoretical underpinning as was the fact that the whimsical nature of e-learning-related policy in many institutions (including the case study institution)

seems to lack solid research and evidence-based support. Similarly the extension from communities of practice from outside the classroom to inside seems to be governed by personal circumstances and motivations rather than by theoretical and pedagogical thinking. The literature review has made me think about where my personal professional practice and the institutional policies and visions of the school I work for, and other schools I know, position themselves. As a result I have tried to explore my own practice further in the light of what I have read and understood so far. The theoretical support also seems to be of value for the underpinning of the role of writing and the communicative dimension of the process of learning using synchronous and asynchronous tools (e.g. chats and conferencing carried out as a simultaneous activity by all parties or blogs and messaging carried out at deferred times).

When discussing Martin's (2009) levels, I have tried to put myself under the microscope. This has also helped me re-consider my own teaching context allowing me to make more informed sense of my current work-related situation. It is helping me better understand where changes are coming from and how likely they are to move along the innovation-adoption continuum. This in turn could help find greater integration between an intuitive and empirical approach (which seems to be typical in this relatively new field) and supporting theory and research in e-learning and to put it in Thompson's words (2007, p.169), 'integrate theories and empirical finding across domains, cultures and methods'.

Many contextual factors are included in my research questions and these form an automatic part of reflection as they become the focus of analysis. The awareness that context shapes events is not new to me, but being able to address the issue with greater theoretical underpinning sheds different light on the research and the practice. While it is not a new concept that our own values, both personal and professional, are embedded in the cultural and economic contexts in which we live and operate, it seems healthy to revisit it with greater awareness from time to time. Conversations with colleagues have once again made me aware of how embedded in social practice and culture language learning and teaching is, from the point of view of pedagogy and institutional policy.

Analysis of the data occurred within the NLS framework which can be broken down into literacy as social practices (e.g. Street, 2003a; Street, 2003b) and literacy practices concerned with new post-typographical literacies (e.g. Lankshear and Knobel, 2006). As part of on-going reflection and transfer to the context at hand, I have been focusing on how they interact with each other and on the importance of training and guidance as catalysts for successful development in language education to take place. I have become more tuned to my own and my students' digital literacy and social practices and how my role as teacher can influence these practices in the context of foreign language learning. The theoretical underpinning and available literature have made my evaluation more confident and focused and have brought home the importance at policy levels of a holistic

approach to developing new strategies and not ad hoc afterthoughts and the importance of further research to move beyond the intuition-based practice.

Issues related to my own practice

Carrying out this study, as well as my direct recent professional experience, has made me rethink my professional values. This evaluation process is the conscious result of gaining greater awareness of issues both theoretical and arising from research done elsewhere. My roles as practitioner in the classroom, pedagogical advisor in middle-management position and researcher have complemented each other and given me a more rounded picture of what happens at various levels within an adult learning institution. While on the one hand complementing each other, these roles can also be in conflict with each other: number crunching vs. pedagogy; statistics vs. teacher training; status quo vs. change and so on. I thought my position could be one of mediator between the grass-roots and higher management, but this proved harder than expected when there are political and economic aspects involved.

As a result of some changes in my work situation I am returning to my professional roots, meaning that my professional practice is more centred around working with the learners, helping them function using another language, providing them with skills and strategies, guiding them to

become more autonomous and empowered. Reading and carrying out this project has helped me focus on learner autonomy and the importance of the role of the teacher in this process.

This shift in professional practice has meant the possibility to re-gain a voice in terms of pedagogical values and teaching practice that may not necessarily represent the institution's. The personal journey of awareness gaining has led me to reconsider the current policies at the institution where I work, with particular reference to issues of access and communities of practice. Much pedagogical decision-making is driven by top-down decisions (overarching and local). At the decision-making level of the school where I teach, there is little understanding and personal engagement in practices using collaborative digital technologies, nor does there seem to be a perceived need for making digital collaborative resources available to those teachers who might want to engage with them. Being able to incorporate other social practices in my language teaching has provided me with a stronger pedagogical foothold in the classroom

With reference to writing I started looking at my own experience writing in another language using Skype. I started reflecting on the extent to which communicating with native and non-native speakers can encourage or 'problematise' the scaffolding effect of language acquisition and usage. My own experience confirms the benefit of improved vocabulary acquisition and usage; greater confidence and more sophisticated sentence structure.

When communicating with native speakers, I have consciously taken advantage of the scaffolding effect this exposure provides and I have implemented filters and adopted a more active attitude, which has encouraged me to use other PC tools to verify and check good language structure and vocabulary and notice other people's problem areas.

As mentioned in the literature review, a further point of reflection concerned the date of publication of various writings, as this can relate to awareness and desirability of e-learning and blended learning; regular and reliable access to information technology; development of digital literacy skills and engagement in literacy practices using digital technologies. The data seems to indicate that at times there seemed to be greater resonance among practitioners in the local contexts (based on their comments and outlook) with more dated literature. This could be seen as a level of local 'maturity' that is not ripe for the leap projected in certain literature. Moreover a lack of resonance with the local could lead practitioners and policy-makers to distance themselves from the innovation-adoption process.

8 Implications for wider professional practice

Recommendations arising from this research and specifically related to the case-study institution were outlined in chapter 6, Conclusions and Recommendations. This chapter outlines some wider-ranging implications, derived from the study, which are of interest to professional practice more generally, to institutions, teachers and learner making the transition from classroom to blended learning, with particular reference to the issues involved in taking changing digital literacy practices into account.

The study contributes to wider implications in different ways. It identifies the need for the whole profession to gain visibility and power through awareness of digital literacy practices and involvement in communities of practice that encourage positive pedagogies at the service of education and foreign language learning. As the educational system is more likely to evolve rather than to undergo sudden revolution (the Becta Report, 2008), this implies a degree of orchestrated change and decisions at policy levels which have to take into consideration the multiplicity of agents present in the global and local context (Garrison and Anderson, 2003; Anderson, 2008; Chapelle, 2010; Coryell and Chlup, 2007). Also according to Davies (2011) it is design not improvisation that creates the best conditions for success. Moreover, as mentioned in the section on access in chapter 5, for wider institutional adoption of information technology and digital literacy practices to occur, theoretical underpinning on the benefits and practical information on how to approach this shift help go beyond the much more

subjective intuition-based approach (Coryell and Chlup, 2007; Lea and Goodfellow, 2009; Chapelle, 2010; Davies and Fletcher, 2010, Hernandez-Serrano and Jones, 2010). Identifying ways of moving in this direction could be a first step towards creating a different vision within an institution with regards to its policies. What is needed is a greater understanding of the benefits, both pedagogical and institutional on the one hand and, on the other, practical proposals on how to best proceed, making the institution an active part in this shift and helping them to reach out to practitioners who would like to embrace a more blended learning approach. Design and policy ensure education and good pedagogy remain at the forefront of adult foreign language teaching, with the aim of empowering learners and engaging them in social practices that link private, professional and language learning spheres through common skills and practices.

The balance between serving the profession through innovation and tradition is greatly influenced by the local cultural and economic contexts. Practices also go through the understanding of concepts and how the context shapes language and practice. The concept of blended learning for instance, in the context of the case study is shaped by the language that defines it and the usage that translates it into practice. Some context specific considerations and suggestions are made in the conclusions and recommendations section above. Wider-ranging comments on implications below, have been divided into two areas concerning pedagogy and policy-making with a focus on empowerment, a critical approach to digital

technology and pedagogy, and integrated communication and exchanges between researchers, policy-makers and practitioners.

Implications for pedagogy

Pedagogical implications foreground the changing roles of teachers and learners in the context of new digital literacy practices and changing communication patterns. They address the need for empowerment through digital literacy skills and practices that go beyond simple usage into what Martin (2009) calls the transformation stage and take a critical stance to ensure learning remains at the forefront. Below are the main implications drawn from this study.

- Pedagogy has to incorporate a shift in approach from what to learn to how to learn. This not only implies access to digital technology and engagement with digital literacy practices, it also means a change in the roles of teachers and learners in the learning process. The data shows there is a further challenge to the assumption that using new digital technologies automatically leads to greater learner autonomy. The latter in fact should not be equated with access to learning resources and functioning in a self-study mode. The role of the teacher becomes more focused on guiding learners on how and where to access information than on providers of information.

Learning becomes a more empowering experience as it is about gaining control of one's own learning and relying less on processing something prepared by the expert teacher. Nevertheless, teachers have to maintain an active role and so be able to guide learners through the maze of learning opportunities available to them. This in turn also means adopting an open approach to the changes in technologies and digital literacy practices.

- Practitioners and researchers need to make sure education is not led by technology, that ways are identified to ensure learners, teachers and institutions are not left alone in deciding how best to use new technologies and that teachers can suggest successful strategies for learning with them. Digital technology and pedagogy are two sides of the same coin. Software and applications are only one aspect of the issue. Another aspect is given by pedagogical values. In fact, according to Snyder (2007, p. 400) 'a set of questions needs to be asked. On what basis should teachers judge software? What kind of instruction is required to support the software? What do teachers want the software tools to help produce?'
- Empowerment can also be achieved through the foregrounded role of writing. Writing as 'real communication' and a communicative literacy practice can improve reading and writing skills, help articulate ideas and thoughts and lead to a higher order of thinking

as well as sustain motivation. It can further empower learners by allowing them to take part in new forms of communication and digital literacy practices in the target language and enable them to engage in social and economic practices.

- Increased links and integrated communication and exchanges between researchers, policy-makers and practitioners could positively influence the changing literacy skills and practices and the innovation-adoption process discussed in this study. In fact, research and training can provide important links between pedagogy, institutional policies and application in the field. Research is needed to go beyond the intuition-based approach and according to Hernandez-Serrano and Jones (2010, p.4), 'reflective and formalised activity is required on how to apply the new tools to bring significant benefits in its informative and cognitive use: in other words, training....'

Implications for policy-makers

For policy-makers to make informed decisions about their context and in view of pedagogy and changing literacy practices, there is a need for them to examine the context further in relation to these theoretical underpinnings and analytical frameworks provided by existing and future research. Some wide-ranging implications for policy-makers follow:

- Policy-makers have the pedagogical and ethical need to consider bridging the gap between traditional and e-learning in ways that fit in with local social practices and changes in literacies by developing strategies to overcome hindrances and to scale from an individual to an institutional level (Freire, 2008).

- They also have the responsibility for, on the one hand, creating a more solid link between management and the teaching force on issues of access to digital technology for successful pedagogy and, on the other, acknowledging and supporting grass-roots initiatives if they reflect changes in social practices that have a pedagogical value for language learning.

- Training needs to be provided for teachers to develop their professional knowledge and be put in the position to offer guidance and to operate with these new tools and resources (Chapelle, 2010; Davis and Fletcher, 2010, Hernandez-Serrano and Jones, 2010). Meredith and Newton (2004, p.46), further argue for significant staff development prior to any entry to e-learning and regret that the reality for staff on the ground is that this form of development does not exist.

The above comments are derived, from the literature and were confirmed by the data collected in this research. They suggest a need for further research which is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

9 Further research and dissemination of findings

The current study, while trying to provide answers to the research questions initially set out, also identified areas worthy of investigation as part of further research. These have arisen as part of the process in defining methodology and analytical frameworks, as well as from data collected but not used, as not directly relevant to what was being investigated. The value of the project also lies in the fact that it situates itself in a context with still limited research and data. The data has been translated into potential situations and scenarios relating to the technological innovation-adoption process in foreign language acquisition within a Swiss institution. Moreover, suggestions have been made towards narrowing the gap between the literature and the applications on the ground. Publication of the study, therefore, could be a small step towards filling this gap and encouraging further research in the area.

Further research

Overall, there seems to be a justified need for further research into literacies and practices involving the use of digital technologies. This could lead institutions to shift their attention to new forms of communication and text and so provide the right mix of educational input and support for both learners and teachers. Given the technological tools for recording writing, further research could lead to looking in more detail into 'talk' and

in particular writing as talk. M-learning could also provide interesting ground for further research.

Digital literacy practices including genres typical of the networking sphere (webinars, web-based communication using Skype or other VoIP -voice over IP- protocols, professional blogs and digital presence on the internet; search literacies) are also entering the working world and the professional scenes. These are electronically mediated and have their own genres and rules (Wetzel, 2020). Further investigation of this aspect falls outside the scope of this project but the issues could be revisited in further research and results presented as a separate study.

On perceptions on whether there is an age-based digital divide in computer literacy practices at home and in the classroom, teachers in the study are divided. According to some, age plays an important role in as much as 'it has an impact' (TS3); 'it might be a problem for someone like me but I guess for younger generations I don't think it is an issue' (TS1). Others like TS4 believe it is 'absolutely not true [as] humans are adapting quickly, even adults' and her views are supported by TN12's who believes that 'more and more [teachers] are becoming computer literate and then there's people of different ages who just don't use computers that much'. The teachers in this case study seem to confirm the findings by Haigh (2011, p.4) that 'although younger people are more likely to be positive about technology, there is evidence that a good attitude to technology, at any age, correlates with good study habits'. However, there is scope in researching this aspect

further in order to best inform choices on pedagogy and institutional policy.

The quantitative data collected in this study while providing important means for comparison is based on too few participants for wider generalisation to be viable. More numerical comparisons could be extrapolated, for instance the quantitative data analysis could also be expanded to include a gender and age split.

In addition, there seems to be scope for expanding on the notion of identity. Originally this was just touched upon in this study (as it is a huge topic in itself and I feared it would move away from the main focus). It is, however, a noteworthy topic within teaching writing in an EFL context as well as within digital literacy (and relates to writing and nationality and maybe gender and age). In particular it would be interesting to address identity outside the sphere of EAP where most of the work on the topic seems to have been carried out.

Closely linked to identity and writing is work done using an 'academic literacies' approach. There is scope for further research carried out in terms of 'academic literacies' as an analytic way to indicate a framework for exploring and theorising writing and literacy. In particular with a view to bridging the gap between theory and pedagogy and bridging the pedagogic gap between academic literacies in a more 'common-sense' understanding and academic literacies in adult foreign language education. What is understood by 'academic literacies' is still mainly theoretical in approach.

According to Lillis and Scott (2008) the ideological strand of 'academic literacies' (referred to in chapter 1) attempts to reform higher education but academic literacies is still in its infancy and there is a need for more specific pedagogies. In fact, in terms of pedagogy it has remained mostly invisible with the exception of EAP (English for academic purposes) involving international students. In order to empower student writers there is an urgency to focus on a range of genres and not just the dominant written genres, part of assessment practices in higher education (Russell et al, 2009, p.412). Moreover there is a need to engage in dialogue with the EAP and ESP community of second language research and teaching, which has its own varied theories of genre and approaches to teaching, often existing side-by-side with first-language efforts (Russell et al, 2009, p. 417).

Extending the case study to include not only schools (belonging to the same overarching institution) in the Italian speaking area, but also the German and French speaking areas was thought to add interesting insight in terms of the extent to which digital literacy practices can be affected by geography, through culture and levels of technological awareness and use. With hindsight, the findings were too limited to draw any meaningful conclusions. However, more extensive investigation of the north-south split addressed in this study may be an area for further research.

Finally, replicating this study in other contexts could add strength to evidence-based research and policy-making.

Dissemination of findings

In terms of disseminating the findings of this research, there are at present a number of potential paths to be followed. Apart from the thesis itself, I can envisage rewriting some of the content into lengths and formats suitable for articles and submit them to professional journals for publication. These journals may include the following, amongst others:

Journal of second language writing

Foreign language annals

Modern language Journal

Language learning and technology

Voice (IATEFL)

TESOL Quarterly

ELT Journal

ETAS (English Teaching Association of Switzerland)

E-learning papers

Dissemination of some of the findings can also occur digitally, via professional forums, which seem to be increasing in numbers and importance within the professional community. Online professional conferencing or presentations at professional events could be a further option and possible path to follow.

At a more local level there will be feedback provided to all the teachers

who took part in the study. Initial feedback will be in the form of a report and opportunities to further engage in discussions and increase awareness and will be favoured and welcomed.

In the same way the findings will be made available to the institution for consideration at policy level.

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11 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Pilot Study Questionnaire

EdD Education – E-learning in language education. An investigation with reference to adult education contexts

QUESTIONNAIRE (PILOT STUDY)

1. How long have you been teaching English as a foreign language?
2. What, in your opinion, makes a good language teacher?
3. What, in your opinion, makes a good language learner?
4. What, in your opinion, what makes a good language classroom, in terms of materials, infrastructure, resources?
5. In your school/institution do you/your students get access to pcs?
If so, how many pcs are there and how often can/do you access them?
6. Do you/your students get access to the internet?
If so, is the school/institution a WI-FI area or not?
7. What do you understand by e-learning?
8. How do you perceive technological change in and outside the language learning classroom?
9. Are there differences, in your opinion, between what happens in terms of digital technology in and outside the classrooms?

In your personal life:

10. How often do you look for information on the web? What kind of information do you look for?
11. Do you take part in online discussion forums? If so how often?
12. Do you read the news online? If so how often?
13. Do you communicate electronically e.g. email, skype, messenger, manga, other? Please specify.
14. Do you use Virtual Learning Environments? If yes please specify.
15. Do you use digital photography? Do you manipulate digital images?
16. Do you use any of the following:
 - word processing and document preparation packages
 - databases
 - spreadsheets
 - desk top publishing
 - digital and interactive games
17. When (if at all) do you use the above? What is your objective? Why do you chose this to more traditional means (if any exist)?
18. What new skills have you had to learn?
19. How did you learn new skills? (course, self-taught, with help from friends and relatives, etc.)?
What motivated you to do so?

In your professional life:

20. What room is there, in your opinion, for digital technology in the language learning classroom?
21. What practices/skills involving digital technologies that you have introduced/acquired in your personal life (e.g. e-mail, e-bay, blogs, mangas, photography, online information searches, etc) have you been able to transfer to your professional life?
22. What changes involving digital technologies have you introduced in your classroom/teaching practices? Why?
23. In what way has digital technology helped you as a language teacher? In what way has it made your professional life more complicated?
24. Which activities do you think are suitable for e-learning in language study (e.g. vocabulary, worksheets, task solving, collaborative writing, etc)?
Which skills do they address?
25. Which activities do you think are not suitable for e-learning in language study? Why?
26. In your opinion and from your experience, is there a technological bias in terms of age, gender, class, access to digital resources, acquired skills, motivation?
27. How can these gaps be bridged? What is your experience?

28. What skills are important in language learning and teaching today?
Why?
29. How can important skills best be incorporated into the language classroom?
30. In your opinion, what short/long-term implications does e-learning have for learner autonomy? Please explain.
31. In your opinion, what short/long-term implications does e-learning have for developing writing skills?
32. In your opinion, what short/long-term implications does e-learning have for more collaborative learning/working?
33. Where do you get additional teaching materials from? (e.g. books, in-house developed material, self designed material (how?), existing material downloadable online, other?)
34. Please specify type of activity for each chosen point and how regularly you use them.
35. What would you like to try out/do regularly in your classroom and why?
36. What infrastructure would you need?
37. What barriers if any are there in your opinion to e-learning in the language learning context, e.g. access, skills, infrastructure, time, etc. (at both personal and professional levels)?
38. How could these barriers be overcome?

39. What changes would you like implemented at institutional levels?
Why?
40. What role do you think learning institutions should play in the
delivery of innovation and technical support?
41. What are your views on existing training needs/opportunities for
the professional teaching practitioner?

Appendix 2 – Letter of invitation

Dear colleagues,

I am currently carrying out a study for my doctoral research (EdD in Education) at the Open University, Milton Keynes, UK.

The research focuses on e-learning in foreign language education. It seeks to:

- explore existing notions of language learning with reference to changes in technology and literacy practices
- shed some light on the perceived conflicts regarding the use of digital resources for language learning in and outside the classrooms (for all involved, i.e. learners, teachers and institutions)
- consider pedagogical and institutional implications.

I would like to invite teachers operating in different areas of Switzerland, with different personal and professional backgrounds, to take part in this study. This would require you to fill in a questionnaire.

Please be reassured that your answers will be treated with the utmost confidentiality, and under no circumstances will any of the information you provide be passed on, linked to your personal and professional identities or published without seeking your permission first.

Please also note that this is my own personal work and is in no way related to the school I work for or to my professional roles therein.

It is likely that I may ask you to take part in a follow up exchange/interview but more about that later. In exchange for your time and effort I am willing to offer you feedback on the issues and a final report of the findings. I also hope that reflection and discussion on current professional issues will prove as rewarding a process for you as it is for me.

Thank you.

Nadia Marzocco

e-mail address: nadia.marzocco@gmail.com

Appendix 3 – Background to study provided to teachers

Brief introduction to study being undertaken.

The study addresses the issue of transfer of digital technologies and skills between life inside and outside the English adult language learning classroom. It wishes to identify what it is about language learning that poses particular problems in the adoption of e-learning and what existing research backs this up. It also wishes to investigate aspects of access, gender or cultural bias and implications for pedagogy (writing in English, learner autonomy and teaching presence) and institutional policies (infrastructure, training). As e-learning is a vast area even within the more confined space of EFL/ESL, the specific interest in the e-learning of writing skills in English in adult language education sharpens the focus of the study.

The rationale behind the research questions has arisen out of a personal and professional need to link research to practice. At an intuitive level and from personal and professional experience the understanding and adoption of e-learning is not a straightforward process by neither learners nor teachers on one side and institutions, pedagogy developers and course designers on the other. In fact, personal professional experience seems to point to the fact that although different literacy practices are used by both students and teachers outside the classroom, these do not always easily transfer to language learning and teaching. There seems to be ongoing tension between traditional and digital resources used within the adult learning institution where I work.

The more recent transition to electronic multimedia communication encompasses shifts in skills and literacies that are far wider reaching than any previous changes (except perhaps the introduction of print). Jewitt and Kress (2003a) and Snyder (2003) in line with Halliday's social semiotic theory of communication (in Butt, 2002), emphasise the critical need to 'read' and 'write' using a multimodal approach. This carries twofold implications for teaching writing skills. On one hand the need to teach

writing (in English) as a mode of communication, and on the other hand the need to improve digital literacy skills to maximise access to resources available in digital environments and to increase learners' potential of partaking in a new communication order.

Most days/everyday

Question 7

What do you use computers/the internet for in your private life?

- Writing e-mails and documents
- Databases
- Spreadsheets
- Reading the news
- Finding information on the web
- Blogging
- Downloading films/music
- Chatting
- Buying and selling
- Games
- Other (please specify)

.....

Question 8

How often do you use computers in your professional life?

Not at all

Once/twice a week

Three/four times a week

At the weekend

Most days/everyday

Question 9

What do you use computers/the internet for in your teaching practice?

Communicating with learners

Communicating with other practitioners

Blogging

Video conferencing

Professional forums

Preparing activity worksheets for learners

Devising online tasks for learners

Other

Please specify

.....

Question 10

Does your institution provide you with access to computers and the internet?

Yes

Please give details.....

No

Not sure

Question 11

How long have you been using computers/the internet for private purposes?

≥ 1 year

2-4years

5-6 years

≤ 7 years

Question 12

How long have you been using computers/the internet for teaching purposes?

≥ 1 year

2-4years

5-6 years

≤ 7 years

Question 13

Which online activities, in your opinion, are suitable in an EFL context?

Vocabulary building

Grammar practice

Web-quests

Online chats

Blogging

Moodle

Other

Please specify

.....

Question 14

Do you use any of the above activities regularly in your classrooms?

Please specify.

Question 15

Where do you get your teaching material from?

Commercially available materials

In-house materials

The internet

Design your own

Other

Please specify

.....

Question 16

How did you acquire the new skills required to use digital technology in your professional practice?

Self-taught

Attending courses (personally financed)

Friends and relative

Professional training (provided by workplace)

Other

Please specify

.....

Question 17

Is there anything about the role of computers in your teaching that you may wish to add?

Appendix 5 – Questionnaire delivered to students

Questionnaire (students)

Question 1

Sex M F

Question 2

Age group

23-30

31-39

40-49

50-60+

Question 3

Years of learning English

≥ 3

4-5

6-10

≤ 10

Question 4

What level are you currently attending?

Low

Intermediate

High

Question 5

Why are you learning English?

International diploma preparation

For academic reasons/studies

For business reasons/work

Socializing/travelling

Other

Question 6

What nationality are you?

Please specify

Question 7

How often do you use computers in your private life?

Not at all

Once/twice a week

Three/four times a week

At the weekend

Most days/everyday

Question 8

What do you use computers/the internet for in your private life?

Writing e-mails and documents

Databases

Spreadsheets

Reading the news

Finding information on the web

Blogging

Downloading films/music

Chatting

Buying and selling

Games

Other (please specify)

.....

Question 9

How often do you use computers/the internet for learning English?

Not at all

Once/twice a week

Three/four times a week

At the weekend

Most days/everyday

Question 10

How do you use computers/the internet to improve your English?

Communicating with learners

Blogging

Video conferencing

Forums

Doing activity worksheets given by teacher

Other

Please specify

.....

Question 11

How long have you been using computers/the internet for private purposes?

- ≥ 1 year
- 2-4years
- 5-6 years
- ≤ 7 years

Question 12

How long have you been using computers/the internet for improving your English?

- ≥ 1 year
- 2-4years
- 5-6 years
- ≤ 7 years

Question 13

How much does the computer/the internet help you improve your English?

- Hard to say
- Not very much
- A little
- A lot
- A great deal

Question 14

Which online activities, in your opinion, are suitable for improving your English?

- Vocabulary building
- Grammar practice
- Web-quests
- Online chats
- Blogging
- Moodle
- Other
- Please specify

.....

Question 15

In your opinion, has learning writing skills become more important as a result of increased digital literacy practices (e.g. social networking outside the classroom; using online platforms and resources)?

If so please explain.

Question 16

What would you like to do in your classroom, using digital technology, that your teacher has not introduced yet and why?
Please explain.

Question 17

How did you acquire the new skills required to use digital technology?

Self-taught

Attending courses (personally financed)

Friends and relative

Professional training (provided by workplace)

Other

Please specify

.....

Question 18

Is there anything about the role of computers in the study of English as a foreign language you would like to add?

Appendix 6 – Issues and questions guiding semi-structured interviews

Aim of interview/focus group:

- identify reasons for resistance (personal and wider)
- expand on questions from questionnaire (more quantifiable)
- identify inconsistencies – aids triangulation

The questions below are guidelines to direct the interview/focus groups sessions. The numbers are for coding purposes. The interview itself does not have to follow this order.

Further questions might arise from the initial analysis of questionnaires.

1.

What kind of classes do you teach? (age, gender, cultural background, language level, objectives)

2.

What do you understand by e-learning?

3.

What do you understand by blended learning?

4.

How do you perceive changes in language teaching with reference to new digital technology and social networking?

5.

Which activities, in your opinion, are not suitable for e-learning in an EFL context? Please explain.

6.

In your opinion, has the increase of digital technology provided a shift in the skills needed for communication?

If so please explain.

7.

What is the role of speaking in your teaching practice? Which activities support it?

Please explain.

8.

What is the role of writing in your teaching practice? Which activities support it?

Please explain.

9.

In your opinion, has teaching/learning writing skills become more important as a result of increased digital literacy practices (e.g. social networking outside the classroom; using online platforms and resources)?

If so please explain.

10.

In your opinion, has the role of the EFL teacher changed as a result of technical and digital innovations.

If yes, please specify.

11.

What is the role of writing in a communicative approach?

12.

(based on answers to Q 16, 17 in questionnaire)

What would you like to do in your classroom that you have not tried out yet

and why?

Please explain.

13.

What infrastructure/training would you expect a teaching institution to provide for good quality EFL learning and teaching to take place?

Please explain.

14.

(can also get from employer)

What teacher training for professional development is currently being provided by your institution?

Please specify.

Elicit some comments on:

writing as a skill (including the use of discussion rooms online) to

- articulate thoughts (improve reading and writing skills and lead to higher thinking order)
- provide real communication (in line with communicative approach in ELT)
- sustain motivation
- transfer literacy practices outside the classroom to language learning

the need to address writing:

- increasing demand for e-mail/report writing (companies/intl diplomas) even outside EAP/ESP classes where writing tends to be more foregrounded?

Appendix 7 - Example of coding of interview data

TS4

Below is an example of the colour coding used for thematic categorisation. However, often the categories are not so clear-cut and information may pertain more than one. In such cases more than one colour may have been used and quotes may have pertained different areas of analysis.

This, together with post-interview reflection notes made by the researcher have has been included in the analytical work carried out.

Broadly speaking the colour codes refer to the following themes and ideas

Orange: understanding and perception of e-learning and blended learning

Red: digital literacy issues and changes

Purple: the role of the teacher and teaching activities

Blue: communication and the role of writing and speaking

Light green: the role and responsibilities of institutions

Dark green: autonomous learning

In terms of gender difference in approach and motivation? (n)

no I really think it depends on the individual

E-learning and blended learning (n)

well I guess it s all in the e. the e represents digital tech. So anything that includes dig tech I suppose. Which can be working from home on Skype, working with interactive material in the classroom, looking up courses on the internet or having conference classes using the ability to conference call and Skype All those things I suppose.

Blended learning. Must be a mixture of old and new I guess. Coming from

the old school I would go for blended every time I'd feel more comfortable. Maybe that is one of the reasons why blended learning is a favourite option. People are coming from a place of comfort. At least people over 20. People under 20 are wired for e-learning.

You said blended as a mix of old (more comfortable) with, but instinctively not rationally (n)

humans are people of habit. First precedents are very hard to eradicate or change. If a person has a precedent way of learning it's very hard to learn in another way.

Do we have to learn in another way? (n) what could you blend (n)

the thing with blending is....once the knowledge is there and you've learnt what you have to learn you have to go out there and literally do it and use it. And the world today out there involved dig tech. The very fact that blended learning includes dig tech means you're developing a capacity to use digital media as much as you're learning a language. Your learning to use a language through a dig medium.

Dig literacy prerequisite (n)

tricky question. I think we can learn language from our mothers. We need nothing to learn a language.

Adults(n)

maybe in the approach it is less rote and memory work now and more access to info instantly and if that's the approach we want for learning or having a backup we can refer to instantly to save our brains from having to memorise, then yes I guess it is some sort of pre requisite. Some sort of digital help.

Changes in teaching with ref to dig tech and soc networking (n)

I think it's with the teacher to be one step ahead and to know what services the digital media offers which can be incorporated into listening for example. Calling in video examples, calling in ways of finding vocabulary or translations. Incorporating them into the lessons. Without making the lesson stilted. Students have on hand all this support material. I don't think it's a good idea to speak to a computer. I think human dialogue is unpredictable and therefore it's better to do face to face or through Skype. But similarly to have techniques up ones sleeve to access vocabulary or examples of role plays or expressions. That's useful. Children at school use this for any of their subjects.

Even adults, maybe 10 years ago I would have said people over 50 are not interested they're not going to be able to log on, get the translators out.

But that's not true at all. Humans are adapting quickly, even adults.

Differences between adults and young learners, but we can't draw a line between adults of a certain age are not able to learn. They are learning.

Role of teacher. (n)

I think the teacher obviously is a knowledge base so it knows the answers to the questions a student has. and a teacher can assess the personality of the student and see the best way the student is going to learn and guide the student towards the best way he is going to learn. In the case of dialogue between two humans is different from dialogue with a machine. It's something we need. And maybe teachers can be useful that ways. Bring in a spontaneous kind of communication at whatever level of language the student is learning. I think there'll always be need of a teacher. Students just like the human....

Conflict of teacher with technology? (n)

depends on the teacher. An active teacher will take anything and use it as a

tool and a teacher with a strong mind will dominate the class. It really depends on the strength of the ability to teach of the teacher as to much they are overridden by the technology or by how much the students would prefer it to be filtered through the human.

Communication (n) role of speaking and writing and activities

yes. Mmh. First of all the communicative approach is winning out over form or style because I guess bottom line people need something and I don't think e learning necessarily means written work. At the moment we do a lot of writing emails, translations in writing. But I see my son playing with his friends and it is all spoken. And I see this as a precursor of how things are going to be done in the future.....amazed how 3-4 people working together as fast as possible to achieve a task together speaking.. wiring up.

social networking part shift to spoken? (n)

I think so yes. Just from what I see in my home.

There s a place where the written word is useful. Its reflective, at least for a few seconds and speaking is spontaneous. I think for certain things like achieving tasks it s going to be spoken. I see that coming. People are starting to use Skype in a way they never did. We re at the infancy of this.

Social networking impacting learning abilities (n)

certainly I think it s positive in that it gives greater access to the possibility for dialogue. Whether its written facebook or speaking these games, it just means there s more volume, more opportunity to practice. It seems fun and diverting but what is it s practice. I think it will most probably increase. If this tech develops to the point where companions in a class have the opportunity to chat on Skype from their homes, that would develop as a medium.

Activities (n)

I think the ones that are redundant are the ones that just duplicate the exercises you have in a book. A,b,c, click. They're boring. Not dynamic. I think those kinds of things will gradually fade away. Not that they're not useful but e-learning brings about aspects that are dynamic.

Dynamic. Skype is literally in real time. Even chats and Facebook. You get instant feedback. That's exciting. That's communication. Not saying it's not useful but there'll be less request for the old-fashioned type of exercise as time goes by.

Communicative part suitable for learning g activities (n)

I think so maybe with the exception of pronunciation where you can hear examples. That's useful.

Scope for more writing?

Ideally yes. Problem is that people need English yesterday and they need it for example in their work to achieve specific objectives. They're not fussy about the grammar. They just want the person to understand the key point and if the English they use works that is going to be fine.

I mean e-learning should help them tidying this up and perfecting, but we've got this incredible resistance to the fine points of style when the overriding wish of people who don't speak the language is to get the message across. Why should we bother getting over this (B1/B2 plateau). And I think it's almost peer pressure that holds people there sometimes. We understand each other, why should we make the effort. I don't know. E-learning is so conducive to communicative learning because it has this dynamic aspect. It should be used also for improving language level, grammar and fluency but that depends on the individual.

Role of writing? (n)

certainly writing and certainly in the digital world writing has been reduced to

basic ideas. So there is a place for it but its in a very contained way. Eve writing in the ways that people used to write letters to each other, beautifully formed sentences, ideas followed through to the end. We don't do that any more. But communication occurs (n). yes

What would you like to do? (n)

well. I may be a sort of a bit old fashioned. I think that e-learning could be useful for persuading students to practice not so much in the classroom but outside. To consolidate. The whole problem with language learning is they are learning new staff everyday with very little time to repeat and consolidate and categories. More than anything it would be useful for that as a backup. A way to repeat material which maybe has been learnt in the classroom in an old-fashioned way. There I think e-learning can help.

I think without the teacher. I don't see why e-learning has to come between learning and the teacher.

E-learning in private sphere? (n)

yes.

The only situation it would be useful is if it is difficult for the teacher and the student to get together. That way you can have support back up lessons of s shorter duration, Skype That s not the same as having a face to face lesson. Skype is quite intense. Your facing someone full face and to be fixing someone in the eye for more than 20 min is not natural. We don't do this in natural life. As a support that would be useful. Not for periods of time. Not to replace a real lesson.

Roles of institutions and teachers. Responsibility (n)

that s a big question because institutions till now have been places with people and offices and everyone comes to the institutions. But the way the

modern world works, is the institution has been replaced by a control centre, it doesn't have a physical form. It's hard to define institution, what are their roles, when institutions themselves might be dinosaurs.

What would you expect the institutions to provide (n)

access to technology. I read in the paper that the Singapore army. Men have to do two years of militia. They're issuing all these soldiers with iPads. This is the way the army is going to learn. It means they have a quicker way of communicating with their higher officers, with receiving and accessing data of things they have to learn. When an army is starting to do something it's an indication of maybe one of the efficient ways of learning. I think an institution should provide their students with iPads.

Micros.

If Migros wants to be here in 10 years' time start renting out iPads, at least for while students are in the classroom. Hand them out and collect them afterwards. Students can access information data, ideally they can Skype the teacher. Teacher's accessible in this half hour Skype. Pulling pronunciation exercises, role plays, look at audios together. Rather than having whiteboard. It's dinosaurs. Obsolete.

IWB? I think it can all be done with little. People are used to that kind of thing. The visual is going to be important.

Bypass a technology (n)

Yeah, I think it's over (IWB)

Migros could learn from this.

I never felt comfortable with IWB. It means a lot of work for teacher and potential distraction.

For institutions with forward thinking. I think iPads or that type of concept will be here for a while. It's just that much more effective.

I think a lot of success of a teacher depends on how well a teacher can use psychology to motivate. I think our role is motivators and helping students to find places where they get the info they need. I think students now, specially the young ones. If they want something they'll go and find it. It's not go and ask the teacher or wait to be told. The whole approach is different. So a teacher is a motivator to keep students motivated wanting to learn and also help students to go and find the right places to find the info.

Extremes (n)

maybe the teacher who likes books will find students who like books. It depends, if the teacher works for an institution he's obliged to update. We are all obliged to update, whether we like it or not. Life is changing, we have to update. In appliances at home, the ways we support our children. Teacher does not have the prerogative to say no I'm not going to teach that way.

Role of institution (n)

should really be on the lookout for new trends in learning. Be constantly assessing that and passing that down to the teachers. Things changing faster and faster. So institutions can't set a program for 10 years and hope it's going to work.

TE won't work for 10 year. Maybe 3 years. Not because books aren't good but because the ways people learn changes.

How technology can help articulate thoughts (n)

there you have a lot more considering reflecting thinking has to go on. I don't think a machine can do this. There we come back to our human brain. In the old days you would say if you want to get someone up to a higher level the best way is lots of examples of language at that level, reading. Perhaps e-learning can incorporate access to documentaries and reading

materials at that level. Just access to materials. But bottom line it's up to the student.

Full circle (n)

it can help to a point. But without examples of a better form of writing it can also be a loop, a dead end.

Writing is excellent it forces one to think about what we want to say...

the written form of reading materials,

communication in the written form, absolutely. There is no other way to move to a higher level.

Face book provides everyday communicative examples. Something that works for the mass. Something that works for specialised situations. You require different levels of exactness. University you have to sharpen up to the words to use.

Appendix 8

Consent form for the recording of interviews

I,, herewith give my consent for the interview with Nadia Marzocco, held on..... to be recorded.

I understand that the information collected will have the sole purpose of providing data for the research she is carrying out as part of her EdD in Education with the Open University in Milton Keynes, UK. It will be stored in a safe place and the information contained will not be passed on to third parties or linked to me, now or anytime in the future. I also understand that I can withdraw from the interview at any time if I wish to do so.

Date:

Signature: