

Participation and Experiences of
Reclassified English Language Learners
in a Learning Management System

by

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved April 2017 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2017

ABSTRACT

In this study, I investigate how secondary reclassified ELLs use the Learning Management System Schoology in three secondary English classrooms. Particularly, I focus on the digital literacy practices reclassified ELLs use as they navigate Schoology to complete a multi-page research paper. In examining the digital literacy practices of secondary reclassified ELLs who have recently exited the language development program, I add to research in the fields of New Literacies and Multiliteracies, sociocultural approaches to learning, and identity studies.

In this qualitative study, I employed ethnographic techniques (i.e., data collection, participant observation, interviewing, and collection of archived material and digital artifacts stored in Schoology). I drew from communities of practice and identity frameworks to examine focal participants' literacy practices when participating in the online space of Schoology and provided screenshots to showcase this participation. I examined email exchanges that were co-created by teacher and student that demonstrated their reliance on a digital tool to continue the teaching and learning processes. I exhibit screenshots of focal participants' engagement with the revision process as they used Schoology's and Microsoft Word's digital editing tools. Finally, I examined focal participants' participation in Schoology's online discussion forum to highlight how they revealed aspects of their identities and performed these identities in a mainstream-learning environment as well.

My analysis establishes that focal participants' access to an LMS like Schoology and other digital spaces (e.g., email) supports the language learning and literacy practices of reclassified ELLs. In addition, my analysis of focal participants' digital and communication practices shows that they contributed to their agency, positioned themselves as empowered and knowledgeable learners, and performed the role of "peer as mentor" when providing

feedback to their peers. Finally, in my analysis of focal participants' inventories of digital literacy practices, I discovered that their engagement in Schoology for the purposes of learning and communication reinforced their language learning, both traditional and digital literacies, and overall academic achievement. Findings of this study emphasizes the importance of technology integration at the secondary level so that all students have equal access to digital and multimodal ways of learning in today's digital age.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to those individuals who continue to experience injustice and marginalization. Never lose hope.

I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my mother
Maria Felicitas Aguirre
for being the rock of our family.

También me gustaría dedicar esta disertación a mi madre
Maria Felicitas Aguirre
por ser la roca de nuestra familia.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My study could not have been possible without the participation of the five focal participants who took time out of their busy high school schedules to share their views and perspectives with me. My sincere appreciation goes to Josue, Rosalba, Ester, Valentina, and Miguel, whom I had the opportunity to collaborate with during this study. I would like to especially thank Mrs. Bolton, Ms. Lannister, and Mr. Hilaria, who provided insight on focal participants' academic progress throughout the spring semester. They joyfully opened their classroom doors so that I could observe focal participants and gave me access to their Schoology online spaces so that I could collect data. To all my current students, I thank you for encouraging me and holding me accountable to meet my academic deadlines during the last phase of my doctoral studies—you are the reason I continue to learn and grow academically and professionally.

I would like to acknowledge my parents, Maria Felicitas Aguirre and Pedro Hurtado, for always choosing what was best for our family. You immigrated to this country at an early age to find a better life, and with dedication and effort, you reached your goals. Your hard work, guidance, and belief in the importance of acquiring an education are what brought me to where I am now. I would also like to thank my sister Veronica and her husband for always believing in my educational journey—I recognize that I missed many family events. Thank you to my younger brothers, Pedro Jr. and Jesus, for always inquiring about my educational studies and offering words of encouragement.

I would also like to extend a warm and heartfelt thank you to my advisor, Dr. Doris Warriner. Your guidance and critical feedback have helped me to be more reflective about my research and selective when writing. My idea of research has solidified, and my transformation as a researcher has shifted for the better because of you. To my committee

members, Dr. Elisabeth Gee and Dr. Kate Anderson, thank you for your support and guidance throughout my study. I truly appreciate you both for believing in my project and me. I would like to extend my gratitude to those professors who demonstrated their passion for teaching, inspired me to continue learning and be a better teacher: Sarah Hudelson, Sarah Amira de la Garza, James Paul Gee, Teresa McCarty, and David Carlson.

A sincere thank you goes to my academic brother, Felipe Baez, who is always willing to review my writing and provide constructive feedback. To my academic sisters, Rosalba Lagunas and Leslie Foley, who throughout the course of my study and the writing process offered words of encouragement and applauded my accomplishments, no matter how small. My journey through graduate school could not have been complete without the three of you.

I am grateful for the professionalism and support my school principal Brandi Haskins offered during my study. You continue to encourage me to become a better educator. I would like to thank my co-workers, especially Claudia, Samantha, Patty, Michelle, Tara, and Sandra for always cheering me on and reminding me that giving up is never an option. A special thank you to Mary Dever and Raquel Garcia for taking time out of their hectic schedules to read and edit (with a critical eye) all chapters of this dissertation; I greatly appreciate your valuable and professional feedback. Thank you to Laura Locker for reviewing my consent forms and writing Spanish versions as well. I would also like to thank my co-teacher, Katie Morris, for providing her unconditional support during the last phase of my doctoral studies. You have always offered words of encouragement and made sure our students were engaged when I was not my fullest at work; you are a dedicated educator and I will always treasure your friendship. Finally, to Angel: your patience, love, and attentiveness during moments of high stress never went unnoticed—for this, I am genuinely thankful and will forever be indebted to you.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The bell rings for lunch, and a rush of high school students take the route towards the cafeteria. I take my daily walk up to the administration office to check my teacher mailbox for any important mail or memos. I walk past a large and recently mowed lawn. Individual students listen to music with their headphones and make their way to the cafeteria area or other surrounding sitting areas. I overhear one group of students discuss the day's shenanigans that occurred in math class and other students walk past me while texting on their cellphones. Next to the administration building, I notice two female students sitting on the floor against the wall of the science building. As I walk past them, I noticed each is holding a tablet and scrolling through what appears to be an electronic book or e-book. I enter the administration building and attend to business.

The anecdotal account presented above is a constant reminder that on any given day, a majority of students who walk the high school's hallways and corridors are consumed by their personal digital devices thus not realizing they may bump into other peers, teachers, or even a wall. Spotted across other Arizona secondary schools and the nation are scenarios like the one presented. The short anecdote stresses the idea that teens do in fact appreciate and are in tune with modern-day technological advances. Teens continue to rely on social media outlets to connect with family and friends who reside locally or abroad. They also rely on digital devices (e.g. cell phones, laptops, tablets) as tools to support and enhance their learning experiences at the secondary level. There is no doubt teens have grown obsessed with and are accustomed to the benefits digital devices and social networks offer both to their social and educational lives.

Globally, secondary students continue thriving on the overwhelming advances that technology yields. Their access to the Internet connects them to a multitude of online spaces within seconds. Exposure to cell phones, iPods, iPads, laptops, and social media networks like Facebook (www.facebook.com), Instagram (www.instagram.com), Pinterest (www.pinterest.com), and YouTube (www.youtube.com) continue amongst adolescents. Adolescent students are not only consumers of multimedia but creators (Langer de Ramirez, 2010; Rhodes & Robnolt, 2009). They can access music and podcasts, create playlists—with ease of mobility—allowing them to stay connected to new content, other youth, news, and media in multiple ways (Rhodes & Robnolt, 2009). Distinctions between their lived and “online” experiences are increasingly difficult to make, as both types of experiences are part of and influence the other (Ito et al., 2010). The frequency of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) use has also increased dramatically. The Pew Internet & American Life Project (PIALP) reported three in four American teens ages 12-17 are “mobile internet users” who say they access the Internet on cell phones, tablets, and other mobile devices occasionally and add that “[a]mong the 20% of teens who do not have their own computer, two-thirds (67%) have access to one they can use at home” (Madden et al., 2013, p. 5). An earlier report by the PIALP indicated that online spaces continue to be favored by many adolescents around the globe to gather, network, play, and share their thoughts, viewpoints, and languages with one another (Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, 2005). Some social networks provide spaces for teenagers to voice their opinions and offer them opportunities to be innovative (boyd & Ellison, 2008).

In secondary school settings, students’ experiences with learning are also being influenced and shaped by their use of ICTs. One online space that has been tapped by teachers working in public schools is Schoology (www.schoology.com). Schoology is

considered a learning management system (LMS) – or a “high level web-based technology solution for planning, conveying and managing a myriad of learning events within an organization such as online, virtual classroom and instructor-led courses that can assess a specific learning process” (Alias & Zainuddin, 2005, p. 28; cf. Greenberg, 2002).

Adzharuddin and Ling (2013) describe the affordances of LMS technologies for learning:

The LMS provides interactive features to the students. As such, threaded discussions, video conferencing, and forums for discussion are the main features of an LMS. The goal of an LMS is to keep track of students’ progress and performance. The LMS is not just viewed as an instructional trend but as a tool that benefits the adopters as well. (p. 4)

Interest in Schoology continues to grow in schools and among teachers around the nation. Schoology has features that assist educators with attendance taking, grading, and assignment tracking. This web-based educational digital tool is intended to be an easy-to-use collaborative interface that encourages online education to be a collective effort in order to increase the impact of everyone involved in a student’s education (www.schoology.com, 2013, para. 1). Schoology supporters and advocates are prideful and testify that their mission is to empower teachers so that they can engage students more efficiently and improve educational effectiveness overall. Most importantly, Schoology is described as an adjustable system that can change according to student needs and continually improve as education and technology advance (www.schoology.com, 2013, para. 2).

However, some wonder whether new technologies are in conflict with or aligned with more conventional approaches to teaching and learning. Because schooling continues to rely on paper-based literacy instead of multimodal, nonlinear literacies in digital environments, questions have emerged about the costs associated with moving to online, digital, internet-based learning platforms for students who will continue to be “tested” in more conventional ways at the end of every grading period. Others argue that LMSs provide

adolescent students opportunities to showcase or build on their existing digital skills that are increasingly required in today's digital era (Alvermann, 2001; boyd & Ellison, 2008).

Ito et al. (2010) and Kupiainen (2013) describe some of the consequences of growing up in “media ecologies” where networked media play a dominant role in the lives of adolescents. They argue that even though some adolescents do not have computer or Internet access, they are “participants in a shared culture where new social media, digital distribution, and digital media production are commonplace among their peers and in their everyday school contexts” (Ito et al., 2010, p. 30). Alvermann and Hagood (2000) advocate that educational language policies that promote critical media literacy be infused in public school curricula. In spite of all the possibilities offered by such recent developments, teachers in many Title I schools continue to feel the pressures of district policies that discourage use of social media and technologies in classrooms (Smythe and Neufeld, 2010). As a result, students' countless funds of knowledge (Moll, 1987, Moll 1992; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) are often devalued or stigmatized in public school settings.

There are few very studies that examine the experiences of English Language Learners (ELLs)¹ in mainstream classrooms, and no studies to date examine how the LMS Schoology supports such students' academic achievement, language learning or literacy development. In this study, I examined how reclassified ELLs² in a grade 12 English class applied their own digital literacy practices to navigate course content, activities and assignments made available by Schoology; tried to and performed new identities; and participated in online communities of practice that fostered their inclusion and engagement.

¹ ELL – An English Language Learner is a K-12 student in Arizona who did not obtain a composite proficiency level of “proficient” score on the AZELLA (Arizona English Language Learner Assessment) regardless of his/her tenure as English Language Learner (www.azed.gov/).

² A reclassified ELL – also referred to as an FEP (Fluent English Speaker) – is a student who has received a score on the AZELLA (Arizona English Language Learner Assessment) that considers them “proficient” enough to “exit” the English Language Development (ELD) classroom and join students enrolled in mainstream classes.

This study was conducted in a high school influenced by anti-immigration discourses and deficit views of multilingualism, and data were collected from and about students who had recently been placed in mainstream classrooms—either because they had "tested out" of the English Language Development (ELD) class or because they had refused to be placed in that environment in spite of their test scores.

Positionality Statement

I had the opportunity to work as a high school ELD teacher from 2009 to 2015 at the research site discussed in this study. During this time, I was also enrolled in a doctoral program in curriculum and instruction with a focus in language and literacy at the local public university. While teaching and interacting with ELLs, I was also reading recent scholarship on digital literacies, multiliteracies pedagogy, multimodalities, and the digital gap that exists between young learners across the country and the world. I began to gravitate towards literature that emphasized and asked questions about access to ICTs and digital literacies amongst historically marginalized groups. With key insights from the scholarship in mind, I decided to integrate Schoology in my classroom. My goal was to enhance the ELD curriculum and provide my students with a rich learning experience. Even though the high school district's ELD curriculum did not officially endorse the integration of an LMS like Schoology as a pedagogical tool, my interest of how adolescent learners of English mediated learning by using an LMS sparked my interest. I began to explore ways that Schoology could support my students' language learning and digital literacy practices. Through discussions with other colleagues in my department, I discovered that other English teachers on campus had also adopted Schoology in their classrooms as a way to enrich the senior English curriculum. Eventually, I decided to conduct a qualitative pilot study that observed when, why, and how ELLs'—enrolled in my class—used Schoology and the influence such

practices had on their learning. In my pilot study, I examined students' identity formation and language learning as revealed in their blogs and online threaded discussions. During initial stages and brainstorming about which topic to further explore for my dissertation, I felt the need to come back to my pilot study. I examined the experiences of those participants who refused English language development services but who continued to engage with mainstream curricula and Schoology. To accomplish these goals, I observed students' online and in-person practices, gathered their perspectives about their participation in Schoology while they completed the end-of-year research paper, and analyzed my findings in light of what we already know about language learning and the literacy repertoires ELLs carry with them.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore how reclassified ELLs continue to build on their literacies while interacting in the online space of Schoology despite their English language deficits. The main focus is on the experiences of reclassified ELLs with Schoology, the integration of the LMS into three twelfth-grade English classrooms, and how reclassified ELLs engage and navigate within the online context to complete the end-of-year research paper. The following questions guide this study:

- 1) How do participants use a learning management system like Schoology?
- 2) Which features of an LMS do the participants use? How/when/why/for what purposes do they use those particular features?
- 3) What literacy practices do participants engage in when participating in the online space of Schoology? What literacy practices do the participants use the most?

4) What do the students say about their use of and participation in Schoology?
What do they say about this participation in relation to their language learning, literacy development, and academic achievement?

Significance

Current research continues to explore the various ways that adolescents use social media tools and the implications of those practices for learning; however, there have been few studies that explore how new technologies facilitated current ELLs' and reclassified ELLs' literacy development. Often, ELLs are marginalized based on deficit models of linguistic difference. Additionally, ELLs' abilities in their first language are viewed as a limitation instead of a resource for meaning making in classroom activities because of restrictive educational language policies (Black, 2006). Van Hook and Fix (2000) claim that school placement is a determinant of immigrant youth's academic success and this particular group of learners receive bilingual instruction less often than elementary learners, despite the high number of immigrant adolescents attending secondary school settings. Some scholars argue:

Although a strong ethnic identity is positively correlated with literacy and academic success, linguistic and cultural segregation diminishes the potential for academic success among immigrant youth because they are denied easy access to practicing and learning English or familiarizing themselves with mainstream culture. (Matute-Bianchi, 1986; Obgu, 1991; Zhou & Bankston, 1994).

Gibson (1991) and Macias (1990) argue that it is counterproductive to provide minimal resources for secondary school immigrants and force them to remain within their own linguistic and cultural groups in school. Marginalized groups experience a certain predicament of linking success and power to the process of becoming part of, being liked,

and being in the dominant group (McLean, 2013). Moreover, socioeconomic marginalization often accompanies limited access to digital practices in the home (Mills, 2010).

Secondary schools that integrate digital educational tools like Schoology offer students opportunities to build on and further develop digital skills they bring with them to school. Schoology provides a space for reclassified ELLs to have a voice and make meaning of concepts discussed in class. Educational language policy makers in Arizona argue that reclassified ELLs and those students who have refused language development services continue to fall behind if not provided with adequate language support or given the opportunity to learn from qualified teachers. Nonetheless, reclassified ELLs who participate in mainstream curricula need guidance by expert teachers—advocates, to help them move beyond the known to the new (Mills, 2013).

This study can provide insight on how reclassified ELLs use an LMS like Schoology to engage with learning while offering suggestions to secondary language arts teachers on alternative ways to enhance their teaching. Findings from this study can yield ideas to support or modify current pedagogical practices that can target future reclassified students' digital literacy needs and improve the current model to educate ELLs. There is a great need for input and insight from reclassified ELLs' participation and experiences in mainstream secondary classrooms. Their observed interactions in an LMS can offer educational policy makers and district administrators with a knowledge base to make empirically supported decisions that in turn will affect future ELLs around the state.

Using ethnographic methods, I investigate how five reclassified ELLs applied their own digital literacies and participated in Schoology to complete a multi-page research paper in a mainstream language arts classroom during their last semester of high school. I document and examine the communication practices between teacher and participant,

communication practices between participants and their peers, and the in/out of school support systems in place to support the literacy development of the participants. Informed by The New London Group's (1996) theory of multiliteracies and Lankshear and Knobel's (2011) notion of New Literacies, I examine the interactions of participants between their respective teachers and their peers during their integration in Schoology. These types of new literacy pedagogies suggest that they meet the needs of students that allow them to navigate within technological, cultural, and linguistically diverse communities (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Kalantzis & Cope, 2011). The New London Group (1996) argues that *situated practice* is an essential aspect for situating meaning making in real-world contexts and take into account the sociocultural needs of all learners. In this framework, new forms of literacy made possible by digital technology advancements are viewed as sociocultural in nature and the focus is on literacy as a "social practice" and is infused with socially patterned and goal-directed ways of doing (Gee & Hayes, 2012; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Kalantzis & Cope, 2011).

This study will contribute knowledge about how reclassified ELLs learn while using an LMS designed for education and contribute to the broader field of education, but most importantly to the areas of teacher education research, language acquisition research, and ICTs in the classroom. This study may offer educators with ideas of how to create curricula that promote the development of digital skills for all secondary students so that they can have an equal opportunity of participating in a digitally driven global community once they leave the school setting.

Overview of the Dissertation

In Chapter 2, I describe the historical, ideological, political, and surrounding context in which this study took place. I begin with a discussion of local language policies (and “English Only” views) in order to provide a context for understanding the experiences of learners of English enrolled in public schools across the state of Arizona and the nation. Then, I explore the literature of the integration of LMSs in educational settings and review what we know from recent scholarship about teens’ digital and social media practices. Finally, I discuss my theoretical framework to describe how both multiliteracies and new literacies constructs interconnect with notions of communities of practice, identity, and sociocultural theories. I also emphasize the concept of agency, identity, and autonomy as a construct that has a significant role in the learning context.

In Chapter 3, I describe the research context, my methodological orientations, and the methods/procedures that I used to collect and analyze data. I also provide descriptions of the five focal participants and rationale for selecting them, as well as introduce the three teachers and rationale for incorporating them in my study. In the rationale section, I provide my reasons for aligning to ethnography as a research methodology and discuss learning as a social and situated practice. In the section on research context, I offer a description of the spring semester’s units covered in Senior English as well as components and requirements of the senior research paper. Finally, I describe each focal participant through thick description by drawing from comments made in questionnaires and responses made to questions asked during phase one of interviews. I also provide insight about participating teachers’ perspectives about technology incorporation in the classroom, their digital and media use, and opinions about the integration of reclassified ELLs in mainstream classrooms.

In Chapter 4, I analyze emails and comments in Schoology's feedback platform that were exchanged between teachers and focal participants during a sixteen-week period. Engagement with digital literacy practices within Schoology allowed students to continue learning outside the traditional classroom setting. Additionally, Chapter 4 highlights three main reasons participants relied on email as a mode to communicate electronically: 1) to provide explanations; 2) inquire about a variety of subject matters; 3) and receive feedback and comments from their teachers. The chapter further demonstrates how instances of teaching and learning occurred in an online space, i.e. email, thus becoming a platform for focal participants to construct and perform their identities as mainstream students.

In Chapter 5, I identify the affordances of peer review and focal participants' participation in Schoology's online discussion forum. My goal is to show how focal participants advance their traditional and digital literacies by analyzing the communication between focal participants and their peers during peer-editing processes and online discussions in Schoology. I also examine the feedback exchanged between focal participants and their peers in Schoology's discussion forum. I discuss three major areas in which peer-to-peer communication occurred in a time span of sixteen weeks: 1) peer-to-peer editing by using Microsoft Word's track changes tool; 2) provided typed comments and feedback directly on peers' essays; and 3) engaged in online discussions.

In Chapter 6, I provide a summary of my findings. I discuss how sociocultural perspectives and learning as a situated practice interconnect with notions of communities of practice and identity. I direct attention to reclassified ELLs' digital literacy practices and how they employ such practices as they engage with certain features of Schoology and communicate with their teachers and peers. I also provide a section that details the value of Schoology through the lens of focal participants, and the current studies that focus on LMS

integration in educational settings. I provide my pedagogical and methodological recommendations that encourage educators to consider the incorporation of LMSs in their teaching as well as highlight how this study informs methods to study digital literacies. I also offer commentary of my identity as a teacher and researcher to explain my role within the context of my study. Finally, I provide a section on the direction for future research to be followed so that we can better understand reclassified ELLs' experiences and their application of digital literacies when participating in educational online spaces.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I will describe the context in which this study took place, with a focus on the historical, ideological, and political context (e.g., local language policies and “English Only” sentiments) that influence the experiences of English learners enrolled in public schools in Arizona and across the nation. Then, I will explore the literature of the integration of LMSs in educational settings, and review existing scholarship on teens’ digital/social media practices. I will also describe how agency and identity constructs interconnect, as well as describe my theoretical framework and elaborate on notions of learning as sociocultural and situated practice that link to multiliteracies and new literacies perspectives.

The Historical and Ideological Context of Language Policies in the Arizona Context

Throughout American history, educational and political contexts have coexisted alongside “English-only” discourses that are linked to language minority students (Tollefson, 2013). When it comes to educating minority students, the United States has committed minimally (Gandara & Orfield, 2010) and over decades, exploitative policies have imposed disadvantages on these students (Tollefson, 1991, 2013; Wiley & Wright, 2004; Critin, Reingold, Walters, & Green, 1990).

With respect to the influence of ideology on language policies and practices, Wiley and Lukes (1996) discussed the relationship between assumptions underlying linguistic ideologies and other ideologies that promote “individualism and social mobility through education” (p. 511). They also explain how schools continue to position students through language assessment. Wiley and Wright (2004) noted that language and literacy policies have been used as “instruments of social control” and found that both “racism and linguistic

intolerance have been closely linked with antecedents in the colonial and early nationalist periods” (p. 142). Tollefson (1991) argued that even though there are numerous language programs, there still exists a widespread inability to speak the “language varieties” needed for accessing political power and economic resources. Critin, Reingold, Walters, and Green (1990) explored the social and political conditions that have stirred linguistic conflict and appealed to “official English” initiatives. Cameron (1997) focused on understanding why the judicial system, judges in particular, uphold national origin challenges based on “language discrimination in such low esteem” (p. 261). Moreover, Ovando (2003) argued that changing political, social, and economic forces—rather than consistent ideology—have fashioned the nation’s responses to language diversity. Stritikus and Garcia (2005) and Wright (2007) assert that because of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, the country is moving in the opposite direction when deciding on fitting language programs that can address linguistically diverse groups. Tollefson (2013) points out that minority students need to be able to access both political and economic means but need the appropriate “language” and understand how to use it to make this reach possible. Even though states and school districts focus their attention on student accountability and denying them high school graduation, there is insufficient attention on finding ways to ensure ELLs receive an education they need and deserve through high-quality curricula, qualified teachers, and sufficient resources (Menken, 2008).

The scholars mentioned above emphasize the idea that non-English speaking students in Arizona schools continue to be marginalized in part by restrictive educational language policies that limit language acquisition teachers to create a true “liberatory education” (hooks, 1994, p. 44). During my time as an ELD teacher at the secondary level, I realized that I was not providing my ELL students with a rich and meaningful education

because I aligned my teaching solely on state standards and mandates. I began to explore different ways of how to enrich and support my ELL students so that they too can experience mainstream curricula that would allow them to have some sort of “normalcy” embedded in their educational experience. One statement that resonates to this day is hooks’s (1994) statement on students’ determination to learn: “Students are eager to break through barriers to knowing. They are willing to surrender to the wonder of re-learning and learning in ways of knowing that go against the grain” (p. 44). These words speak to me because I believe that all students are capable of “breaking through barriers” if we equip them with the appropriate academic tools and skills. Creating restrictive language policies like those implemented in Arizona positions language development teachers to limit their pedagogical practices that may close the path for students to “transform consciousness” and participate in a “climate of free expression” (hooks, 1994, p. 44). When thinking about what topics I wanted to explore for my dissertation, I definitely knew that it would include ELLs because of the historical and political context that surrounds this group, specifically. Since reclassified ELLs continue their educational trajectory in mainstream classrooms, I am concerned because I know that they need adequate English and digital skills to participate in all areas of American life.

Abedi and Dietel (2004) examine the implications of NCLB requirements for English-language learners and offer recommendations to support states, school districts, and schools to facilitate the progress of their students. McCarty (2011) highlights Ricento and Hornberger’s (1996) notion of “unpeeling the onion” to emphasize teachers’ appropriation of official language policy texts. Menken (2006) emphasizes the idea that English-language learners are often disproportionately being “left behind” due to challenging standardized assessments and explains that these tests “were never intended for them in the first place”

(p. 63). In such ways, standardized testing has become *de facto* language policy in schools, leaving ELLs and teachers who serve such students, affected by these restrictive policies (Baker, 2006; Menken, 2008; Menken, 2009; Menken and Garcia, 2010; McCarty, 2011; Shohamy, 2010). Moreover, language policies often define the limits of what is educationally possible. Yet, even with established restrictive policies, there are implementational spaces in policy texts and ideological spaces in school and community contexts, which in fact encourage educators to provide opportunities for minority learners to challenge dominant educational discourses (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007).

In his study, Johnson (2009) presented results from an ethnographic study of language policy that examined the implementational and ideological spaces in language policy traced through the multilayered contexts of language policy creation, interpretation, and appropriation of curricula. The study emphasized the creation, interpretation, and appropriation of language policy at the macro-level, i.e. teachers' participation and perspectives influenced the outcome of the school district's bilingual education language policy. For the purpose of this study, I recognize 'implementational spaces' that occur at the micro-level, which are traced through teachers' own pedagogical practices and ways of appropriation of current curricula that support reclassified ELLs. Such implementational spaces allowed teachers to make their own decisions and craft ways to support reclassified ELLs as they completed their research project—one way was to integrate a LMS like Schoology in the Senior English curriculum.

Language Policy in Arizona

The English-only movement can be traced back to 1981 when an amendment to the U.S. constitution was introduced in an attempt to establish English as the nation's official language (Tollefson & Tsui, 2004). Arizona's history delineates its fair share of "English-

only” rhetoric affecting English-language learners and their families. Gandara and Orfield (2010) explain that Arizona has experienced more than a decade of restrictive language policies, and a number of decades of alleged “under-funding and neglect” of its thousands of ELLs. As Rios-Aguilar, Canche, and Sabetghadam (2012) explain, both immigration and educational policies interact with language policies. For example, in the state of Arizona, HB 1070 was signed into law in 2010, which made it legal for police officers to ask for proof of legal status after an individual has been pulled over for questioning. Moreover, in 2011, the state’s Superintendent of Instruction implemented a law that prohibited teachers from teaching ethnic studies in public schools (Rios-Aguilar, Canche, & Sabetghadam, 2011).

In *Flores v. Arizona* (1992), parents of English-language learners sued the state for not providing adequate educational services to ELLs, not properly funding bilingual programs, and most importantly, argued that students exiting language programs did not acquire sufficient English to be successful in mainstream classrooms, which violated the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1964 (DaSilva Iddings, Combs, & Moll, 2012; Jimenez-Castellanos & Topper, 2012; Combs, 2012; Lillie et al., 2010). The *Flores v. Arizona* case set the stage for current language policy and planning (LPP) at the legislative level, which placed the spotlight on linguistic diversity. Once again, this prompted a design for an initiative that required Arizona voters’ participation at the polls.

The voter approved Proposition 203 “English for the Children” mandated the end of bilingual education programs K-12 and replaced them with Structured English Immersion (SEI)³ programs (Lillie et al., 2010; Tollefson, 2013). Wright (2005) found that Arizona’s Proposition 203 was simply a “political spectacle” rather than a “democratic rationale policy”

³ Structured English Immersion (SEI): content is a minimum of four hours daily of English language development with an emphasis on phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon, and semantics.

with genuine concern for language minority students. Because of Proposition 203, Arizona educators' professional choices were limited, as well as for parents when determining their child's educational options (Wiley, 2013). Consequently, the SEI model was an immediate response to Proposition 203, but also an act of compliance with the *Flores v. Arizona* judgment (Lillie et al., 2010).

Structured English Immersion (SEI) is defined as a classroom in which all students are limited English proficient as determined by the Arizona English Language Learner Assessment (AZELLA) that labels students as Pre-Emergent, Emergent, Basic, Low Intermediate, and High Intermediate (www.azed.gov, 2008, p. 2). The Arizona Department of Education website categorizes these proficiency levels as follows: 1) Pre-Emergent—the student has no ability to comprehend text independently and read and write English; 2) Emergent—the student has limited ability to comprehend text independently and read and write English; 3) Basic—the student has the ability to decode and comprehend text independently, read and write in English; student's fluency may impede comprehension; 4) Low Intermediate—student has the ability to comprehend text by reading fluently in English; student can identify and summarize information in text; and 5) High Intermediate—the student has the ability to comprehend grade-level text by reading fluently in English; student can identify, summarize, and analyze information, including literary elements, in text.

Accordingly, SEI classroom content is a minimum of four hours daily of English language development with an emphasis on phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon, and semantics. Included in SEI classroom content are Arizona's K-12 English Language Learner Proficiency Standards and the obvious connections to English language arts instruction such as, listening, speaking, reading, and writing (www.azed.gov, 2008, p.2). Currently, 72.5% of

ELLs are instructed in SEI classrooms across the state (www.azed.gov, 2014, “ELL Coordinator Boot Camp”). The SEI model also requires ELLs to be grouped by their English language proficiency and follow a specific regimen of minutes (i.e., the 4-hour ELD Block model) for each component of English instruction (Wiley, Lee, & Rumberger, 2009). Wright (2005) explains that “[t]he suggestion that 1 year (180 days) of sheltered English immersion (SEI) is adequate for students learning English has no basis in the research on second-language acquisition” (p. 669). Mahoney, Thompson, MacSwan, Combs, and Reyhner (2004) provide an analysis of the effectiveness of SEI and recommendations for ELL policy, especially for language policy makers in the state of Arizona. Currently, the SEI model is falling short of cultivating an effective language-development environment with rigorous material comparable to that of non-ELLs because the 4-hour block model does not lend itself to mainstream curriculum (Martinez-Wenzl, Perez, & Gandara, 2012). For the purposes of this study, SEI and 4-hour ELD block model terms will be used interchangeably.

The state of Arizona has instituted a highly restrictive language policy—the 4-hour English language development block (Rios-Aguilar, Canche, & Sabetghadam, 2012). Rios-Aguilar, Gonzalez-Canche, and Moll (2010a, b) describe the 4-hour ELD block model as a restrictive language program based on politics, ideology, and false hope that the English language can be successfully learned under unrealistic conditions. Lillie et al. (2010) found that ELLs are not acquiring the sufficient English in one year to be reclassified and are held back in the 4-hour ELD block for a second or third year. The same study also found that ELD blocks are unable to support ELLs’ literacy skills to pass courses required for graduation. Jimenez-Castellanos and Topper (2012) highlight the complexity of determining adequate funding for schools with high numbers of ELLs. Moreover, they emphasize the

Flores v. Arizona case, arguing that schools have failed to ensure that all students exiting the program had in fact mastered English well enough to meet the standards of mainstream curricula. Arizona's current and reclassified ELLs would benefit considerably if curriculum designers would provide them with access to quality curricula and digital technologies because this can warrant they are well-equipped with 21st Century skills needed to secure employment or attend higher education institutions in a digitally driven world (Jenkins et al., 2009).

According to Arizona's Department of Education mission statement, educators are expected to "ensure that all English language learners have equal educational opportunities to achieve academically" (www.azed.gov/). Currently, Arizona's schools have an obligation of educating an estimated 85,000 ELLs. Of those ELL students, 10% are enrolled in secondary schools. Three program options for English language learners are available: 1) Structured English Immersion (SEI); 2) Mainstream placement using an Individual Language Learner Plan (ILLP); and 3) Bilingual with appropriate waivers/parent consent (www.azed.gov, 2014, "ELL Coordinator Boot Camp"). If Arizona's department of public education declares it is our duty as educators to ensure all English language learners receive equal educational opportunities, then it is essential to reevaluate the current system in place.

Since the ruling of *Flores v. Arizona* in 2000 and the passage of Proposition 203 in Arizona, the legal landscape for the teaching of English language learners has changed dramatically (Mahoney et al., 2004; Jimenez-Castellanos, Combs, Martinez, & Gomez, 2013). Prior to these two events, the federal Bilingual Education Act of 1968 and the U.S. Supreme Court case *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) permitted school districts to choose from a variety of program models for educating ELLs (Mahoney et al., 2004). However, Proposition 203

mandates that all Arizona children be placed in English language classrooms and all ELLs are educated through SEI instruction for a period of one year (A.R.S. 15-752; Wright, 2005).

Systematic Segregation

Gandara and Orfield (2012) highlight segregation and its effect on English language learners and other students in Arizona. They found that even though segregation in the South was declared unconstitutional in 1954, Arizona continued to permit school districts to openly segregate students until court cases *Keyes v. Denver School District No 1* (1973) and *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) brought significant change for Latino students. Furthermore, Gandara and Orfield (2012) emphasize Finn's (1998) work by explaining how minority students took this particular issue to court in the 1950s—winning victories in both state and federal courts.

Gandara and Orfield (2012) state:

When Latino students faced discrimination, educators sixty years ago tried to justify segregation as an educational necessity, saying that it was good for children to be segregated in the “Mexican Room” because of their language. The 1951 *Gonzalez v. Sheely* federal court decision outlawing segregation on the basis of language needs was harmful and could not be permitted under very limited circumstances because it had negative consequences for the acquisition of English. (p. 3)

Gandara and Orfield's findings ascertain the history of discrimination minority students faced in the past. It also touches on the debate (Valdes, 2001) for determining the “right way” of educating minority students. Educators and educational settings need to adapt to change (Alvermann, 2007) when dealing with language diversity in ways that foster learning among students from language minority backgrounds (Warriner, 2004). Yet, the current model for educating ELLs in Arizona remains stagnant instead of progressing.

Garcia, Lawton, and De Figueiredo's (2012) report indicate that the 4-hour ELD block is problematic for secondary ELL students who are required to pass standardized writing and content-based exams to graduate from high school. Additionally, these students

are being excluded from core academic areas such as math, science, and social studies.

Nguyen and Stritkus (2009) advise that an instructional model that dictates the isolation of ELLs from mainstream students and classrooms has a negative impact on the social and cultural wellbeing of these students. Researchers further explain that ELLs are “silenced and marginalized in the greater school context, which diminishes their sense of belonging to the educational environment” (Nguyen and Stritkus, 2009, p. 172). Blanton (2005) and Weinberg (1995) agree that inequality practices found in mid-twentieth century, such as segregation and under-education continues to be evident.

To this day, what remains controversial are the mandates placed upon all Arizona teachers. Abiding to NCLB initiatives, the Arizona Department of Education signed a provision that required all teachers, administrators, and ELL coordinators to complete a three-credit-hour SEI certification program by 2010 (Mahoney, MacSwan, & Thompson, 2005). Proposition 203’s mandates are: 1) SEI models; 2) Bilingual options available only by special waivers, which are now unavailable to ELL students who are younger than 10 and not have special needs; and 3) ESL programs and Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are no longer valid program options for ELLs (Mahoney, MacSwan, & Thompson, 2005).

Arizona ELLs are reassessed annually by taking AZELLA at the end of each school year. If students score less than proficient, they are considered continuing ELLs. However, students who score proficient on the annual assessment are reclassified and labeled as Fluent English Proficient (FEP). Once students are labeled as FEPs, they are no longer required to receive ELD services and are exited from the program. FEPs are mainstreamed into regular content-area subjects the following school year; however, they are monitored for two years and their academic progress is tracked by the school district’s office of language acquisition. It is important to note that reclassified or FEP students who struggle with mainstream

curricula must be provided with compensatory instruction. This type of instruction can include 1) summer school, 2) after-school or before school tutoring, and/or Saturday school (www.azed.gov, 2014, “ELL Coordinator Boot Camp,” slides 16-17). The Office of English Language Acquisition Services stresses that “reclassified students may not be at grade level, but have enough English to access grade level content. Additional supports may be necessary for them to access the content and be successful” (www.azed.gov., 2014, “ELL Coordinator Boot Camp”)

Furthermore, some ELLs are being withdrawn from the language support they need and reclassified as full FEP even though they are not well prepared to meet the demands of a mainstream classroom (Rios-Aguilar, Gonzalez-Canche, & Sabetghadam, 2012). Teachers are witnessing reclassified ELLs struggling in mainstream classrooms, largely due to the lack of language support in those specific classrooms (Lillie, et al., 2010). The report also shared how non-ELD teachers “do not ‘understand the [reclassified] ELLs are still ELLs’ and need help learning academic content, while at the same time support in continuing their English development” (Lillie, et al. 2010, p. 27). It is believed that ELLs are being “passed” as proficient too quickly, which leaves AZELLA opened for scrutiny (Lillie, et al., 2010). Rios-Aguilar, Gonzalez-Canche, and Moll (2010a) explain that reclassification rates are higher in some schools and some ELLs are re-entering the 4-hour ELD block model after being labeled proficient. If reclassified ELLs are being mainstreamed, then they are being held to the same standards as their peers. This is concerning because even though ELLs need exposure to quality curricula, they still need language support when exposed to mainstream content.

Digital Literacies and English Language Learners

Adolescent ELLs are already part of a global communication hub interconnected via the Internet; therefore, teachers need to capitalize on the relevant knowledge they possess. Warschauer and Healey (1998) found that some ESL and English as Foreign Language (EFL) students already had digital literacy skills in their own languages. It is likely, however, that many ELLs should develop new digital literacy skills as they begin to meet the challenge of accessing and responding to the vast amount of English-language material accessible online for the first time (Warschauer & Healy, 1998). Also, the Internet generates unique opportunities for adolescents to employ second-language (L2) writing for navigating social identity development through social interactions with other L2 writers (Lam, 2000; 2004). Lewis and Fabos (2005) encourage teachers to draw on and expand students' existing digital literacies. Furthermore, students' in-school and out-of-school literacy practices and the integration of digital literacies with writing instruction can offer educators insight of students' funds of knowledge (Moll, 1992, 2005) that can be capitalized upon to enhance learning. Langer de Ramirez (2010) insists digital literacies support ELL students to become creators—not recipients of knowledge. She further states:

Media literacy—in the past mainly focused on television and print media—now includes the Web and its explosion of information and material. And since ELLs are only just acquiring more challenging language, such as idiomatic expressions, they are especially vulnerable to advertisements and other media that often use this type of language as a means of persuading audiences. (p. 3)

Some scholars define social media as an interactive “delivery system for language” as seen in chat rooms, text messaging, or Tweet feeds and emphasize the idea of multimodality as presently more pervasive (Gee & Hayes, 2011). It is imperative for educators to teach ELLs how to think critically when coming across online material available to them. Curriculum

designers need to be cognizant of the vulnerabilities and challenging language ELLs come across. Moreover, educators need to recognize the pre-established relationships youths have to technologies and capitalize on these relationships to support learning.

Johns and Torrez (2001) found that “new technologies offer many possibilities to the second language learner” (as cited in Langer de Ramirez, 2010, p. 4). Teachers need to capitalize on adolescents’ experience with social networks to develop their technological and media literacies (Callaghan & Bower, 2012). A study highlighting the integration of social networking tools found that most ESL students believe that social networking sites yield great benefits because they support the development of their writing skills (Yunus, Salehi, and Chenzi, 2012). This group of researchers further explains that students with scarce language skills could interact with other students with less stress and using a social media space like Facebook as a learning space could activate students’ creative thinking skills (Yunus, Salehi, and Chenzi, 2012). This particular study examined how exited or reclassified ELLs interacted with content, language, and their peers in a LMS while highlighting their acquired knowledge about writing through their use of digital editing tools to provide feedback and participation in Schoology’s online discussion forum.

Not all learners have equal access to ICTs or digital literacies. Research has demonstrated that socioeconomic marginalization is tied to a condensed quality of access to digital practices in the home (Mills, 2010). For example, Goodman, Calfee, and Goodman (2014) found that “12.1 percent of Asians, 27.4 percent of Blacks, 26.6 percent of Hispanics, and 9.9 percent of non-Hispanic Whites” (p. 39) are living below the poverty line. According to the Census Bureau, nearly one in six Americans officially lives in poverty—over 49.1 million people (www.census.gov/). Nevertheless, anyone committed to public schooling must accept that poverty is a social issue closely related to marginalized students and their

schooling (Warschauer, 2000, 2003; Goodman, Calfee, & Goodman, 2014). These statistics suggest that minority students continue to miss out on opportunities that build on acquiring digital knowledge and application of both in and out of school literacy practices.

Kulik (2003) claims increased computer access benefits student writing development while other studies found that greater computer access had a mixed impact on student performance (Bebell & Kay, 2010; Goldberg, Russell, & Cook, 2003; Wenglinsky, 2005; Zheng, Warschauer, & Farkas, 2013). Snyder et al. (2002) present a study in which an economically disadvantaged family shared one computer, which became a source of entertainment whereas members of a wealthier family use their computer for research purposes and organizing social aspects of their lives. Another study revealed wealthier students with home computers were more likely to complete school assignments than low-SES students with home computers (Becker, 2000). A significant gap of computer access in schools, especially those schools with high numbers of minorities, was found in a study in which teachers shared their challenges that ranged from not having access to Internet to not understanding ELLs limited English (Kleiner and Farris, 2002). Buckingham (2007) confirms, “even when youth have access to digital production technology at home, they rarely apply digital tools to creative media production unless socialized into these practices” (as cited in Mills, 2010, p. 259) because often, curricula does not lend itself to allow students to be socialized into such practices. These studies suggest that adolescent minorities have differential access to technological advances. If schools do not provide those who would not otherwise have access to the technology with academic ways for developing digital skills, there is possibility they will continue to be marginalized.

Learning Management System: Schoology

A learning management system is an online system that is currently being used in higher education and K-12 institutions around the world. Increasingly, universities have incorporated online portals for both students and professors. Students and professors have the ability to connect with each other without the confines of the traditional classroom (Adzharuddin & Ling, 2013). In this section, I describe a learning management system as an educational learning management system, provide scholarship on the integration of LMSs in educational settings, and provide context that highlights Common Core State Standard's (CCSS) emphasis of technology integration in classrooms.

Hawkins and Rudy (2007) report that 90% of U.S. universities have adopted an LMS for faculty and student use. There are four types of e-learning systems. These systems include: Learning Management System (LMS), Learning Content Management System (LCMS), Learning Design System (LDS), and Learning Support System (LSS) (Ismail, 2002). In their study, Machado and Tao (2007) compared the LMS Moodle to the LCMS Blackboard, and they define an LMS as a “software application designed with specific intent of assisting instructors in meeting their pedagogical goals of delivering learning content to students” (p. 7). Cavus (2007) states that an LMS acts like a bridge between the instructors and learners. Falvo and Johnson (2007) explore LMSs used in the United States for teaching and learning in higher educational settings. Their study asked why particular systems are adopted and how these systems are presented to both faculty and students. They also found that the most popular LMS used in higher learning institutions across the United States was Blackboard. In a similar study, researchers examined the factors that might influence instructors' perceived ease of use and usefulness of an LMS and actual use (Al-Busaidi & Al-Shihi, 2010).

LMS is frequently confused with other concepts like e-learning, digital learning, virtual learning and distance learning (Kritikou et al., 2008) and the term has often been used incorrectly in various pieces of research (Watson & Watson, 2007). LMSs are sometimes mistaken for Course Management Systems (CMS), which are used mainly for online or blended learning, supports the placement of course materials online, and can be easily linked with the functionalities of an LMS (Watson & Watson, 2007). An LMS provides a space for learners to access teacher created activities; for the teacher, a LMS can track student progress, record completions, and allow the sending of information to learners through its built-in email system (Carliner, 2005). Albirini (2006) explains that a LMS facilitates virtual learning where the ultimate goal is to support learning inside the classroom through digital tools and technologies.

One popular educational tool recently tapped by secondary teachers around the nation is Schoology (www.schoology.com). Schoology provides tools for educators to take attendance, grade, post readings, and track assignments. This web-based educational digital tool is an easy-to-use collaborative interface that encourages online education to be a collective effort in order to increase the impact of everyone involved in a student's education (www.schoology.com, 2013, para. 1). Schoology is an adjustable system that can change according to student needs and continually improve as education and technology advance (www.schoology.com, 2013, para. 2).

In addition to common search engines (e.g. Yahoo!, Bing, Google) used for research purposes and emailing between teacher and student, tools for educational online discussions and blogging are prevalent now. Recently, the LMS has become an active domain for educational online research (Cavus, 2007); however, there is a dearth of research involving LMS integration at the secondary level. This study adds to educational and Internet research

by providing insight on how secondary students make use of online spaces found in LMSs. In order to understand how reclassified ELLs negotiate their own digital and language skills to understand literature and concepts being taught in an English classroom, I examined their participation in the online space of Schoology. In particular, I examined the communication that occurred between focal participants and their peers and the communication that occurred between focal participants and their teachers, as well as had informal discussions with their respective teachers about pedagogical adjustments. This study adds to the growing scholarship of online ethnography and Internet inquiry. Schoology's mission statement emphasizes supporting teachers and enhancing students' learning. The site, however, does not mention how teachers can use this tool to support ELLs' language development. Since reclassified ELLs continue to benefit from differentiated instruction (Erben, Ban, & Castaneda, 2009), teachers can introduce new concepts through a LMS like Schoology (e.g. digital images or YouTube clips). Also, teachers have the option of inserting links to academic/educational websites or social media sites for students to explore both in and out of school, anytime. Because students live an era in which digital technologies and literacies are increasingly relevant to schooling practices, scholars have encouraged educators to find ways to adapt to the "new literacy context" and urged the necessity for understanding how the Internet "require[s] new social practices, skills, strategies, dispositions, and/or literacies" (Sweeny, 2010, p. 122). Even though there is increased focus on technology use in classrooms, research has proven technology is scantily being used in meaningful ways (Boiling et al., 2008).

Doering, Beach, and O'Brien (2007) suggested that pre-service teachers learn to develop activities using tools to foster engagement and critical analysis of ideas and social issues. Teachers need to be equipped with the knowledge of how to infuse curriculum with

interactive online tools such as chat, IM'ing, blogs, and wikis to foster not only thoughtful analysis and reflection on ideas and social issues but also to use multimodal links to images and texts which are beneficial when interacting in discussion forums. Lam (2000) claims online cultures afford immigrant youth with spaces to develop new linguistic and technical skills. Even though Schoology does not allow the automatic interaction between other student users outside the boundaries of a specific class or with student users from other regions of the globe, the system does permit teachers to grant access to their students to connect with other student users if needed. Nonetheless, giving students opportunities to interact with digital literacies in school can provide socially meaningful experiences since they already e-mail and blog as a way to communicate outside of school (Williams, 2005). Since reclassified ELLs are held to the same academic standards as mainstream students, they need to be able to participate in “higher order thinking skills like analysis, synthesis, and evaluation” (Zawilinski, 2009, p. 652). An online threaded discussion group benefits more reserved students significantly because it allows them to reflect before responding (English, 2007). Also, Electronic discussions have the potential to build virtual communities that allow students to negotiate between peers’ responses and text across classroom boundaries (Mercer, 2000).

Common Core State Standards

CCSS emphasizes the use of technology and application of digital skills in their standards; both the teacher and student will remain accountable in producing satisfactory results from standardized assessments. By being proactive and redesigning pedagogical practices that promote the use of digital tools and incorporation of media, teachers can ensure they are meeting the needs of adolescents who are ready to apply a vast repertoire of digital skills. One of CCSS’ speaking and listening standards for grades 11-12 suggests that

students “[m]ake strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest” (www.corestandards.org/). Another speaking and listening standard for grades 11-12 suggests that students “integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data” (www.corestandards.org/). As CCSS moves towards full implementation across the nation, it behooves educators to begin focusing on how to integrate aspects of media—social and educational—and digital tools to enhance instruction in mainstream secondary classrooms that include diverse groups of learners.

Schoology is regarded as mediating learning; teachers have opportunities to scaffold for struggling readers and writers such as reclassified ELLs. For example, students may have laptops in front of them and observe how their teacher demonstrates how to accomplish a specific task by doing and projecting the process on a SmartBoard screen. Students can then practice and accomplish intended tasks independently. By facilitating ways marginalized students like reclassified ELLs participate in and experience mainstream curricula with language support, Schoology scaffolds and supports students’ learning in both off/online spaces.

Identity, Agency, and Autonomy

In their textbook designed to introduce sociocultural theory in second language education through narrative analyses, Swain, Kinnear, and Steinman (2011) expand on the idea of *agency*. This group of scholars believes that all individuals are agentic and they behave in particular ways according to their drive and goals, and “are able to do [so]

depend[ing] on the particular constraints and affordances that are present in the situation,” which “vary across cultures and may be material or symbolic” (p. 149). In his study, Huang (2011) presents a diagrammatical representation (See Figure 1) that shows the relationships between identity, agency, and autonomy. Huang’s visual supports Benson’s (2007) idea that “agency can perhaps be viewed as a point of origin for the development of autonomy, while identity might be viewed as one of its more important outcomes” (p. 243). For this study, I will draw from this notion to explain how focal participants took control of their own learning by relying on technologies available to them to provide feedback to their peers and enhance their own writing.

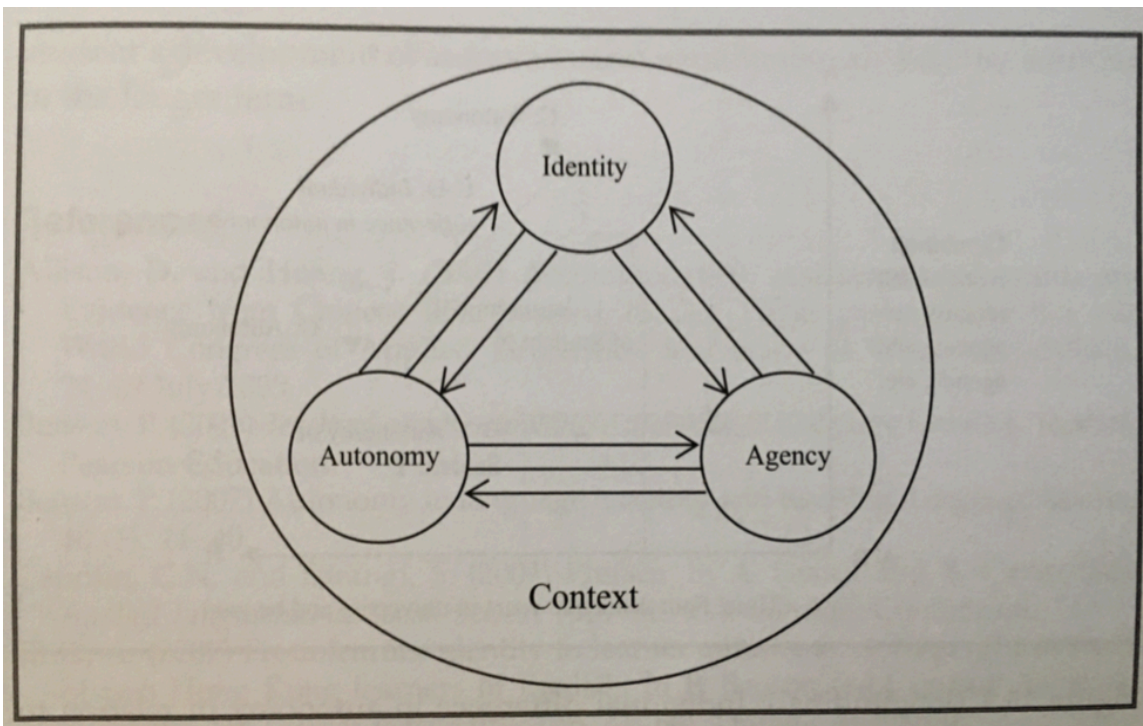


Figure 1. Huang’s (2011) conceptual diagram of how identity, agency, and autonomy interconnect in a learning context.

According to McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer (1985) those individuals who are intrinsically motivated take an active role as writers, are more self-directed, and see themselves more apt of setting and accomplishing goals. Additionally, a number of writing studies have indicated that self-efficacy plays a major part in influencing student choice, persistence, effort, thought patterns, perseverance, and emotional reactions when fulfilling a writing task (Pajares, 2003; Pajares & Johnson, 1994; Schunk, 2003).

Theoretical Framework

For this study, I will view literacy as a social situated practice (e.g., Gee, 2000; 2011; New London Group, 1996; Street, 1995) and draw upon Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (1998) notion of communities of practice, theories of identity (Gee, 2000; Wenger, 1998; Murray, Gao, & Lamb, 2011), and Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theories of learning. The New London Group (1996) argues that having a multiliteracies (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000) approach will ensure adolescents are meeting the literacy demands required to achieve two literacy-learning goals. These goals include creating access to the ever-changing language of work, community, and power and cultivating the critical engagement necessary for adolescents to design their futures and ensure a place in the work force. Albers and Harste (2007) find the term "new literacies" useful for conceptualizing the kinds of practices that emerge within a "digital and high-tech world" and view the word "studies" as a conscious effort to critically look at what is being said and how it is being said, especially through technology" (p. 15). Lankshear and Knobel's (2006) two categories characterized the field of new literacies: 1) post typographical (e.g., PowerPoint, iMovie, Movie Maker, etc.) and 2) ad hoc, or emergent literacies (e.g., blogs, vlogs, podcasts, wikis, etc.). New literacies are characterized by the incorporation of new "technical stuff" or "digitality" and the idea of "ethos stuff" or having the "mindset informing literacy practice" (Knobel and Lankshear,

2006). New online tools have facilitated the production of content such as blogs, wikis, and social networking sites over conventional Web practices (Mills, 2010).

I will draw from Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory to understand learning as a situated social process and to analyze reclassified ELLs' meaning making processes as they participate and compose in an online social space. Research has shown the value of focusing on ELLs' "active creation or use of new means to accomplish and understand an activity" (Erben, Ban, & Castaneda, 2009, p. 54). In these ways, a LMS like Schoology can be used to support and extend the work that teachers do in person with their students. Most ELLs continue to struggle with language acquisition and understanding mainstream concepts even after moving to a mainstream classroom, and sociocultural theory helps to explain how some ELLs can perform classroom tasks (i.e. traditional, communication, and digital practices) independently if provided with adequate differentiation and support. Vygotsky believes that researchers who study communication practices should place less emphasis on the transfer of information and more on the individual's actions, e.g. speaking, writing, reading, which demonstrates how they maintain their "individuality and create a shared social world during communicative activity" (Brooks & Donato, 1994, p. 273). Furthermore, in today's world, both the communicative task and engagement with and control of communicative exchanges that benefit individuals who are learning a second language are equally important (Brooks & Donato, 1994).

Another construct that informs my understanding of learning as socially situated and interactionally mediated is the notion of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Wenger explains the concept of COP as having components necessary to characterize "social participation as a process of learning and of knowing" (pp. 4-5). For example, Wenger explains that a social theory of learning must incorporate meaning,

practice, community, and identity components to distinguish social activities that involve learning and ways of “being” (Wenger, 1998).

For the purpose of this study, I apply Wenger’s (1998) framework of COP because I am interested in exploring how reclassified ELLs perform their identities and create instances of learning that adds to their agency while interacting in a teacher-created online environment, i.e. an online learning community. Evidence of agency and performed identities can provide insight on how reclassified ELLs make meaning as they participate in activities and conversations, in this case, online discussions. Because reclassified ELLs are expected to interact and engage with mainstream curricula, it was essential to examine how they learn from their peers and teacher. The COP lens provides one way to attain better understanding of how reclassified ELLs integrate and learn in a secondary mainstream language arts classroom.

This study was also informed by identity theory (Gee, 2003; Wenger, 1998; Murray, Gao, & Lamb, 2011). In *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity* (1998), Wenger explains the tension between theories that give primacy to either social structure or action. Wenger suggests theories of identity:

Concerned with social formation of the person...they address issues of gender, class, ethnicity, age, and other forms of categorization, association, and differentiation in an attempt to understand the person as formed through complex relations of mutual constitution between individuals and groups. (p. 13)

Wenger (1998) further explains learning as being “caught in the middle” of identity theory because learning serves as a path for the progression of practices and the inclusion of newcomers while also the path for the development and transformation of identities (p. 13). After I examined data, I became more acquainted with the complexities ELLs experience.

Since some reclassified ELLs enter mainstream classrooms unprepared (Lillie et al., 2010), it was noteworthy for me to explore their struggles in new learning contexts.

Gee's (2000) sociocultural theory of identity is described as a meaning-making process that is linked to the cultural tools and communicative symbols that are rooted in language. Gee's (1999) notion of "big D" Discourse refers to socially situated identities that involve performing and recognizing characteristic ways of "thinking, valuing, acting, and interacting, in the 'right' places and the 'right' times with the 'right' objects" (p. 34). For example, students in a secondary language arts class might be asked to participate in a Socratic seminar that discusses gender roles in the novel *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937) that requires them to speak or write in a specific way. One student might use sentence frames to phrase their comments to other peers: "I agree with what you've just said, however..." or "Can you clarify for us? I'm a little confused with what you're trying to say..." These types of sentence frames project an academic "way of being" and provide an example of how we sometimes are required to play different roles in different contexts. The student who uses sentence frames, for example, may project a different identity with a group of friends discussing academics in a more relaxed environment like a park or school cafeteria.

I draw from Gee's (2000) notion of identity to examine emails between focal participants and their teachers through what Gee coins as the "Institutional Perspective" or "I-identities." Gee explains the "Institutional Perspective" as one of four ways to formulate inquiries about how identity operates for a person, in addition to, referring to identities set by authorities within an institution. I align myself to Gee's notion of identity because in my experience working with ELLs, I have noticed individual students taking on different roles (e.g., a non-English speaker relying on the English language to communicate academically,

who later is recognized as a “non ELL” or “mainstream student” making him or her part of the mainstream community). My study closely looks at focal participants’ digital literacy practices within the boundaries of an LMS like Schoology that supports their learning and provides insight of how they navigate an online/digital environment while creating and performing their own identities as mainstream students.

In her study, Black (2005) draws on the notion of hybrid identities to examine how ELLs use online spaces to publicly perform aspects of their identities. By being active participants, current and reclassified ELLs develop a sense of affiliation in any given online community. English-language learners use hybrid linguistic practices as “multiple expressive modes” to develop identities and make online social connections (Thorne, Black, & Sykes, 2009). Consequently, discussion threads and blogs, for example, are interactive online tools that facilitate the already established forms of expository and narrative prose while also supporting the development of novel composition practices and contexts of reception (Thorne, 2008). Not only did reclassified ELLs build on their digital and language skills, they also had opportunities to participate in socially meaningful experiences (Williams, 2005) like the focal participants in this study.

Summary

In this chapter, I have delivered an overview of the historical context that envelops language policies and “English Only” sentiments in Arizona and across the United States. I provided historical context to contextualize current and reclassified ELLs who continue to be assimilated into public schools, even though they are considered a marginalized group. I also provided an overview of the literature of the incorporation of LMSs in educational institutions and a review of adolescents’ digital/social media practices. I offered a brief overview of the relationship between identity, agency, and autonomy. Finally, I described my

theoretical framework that encompasses notions of identity, communities of practice, sociocultural theories of learning, and multiliteracies and new literacies.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I provide my reasoning for using qualitative research methodologies, a description of the research site, my rationale for selecting the five focal participants, and a brief description explaining why I chose to include the three teachers discussed in this study. I also explain the senior research paper unit, my methods of data collection and data analysis used. Finally, I describe each focal participant through thick description by drawing from comments made in questionnaires and responses made to questions asked during phase one of interviews. The purpose of this chapter is to provide context for my readers—so that they can better interpret the data and analysis I discuss in Chapters 4 and 5. Because this study’s focus is on focal participants’ engagement within Schoology as they complete one multi-page thematic research paper, I offer an overview of the research unit and intended goals as indicated in documents provided to students by their teachers.

Rationale

My goal was to obtain a deep and more nuanced understanding of focal participants’ digital literacy practices while using a particular LMS to access course material and complete course assignments. To this end, I used a variety of qualitative research methodologies (Stake, 2010; Wolcott, 2008) to gather and analyze data. For instance, I employed ethnographic methods to observe, document, interview and analyze focal participants’ practices while using Schoology. This is aligned with a growing interest in recent years in using ethnography to understand the role of the Internet in learning (e.g., Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Lam, 2000, 2004; Alvermann, 2008; Beneito-Montagut, 2011; Daer & Potts, 2014). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) describe ethnography as a “reflexive position that allows the observation of how people construct, re-construct, and make meanings” (p. 25).

Beneito-Montagut (2011) explain why such an approach is useful for understanding the role of the social in non-traditional learning settings and how ethnography has the ability to “explore the scope of interpersonal interactions as such while also taking into account the lack of face-to-face interaction and the lack of a traditional notion of place in which to ground fieldwork” (p. 719).

Clifford (1992) describes ethnography as a geographic project involving practices of dwelling in physical locations, mapping and understanding the practices within these locations, while also retreating to other spaces. Leander and McKim’s (2003) work on adapting ethnography across online and offline spaces involving adolescents suggest construction of online ethnography is in its initial stages of distinguishing between traditions and practices.

In his work on educational technology integration, Johnson (1995) proposes that educators employ research that promotes in-depth understanding of how technologies mediate learning instead of examining for superficial qualities only. He further states that qualitative methodologies are beneficial tools for enriching our understanding of pedagogical practices and learning, and he points to their acceptance in recent years. Strauss and Corbin (1990) argue that qualitative methods appropriately employed can serve to support the understanding of phenomenon occurring within a particular context and to gain perspectives on occurrences about which little or much is known equally. Stake (2010) believes that the purpose of qualitative research is to understand a “particular situation” and “we should contribute to setting policy and professional practice” (p. 65). Even though I spent most of my time in Schoology’s portal to observe focal participants’ use of and interactions, and less time in physical classrooms, I was able to gain an in-depth perspective of how focal participants negotiated their roles as mainstream students within the virtual constructs of

Schoology. My research design allowed me to interview participants, collect screenshots of their participation in Schoology's discussion forum, collect artifacts uploaded through Schoology's dropbox feature, and document the context of the classroom through observations so that I could provide my own interpretive viewpoints. Moreover, qualitative research is viewed as a "dynamic process" in which researchers must find balance between opposing forces (Baym, 2009). Tensions in educational policy-making can be uncovered and different groups can either negotiate or resist policies in their favor (Canagarajah, 2006).

I draw on the notion of situated practice (New London Group, 1996) in order to make sense of how reclassified ELLs' experiences in Schoology support their language learning and literacy practices. I view learning as an endeavor that is facilitated by meaning making in real-world contexts, and as a sociocultural process. During my time as an ELD teacher, I realized that my students became more intrigued and motivated if I created lessons that would engage them with authentic and meaningful social practices involving discussions, texts, and technologies. Following Cope and Kalantzis (2009) and their notion of situated practice as "experiencing" (p. 184), I view human cognition as shaped by situation and context, where meanings are grounded in the real world of patterns of experience. Also drawing on Cope and Kalantzis (2015), I examine two types of "experience": 1) when learners experience the known (when they bring their own acquired knowledge, experiences, and interests to the learning context); and 2) when learners experience the new (when learners are exposed to novice situations, they observe or partake in something that is new or unfamiliar, but participate within the limits of intelligibility and close to their own lived experiences). With all of this in mind, I examined data, such as transcribed interview transcripts, online discussions, field notes, emails, screenshots of focal participants' use of Word's track changes tool, and classroom artifacts through a sociocultural theory lens (e.g.,

Vygotsky 1978; Gee & Hayes 2012; Lankshear & Knobel 2011; and Kalantzis & Cope, 2011) with a nuanced understanding of literacy as a social practice that is influenced by a wide range of socially patterned and goal-oriented ways of “doing” and “seeing” the world.

Research Context

Because teachers encouraged digital communication, they would, for example, require students to bring any concerns to the forefront via Schoology’s feedback feature or personal email. Before I solicited focal participants’ participation in my study, they had already been socialized into using email in particular ways (e.g. inquire and/or inform the teacher about specifics concerning the research paper) as this was common practice in all Senior English classes. Also, their Senior English teacher had already introduced focal participants to Schoology at the beginning of school year and understood that the LMS was a significant component to the course. On a side note, four out of the five focal participants had already been exposed to Schoology when they were my ELL students; they were part of my pilot study that looked at the potential of blogs in language learning and literacy practices of ELLs. Nonetheless, these a/synchronous practices allowed focal participants to perform complex tasks by participating in forum discussions that promote the application of reading, writing, and high-order thinking skills while negotiating their own digital skills to create meaning in the mainstream environment. Focal participants who participated in online discussions seemed to benefit from the unlimited amount of time they had to gather their thoughts/opinions before they made their own initial post or before commenting on their peers’ posts.

My study took place at a Title I high school located in the Southwest region of the United States. In this particular setting, students enrolled in this Senior English class had been exposed to the LMS Schoology that was used as an educational online space to

collaborate in discussion forums, blog, open links to additional Internet sites (e.g., Purdue's Online Writing Lab, Google Scholar, EBSCOhost), upload digital images, take teacher-created online assessments, and submit assignments electronically. The students who participated in this study were very familiar with using the LMS Schoology before taking Senior English—not necessarily because the LMS was sanctioned by the District and mandated by the English department, but because teachers in this school had used the LMS as an online tool to support both teaching and learning.

In the classes I observed, teachers utilized the LMS to pose writing prompts that related to a topic being discussed in class or to propose thematic questions that emerge from the literature in Schoology's discussion forum. Additionally, students were often required to post an initial response that demonstrated their critical thinking skills and comprehension of the topics. Students also routinely read their peers' posts and replied—thereby engaging in digital discussions. Students had the option to blog by using Schoology's blog feature even if a teacher did not require it. Moreover, students could upload digital images to compliment their blogs and online discussion posts. Some teachers provided students with resourceful links to support their research agendas. For example, a teacher might upload links to specific online resources such as Google Scholar or the class's online textbook. As long as they had Internet access, students could click on these links and explore these sites at their own convenience both in and out of school.

Teachers also had the option of creating online assessments for their students. They sometimes generated tests that include true or false, multiple choice, and open-ended questions. Schoology allowed teachers to keep a record of students' assessment results, and both the teacher and student could review these data anytime. Most importantly, Schoology offered a dropbox feature for electronic submission of assignments. A student could upload

a document and the teacher could provide feedback using Microsoft Word's track changes tool or Schoology's editing tool and return the document to the student by uploading to his or her individual dropbox. One goal was to eliminate the exchange of hard copies between teachers and students; another was to expose students to the revision and editing process through the use of Microsoft Word's track changes tool; and yet another was to keep a visible record of students' work progress and participation in Schoology.

The five focal participants who participated in this study attend Winterfell High School (pseudonym). The majority of Winterfell students come from low-income families, and 54% of students are on free-or-reduced lunch. Winterfell's population is approximately 1800 students. These students are predominantly ethnic minorities: Hispanic (70%); Black (15%); White (10%); Asian (2%); American Indian/Alaskan Native (1%); Native Hawaiian (1%); and two or more races (1%). Additionally, the school's four-year graduation rate is 77.9%; the dropout rate is 2.7%. Winterfell received a grade of B for the 2013-2014 school year (<https://azreportcards.com/>). Winterfell is among other secondary schools in Arizona that are under restrictive language policies that affect mainly learners of English, their parents, and teachers. ELLs are routinely moved out of the 4-hour block into mainstream classrooms where their non-ELD teachers have the responsibility of finding ways to meet the needs of those students exiting the ELD program, i.e. reclassified and those refusing language development services.

During data collection for this study, Winterfell had a total of 18 (0.0100%) official ELL students enrolled. Compared to surrounding secondary school districts and previous years at Winterfell, this was a relatively small number of ELL students. One factor potentially contributing to the decrease in enrollment was the increased number of

immigrant families leaving Arizona because of both the 2007 economic recession and SB1070⁴ law that went into affect in 2010.

Among the ELLs at Winterfell, there were 8 Pre-emergent/Emergent ELLs, 4 Basic ELLs, and 6 Intermediate ELLs. The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) requires all schools that provide ELD services to monitor reclassified ELLs for two years. Winterfell had a total of three (grade 12) Year 1⁵ reclassified students or Fluent English Proficient (FEPs) and one (grade 12) Year 2⁶ student, also FEP. If students qualified for ELD services but refused them, they were labeled as Monitored Refusals⁷ Year 1 or 2. Winterfell had only two students labeled as Monitored Refusals. This study focused only on three Year 1 FEPs and two Monitored Refusals Year 2 (non-FEPs). I decided it was important to include those students who refused ELD services in my study because they were not considered ‘proficient’, yet they participated and engaged with mainstream curricula without language support. This study examines the experiences of five young individuals (with the exception of one) who faced the relocation from their home country to the U.S. at a young age to encounter challenging academic tasks and numerous standardized assessments with no or limited knowledge of the dominate language—English. The focal participants of this study, however, were tasked to learn new ways of being and communicate—in terms of language—in a country that historically is accepting of immigrants but regularly fails to provide them an equitable chance at an education.

⁴ SB1070 allowed police officers to ask drivers for legal documentation when pulled over for a suspected traffic violation. Many families feared being separated by immigration officials, hence, they moved to neighboring states (Campbell, 2011).

⁵ Year 1 – These students have successfully passed AZELLA, have been deemed as “exited” the ELD program, and have been placed in mainstream classrooms. This is their first year as a mainstream student. Their academic progress is tracked for the next two years.

⁶ Year 2 – This student has entered their second year in mainstream classrooms. After tracking their academic for two years, they will no longer receive any compensatory instruction.

⁷ Monitored Refusal – Parents have signed a waiver to refuse ELD services for their child. However, state law requires schools to provide compensatory instruction and track their academic progress for two years.

Selection and Recruitment of Participants and Teachers

Five high school seniors who either graduated the ELD program or refused language support were recruited for this study. Three were known as reclassified ELLs or FEPs, and two were considered Monitored Refusals, i.e. they refused language support from the ELD program. Focal participants included three female and two male students. All five focal participants come from Mexican-American backgrounds. Three students, who were part of Winterfell's ELD program, had exited the ELD program after AZELLA results deemed them 'proficient' in May 2014. The other two students refused ELD services, but they continued being monitored by the school district's office of English Language Acquisition as directed by the state. All five students who participated in this study were enrolled in a mainstream Senior English class—each class held an average of 34 students.

In order to recruit students for this study, I first requested an official document (December 2014) from the school's ELD counselor that listed all current ELLs and those who had exited the ELD program in the past two years at Winterfell. I reviewed the list and made note of those students who were current seniors and enrolled in Senior English II (official title for second semester of Senior English). I also made sure students were labeled as "reclassified" or "refusal monitored" as appropriated by AZELLA results. I asked to meet with five specific students who met the criteria after school and asked them if they were interested in being part of my dissertation study. I provided students with a parental consent (January 2015) and assent form (See Appendices B, C, and H) that provided an overview of the study for their review. I allowed students three days to decide on whether or not they wanted to participate. All five students agreed to participate and they became the five focal participants of this study.

Three teachers were also part of this study. Two female teachers were white and one male teacher had Mexican-American roots. I considered these three particular teachers to be part of my study because of the professional relationships already established, their familiarity with Schoology, and their beliefs about education overall. For example, Mr. Hilaria was on his 9th year of teaching during this study. Both of us took graduate courses together, participated in professional committees at our school district, and implemented Schoology in our classrooms. His philosophical stance on education and literacy aligns with my own, which made it possible to ask for his participation in this study. He agreed to participate without reservations. Mrs. Bolton came to Winterfell with two years of teaching experience; however, she was new at working with adolescent learners. I decided to ask her to participate in my study because she had experience teaching an online course at the college level. She also agreed to participate in my study. The final teacher, Ms. Lannister, had no teaching experience. She flew across the country to secure a teaching position at Winterfell. I decided to include her in my study because of our professional relationship, her beliefs about public education, and her stance on ways to close the student-achievement gap. She also agreed to participate in my study without hesitation.

Out of 96 students in three Senior English II classes, five focal students were selected to be part of this study. However, other students' posts were used as data to support the interpretation of focal participants' responses to their peers' online posts. For this reason, a separate student consent form was generated and distributed to all students and their parents (See Appendices B, C, and H). Focal participants interacted in Schoology's threaded discussion feature. They were required to post their initial responses to teacher-created prompts as well as respond to their peers' posts. This practice continued throughout the spring semester, i.e. January to May 2015. Even though I focused on five focal

participants that were enrolled in three different Senior English II classrooms, each classroom looked different because each teacher used Schoology differently. Focal participants were only able to see what was relevant to their own specific class and were not able to interact with other students from the other classes that were part of the study, i.e. one classroom was its own entity. However, teachers were able to receive administrator rights to any Schoology class page if the teacher of that specific class granted other fellow teachers a specific code to gain access.

By the end of the 2015 spring semester, focal participants had completed a 10-page research paper—a significant end-of-high school culminating project—and interacted in the online space of Schoology during the process. Focal participants, along with their counterparts who were enrolled in Senior English II, were provided with a detailed schedule with due dates that pertained to all assignments related to the research paper (See Appendix D) and a timeline with a checklist to be signed by the teacher and student’s parent or guardian (See Appendix E), which was collected at the end of the culminating project. The senior research paper required focal participants to engage in the revision/peer-edit process and communicate with their teachers via Schoology’s inbox feature and/or email. Accordingly, individual teachers expected students to complete and upload additional assignments to the class’ specific digital folder in Schoology.

The Senior Research Paper (January—May 2014)

Throughout the 2014-2015 school year at Winterfell, the Senior English curriculum exposed focal participants to British literature that was divided into six units or eras as designated in the course textbook. Eras included The Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Periods, The English Renaissance, and The Restoration and Eighteenth Century, which were covered during the 2014 fall semester. During the fall semester, students read three major literary

works that included *Beowulf*, *The Canterbury Tales*, and *Macbeth*, in addition to a number of informational texts to complement each reading. Focal participants also interacted with other peers in Schoology’s discussion forum and completed numerous reading and writing activities.

My study focused on the 2015 spring semester. Three other eras were covered during this particular semester: The Romantic, The Victorian, and The Modern and Contemporary Eras. In addition to the mentioned eras, students were also required to work independently and complete a multi-page thematic research paper that focused on a particular era of their choice; in some cases, teachers assigned the eras to students. I want to clarify that the “research unit” was an independent component in addition to the Romantic, Victorian, and Modern and Contemporary Eras being covered throughout the spring semester. Table 1 provides a visual representation of the duration of the “research unit” and units/eras and how they coincide within a 5-month period.

January	February	March	April	May
Research/Senior Paper				
The Romantics		The Victorians	The Modern and Contemporary	

Table 1. Spring semester units and research path

Focal participants and their peers were required to write a 10-page research paper, which consisted of several 1½-2 page written papers throughout the spring semester. As a whole, the research paper required 10-12 sources from which to cite. Each of the six eras covered throughout the school year came with four initial thematic questions. For example, The English Renaissance unit initiated with the following thematic questions: 1) Should religion be tied to politics? 2) Why is love so complicated? 3) What is the ideal society? and 4) Why do people seek power? Once a student selected or was assigned an era to explore, he or she had to choose one of the four thematic questions that interested him or her, which

became the subject area to research (i.e., era and theme). After having selected an era and question, students selected two writers to study. They also selected two literary pieces by each writer to analyze. It was important for students to select authors and works aligned to their theme of study and respective era. A breakdown of essay assignments and requirements that eventually became one 10-page research paper can be found in Appendix F.

At the start of spring semester (January 2015), students were provided with a hardcopy of “Senior Research Paper Timeline/Checklist” (See Appendix E) that listed all required assignments and due dates. After an assignment or task was completed and approved, students collected a signature from their teacher. Also, if students did not complete an essay or assignment on the specified due date, a phone call was made to make parents aware of their son or daughter’s missing assignment. In addition to a timeline/checklist handout, students kept a “Schedule of Assignments” (See Appendix D) related to the research paper. The schedule listed weekly assignments with due dates for twenty weeks (i.e., Week One: January 5-9 to Week Twenty: May 18-22). All forms related to the thematic senior research paper were made available to students as both hardcopies and electronic versions that could be accessed on Schoology.

Data Collection

Questionnaires

In the initial stages of the study, a demographic questionnaire (See Appendix G) that contained 14 open-ended questions was administered to focal participants to obtain a sense of their social/digital media use as well as their digital devices/applications use. The questionnaire was also designed to gather focal participants’ opinions about Schoology and technology in general. Responses to the questionnaires provided data that allowed me to assemble focal participants’ profiles as users of digital/social media and devices, their

participation in online social networks, and their knowledge of digital skills in relation to learning. For example, focal participants were asked to reveal which types of social media and social networks they engaged with and their opinions about Schoology. I asked questions about their experiences with Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to indicate the types of online spaces focal participants frequent to gain an overall sense of their views towards Schoology as an online space used for learning purposes. The open-ended response format of questionnaires helped me understand focal participants' engagement with digital literacy practices, which was central to this study and helped answer Research Question 3 (what students say about their use and participation in Schoology). Focal participants and their classmates received a student assent form (See Appendix H) and their parents were asked to complete a parental consent form (See Appendix B & C) as well.

The three teachers selected for this study were also asked to complete a demographic questionnaire (See Appendix I) that asked them questions about how they came to be teachers, their years of teaching experience, and their own use/participation in social media, and their use of digital devices/applications. Teachers were also asked to sign a consent form (Appendix J). I documented teacher conversations on an informal interview form (See Appendix K). I asked them about any challenges or rewards of their experiences as they integrated Schoology in their teaching, and their thoughts on the experiences of recently mainstreamed ELLs' use of Schoology. Winterfell's principal was also provided with a separate consent form (See Appendix L) for her review and permission solicitation. Even though data collected from teachers did not address any of my research questions, it was viable to this study because their shared-experiences complimented those of this study's focal participants.

Interviews and Transcripts

I interviewed the five focal participants two or three times each. All interviews took place after school in my classroom at Winterfell. Four participants were unable to provide commentary for the last formal (face-to-face) interview; however, they were able to submit email correspondences instead. Only one focal participant was able to participate in the third formal interview. I audio recorded and transcribed 11 interviews that lasted approximately 40 minutes each. I used a modified version of Seidman's (2006) three-part approach to interviewing to conduct formal interviews. Because my research questions lend themselves to a basic mode of inquiry (i.e., recounting narratives of experience; Seidman, 2006), understanding the lived experiences of focal participants and the meaning they make of that experience was essential to this study. Interviews conducted with focal participants were divided into three parts: 1) Focused life history; 2) Details of experience; and 3) Reflections on meaning/learning (See Appendix M). All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed (See Appendix N), with the exception of four email correspondences, which were collected a few weeks after participants had already graduated from Winterfell. I used an interview form (See Appendix O) that listed the formal interview questions and emailed them to four focal participants. Participants typed their responses and sent them back to me via email.

In the first phase of the study (mid February 2015), I interviewed all focal participants to gain insight on their personal history, in/out of school extra-curricular activities, use of electronic devices (e.g., computer, iPad, iPhone, etc.) and participation with social/digital media and social networks. Even though teachers were not interviewed, I asked them to complete a questionnaire to gather insight about their use of digital/social media, opinions about Schoology and technology, and their thoughts about reclassified ELLs'

integration into the mainstream environment to help me gather a well-rounded profile of each teacher participant.

In the second phase of the study (end of March 2015), the five focal participants were formally interviewed again. This time, the interview included questions about their experiences in Senior English II and participation in Schoology. Details of focal participants' lived experiences, their interactions, and participation in Schoology offered a nuanced view of the potential Schoology has to mediate learning.

In the third phase of the study (end of May 2015), my plan was to formally interview focal participants once again; however, only one focal participant was available to complete a face-to-face formal interview. The other four participants completed the interview questions electronically and sent them back to me via email. The third interview attempted to elicit reflections from focal participants on topics that came up during the first two interviews. Focal participants were asked to reflect on the experiences they had described as well as what meanings they formed of those experiences—with a focus on their participation in Schoology and use of technologies. Interviews helped me answer Research Question 3 (what do the participants say about their participation in relation to their language learning, literacy practices, and academic achievement).

Teachers were also given the opportunity to share their reflections about their implementation of Schoology and the impact integrating a digital educational tool had on reclassified ELLs' language development and learning. Their perspectives also helped me understand how LMSs could enhance, or not, teaching practices. Additionally, teacher-shared experiences helped me understand how participating teachers negotiated their own pedagogical decisions that ultimately had an impact on mainstream students and the five

focal participants (deemed as reclassified ELLs) who interacted in the online space of Schoology.

Emails and Email Correspondences

Another source of data were email exchanges between focal participants and their teachers. I asked teachers, after the school year ended, if they could send me all email exchanges they had furnished with focal participants throughout the spring semester. I chose to print and examine emails because I noticed that they were an integral part of how focal participants communicated their concerns about the senior research paper with their teachers. I noticed that email was the main mode of communication between teacher and student that created an additional space for learning and teaching scenarios to manifest. In fact, I was under the impression that students would use Schoology's inbox feature to communicate with their teachers, instead, I found all seniors, including focal participants, used their personal emails to communicate their concerns or inquiries about the senior research paper during after school hours, specifically. Observing how focal participants used email to communicate with their teachers helped me understand how different communicative modalities and application of digital skills shaped their learning experiences and helped answer Research Question 2 (what literacy practices do the participants use the most). Furthermore, focal participants' engagement with digital communication and application of digital skills outside the boundaries of Schoology points to what was missing within the online space of Schoology.

Observational Fieldnotes

I conducted classroom observations and took field notes of focal participants as they interacted with their classmates and teachers to inform my understanding of the artifacts I collected and analyzed (See Appendix P). In addition, I observed participants as they

navigated Schoology and how they utilized their laptops during class time to complete assigned writing tasks. Even though the main focus was to observe focal participants' membership in Schoology, my observation of them in the classroom setting provided details that I used to create thick descriptions (Stake, 2010) of focal participants. I also conducted observations of two focal participants receiving support from one of Winterfell's ELD aides. These observations helped me construct a profile of those focal participants who chose to ask for additional support outside of their senior English class and helped answer Research Question 1 (which features of Schoology do the participants use); and Research Question 2 (what literacy practices do participants engage in when participating in the online space of Schoology). As mentioned before, most of my "observations" of focal participants occurred during their participation in Schoology.

In spite of the obstacles, scheduling challenges, and the demands of my professional duties that ensued while conducting this study at Winterfell, I was able to observe focal participants in their classrooms at least three times from February to May 2015. It was my intent to observe all five focal participants at least once a week until the end of the semester. However, it was logistically impossible since I was not able to demand more of my colleagues by asking them to cover my own classes, and asking for substitute coverage was not an option. I was fortunate enough to have the support of my site principal and was encouraged to conduct classroom observations during my "prep" hour. I was also fortunate enough to have colleagues who stepped in and offered to cover my classes so that I could continue collecting data throughout the semester.

Screenshots of Online Discussions

Focal participants contributed in a number of online discussions that differed in topics and expectations set by their respective teacher. I observed the interactions of each

focal participant with their peers in order to gather insight of how they negotiated both their traditional and digital literacy practices to make meaning in the online space of Schoology. I took screenshots of focal participants' Schoology personal profile, online threaded discussions, and communication with their teachers in Schoology's feedback section. I was specifically looking at how focal participants made use of the online discussion feature that allowed them to either present their own ideas or refute those ideas of their peers because I wanted to get a glimpse of how they applied their digital and communication skills that addressed Research Question 1 (how/when/why for what purpose do they use those particular features). Analyzing screenshots of focal participants engaged in activities helped me construct a profile of each focal participant as an approach to acknowledge their shared details and cultural complexities (Stake, 2010).

Screenshots of Focal Participant/Teacher Interactions in Schoology

Even though the Microsoft Word's track changes tool was not a sanctioned feature in Schoology, the platform did have a similar application. Teachers were able to provide electronic feedback directly on a student's paper in Schoology, if they chose to do so. Teachers also had the opportunity to provide feedback to individual students that related to a piece of writing in the Schoology's feedback section. I took screenshots of this process to show the communication that occurred between teacher and student within the confines of Schoology, which is central to this study, and address Research Questions 1 (which features of Schoology do the participants use) and 2 (what literacy practices do participants engage in when participating in the online space of Schoology).

Screenshots of Focal Participants using Track Changes

During this study, students were encouraged to use Microsoft Word's track changes tool to either review their teachers' comments or provide feedback to their peers.

Screenshots of focal participants' use of the track changes tool to provide electronic feedback to their peers were taken to capture how they applied their digital and acquired language skills and to show how they relied on the digital communicative mode offered by technology to further advance their learning. Analyzing screenshots of focal participants' use of the track changes tool helped me gain a better understanding of how they mediated learning by applying both their traditional and digital literacy practices as well as help answer Research Question 2 (what literacy practices do the participants use the most).

Data Analysis

My analysis of data collected generated preliminary findings about how an LMS like Schoology supports learning. I first analyzed focal participants' questionnaires to gather a general overview of their media and digital literacy practices along with their opinions about their participation in Schoology and technology in general. I analyzed field notes and interview transcripts for recurrent patterns and themes; analysis and coding were ongoing throughout the spring semester. I analyzed screenshots of the electronic communication that occurred between focal participants and their teachers (i.e., emails and teacher feedback in Schoology), screenshots of electronic communication that occurred between focal participants and their peers (i.e., track changes, online discussions), and interview transcripts that offered focal participants' opinions about their use of technology and participation in Schoology.

Technique	Amount of Data
1) Questionnaires	18 pages
2) Interview Audio Recordings	385 minutes
3) Interview Transcripts	90 pages
4) Email Correspondences (Interviews)	21 pages
5) Emails	137 pages
6) Observational Fieldnotes	32 pages/715 mins.
7) Screenshots of Online Discussions	34 pages
8) Screenshots of Feedback to Participants (Schoology)	26 pages
9) Participants' Feedback to Peers (Word/Track Changes)	18 pages

Table 2. Data collection

It was my intent to analyze these data to understand how focal participants tapped one educational LMS—Schoology—to further advance their language learning and build their literacy repertoires. During analysis of focal participants' use of Schoology features, the digital literacy practices they engaged in when participating in the LMS, and their opinions about their participation in Schoology in relation to their language learning, literacy repertoires, and academic achievement, I began to understand how focal participants negotiated their own literacy and digital skills to make sense of their positionality within the mainstream context. (See Table 2 for information on data collection.)

After analyzing focal participants' questionnaires (Appendix G), four major categories and 17 sub-categories were created. I decided to apply what Gable and Wolf (1993) coin as Values Coding as a method to reflect focal participants' values, attitudes, and beliefs in relation to their participation in and use of social media and digital practices. Values Coding was a way to gain insight of focal participants' perspectives or worldviews, specifically when they were asked to complete a questionnaire that elicits personal views, opinions, or perspectives on a specific idea or topic. I found Values Coding useful when coding questionnaires because this process allowed me to get a glimpse of what each focal participant valued in terms of technology and social and digital media use and their attitudes

towards their participation in Schoology in relation to their learning. Saldana (2013) emphasizes this type of qualitative inquiry as a means to assess what participants value, believe, think and feel about social life.

Because my study encompasses adolescent ELLs' membership in Schoology and their application of digital literacies within the platform, I wanted to represent their perspectives about their place in today's digitally driven and technologically advanced world. Values Coding helped me uncover focal participants' personal views about their participation in an LMS designated for learning.

Another set of data consisted of interview transcripts. I analyzed 11 interviews and four email correspondences. Interviews were conducted in a time span of 20 weeks. As mentioned, phase three of interviews did not materialize for four out of five focal participants because of time constraints and unavailability during the last week of school; focal participants were gearing up for and focused on graduation, which was completely understandable. Instead, focal participants answered the last set of interview questions on a Word document and returned to me via email. During the first layer of analysis, I did preliminary coding and created categories after observing patterns across all focal participants' interviews.

According to Roulston (2010), the research interview has been a key method of data generation used by researchers to obtain descriptions from participants concerning their experiences, perspectives, beliefs, and opinions (p. 77). Her account offers readers with a conceptualization of the interview as a "socially-situated encounter in which both interviewer and interviewee play active roles...takes the co-construction of interview data as a topic of examination, rather than as a transparent resource" (p. 78). Andrews (2008) defends the use of interviewing as research by proclaiming that interviews represent choices we have made at

a specific moment, and these choices may vary as time goes by (p. 86). Most importantly, Andrews (2008) asserts that the more “vantage points” from which we observe phenomena the better off we are at understanding what we observe (p. 86). I relied on “the series of three interviews” concept (Seidman, 2006) to conduct formal interviews with my focal participants to establish the context of each focal participant’s experience or life history; allow each focal participant to reconstruct the details of their experience with and participation in Schoology; and encourage each focal participant to reflect on the meaning of their experience with and participation in Schoology.

I decided to apply thematic analysis (Tamboukou, 2003; Riessman, 2008) to interview transcripts as a way to investigate what focal participants had to say about their participation in Schoology in relation to their language learning, literacy repertoires, and academic achievement. Focal participants’ tellings included instances of their beliefs about the technological support systems in place, i.e. at home; in/out of school, and their views about education in general. This process helped address Research Question 3 (what do they say about their participation in relation to their language learning, literacy repertoires, and academic achievement). This approach helped me gain a better understanding of how focal participants performed their identities as members of a mainstream learning community and how they collaborated with peers in the online space of Schoology.

The third set of data consisted of emails that were produced between teachers and focal participants during the spring semester. At first, I was not expecting emails to be part of my data collection; however, I noticed that focal participants, as well as other students in other senior English classes, used email as the main platform to voice their concerns or inquire about the senior research paper to their teachers. Thus, the communication that transpired produced teaching and learning episodes between focal participants and teachers

in emails that became an unexpected major finding and the main subject matter for data analysis Chapter 4.

To conduct the first layer of analysis, I first read and examined all emails made between teacher and focal participants. I read a total of 205 emails that were produced between January—May 2015. I did some preliminary coding and indexing or Holistic Coding (Dey, 1993) that produced three codes and 21 sub-codes. (See Appendix Q).

As a second layer of analysis, I applied Subcoding (Gibbs, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994) as a way to “second-order tag” primary codes to enrich my findings. I proceeded to categorize (Miles & Huberman, 1994) codes, which produced two major categories and three sub-categories. (See Appendix R)

I collected 32 pages of field notes and observed focal participants approximately 700 minutes from February to April 2015. Field notes were taken on an observation protocol (See Appendix P) and analyzed for patterns and themes in relation to focal participants’ interview responses. As mentioned before, my study focused more on focal participants’ contributions in Schoology instead of their engagement with in-class activities. Hence, field notes provided details of how focal participants engaged with their peers, teachers, and in-class technologies (e.g., laptops, Schoology, etc.).

Between all three teachers, 12 online discussion prompts were created. Mr. Hilaria created five online discussions with the following titles: 1) Romantics: Intro Discussion; 2) Where do we find peace?; 3) What makes a visionary?; 4) The Restoration: Intro Discussion; and 5) Era & Self Introduction. Mrs. Bolton created: 1) Era & Self-Introduction; 2) Revisions Process Discussion; 3) A Modest Proposal; 4) Rime of the Ancient Mariner; and 5) Pride and Prejudice vs. B. Jones. Finally, Ms. Lannister created the following six online discussions: 1) Where do we find peace?; 2) Era & Self Introduction; 3) A Modest Proposal;

4) Victorians: Intro Discussion; 5) Alfred Lord Tennyson Discussion; and 6) The Rape of Lock Discussion. After I examined all online discussions, I found that only one—Era & Self Introduction—was assigned consistently across all four classes, and all focal participants, regardless of which teacher they had, completed this particular online discussion.

Focal participants contributed in 17 online discussions. I collected 17 initial posts made by focal participants, collected 19 replies made to other peers, and collected 13 peer responses made directly to focal participants' initial posts (See Appendix S). To conduct the analysis for online discussions, I read and analyzed all 36 posts made by focal participants, i.e., initial posts and replies. I extracted phrases from each sentence and applied preliminary coding, which fashioned 73 codes. I clustered codes into groups by association that later became categories. Seven thematic categories emerged: 1) Individuality; 2) Education; 3) Harmony; 4) Disparity; 5) Emotions; 6) Technology; and 7) Nature. (See Appendix T)

I applied thematic analysis or “themed the data” (Smith & Osborn, 2008; Tamboukou, 2003; Riessman, 2008; Saldana, 2013) to online discussions because I wanted to document instances of how focal participants revealed accounts of “self” rather than focus on the number of online discussions they had produced with their peers. Through a thematic analysis lens, I viewed “language as a resource” (Williams, 1984) that supported focal participants to engage in an online community of learners and expose qualities of their identities. DeSantis and Ugarriza (2000) define theme as “an abstract entity that brings meaning and identity to a recurrent [patterned] experience and its variant manifestations” and “captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole (p. 362). Furthermore, Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) explain *theme* as a function to organize a group of repeated ideas into an implicit topic (p. 38). As noted, seven major themes emerged after analyzing focal participants' online discussion initial posts and replies (See Appendix T).

Beliefs and attitudes towards education, discrimination, technology, and nature were some of the few subject matters referenced in focal participants' initial posts and replies to other peers, which will be further discussed in data analysis Chapter 5.

Another source of data were screenshots of teacher and student interactions that occurred in Schoology's feedback section. A total of 26 screenshots were collected. Of the five focal participants, only two used this particular feature to communicate with their respective teacher. However, all three teachers used the feedback feature throughout the spring semester to offer their feedback and comments in regards to writing assignments, consistently. Collectively, teachers made a total of 57 entries. Some of the entries directed to focal participants included: inquiring about a missing assignment, providing feedback in regards to MLA/essay structure/format, providing suggestions of how to improve an essay (grammar/punctuation), and providing a score on an essay.

A seventh source of data were screenshots of focal participants making comments to their peers by using Microsoft Word's track changes tool and screenshots of focal participants providing electronic feedback to their peers. In regards to focal participants' track changes entries, a combined sample of 202 entries was created across 14 peer-edited essays. Included were entries labeled as Comment, Deleted, or Formatted. These labels indicated the types of recommendations offered, i.e., modifications, deletions, additions, or revisions related to formatting. Figure 2 below illustrates example screenshots, taken directly from Schoology, of entries made by one focal participant.

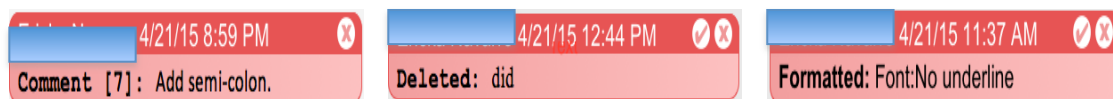


Figure 2. Example track changes entries

Collectively, focal participants made 140 comments (51%), requested 57 items to be deleted (28%), and requested 5 formatting changes (2%). Appendix U displays numerical values of track changes made by each focal participant. To conduct the analysis of focal participants' track changes entries, I first read and analyzed all Comment, Deleted, and Formatted entries made by participants across 14 peer-edited essays that were completed in a four-month span. At first, I did not expect to apply any criteria while I read and analyzed entries; however, during preliminary coding, focal participants' entries created categories that alluded to The Six Traits of Writing conceptual model. For example, participants presented entries such as, "Do not use contractions," "Change this sentence to..." and "Explain this sentence." Appendix V exhibits how I organized all entries accordingly into five of the Six Traits of Writing classifications as part of my first layer of analysis: 1) Ideas and Content; 2) Organization; 3) Word Choice; 4) Sentence Fluency; and 5) Conventions. I purposely left out Voice because none of the focal participants' entries implied the use (or lack of) its descriptors. I did, however, include Format/Sources/MLA as an additional category to reflect focal participants' entries about suggested modifications, omissions, formatting, citing sources, and MLA guidelines. Focal participants' use of the track changes tool and how they applied their digital and communication skills is further discussed in data analysis Chapter 5.

As a secondary layer of analysis, I looked at 1) purpose for making an entry, 2) recommendations offered, and 3) assumed prior knowledge (i.e., concepts appropriated from The Six Traits of Writing model). In terms of entry purpose, I looked at the following categories: declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory. I tallied entries that included complete sentences, semi-complete sentences, phrases and fragments, which furnished 136 entries made between all five focal participants. Collectively, participants made 90 (66%) imperative entries, 27 (20%) declarative entries, and 19 (14%) interrogative entries.

None of the focal participants' entries signified exclamatory sentence structure; therefore, I did not include it as a code. In terms to recommendations offered, participants made a total of 127 entries. Between all five focal participants, 101 (80%) entries were recommendations to make modifications and 26 (20%) were recommendations to make omissions.

In terms of assumed writing skills prior knowledge, I considered the original 202 entries made by participants. Jointly, focal participants made 86 (43%) entries linked to Conventions, 39 (19%) entries linked to Format/MLA, 29 (14%) entries linked to Organization, 24 (12%) entries linked to Ideas and Content, 22 (11%) entries linked to Sentence Fluency, and 2 (1%) entries linked to Word Choice. Appendix W lists codes and subcodes for the second layer of analysis.

I relied on Descriptive Coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldana, 2003; Wolcott, 1994) because this approach assisted with organization. I examined what focal participants were accomplishing as they engaged in peer editing activities. I focused on how focal participants demonstrated their knowledge about writing during peer review sessions and how they relied on a digital mode, i.e., the use of the track changes tool, to provide feedback to their peers instead of making traditional pencil/pen markings on hardcopies.

The Focal Participants

"I didn't want to be in that class but I had to"

Rosalba is 18 years old. She was born in a southern state of Mexico. She is the youngest and only female of four older siblings. She shared that at the age of thirteen her father decided to move the family to the U.S. to "have a better life than in Mexico" and he wanted her "to have a better education." Rosalba considers herself bilingual since she speaks and understands both English and Spanish. She speaks mostly Spanish at home and exercises English at school. When asked about her language preference for in-school social

talk, she said she preferred using “Spanglish,” which she defined as “a mix of English and Spanish.” When at home she enjoys cooking, and entertaining her nephews by teaching them how to draw and read. When she spends time with her friends, she enjoys going to the movies or playing soccer and baseball at a neighborhood park.

With regard to her digital use and social media practices, Rosalba mentioned in her questionnaire that she uses Facebook, Pinterest, and Schoology. She also mentioned using digital devices such as a cell phone to text and computers on a daily basis to either do research related to her senior research paper or go on Netflix to watch movies. Rosalba considers herself a user and creator of social media. When online, Rosalba looks for interesting books and magazines to read. She also watches educational documentaries, does research on her senior paper topic, and chats with friends and relatives who reside in Mexico. During our first interview, Rosalba mentioned using Skype to talk to her boyfriend and family in Mexico almost every weekend. Rosalba mentioned having a Facebook page but did not “like to put stuff up” because she thinks “it’s dumb.” Rosalba said she does “research for things like food or DIY.” Rosalba also shared that her family has one computer with Wi-Fi access and it is stationed in the living room for everyone to use.

Regarding high school and her past experiences in language development classes, Rosalba mentioned she did not know anyone at Winterfell when she first started as a ninth-grader. She felt Winterfell was “an accepting place” and felt safe “because of the policemen that were around campus” and “the security.” When asked about her participation in extracurricular activities, Rosalba stated she “was going to join soccer but didn’t because my grades, were not like really good.” When asked about her experience in ELD at Winterfell, she stated, “That’s something that happened. I didn’t want to be in that class but I had to. Because I didn’t pass my AZELLA. But I didn’t take it like something—I didn’t know it was

a test to be in regular classes.” As a follow up question, I asked Rosalba if being in the ELD program helped her and she mentioned, “It was nice meeting new people, new teacher...and having to work with others that is not from your country.”

Rosalba was my student during the 2013-2014 school year. During this particular school year, Rosalba was in eleventh grade and was labeled “High-Intermediate” according to prior AZELLA scores. During spring 2014, Rosalba retook the AZELLA and passed, which deemed her ‘proficient’ thus allowing her to enroll in mainstream classes the following school year.

“I think it was gonna be hard for me because I didn’t know English enough”

Valentina is 18 years old. She was born in a southwestern city of Arizona. She spent her childhood in northern Mexico and is the oldest of three siblings. Valentina mentioned she lives with her father while her mother continues to reside in Mexico. Valentina grew up speaking Spanish at home; however, she started learning English her freshman year when she was fourteen years old after moving from Mexico to the U.S. When spending time with her friends, Valentina speaks Spanish, and on occasion, she enjoys attending parties with her friends. When at school, Valentina said, “it depends on teachers and friends” on deciding when to use either English or Spanish.

In both her questionnaire and first interview, Valentina mentioned visiting Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, and Schoology. She considers herself to be a user of social media. When Valentina is online, she mentioned doing research for her research paper at least three times per week. She owns a laptop and a cell phone. Similar to both Rosalba and Miguel’s comments, Valentina’s family also has one computer for the household. Valentina mentioned the computer sits in her “dad’s room” and she is allowed to “use it for senior paper work.”

Valentina stated she has only been at Winterfell for two years. She completed her first two years of high school in a southern border town of Arizona. When I asked her about her perceptions about Winterfell, Valentina stated, “I think it was gonna be hard for me because I didn’t know English enough.” Even though she was not in the ELD program at Winterfell, Valentina said she developed friendships with those students who were in the program. She also mentioned taking SEI classes at the high school she was attending prior to coming to Winterfell. Currently, Valentina participates in both softball and dance programs. Valentina did not mention much about her experiences in the SEI environment. She did mention that being in those classes “helped me to start explaining and writing.”

“They didn’t want to speak Spanish. They were gonna give me a hard time”

Josue is 18 years old. He was born in a major Arizona city; however, he spent his childhood in Mexico and returned to the U.S. at age fourteen. He has two older sisters. He currently lives with one of his older sisters and her husband. Both his parents continue to reside in Mexico. Josue mentioned speaking “more English at work than school or home.” With his friends he speaks Spanish and sometimes English. When at school, Josue speaks mostly Spanish but when a teacher asks him to do something, he uses English. Unlike the other four participants, Josue said that he does not seek support from his family with his homework or anything related to school.

During the first interview, Josue mentioned he rarely visits any social media sites. He does use Snapchat sometimes and considers himself a user of social media. However, in his questionnaire he did mention visiting Snapchat, Instagram, Schoology, and sometimes Facebook. He also mentioned visiting Craigslist three times per week and also gets his news from major network outlets. He owns a cell phone and a laptop. Josue uses his cell phone to call or text his parents in Mexico. Josue uses his laptop to do homework and watch action,

adventure, and comedy films on Netflix. He disclosed that sometimes he likes to watch movies alone “cause it has a lot of violence and I don’t like to watch it with my sister and niece.”

Josue stated that he has been at Winterfell for two and a half years. He started mid-year during his sophomore year. Josue was living in an inner-city neighborhood and attended another high school prior to enrolling at Winterfell. He mentioned taking the AZELLA at that specific school and when he registered at Winterfell, he was automatically placed in the ELD program. Josue mentioned that the following year he had passed the test. Josue’s impressions of Winterfell were expressed in interview one. His initial perceptions of Winterfell were that teachers “were probably mean. They didn’t want to speak Spanish. They were gonna give me a hard time.” He did say that the ELD program was “a good program” and he did “learn a lot of new words from there and speaking more English.” In regards to Winterfell’s environment, Josue mentioned he felt more secure and happy. Josue does not participate in any school extra-curricular activities. He has been working for a construction company for the past two years.

“I had difficulty with English with my aw-Senior English. It was the most difficult”

Ester is 17 years old. She was born in Mexico and was eleven years old when she came to the U.S. Her father came first then Ester followed. Both her and her father left Mexico, leaving mother behind. They currently reside with Ester’s aunt. Ester mentioned that her mother had reunited with the family about one year ago. Ester has two brothers and two sisters; she is the oldest. Ester’s first language is Spanish. When at school, she uses Spanish frequently with her friends. Ester shared that she uses English when asking for her food in the school cafeteria and when doing academic work. She enjoys going to church with family members. She mentioned she does not do much with her family because her father is

always working. Ester stated she does not have any friends. She spends most of her free time with her boyfriend. They go out to eat, the movies, and sometimes the zoo.

In her questionnaire, Ester disclosed she frequents Instagram, Google, YouTube, and Schoology. She considers herself a user of social media. When online, she looks up information to support her senior research paper (i.e., information on the Romantic Era). In interview one, Ester stated she visits Instagram to “look at pictures only.” She also visits “YouTube to listen to and watch music videos.” When asked about Schoology, she said she visits the site to “submit the work we have to do in the senior class.” She did mention that after having Facebook for three years she “erased it because it was boring.” When she did have Facebook, she used the social media site to chat with her friends who live in Mexico. Like the other focal participants, Ester owns a cell phone and a laptop and also mentioned that her household has one communal computer that sits in the living room.

Ester has been attending Winterfell since her freshman year. Her first impression of the school was that it “was big.” She disclosed that she was “not scared because everyone looked Mexican.” She did mention that her ELD teacher “was white-she was mean...sometimes...” She also said that it was a “positive” thing that there were many Mexicans because she “speak[s] Spanish the most.” Ester said that the ELD program “was good” and it helped her “improve my English.” She also disclosed her feelings about being in mainstream classes: “It was boring. Because everyone-every class is so loud. I can’t concentrate or nothing. I’m the only one that is quiet. I had difficulty with English with my aw-Senior English. It was the most difficult.” At the time of our first interview, Ester was pregnant, but did not disclose this information to me personally, perhaps out of embarrassment. She later disclosed this information to me during an observation of a tutoring session between her and one of Winterfell’s ELD aides.

“More English than anything”

Miguel is 18 years old. He considers himself a “Mexican-American.” He was born in a large city in Arizona and the only focal participant who never lived in Mexico as compared to the other four focal participants. He has four brothers and three sisters; Miguel is the youngest. Miguel disclosed he works with his father who is a diesel mechanic. His mother works for an agency that helps people apply for health insurance. He aspires to be a United Technical Institute (UTI) technician after graduating from high school. Both his parents speak English and Spanish. Miguel mentioned his father was born in a northern U.S. state but considers himself “Mexican.” Like Rosalba, Miguel mentioned he uses Spanglish or “a mix of both” languages. However, he uses “more English than anything.” He did mention that his father “kinda brought me up with Spanish. Like learned the language.” Miguel enjoys family vacations to California and the state fair when it is town. With his friends, Miguel enjoys going out to restaurants and playing basketball. He uses English mostly to communicate with his friends both in and out of school.

In his questionnaire, Miguel mentioned his digital use and social media practices. He stated he “used Google, Schoology, Snapchat, and the [School District’s Website].” He mentioned reading about the authors he was assigned for his senior research paper when doing research online. In our first interview, Miguel said he visits Facebook, Instagram, and EBSCOhost and the online textbook to help him with his senior research paper. He said he looks through friends’ Instagram posts and uses Facebook to follow any mention of his favorite baseball team, The New York Yankees. Miguel mentioned he carries a cell phone and owns a tablet. Similar to Rosalba’s comment about having access to one computer at home, Miguel also mentioned there is one computer available at home: “It’s basically for the

house...anybody can use it. In like, my dad's office." Miguel mentioned playing basketball at school for fun, and was an actual team player for Winterfell's baseball team in the past.

Regarding Miguel's experience in the ELD program, he mentioned ending up in the program at Winterfell after taking the AZELLA, but was unsure why that had happened. Miguel mentioned, "Yeah I got a low score cause...I don't know-I didn't know what it was...I think I scored proficient on the AZELLA." Miguel was in the ELD program for a period of two months during the 2012-2013 school year. During this particular school year, I was the school's ELD reading teacher (one domain out of the 4 domains that make up the 4-hour model) and I was also teaching Sophomore English. Miguel was initially placed in the ELD reading class, but after scoring proficient, he was "reclassified" and taken out of my ELD reading class and placed in mainstream classes. Miguel stated that even though he was only in ELD a short time, it was "fun" and had "good teachers."

The Teachers

"It's a hybrid-like class"

Ms. Lannister, a white American female in her early twenties, is the youngest of the three teachers and newly integrated to the teaching profession. Our professional relationship began in the fall of 2014 after having met at the staff orientation to open the new school year. Ms. Lannister was also part of the Sophomore English content team, which I led. She taught sophomores and seniors during this particular school year. In the spring, during an informal interview at the beginning of the study, she had disclosed to me that she grew up in a small mid-western town of the U.S. After searching for a teaching job in the mid-west, her search did not materialize. She decided to seek employment elsewhere. She was hired to teach at Winterfell and decided it was a "good way to gain experience in the classroom" even though she had to move across the country to teach.

Her questionnaire revealed that she wanted to become a schoolteacher when she was in the fifth grade. When a sophomore in high school, she decided she wanted to attend a university to become a teacher. Her mind was set on teaching English at the high school level instead of the elementary level. In regards to Ms. Lannister’s digital and social media practices, she mentioned using her personal digital device at least “10 hours a day” while using digital devices for instructional purposes “6 hours” on any given school day. She also mentioned that she checks her social media networks at least “every hour.” When asked about her observations about students’ use of technology, she listed the following:

Students do not know how to use PowerPoint; are able to participate in discussions, submit assignments and revisions on Schoology; struggle with using track changes on Microsoft Word; are able to send professional emails; are for the most part able to identify credible sources or check with me prior to using them; and are always on their phones for text messaging, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube sometimes.

(Questionnaire—February 15, 2015)

Ms. Lannister also disclosed she incorporates “polleverywhere.com, Schoology, clickers, a projector, tablet, laptops, and computers in her classroom.” She mentioned Schoology is integrated specifically for the senior research paper. She wrote, “It’s a hybrid-like class. Students upload drafts, peer edits, and final paper” and Schoology is used “for discussion threads, to upload PDFs of novels and other texts for students to use at home because there are not enough books for them to take home.” Ms. Lannister also revealed that students “did not know how to engage in a professional or academic discussion” but after some practice, “they were able to contribute more academic responses.”

Regarding technology policies at Winterfell, Ms. Lannister mentioned that technology “could be incorporated more often and fluidly without having to provide a lesson plan to use it...it seems like an added requirement.” She also mentioned “headphones were allowed in the classroom” because students “seem to work better independently.” Ms. Lannister agreed that students “are not generally technology literate” and therefore “schools need to promote the use of e-learning tools and incorporation of technology more often.” Finally, when asked about language policies that promote the inclusion of reclassified English-language learners in mainstream classrooms, she wrote: “I am not sure what the policies are. I do not mind the inclusion of those students. The student I have is a hard worker and welcomes revisions, help, etc.”

“Reclassified ELLs are not always prepared for mainstream classrooms”

Mr. Hilaria is a Latino male in his early thirties. He has been teaching for 10 years. His teaching experience ranges from 4th to 12th grades. At the time of this study, Mr. Hilaria was on his 9th year of teaching at Winterfell. In his questionnaire, Mr. Hilaria revealed that he wanted to be a teacher ever since he was in kindergarten. My relationship with Mr. Hilaria began during the 2007-2008 school year. He was teaching Freshman and Sophomore English at Winterfell. We both began to take graduate courses at the local state university. Eventually, he began to teach Senior English—became the Senior English content team leader—and incorporated Schoology in his instruction.

In regards to Mr. Hilaria’s digital and social media practices, he revealed in his questionnaire that he uses his cell phone constantly to text individuals, accesses the Internet for email, and visits Facebook at least once a day. He mentioned that students “are constantly on social media” and “it seems that they are on Facebook and Instagram...the most.” Mr. Hilaria disclosed that he incorporates Schoology in his class to “pose a question”

that requires students to “complete an original response and respond to one or two students.”

When asked about current policies regarding technology use in the classroom, Mr. Hilaria mentioned that Winterfell students need “more access to laptops.” He wrote: “Our schools want us to integrate technology into the classroom and it would be ideal if there were more computers—like each classroom had computers accessible all the time.” Mr. Hilaria also mentioned that most students are “familiar with at-home uses of these devices and that teachers would benefit from integrating into the classroom,” but “support from administration is helpful.”

Mr. Hilaria also commented on current language policies that promote the inclusion of reclassified ELLs in mainstream classrooms. He believes that “reclassified ELLs are not always prepared for mainstream classes.” Additionally, he mentioned that there is not “enough room at this level to incorporate literature and activities that are relevant to them—their culture.” Mr. Hilaria does agree that Schoology “allows ELLs a space to interact with classmates—since they have more time to think about what they want to write/say/share.”

“So many tech problems that plague me in my professional life”

Like Ms. Lannister, Mrs. Bolton was also new to working with adolescent students. She had experience teaching an online course to adults prior to arriving at Winterfell High School. Mrs. Bolton is a white American female in her early forties. She is happily married and has five children. In her questionnaire, Mrs. Bolton mentioned that she wanted to become a teacher “a decade ago.” She uses a digital device “nearly every hour [she] is awake” and visits social media sites daily. Mrs. Bolton mentioned that students are constantly connected to social media through their phones. She also mentioned, “each clique uses a different medium, i.e. Snapchat, Facebook, Tumblr, YouTube, depending on the preferred

platform of their group.” When asked about the types of social media and/or digital tools she incorporates in her class, Mrs. Bolton said the following, “Limited to Schoology. I would use more if there were not so many tech problems that plague me in my professional life (classroom constantly having issues).” In regards to students’ participation in Schoology’s online forum, Mrs. Bolton revealed that students “needed much direction in the types of responses that are appropriate” and that “direct instruction about how to further the conversation need to be given to encourage true discussion.” Questions regarding current technology and language policies, and the inclusion of reclassified ELLs in mainstream classrooms were left unanswered.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented my reasoning for using qualitative research methodologies, a description of the research site, my rationale for selecting the five focal participants, and a brief description that explains the teachers’ role in this study. I also explained the senior research paper unit, my methods of data collection and analysis used. I explained my methods of analysis and why I took such approach to examining my data. I provided an overview of the data collected, how I analyzed the data, and addressed how the data addresses my research questions. I provided numerical data to illustrate how some focal participants engaged in some activities and not others while also highlighting focal participants’ inclusion within an online community of learners. Finally, I described each focal participant through thick description by drawing from comments made in questionnaires and from responses to questions asked during the first phase of interviews. I also provided insight of teachers’ own digital practices, views about educational technologies, and opinions about the integration of reclassified ELLs in the mainstream learning environment.

CHAPTER FOUR

TEACHER AND STUDENT COMMUNICATION: AFFORDANCES OF EMAIL AND SCHOOLGY TO FACILITATE LEARNING

One key finding discussed in this chapter is that focal participants and their teachers used certain online spaces and their particular features to co-construct teaching and learning conditions in the online environment. One digital communicative mode focal participants used was email and another was Schoology's feedback feature to communicate with their teachers. For instance, focal participants applied their digital and communication skills to engage in discussion with their teachers concerning the senior research paper, by typing emails comprised of a variety of topics (e.g., to inquire and inform their teachers about tasks regarding the senior research paper). These practices supplemented what was occurring in person during class time. Moreover, digital communication that occurred within Schoology and email allowed focal participants to continue learning even when outside of the traditional classroom setting.

This chapter specifically focuses on practices that were prevalent in two major online spaces where electronic communication occurred between focal participants and their teachers during a sixteen-week period. Focal participants often used email as a digital communicative mode to provide explanations, inquire about a variety of subject matters, and receive teacher feedback and comments—for example, when working on their senior research paper. In addition to providing feedback through email, teachers also offered electronic feedback to focal participants in Schoology's feedback section to discuss matters that pertained to the revision process and the senior research paper.

To examine how such practices facilitated learning in the online environment, notions of identity and sociocultural perspectives on learning informed my analysis of emails

between teachers and focal participants and provided a nuanced view of the potential this particular digital practice had in the literacy repertoires and language learning of focal participants. Teachers and focal participants used email frequently, and it provided a space in which focal participants' online identities were revealed, contested, modified, and celebrated. Not only did email communication between focal participants and teachers reinforce learning about certain subjects and topics, focal participants broadened their language learning and expanded on their digital literacies. Finally, I examined screenshots of the exchanges that occurred within Schoology to provide examples of how teachers and focal participants used Schoology's feedback feature. I specifically highlight screenshots that show how teachers provided digital feedback in Schoology's feedback section and show how focal participants addressed such feedback by making revisions to their essays as they used the digital editing tools available on both Microsoft Word and Schoology.

Email as a Digital Communicative Mode to Foster Agency and Identity

In this section, I examine the digital literacy practices that focal participants use to navigate the Schoology platform and to respond to questions and requests made by teachers related to course content. I analyze how focal participants used email to communicate not only meaning but also identities, how teachers responded to student emails, and the ways that the correspondence seemed to influence teaching and learning processes and practices. I show how focal participants' active and engaged participation (which was facilitated by certain approaches that the teacher took) fostered students' learning of literacy and language.

After I examined the email exchanges between focal participants and their teachers, a number of preliminary findings surfaced. Specifically, I found that Rosalba's and Valentina's email exchanges with their teacher revealed performed identities as mainstream students who self-advocated to create pathways to academic success. Additionally, I learned that topics

discussed in email exchanges revealed how these two focal participants contributed to their agency by taking part in “communicative exchanges” or control of their education that showcased their individuality and creation of a “shared social world” during digital communication with their teacher.

Email as a Platform to Construct Identity and Promote Agency: *Rosalba*

For the most part, Rosalba’s emails to Mr. Hilaria had a friendly and relaxed tone. Emails exhibited Rosalba’s effort and determination to meet the demands of a highly complex writing project. On ten occasions (out of 40 self-initiated emails) Rosalba used a friendly tone to greet Mr. Hilaria (e.g., *Hi Mr. Hilaria* or *Hello!*) to inform him that she had completed or made revisions to a specific essay and uploaded to Schoology. She kept a consistent relaxed and cordial form of digital communication with Mr. Hilaria throughout the spring semester. In two of these emails, Rosalba advocated for herself after she failed to submit essays on time and emailed Mr. Hilaria to let him know about her situation. The following are examples of Rosalba using digital and communication literacy practices to inform her teacher about situations concerning her assignments. A brief summary of each email exchange to offer readers context and analysis is provided first, and then my interpretation follows.

The first email exchange (A) between Rosalba and Mr. Hilaria occurred at the beginning of the spring semester and start of the senior research paper unit (January 2015). In her email to Mr. Hilaria, Rosalba explained to him why she had submitted her assignment late. In response, Mr. Hilaria briefly replies by thanking her for letting him know of this situation.

(A) Email Exchange

1 Rosalba: Hello [Mr. Hilaria,
2 I'm writing this email to let you know that I am late in
3 turning in my paper from last week. (The Quest).
4 I thought I would have my battery now since I ordered it
5 last week but it hasn't come yet and I almost done with
6 my statement of interest. I will turn it tomorrow for sure
7 because I have to go to the public library and work there I
8 hope you understand.
9 Thank you,
10 (Email address)
11 Mr. Hilaria:
12 Thanks for letting me know.
13 Thank you,
14 [Mr. Hilaria]

(Rosalba, email, 1-16-15)

Here, Rosalba self-advocates by taking the initial steps to email her teacher in hope that her teacher yields understanding of her actions. Because “agency refers to the socioculturally mediated capacity to act,” (Deters et al., 2015, p. 4), I find this exchange between Rosalba and Mr. Hilaria conceptualizing the notion of “acting on one’s behalf” for the formation of an intended outcome. Rosalba self-advocates and seems determined to let Mr. Hilaria know of her error in judgment (lines 2-3). Rosalba also displays awareness about how important it is to complete and submit assignments on time, even though hers was late, after she shared she was going “to the public library and work there” (line 7). Rosalba took

purposeful steps to engage in electronic communication with her teacher to show she was “doing her part” as a student in Mr. Hilaria’s class, or in this case, performed an identity as a mainstream student who demonstrated effort in spite of the obstacles she was experiencing at the time (lines 4-5).

Rosalba’s application of “formal talk”—as found in her emails to Mr. Hilaria—is significant because the digital social interactions that occurred identified Rosalba as a student who is aware of the time and place (or context) in which and with whom to employ her digital and communication skills, especially in academic settings that encourage the use of email. As stated in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, students’ digital literacies continue to be contested by today’s digital era (Alvermann, 2001; boyd & Ellison, 2008). For example, in the current era of assessment, a number of school districts around the nation are moving away from traditional paper-based forms to multimodal or non-linear forms of assessing students. The exchange between Rosalba and her teachers provides a snapshot of how students tap digital technologies to communicate in the educational setting and further cultivate their digital literacy repertoires.

I find Rosalba’s email exchange with Mr. Hilaria interesting because I have worked with ELL students in the past and noticed how they shy away from asking questions that pertain to the class. After I examined Rosalba’s and the other focal participants’ emails, I discovered that they often favored email as a digital mode to interact with their teachers. This puts into perspective English’s (2007) claim that reserved students benefit from participating in online threaded discussions because the asynchronous nature of this practice allows them to construct coherent statements before sharing in an online group versus participating and sharing in whole-group (face-to-face) sessions. Perhaps focal participants ask their teachers questions via email because they are more experienced and skilled to tap

multimodal forms of communication as suggested by Warschauer and Healey (1998) and Rhodes and Robnolt (2009). After I examined emails, I noticed how focal participants carried digital knowledges and demonstrated their application of digital and communication skills as they interacted with their teachers and peers.

In another email exchange (B), Rosalba asks a question that pertains to an assignment introduced on a day she was absent. In this case, however, Mr. Hilaria did not reply. Later (during email exchange C), however, when Rosalba asks another question about whether or not she is able to edit another peer's paper, Mr. Hilaria acknowledges her question and responds to her by letting her know that it is okay for her to edit another peer's essay that has already been peer edited.

(B) Email Exchange

1 Rosalba: Hi [Mr. Hilaria,]
2 I just want to know if I can do the peer edit too. I was not
3 here on Monday and I heard they chose their partner that
4 day.
5 Mr. Hilaria: (No response)

(C) Email Exchange

1 Rosalba: The Statement of Interest. I have a question, can I still
2 edit a paper that has been edited by another person?
3 Mr. Hilaria: Yes, you can edit a paper that has been edited.
4 Thank you,
5 [Mr. Hilaria]

(Rosalba, emails, 1-6-15 & 2-19-15)

These two email exchanges between Rosalba and Mr. Hilaria demonstrate how Rosalba calls upon her understanding of politeness rituals while engaging in digital and communication practices through the communicative technologies available to her, i.e. email and writing, while seeking clarification from her teacher. In this case, Rosalba demonstrates her capacity to act, in part by asking questions that create a desired outcome. For example, in email exchange (B), Rosalba begins her email by using a declarative sentence (line 2) and then provides an explanation (“I was not here on Monday”) to emphasize the fact that she was absent (lines 2-3). Rosalba exercises her communication and digital skills to perform her identity as a student who has the will to complete necessary assignments she failed to submit on time and chose not to dismiss the situation entirely. Instead, Rosalba engages in digital conversation with Mr. Hilaria perhaps to display initiative and show she has the self-motivation to complete assigned tasks even though she was not in class when the assignment was introduced. In this case, online/digital communication practices provided a mechanism and space for building the student-teacher relationship between Rosalba and Mr. Hilaria. A student like Rosalba mirrors those who often struggle to “connect” with their teachers due to communication barriers.

In email exchange (C) above, Rosalba emails Mr. Hilaria to ask him a question (lines 1-2). Again, Rosalba uses email as a method to ask questions to her teacher, which distinguishes Rosalba as a young woman who takes a pro-active approach—by self-initiating an email to her teacher—instead of not communicating at all. When I interviewed Rosalba, she commented on how much she uses and likes email: “Oh yeah! I used my email a lot these past months. To ask him questions if I didn’t understand” (Rosalba, interview, 3-15-15). Rosalba also said she was well aware that her use of email was substantial throughout the spring semester. Rosalba initiated 40 emails throughout the spring semester and five

emails were created to ask Mr. Hilaria questions specifically. While Rosalba did not tap Schoology's platform to communicate her questions digitally like in the examples above, she did use email as a mode to connect with her teacher to engage in the learning process. When I asked her more about why she did this, she said, "Email...cause we as students we can't send messages...throughout Schoology...and I don't know why...to the teacher or another student to ask them something about the topic" (Rosalba, interview, 5-15-15). I found her response interesting because I was under the impression that she knew that Schoology had a special built-in "email" feature that allowed her to communicate with her teacher. Instead, she said she used her personal email because students could not "send messages... throughout Schoology...and I don't know why."

In another email exchange (D) (see below) between Rosalba and Mr. Hilaria, Rosalba initiates an email to inform Mr. Hilaria that she has uploaded her Background Era essay in Schoology. However, Mr. Hilaria takes this opportunity to educate Rosalba on the importance of meeting strict deadlines. They engage in a lengthy email exchange where Rosalba acknowledges Mr. Hilaria's comments but still provides an explanation. I feature this specific email exchange because it shows how Rosalba exercises her communication and digital skills to engage in a formal and digital discussion with Mr. Hilaria, which demonstrates ownership of the situation. In the same email exchange, Mr. Hilaria places accountability back on Rosalba; he reminds her of computer availability at school (lines 13-14) and asks her if she is going to meet the deadline (line 21). He also reminds her that other students, including her, had plenty of in-class time and access to computers to work on research and the senior paper (lines 13-15). I find this email exchange compelling because it has the feel of an actual conversation in which Mr. Hilaria took the opportunity to establish criteria, remind Rosalba about the importance of meeting deadlines, and comment on the

consequences of not meeting deadlines. Indeed, he seems more aware of the potential negative influence on her graduation status than Rosalba does.

In Email exchange (D) below, notice how Rosalba comfortably applies her acquired digital communication skills to engage in an electronic discussion with her English teacher and to provide an explanation (lines 11-12 and lines 16-18) for not meeting an important deadline. Furthermore, the email exchange is significant because it shows that Rosalba relayed information about personal hardships she was experiencing at the time to her teacher in ways that reflect and further establishes trust. As a teacher, I can understand that many students do genuinely experience obstacles that can prevent them from being successful; however, I would rather have a student reflect on his or her problems and discuss them with me so that we can both come up with a solution to a problem that is impeding them from being successful academically. In this email exchange, Rosalba does not get the answer she hoped for, but she continues to apply her language and communication skills to self-advocate and create a relatively positive “outcome” for herself (line 22). Such decisions and actions simultaneously reflect and contribute to her agency.

As mentioned before, students who are identified as “ELL” or “reclassified” at times are stigmatized in the local context in ways that seem to discourage many of them from participating in class, applying their acquired language skills fully, or self-advocating due to their limited English proficiency. Knowing this about the local context influenced my own decision to pay attention to and keep track of practices or attitudes that seemed aligned with ELL identities (vs. “mainstream” identities). Further, the email exchange above reminds me of one of the three key characteristics when it comes to agency and second language learners: “the learner [has] an awareness of one’s responsibility for one’s own acts” (Lier, 2008, p. 5). At no point did Rosalba mention she was going to stop submitting papers, stop

caring, or give up completely. In the end, the email exchange between Rosalba and Mr. Hilaria revealed her views about education (line 22) and recognized her teacher's effort (line 8) to help her progress towards academic success.

(D) Email Exchange

1 Rosalba: I resubmit my Background Era Essay.

2 Thank you,

3 (Email address)

4 Mr. Hilaria: We have been working on this paper since January 6th—

5 and since then, all students have known that that is the

6 deadline. You were aware of that, no? Continue to submit

7 work and email me as you do.

8 Rosalba: I know I was aware of that. I could of done it this week but

9 I had some appointments that is why I did not wen to

10 school today.

11 Mr. Hilaria: When you have major deadlines (such as the one you have

12 tomorrow), you work ahead to meet those deadlines—even

13 if you have appointments. We have had a good amount of

14 computer time the last three weeks, as well. Do you have a

15 6th hour?

16 Rosalba: I know but since most of my family is out of town I had to

17 take care of my nephews and help my mom with some

18 chores. Yes I do have a full schedule. I do not get early

19 release or late start.

20 Mr. Hilaria: Please remember that the paper is due

21 tomorrow. Do you intend to meet the deadline?

22 Rosalba: I am working on it right now, so if I don't meet the
23 deadline you are not going to accept any more work?

24 Mr. Hilaria: As I stated, we have worked on this project since January
25 6th. As of right now, you only have two items on your
26 checklist accepted—the Statement of Interest and Author
27 I. The research paper and all that is required is a
28 graduation requirement. IF you do not complete this
29 [School District's Name] requirement, you do not
30 graduate. Please come talk to me in the morning or after
31 school tomorrow. Again, email me as you submit work.

(Rosalba, email, 4-23-15)

Email as a Platform to Construct Identity and Promote Agency: *Valentina*

Valentina was another student whose practices fostered her sense of agency and motivation, particularly when communicating with Mr. Hilaria through email. In the 20 emails that she initiated, Valentina greeted Mr. Hilaria with a formal tone 10 times (e.g., “Good morning/afternoon Mr. Hilaria,”) and a friendlier tone five times (e.g., “Hello” and “Hello Mr. Hilaria,”). Like Rosalba, Valentina followed classroom procedures (as outlined on the syllabus) and emailed Mr. Hilaria after she submitted assignments in Schoology. Through email correspondence, Valentina clarified her understanding of how to identify appropriate credible sources, where to find tutoring services before or after school, and how to inform her teacher that she had uploaded an assignment on Schoology.

The following email exchange (E) between Valentina and Mr. Hilaria takes place before Valentina uploaded one of her essays on Schoology; she specifically asked Mr. Hilaria

if a certain website was a suitable source to use for her research paper. The correspondence demonstrates that Valentina and Mr. Hilaria have built a student-teacher relationship and that part of this relationship is founded on Valentina’s identity as a mainstream student who takes charge of her own learning. Emails between Valentina and Mr. Hilaria are examples of how she favors email to engage in electronic discussion in order to ask for approval or inform—instead of engaging in a traditional face-to-face discussion. Because Valentina demonstrates a “capacity to act,” I argue that her actions are agentic in ways that foster a desirable identity in this particular learning environment. I focus on this email exchange (E) for two reasons. First, it shows that Valentina uses email to ask her teacher a specific question to clarify the parameters of a specific assignment. Second, Valentina inserts a specific URL within her email (line 4), which demonstrates her acquired digital literacies and awareness of online resources available to support her research.

(E) Email Exchange

1 Valentina: Good Morning [Mr. Hilaria,]
2 I’m [Valentina] from your Senior English class during fifth
3 period. I’m writing this because I wanted to know if I can use
4 this online page for my essay. (URL inserted here)
5 Thank you,
6 [Valentina]
7 (Email address)
8 Mr. Hilaria: Yes, and give credit to Allen et al. If you have using this
9 information, it is just as if you are using the book. Thank you.
10 –[Mr. Hilaria]

(Valentina, email, 1-24-15)

The email exchange further exhibits how learning and teaching occurs (lines 8-10) in an online communicative platform because one student's question was quickly addressed without the need to hold a face-to-face conversation, which advances the learning process. Additionally, the displaying of online sources, e.g., the URL that Valentina attached to her email (see Email Exchange (E) above), demonstrates the practicality for reviewing sources by both teacher and student. Further, the email exchange is socially constructed and helps me understand that teaching and learning continue to occur outside of the traditional classroom setting, i.e. in digital/online spaces, with second language learners if the technologies and proper guidance is available. I was also able to observe how second language learners who initiate or exercise autonomy (e.g., by fashioning emails or co-constructing online discussions with their teachers) enhance their learning and contribute to their agency. This further explains why I often distinguished "ELL" students from "mainstream" students. For instance, in my own experience teaching secondary ELLs, they were more reluctant to take initiative or exercise autonomy because they were self-conscious about their own language abilities. For this reason, I strived to create a safe learning environment that provided a sense of belonging so that all students could comfortably express their prior knowledge on a variety of topics.

In email exchange (F) below, Valentina advocates for herself by asking Mr. Hilaria for his support and availability. Because Mr. Hilaria has "prep" during 6th period, Valentina is aware she is able to visit his classroom without interrupting any teaching that could be taking place. In this email exchange, Valentina uses email to ask for support on a specific assignment and negotiates a time of when to meet to discuss the issues with her essay. This is significant because Valentina is a former ELL requesting the support of her teacher through a different modality, i.e. email, instead of asking in person. As I mentioned before,

most current and former ELL students do not jump at the idea of asking their teachers for help. In this case, Valentina contributes to her agency by exercising her communication and negotiation skills (lines 5-7) to determine a time to meet with Mr. Hilaria. Valentina also welcomes the idea to engage in a face-to-face interaction with Mr. Hilaria for clarification purposes (lines 4-5), which I find interesting because she creates a learning opportunity for herself.

(F) Email Exchange

1 Valentina: [Mr. Hilaria,]
2 This is [Valentina] from your 5th Senior English hour.
3 I'm writing this because I need help in my "RSC: Era
4 Background" paper, the changes you asked me for,
5 I'm really not sure but I cannot stay tomorrow (Thursday)
6 during period after school. I do not know if you can explain
7 and help me this Friday during 6 hour. Also for letting you
8 know I resubmitted my "RSC: Statement of Interest" with
9 the corrections.
10 Thank you,
11 [Valentina]
12 (Email address)
13 Mr. Hilaria: January 29, 2015
14 Grade updated. Be sure I sign off on your paper for
15 the Statement.
16 Thank you. –[Mr. Hilaria]

(Valentina, email, 1-28-15)

In a final email exchange (G) below between Valentina and Mr. Hilaria, she informed him that she had resubmitted a revised version of her essay (lines 2-4). Mr. Hilaria acknowledged her email by stating he would review her paper in the next few days (line 10). The following email exchange demonstrated Valentina's pro-active nature and initiative to be on time, and at times, ahead of her assignment deadlines. The email exchange demonstrates how Valentina uses email as a method to inform her teacher about an assignment that was uploaded on Schoology. In this correspondence, Valentina engaged in practices that self-motivated and proactive students do; she even submitted her assignment early (lines 2-5). Perhaps Valentina was more prone to attempt and persevere in unfamiliar writing tasks (McCarthy, Meier, & Rinderer, 1985) because after I examined all focal participants' emails, I noticed that Valentina had uploaded assignments early three times during the spring semester; this was not the case with the other focal participants. In turn, Mr. Hilaria recognized Valentina's diligence and persistence in completing a complex task (lines 10-12), which is what all teachers yearn for from their students. Valentina's way of "working ahead" and application of digital and communication skills helped her stand out as a young woman who made choices that contributed to her own agency within the mainstream environment.

Because Valentina's I-identity had been assigned to her, i.e. reclassified ELL, by the institution, she had taken on the official role of a "mainstream student" as defined by district personnel governing the language acquisition division and AZELLA. Valentina in a sense is able to represent herself not primarily as a reclassified ELL but rather as someone who is able to engage and assimilate to the complexities of mainstream curricula and academic culture. This quality was most pronounced in Valentina but was also shared by all focal participants in this study.

(G) Email Exchange

1 Valentina: [Mr. Hilaria,]
2 This is [Valentina] from you period 5 of Senior English. I'm
3 writing this because I want to inform you, I just resubmitted
4 my assignment "Author One Background Essay" with the
5 corrections you asked me for.
6 Thank you,
7 [Valentina]
8 (Email address)
9 Mr. Hilaria: [Valentina],
10 I will review this paper over the next few days. It is not due
11 until Friday.
12 Thank you. –[Mr. Hilaria]

(Valentina, email, 2-9-15)

Email as a Communicative Mode to Promote Teaching and Learning

In the section above, I examined emails that show how two focal participants used email to communicate not only meaning but also identities, how they used email to contribute to their agency, and how teachers responded to their emails. In this section, I continue to examine emails to highlight how email is used as a platform to engage with the teaching and learning processes and how such processes foster the literacy repertoires of focal participants.

Teaching and Learning: *Mrs. Bolton and Josue*

Unlike Mr. Hilaria and Ms. Lannister, Mrs. Bolton frequently provided detailed and lengthy emails to her students that included commentary on how and what to revise. Josue

was the only focal participant from this study who was enrolled in Mrs. Bolton's Senior English II class. The following emails are examples of how Josue uses email as a mode to inform his teacher that he has uploaded assignments on Schoology. Nonetheless, Josue's short emails to Mrs. Bolton encouraged me to further examine how Josue used the digital editing tools available to him to enhance his writing as recommended. In the following email exchange (H), Josue emails Mrs. Bolton to notify her that he had revised and uploaded both his Era Background and Author One essays in Schoology. Mrs. Bolton replies and informs Josue that she has approved one paper, but not the other. Instead, she reminds Josue that he needs to include citations at the beginning of the second paragraph in his Author One essay.

(H) Email Exchange

- 1 Josue: im [*sic*] done with the revisions you told me to do on my Era
2 Background and my author one
3 Mrs. Bolton: Era Background is approved, Author 1 needs citations for the
4 facts at the beginning of the second paragraph.
5 [Mrs. Bolton]

(Josue, email, 4-30-15)

I chose to highlight this specific email exchange between Josue and Mrs. Bolton to show how Josue engages in digital communication to inform his teacher that he has revised two essays. Even though Josue did not explicitly acknowledge Mrs. Bolton's comments by thanking her after he had received her feedback, he did take her recommendations into consideration as noted after I examined revised writing pieces as shown in the sections that follow. Josue used the digital editing tools available through Schoology and Microsoft Word; he highlighted specific areas of his essay, typed comments, and uploaded his essay on Schoology for his teacher to review. The screenshots that follow help capture how focal

participants like Josue used particular digital editing tools and engaged in the revision process to enhance his own writing.

Figure 3 below is an example screenshot that shows how Josue uses the digital highlighting tool available in Microsoft Word to indicate how he responded to feedback from Mrs. Bolton and revised his paper. The screenshot features the introductory paragraph of Josue’s Author One essay, which is one of six essays that complete the entire senior research paper. Josue also includes a short statement “(Added this paragraph)” in red color to indicate he has added text to enhance his introductory paragraph.

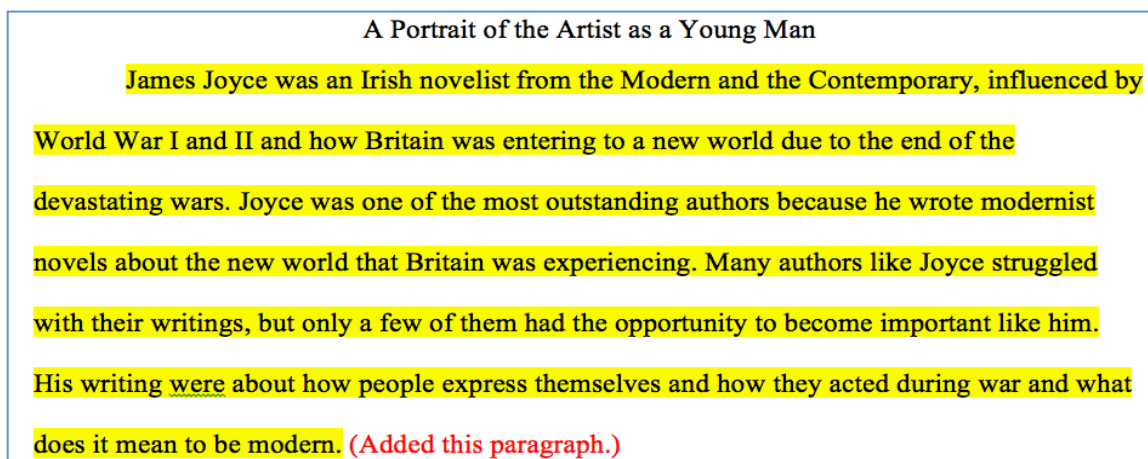


Figure 3. Screenshot of Josue’s introductory paragraph of his Author One essay and his use of the digital editing tools available in Microsoft Word.

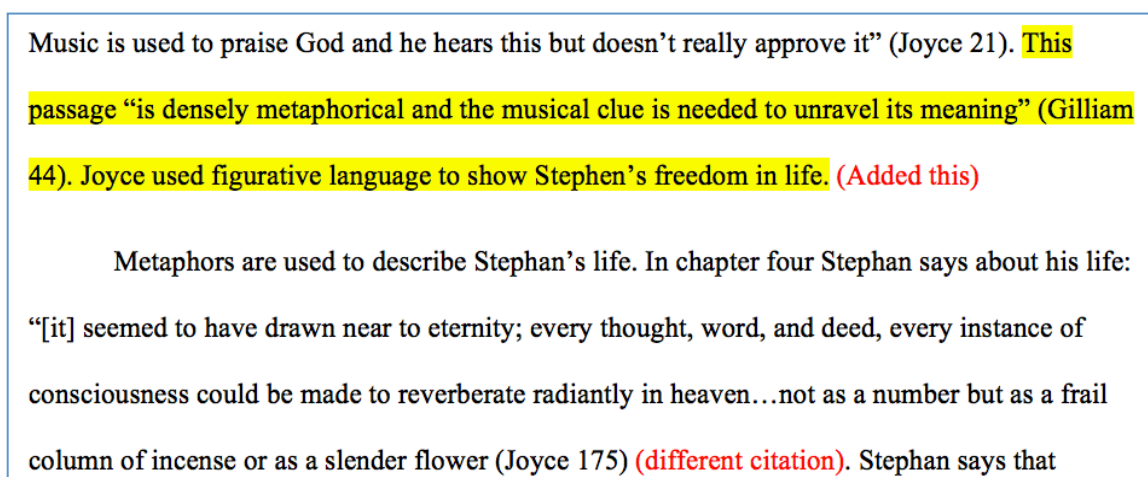


Figure 4. Screenshot of Josue engaged with the revision process and use of the digital editing tools available in Microsoft Word.

In Figure 4 above, Josue uses a digital highlighting tool to show the additional text he included and the short phrase “(Added this)” in red color to indicate to Mrs. Bolton the additions he made to his paragraph. In this screenshot, Josue specifies he cited a different source by inserting the phrase “(different citation)” in red color.

An analysis of email exchange (H) and the two screenshots (Figures 3 and 4) demonstrate how both Josue and Mrs. Bolton co-constructed a particular kind of teaching and learning experience by using digital tools and practices in purposeful ways. Not only did Josue rely on email communication to read his teacher’s comments and feedback in regards to his essays, he applied his digital and language skills to engage in the revision process by using the digital editing tools available to him. Yet, Josue positions himself as a student who struggles with writing. For instance, in phase one of interviews, I asked Josue if he was being successful in his Senior English class. He said the following:

Not right now. Cause the senior paper is...hard. Especially! Especially for me. Cause I have to do a lot of researches [*sic*]...and I don’t know exactly what the teacher is asking for...

(Josue, interview, 2-26-15)

Josue’s comments shed light on the fact that he continues to struggle academically because of his limited English proficiency; however, it is evident that Josue continues to demonstrate effort and determination (as exhibited in the email exchange and screenshots above) because he engages with and attempts the required tasks that are asked of him. His perseverance both reflects and contributes to his agency albeit in situated and locally specific ways. Repeatedly, Josue positions himself as a second language learner who continues to struggle in a secondary mainstream language arts setting when he shared, “Cause the senior paper is...hard. Especially! Especially for me!” However, after I examined Josue’s essays in Schoology, I noticed that he frequently navigated through complex writing tasks and

engaged with the digital revision process in spite of his beliefs that such tasks are “especially” difficult for him.

In the following email exchange (I), Josue emails Mrs. Bolton to inform her that he has made the required revisions to one of his essays. Mrs. Bolton replies with a lengthy email that lists the items he failed to address. Additionally, her reply includes a request for Josue to stay after school the following day to receive one-on-one support. Here we see another example of how Josue uses email to inform his teacher that he has made revisions to one of his essays and uploaded the document on Schoology. The email exchange also reveals how Mrs. Bolton provided web links to online sources that offered relevant information for Josue to explore and support his research.

This particular email exchange demonstrates how Mrs. Bolton uses email as an online space to provide instruction and scaffolding perhaps because Josue did not acknowledge her initial recommendations. Given the detailed email constructed by Mrs. Bolton, Josue is not acknowledging her suggestions. She provides explicit examples and directs Josue to fix his errors, which emphasizes email as conducive for learning as well as for teaching.

(I) Email Exchange

1 Josue: I made the corrections
2 Mrs. Bolton: The citations are still an issue and the info about the
3 Presidents is not better yet. Your statements about the
4 presidents are false. Woodrow Wilson was president during
5 WWI. After policy of neutrality at the outbreak of World War
6 I, Wilson ed [sic] America into war in order to “make the
7 world safe for democracy.”

8 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/1600/>
9 [presidents/woodrowwilson](https://www.whitehouse.gov/1600/presidents/woodrowwilson)
10 FDR died and his Vice President, Truman took office. After
11 that was Eisenhower.
12 [https://www.whitehouse.gov/1600/presidents/](https://www.whitehouse.gov/1600/presidents/franklinroosevelt/)
13 [franklinroosevelt/](https://www.whitehouse.gov/1600/presidents/franklinroosevelt/). However, this essay is about England
14 during this time. Why did England engage in WWII? Your
15 Pearl Harbor citation should be Macchling. Erase the two
16 citations that you didn't use (that are incorrect as well). Please
17 stay after school tomorrow to get help on this.
18 [Mrs. Bolton]

(Josue, email, 4-16-15)

In Email Exchange (I) above, Mrs. Bolton reminds Josue that he did not acknowledge her suggestions/recommendations in previous emails: “The citations are still an issue” (line 2) and “the info about the Presidents is not better yet” (lines 2-3). In this particular situation, concerning implications in terms of Josue’s literacy development surface because he is not fully engaged with the editing and learning process, which places his academic success in Mrs. Bolton’s class in jeopardy. Mrs. Bolton takes the opportunity to refute Josue’s claims about who was the U.S. president during World War I (lines 3-4) and even provides two links (lines 8-9 and 12-13) to show Josue where he could find credible and reliable sources with information to support his ideas. Because I view learning as a social practice, I argue that Mrs. Bolton encouraged Josue to continue his learning by providing direct instruction through digital communication in an attempt to encourage Josue to engage

in digital communication. However, in the case of Josue, he did not fully engage in the revision process and displayed signs of struggle by noticing Mrs. Bolton's detailed emails.

I particularly find the email exchange above significant because Mrs. Bolton requests for Josue to stay after school to receive one-on-one support (see lines 16-17). Even after she provided extensive feedback, Mrs. Bolton expected Josue to meet with her in person, which is a valuable practice for any student who struggles and misunderstands course material. Possibly, Mrs. Bolton requested to conference with Josue to eliminate confusion that is sometimes evident in electronic communication (e.g., tone). Additionally, we see how online/digital practices and in-person communication can support both student and teacher in the learning environment, specifically learners like Josue. Because Mrs. Bolton provided sizable emails, the expectation was for Josue to acknowledge her suggestions, make revisions, and find credible sources so that he could enhance his writing. At the same time, Josue's engagement with the revision process and digital communication with Mrs. Bolton (though at times limited) did contribute to his literacy repertoire.

After I examined all focal participants' emails, I found that Josue wrote 14 emails to Mrs. Bolton between early April to early May. He did not use greeting and closing phrases that are commonly used when writing emails in a professional online environment. Mrs. Bolton ignored Josue's indifferent style of writing and provided extensive feedback, however. In contrast to the other focal participants, Josue was the only focal participant to exercise this style of writing when communicating with his teacher through email. In the end, Josue's ability to engage in electronic communication with his teacher and the use of the digital editing tools available to him reinforced his digital and communication literacies.

Teaching and Learning: *Mr. Hilaria and Rosalba*

In the following email exchange (J), Rosalba sends an email to Mr. Hilaria as a friendly reminder to “nudge” him about a previous email she had sent; she had asked Mr. Hilaria about how to properly cite an online source. Mr. Hilaria replies to her email and provides her with examples of how to cite properly. The email exchange below between Mr. Hilaria and Rosalba also demonstrates an example of how one student’s agency is realized when she self-advocates and uses email to inquire about how to cite. This email exchange also reveals how Mr. Hilaria relies on digital messaging to deliver information. The email exchange clearly illustrates how Rosalba uses email as an electronic mode to send a “friendly reminder” to Mr. Hilaria about a specific issue that he might have overlooked in a previous email.

She included an example that related her concern: “Like for example ‘he saw God’ (Allen et al. 567) but instead from the site” (lines 4-5). It appears Rosalba has a grasp on how to cite text from a book, but has trouble understanding how to cite information from a specific website. She applies her digital and communication skills to ask her teacher a question that could quickly be answered without the need to meet in person. Mr. Hilaria at the same time relies on email to respond to Rosalba with the information she requested. I also noticed that the information that Mr. Hilaria provided could have been found in a number of websites or handbooks (i.e. OWL Purdue or MLA Handbook websites) that provide guidelines on how to properly format papers and so on.

(J) Email Exchange

- 1 Rosalba: Good morning, [Mr. Hilaria],
- 2 I sent you a message last Saturday but I think you
- 3 did not get it and I asked you how can I put a quote

across learning environments. I.e., Rosalba found ways to communicate, e.g., email, to interact with her teacher to engage in the learning process, which contributed to her literacy repertoire and agency in a range of contexts.

Teacher Requests for Face-to-Face Interactions

In the section above I show how two focal participants and their teachers used email as a digital communicative mode to co-construct teaching and learning situations. In the following section, I highlight how teachers use email to offer direct instruction and how they request focal participants to meet in person to continue the learning process. I show email exchanges that show teachers' requests for face-to-face interactions because I want to emphasize the fact that even though teaching and learning occurred in a digital platform like email, face-to-face interactions were valuable for teachers and students as well.

Teacher Request for Face-to-Face Interaction: *Ms. Lannister and Ester*

In email exchange (K) below, focal participant Ester relies on email as an electronic method to inform her teacher that she has completed and uploaded her Statement of Interest essay in Schoology. She also provides a brief explanation to explain why she has submitted the assignment late. Ms. Lannister acknowledges her email and encourages her to come see her and discuss the issues with her essay in person. Here we see how Ester uses digital technologies (e.g., a cell phone and email) to communicate a somewhat complicated situation to her teacher. In response, Ms. Lannister suggests that they meet in person to discuss Ester's concerns. In contrast to Mrs. Bolton who provided extensive emails to Josue, Ms. Lannister encourages Ester to participate in a face-to-face interaction in order to figure out what needs to get done. For instance, she writes, "I started to leave comments, but I think it might be more beneficial if we worked on the paper together, if that is okay!" (lines 8-10).

(K) Email Exchange

1 Ester: Hey [Ms. Lannister,]
2 The reason why I am sending this email is to let
3 you know that I submitted the Statement of
4 Interest paper. The reason of submitting it late and
5 also not going to school these two days it's because
6 I have been sick.

7 (sent from my iPhone)

8 Ms. Lannister: Hi [Ester], I started to leave comments, but I
9 think it might be more beneficial if we worked on
10 the paper together, if that is okay! ;) We're missing
11 citations, quotes, and some explanations. We can
12 work on it during class tomorrow. Do you have a
13 fifth hour class? Can you stay after school on
14 Friday? Let me know! Thanks,
15 [Ms. Lannister]

16 Ester: Alright. I will stay tomorrow or Friday, depends if
17 I'm feeling better.

18 Ms. Lannister: We can work on it tomorrow during class. I have
19 sixth hour seniors, so you can come work with
20 them again and I can help during that period as well.

21 Ester: Okay, thanks.

(Ester, email, 1-21-15)

Ms. Lannister not only acknowledged the value of the communication that occurred with her student through email, she also placed emphasis on the idea of meeting in person to engage in valuable face-to-face instruction. This further illuminated the concept of scaffolding. According to Swain, Kinnear, and Steinman (2011), “assistance is given when needed and in the quantity and quality needed” (p. 26) as Ms. Lannister attempted to do in the email exchange above. Ms. Lannister listed the items that Ester needed to address (line 11), but also encouraged Ester to make herself available (lines 18-21) to have a face-to-face interaction to reinforce learning.

All focal participants disclosed they were cell phone users, and I also observed that they were. I observed that, after I examined participant questionnaires, they also tapped their digital devices to communicate with their teachers (e.g., see email exchange (K) between Ester and Ms. Lannister above). After she explained the reason for her absences, Ester does not include a closing phrase; instead, I noticed a “signature” from her cell phone, “(sent from my iPhone),” that was generated at the end of her email to show the origin of the digital message (line 7). This practice provides insight into how Ester views her cell phone as another mode to relate important information to her teacher and continues to engage in the learning process, which contributes to her agency and literacy repertoire. This social and digital communication practice also shapes her performance of identity. Although Ester is a digitally knowledgeable individual who is invested in her own education, the email exchange above was not solely determined by Ester alone; instead the exchange was co-constructed by both teacher and student to reach an end goal (lines 18-21).

During observations of Ester in Ms. Lannister’s class, I noticed Ester, on at least three occasions, sitting quietly and working on a school laptop. On these same occasions, I observed Ms. Lannister walking the room and provide one-on-one assistance if requested by

individual students. On one specific morning (Fieldnotes: 4/2/15), Ms. Lannister walked her class to a computer lab so that students had the opportunity to type their essay due that week; the laptop cart that Ms. Lannister usually checked out and kept in her classroom was lent out to another teacher that particular week. During her time in the computer lab, I observed as Ester worked quietly and independently on a desktop computer. Ms. Lannister walked the room, and I noticed her checking in with random students. She approached Ester fifteen minutes into the class period: “How are you doing [Ester]?” Ester replied, “I’m confused about what to add in this section.” Ms. Lannister sat next to her and began explaining how to organize specific sections of her essay. This interaction lasted close to three minutes until the phone rang. As Ms. Lannister walked away from Ester, she yelled out, “Let me know if you need me to explain again!” Ester continued to work quietly and independently until the class period was over.

During a visit to one of my colleague’s classroom—Winterfell’s only ELD classroom/teacher at the time—I noticed Ester sitting in front of a desktop computer and interacted with Ms. Valencia (pseudonym), the ELD aide (Fieldnotes: 2/25/15). I noticed Ester navigated through EBSCOhost (the main academic search engine sanctioned by the District for research purposes). Ester asked Ms. Valencia for assistance on how to identify articles that could be used to support her research topic. That day, Ester stayed after school for 45 minutes until her parents came to pick her up. On another occasion during lunch (Fieldnotes: 3/3/15), I noticed Ester in the ELD classroom and how she pursued Ms. Valencia’s academic support once again. I observed how Ms. Valencia assisted Ester by showing her how to look up websites that offered guidelines on how to properly format essays (e.g. the online version of the MLA Handbook). I remember this day particularly well because Ester disclosed to me that she was two months pregnant. I told her to continue to

work hard in all her classes and not to give up. Ms. Valencia reassured Ester she was “in good hands” and told her, “you have [Ms. Lannister], us, and you have him to help you!” Ms. Valencia referred to Ester’s support systems at school: Ms. Lannister, the ELD team, and her previous ELD teacher—me.

As the final due date for the senior research paper approached, I noticed Ester frequenting Ms. Valencia more often throughout the school day and after school. On one occasion, I noticed Ester sitting in front of a desktop with her head down while Ms. Valencia assisted another student. I approached her and had small talk with her.

Excerpt 1

(R: Researcher / E: Ester)

- 1 R: “So...how’s it going?”
- 2 E: I’m okay...*pues aqui estresada con el senior paper.* (English=I’m
3 just here stressed out with my senior paper.)
- 4 R: We are almost to the end. When is the due date?
- 5 E: *El 20 de Abril.* (English=April 20th)
- 6 R: Oh ok. Let me know if you need anything okay? Remember that
7 my room is available too.
- 8 E: *Si, gracias!* (English=Yes, thank you!)

(Ester, informal observation, 4-3-15)

In this exchange, I offered my assistance (lines 6-7) and reassured Ester she had support from other adults on campus, not just the ELD aide. Even though Ester mentioned she was “just too lazy to stay after school” for tutoring in interview one, I found Ester had done the opposite. Ester tapped the available resources and support structures at Winterfell.

Ester's actions not only showcase how some students continue the learning process outside the confines of Schoology, she also sought one-on-one support from her teachers.

Teacher Request for Face-to-Face Interaction: *Mr. Hilaria and Miguel*

In email exchange (L), Miguel sends an email to Mr. Hilaria to inform him that he has completed and uploaded his bibliography assignment on Schoology. Mr. Hilaria replies to Miguel to remind him to follow correct formatting rules. After Miguel replies to update Mr. Hilaria that he has fixed his errors, Mr. Hilaria proposes he come see him in person because Miguel did not address the errors as suggested.

(L) Email Exchange

- 1 Miguel: I turned in the bibliography 2 the right one
- 2 Mr. Hilaria: [Miguel,]
- 3 Please note that you need to submit work that is in
- 4 Times 12. Do not submit work that is not in that
- 5 font and size. Please correct your Annotated Bib
- 6 font and resubmit.
- 7 Thank you. –[Mr. Hilaria]
- 8 Miguel: I fixed the Annotated Bib
- 9 Mr. Hilaria: Please double check that you submitted the correct
- 10 document. It is still not Times 12. If you are not
- 11 sure what I need you to do, come see me so I can
- 12 show you.
- 13 Thank you. –[Mr. Hilaria]

(Miguel, emails, 4-14 to 4-17, 15)

Mr. Hilaria also encouraged face-to-face interactions with his students as seen in the above exchange with Miguel. In his email discussion with Miguel, Mr. Hilaria attempted to create a situation that encouraged Miguel to self-check his work for errors, revise, and resubmit. He also encouraged Miguel to come see him in person for additional support to clarify any misunderstandings. Mr. Hilaria gave Miguel the opportunity to practice his revision and formatting skills on his own. Unlike Mrs. Bolton who wrote extensive and detailed emails to Josue, Mr. Hilaria refrained from doing so in this case with Miguel. Mr. Hilaria may have trusted that Miguel would figure how to change his font size on his own, which was confirmed later that he did, after Miguel submitted a revised version of his essay in Schoology. Again, we see how the email co-constructed between Mr. Hilaria and Miguel as an example that shows how the teaching and learning processes continue within the confines of a digital platform. Mr. Hilaria sees the value of meeting in person, in addition to engaging in digital communication, to provide guidance and support for his students.

Teacher Request for Face-to-Face Interaction: *Mrs. Bolton and Josue*

In email exchange (M) below, Josue emails Mrs. Bolton to update her about revisions he made to one of his essays. Mrs. Bolton replies to Josue to let him know that he had errors with his sources cited. Email exchange (N) below is similar; Josue updates Mrs. Bolton about “corrections” he made to another of his essays. Mrs. Bolton offers her expertise on how to properly cite sources. Both email exchanges, however, show Mrs. Bolton request to meet with Josue in person to address some concerns with his writing.

I featured both email exchanges below because they are examples of how Josue uses email to update Mrs. Bolton about revisions he made on his essays and because Mrs. Bolton encourages face-to-face interactions to clarify any misunderstandings. I find the email exchanges important because of all five focal participants, Josue had the most invitations—a

total of three—to engage in face-to-face interactions with his teacher as noted in the email exchanges.

In Email Exchange (M), Mrs. Bolton typed, “We will have to work together to fix these citation errors for accuracy” (line 5) and in Email Exchange (N) she stated, “Please stay after school tomorrow to get help on this” (lines 3-4). It seemed that the recommendations offered through email by Mrs. Bolton were not sufficient; therefore, she encouraged Josue to attend one-on-one sessions after school to address concerns in regards to his writing.

(M) Email Exchange

1 Josue: fix the quotes [sic] that were wrong in the citation and [sic]
2 all of the revisions you gave me
3 Mrs. Bolton: Crediting Friedman for Joyce’s words is incorrect
4 and there is not page 175 for the Friedman source.
5 We will have to work together to fix these citation
6 errors for accuracy.
7 [Mrs. Bolton]

(N) Email Exchange

1 Josue: I made the corrections
2 Mrs. Bolton: ...Erase the two citations that you didn’t use (that
3 are incorrect as well). Please stay after school
4 tomorrow to get help on this.
5 [Mrs. Bolton]

(Josue, email, 4-16 & 5-2, 15)

The email exchanges are interesting because Josue mentioned in an interview that he did not understand at times or was unsure what his teacher was asking of him: "...and I don't know exactly what the teacher is asking for..." (Josue, interview, 2-26-15), yet I observed in her emails how Mrs. Bolton encouraged Josue to meet with her in person to receive one-on-one instruction. In fact, Josue expressed the following in interview Excerpt 1 below when I asked him how he communicated with Mrs. Bolton when he did not understand a concept or was unsure how to approach a writing assignment:

Excerpt 2

(R: Researcher / J: Josue)

1 R: How do you mostly communicate your concerns to [Mrs. Bolton]?

2 J: Email.

3 R: What was the email used for?

4 J: So I can get revisions or approvals on papers.

5 R: On papers?

6 J: Yup.

7 R: Do you use email for anything else?

8 J: Well I did with one of my friends because I needed to peer edit
9 their essays. But basically the same thing.

10 R: Did you ever ask her questions? Like, if you didn't understand
11 something?

12 J: Yes.

13 R: Through email?

14 J: Oh, not through email.

15 R: Was she helpful?

16 J: Yes.

17 R: Okay.

(Josue, interview, 2-26-15)

In line 4, Josue shared that he uses email to “get revisions or approvals on papers.” He also comments in lines 8-9 that he uses email to exchange essays with a peer to edit each other’s papers. However, Josue reveals that he did not use email to ask Mrs. Bolton questions (line 14), but she was helpful when he did interact with her in person (lines 15-16). In contrast to focal participant Valentina, Josue did not request to meet with his teacher when he needed support. Instead, Mrs. Bolton was the one who initiated the idea of meeting in person to discuss issues with Josue’s essays. For the most part, Josue did not create situations for himself that contributed to his agency. It was apparent that Josue struggled with how to approach the revision process or simply chose not to engage in digital communication with his teacher because Mrs. Bolton sent detailed emails and requested to meet with Josue in person.

The Use of Digital Editing Tools to Enhance Writing

In this section, I examine how teachers and focal participants used Schoology’s feedback feature to engage with the revision process with a focus on their use of digital editing tools available both in Schoology and Microsoft Word. Similar to how teachers used email to continue “teaching” outside the traditional classroom, they also viewed Schoology as an online space to offer guidance and support to focal participants as they engaged in the revision process. One example screenshot exhibits how one teacher, Mrs. Bolton, offers her guidance and expertise to focal participant Josue as he engaged with the revision process and the uploading of his essays in Schoology. Another screenshot shows how one focal participant, Rosalba, engages in electronic discussion with Mr. Hilaria in regards to her essay

in Schoology's feedback section. A third set of screenshots shows how focal participant Ester uses digital editing tools available in Microsoft Word to revise her essays and shows how Ms. Lannister provides feedback by using Schoology's digital editing tools as well.

Use of digital editing tools: *Josue*

I feature the following example screenshot (Figure 5) below to show how Josue's teacher provides extensive feedback in Schoology after he uploaded his Statement of Interest essay. The screenshot depicts how a user of Schoology would see his or her essay displayed after it has been uploaded. Notice Josue's essay on the left pane and Mrs. Bolton's feedback, comments, and questions on the right pane. In the left pane, observe how Mrs. Bolton uses Schoology's digital editing tool to highlight certain areas of Josue's paper to get his attention. All marks and comments could be made directly on Josue's paper without the need to print out a hardcopy, which is a critical feature because this allows Josue to access his document outside of school and not feel restricted to revise his essay during class time only. After reading his teacher's comments, it was up to Josue to make revisions and resubmit his essay to the same designated digital folder.

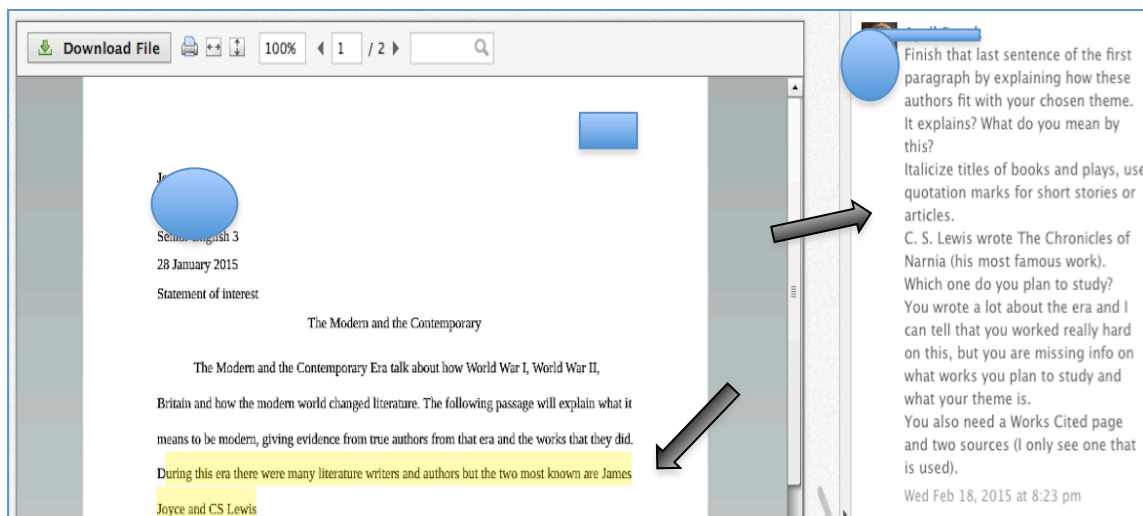


Figure 5. Screenshot of Josue's Statement of Interest and Mrs. Bolton's use of Schoology's feedback feature to offer feedback.

In this case, there is no evidence that Josue resubmitted his paper because there was no receipt with time and date to show a second revision had been submitted. The assumption is that Josue left his essay “as is” and accepted the final grade assigned by Mrs. Bolton. Also, there was no evidence of Josue sending an email to Mrs. Bolton to inform her that he had uploaded this particular essay, as was the common practice in senior English classes at Winterfell. Focal participants’ and teachers’ names, along with their Schoology avatar, have been covered with blue shapes on all screenshots in this section to respect their anonymity.

The screenshot above is displayed because this is an example of Josue using Schoology’s dropbox feature to upload his essay. The screenshot also demonstrates how Mrs. Bolton uses the digital editing tools available in Schoology and feedback section to provide comments/feedback to Josue. This particular screenshot is important because it provides an instance of how one focal participant’s digital practices contribute to his overall language learning and literacy repertoires. For example, Mrs. Bolton’s feedback, found in the right pane, offered support and guidance to Josue to enhance his essay (e.g., “Finish the last sentence of the first paragraph by explaining how these authors fit your chosen theme” and “Italicize titles of books and plays, use quotation marks for short stories or articles”). These recommendations made by Mrs. Bolton suggest that Josue has limited knowledge about how to properly format certain titles. Even though Mrs. Bolton has opportunities to have one-on-one sessions with Josue, her guidance and support continues in the online space of Schoology, which is equally valuable for a student like Josue because his learning depends on the support he receives from his teacher regardless if support is presented digitally or traditionally (i.e., face-to-face or the classroom setting).

Use of digital editing tools: *Rosalba*

In the following screenshot (Figure 6), focal participant Rosalba uploads her Thesis Statement essay on Schoology. Mr. Hilaria directs Rosalba to “See my comments in the document” (right pane) and Rosalba replies to provide an explanation about having trouble formatting her Works Cited page (e.g., “I don’t know why it keeps showing that I do it on the other page”). I chose to feature this screenshot in particular because this is an example of a focal participant and her teacher using Schoology’s feedback feature to engage in digital communication and co-construct a communicative exchange for clarification purposes. Here, Rosalba engages in a digital and social practice with her teacher to co-create a learning experience that benefits her. I noticed that Rosalba uses the digital editing tool to highlight the changes she made to her essay (e.g., “Allen et al.” and “However, there”). Her learning is reinforced after she wrote a short reflection at the bottom of her Thesis Statement essay: “I made minor mistakes that I could avoid, I decided to highlight that mistakes I made, and I have put the Works Cited on its own page.”

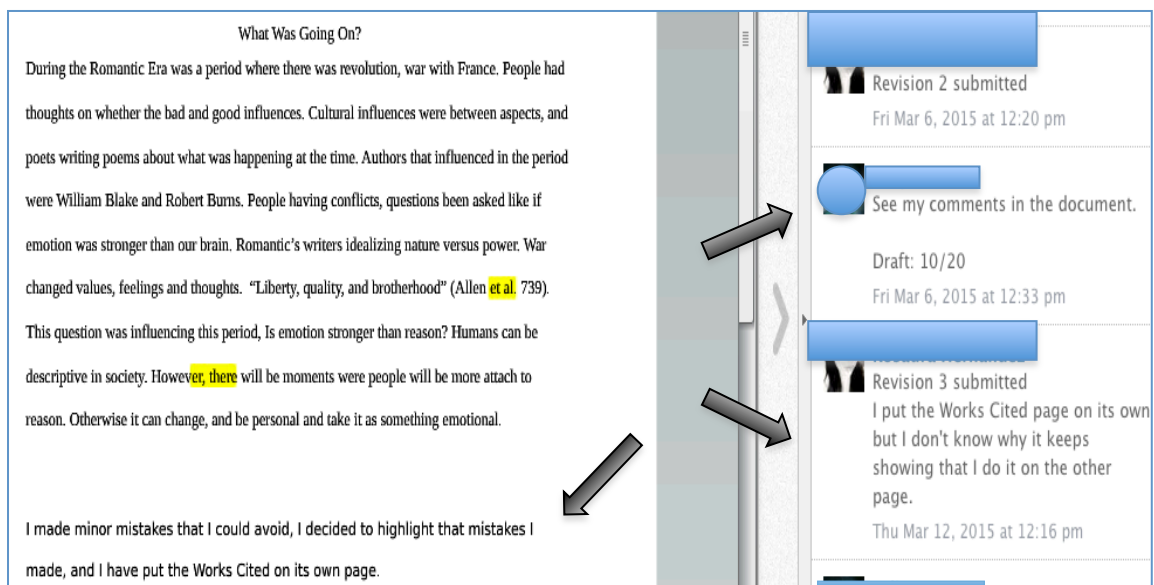


Figure 6. Screenshot of Rosalba’s use of Schoology’s feedback feature to communicate with Mr. Hilaria and her use of the digital editing tools available in Microsoft Word.

As a teacher myself, I know the value of self-reflection and I encourage students to self-reflect after they have completed a major and complex task. For this reason, I also find this particular screenshot interesting. Rosalba, a former ELL student, demonstrates how she finds value to self-reflect after completing a large writing assignment. She accepts the mistakes made in her essay when she wrote, “I made minor mistakes” and learned how to avoid the same mistakes in future writing tasks. Thus, Rosalba’s own contributions to her agency, i.e. her co-constructed digital discussions with her teacher, use of digital editing tools to revise, and self-reflections, shape her performance of identity as a digitally driven and knowledgeable student in a mainstream context.

Schoology as a Platform to Promote Learning through Teacher Feedback

In the final section of this chapter, I examine how students rely on Microsoft Word’s digital editing tools to partake in the revision process after teacher feedback is provided. Teachers provide feedback, they return papers via Schoology, and then students have to make revisions to their papers by using the digital editing tools available on Microsoft Word. Essays are then uploaded on Schoology (in some cases more than once) until the teacher deems their essay acceptable for a final grade. During the revision process, students are asked to use the digital highlighting tool in Microsoft Word to indicate which sections of their essay were modified. Additionally, students were required to write what modifications they made to their essay either right after each modification or at the bottom of their essay. Even though Microsoft Word is not a major component of Schoology, compatibility between the two made it feasible for students to up/download documents anytime for revision purposes.

Learning through Teacher Feedback: *Valentina*

As an example, in the screenshot below (Figure 7), Valentina uses the digital highlighting tool to highlight the first sentence of her paragraph to indicate she has made a modification (see highlighted section). She also included a short phrase to specify the type of change she made (e.g., “(Changed the first sentence)”). In the second highlighted area, Valentina again uses the highlighting tool to indicate she made an addition to her paragraph (see highlighted section) and inserts another note to specify she has added two additional sentences to her paragraph (e.g., “(I added two sentences)”).

Valentina’s engagement with the revision process as exhibited in Figure 7 below shows how her acquired prior language and digital skills work together (think of it as gears in motion) to help her to complete a large and complex writing project like the senior research paper. Valentina’s actions also confirm that with appropriate technologies (such as those available via Schoology) and teacher support, Valentina is able to perform a successful student identity, in a mainstream environment.

Than The Industrial Revolution became almost after The French Revolution since both were during the same period (Changed the first sentence). "No one can deny this period began in the eighteen century" (Deane 4). This period of time brought prosperity to farmers but poverty to families employed in factories. "Factories invaded the countryside, making small towns into cities" (Damrosch 17). There were no laws to protect factory safety, workers' hours or child labor. The government "made no effort to control the economy" (Allen et al. 741). The modernization improves agricultural yield and animal husbandry. To obtain the power, factories set by the river converting peaceful valleys into sites of production. In the 18th century employed "6 hundreds and manufacture thirty, by 1820's workforce were thousand" (Damrosch 19). In moral adjusted in the relation to economic opportunities, the empire appetite for exotic urban squalor, or merely in a commercial life. The eighteen also adjusted in relation of romantics; writers and poets. Officially the romanticism began. (I added two sentences).

Figure 7. Screenshot of Valentina's use of the digital editing tools available in Microsoft Word.

As a student with many linguistic resources and digital skills, Valentina is able to modify her paragraph in ways that respond to her teacher's feedback (e.g., by including the traditional topic and closing sentences as required; see Figure 7). This screenshot also shows that Valentina knew basic paragraph structure. For example, with Mr. Hilaria's feedback, Valentina is able to make self-corrections to enhance her paragraph. This approach is significant because students need the support and guidance from their expert teachers in order to attain an adequate understanding of the writing process like Valentina exhibited throughout the spring semester.

The following is an excerpt from a reflective piece Valentina wrote at the end of one of her first essays at the beginning of the spring semester. Mr. Hilaria's students were asked to reflect on the revision process and state modifications they made to their paper and explain why they chose to make changes and so forth. The excerpt displayed below is an example of Valentina's awareness about writing and the importance of self-reflection.

Excerpt 3

1 The reflection of this paper is I learned and now I could
2 remember the size of my title and header those are “Times New
3 Roman” with 12. Also I highlight the last name of my authors
4 because I did not know after you use someone’s name you have to
5 use the last name to refer at the person again. Now I remember
6 that for my future papers. Finally my last change was to add a
7 work cited is highlighted also.

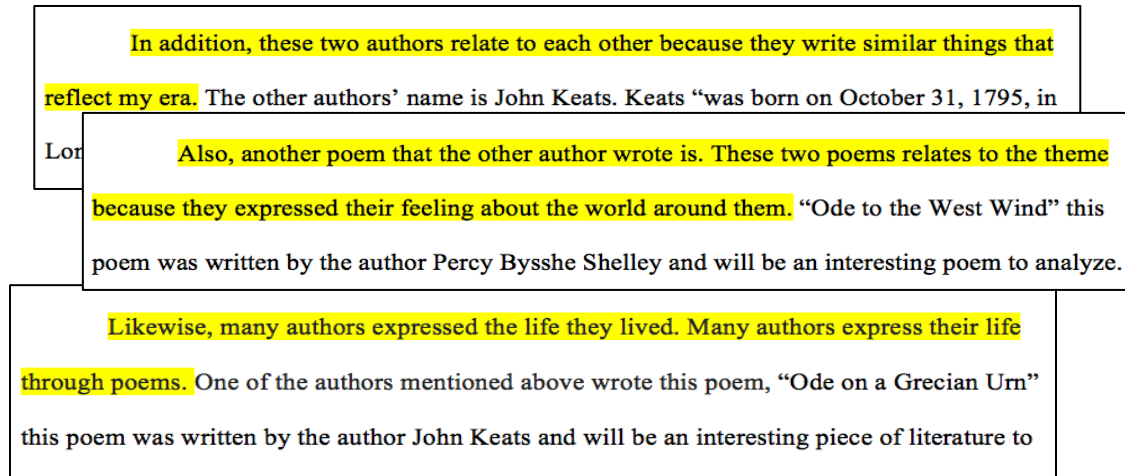
(Valentina, self-reflection, 1-25-15)

Excerpt 2 above includes three instances of Valentina describing “how” she enhanced her essay. First, she highlighted the last names of authors (line 3), second; she added a Work Cited page, and third, she highlighted modifications made (lines 6-7) to show her teacher. Evidence of Valentina engaged with the learning process took place when Valentina disclosed that she “remember[s] the size of [her] title and header those are ‘Times New Roman’ and 12” (lines 2-3). She offered an explanation perhaps to solidify her own understanding of the rules in place about when and when not to use an author’s last name (lines 4-5) during academic writing, which confirms her awareness of guidelines set by the MLA handbook.

Learning through Teacher Feedback: *Ester*

The following cluster of screenshots (Figures 8-10) shows how Ester uses the digital highlighting tool to highlight areas that were modified in one of her essays. Even though she did not provide details about what exact changes were made as Valentina did (in Figure 7 above), Ester did use the digital highlighting tool to make Ms. Lannister aware of changes made. Similar to Valentina, Ester also demonstrates she has an adequate understanding of

essay structure and organization; however, she still needs support from her teacher to provide her with instruction on how to appropriately use transitional phrases/sentences between paragraphs when writing essays.



Figures 8-10. Screenshot cluster of Ester’s use of the digital editing tools available in Microsoft Word.

I featured the cluster of screenshots (Figures 8-10) specifically to show how Ester uses the digital editing tools available to show her teacher she is engaged in the revision process. Note that Ester inserted transitions such as “In addition,” “Likewise,” and “Also,” to make connections between her paragraphs. Not only did this activity allow Ester to apply her digital skills, this exercise also allowed her to demonstrate her prior knowledge about writing.

Ester’s use of the digital highlighting tool not only served as a way for Ms. Lannister to quickly account for changes made, this digital practice also allowed Ester to see her newly revised writing piece to solidify her learning. The likelihood that Ester had experience using this strategy across content areas at Winterfell was likely since Ester was my student during her time in the ELD program; Ester engaged in a number of digital activities (e.g., online discussions, blogging, uploading essays on Schoology, etc.). It is evident in the cluster of

screenshots above that Ester carried prior writing skills and knowledge of how and when to apply transitions in her essays. Furthermore, online editing tools like those offered through Microsoft Word facilitated the revision process for Ester, which further refined her writing and digital skills.

Learning through Teacher Feedback: Josue

In the following screenshot (Figure 11), I show how Mrs. Bolton uses Schoology’s feedback feature to offer Josue advice and how Josue uses the digital editing tools to revise his Literary Analysis One essay. In the screenshot, notice how Mrs. Bolton provides detailed comments for Josue’s review (right pane). Figure 11 also shows Josue’s uploaded Literary Analysis One essay (left pane). He uses the digital highlighting tool to indicate to Mrs. Bolton of revisions he made. In this instance, Mrs. Bolton’s comment made to Josue, “Wonderful job!” demonstrates how teachers can not only offer guidance and support so that students can enhance their writing, but also use this feature to create a “safe space” by offering words of encouragement, especially for Josue who seems to struggle with writing.

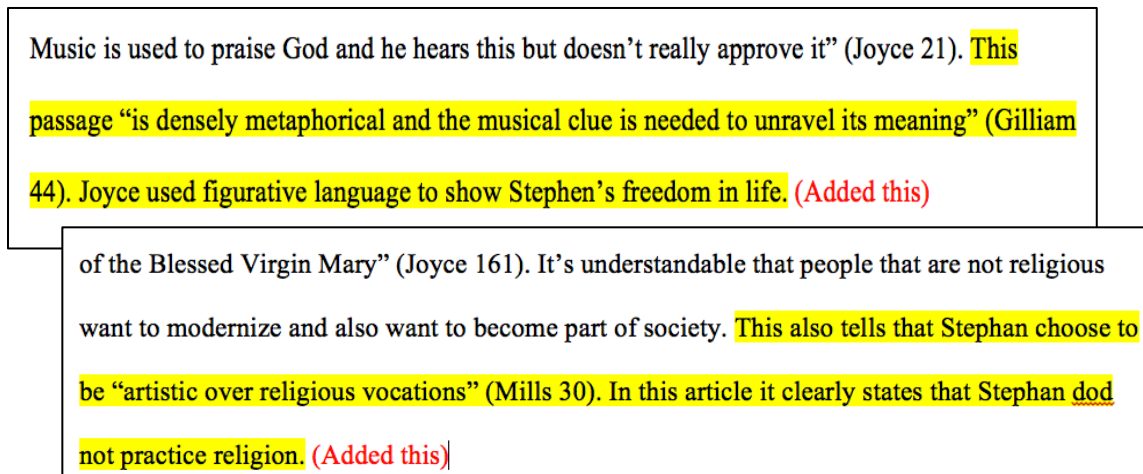


Figure 11. Screenshot of Mrs. Bolton offering words of encouragement and support to Josue via Schoology’s feedback section.

Through his teacher’s words of encouragement, it is likely Josue is motivated to continue to want to complete a large writing task like the senior research paper. Unlike the other focal participants, I noticed that Josue was the only one who needed a boost of

confidence so that he could continue with his research paper. I find this screenshot interesting because even though Mrs. Bolton acknowledges Josue's efforts, she still continues to provide support within Schoology's platform (e.g., "Please also explain how this work connects to the author...") Mrs. Bolton's words of encouragement and support serve as a boost for Josue because he is able to recognize his errors through valuable guidance offered by his teacher, and in turn, supports how he could mediate learning.

In the final cluster of screenshots below (Figures 12 &13), Josue adds two more sentences (both are in-text citations). Again, he writes, "Added this" in red color to specify he has made modifications. In the second screenshot, Josue again adds two sentences and highlights them to indicate they have been added. He also writes, "Added this" in red color to indicate to Mrs. Bolton what he added to his paragraph. I feature this particular set of screenshots because these are an example of how Josue uses the digital editing tools to show his teacher how he is engaged in the revision process.



Figures 12 & 13. Screenshot cluster of Josue engaged with the revision process and his use of the digital editing tools available in Microsoft Word.

The figures above also demonstrate how Josue applies both his traditional and digital skills by inserting in-text citations appropriately. It is evident that Josue is following teacher expectations by including additional material that was requested in previous editing activities. Again, we see how one former ELL maneuvers through and uses the digital editing resources available to enhance his writing thus creating a learning experience that advances his learning and further add to his literacy repertoire.

Summary

In this chapter, I analyzed how teachers and students used email and Schoology's platform to communicate. I examined and analyzed email exchanges to show how focal participants used email to inquire or inform their teachers about situations regarding the senior research paper. I exhibited how teachers and focal participants co-created teaching and learning scenarios within Schoology's feedback section and email platform. I examined screenshots of students engaged in the revision process and their use of the digital editing tool available in Microsoft Word that allowed them to enhance their writing. The data in this chapter indicate that focal participants were able to convey their concerns and inquire about the senior research paper through digital modalities, i.e., email and Schoology, in ways that accelerated the learning that was happening face-to-face in the classroom. Focal participants learned across contexts (classroom and online) because they brought similar strategies, goals, and priorities to both. At the same time, each context has its own affordances. So, while some students and teachers found it easier to communicate with each other via email, others preferred to talk in person.

As the findings presented in this chapter demonstrate, all focal participants brought their prior digital and traditional literacies to the task of completing their assignments, and all engaged in digital practices that advanced or solidified their learning and cultivated their

literacy repertoires. Even though research indicates that a gap exists between mainstream and marginalized groups (like ELLs) in terms of their access to digital technology, the focal participants in this study completed the same requirements as mainstream students did. Using email, for instance, focal participants were able to further develop communication and writing skills deemed necessary to integrate into the work force or higher learning institutions after leaving high school.

What was expressed in email exchanges between teachers and students revealed the value of email in addition to face-to-face interactions as a mode to support reclassified ELLs' language learning. Email became a platform for teaching while also becoming a virtual space for learning. For example, because the research paper was contingent to specific due dates, it was critical for focal participants to stay on board and not fall behind. Email served as a virtual space to continue moving this process along. Focal participant and teacher email exchanges revealed how both language and communication skills were applied and identities were performed by focal participants. Some teachers, like Mrs. Bolton, favored email to provide more direct instruction while other teachers, like Ms. Lannister, preferred to address her student's concerns in person and less through email. Nonetheless, both the teacher and student benefited from email as a mode for communication because of the affordances (access from home and quick responses) it provided throughout the spring semester.

Moreover, focal participants used the highlighting tool in Microsoft Word to show which sections or sentences they had modified/omitted/added in their essays. In addition to using the digital editing tools, focal participants were asked to state what modifications they made to their writing. These digital literacy practices provided opportunities for reclassified ELLs to engage in multimodal forms of revision processes. This digital practice is important because the current digital era, now more than ever, requires students to participate in LMSs

like Schoology and engage in digital forms of communication with others in higher learning settings and various work places as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2.

Finally, drawing on identity and sociocultural perspectives, I examined focal participants' emails and teacher feedback found in Schoology's feedback feature to uncover how email communication and Schoology affordances fortified and added to the literacy repertoires of former ELLs. I learned that focal participants exercised autonomy and learned through teachers' guidance and feedback, which added to their agency. I purposely examined emails between focal participants and their teachers through what Gee (2000) coins as the "Institutional Perspective" or "I-identities" because reclassified ELLs already come to mainstream classrooms labeled as "learners of English" or "students with limited English" which carries a stigma amongst high school students. Since these identities are already deeply rooted in the reclassified ELLs' psyche, examining the interactions between teachers and focal participants revealed how focal participants latched on to the mainstream student identity by participating with diligence and perseverance in spite of their struggles with the English language. Specific experiences and undertakings of the focal participants in this study illustrate the ways that agency and online practices emphasizes the relationship between identity construction and literacy repertoires.

CHAPTER FIVE

PEER-TO-PEER COMMUNICATION: AFFORDANCES OF PEER REVIEW AND ONLINE DISCUSSIONS TO FOSTER LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

In Chapter Four, I examined emails and digital exchanges in Schoology that occurred between focal participants and their teachers in order to understand the potential of digital communication for fostering the language learning and literacy practices of focal participants. I found that focal participants not only engaged in practices that facilitated language learning and their literacy repertoires, they also participated in practices that allowed them to display certain aspects of their identities and contribute to their agency. For instance, as they engaged in digital communication with their teachers through email exchanges and Schoology's feedback feature, I observed how they actively contributed to the revision process by using the digital editing tools available to them. By examining their local situated practices to understand how focal participants use these digital tools to enhance their own language learning, I found that with support from their teachers, access to digital editing tools, and Schoology's platform, focal participants were actively involved in (and excited about) practices that enhanced and bolstered their own literacy repertoires, language learning, and overall academic achievement. My analysis indicates this was accomplished in part because focal participants were able to communicate their concerns and inquire about subject matters that concerned the senior research paper via email exchanges and electronic communication on Schoology. In a variety of ways, the students and teachers co-constructed learning and teaching scenarios in ways that advanced student learning.

Such findings make an important contribution to research on the technology gap that exists between mainstream and marginalized groups like ELLs. As my analysis in Chapter 4 shows, although the gap is often robust, it is not impenetrable. By communicating

with their teachers outside of class in this routine fashion, the students in my study were more present during class and more committed to and interested in their assignments when not in class. As I explore in the present chapter, ELL students in this study used digital communication technologies to communicate regularly with their peers about academic content in ways that also enhance their language learning and literacy practices. Chapter Five will focus on the affordances of peer review (i.e., use of the digital track changes tool to provide feedback) and focal participants' interactions with peers in Schoology's online discussion forum as a way to understand how students employ their membership in a mainstream online community of practice and how they apply their digital literacies to further advance their own language learning and literacy repertoires.

Another key finding discussed in this chapter is how focal participants revealed aspects of their identities when their peers encouraged their participation in an online community of practice during peer editing sessions and online discussions. This chapter will focus on three areas in which peer-to-peer communication occurred in a time span of sixteen weeks. By examining how participants provided feedback to each other (e.g., by using the track changes tool or by inserting comments on their peers' written work and/or by responding to their peers in the online discussion forums), I found that focal participants integrated themselves in a mainstream community of learners while employing their traditional and digital literacies in the online space of Schoology.

I rely on the notion of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and identity perspective (Gee, 2000) to analyze comments and suggestions offered by focal participants to their peers through the track changes tool to provide a nuanced view of the potential digital peer review and online interaction had on the language learning of focal participants. I align to Lave and Wenger's (1991) notion of communities of practice to

discuss how participants developed as members of an online community where they were able to learn from each other and offer their own expertise albeit developing themselves as mainstream students in a secondary English classroom.

In this chapter I also identify and examine instances of how focal participants used the digital track changes tool to provide feedback to their peers and how their peers responded to that feedback. Additionally, I identified and examined fourteen essays that included feedback provided by focal participants to their peers. Focal participants found the digital track changes as a valuable tool to provide feedback to their peers, and in turn, allowed them to exercise their digital abilities to provide comments/feedback directly at the end of peers' essays in lieu of making traditional pen or pencil markings on hardcopies.

In the final section of this chapter, I examine screenshots of focal participants' interactions with their peers and their contributions made in Schoology's online discussion forum. I analyze instances where focal participants engaged in online discussions with their peers in ways that fostered a sense of inclusivity because they had the opportunities to be part of a group of online learners that valued their input. I draw from Gee's (2000) notion of identity as a way to emphasize focal participants' contributions both at the social and individual level, and I show how those contributions had an effect on students' language learning and literacy repertoires.

Affordances of Peer Review to Facilitate Learning

In Chapter Five I examine digital peer-to-peer interactions between focal participants and their classmates during three peer-editing activities as part of the research unit expectations in order to understand how focal participants use the digital editing tools available to them to complete assignments. I draw from the communities of practice framework to analyze the interactions between focal participants and their peers as they

engage in peer editing activities and their use of the digital track changes tool to provide a nuanced view of how focal participants use this tool to provide feedback to their peers and to illuminate the potential for digital feedback to accelerate the language learning and literacy repertoires of focal participants.

Students enrolled in Senior English II were required to submit evidence that they had peer reviewed and edited three essays throughout the 16-week research unit. Along with uploading their Author One Background, Literary Analysis Two, and Final Paper on Schoology, they were also required to upload a “Peer Edit” of another student’s Author One Background, Literary Analysis Two, and Final Paper (See Appendix D for Schedule).

Students were required to exchange papers through personal email accounts and to review and provide feedback to a peer of their choice by using Microsoft Word’s track changes tool.

Focal participants had the freedom to choose who they wanted to exchange papers with during peer editing activities; teachers did not assign students to each other. After the pair reviewed each other’s papers, they each had to submit the reviewed/edited document on Schoology as proof that they engaged in the peer-editing process. After I examined focal participants’ peer reviewed documents, I noticed that four out of five focal participants engaged in all three assigned peer-editing activities; Miguel engaged in two out of three only. In total, I examined 14 peer-reviewed documents that demonstrated focal participants’ use of the digital track changes tool. To help distinguish between different kinds of feedback, I describe feedback made by focal participants through track changes as *entries* and feedback provided in paragraph form as *comments*.

Peer-Review as an Approach to Foster Empowerment and Mentorship

In this section, I examine entries made by focal participants to their peers and explain how peer-to-peer editing activities positioned focal participants as empowered learners and mentors. Screenshots reveal how focal participants used the digital track changes tool to deliver valuable feedback to their peers. Screenshots also demonstrate focal participants' prior writing skills knowledge and digital abilities. Before each screenshot, I provide a short descriptive summary to provide context. The screenshot is followed by my interpretation and analysis. My explanations align to two components of my theoretical framework— notions of identity and communities of practice—as a way to observe focal participants' integration within Schoology's online community and their actions, which exposed aspects of their identities within the constructs of a mainstream online context.

Digital feedback to peer (Track Changes Entries): *Valentina*

In the first screenshot below (Figure 14), Valentina edits and inserts comments using the digital track changes tool. The excerpt Valentina is responding to is about author Doris Lessing's personal background and literary contributions. As a reminder, students were required to include author information and literary works that connect to their selected theme, which had been selected earlier in the research unit. I feature this particular screenshot because this is an example of how Valentina uses the digital track changes tool to provide feedback (comments made in red color) to one of her classmates. Valentina points out what is missing in her introductory paragraph but does so with a supportive tone, e.g. "I like your paragraph but..." Here, Valentina positions herself as a knowledgeable student who understands the writing process and who is able to offer guidance to another peer. For example, she poses the question ("what's the name of her parents?") after her peer had written: "Her dad fought in World War I and her mom was a nurse."

Outspoken

Doris Lessing was born in Persia which is now Iran in October 22, 1919 (Jan Hanford). Her dad fought in World War I and her mom was a nurse what's the name of her parents?.. She described her childhood as an uneven mix of some pleasure and much pain (Hanford). She had to go through very bad moments when she was young.”She recently commented that unhappy childhoods seem to produce fiction writers” (Hanford). Her mom wanted to raise perfect children, so she had massive amount of rules in the house. They sent her to an all-girls high school and dropped out when she was thirteen. Lessing did not turn out like her mom wanted her to be. I like your paragraph but you don't have any information of her family of her life, you did not describe her at all.

Figure 14. Screenshot of Valentina’s use of the digital track changes tool to provide feedback to her peer.

Valentina provides a sentence-long comment to indicate what was missing in her peer’s introductory paragraph: “I like your paragraph but you don’t have any information of her family of her life, you did not describe her at all.” The requirements for this assignment ask students to include significant information about their author’s personal background, especially names of parents and siblings (See Appendix F), and Valentina’s remarks suggests she is aware of the essay requirements as she urges her peer to go back and include missing components or applicable content. Valentina positions herself as a knowledgeable member of a community of learners who offers her advice to peers of a mainstream academic environment. This is most important because as a former ELL student, Valentina capitalized on the opportunity to build on her prior knowledge (i.e., reading and writing abilities) and build self-confidence while interacting with other mainstream students. In these ways, students like Valentina contribute to their own language and literacy repertoires in and through the peer-review activity – which created a space for her to demonstrate both her acquired language knowledge and her ability to act as “mentor” with her peers.

In the next example screenshot (Figure 15), again Valentina uses the digital track changes tool to edit and provide feedback to one of her peer's essays. The screenshot contains a section of an essay dedicated to author Doris Lessing's background information. The screenshot shows how Valentina inserts her comments, in red color, in hopes that her peer addresses her suggestions to revise.

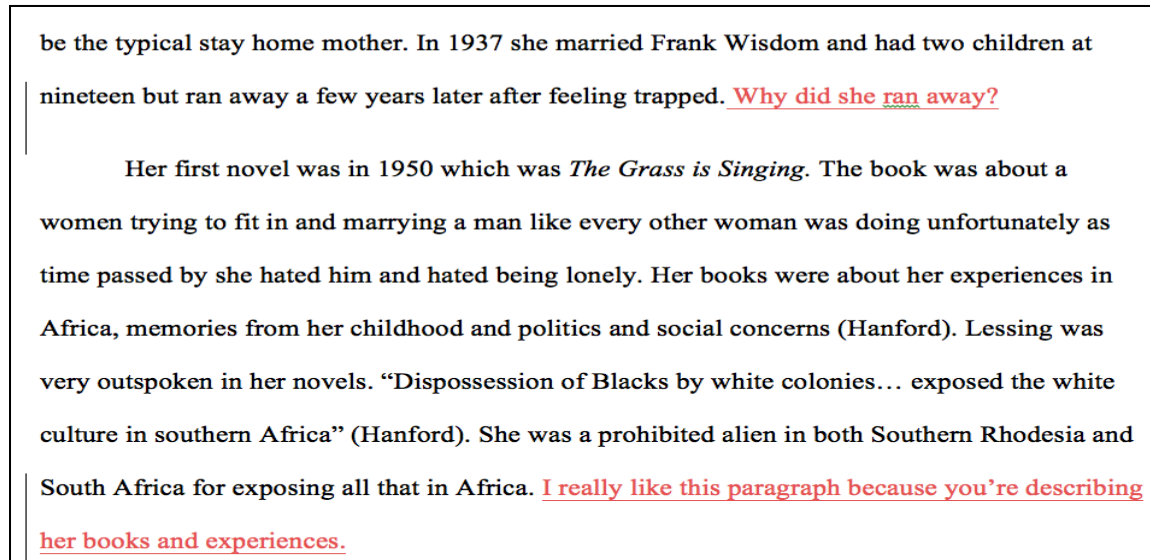


Figure 15. Screenshot of Valentina's use of the digital track changes tool to provide feedback to her peer.

Figure 15 above illustrates that Valentina poses the question: "Why did she ran [*siz*] away?" after her peer mentioned Lessing had married Frank Wisdom but ran away from her marriage after feeling trapped. Even though Valentina applies an incorrect verb tense by using "ran" instead of "run," Valentina did not refrain from offering feedback to her peer in ways that a knowledgeable individual who is confident enough (in terms of writing abilities) to offer her support to others would. At the end of the paragraph, Valentina validates her peer's writing – "I really like this paragraph because you're describing her books and experiences" – in ways that help soften the more critical feedback. I find Valentina's feedback interesting because I observed how one reclassified ELL employed the role of

“mentor” to encourage another peer to execute persistence after she poses the question, “Why did she ran [*sic*] away?” Perhaps Valentina has experienced the same type of support and guidance in past language arts courses and has been encouraged by former teachers to expand on or elaborate on her own writing. Again, Valentina’s suggestions made to her peer as discussed above show that she is not only knowledgeable and confident but also supportive and sympathetic (perhaps because of first-hand experience).

In an interview, Valentina revealed instances of her work ethic. She said, “Right now I am working the double of hard than the beginning of the year, my senior year” and “Now I see I met all my deadlines but at the same time I don’t.” The latter shows Valentina as an individual who perhaps does not accept failure easily, while the former indicates her impressions of having high standards for herself. As a piece of advice to future seniors, Valentina said, “the senior paper is easy maybe too much research and information but also as long as you keep being responsible about it...” She offers future seniors advice about the amount of “research and information” required during the senior research paper process, yet cautions them to be “responsible about it...” Valentina also disclosed, “[Mr. Hilaria] will appreciate that because you are trying” and “also always try your best to turn everything on time...” Valentina portrays Mr. Hilaria as supportive and someone who appreciates students who “are trying” thus positioning herself as a student who is aware of the importance of meeting deadlines and showing effort in class. Valentina mentions turning in items “on time” because the senior research paper has contingent and strict deadlines that need to be met to secure a passing grade in Senior English II. Valentina’s advice to a future senior about exercising effort and submitting assignments in on time reflects her individuality as an empowered and aware student who surpasses classroom expectations established by her teacher in a mainstream context.

As noted above, a reclassified ELL like Valentina positioned herself as an empowered individual who exercised autonomy by taking the role of “mentor” to provide guidance to one of her peers. In his studies regarding empowerment, Rappaport (1987) defined empowerment as

the mechanism by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their lives...For some people the mechanism of empowerment may lead to a sense of control; for others it may lead to actual control, the practical power to effect their own lives. Empowerment can be either understood as an internationalized attitude, or as an observable behavior. (p. 3)

After I examined data that encompassed interactions between focal participants and peers, I noticed that focal participants positioned themselves as empowered individuals, which also reflects “an expansion of agency” (Alsop et al., 2006; Narayan-Parker, 2005). For example, focal participants offered support to their peers and applied their acquired traditional and digital skills within a specific context, i.e. the online space of Schoology, which provided examples of how focal participants mediated their own learning. Themes that emerged are discussed further in the following sections and example screenshots are exhibited of focal participants’ input during peer-review activities.

Digital Feedback to Peers (Track Changes Entries): *Ester*

In the following screenshot (Figure 16), Ester uses the digital track changes tool to provide feedback to one of her classmates. The screenshot shows her peer’s introductory paragraph that mentions author William Blake. The screenshot also exhibits the number of changes made directly on the introductory paragraph and track changes entries made by Ester. Focal participants’ names are blocked to respect their anonymity.

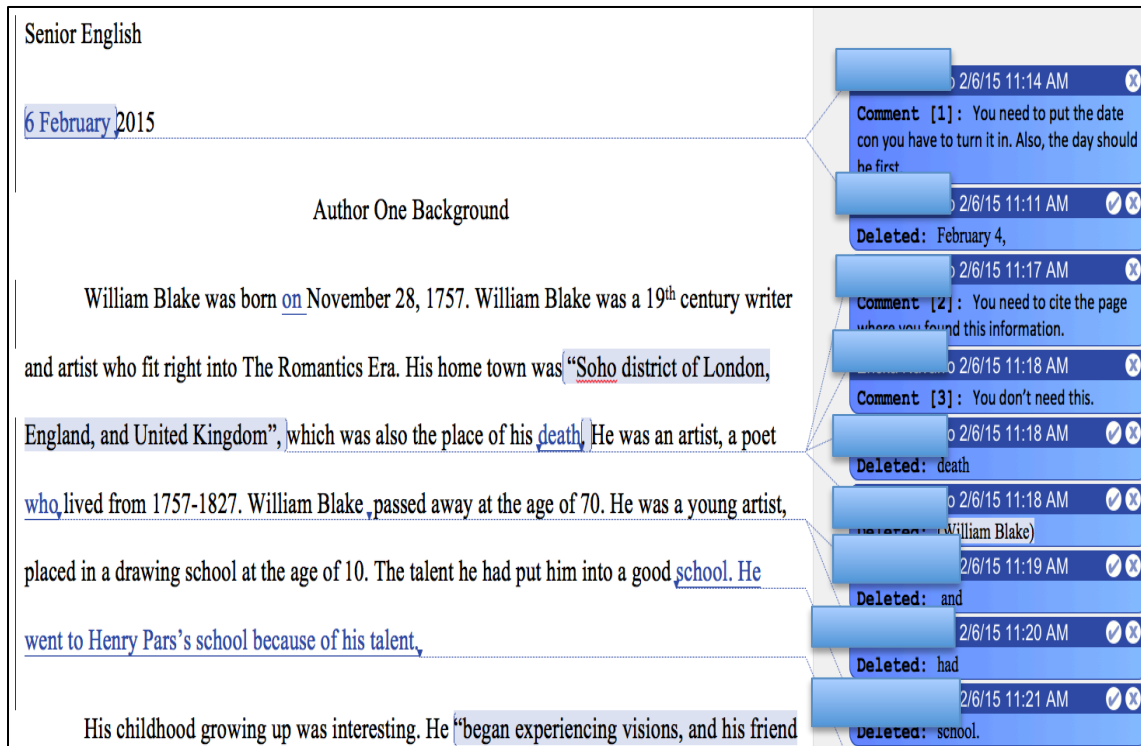


Figure 16. Screenshot of Ester’s use of the digital track changes tool to offer feedback to her peer.

This is an example of a focal participant’s use of a digital editing tool to engage in the editing process to demonstrate her understanding of how to format an essay, i.e. how to apply MLA rules. For example, in Comment [1] Ester writes, “You need to put the date can you have to turn it in. Also the day should be first” and in Comment [3] she writes, “You need to cite the page where you found this information.” Like focal participant Valentina, Ester also takes the role of “mentor” to provide guidance and support to her classmate. She also exercises autonomy by taking it upon herself to delete certain words from her peer’s paragraph. For example, she deletes “February 4,” “(William Blake),” “and,” “had,” and “school” in an effort to enhance her peer’s essay. Her approach demonstrates her self-confidence as a writer who is unafraid to make changes and improve her peer’s essay. Here, Ester uses digital editing tools to demonstrate her abilities as a writer and at the same time, exercises her acquired digital literacies to support another peer. Ester demonstrates her role

as a mainstream student whose participation in a community of practice emphasizes the notion of peer-to-peer interactions as a social process of learning and knowing. The screenshot below (Figure 17) is the continuation of the screenshot above (Figure 16). Here, Ester provides five comments and makes two deletions.

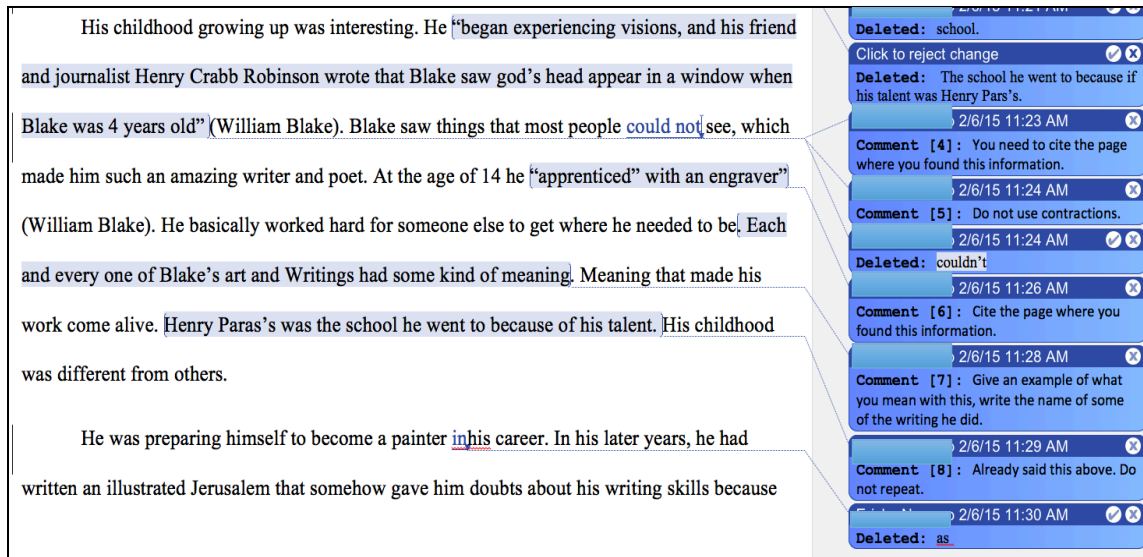


Figure 17. Screenshot of Ester's use of the digital track changes tool to offer feedback to her peer.

Again, Ester exercises autonomy by making modifications and replacing the contraction *couldn't* with *could not*. In the second deletion, Ester replaces *as* for the preposition *in*. Ester's self-made modifications/deletions provide insight of Ester's understanding of academic writing (i.e. use of contractions) and awareness of The Six Traits of Writing conceptual model. In Comments [4] and [6], Ester offers guidance in regards to citing sources, and in Comment [7], Ester asks for additional content to enrich her peer's essay. As Ester engaged in peer editing activities, her awareness of writing conventions and MLA guidelines was noted. The amount of deletions and comments made by Ester suggests her level of investment in the peer-editing process and her digital knowledge of how to use the track changes feature. This example demonstrates how one reclassified ELL adopted

practices that indicate her membership in a particular community of practice—a community where students use digital literacy practices to simultaneously critique and support her classmates (some of whom are described as “mainstream”).

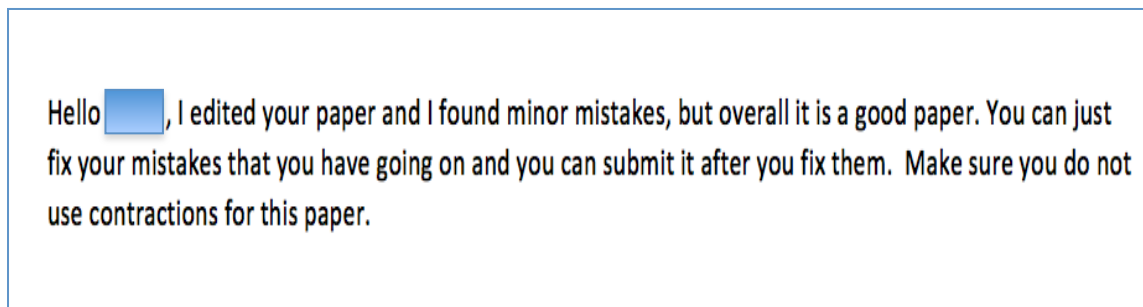
Digital feedback to peers (Microsoft Word Comments): *Rosalba*

After I examined, analyzed, and coded focal participants’ track changes entries, I proceeded to examine the comments made by focal participants to peers during peer-editing activities. Specifically, focal participant Rosalba made three comments; participant Miguel made two comments; and focal participants Valentina, Ester and Josue offered one comment. These comments ranged from one to seven sentences long which varied in sentence structure (i.e., simple, compound, complex, fragment, and run on). These particular comments made by focal participants offered words of praise to peers for a job well done and advice that referred back to The Six Traits of Writing conceptual model. As mentioned before, to distinguish between the two types of digital feedback provided, digital feedback made by focal participants in paragraph form will be discussed as *comments*.

One major theme that emerged after I analyzed both track changes entries and the set of eight comments was the idea of focal participants taking the role of “mentor.” In their comments/feedback offered to their peers, focal participants revealed their personal beliefs about writing and literature and offered advice on how to enhance essays, which validated their own writing skills prior knowledge. Another theme that emerged was the notion of autonomy. Focal participants took it upon themselves to make changes to peers’ essays and offered useful feedback that supported the writing development of other peers as well. Embedded in the digital feedback provided by focal participants were examples of their acquired knowledge obtained in past language arts courses. Further, extracted phrases (See Appendices U & V) conveyed not only focal participants’ writing skills prior knowledge, but

also confirmed the level of confidence needed to offer recommendations about how to improve peers' writing despite their own struggles with writing.

The following are examples of how focal participants exercised autonomy and how they demonstrated traits of empowered individuals because they were given the opportunities and platform to exert agency successfully. The learning structures, i.e., participation in peer-review outside the classroom and access to digital editing tools, were conditions for applicable agency to occur. Following are example comments made by focal participants that offered suggestions to make changes on peers' essays.



Hello [redacted], I edited your paper and I found minor mistakes, but overall it is a good paper. You can just fix your mistakes that you have going on and you can submit it after you fix them. Make sure you do not use contractions for this paper.

Figure 18. Rosalba's comments made to her peer Enrique.

In Figure 18 above, Rosalba delivers a comment to Enrique (pseudonym) after editing his Author One Background essay. The first sentence is a compliment to her peer: "but overall it is a good paper." The following two sentences are recommendations, which reveal Rosalba's awareness of the essay requirements and when to avoid the use of contractions. This particular comment demonstrates Rosalba's use of a digital mode to offer feedback to her peer Enrique.

In her last interview, when I asked Rosalba about this, she said she was not comfortable having face-to-face conversations with her peers. The following is an excerpt that highlights this particular conversation during interview two.

Excerpt 1 (Rr: Researcher / R: Rosalba)

- 1 Rr: Tell me a little bit about some of the challenges you faced in
2 Senior English.
- 3 R: The hardest part of my class work was to pair up with people I
4 did not know. I was not very comfortable talking with them face
5 to face. For example when we needed to do team work in class.
6 However it was fun because you met new people.

(Rosalba, interview, 6-5-15)

Consequently, after I examined all digital feedback made to her peers, I noticed that Rosalba preferred to engage in virtual exchanges with her peers instead. Even though Rosalba stood behind the “digital curtain” during peer-editing activities, she made valuable contributions and provided support to her peers as noted in Figure 18 above (e.g. “Make sure you do not use contractions for this paper.”) Like other focal participants, Rosalba also exhibited the role of “mentor” when she offered her expertise to her peers. Rosalba’s participation in peer-review activities demonstrated how she was able to supply her expertise and support those peers who in a sense have always been deemed “proficient” by the educational institution. Yet, Rosalba’s ability and willingness to provide feedback in this way helps to demonstrate and solidify her (emerging) membership in a group she had been trying to join. I.e., Rosalba became a member of a particular community of practice by engaging in the practices of that community. In Figure 19 below, Rosalba writes a six-sentence paragraph to Samuel (pseudonym) to compliment him on a job well done and for including fitting content in his essay. In the last three sentences, notice how Rosalba writes to Samuel on a more personal level: “I know we make mistakes...”

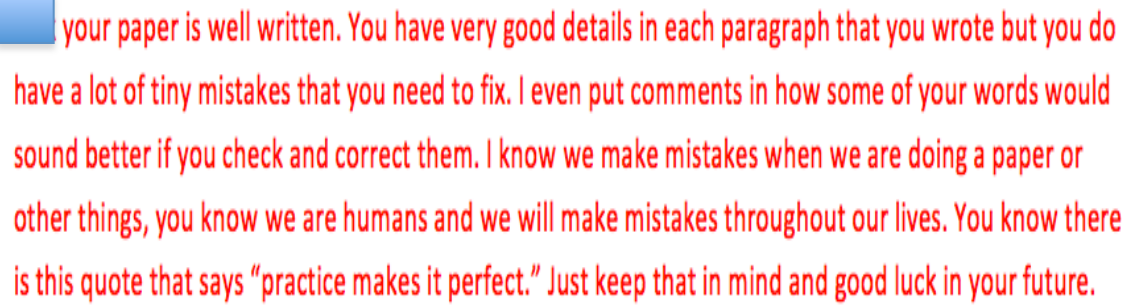
A screenshot of a comment written in red text on a light blue background. The text is enclosed in a thin blue border. The comment reads: "your paper is well written. You have very good details in each paragraph that you wrote but you do have a lot of tiny mistakes that you need to fix. I even put comments in how some of your words would sound better if you check and correct them. I know we make mistakes when we are doing a paper or other things, you know we are humans and we will make mistakes throughout our lives. You know there is this quote that says "practice makes it perfect." Just keep that in mind and good luck in your future."

Figure 19. Rosalba’s comments made to her peer Samuel.

In this example, Rosalba takes advantage of the digital platform to offer words of advice and suggestions to her peer Samuel, and she exposes her attitudes about writing after she uses the collective pronoun “we” to include herself in a group of individuals who struggle with writing. She also refers to the English proverb “practice makes perfect” to remind Samuel that good writing requires patience and repetition. Rosalba’s last sentence suggests she is an encouraging and caring individual who wants the best academic outcome for not only herself, but for her peers as well. Rosalba also demonstrates autonomy by stating to Samuel: “I even put comments in how some of your words would sound better if you check and correct them.” Her statement emphasizes self-confidence and ability to offer her expertise to a fellow peer.

In the comment below (Figure 20), Rosalba recognizes Cruz’s (pseudonym) disposition after she mentioned, “but you probably felt frustrated yet you wrote your opinion in the last paper.” Rosalba’s comments indicate her attitudes about writing, peers’ recognition of disposition, and knowledge of writing traits such as Conventions and Word Choice as found in The Six Traits of Writing conceptual model.

Overall your paper is well written, you have several mistakes that you need to correct. There are some sentences that do not make sense i corrected few and I said what to correct on them. I think you started writing it good but you probably felt frustrated yet you wrote your opinion in the last paper.

Figure 20. Rosalba’s comments made to her peer Cruz.

Again, Rosalba’s comment to Cruz proves her understanding of the frustrations and struggles associated with writing if one is not equipped with the adequate skills. She also exercises autonomy by making modifications to Cruz’s essay: “[I] corrected few and I said what to correct on them.” As noted with Ester’s and Valentina’s use of the digital track changes tool to provide feedback, Rosalba also embodies the notion of peer as “mentor.” Not only did she display knowledge of about writing conventions, but she also revealed instances of her own past experiences and struggles with writing. Similar to Valentina, Rosalba’s lived experiences as a struggling writer helped her identify with some of her peers and understood not only what a draft needs in terms of revisions but also how to deliver a message in a helpful and supportive manner.

Digital feedback to peers (Microsoft Word Comments): *Miguel*

On the last assignment or final draft, Miguel inserts a comment to his peer Luz Elena (pseudonym), as illustrated in Figure 21 below. He offers compliments to Luz Elena for having a “well-written paper” and acknowledges her inclusion of suitable content that related to her essay’s time period. In this particular comment, Miguel writes in third person to show his teacher, Mr. Hilaria, what he found after he edited Luz Elena’s essay.

This is a well written paper it has good points. This gives you details about what happened at this time period. I like the poems I also liked which others I can relate to them they were both good authors this poem to me just flows you wouldn't have any trouble understanding it is ges real smooth. This is a real good poem to read or use as examples to a good senior paper use good transition words she put all the aspect of what this paper or what the teacher wanted it helps you understand this era.

Figure 21. Miguel's comments made to his peer Luz.

In his comment to peer Luz Elena, Miguel writes, “[Luz Elena’s] use [*sic*] good transition words. She put all the aspect [*sic*] of what this paper or what the teacher wanted...” Miguel’s account to his teacher depicts his awareness of using transition words for organization purposes when writing essays. He also understood the importance of including suggested requirements set forth at the beginning of this particular assignment. Figure 21 is significant because we see how Miguel provides feedback to two audiences: his peer and his teacher. He performs identities of a supportive peer who is knowledgeable about writing and a student who can follow instructions with regard to the assignment. Miguel’s actions position him as an “apprentice” who is learning to be part of particular community of practice, i.e. a mainstream classroom, and perform as a student in a mainstream context.

Digital feedback to peers (Microsoft Word Comments): *Josue*

In Figure 22 below, Josue offers compliments to his peer Leo (pseudonym) by inserting two sentences that allude to writing trait Organization. Most of Josue’s comments indicate his view that Leo included appropriate content (e.g., “you connected the theme and the Industrial Revolution and how it shaped the Victorian Era” and “You also gave a lot of

background information of the Era that made the essay interesting right from the start with your history review of the time.”).

Your essay flows smoothly together as one. You did a great job. I like how you put everything together. The only major thing you did wrong is to leave the subtitles. Also aside from some few kinks, you did a good job according to the rubric. I liked how you connected the theme and the Industrial Revolution and how it shaped the Victorian Era. You also gave a lot of background information of the Era that made the essay interesting right from the start with your quick history review of the time. I would give you a grade between a seven or an eight.

Figure 22. Josue’s comments made to his peer Leo.

Josue’s comments suggest he had adequate understanding about writing because he was able to acknowledge how peer Leo incorporated appropriate content and understanding of organization. His understanding of these traits allowed him to share his prior writing skills knowledge with his peer Leo thus positioned himself as a peer “mentor” as well. As with most examples presented in this section, focal participants’ practices (i.e., providing feedback to each other) help to establish and bolster their membership in a certain community of practice. In this particular community of practice, students are able and willing to evaluate their peers’ writing. Additionally, the situations presented can be described as evolving and dynamic because focal participants are developing capacities by engaging in digital and traditional literacy practices.

Affordances of Online Discussions to Facilitate Learning

In this section, I discuss focal participants’ interactions and contributions made in Schoology’s online discussion forum. Through screenshots, I examine the exchanges between focal participants and their peers and display their contributions made during these exchanges. As mentioned before, focal participants’ involvement in Schoology’s online

discussion forum promoted inclusivity because they had the opportunities to be part of a community of learners that valued their input made during online discussions. Through sociocultural and identity lenses, I emphasize focal participants' contributions both at the social and individual level, which ultimately had an effect on their language learning and literacy repertoires.

Online Discussion Themes

The following sections are divided by specific themes that emerged during the coding process. As noted in my methodology chapter, seven major themes emerged after analyzing focal participants' online discussion initial posts and replies (See Appendix T). Themes were formulated after I examined focal participants' posts and their replies to their peers in Schoology's online discussions forum. Posts revealed focal participants' beliefs and attitudes towards a variety of topics and were categorized into specific themes: individuality, education, harmony, disparity, emotions, technology, and nature.

Themes: Individuality and Disparity

Ester: *"It does not matter where we are, or where we are from"*

In the screenshot below (Figure 23), Ester types an initial post in response to Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* discussion thread. Ester's initial post alludes to society's obsession with appearance and increase of self-image incongruences amongst individuals, especially adolescent females. Focal participants' and peers' names are blocked to respect their anonymity.

Ester reveals her own views on the idea of appearance and is not reluctant to disclose personal information: "We all worry about appearance [*sic*] including me, is something that we can't deny." Ester's comments are significant because they situate her as a knowledgeable contributor to the critical discussion of self-acceptance/self-image at the cost

of exposing her own vulnerabilities. Like Rosalba, Ester is willing to share personal beliefs with her peers in the online space of Schoology. Both rely on the protection offered by the “digital curtain” as they provide their input to an ongoing online discussion thus positioning both as contributors of a community of practice within a mainstream online environment.

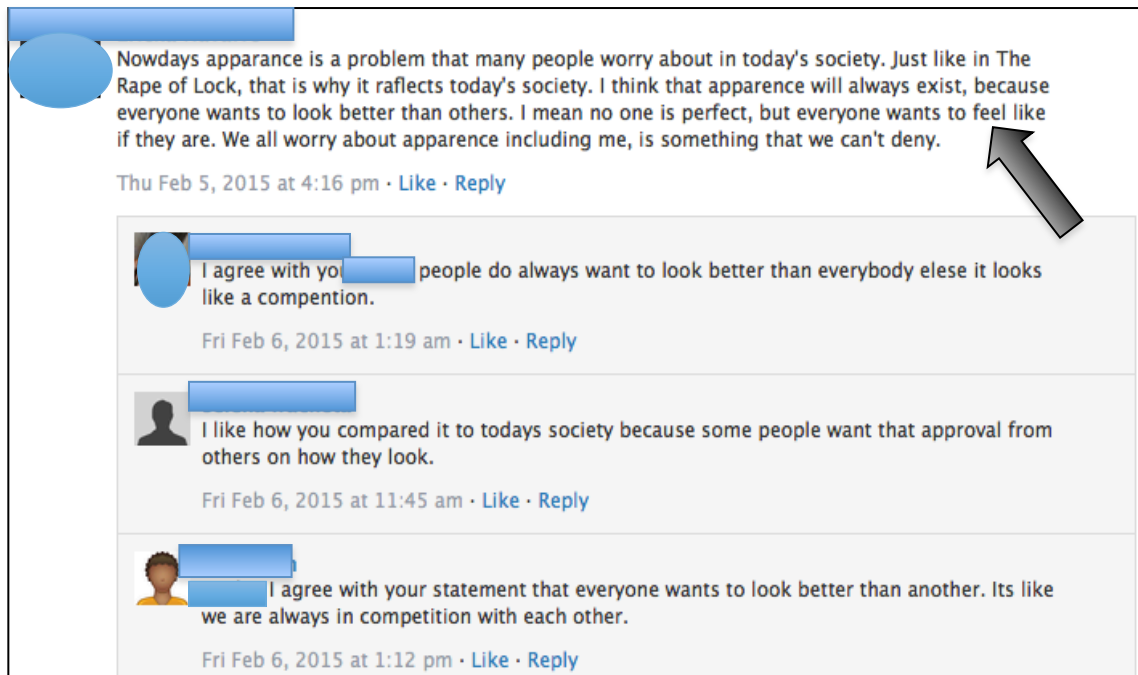


Figure 23. Ester’s initial post and classmates’ replies.

In the same figure, three peers replied to Ester in regards to her post about appearance. One female student, Michaela (pseudonym), agreed with Ester by stating that people “want to look better” and “it looks like a competition.” Another female student, Sabrina (pseudonym) said, “I like how you compared it to today’s society.” Finally, a male student, Ethan (pseudonym), agreed with Ester by providing an opinion similar to Sabrina: “It’s like we are always in competition with each other.” The online discussion between Ester and three of her peers, as shown in Figure 23 above, provides an example of how one reclassified ELL had the opportunity to exercise her digital and communication skills and contribute her opinions in an online community of practice. For instance, when Ester states,

“We all worry about appearance [*sic*] including me, is something that we can’t deny,” she establishes her position within the group—as an individual who identifies with her peers and their concerns about self-image.

The following are screenshots of an initial post made by one male student, Carlos (pseudonym) and Ester’s response to his post (Figures 24 and 25). In Figure 24, Carlos makes an initial post in regards to *The Rape of Lock* discussion thread. In Figure 25, Ester replies to Carlos’s post and provides her own personal views on the idea of appearance.

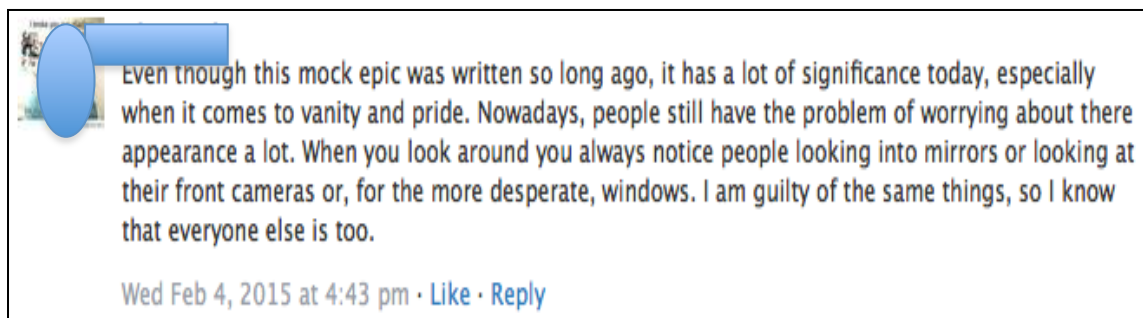


Figure 24. Initial post made by Ester’s peer, Carlos.

Ester reassures Carlos when she writes: “Eventhough [*sic*] we do not have to worry that much about apparence, [*sic*] because no on [*sic*] is perfect” (See Figure 25 below). Here, Ester explains how individuals differ in regards to physical appearance. Additionally, Ester’s reply is an example of how one timid adolescent (and former ELL student) provides commentary to an English-speaking group of peers despite her own struggles with the English language. Ester was equipped to provide feedback because of her lived experiences as an ELL who had to learn to write in her second language—English.

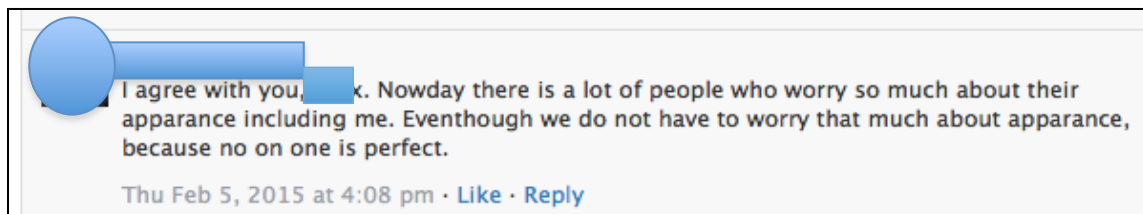


Figure 25. Ester’s reply to peer Carlos’s post.

The exchange above further determines how Ester takes advantage of the online platform available to her to share her own personal beliefs, which again emphasizes the notion of reliance on the “digital curtain” in lieu of participating in face-to-face discussions. The screenshots of online discussions above (Figures 24 & 25) between Ester and her peers indicate her preference for online discussions over face-to-face interactions. In interview two, Ester revealed that she preferred to participate in Schoology’s online discussion forum instead of having face-to-face conversations. The following is part of her response:

Excerpt 2

Because like in Schoology I don’t see their faces...And if I talk in person they will make me nervous and I won’t say anything. I’ll just be quiet, silent... I will not.

Because I’m just typing and not nervous. Or I don’t see their reactions when they read and what I wrote. Yeah I think it’s better.

(Ester, interview, 5-11-15)

Ester’s comments in Excerpt 2 accentuate her views about participating in online discussions versus participating in face-to-face interactions as stated previously. As I examined Ester’s participation in Schoology’s online discussion forum, I noticed how Schoology’s online platform allowed her to fully participate and reveal information that she may have been reluctant to share during face-to-face interactions. In the end, Ester’s online discussion posts revealed her individual beliefs about society’s obsession with self-image and engaged in a digital discussion with her mainstream counterparts. Additionally, her interview excerpt above conveyed her inclination to discuss critical issues behind the comforts of an online interface—like Schoology—instead of discussing with her peers in face-to-face scenarios. Ester, like other focal participants in this study, seemed to find the “digital curtain” that Schoology provided comforting. Focal participants capitalized on this space to

share their views and perspectives, which still encouraged their participation in a mainstream community of practice.

In the screenshot below (Figure 26), Ester posts a response to a discussion thread about Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal*. Her post focuses on the issue of racism in society. Ester expresses her strong and thought-provoking opinions about racism. She uses words and phrases such as "religion," "color," "equal," "racism has always existed," and "Racism has influenced slavery, wars and legal codes" to enrich her post. In response, one of her classmates replied and acknowledged Ester's use of Horatian and Juvenalian satire that depicts the idea of people wearing masks to disguise their true skin color. Ester's posts show that an educational online environment like Schoology can create an intimate space where continuing learners of English have an opportunity to express their individuality and connect with their peers.

Furthermore, students like Ester and Rosalba, who seem reluctant to engage in face-to-face discussions about academic content, have access to technologies that create spaces for practicing their language and digital skills. In such ways, the features that the LMS Schoology offers enhance and enrich these students' learning experiences. For Ester, Schoology provides an online space for her to reveal personal aspects of her life that relate to literature she was exposed to in the classroom. Schoology also helped build a stronger connection between Ester and her peers after she relied on their online discussion posts as "mentor texts." For example, Ester disclosed she relied on peers' online discussion posts to understand topics discussed in class, which gave her extra "think time" to think about how to articulate her responses before sharing them with the entire class in the online discussion forum.

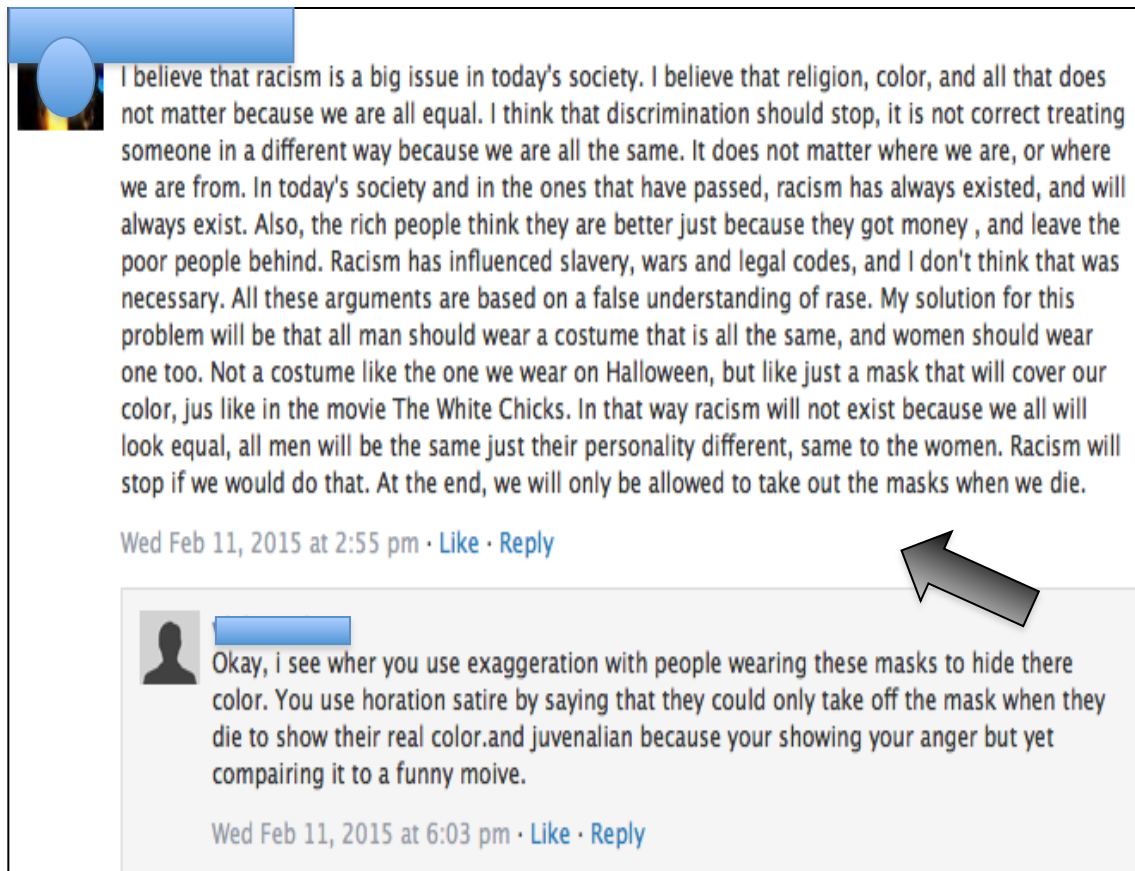


Figure 26. Ester's initial post and her peer's reply.

In Excerpt 3 below, Ester mentions not understanding Old English (line 3) therefore relies on her peers' comments (line 4) to get an idea of how to articulate her online responses. This is significant because a learner like Ester relies on her peers' posts to learn how to articulate her own ideas before sharing her own or posting in Schoology's online discussion forum. Strategies like the one performed by Ester could benefit other emerging ELLs or students with learning disabilities who enter mainstream classrooms because of agendas that promote inclusion.

Excerpt 3

(R: Researcher / E: Ester)

- 1 R: How does participating in online discussions help you understand
2 the literature better?
3 E: Like umm...most of the time I don't understand old English so by
4 reading others' comments that gives me an idea of what it was about.
5 R: Yeah...

(Ester, interview, 5-11-15)

In Excerpt 4 below, Ester once again explains that reading other peers' online posts first helps her think and allows her to prepare to write before she makes her response visible to her peers (lines 2-3). Similar to Ester's comments, Valentina expressed in both her email correspondences that "sometimes [she] did not have a clear image or idea about the discussions...[she] had to read the comments...then give [her] opinion about what the discussion was about." Comments that reflect how focal participants relied on their peers' posts for comprehension were found across all interview transcripts. Ester appreciates being part of a community of learners that values her input, and at the same time, because she relies on her peers' posts as "mentor texts" to make meaning of the online thread discussion's subject matter.

Excerpt 4

(R: Researcher / E: Ester)

- 1 R: Do you think Schoology has helped you learn?
2 E: Yeah but, like I said just by understanding...umm...like a
3 reading-reading their comments...umm...that have helped me.

(Ester, interview, 5-11-15)

In the end, the academic learning experiences provided to Ester behind the “digital curtain” allowed her a space and a way to pursue new and different ways of self-expression. Her viewpoints on racism were not only made public, parts of her individuality were also revealed to her peers, which also allowed her incorporation into an online community of practice. In turn, such practices support Ester’s language learning and augment her literacy repertoire.

Themes: Individuality and Disparity

Valentina: *“A woman is more than just a thing. The good thing is that now we see the difference”*

In Figure 27 below, Valentina makes an initial post in response to one of the four essential questions posed by the teacher to introduce The Restoration and 18th Century Era: 1) What can fix society’s problems?; 2) Can science tell us how to live?; 3) What topics are newsworthy?; and 4) What is a woman’s role in public life? Valentina chose to discuss Question 4 with a seven-sentence initial post. Her paragraph includes phrases such as “equality between a man and woman,” “woman are could be more than what a man is,” and “Being independence.” Valentina’s post sheds light on women’s roles during the Restoration and 18th Century Era and her understanding of these roles in today’s modern society. She describes women as “mentally” strong, but also says that men have “more [physical] strength.”

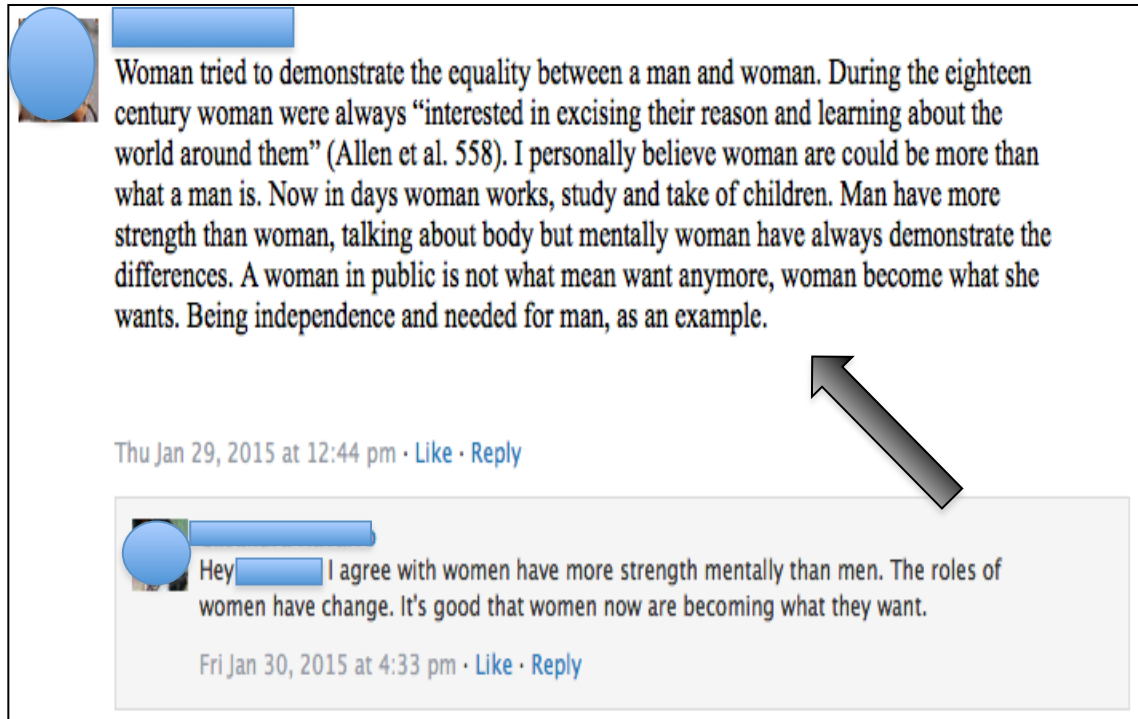


Figure 27. Valentina’s initial post to the question: What is a woman’s role in public life?

Similar to Ester’s comments about the inequalities that exist in modern day society in regards to color, religion, and class, Valentina also alludes to the notion of inequality that exists between genders. Valentina seems to be aware of the social issues that transpire presently in our society and is not reluctant to share her opinions about gender inequality. Another student, Cristina (pseudonym) replies to Valentina’s post, agrees with her, and offers her own opinions about how “women have change [*sic*]” and “now are becoming what they want.”

Figure 28 below shows peer Lunaitzel’s comments in response to the discussion thread on *Woman’s role in public life* and Figure 29 contains Valentina’s reply, that shows her comments on gender inequality. After Lunaitzel mentions that women of the Restoration and 18th Century “were interested in learning about the world around them but could not have a say in anything,” Valentina agrees with her peer and states: “The good thing is now

we see the differences.” Valentina’s comment implies that in today’s modern times, education is more attainable, especially for women.

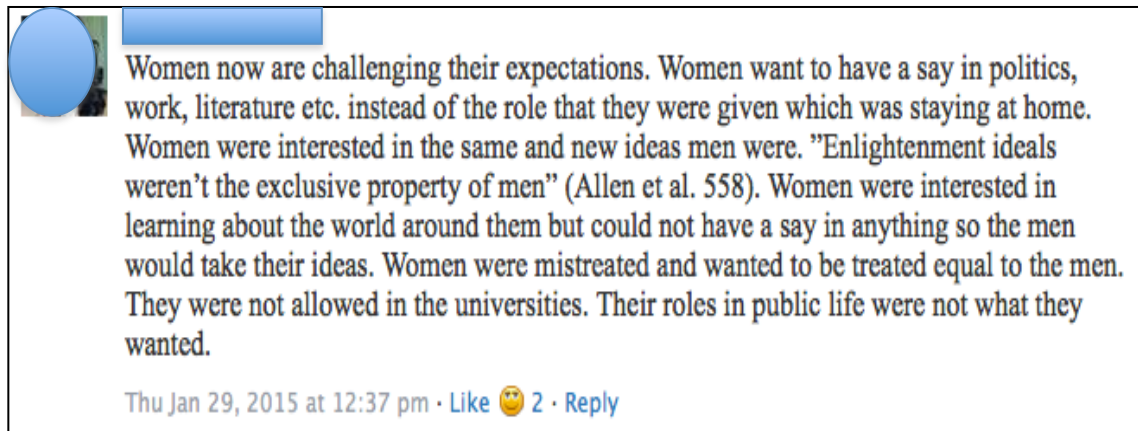


Figure 28. Peer Lunaitzel’s initial post to the question: What is a woman’s role in public life?

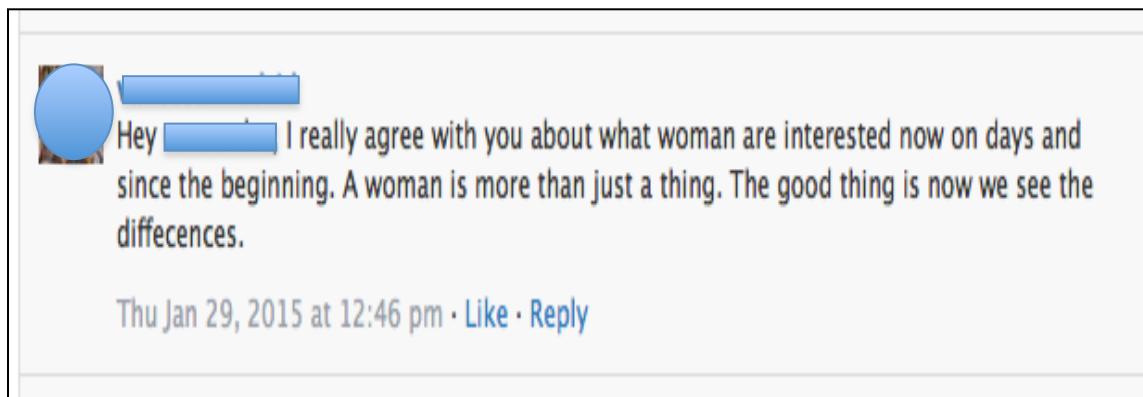


Figure 29. Valentina’s reply to her peer Lunaitzel’s post.

The exchange between Valentina and Lunaitzel highlights hooks’ (2010) idea that “[t]he individual women who broke through sexist boundaries were beacon lights. Every male and female who witnessed their advancement was taught via their presence that gender equality could happen” (p. 93). Valentina’s comment to her peer implies that in today’s world, it is possible for uneducated women to have access to an education and be “in the know” instead of hiding behind the shadows of a man, as history has demonstrated. Again, we see one adolescent reclassified ELL who uses an online platform to discuss a critical issue

(e.g. gender inequality) and illuminate her own personal beliefs. In addition, Valentina's exchange with her peer highlights the need for integrating an LMS like Schoology in secondary curricula. Through enough "think time," Valentina was able to formulate her opinions before sharing them with her peers in the online discussion forum. The idea of "think time" was noticed across all focal participants' online discussion exchanges. In the case of Valentina, her actions provide examples of how this particular LMS supports continuing learners of English, which allows them "think time" about specific topics before delivering coherent responses for others to view. Because Valentina's comments were well received and respected, she became part of an online community of practice, i.e. part of a mainstream-learning environment. Her input was valued and her contributions added to critical online discussions in an online space that fostered inclusivity, which is significant for learners like Valentina and the other focal participants.

Themes: Individuality and Harmony

Rosalba: *"I just think this whole world is rare in so many ways"*

Ester, Valentina, and Rosalba mentioned concerns with individuality and harmony in their initial posts and in their replies to other peers after they responded to the question, Where do we find peace? In her post (see Figure 30 below), Rosalba reveals her appreciation of music and discloses listening to music as a form of finding peace. Rosalba agrees that some individuals find peace in concrete places like "on top of a hill on a mountain...The beach." However, Rosalba discloses that while she listens to music she allows her mind to "wonder" and question the meaning of earth's place in this universe. She also mentions: "Each brain is a different world and we think differently." Rosalba's comments suggest she is an inquisitive individual who likes to ask questions frequently and recognizes that not all people will think and do the same as she does to find peace.

In response, her peer Indira (pseudonym) replies to Rosalba's initial post and mentions she relies on music to find peace and relax as well. This is another example of connections being constructed between focal participants and their peers in the online space of Schoology.

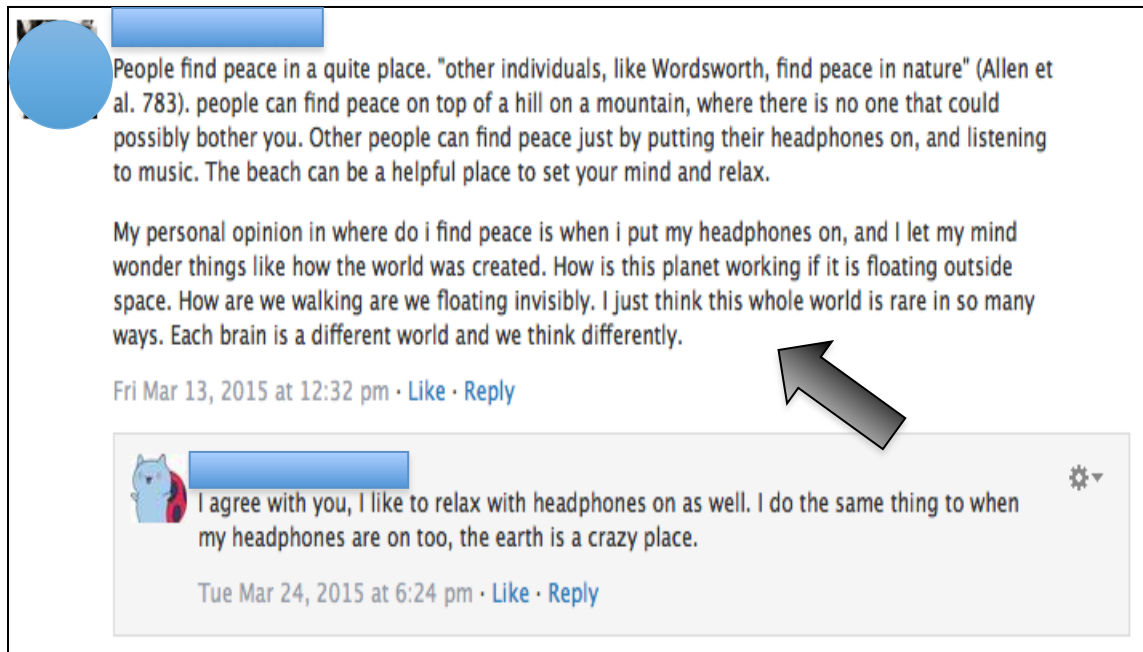


Figure 30. Rosalba's initial post to the question: Where do you find peace?

As mentioned in Chapter 4, focal participants and their teachers used email as a platform to communicate when outside the confines of the traditional classroom setting. For instance, email exchanges revealed how occurrences of teaching and learning were co-created by both teacher and student. In this case, focal participants and peers also co-created scenarios that enhanced learning (i.e., through the sharing of personal experiences in Schoology's online discussion forum). Nonetheless, Rosalba's comments made to her peers suggest that an LMS that offers a space to collaborate with others can help uncover the viewpoints and beliefs of other students in regards to topics related to literature, which benefits second language learners.

In the screenshot below (Figure 31), Rosalba reads and replies to peer Sonia's (pseudonym) initial post about *finding peace*. Rosalba agrees with Sonia, i.e. peace as an abstract idea. However, Rosalba disagrees with Sonia and states that an individual does not easily control his or her dreams.

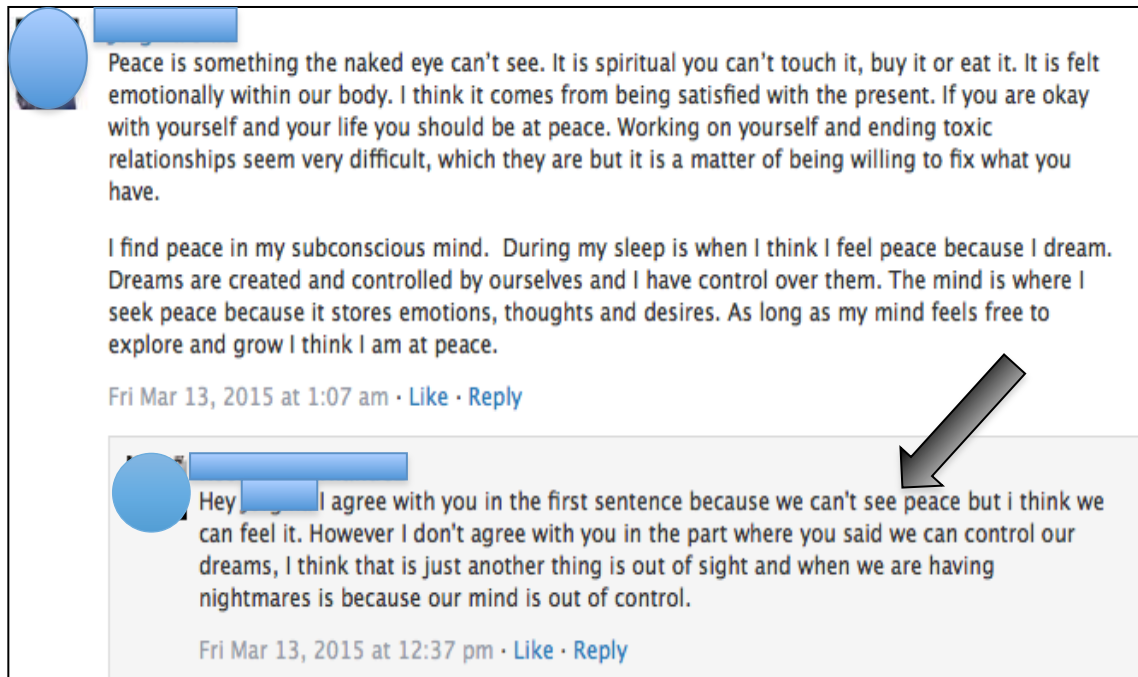


Figure 31. Rosalba's reply to her peer Sonia's post.

This exchange between Rosalba and Sonia proves that a continuing learner of English is capable of maintaining an academic discussion despite disagreements and language barriers in the online space of Schoology. Rosalba's use of "I agree" and "However I don't agree with you" illustrate her knowledge of proper "academic talk" that positioned her as an empowered individual; her statements were considered and valued. For example, Excerpt 5 below is Rosalba's response after I asked her about what she liked about having traditional classroom activities in addition to Schoology. Lines 1-2 suggest Rosalba prefers discussing topics in Schoology instead of discussing them in more conventional ways (i.e. face-to-face).

Line 3 suggests she prefers to quickly “read” a peer’s post and “ask him” or inquire about his or her post only if she finds it necessary to do so.

Excerpt 5

- 1 It was fun and interesting because you don’t have to be with
- 2 another student to be talking about the topic. You just need to read the
- 3 question and ask him if it was right or something.

(Rosalba, interview, 5-15-15)

Rosalba seems determined to use Schoology as a “cyber-bridge” between her and her peers after she stated, “If he wants to ask me something about what I put in his post, he can umm...he can ask me via Schoology and I will let him know if I can talk to him.” In email correspondence three, Rosalba disclosed that the hardest part of being in Mr. Hilaria’s class was “to pair up with people she did not know” and “was not very comfortable talking with them face to face.” Comments made by Rosalba suggest that she continues to favor communication with her peers via Schoology instead of having face-to-face conversations to discuss literature related topics, which emphasizes the notion of relying on the “digital curtain” as discussed in previous sections.

During interview two, Rosalba offered her overall opinion about Schoology. Again, she preferred online discussions instead of face-to-face interactions. Excerpt 6 below implies the idea of “freedom of expression” as a way to describe the acknowledgment of individuals’ opinions in online discussions (lines 4-6). Through acknowledgment, peers create an inclusive atmosphere, which is highly meaningful for continuing learners of English like Rosalba and the other focal participants. Because focal participants in this study are labeled as “mainstream” and “reclassified” students, their inclusion to the new context, i.e. mainstream curriculum, is essential. In this case, Rosalba’s contributions made during online

discussions provides a “sense of belonging” within a community of learners and promotes her identity as a mainstream student who can persevere despite having emergent English writing and speaking skills.

Excerpt 6

(Rr: Researcher / R: Rosalba)

- 1 Rr: What is your opinion of Schoology, overall?
- 2 R: To say what you can't say face-to-face.
- 3 Rr: Okay. So you're allowed to say the things that you really want to say?
- 4 R: You're more positive and open
- 5 Rr: More open? What does that mean?
- 6 R: Like you...you have the freedom to speak.

(Rosalba, interview, 5-15-15)

Found in Rosalba's last email correspondence (see Excerpt 7 below), were critical comments about favoring online discussions instead of face-to-face interactions. Excerpt 7 below holds significance because after she had disclosed her favoritism of online discussions over face-to-face interactions in previous examples, Rosalba came to appreciate online discussions as a mode (lines 1-2) that boosted her self-confidence and encouraged her to speak in front of others. The excerpt illustrates how a shy student like Rosalba was able to engage in face-to-face interactions (lines 1-2) with her peers after having had the opportunity to discuss topics behind the “digital curtain” the LMS provided. Additionally, Rosalba stated that she “learned how to type faster and better” and her “writing skills improved” (lines 3-4), which sheds light on the potential an LMS like Schoology has in the language learning and literacy repertoires of current and former ELLs.

Excerpt 7

1 Schoology did help me in my language development because thanks to this
2 method I was more open in face to face conversations it did not matter if I
3 got nervous or shy talking straight. I learned how to type faster and better.
4 My writing skills improved to better now I know more things that I did not
5 when it was my first time using Schoology.

(Rosalba, email correspondence, 5-30-15)

In the end, despite her views about technology, Rosalba did, in fact, utilize a variety of technologies as support systems to support her language learning and gained self-confidence during the process. As mentioned in an excerpt about her views about social media in previous sections, Rosalba was cautious about facets of her identity being exposed to her peers. Perhaps she favored Schoology's discussion forum because the platform served as a "digital curtain" she could stand behind while interacting with her peers. In Excerpt 6 above, Rosalba reveals she is thankful for being given the opportunity to interact in online spaces like Schoology because now she is "more open in face to face conversations" (line 2) and "it [does] not matter if [she gets] nervous or shy" (lines 2-3) when engaged in face-to-face interactions. Rosalba's comments uncover her transformation after having engaged in a number of online discussions, which she states helped boost her self-confidence and allowed her to express her opinions in front of others more freely. Moreover, Rosalba's comments alluded to her no longer relying on the "digital curtain" she stood behind as she engaged in Schoology's discussion forum. Overall, the LMS Schoology arranged for an inclusive atmosphere for learning, which was highly beneficial for continuing learners of English like Rosalba and the other focal participants of this study.

Valentina: *“The field always lets you be the person you want to show and that’s the most comfortable and the most peaceful thing”*

Contrary to Rosalba, Valentina revealed that she finds peace when playing softball (See Figure 32 below). Additionally, Valentina said that “Personality” is a place to find peace because “The field [sic] always let you be the person you want to show and that’s the most comfortable and most peaceful thing.” According to Valentina, an individual who is athletically inclined could be liberated mentally and find relaxation while engaging in any type of sport.

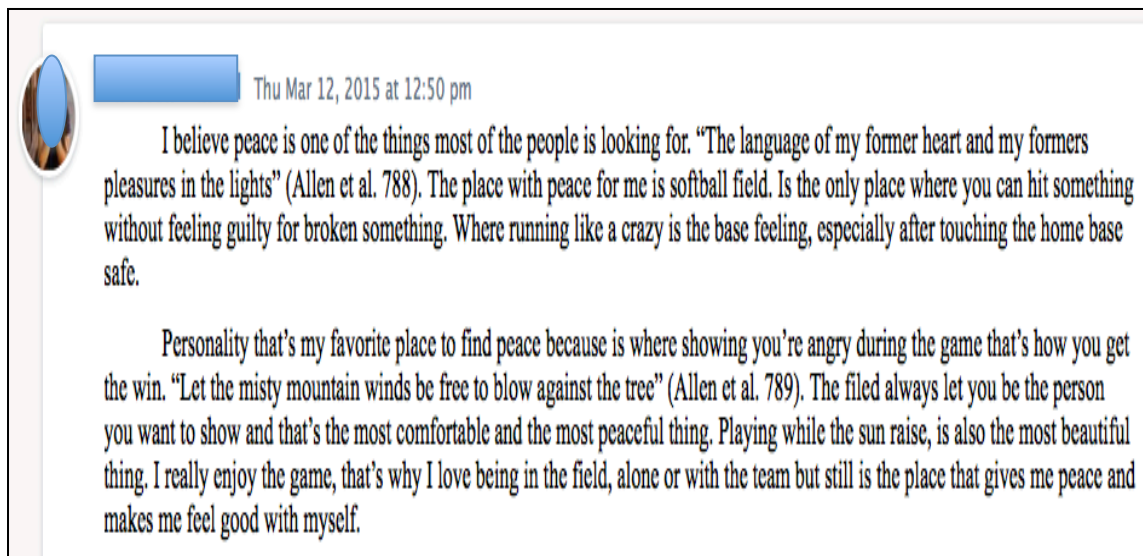


Figure 32. Valentina’s initial post to the question: Where do you find peace?

In Figure 33 below, peer Adarik (pseudonym) affirmed the idea of playing a sport as a form of relieving stress that can be beneficial. Adarik offered Valentina advice about what to do when feeling stressed or angry—“leave it all on the mat” (i.e. one needs to rely on physical activities such as sports to mitigate negative moods.) The exchange between Valentina and Adarik again demonstrates the significance of peer-to-peer communication that was noted after I examined all online discussions. Valentina not only applied her language, communication, and digital skills to engage in discussion with one of her peers, she

became a member of a mainstream community of practice that valued and respected her input.

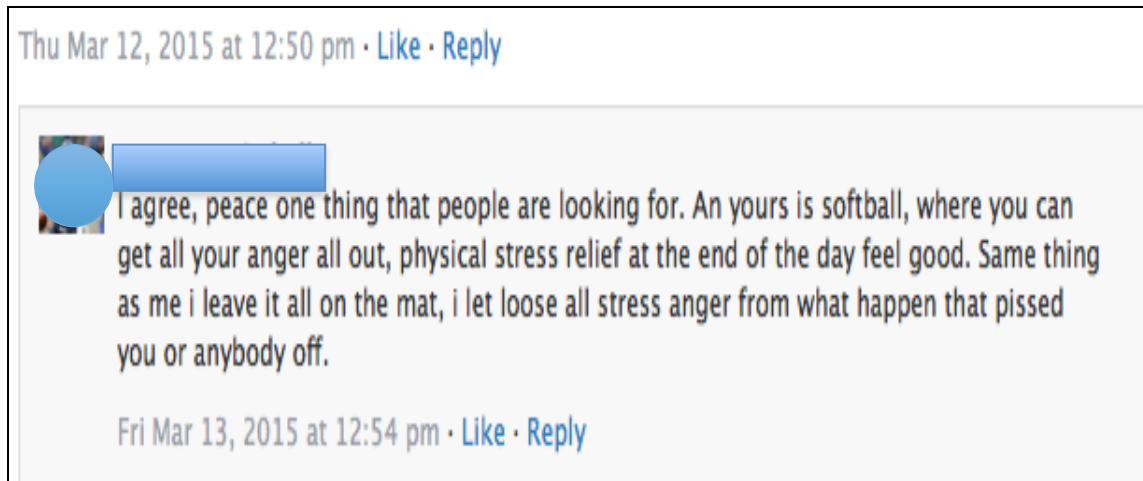


Figure 33. Peer Adarik’s reply to Valentina’s post.

In the following example screenshots, Valentina replied to her peer Julio (See Figures 34 & 35 below) in regards to the question, Where do we find peace? Her comments imply that Julio has not found a place that he can define as peaceful: “maybe you haven’t found that place at all.” Valentina, who agreed with Julio, offered words of inspiration and reminded him that when one finds a place deemed as peaceful, it is a place “where you can feel yourself and feel free.” Again, we see the interaction between a focal participant and her peer. Valentina continues to participate in a community of practice that values the contributions of all students. Valentina also performs an identity as a mainstream student who is capable of participating in an online discussion with her peers who are deemed as “mainstream.”

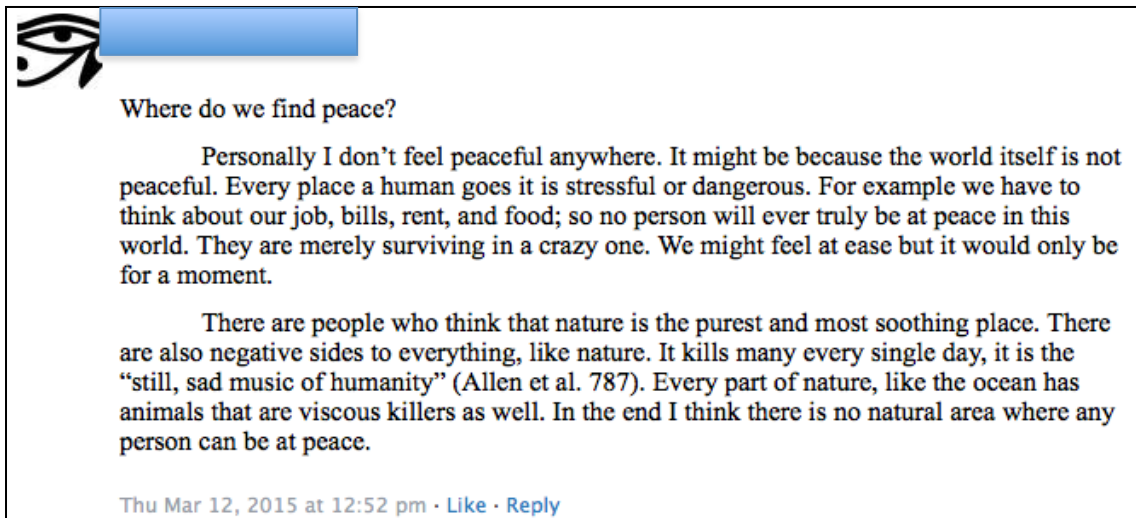


Figure 34. Peer Julio's initial post to the question: Where do you find peace?

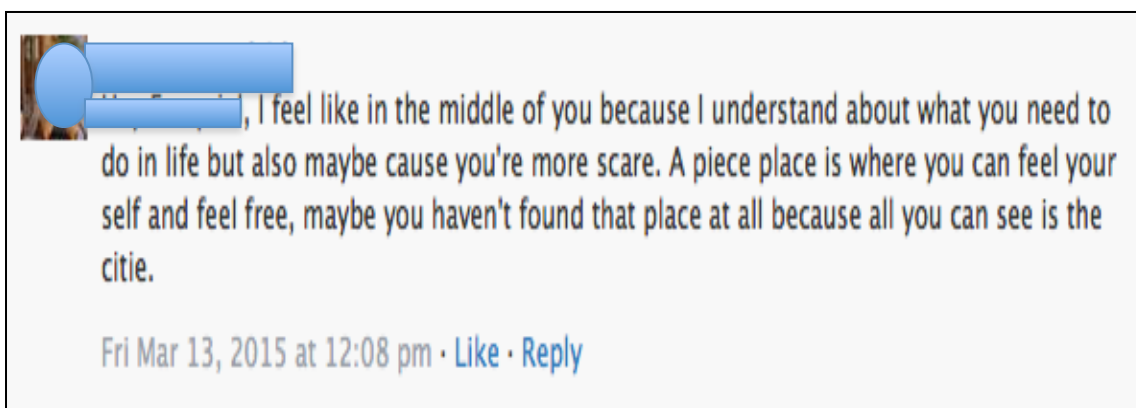


Figure 35. Valentina's reply to her peer Julio's post.

Ester: *"If everything was good, no kidnapping, not killing people, we could all have peace"*

In Figure 36 below, Ester expressed her opinions about *where to find peace* and had a discussion with her peer Micaela (pseudonym) by providing a counter response. First, in her two-paragraph initial post, Ester used a combination of 16 simple, compound, and complex sentences. Compared to her other two online posts, this was the longest. This is significant because focal participants were able and willing to write substantial and more complex pieces of writing. Such practices fostered second language learning and second language literacy practices. Second, a significant observation within Ester's post is the indication of injustices

and violence that occurs throughout the world, especially in her home country—Mexico. Ester provided an example to support her ideas by stating: “For example, in Mexico so much people have been kidnapped, many people have been found death [*sic*]. So many things have been happening and that is why peace is so much needed.” Ester’s comment about the violence occurring in Mexico unearths her personal attitudes and feelings about the atrocities that occur daily.

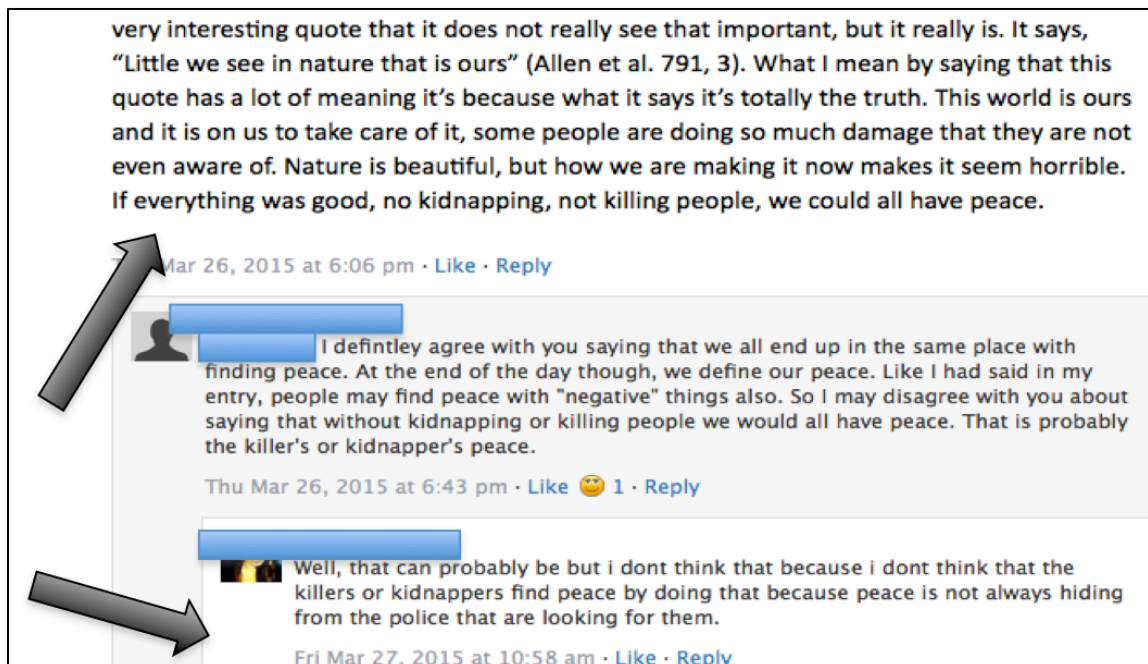


Figure 36. Ester’s initial post to the question: Where do you find peace? and the interaction with her peer Micaela.

Perhaps, for Ester, a place where one can find peace is a place where one can live in an environment free of violence or a place that is free of pain and suffering. And third, there was evidence of Ester making a counter response to her peer’s first reply, which I only observed occurred once after examining all focal participants’ posts and replies. Moreover, focal participants had opportunities to substantiate their views, debate different perspectives, and support their opinions about a variety of topics through the asynchronous nature of Schoology’s online discussion forum.

Micaela respectfully disagreed with Ester when she stated, “So I may disagree with you about saying that without kidnapping or killing people we would all have peace. That is probably the killer’s or kidnapper’s peace.” Ester took this as an opportunity to engage in academic disagreement and began to make a case to defend her stance. Ester also applied the recommended response format suggested by her teacher, i.e. she followed protocol when responding to her peers by using phrases such as “I agree” or “I disagree with you...” in order to have an appropriate, academic discussion. In this illustration, I noticed Ester engaged in a passionate discussion about the ugliness that affects the Mexican people. Ester had strong opinions specifically about violence perhaps because she has family who continue to reside in the country of Mexico, which makes this topic closely relevant and personal to her own life.

The exchange between Ester and her peer Micaela shows how both co-created a learning experience because in the LMS’s digital platform, focal participant Ester applied her digital and communication skills to participate in a discussion with one of her peers, and in turn, her peer learned about conditions in a neighboring country. Through a sociocultural lens, I argue that Ester’s discussion with her peer is authenticated after Ester provides an example of Mexico’s current conditions (i.e. constant violence and kidnappings), which is a situation that is created by Ester to support her peer’s understanding of the current conditions that others experience in other parts of the world.

In Figure 37 below, one of Ester’s peers—Dora (pseudonym)—also narrated the idea of *finding peace* in her initial post. Her post expresses her opinions about where to find peace and includes cited information from one of William Wordsworth’s poems to support her ideas. The proceeding screenshot (Figure 38) exhibits Ester’s reply to her peer Dora’s initial post (Figure 37).

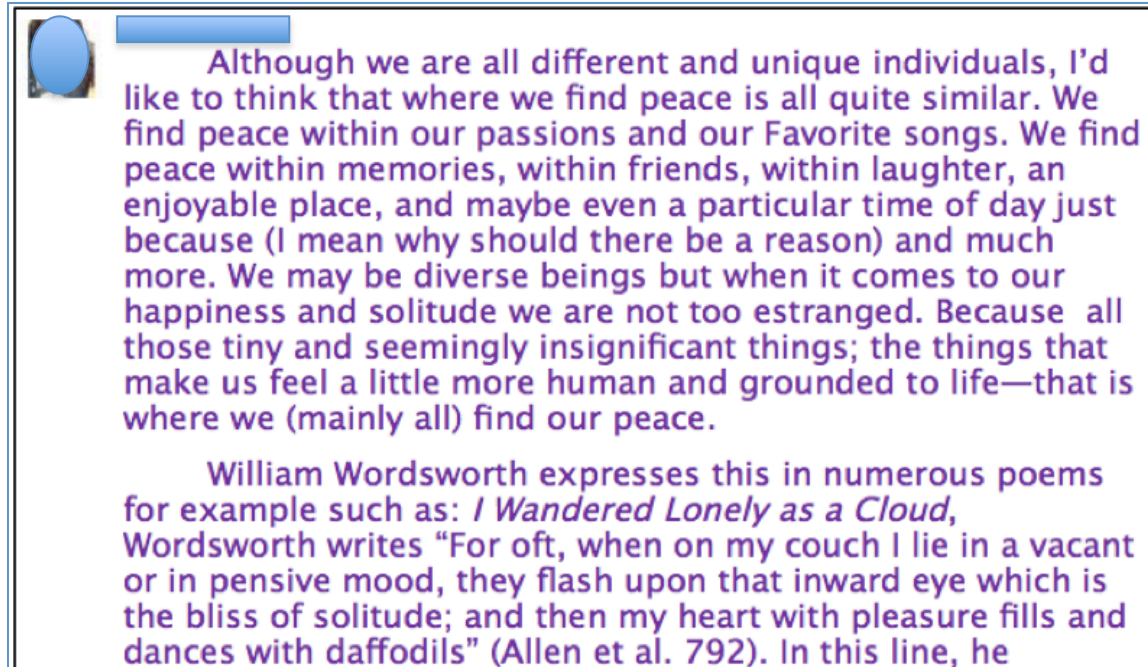


Figure 37. Peer Dora’s initial post to the question: Where do you find peace?

In Figure 38 below, Ester replies to Dora’s post (Figure 37 above) in a particular manner. I noticed Ester’s use of the persuasive technique parallelism as way to emphasize her ideas: “we are all humans [*sic*], we all live in one world, and we all have feelings. We can find peace...” Ester’s technique highlights her prior writing skills knowledge. Additionally, her application of acquired writing skills reflects the transfer of learned persuasive and argumentative strategies to her senior English class without being prompted to do so. Likewise, Ester’s literacy practices are significant because she is applying what she has learned in prior language arts courses to a complex piece of writing like the senior research paper.

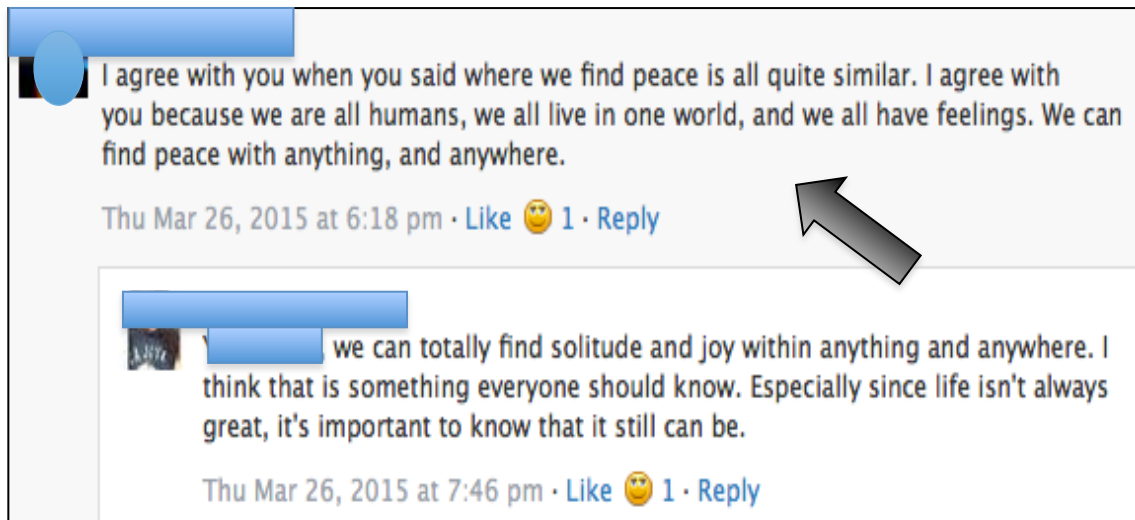


Figure 38. Ester’s reply to her peer Dora’s post and continued interaction.

As mentioned in a prior section, Ester explains that reading her classmates’ online posts first helps her think about what and how to write before she is ready to type her response and made it visible to her peers (e.g. “reading their comments...umm...that have helped me.”) Similar to Ester’s comments, participant Valentina expressed in both her email correspondences two and three that “sometimes [she] did not have a clear image or idea about the discussions...[she] had to read the comments...then give [her] opinion about what the discussion was about.” Both Ester’s and Valentina’s comments about how they rely on their peers’ posts as “mentor texts” for comprehension were found across all focal participants’ interview transcripts. In the end, Ester appreciates being part of a community of learners because she relies on her peers’ posts as “mentor texts” to further advance her literacy repertoire.

Themes: Individuality and Education

Miguel: *“I think people would be lost without technology [sic]”*

In Figure 39 below, Miguel takes a diplomatic stance against believers and non-believers of science. He states, “To me I would not mind to hear them out it would be nice

to see what they have to say.” Miguel brought up the current controversy that surrounds the scientific and political fields. However, he does believe that people make their own choices in life: “people are their own persons.”

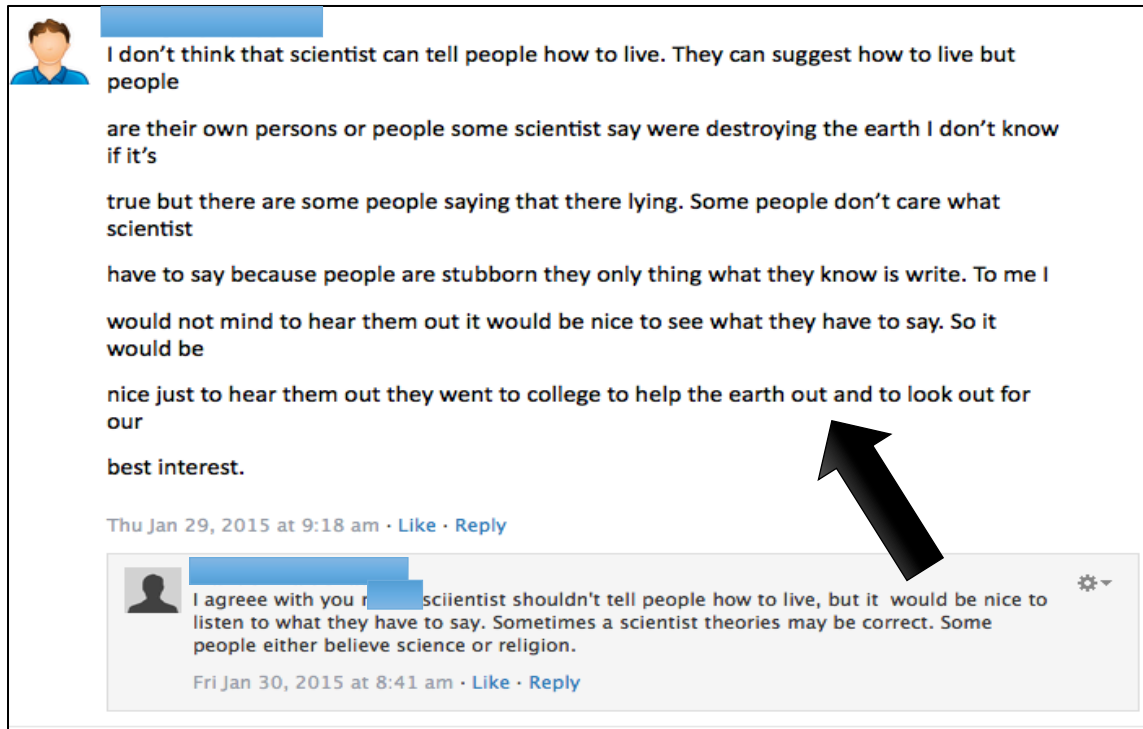


Figure 39. Miguel’s initial post to the question: Should science tell you how you live?

Miguel’s comments are quite interesting because here we see how he imagines different audiences for his text. Also, Miguel emphasized the importance of having an education after he stated, “they went to college to help the earth and to look out for our best interest.” Miguel’s comments are striking because they provide insight about his level of awareness in regards to controversial topics such as claims about climate change or the constant back and forth debate between “stubborn” vs. “non-stubborn” individuals in both scientific and political arenas. Miguel’s peer, Diego (pseudonym), brought up “scientific theories” as sometimes being correct and also mentioned that “[s]ome people either believe science or religion.” The exchange in Figure 39 exhibits the interaction between a focal

participant who struggles with writing and his peer who is deemed “mainstream.” The exchange is significant because Miguel provides input and it is valued by one of his peers thus positioning Miguel as a contributor of an important discussion within the context of a mainstream environment.

In Figure 40 below, Miguel replied to peer Tony’s (pseudonym) post about how society’s problems could be fixed. In his last two sentences, peer Tony stated, “Society now is just based on technology making the human race lack in intelligence...” Miguel replied and agreed with Tony “100 percent” and also used all capital letters to emphasize the idea of technology governing human life: “I THINK PEOPLE WOULD BE LOST WITH OUT TEECHNOLOSY” [*sic*].

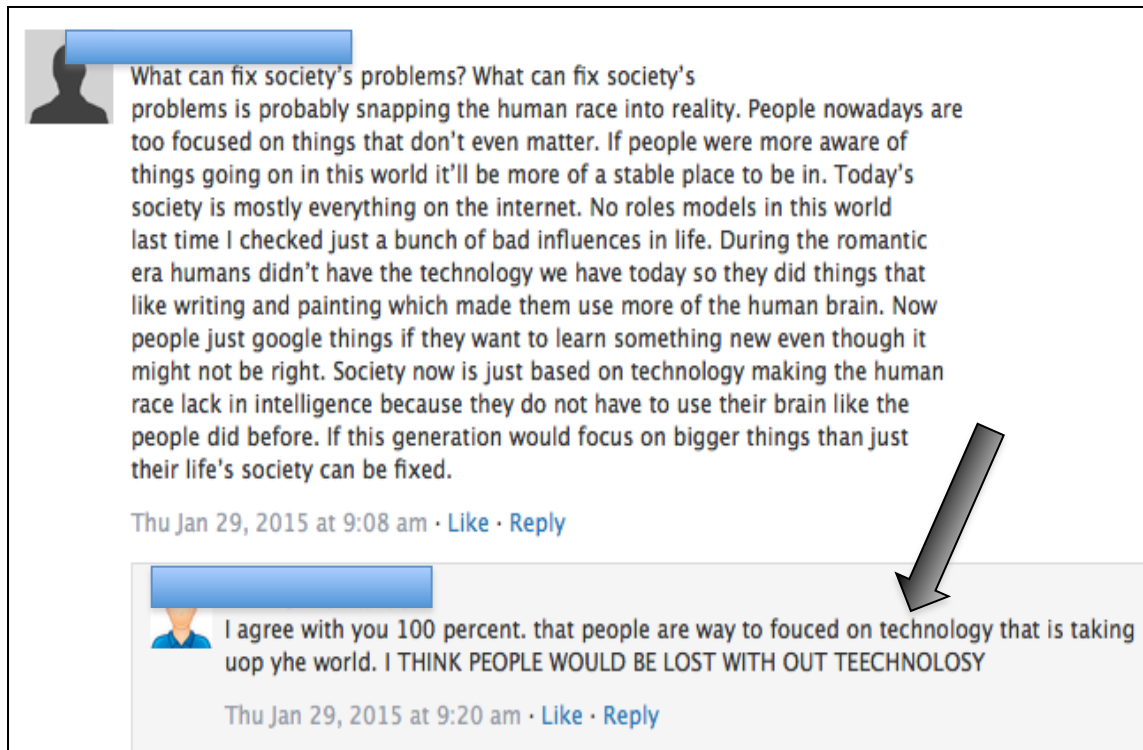


Figure 40. Peer Tony’s initial post to the question: What can fix society’s problems? and Miguel’s reply.

Miguel's response to his peer illustrated his personal attitude towards technology. He is well aware that technology is part of his daily life and recognizes that his life would be different without digital gadgets/technologies, i.e., laptop, cell phone, or access to the Internet. The exchange between Miguel and Tony is significant because Miguel stresses the idea of today's digitally driven society and alludes to what can happen ("people would be lost") if technology was not available. In the end, Miguel was able to be part of a community of practice that valued his opinions and allowed him to perform aspects of his identity as an individual who is aware of a variety of issues. E.g., the continuous debate between science and religion. Miguel also demonstrated his role as a "mainstream" student by engaging in online discussions inside the confines of the LMS by applying his language and communication skills to discussions and with others who are deemed proficient in English. Like all other focal participants, Miguel also found the value in the LMS's online discussion forum; he recognized the online space as a venue that allowed him to contribute his own perspectives, as well as, acknowledged how his peers appreciated his contributions.

Summary

In this chapter, I examined the digital interactions that occurred between peers through peer-review activities and their participation in Schoology's discussion forum. The analysis of data showcased in this chapter indicates that participants often provided useful feedback to their peers and contributed their perspectives in Schoology's online forum. As discussed in Chapter 4, focal participants continued to learn even though many of the conventions of the traditional classroom setting were absent, in part because expected teaching and learning routines were still present. As participants exercised the role of peer as "mentor," they provided fitting feedback after they engaged in peer editing activities.

Although participants faced challenges because of their language barrier, they demonstrated

resilience and effort as they participated in mainstream learning activities. With the affordances of digital tools and Schoology's online discussion forum, focal participants were able to further improve communication and writing skills and be included in an academic community of practice. For example, focal participants were able to provide input about a variety of critical issues by replying to their peers in Schoology's discussion forum. Also, focal participants were able to tap the digital editing tools available in Microsoft Word and Schoology to make revisions to their writing assignments. These practices were important for focal participants because through these practices and the asynchronous nature of Schoology, they were able to continue the learning and revision process outside the confines of the traditional classroom.

Three major themes in regards to peer-to-peer communication that promoted literacy practices amongst reclassified ELLs emerged during a sixteen-week period. First, participant feedback offered through Microsoft Word's track changes tool revealed their prior writing skills knowledge and instances of empowerment. Focal participants provided feedback that encouraged literacy repertoires for both the focal participant and chosen peer. Reclassified ELLs became empowered individuals who exercised autonomy by taking the role of "mentor." With limited guidance from teachers, focal participants revealed their application of digital and traditional literacies. Second, individual identity construction was evident after focal participants took on the role of "mentor" while capitalizing on the knowledge they had gained in former language arts classes. Because I-identities were assigned, i.e., reclassified ELL, by the academic institution, focal participants took upon the official role defined by district personnel governing the language acquisition program at Winterfell. Focal participants were able to represent themselves as both reclassified ELLs

and mainstream students who were able to engage in complex activities offered by a mainstream curriculum.

Peer review activities allowed focal participants to provide valuable feedback to their peers. Track changes entries and comments made by focal participants to their peers illustrated how they were invested and had a sense of control of how to “mentor” their peers during the peer-editing process and awareness of the writing process. With limited guidance from teachers, focal participants brought to the forefront their digital and traditional literacies skill level.

Focal participant experiences in this study exemplify the ways that identity and apprenticeship into a community of practice emphasizes the relationship between identity construction and literacy repertoires. Focal participants’ input was valued and respected by their peers, which represented an environment that fostered inclusivity. Further, relying on communities of practice and identity frameworks, I examined focal participants’ online discussions as they engaged in online discussions with their peers. Schoology’s online discussion forum served as a platform for focal participants to perform certain identities. Additionally, the online discussion space encouraged focal participants to be contributors of a learning community, which promoted inclusivity for all students. Identities as mainstream students were solidified amongst focal participants since they made academic contributions to their peers through digital practices, which displayed a wide range of digital knowledges between focal participants.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

In this study, I attempted to develop an understanding of traditional and digital practices that promote language learning and literacy practices of reclassified ELLs who participate in a mainstream twelfth-grade English classroom that integrated the LMS Schoology. During the initial stages of data collection, I documented focal participants' opinions about Schoology and its integration in the classroom. I focused on their use of Schoology and its features that facilitated their language learning, literacy repertoires, and overall academic achievement. Conversely, I studied how traditional and digital literacy practices encouraged the participation of focal participants in the online community of Schoology and their progression to complete a multi-page research paper during the spring semester. The current study enriched my understanding of second language learning and the integration of LMSs in secondary classrooms. I was able to understand how focal participants navigated the online space of Schoology, mediated their learning as they completed a substantially large and complex writing task, and substantiated their perspectives as they participated the online community of practice that fostered inclusivity.

My research questions addressed reclassified or exited ELLs' participation in a mainstream senior English classroom that integrated Schoology as an online educational tool. I designed my research questions that focused on focal participants' utilization of Schoology features and application of their literacy practices as they engaged in the online space of Schoology. My research questions also focused on learning about focal participants' views about their participation in Schoology in relation to their language learning, literacy practices, and academic achievement. Through participant observation, interviews, and document collection, I analyzed how focal participants used and navigated the online space

of Schoology, communicated with their teachers through email and Schoology's feedback section, and communicated with their peers through peer review activities and online discussions. I was able to examine how focal participants appropriated both their traditional and digital literacies in ways that encouraged them to perform aspects of their identities and contribute to their agency. My analysis of data generated five sets of findings, which I review and synthesize in the following sections.

The first main finding of this study is that focal participants contributed to their agency and performed aspects of their identities through the digital communication (email) that occurred between focal participants and their teachers. I found that focal participants not only engaged in digital and communication practices that facilitated language learning, they also participated in practices that allowed them to display certain aspects of their identities that contributed to their agency. Focal participants relied on two digital modes—email and Schoology's feedback feature—to communicate with their teachers. Not only did focal participants apply their communication skills as they inquired about the senior research paper and revision process, they also applied their digital skills as well. For example, Valentina often used email as a digital communicative mode to provide explanations, inquire about a variety of subject matters, and receive teacher feedback and comments in regards to her writing assignments. Through online communication with her teacher, Valentina self-advocated, which contributed to her agency. In addition to providing feedback through email, Mrs. Bolton also offered comments to Josue through Schoology's feedback feature to discuss matters that pertained to his writing. Even though Josue did not frequently respond to Mrs. Bolton's emails, I noticed that he was a student who acknowledged his teacher's comments and continued to learn by making revisions to his writing. These practices were an extension on what was occurring in person during class time. Moreover, digital

communication that occurred inside the LMS and email allowed focal participants to continue learning even when outside of the traditional learning setting. By examining their local situated practices to understand how focal participants use these digital tools, I found that with support from their teachers and access to digital tools, focal participants mediated learning to improve their traditional and digital literacies. This approach aided focal participants to enrich their literacy and language learning repertoires, which contributed to their academic achievement in senior English class.

The second major finding is how focal participants and their teachers co-constructed teaching and learning situations during digital communication, which I present through email exchanges. For example, Mrs. Bolton provided lengthy emails to Josue to provide direct instruction, and during class, I observed how Mrs. Bolton and Josue engaged in a long conversation about how to format one of his essays. Other focal participants were able to communicate their concerns and inquire about subject matters concerning the senior research paper via email exchanges and electronic communication in Schoology as well. For instance, Valentina and Rosalba used email to ask their teacher, Mr. Hilaria, questions that pertained to research and revisions. In other words, there was no need for Valentina and Rosalba to wait and speak to Mr. Hilaria in person to ask him questions. Mr. Hilaria would in turn reply by offering his support through detailed responses. Nonetheless, students and teachers co-constructed learning and teaching scenarios in ways that advanced students' learning through email exchanges. The development of agency and exercised self-efficacy were evident after examining all focal participant and teacher email exchanges, which suggests that reclassified ELLs are resilient, motivated, and productive if the necessary components are in place, i.e. teacher support and access to technology—both in and out of school.

The third main finding is that focal participants and teachers found value in face-to-face interactions to accelerate learning in addition to the learning processes that occurred within Schoology's platform. Focal participants regarded the support they received from their teachers both in online spaces and during face-to-face interactions. For example, Ester favored email as an electronic method to inform Ms. Lannister that she had completed and uploaded certain essays on Schoology. Ms. Lannister acknowledged Ester's emails and encouraged her to see her in person to discuss the issues with her writing. Email exchanges that transpired between focal participants and their teachers demonstrated the value of face-to-face interactions in addition to the learning that occurred in the traditional classroom setting.

The fourth finding described how focal participants performed the role of the peer as "mentor" and how they positioned themselves as empowered learners as they engaged in peer review activities. Screenshots revealed how focal participants utilized the digital track changes tool to deliver valuable feedback to their peers and also exhibited focal participants' writing skills prior knowledge and digital abilities. Also evident were instances of individual identity construction amongst focal participants after they took on the role of "mainstream student" while capitalizing on the knowledge they gained as former ELL students. For example, Valentina positioned herself as a knowledgeable member of a community of learners after she offered her advice to her peers during peer-review activities. Valentina demonstrated her writing skills prior knowledge and exhibited self-confidence after she interacted with her peers in a mainstream (traditional and online) environment. In these ways, students like Valentina contributed to their language and literacy repertoires in and through peer-review activities. These practices created a space for her and the other focal participants to demonstrate their acquired language knowledge and abilities to act as

“mentors” with their peers. Because the academic institution assigned I-identities (Gee, 2000), Valentina, Rosalba, and Ester took upon the official role defined by the language acquisition program at Winterfell as “mainstream students” as noticed when I examined their engagement with the digital communication tools available. However, both Josue and Miguel took a less specific role within the confines of Schoology and email. For example, Josue and Miguel used email to communicate with their teachers less frequently. Instead, I noticed that on a number of occasions, Miguel requested the support of Winterfell’s ELD aide. I also noticed that Josue interacted with Mrs. Bolton during classroom observations, and on two occasions, he came to my classroom to ask me to clarify the requirements of future assignments that were assigned in senior English. All focal participants were able to represent themselves as both reclassified ELLs and mainstream students who were able to engage with complex material offered by the mainstream curriculum, engage in digital communicative exchanges with their teachers, and participate in Schoology’s online discussion forum despite their struggles with the language and complexities brought forth by the mainstream curriculum. By examining how focal participants provided feedback to each other, I found that they integrated themselves into a mainstream community of learners while employing their traditional and digital literacies in the online space of Schoology.

The fifth and final finding of this study described how focal participants revealed aspects of their identities when their peers encouraged their participation in an online community of practice during peer-review sessions and online discussions. For instance, peer-review activities allowed focal participants to provide valuable feedback to their peers thus positioning themselves as competent learners. For instance, during one peer review activity, Josue offered his support to one of his peers by providing digital feedback that was meant to enhance his essay. Peer-review activities allowed Josue to prove himself as an

empowered learner and “mentor” as well. Further, in this particular community of practice, focal participants were able and willing to evaluate their peers’ writing. These particular situations can be described as evolving and dynamic because focal participants are developing capacities by engaging in digital and traditional literacy practices. During their participation in Schoology’s online discussion forum, Miguel and Ester revealed aspects of their identities. At one point, Ester was able to uncover her attitudes about the reoccurring violence perpetrated by drug cartels in Mexico while Miguel exposed his opinions about our reliance on technology. Nonetheless, in Schoology’s discussion forum, focal participants had opportunities to substantiate their views, debate different perspectives, and support their opinions with a variety of topics through the LMS’s asynchronous nature.

Figure 41 below captures my study’s major findings. This visual representation suggests that focal participants’ communication with their peers, teachers, and interactions with and application of their digital practices in online spaces work together as “gears in motion” to produce the outcome of language learning in the mainstream context. I argue that focal participants not only learned by commissioning digital technologies (e.g., the LMS Schoology, email, or the simple use of a laptop) and applying their digital literacies, but also by interacting with their teachers to co-construct teaching and learning scenarios in both email and Schoology’s feedback feature and the interactions that occurred between focal participants and their peers during peer review activities and online discussions. In the end, this visual representation illustrates “gears in motion” as a way to focus attention to how co-construction was found everywhere and how focal participants’ identities were in fact socially mediated in the process.

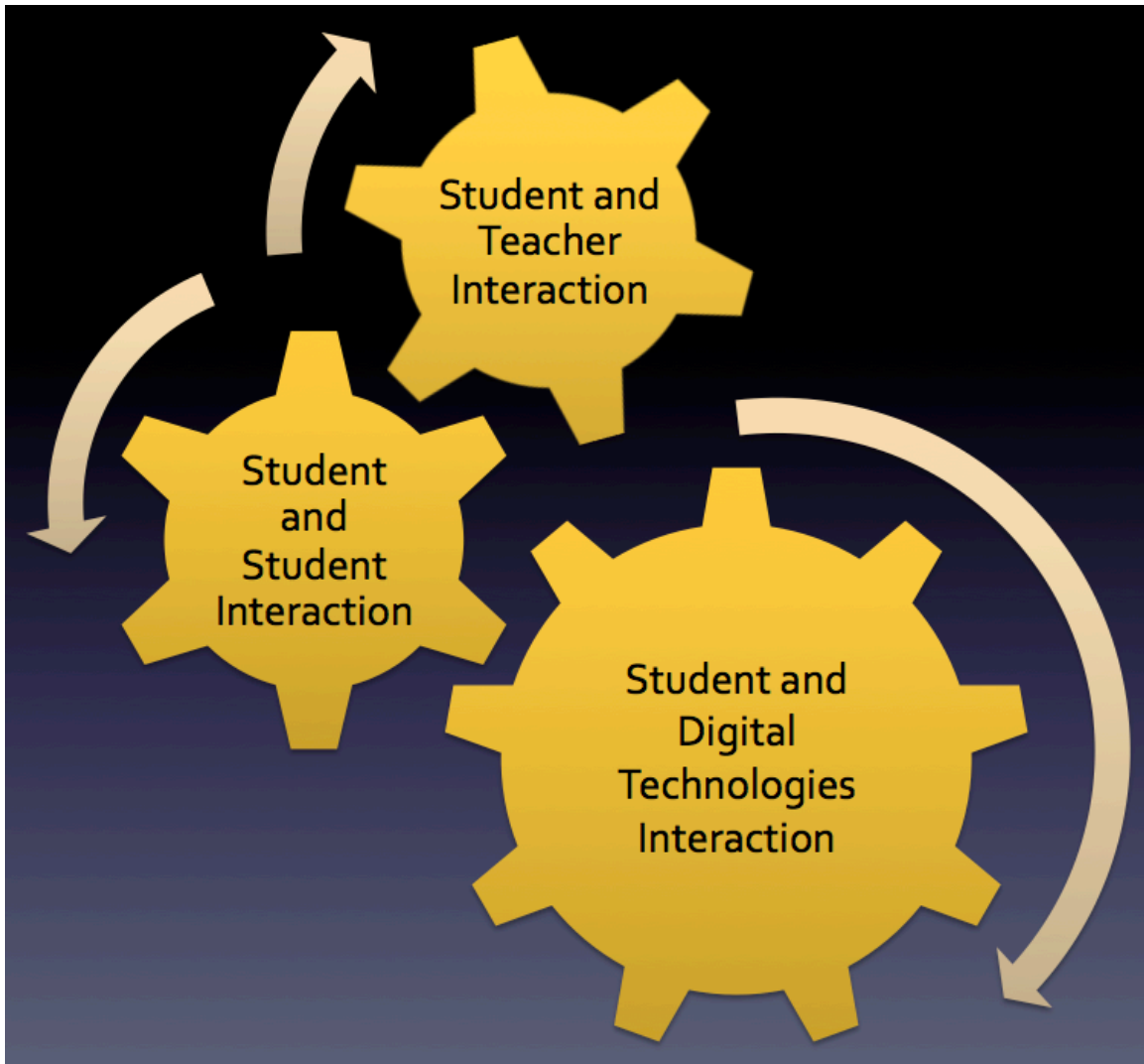


Figure 41. Gears in motion to visually capture this study’s major findings.

Contributions of the Study

My study makes several contributions to the examination of traditional and digital literacies in relation to second language learning in a secondary setting. First, it sheds light on the application of the acquired prior traditional and digital knowledge of a marginalized group of learners—adolescent ELLs who assimilate into the mainstream environment after having exited the language development program. This assimilation elucidates the complex and situated ways in which reclassified ELLs rely on both traditional and digital skills to make sense of the mainstream environment. Additionally, it magnifies our view of learning

spaces beyond the confines of the traditional classroom, suggesting noteworthy methodological and pedagogical implications. My study draws from a sociocultural lens to understand how reclassified ELLs mediate learning and how they participate in a mainstream environment that contributes to their agency. The study does this by focusing on the practices focal participants engage with and how they interact with their peers and teachers when interacting in the online space of the LMS Schoology.

Digital Literacies and English Language Learners

This study makes significant contributions to the field of Multiliteracies and New Literacy Studies (Street, 1993; New London Group, 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) by connecting a variety of theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches. This study documents the lived-experiences of a marginalized group—adolescent ELLs who have exited the language development program—by applying identity and communities of practice constructs (Gee, 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) to explore how they negotiate learning in the “mainstream” online space of an LMS. This study also draws on sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) to theorize the ways ELLs mediated learning in a mainstream and online learning environment.

The study also examines the locally situated ways that focal participants access and appropriate traditional and digital literacies through interactions with their teachers and peers in a community of practice. These include face-to-face interactions with teachers, digital interactions that occurred with their peers in Schoology’s online discussion forum, and interactions with peers during peer review activities. The analysis situates focal participants’ lived experiences in online spaces, and it examines empirically how adolescent ELLs make sense of their current access to the mainstream curriculum, their recent and current learning experiences, and their negotiation of the English language.

Throughout my data analysis chapters, I discussed how focal participants employed roles in a variety of contexts. Therefore, it is noteworthy to explain how I characterized students and their literacy practices and identities. First, the relationships that were already established between focal participants and me influenced how I used the term “ELL” or “reclassified.” For instance, four out of the five focal participants had been my former ELL students. During this time, I noticed how all of them were hesitant (and at times blatantly unwilling) to engage in face-to-face interactions or participate in larger writing assignments. During casual conversation, they would share that they felt insecure and self-conscious about how their English language would sound if shared with a large group; instead, they chose not to participate at all. Second, as a teacher who has built relationships with his current mainstream students, I have noticed that this group of students is more willing to be vocal and to engage in whole-group discussions. Because educational policies mandate that ELLs and students with IEPs integrate the general learning environment, ELLs continue to sit in my mainstream English classes. I continue to observe how they shy away from participating in whole-group discussions, yet they participate and stand behind the “digital curtain” during online discussions in the LMS Blackboard. Finally, as in any classroom, adolescent students (mainstream or ELLs) will sometimes make the wrong choices; however, I argue that a mainstream student and an ELL student differ in how they mediate learning and negotiate their language and literacy repertoires in the learning environment.

Integration and Significance of Schoology

During interviews, focal participants expressed their opinions about the integration of Schoology in their senior English class. Below is Valentina’s statement that captures the views of the other focal participants who said Schoology supported their language learning. Valentina explained that Schoology helped her develop better reading and writing skills and

offered an online space that allowed her to revisit archived materials as support when her teacher was not available. Additionally, Valentina mentioned that she relied on peers' online posts to help her understand the topics discussed in class:

Of course. It helped me by giving me the time to answer discussions, gave me examples of what I did not understand...I could improve by seeing the corrections and try to make every paper look better in any way possible...I can use it anytime and anywhere, including I can download the app and use it in my phone, because is so easy, I do not have to be only at school to use it. Like books or when I need my teacher, Schoology is all what I need to finish my work...I think it helped me a lot in topics discussed in class because sometimes I did not have a clear image or idea about the discussion then as I was read the comments I could understand more and then give me opinion about what the discussion was about...it gave me online websites where I can find good information. Gave me examples of what I did not understand when I was out of school.

(Valentina, email correspondence, 6-5-15)

This study examined the LMS Schoology and how reclassified ELLs tapped specific features of the LMS to advance their language learning in a social and mainstream context. This study revealed that students like Valentina, who faced academic challenges because of her struggles with the language, mediated learning within a social and mainstream environment that encouraged the application of traditional and digital communication practices. Valentina's statement above proves that an LMS like Schoology can be viewed as a digital educational tool and a "digital bridge" (Cavus, 2007) between student and school, which emphasizes the potential of the LMS's asynchronous nature.

Studies (e.g., Lam, 2000; Mercer, 2000; Williams, 2005; Albirini, 2006; Cavus, 2007; Doering, Beach, and O'Brien, 2007; English, 2007; Falvo & Johnson, 2007; Al-Busaidi & Al-Shihi, 2010) have detailed the integration of LMSs for teaching and learning in higher educational settings and looked at how adolescent learners mediate learning in educational online spaces. They have also suggested the incorporation of digital educational tools in lessons so that learners can develop new linguistic and technical skills. However, there is a dearth of research involving ELLs' utility of LMSs at the secondary level. Little research on LMS integration in the classroom has revealed that if technology is made available to students, it is scantily used in purposeful ways (Boiling et al., 2008). This study highlights the LMS Schoology and the potential to provide secondary ELLs with a multimodal learning experience.

Recommendations

The findings of this study offer some implications for the theory of second language learning at the secondary level. First, it is imperative that teachers continue to integrate digital tools into their teaching, if possible. Teachers should communicate and voice their concerns about the need to infuse the language arts curriculum with units that encourage the use of technologies that allow learners to develop new linguistic and technical skills necessary for the 21st Century (Jenkins, 2009). For instance, in his last email correspondence, Miguel stated that technology is important in schools because “maybe one day you will work in an office and you will have to use it sometimes” and “technology played a big role in helping [him] get a job interview and things like that.” Conversely, if LMSs like Schoology incorporate into secondary classrooms, additional strategies designed to support reclassified ELLs should be used accordingly. It is imperative for teachers to be cognizant of

the needs of reclassified ELLs since they are mainstreamed into content-specific courses and continue to face challenges as they navigate the mainstream environment.

One statement that captures all of the focal participants' opinions about their experience in language development classes and emphasizes the idea that these students continue to struggle as they engage in the mainstream context was Rosalba's comment about her school's language development program and experience:

Yes, I do feel prepared with the education [Winterfell High School] offered me to move on in my education. My only concern is that I did not have the opportunity to get a higher education like to get in honors classes. I lack a lot of knowledge; I feel like I did not gave [sic] everything that I have one because I was in the program ELD which it helps but not as much as I wished. The program ELD needs to prepare students to not only in the English language but also in how education can get in the future in further classes.

(Rosalba, email correspondence, 6-8-15).

Rosalba's comments above allude to the critical role language development programs have in the lives of secondary ELLs. Additionally, Rosalba's attentiveness (e.g., "The program ELD needs to prepare students") suggests that language development programs need to prepare ELLs with the necessary skills that will ensure their academic success as they engage with mainstream curricula. It is noteworthy for policymakers and school officials to discuss ways to meet the needs of all students, in particular, ELLs who are often disenfranchised from the mainstream student population.

Pedagogical Implications

Lewis and Fabos (2005) and Langer de Ramirez (2010) assert the significance of allowing adolescent ELLs to apply their existing digital literacies within the learning context and insist that digital literacies do in fact support ELLs to become “creators” of knowledge and not solely recipients. Focal participants in this study have demonstrated their application of traditional and digital literacy skills to complete a multi-page research paper and navigate Schoology’s platform. Because the mainstream environment continues to challenge those ELLs who have graduated the language development program, an LMS like Schoology and the affordances of email can fortify the communication between teacher and student to accelerate learning further. For example, as discussed in Chapter 4, Mrs. Bolton utilized email as a mode to provide direct instruction as she offered extensive feedback to Josue. In turn, Josue acknowledged and addressed his teacher’s comments because when I examined his writing assignments, I found that he did, in fact, make the necessary revisions as requested. The scenario described is significant because both teacher and student co-created teaching and learning situations within the confines of the online space, i.e., email, in addition to what was occurring in the traditional classroom setting. Findings of this study suggest that without the electronic communication that took place between teacher and focal participant, e.g., email exchanges and comments left in Schoology’s feedback section, the learning process would have been delayed. Instead, the digital exchanges formed a “digital bridge” (Cavus, 2007) between teacher and student to continue the teaching and learning processes.

The research unit extended from January to April 2015—a total of 16 weeks, which allowed teachers to implement a variety of pedagogical practices throughout the spring semester. All three teachers highlighted in this study utilized Schoology’s online discussion

feature to create discussion threads about the literature discussed in class so that students could engage in digital interactions; write initial posts, read posts made by their peers, and reply to others. Ms. Lannister provided opportunities for students to participate in online discussions and encouraged learners like Ester to integrate a “mainstream” community of practice so that they could contribute their perspectives on a variety of topics. For Ester, participating in online discussions was highly significant. In an interview, she stated the following: “Because like in Schoology I don’t see their faces...And if I talk in person they will make me nervous and I won’t say anything. I’ll just be quiet, silent” (Interview, 5-20-15). Even though Ester had reservations about engaging in face-to-face interactions with her peers, she stood behind the “digital curtain” offered by the online space of Schoology that allowed her to still contribute and safely express her opinions (which were valued) within a mainstream community of practice. Teachers’ instructional choices (i.e., encourage students to use Schoology’s discussion feature) made during this study encouraged reclassified ELLs to integrate a mainstream community of practice as well as allowed them to negotiate their learning through the application of their acquired traditional and digital practices.

When asked about how online discussions supported their learning and understanding of the literature discussed in class, focal participants said they relied on their peers’ comments made in Schoology’s discussion forum, which indicated that “mentor texts” were tapped to support their learning. Focal participants also capitalized on the asynchronous nature of Schoology, which permitted them the extra “think time” to formulate their ideas before sharing them with their peers. For example, in an interview, Rosalba said, “...some of them were questions like, What happened to Beowulf? And to understand it better, I read the comments first and then I was like thinking about what to put...and later respond to them” (Interview, 5-15-15). Rosalba’s statements shed light on the

importance of incorporating an LMS like Schoology in secondary language arts classrooms so that former ELLs can have opportunities to review peers' comments as a way to help them frame their responses before sharing with the entire group. Nonetheless, integrating Schoology within the mainstream language arts curriculum at the secondary level is a useful instructional approach for ELLs' continuing language and literacy development.

It is noteworthy to also discuss the small number of ELLs (and small sample size—5) at Winterfell. I realize that this particular situation might have influenced what focal participants did and said, and how teachers engaged and responded to them. As mentioned in Chapter 2, given the political climate (i.e., Arizona's SB1070 law and Sheriff Joe Arpaio's transparent assault on the undocumented) and the housing market crash of 2008, a decline in enrollment at Winterfell and across the District was highly evident. Many families that lived near Winterfell lost their homes and were forced to move to suburbs nearby or neighboring states. The language development program was impacted the most since the program is usually comprised of recently arrived students (non-English speakers) from other parts of the world and/or refugees, but not always true, which set the official enrollment numbers at an all time low since the opening of Winterfell. Perhaps focal participants capitalized on the fact that they were a small learning community at Winterfell and recognized that they could receive individualized instruction, in turn, teachers found value in this and negotiated their own teaching practices to be able to meet the needs of reclassified ELLs as well.

Mills (2010), Goodman, Calfee, and Goodman (2014), and Warschauer (2000) agree that not all learners have equal access to ICTs or digital literacies in the home (i.e., those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged). Therefore, it is imperative that educators provide opportunities that warrant students to participate and engage with educational digital spaces and tools to further enhance their digital and communication skills deemed necessary in

today's digital age. However, Lankshear and Knobel (2007b) and Alvermann (2008) caution that when school districts restrict teachers (who are users of technoliteracies) from providing their students with digital learning opportunities, some with limited Internet access at home will continue to fall further behind their more privileged counterparts. Moreover, Alvermann (2008) indicates that simply providing computers, software, and high bandwidth access to low-income families is not enough to offset the limitations associated with the digital divide. If teachers and creators of curricula do not encourage the integration of LMSs like Schoology and application of digital practices, disenfranchised students like current and former ELLs run the risk of missing out on opportunities that build on enhancing their acquired digital knowledge and application of both in and out of school literacy practices needed for higher education settings or the workplace. Similarly, (Menken, 2008) explains that school districts do not place enough emphasis on ensuring ELLs have the opportunities to attain the academic standards that have been set (e.g., high-quality curricula, qualified teachers and schools with sufficient resources) and this positions ELLs to continue falling behind because they are “systematically denied the opportunity to meet or exceed the standards” (p. 159). Educators who serve ELLs need to be aware of the challenges and experiences that they bring to the classroom and need to advocate for ways that ensure an equitable education for all students.

Methodological Implications

This study makes a number of significant methodological contributions. The use of ethnographic methods that focus on focal participants' lived-experiences (Stake, 2010; Wolcott, 2008; Seidman, 2006) as they navigated Schoology adds to the growing interest of using ethnography to understand the role of the Internet in learning (e.g., Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Lam, 2000; Alvermann, 2008; Beneito-Montagut, 2011; Daer & Potts, 2014).

The online space of Schoology and email allowed focal participants to reach their teachers and archived materials outside the traditional school setting (e.g., at home, community library). Such communication created a “digital bridge” that accelerated learning and allowed focal participants to exhibit their I-identities as students of a senior English class within a mainstream context. Also, focal participants stood behind Schoology’s “digital curtain” that allowed them to contribute their opinions to their peers, in addition to, participate in face-to-face exchanges with their teachers and peers in the classroom.

Instances of communication between focal participant and teacher took place when Ester, Rosalba, Valentina, Miguel, and with less frequency Josue, used email and Schoology’s feedback section to reach their teachers to discuss situations regarding the senior research paper. In the case of Josue, who did not engage in frequent online communication with his teacher like the other focal participants did, he reported having a “not so good” teacher-student relationship. This sheds light on teacher-student relationships in secondary settings and should be an area for further studying and theorizing because even though students can stand behind the “digital curtain” as afforded by Schoology, some will continue to opt-out from participating in online activities which creates dire implications to their overall academic standing and learning experience.

My Identity as a Teacher and Researcher

Over the course of this study, I began to recognize different aspects about who I am as teacher and researcher. Not only was I able to collect and analyze data for this study, I was also able to hold a full-time position as a high school English teacher, which made me recognize my own resilience and determination. Specifically, I have contemplated ways to enhance my own teaching practice and have thought about how to incorporate digital tools

in my lessons to provide the best learning experience possible for my students. Nonetheless, every year brings a new set of challenges and a number of triumphs as well.

As I observed focal participants and sporadically had small conversations with teachers throughout this study, I was reminded of the complexities a classroom carries. I had an emic perspective of what occurs in the classroom, which positioned me as privileged researcher as I collected data and interacted with focal participants and teachers. For example, Rosalba, Josue, and Ester were former students of mine when they were enrolled in the ELD program at Winterfell. The teacher-student relationship that existed allowed them to comfortably share their views and perspectives about topics that emerged during interviews. Even though Mrs. Bolton and Ms. Lannister were new to Winterfell, I was able to create a professional relationship with both of them during fall semester that led me to comfortably ask for their participation in my study. My friendship and professional relationship with Mr. Hilaria began when he secured a position at Winterfell. We both began to take graduate courses at the local university and it is when my philosophical stance on education and teacher identity truly began to shift.

Now that the study has ended, I have started to wonder whether my role as researcher and former teacher of four of the focal participants could have influenced how they responded to my interview questions or interacted with their teachers and peers. For the most part, all focal participants seemed to feel comfortable talking with me during interviews. It could be because I was an established, well-respected teacher at Winterfell and they recognized the significance of participating in this type of study. Focal participants may have also recognized the value in supporting teachers who continue striving to attain their own academic goals as well.

At times, it was difficult to disentangle my teacher and researcher roles (and how they influenced each other). I seemed to be constantly wearing two hats and I sometimes struggled to figure out which one to make more visible to study participants. However, this dual identity as teacher-researcher turned out to be an asset while analyzing data because I could draw on multiple perspectives while making sense of what had been done or said. For instance, as I examined my former ELL students' (Josue, Rosalba, Ester, and Miguel) artifacts and interactions, I had an insider perspective to their acquired literacy repertoires, which influenced how I viewed them as former ELL students and current mainstream students. Further, my emic understandings of focal participants' literacy repertoires helped shape the process of coding and analysis. For example, as I examined focal participants track changes entries, I began to notice focal participants' writing skills prior knowledge by the way they offered feedback to their peers (i.e. their entries alluded to The Six Traits of Writing conceptual model), which guided me through the coding process.

In conducting this study, I was able to observe focal participants' engagement in the online space of Schoology. Even though I was an outsider (in terms of focal participants not being my current students), I had basic knowledge and understanding of how Schoology was being used because of the discussions I had (during a number of content-team meetings throughout the school year) with colleagues about Schoology's implementation. I also had exposed my former ELLs and was currently exposing my mainstream sophomore English students to Schoology as well.

I was able to observe how focal participants applied their traditional and digital literacy practices while they navigated the online space of Schoology. I was able to note how focal participants' contributed to their agency and performed aspects of their identities through digital communication, i.e., email and Schoology's feedback feature, that occurred

between focal participants and their teachers. I noticed that focal participants self-advocated and displayed self-efficacy as they communicated with their teachers regarding the senior research paper. I also had the opportunity to observe how focal participants and teachers utilized email to co-create teaching and learning scenarios in the online environment, which was crucial for students like Josue who needed additional support outside the confines of the traditional classroom. I learned that even though teachers encouraged the use of Schoology as a way to communicate between teacher and student, focal participants also found value in having face-to-face connections with their teachers to solidify understanding about a variety of topics. In addition to what occurred in Schoology, face-to-face interactions also served to accelerate the learning process. I was also able to witness how focal participants performed the role of peer as “mentor” and how they positioned themselves as empowered learners as they engaged in peer review activities. For example, all focal participants used Schoology’s and Microsoft Word’s digital editing tools to revise their own writing and to provide feedback to their peers. Finally, I was able to see how focal participants exposed aspects of their identities as they participated in Schoology’s discussion forum. Focal participants were able to bring in aspects of themselves—life experiences, cultural backgrounds, and beliefs—and embed those in their initial online discussion posts and replies to their peers. I was able to see how peers of a mainstream community of practice valued and respected focal participants’ contributions and how focal participants performed their identities as students who contribute within the mainstream environment.

I believe that my positionality allowed me a fuller more complex understanding of focal participants’ ways of being. As I continue to grow as a teacher and researcher, I am able to see the intricate factors reclassified ELLs bring to their learning experience, and how those factors mediate learning in the mainstream context. I have learned that what focal

participants did in the online space of Schoology and the senior research paper were not basic tasks but highly complex and dynamic. I realized that if given the right tools (e.g., digital editing tools) and provided with adequate support (e.g. qualified teachers), reclassified ELLs are able to show resilience and persistence when asked to complete complex tasks.

This study shows us the potential and LMS like Schoology, which allows students to communicate with their teachers and peers (“digital bridge”) and take advantage of its asynchronous nature, has in developing the digital literacies of secondary students, in particular, reclassified ELLs who continue acquiring the language. The New London Group (1996) encourages educators to have a multiliteracies approach so that adolescent learners can have access to the “dynamic language of work, community, and power” that is needed for the design of their futures, in addition to, securing a place in the work force. In this study, I have demonstrated how focal participants have interacted and applied their digital skills in a social and online space (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). I have also demonstrated how they exercised their communication practices with their teachers and peers, which is a valuable skill to have once they enter the work force or a higher educational setting.

I also build on Wenger’s (1998) communities of practice and Gee’s (2000) identity frameworks. This study shows us how focal participants integrated a mainstream learning environment, and revealed aspects of their identities in the process. During their participation in Schoology’s online discussion forum, focal participants were able to validate their opinions, debate different perspectives, and support their opinions with a variety of topics. Focal participants were also able to expose aspects of their identities through posts (and replies) made in Schoology’s online discussion forum. Focal participants also revealed aspects of their identities, i.e. I-identities, when they communicated electronically with their teachers in both email and Schoology’s digital platforms. In the end, teachers and students

were able to create a community of practice (in the online spaces) that fostered inclusivity by valuing and respecting the contributions made by focal participants (Wenger, 1998).

Future Directions of Research

I relied on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of learning to analyze focal participants' interpretive data. Only one teacher, Mr. Hilaria, held a sociocultural philosophy toward teaching, learning, and literacy. Both Ms. Lannister (who was new to the teaching profession) and Mrs. Bolton (who was working with adolescent learners for the first time) had a limited understanding of sociocultural perspectives in relation to teaching and learning. Future research might involve helping pre-service teachers understand sociocultural theories of learning since they may teach a diverse group of learners. Pre-service teachers might begin by reading Vygotsky's work to understand how his theory functions in a classroom that includes students from different ethnic backgrounds and bring with them various histories and lived-experiences.

This study looked at the digital literacy practices applied by reclassified ELLs as they navigated Schoology's platform during one research unit that stretched throughout one school semester. Future research could investigate former ELLs' digital literacy practices used throughout an entire school year—across units and in Schoology. In this study, for instance, focal participants engaged in online discussions to make sense of thematic questions that emerged from reading a variety of literary pieces. It would be beneficial to examine whether Schoology's online discussion feature use over an entire school year (and in multiple classrooms) would show how reclassified ELLs tap their acquired resources (for what reason, when, why, and how) and their acquired digital literacy practices to shape their capacity to negotiate language learning.

Future research might also look at how participants use Schoology's blog feature. English (2007) explains that blogs work as allies to a teacher who believes in giving students a voice in the classroom while Sweeny (2010) refers to blogs as "popular forums for many teens to express themselves" and spaces for adolescents to publish their final product and practice their writing skills (p. 128). Even though focal participants in this study did not use Schoology's blog feature, they did voice and share their ideas freely in Schoology's discussion forum. In this study, focal participants conveyed competence after posting their work in an online space, shared their ideas freely without having to speak face to face (though often-resistant at times), communicated, read, and wrote in English for an authentic audience and purpose as suggested by Langer de Ramirez (2010).

Conclusion

In this study, my goal was to understand how focal participants used an LMS like Schoology in three twelfth-grade English classes. Throughout this dissertation, I have provided email exchanges between focal participants and their teachers to show how they created teaching and learning situations in the online environment. I have also provided screenshots of focal participants' engagement with Schoology's and Microsoft Word's digital editing tools to show how they completed the revision process and how they provided feedback to their peers. I also showcased screenshots of focal participants engagement with Schoology's online discussion forum to show how they revealed aspects of their identities when encouraged by their peers to participate in an online community of practice. Additionally, I have discussed the traditional and digital literacy practices that focal participants engaged with while they navigated Schoology and completed a multi-page research paper through. My analysis of focal participants' traditional and digital literacy practices revealed that they contributed to their agency, performed aspects of their identities,

performed the role of peer as “mentor,” positioned themselves as empowered and knowledgeable learners, and valued face-to-face interactions with their teachers and Schoology equally. My analysis of focal participants’ participation in the online space of Schoology revealed that they were able to apply their acquired prior writing and digital skills to support the completion of a multi-page research paper. Focal participants also disclosed that Schoology served as a tool that helped them build on their existing literacies, as well as, helped them be successful in senior English class.

As a final note, I reiterate that school districts have a responsibility to introduce and reinforce the new literacies that have been recognized and allow the integration of LMSs like Schoology. The interaction that occurs within the online space of Schoology for ELLs to make connections with literature and interact with their peers in a mainstream context is crucial. Even if teachers take steps to incorporate lessons with new technologies, it is not sufficient to prepare ELL adolescents for social and civic participation. Current and former ELLs need guidance by expert teachers that advocate for them to help them move beyond the known to the new (Mills, 2013). This study provides insight on how educators at the secondary level can incorporate a LMS in their teaching (as a way to compliment) and further support the language learning, literacy repertoires, and academic achievement of an already marginalized group of adolescent learners.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM

APPROVAL: EXPEDITED REVIEW

Doris Warriner
 English
 480/727-6967
 Doris.Warriner@asu.edu

Dear Doris Warriner:

On 2/24/2015 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Participation and Experiences of Reclassified ELLs: Integration of a Learning Management System in a Secondary English Classroom
Investigator:	Doris Warriner
IRB ID:	STUDY00002209
Category of review:	(6) Voice, video, digital, or image recordings, (7)(b) Social science methods, (5) Data, documents, records, or specimens, (7)(a) Behavioral research
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRBAppendixAStudentQuest.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • IRBAppendixFSpanishVerParentalCons.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • IRBRevised2February21.docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • IRBAppendixHTeacherConsent.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • IRBAppendixDInterviewProtAdults.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • SitePrincipalLetterofSupportFeb21.pdf, Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc); • IRBAppendixBInterviewProtStudents.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • IRBAppendixEParentalConsent.pdf, Category: Consent Form;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SuperintendentLetterOfSupportFeb21.pdf, Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc); • IRBAppendixGStudentAssent.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • IRBAppendixCTeacherQuest.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);
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The IRB approved the protocol from 2/24/2015 to 2/23/2016 inclusive. Three weeks before 2/23/2016 you are to submit a completed Continuing Review application and required attachments to request continuing approval or closure.

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 2/23/2016 approval of this protocol expires on that date. When consent is appropriate, you must use final, watermarked versions available under the “Documents” tab in ERA-IRB.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Fernando Hurtado

APPENDIX B
PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

January xx, 2015

Dear Parent:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Doris Warriner in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Department of English at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to examine exited English-language learners' participation in a Senior English class and explore their experiences as learners while using a learning management system called Schoology.

Students will participate in a number of activities that incorporate the use of Schoology. They will participate in online discussions, posts blogs, and comment on their peers' posts as well. I would like to visit your teen's Senior English class and observe the instructional process throughout the spring semester. These visits will be used to observe your son or daughter's participation in-group or whole-class discussions as well as interaction with Schoology. I am asking for your permission to talk with your student about his or her in-school activities and his or her out-of-school literacy practices. I will be audio-recording these interviews. These audio recordings will be stored on an iPhone application that requires a passcode. Names of student participants, teachers, the school, and the district will be kept confidential; and audio-recordings of interviews and conversations will be deleted after they have been analyzed. The results of this study may be used in future presentation and/or publications, but your son or daughter's name will not be used. Pseudonyms will be used in all written or oral reports to protect your student's privacy.

Your student's participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to have your son or daughter participate, or to withdraw your son or daughter from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. Withdrawing from this study will not affect your student's grade in Senior English. Equally, if your son or daughter decides to withdraw from the study at any time, will result in no penalty. Participation benefits will offer educators and researchers insights about how exited ELLs engage in a secondary English class and their participation in a learning management system. Most importantly, findings of the study may provide secondary teachers with new methods of teaching and/or illustrate benefits of incorporating digital tools.

If you have any questions concerning the research or your student's participation in this study, please call me at (623) ***-**** or email me at [email address]. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Doris Warriner, at (480) ***-**** or via email: [email address]. Both of us would be happy to address any concerns you may have.

Sincerely,

Fernando Hurtado, M.Ed.

By signing below, you are giving consent for your son/daughter _____ to participate in the above study.

Printed Name

Signature

Date

You may contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board through ASU Research Compliance Office at (480) ***-**** for additional information pertaining to your student's rights as a participant in this research project.

APPENDIX C

CONSENTIMIENTO DEL PADRE O TUTOR

Enero xx, 2015

Estimado Padre de Familia o Tutor:

Soy estudiante posgraduado bajo la dirección de la Profesora Doris Warriner en la Facultad de Artes y Humanidades, Departamento de Inglés de La Universidad Estatal de Arizona (ASU). Estoy llevando a cabo un estudio de investigación para examinar la participación de estudiantes salidos de la clase para aprender la lengua inglesa en una clase de grado 12 y explorar la formación de su identidad como alumno social utilizando un sistema de monitoreo docente llamado Schoology.

Los estudiantes participarán en un número de actividades que incorporarán el uso de Schoology. Participarán en discusiones en línea, escribirán blogs y también comentarán sobre las ideas presentadas por sus compañeros. Me gustaría visitar la clase de Inglés grado 12 de su adolescente y observar el proceso de instrucción a lo largo del semestre de primavera. Estas visitas se usarán para observar la participación de su hijo (a) en discusiones de equipos o grupo entero así como la interacción con Schoology. Estoy pidiendo su autorización para hablar con su estudiante sobre sus actividades escolares y sus prácticas de alfabetización fuera de la escuela. Estaré grabando estas entrevistas. Estas grabaciones de audio serán almacenadas en una aplicación de iPhone que requiere contraseña. Las audio grabaciones serán borradas después de haber sido analizadas.

Después de analizar el audio de las entrevistas, los comentarios se conservarán en confidencialidad. Los resultados de este estudio pudieran ser utilizados en alguna presentación futura y/o publicaciones pero el nombre de su hijo (a) no será utilizado. Seudónimos serán usados en todo reporte escrito u oral para proteger la privacidad de su estudiante.

La participación de su estudiante en este estudio es voluntaria. Si usted decide que su hijo (a) no participe, o si decide retirar a su estudiante de este estudio en cualquier momento, esto no resultará en penalización. El retirar al alumno de este estudio, no afectará la calificación en su clase de inglés grado 12. Igualmente, si su estudiante decide retirarse de este estudio en cualquier momento, esto no resultará en ninguna penalización. Los beneficios de la participación ofrecerán a educadores e investigadores conocimiento sobre cómo los estudiantes que salen de la clase para aprender inglés se acoplan a una clase de inglés en la escuela secundaria y su participación en un sistema de dirección electrónico. Más importante, los resultados del estudio pueden proporcionar a maestros de secundaria y preparatoria con nuevos métodos de enseñanza y/o demostrar los beneficios de incorporar herramientas digitales.

Si tiene cualquier pregunta con respecto a la investigación, o la participación de su estudiante, por favor comuníquese conmigo al (623) ***-**** o por correo electrónico [domicilio de correo electrónico]. Puede también contactar a mi director, Dra. Doris Warriner, al (480) ***-**** o por correo electrónico [domicilio de correo electrónico]. Ambos estaremos gustosos de discutir cualquier preocupación que pudiera tener.

Sinceramente,

Mtro. Fernando Hurtado

Su firma abajo da el consentimiento de que su hijo (a) _____ participe en el estudio arriba mencionado.

Nombre impreso

Firma

Fecha

Puede contactar al Jefe de Departamento del Consejo Institucional de Áreas Humanísticas de la Universidad Estatal de Arizona (ASU) a través de la Oficina de ASU Research Compliance al (480) ***-**** para información adicional relacionada con los derechos de su estudiante como participante en este proyecto de investigación.

APPENDIX D

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS (SENIOR RESEARCH PAPER)

This schedule pertains to all assignments related to the research paper. Other class assignments are not included here.

Week One: January 5-9

1-6—Tuesday: RSC: Era assigned

1-9—Friday: RSC: Era and Self Introduction Post Due

Week Two: January 12-16 (Early Release Wednesday)

1-16—Friday: RSC: Theme and Author Interest Statement Due

Week Three: January 19-23

1-19—Monday: No School, Civil Rights Day

1-23—Friday: RSC: Era Background Due; *Upcoming*: Select a Peer Editor

Week Four: January 26-30 (Early Release Wednesday)

1-30—Friday: RSC: Thesis Statement Due

Week Five: February 2-6

2-4—Wednesday: Grades for Quarter 3 Posted

2-6—Friday: RSC: Author One Background Due and Peer Edit Due

Week Six: February 9-13 (Early Release Wednesday)

2-13—Friday: RSC: Annotated Bibliography Check (at least 5 sources)

Week Seven: February 16-20

2-16—Monday: No School: Presidents Day

2-20—Friday: RSC: Author Two Background Due

Week Eight: February 23-27

2-23—Monday: AIMS Writing (Tentative Senior Lab Day)

2-24—Tuesday: AIMS Reading (Tentative Senior Lab Day)

2-26—Wednesday: AIMS Math (Tentative Senior Lab Day)

Week Nine: March 2-6

3-6—Friday: RSC: Literary Analysis One Due; End of Quarter 3; *Upcoming*: Select a Peer Editor

Week Ten: March 9-13 (Early Release)

3-13—Friday: RSC: Research Paper Reflection

Week Eleven: March 16-20

Spring Break

Week Twelve: March 23-27

3-27—Friday: RSC: Literary Analysis Two Due and Peer Edit Due

Week Thirteen: March 30-April 3

4-3—Friday: No School, Spring Recess; *Upcoming*: Select Peer Editor

Email:

Voicemail: (es directly to email)

Week Fourteen: April 6-10 (Early Release)

4-10—Friday: RSC: Annotated Bibliography Due; RSC: Full Draft Due (No Conclusion)

*4-11—Saturday: Senior Saturday, 8:00 a.m. to Noon

Week Fifteen: April 13-17

4-13-16—Monday-Thursday: Peer and Parent Review and Edit of Paper

Wednesday: Quarter 4 Progress Grades Posted

4-17—Friday: RSC: Conclusion Due; Peer Edit and Parent Review of Paper Due

*4-18—Saturday: Prom

****Week Sixteen: April 20-24 (Early Release Wednesday)****

4-20-23—Monday-Thursday: Student-Teacher Conferences

4-24—Friday: RSC: Senior Research Paper & Timeline Due by 3:00 p.m.

Week Seventeen: April 27-May 1

4-27-5-1—Tuesday-Thursday: 3-Minute Research Paper Presentations

5-1—Friday: RSC: Reflection on Research Paper Process Due

Week Eighteen: May 4-8

5-8—Friday: RSC: Senior Video Project Due

Week Nineteen: May 11-15

5-13—Wednesday: Letter to a Future Student Due

Letter to [redacted]; Due

5-15—Friday: Senior Finals

Week Twenty: May 18-22

5-18—Monday: Senior Finals

5-20—Wednesday: Graduation

Important Information

Class Website

www.schoolology.com

Access Codes:

Useful Websites

Class textbook: www.classzone.com (Username: s [redacted])

Ebscohost: search.ebscohost.com (Username: l [redacted])

Google Scholar: scholar.google.com

Purdue's Online Writing Lab: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

APPENDIX E

SENIOR RESEARCH PAPER CHECKLIST

Senior Research Paper Timeline / Checklist

Name: _____ Class Period: _____

**All assignments must follow the prescribed deadlines. Students may not move on to the next step without approval.*

Assignment	Due Date	Points	Comments	Date Approved	Parent Contact
Drawing for Era	Jan. 6	n/a	Era selection		
Theme and Author Selection	Jan. 16	20	Choose a thematic question. Choose two authors who wrote about that theme.		
Era Background	Jan. 23	100 Form	5-paragraph essay, which includes three events that helped influence/shape the theme.		
Thesis	Jan. 30	100	1 paragraph that creates the focus of the research paper		
Author 1 Background with edits.	Feb. 6	100 Form	An exploration of who the author was and what major experiences influenced his/her writing (5 paragraphs). *Peer edits will be submitted at this time as well.	<input type="checkbox"/> edit complete	
Annotated Bibliography (First Check)	Feb. 13	50	A works cited assignment that includes a description of information borrowed from the source. (Must have at least 5 sources.)		
Author 2 Background with edits.	Feb. 20	100 Sum	An exploration of who the author was and what major experiences influenced his/her writing (5 paragraphs).		
Literary Analysis 1	Mar. 6	100 Form	A 5-paragraph essay, analyzing the author's use of literary devices (3) that help support the overall theme.		
Literary Analysis 2	Mar. 27	100 Sum	A 5-paragraph essay, analyzing the author's use of literary devices (3) that help support the overall theme. *Peer edits will be submitted at this time as well.	<input type="checkbox"/> edit complete	
Annotated Bibliography (Final)	Apr. 10	100 Sum	A works cited assignment that includes a description of information borrowed from the source. (Must include 10-15 sources.)		
Senior Lab Days: February 23, 24, 25 (Tentative)					
First Full Draft (with completed works cited)	Apr. 10	100 Sum.	A combination of all previously submitted essays with smooth transitions (approximately 9 pages)		
Senior Saturday: April 11th					
Peer and Parent Evaluation	Apr. 13-16	75	Complete peer (1 required) and parent checklists.		
Conclusion	Apr. 17	100	Proper MLA formatting of all reliable sources used in the research paper		
Teacher-Student Conferences	Apr. 20-23	100	Individual conferences with the teacher about progress and any deficiencies		
Final Paper	April 24	100 Sum.	Complete research paper with conclusion and works cited list (10 pages of research plus works cited pages)		
Timeline		50	Completed checklist with teacher initials and grades		

APPENDIX F

SENIOR RESEARCH PAPER ESSAY PROMPTS

Senior Research Paper Timeline / Checklist

**Assignment grades will be posted in the Participation/ Performance category, unless otherwise stated.*

2015 Senior Research Paper Prompt

Throughout British history, various events, historical figures, and cultural changes helped shape universal themes for which each era is known most. For your given era, choose an overall theme that will become the focus of your senior paper. You will research historical causes and effects that support your chosen theme, research and write about two notable authors of the era who have been influenced by or wrote about the theme, analyze the use of literary devices in a work by your chosen authors that support the theme, compare and contrast each author's treatment of the theme, and finally apply the theme to your observations and experience today.

Overall Question: This is found at the beginning of each unit in the senior textbook.

Theme (Question reworded in statement form):

✓ **Background Essay: (1 ½ - 2 pages)**

Three events that helped influence/shape the theme-

Include:

- What is the event?
- How did it occur?
- Who was involved?
- When did it occur?
- Where did it occur?
- Explanation of how it affected society and how it relates to the theme

✓ **Thesis: (1 paragraph)**

✓ **Author 1 Essay: (1 ½ - 2 pages)**

- This is an exploration of who the author was and what major experiences influenced his/her writing.

✓ **Author 2 Essay: (1 ½ - 2 pages)**

- This is an exploration of who the author was and what major experiences influenced his/her writing

✓ **Literary Analysis: (1 ½ - 2 pages)**

- In a 5-paragraph essay, analyze the author's use of literary devices (3 devices) that help support the overall theme.

✓ **Literary Analysis: (1 ½ - 2 pages)**

- In a 5-paragraph essay, analyze the author's use of literary devices (3 devices) that help support the overall theme.

✓ **Conclusion: (1 - 2 pages)**

- Compare and contrast the writing styles of both authors. Discuss the similarities and differences in the way they portrayed or addressed the theme of their work.
- Apply what you know about themes as being universal messages that span various times, places, and cultures. Discuss the ways in which your chosen theme may be or has been applied today.

✓ **Works Cited (10-15 sources required) - only 5 of which may be websites and 2 sources must be print sources of literary analysis.**

Helpful Resources:

- phoenixpubliclibrary.org;
- search.ebscohost.com;
- scholar.google.com
- schoolology.com

APPENDIX G

FOCAL PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Name:			Grade:	Date:
Period:	Age:	Gender:	Class Title:	

1. What types of social media (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, etc.) do you use, if any?
2. How do you access these? (Computer, phone, iPod, social media site, other)
3. Do you consider yourself as a consumer or producer of social media? Explain/ Can you tell me a bit more about that? (A consumer watches others use technology. A producer creates media, such as memes, blogs, videos, etc. and shares these with others.)
4. Do you consider Schoology as a form of social media? Explain.
5. What features do you find most useful on Schoology? (Submitting assignments, posting updates, online assessments, etc.) In what ways/how do you find those useful?
6. How does your teacher implement Schoology in his or her class? Please provide examples.
7. Think about classes that have incorporated Schoology, including your ELD class. Do you think your engagement in that class increased or decreased after Schoology was introduced? Why do you think your engagement increased/decreased?
8. Do you access Schoology at home? How often and for what purpose? At home, are you more willing to complete class assignments that require the use of Schoology? Explain.
9. How often do you read online? What kinds of things do you read online? (E.g., eBooks, online magazines and articles, etc.)
10. How often do you use the Internet to do research for class assignments? What kinds of assignments have you completed by using the Internet?
11. Would you rather have a face-to-face (in-person) conversation with your classmates when discussing literature or would you rather share your responses online? Explain.
12. Would you agree or disagree that online discussions allow you to express yourself through writing? Explain.

APPENDIX H
STUDENT ASSENT FORM

Study: Participation and Experiences of exited ELLs: Integration of a Learning Management System in a Secondary English Classroom

My name is Fernando Hurtado. I am a graduate student at Arizona State University.

I am asking you to take part in a research study because I am trying to learn more about Schoology and exited ELLs' digital practices. I want to learn about how adolescent students learn from participating in a social media site like Schoology. Your parent(s) have given you permission to participate in this study.

If you agree, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire (written set of questions). You will be asked how often you use digital devices and participate in social media sites. Answering these questions will take about 10 minutes. You do not have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable.

You do not have to be in this study. No one will be mad at you if you decide not to do this study. Even if you start the study, you can stop later if you want. You may ask questions about the study at any time.

If you decide to be in the study I will not tell anyone else how you respond or act as part of the study. Even if your parents or teachers ask, I will not tell them about what you say or do in the study.

Signing here means that you have read this form or have had it read to you and that you are willing to be in this study.

Signature of participant

Printed name

Signature of investigator

Date

APPENDIX I
TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Teacher:		Date:
Years of teaching experience?	Subject(s) taught using Schoology:	
Grade levels taught using Schoology:	Length of time using or used Schoology:	

1. When did you decide to become a teacher?
2. How many years have you been teaching?
3. What are your observations about students' use of technology? Digital devices?
4. Do you use Schoology? For what purpose? How do you think students respond to the use of Schoology in your class?
5. What types of social media or digital tools do you use in class? (e.g., YouTube, TeacherTube, wikis, blogs, podcasts, Remind 101, Polleverywhere.com, etc.) How do you use them?
6. Have you used Schoology's discussion thread feature in the past? If so, how did it go? What did you like about it? Not like about it? Would you do so again?
7. Do you have any additional observations or comments that you would like to share? Are there any questions I neglected to ask that you thought I should?

APPENDIX J
TEACHER CONSENT FORM

My name is Fernando Hurtado. I am a graduate student at Arizona State University.

I am asking you to take part in a research study because I am trying to learn more about how a learning management system like Schoology can support exited English-language learners' language development and identity formation as social learners. Furthermore, I want to learn more about how exited ELLs' participation in online discussion threads fosters digital literacies while engaging in thematic literary discussions.

If you agree, you will be asked to fill out a demographic questionnaire, participate in informal interviews throughout the spring semester that will be audio recorded and last between 30 minutes to one hour, facilitate discussion threads on Schoology lasting from January to May, and keep a journal for reflection purposes throughout the study.

Your participation in this study is optional. Your participation is fully your choice and you may stop at any time during the study. You may also ask questions about the study at any time. Your name will not be used at any time. Pseudonyms will be used in any written or oral reports.

By signing below, you are giving consent to participate in the above-mentioned study.

Printed Name

Signature

Date

APPENDIX K

INFORMAL INTERVIEW TEACHER FORM

Teacher (pseudonym): _____
Date: _____ Time: _____ Location: _____

Notes/Comments

APPENDIX L
PRINCIPAL CONSENT FORM

Dear Principal:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Doris Warriner in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Department of English at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to examine exited English-language learners' participation in a Senior English class and explore their identity formation as social learners in a learning management system called Schoology.

Students will participate in a number of activities that incorporate the use of Schoology. I would like to visit four teachers' classrooms and observe the instructional activity and briefly (5-10 minutes) interview students about their digital literacy practices. I am asking your permission to conduct research in your school with these teachers.

Parental consent will be obtained prior to the start of this study. Participation is completely voluntary. Comments will be kept confidential. Students and teachers will not be identified. Pseudonyms will be used in any written or oral report of these conversations to protect students', teachers', and the school's privacy. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your school's name will not be used.

The benefits of participating will be that the information from the study may be used to inform teachers and researchers about how those students who exit the ELD program continue their language development in a mainstream classroom.

Sincerely,

Fernando Hurtado, M.Ed.

By signing below, you are giving consent for me to conduct research in your school.

Printed Name

Signature

Date

APPENDIX M
FORMAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
FOCAL PARTICIPANTS

Participant Category	Part I: Focused Life History— Placing Focal Participants’ Experience in Context	Part II: Details of Experience—Concrete Details of Participants’ Experience with technologies/Schoology	Part III: Reflections on Meaning—Intellectual and Emotional Connections to technologies/Schoology
<i>Focal Participants</i>	<p>Let’s talk about you and your family and how you came to Winterfell High School —</p> <p>How old are you now? Grade in school?</p> <p>Where were you born? Did you grow up in the place of birth?</p> <p>What do your parents do?</p> <p>No. of brothers/sisters?</p> <p>First language learned as a baby?</p> <p>Language(s) parents speak at home?</p> <p>Language spoken most often at home? School? With friends?</p> <p>Kinds of activities you do with your family?</p> <p>Do your parents help you learn at home?</p> <p>Kinds of activities you do with your friends?</p> <p>Types of social media sites you visit?</p> <p>Types of technology devices you use/own?</p> <p>Technology access at home? (i.e. personal computer)</p>	<p>Let’s talk about your Senior English class and experience with Schoology —</p> <p>Favorite activities/subjects?</p> <p>What types of literature are you learning in senior English class?</p> <p>How does your teacher support his/her students?</p> <p>How does he/she teach literature?</p> <p>What types of social/digital media are you being exposed to in English class?</p> <p>How did the use of Schoology’s discussion board enrich your learning of the literature? (i.e., books read, topics discussed in class, etc.) I’d ask some broader questions first:</p> <p>How do you use Schoology? What do you use it for?</p> <p>How does a site like Schoology help you refine your reading and writing skills?</p> <p>What features of Schoology.com did you find supported your understanding of topics discussed in class? (E.g., thread questions and/or blogging)</p> <p>What did you like or dislike about using Schoology.com in addition to participating in traditional classroom activities? Why?</p>	<p>Think back to the first time you used Schoology. For what reason were you using Schoology?</p> <p>What were some of the challenges and triumphs in senior English class in relation to Schoology?</p> <p>Best thing about being a student at Winterfell High?</p> <p>Challenges with your academics at Winterfell High?</p> <p>Most proud accomplishment at Winterfell High.</p> <p>What do you think you will be when you grow up?</p> <p>Will knowing literature help? Why/how?</p> <p>Will knowing about social/digital media help? Why/how?</p> <p>Will knowing how to use Schoology help? Why/how?</p> <p>Does Schoology support language development? (Reading and writing skills?)</p> <p>How can senior English be better?</p> <p>Would you recommend this school to other teens? Why/why not?</p> <p>Do you feel prepared with the education Winterfell has offered? Why or why not?</p> <p>How does technology play a role in your life now? What do</p>

	<p>How long have you been at Winterfell?</p> <p>Why did you enroll at this school?</p> <p>Other schools attended?</p> <p>Previous experience an ELD program?</p>	<p>How did Schoology.com allow you to share ideas you might not share in face-to-face interactions?</p> <p>Do you participate in extracurricular activities? (In-outside of school)</p> <p>Do you have other comments about literature teaching/learning?</p>	<p>you think its role will be in the next 5 years? 10 years?</p> <p>Using a 6-word phrase or sentence, describe your experience using Schoology.</p>
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APPENDIX N

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIBING FORM

Interviewer:	Researcher	PHASE I
Interviewee:	Participant XX	
Date:	XX	
Questions	Interview (Transcript)	<i>Commentary</i>
Question 1		
Question 2		
Question 3		
Question 4		
Question 5		
Question 6		
Question 7		
Question 8		
Question 9		
Question 10		
Question 11		
Question 12		

APPENDIX O

INTERVIEW THREE QUESTIONS EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE

When did you start using Schoology? For what reason?

What is special about [high school]?

What was the hardest part of your class work? It can be in any of your classes.

What do you think you will be doing in the next 5 years? Ten years?

Will knowing literature help you be successful in life? How?

Will knowing about social/digital media help you in life? How?

Will knowing how to use Schoology help you later in life? How?

Overall, do you feel Schoology supports your language development? In other words, did it help you develop better reading and writing skills? How?

How could your Senior English class have been better?

Do you feel prepared with the education [high school] has offered? Why or why not?

How does technology play a role in your daily life?

How was your experience participating in the Senior Video Project? What was your role? Did your team accomplish intended goals? What was difficult?

Would you recommend this school to other teens? Why or why not?

Using a 6-word phrase/sentence, describe your experience in Senior English this semester.

Do you have any other comments? Questions?

APPENDIX P

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION FORM

WEEK 1 (JANUARY 5 – JANUARY 9)

NAME:	Researcher
SITE:	High School Senior English (55 minutes)
TIME:	(9:25 a.m. – 10:25 a.m.)
DATE:	
ACTIVITIES:	

NARRATIVE

Time	Observation	Commentary
9:25 – 9:30		
9:30 – 9:35		
9:35 – 9:40		
9:40 – 9:45		
9:45 – 9:50		
9:50 – 9:55		
9:55 – 10:00		
10:00 – 10:05		
10:05 – 10:10		
10:10 – 10:15		
10:15 – 10:20		
10:20 – 10:25		

APPENDIX Q

QUESTIONNAIRE CATEGORIES AND SUB CATEGORIES ANALYSIS

Categories and Sub-Categories

Category 1: Social Media and Digital Devices Use

- User vs. Consumer of Social Media
- Digital/Electronic Devices Routinely Used

Category 2: In/Out of School Digital Literacy Practices

- In-School Practices
- Engagement
- Frequency
- Social Media Networks Visited
- Other Online Sites Visited

Category 3: Perspectives Relative to Schoology as an Online Space Conducive for Learning

- Opinions about Schoology
- Efficiency
- Permanency
- Thinking Time
- Accessibility

Category 4: Attitudes Relative to Schoology's Online Discussion Forum

- Preferences
- Equally Essential
- Inclusivity
- Mentor Text
- Reciprocity

APPENDIX R

COUNT OF FOCAL PARTICIPANTS' ONLINE DISCUSSION ENTRIES

Initial Posts, Replies, and Replies Made by Other Peers			
Participant	Initial Posts	Replies to Peers	Replies Made by Peers
Ester	5	6	6
Rosalba	2	2	2
Miguel	2	1	1
Valentina	4	6	4
Josue	4	4	0

APPENDIX S

CATEGORIES AND SUB CATEGORIES EMAILS

List of Codes Used for Second Layer of Analysis	
Categories and Sub-categories (Emails)	
Category 1: Student to Teacher Email Communication	Category 2: Teacher Support through Email Communication
<p>Sub-category: Explanation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment Submitted • Revised Assignment Submitted • Extension • Wrong Assignment • Personal Information • Late • Technical Issues Uploading (Doc.) • Technical Issues Uploading (Digital Media) 	<p>Sub-category: Teacher Response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directing Student to Schoology • Question to Student • Comment to Student • Feedback to Student • Requests
<p>Sub-category: Inquiries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credible Online Sources • Revised Work and Grade • Before/After School Tutoring • Assignment Submitted (with attached document) • Non-related to Research Paper 	

APPENDIX T

THEMATIC CATEGORIES ONLINE DISCUSSIONS

Thematic Categories Used for Analysis					
Category	Ester	Josue	Miguel	Rosalba	Valentina
Individuality	43	1	10	17	21
Education	8	14	13	0	2
Harmony	11	0	0	7	9
Disparity	35	0	0	0	6
Emotions	1	1	0	1	15
Technology	0	1	2	0	0
Nature	7	0	0	17	0
	105	17	25	42	53
	(43%)	(7%)	(10%)	(18%)	(22%)

APPENDIX U

COUNT OF FOCAL PARTICIPANTS' TRACK CHANGES ENTRIES

Focal Participants (Track Changes)			
Participant	Comment	Deleted	Formatted
Ester	40	48	4
Rosalba	31	0	0
Miguel	5	0	0
Valentina	34	8	1
Josue	30	1	0

APPENDIX V

CATEGORIES TRACK CHANGES

Codes Used for First Layer of Analysis (Track Changes)		
Conventions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Questions ➤ Self-Made Omission ➤ Self-Made Modification ➤ Advise Omission ➤ Advise Punctuation ➤ Advise Grammar ➤ Advise Spelling ➤ Advise Capitalization 	Organization: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Self-Made Omission ➤ Self-Made Modification ➤ Advise Omission ➤ Advise Modification ➤ Perplexity 	Format/Sources/MLA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Questions ➤ Self-Made Omission ➤ Advise Omission ➤ Advise Modification
Ideas and Content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Questions ➤ Advise Modification ➤ Perplexity ➤ Praise 	Sentence Fluency: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Advise Omission ➤ Advise Modification 	Word Choice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Questions ➤ Advise Modification

APPENDIX W

CODES FOR TRACK CHANGES SECOND LAYER OF ANALYSIS

Codes Used for Second Layer of Analysis (Track Changes)		
Entry Purpose: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Declarative ➤ Interrogative ➤ Imperative 	Recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Modify ➤ Omit 	Assumed Prior Knowledge: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ideas and Content ➤ Organization ➤ Word Choice ➤ Sentence Fluency ➤ Conventions ➤ Format/MLA