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Increasing Students' Academic Involvement: Chilean Teacher Engagement with Learners in Blended English as a Foreign Language Courses

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Abstract

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MDiv, University of Notre Dame, 1991

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Learning English as a foreign language (EFL), a highly valued skill in the Chilean marketplace, is an arduous and complex personal endeavor requiring high student motivation. Reflecting this challenge is the heightened anxiety among EFL students, whose work has been associated with historically meager results. Blended learning, the fusion of face-to-face and online content delivery and assessment, offers a promising solution to EFL learner reticence. Evidence suggests that an active online teacher presence in a blended EFL course can enhance student engagement. The purpose of this study was to discover the perceptions of EFL instructional specialists concerning (a) student involvement and engagement in online portions of blended courses, (b) marginal teacher presence in the online portions of blended courses, and (c) ways to improve student involvement in the online portions of the blended courses. Results of a systematic qualitative analysis, employing constant comparative data analysis of individual interviews with a sample of 10 voluntary EFL instructional specialists, indicated teachers need to take part in design of blended EFL courses to address these issues. The findings, coupled with theoretical frameworks of social-constructivism, transactional distance, diffusion of innovation, and universal design for instruction, served as the background for a proposed teacher training project resulting from this study. The study can contribute to positive social change by inviting EFL teachers to become more involved in blended course design, increasing their sense of ownership, sharing best practices for blended EFL teaching and learning, and creating conditions for more successful upward social mobility opportunities for Chilean university students who have acquired certifiable English language skills.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my family (nuclear and extended) for their encouragement and support throughout the long years leading to its completion. Most importantly, I dedicate the conferral of the doctoral degree to my wife, Ana María Miguieles Avalos, without whose patience, sympathetic understanding, and forbearance I would not have been able to complete this milestone in my personal and professional life. I celebrate and gladly share in the achievement of this accomplishment with her. I am all yours, now that this part of our journey together is concluded.

I also dedicate this EdD project study to my son, Bryan Dennis, who has taught me that learning is a process (sometimes a very long and difficult one) but that every day can have its triumphs and that even very small steps mean progress. Thank you, my boy.

I would be remiss if I did not also dedicate this work to God, without whose divine grace and swift answer to fervent prayers for inspiration I could not have even begun.

All glory and honor is yours. *Ave Crux, Spes Unica*.

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With deep gratitude, I recognize the indispensable support, encouragement, and guidance of so many people who have accompanied me along the way as mentors, colleagues, and friends. Again, I acknowledge the crucial role my family (and especially my wife) has played in galvanizing me throughout this journey. Impossible otherwise.

To my doctoral committee chair, Dr. James P. Keen, I give heartfelt thanks for helping me during the writing of the project study. Your wisdom and insight into broader and deeper roads of inquiry have been foundational throughout the process of this scholarly effort and to the final formulation of this work.

I wish to recognize my second committee member, Dr. Sushil Jindal and my university research reviewer, Dr. David S. Bail for their thoughtful critique and suggestions for further improvement on the final drafts of the study. I am proud to be counted among your company.

I am indebted to my colleagues and superiors in the Laureate Network Products and Services division for their friendship and encouragement to pursue this opportunity for professional development. I especially recognize the role of Dr. Germán Ramírez, Mr. Gordon Lewis, and Ms. Joseline Castaños for their steadfast support over the years. I hope this study will serve as a relevant contribution to our ongoing collaboration towards improving the academic services we aspire to provide to our students around the world.

To colleagues and friends at the university where this study took place and throughout the Laureate English Program network, I offer genuine appreciation.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

The amount of time university students spend gaining skills in English as a foreign language (EFL) has critical impact on their success in learning the language (Whyte, 2011). In general, students who spend more time on the task of learning EFL attain higher levels of language competence. Blended learning connotes "the carefully designed synthesis of online and face-to-face (F2F) learning incorporating a range of media based upon a sound constructivist pedagogical framework" (Buckley, Pitt, Norton, & Owens, 2010, p. 57). According to So and Bonk (2010), however, blended teaching and learning engenders a complex and challenging new model for many teachers, as well as their students. Thoughtful design of blended EFL courses as an instructional platform for teaching provides an attractive solution to the challenge of time because these courses can afford students with extended opportunities for guided study and practice without necessarily requiring a work overload for teachers. The new paradigm of blended instruction shows a growing trend in higher education (HE) as the next phase in the long history of EFL teaching.

Crystal (2010) stated that EFL instruction has undergone a variety of iterations over time and explained how teaching approaches and trends have fluctuated in fashion. In *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* (3rd ed.), Crystal chronicled the numerous methods that have been promoted, tried, and adapted throughout the decades in efforts to increase students' EFL learning. It has never been a simple process, and Crystal recommended an eclectic approach in order to address each learner's needs in

appropriate, relevant ways. Crystal has emphasized the notion that learning EFL remains a time-consuming, arduous, and complex personal endeavor—pointing out that significantly high dropout and failure rates in EFL programs have been the norm.

New technologies, supporting a blended EFL instructional format, bring added benefits as well as challenges to the dynamic of language learning. Benefits include the ability to expand EFL learning beyond the traditional four walls of the classroom and into cyberspace. Web 2.0 tools (blogs, wikis, discussion forums, voice and video tools, flash files, etc.) allow for extended practice as well as instruction, which an EFL teacher can guide, monitor, and assess (Whyte, 2011). In addition to affording new types of online assessment opportunities through web 2.0 applications, these tools also allow for unlimited individual, peer-to-peer, small group, and whole group activities, projects, and assignments.

The challenges for blended EFL teaching, however, remain daunting because accomplishment at learning requires students to become at least somewhat proactive and autonomous (Astin, 1999; Kuh, 2009). Not only must university students break out of the mold of passivity and shyness that they may have acquired in K-12 formation, they must also overcome the nervousness often associated with second language (L2) acquisition (Awan, Azher, Anwar, & Naz, 2010). In order to facilitate the transition from minimal student engagement to success, teachers need to move beyond their own acquired—and generally traditional—instructional styles and to address personal reluctance to explore new methodologies, tools, and approaches to EFL teaching, such as blended learning.

Creating the conditions for a high level of student motivation and satisfaction can act as a counterweight to the challenges of a blended approach and can prove crucial to the process of successful learning (Woltering, Herrler, Spitzer, & Spreckelsen, 2009; Wu, Tennyson, & Hsia, 2010). Bolstered by overall student motivation and satisfaction, a sustained, continuous, and persistent engagement by students (online and in class) over time with the content of blended courses can become an attainable goal (Kocoglu, Ozek, & Kesli, 2011). Centered on the thesis that satisfied, motivated, and engaged students will learn EFL with greater success in blended formats, in this basic, interview-based qualitative study I looked to the instructors themselves for insights into what teachers can do to increase the level of student satisfaction, engagement, and learning in the blended program at New Vision University (NVU; pseudonym) in Chile.

The Problem as Defined in Relation to the Local Setting

The NVU offered EFL courses, in one form or another, for many years before initiating the current blended program. According to the former rector of NVU, between 1989-2002 the university had offered traditional (F2F-only) basic level English courses as annual electives to all interested students (M. Albornoz, personal communication, March 15, 2002). In late 2000, NVU officials undertook a cost-benefit analysis of their traditional, elective-course EFL program to determine whether to expand it (and make it an obligatory subject) or to change the methodology by utilizing a computer-assisted language learning (CALL) based system. University administrators eventually decided that a CALL-based program could efficiently meet the needs of all students and set a minimum number of levels for each degree program as a requirement for graduation.

From 2002-2008, the university ran the CALL-based EFL program for individual students (i.e., no class groups or F2F teaching sessions) through an English department established for this purpose.

According to NVU English department leaders, these efforts did not achieve adequate EFL learning outcomes for the students. The traditional program did not offer sufficient hours of F2F instruction, and the learning results with the CALL program were meager. As a result, university leaders decided that a new solution was necessary and, in midyear 2007, asked me to explore alternatives that could generate better results by representing NVU in an international consortium of institutions seeking a more effective approach to EFL. As a result of these deliberations, in 2008 NVU committed to initiating a blended learning approach to EFL instruction. The university has now fully implemented this approach and bridged the gap between the previous F2F-only and online-only (CALL) programs. But the students, while glad to have their teachers back in the classroom, still do not engage sufficiently with the online components of the new blended courses to make adequate use of the extended time for learning English promised by a blended solution.

Rationale

Because of the social and interpersonal nature of language learning, student motivation constitutes a fundamental component to the blended teaching-learning dynamic. Teachers need to manage and maintain intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors for each student throughout the blended learning process. The students themselves are ultimately responsible for their individual achievements and EFL proficiency, but

teachers play a vital role in facilitating their success. The question of what teachers can do to play that role more successfully remains critical to this situation. I undertook this study to examine promising ways of promoting constructive student attitudes, behavior, and performance in a blended EFL learning environment and to look for practices that teachers believe might serve in the interest of enhancing the effectiveness of a blended approach.

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

The NVU is an open enrollment, private university in Chile that now offers educational services to 30,000+ traditional college-age and working adult students on eight campuses in three major cities (Santiago, Concepción, and Viña del Mar). The current rector of NVU has stated that over 90% of the student population comes from the lower middle class and poor segments of Chilean society. They are generally the first ones in their families to go to university (J. P. Undurraga, personal communication, March 20, 2010). The university has recognized the study and learning of EFL as an area of heightened anxiety for these students and, therefore, a greater challenge on the part of the university to assure that learning occurs and that students attain minimal proficiency. Studies have shown that EFL anxiety affects students in other countries as well, as a common impediment to language learning (Awan et al., 2010). The university must deal with current student unease with EFL learning in thoughtful and innovative ways.

Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature

The review of relevant literature demonstrates that the challenges associated with blended EFL programs are not limited to the Chilean, or even the Latin American,

context. Many students from non-English speaking countries face similar issues of reticence, resistance, and anxiety when confronted with the urgent necessity to acquire some minimal level of English language proficiency. The introduction of online, blended, or other forms of hybrid EFL course content delivery has not magically resolved these matters. However, the literature demonstrates that the ability to extend student access to course content and increase opportunities for meaningful student-to-teacher and student-to-student interaction in productive EFL activities outside of the traditional four walls of the classroom through a blended learning program offers a potentially groundbreaking advance in the area of EFL instruction.

Definitions

Blended learning: "The carefully designed synthesis of online and face-to-face learning incorporating a range of media based upon a sound constructivist pedagogical framework" (Buckley et al., 2010, p. 57).

Computer-assisted language learning (CALL): "The full integration of technology into language learning" (Garrett, 2009, p. 719).

Cooperative learning is a teaching strategy that requires helping one another to create an atmosphere of mutual achievement, collaboration, support, encouragement, and praise in order to increase proficiency and reduce anxiety in an EFL course (Awan et al., 2010; Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2010).

Learner autonomy is a multifaceted capacity addressed by the EFL specialist in the particular social context of EFL courses at the university level (Dang & Robertson, 2010). Learner autonomy has much to do with an individual student's innate-personal

cognitive and learning style for EFL and clearly, as is often the case, better students make for better results (Srichanyachon, 2011).

Learning Management System (LMS) is an online platform used for content delivery and assessment as part of a blended learning course. An LMS provides "ample opportunities for [meaningful student engagement with] learning activities and helps faculty to follow-up on student progress with these learning activities . . . [and] to provide students with immediate feedback on their learning progress" (Ocak, 2011, p. 693).

Self-efficacy is an individual's judgments and beliefs of his or her confidence and capability to perform a specific behavior (Bandura, 1977).

Social Presence is the sense of immediacy or intimacy that teachers and other learners share in the online portion of a blended course (Buckley et al., 2010; Ke & Xie, 2009; Knight, 2010; So & Brush, 2008).

Task value is the degree to which students find a task interesting or important (Artino, 2008).

Significance

Access to quality HE is significant for social change in Chile. According to academic leadership at the university, before the 1980s, a university education in Chile—offered at a relatively few, prestigious, public institutions—was primarily available only for the elite students of the country. The vast majority of these students received preparation in high-cost, private high schools economically out of reach for all but the wealthiest segments of Chilean society. Since that time—over 30 years now—the Chilean government has opened the HE market to privatization and, therefore, to a much larger

segment of high school graduates. These "new" students are, to a large extent, underprepared (relative to those who attend the elite universities) for HE studies. The goal was (and is) to provide access to HE for a much wider segment of society, including working adults (P. Dittborn, personal communication, September 15, 2010). The most important issue, concern, gap, or trend influencing the Chilean HE learning and workplace environment today begs the question: access to what?

Chile has invested in access and now focuses attention on the issue of quality in HE through the implementation of a nationwide accreditation system, which looks at various factors thought to have an influence on the quality of teaching and learning—from infrastructure, to libraries, to curriculum, and so forth. One of the major, unresolved issues in HE quality assurance concerns the type of HE syllabi, program formats, and teaching practices required to meet the needs of these relatively underprepared students (P. Dittborn, personal communication, September 15, 2010).

A blended learning program at NVU offers a possible resolution to this issue for the discipline of EFL. Blended instruction can potentially help teachers facilitate EFL learning for all students (Dang & Robertson, 2010). The purpose of this study was to discover the perceptions of EFL instructional specialists at NVU about enhancing student engagement in the online portion of blended courses. The inquiry also helps to clarify the roles of teachers in blended, instrumental EFL courses to support the initiation of steps to help them become more effective practitioners of their discipline and better instructors for students in a blended learning context.

I make note from the outset that blended instruction does not necessitate a work speed-up for the teachers involved. Rather, it suggests an opportunity to optimize the same amount of time currently spent on class preparation, content delivery, and assessment in (potentially) more effective ways. For the students, however, blended learning does provide them with extended and relevant opportunities to spend more time on the task of EFL acquisition. I will stress and reiterate this notion throughout the present study: A blended EFL program offers teachers an opportunity to work smarter (rather than harder) in their instructional practice while, at the same time, encouraging students to do more than was possible (or "normal") in traditional F2F-only or online-only content delivery formats.

Problem Statement

Blended content coverage for students in the EFL program has now become the model for teaching and learning at NVU, and the institution has put into place appropriate online and classroom curricular resources for language development. A blended instructional format adds value to EFL learning if students engage proactively with course content through the online platform so that teachers can maximize F2F class time through communicative activities, facilitated by the course instructor, that foster spoken language production (Richards, 2010; Senior, 2010). But, instructional leaders at NVU report that student engagement with the online component of the EFL courses lags behind the level necessary for the blended learning approach to become fully effective. In this study, I explored this problem by identifying teacher perceptions of the causes for this deficit and of possible ways in which it might be remedied.

Guiding Research Questions

In order better to understand teachers' perceptions of the key factors that may influence the degree to which students engage with and integrate the online components of blended EFL courses, this study addressed the following questions:

Research Question 1: What factors do teachers perceive impede or limit students' engagement with the blended EFL course content through the online platform?

Research Question 2: What factors do teachers perceive contribute to students' engagement with blended EFL course content through the online platform?

Research Question 3: What do teachers propose they could put in place to counteract impediments to students' engagement and to increase their involvement with blended EFL course content through the online platform?

Review of the Literature

Through the electronic databases of the Walden University library (SAGE, ERIC, and Education Research Complete), I conducted an extensive search to find peer-reviewed studies and journal articles to support this study. I used the following key words, in isolation or in combination, in Boolean searches to glean these resources: *blended learning, student motivation, higher education, EFL learning,* and *online learning* (among others). These searches generated many possible reference sources for the present review, which led to the formulation of the research questions and the crystallization of the problem statement.

Over the last few decades, and at an ever increasing pace, HE providers worldwide have been looking for ways to expand their enrollment to traditional as well as

nontraditional students through some form of distance learning format or system. Universities hope to accommodate those potential students who are either unwilling or unable to receive instruction on campus for all, most, or even some of the F2F content delivery portion of their courses. Blended EFL courses seek to provide this type of accommodation to students. In addition to addressing the issue of access, the blended English program leadership at NVU earnestly desires to tackle concerns about poor learner self-efficacy and low task value that students may feel towards EFL learning as a vital part of their professional development while at university. In the following discussion, I address these important elements more fully. First, however, I present a brief overview and timeline of the development of distance education as a backdrop.

According to So and Brush (2008), the primary distance education systems that have been developed to meet diverse student needs fall into three distinct historical segments or generations. So and Brush defined first generation distance learning as correspondence courses that utilized unidirectional content delivery formats via regular mail or other public resources. These same authors indicated that educational providers generally facilitated second generation distance learning through a single source of technology, typically referred to as online courses. For example, Walden University courses would generally fall into this category. Little or no F2F contact between instructors and their students characterizes both of these first two generations and this lack of human interaction has led to extensive criticism. Even though Walden University does require students to attend at least one week-long F2F residency as part of their

course requirements, the great bulk of teacher-to-student and student-to-student interaction takes place online and at a distance.

According to Doughty, Meaghan, and Barrett (2009), inherent danger exists in an overreliance on technology in online courses when an educational establishment holds primary interest in maximizing educational quantity rather than in improving (or at least maintaining) educational quality. Doughty et al. have raised warning flags regarding a certain trend in HE, as part of a political economy model that takes more interest in raising the percentage of student pass rates, increasing class sizes, and lowering teacher costs than in knowledge acquisition—a trend often referred to as dumbing down the curriculum. In response to this negative appraisal and as a correction to the early overreliance on pure e-learning solutions, "the third generation is blended learning, characterized as maximizing the best advantages of face-to-face learning and multiple technologies to deliver learning" (So & Brush, 2008, p. 321). The NVU-EFL program has been rolled out and implemented in Chile over the past 5 years based upon this third-generation, blended learning and teaching model.

Research into student motivation throughout these generational cycles has been widespread and growing. For the most part, how and to what extent online course content adds value to the student and teacher experience of learning remains unclear. Blended learning, however, seems to hold promise into the future as a methodology that substantially increases student satisfaction and motivation (Woltering et al, 2009; Wu et al., 2010). Much of the latest motivation research I examined for this study focused predominately on online-based courses or classroom-based, F2F courses—not on blended

ones. Generally speaking, these group comparison studies showed similar student learning outcomes regardless of the teaching format. In fact, Artino (2008) argued that "this outcome has become so prevalent in the distance learning literature that Russell (1999) has dubbed it the *no significant difference phenomena*" (p. 261). In any case, the following review focuses on some of the general concepts about blended learning that did arise from the literature and the findings from emerging studies that point towards the relevance of blended instructional formats for achieving greater learning outcomes.

Before beginning, I must note that comparison studies are now starting to emerge arguing that blended instruction proves as effective as traditional F2F-only formats, or even more so, given the extended opportunities for teacher-student interaction and engagement with blended course content. In one such study that compared blended instruction with traditional F2F instruction of the same content, Kocoglu et al. (2011) claimed that the "results indicated that there was no difference in content knowledge acquisition between [student] teachers receiving blended instruction and [student] teachers receiving face to face instruction" (Abstract, p. 1124). In other words, one can extrapolate from this and similar studies, that offering 100-hour F2F English courses would (or should) prove just as effective as 100-hour blended courses, given that, according to these same authors, "by combining online classes and face to face learning . . . [an educational] program is able to increase its convenience, flexibility, access, and efficiency while maintaining the quality of the program" (p. 1131). Although to date too little evidence exists to show that this type of result suggests generalizability, as researchers conduct more studies on blended learning, the variations found for individual

cases will lead to more substantive conclusions. By taking research such as Kocoglu et al. as a sufficient starting point, however, the present study expounds on the questions surrounding blended courses.

Blended Learning: What Is It?

Researchers have used the term *blended learning* for nearly two decades to describe a shift in course content delivery, instruction, and teacher-learner interaction that occurs neither wholly F2F, nor entirely online, but rather within "the carefully designed synthesis of online and face-to-face learning incorporating a range of media based upon a sound constructivist pedagogical framework" (Buckley et al., 2010, p. 57). The synthesis referred to can take on different blended forms—from mostly F2F, to mostly online, to a perfect 50-50 split. All definitions of blended learning (or teaching) implicitly recognize that learner self-direction, active involvement, and motivation are critical. The shift towards student-centered learning and the increased adoption of online components as part of once traditional HE instruction formats has led researchers to the conviction that "in order to address some of the limitations associated with the exclusive use of e-learning [or F2F learning for that matter], there is a need to adopt a more 'blended' approach to learning" (Ituma, 2011, p. 59). The worldwide Laureate English Program (LEP) attempts to provide opportunities for the adoption and implementation of this type of approach for universities in the network, like NVU.

Social presence for deep, strategic learning. For many authors in the recent literature (see for example Buckley et al., 2010; Ke & Xie, 2009; Knight, 2010), the notion of social presence created by the teacher and among learners holds special

prominence in blended learning environments. A teacher's presence and engagement with students lends support to deeper, more strategic learning approaches on the part of students—as opposed to surface or superficial learning strategies. Social presence indicates the sense of immediacy or intimacy that teachers and other learners share in the online portion of a blended course. The concept of a teacher's online social presence does not imply the medium per se (Internet, computers) but denotes the experiences and impressions of the users through the medium, which are crucial to the students' perception of psychological distance (So & Brush, 2008). Clearly then, simply turning F2F formats into blended courses, in order to provide more flexible and interactive learning environments for students to experiment in, without providing ongoing guided teacher support and communication, can fall short of the goal of increased student engagement (Doughty et al., 2009). The teachers must make efforts to arouse student curiosity, both online and in the classroom, as the key to fueling their motivation. After all, curiosity demonstrates a perfect example of intrinsically-motivated behavior and, according to Shroff and Vogel (2009), indicates a manifestation of the "desires to explore, discover, understand and know [that are] intrinsic to an individual's nature and are central motivators to his or her behavior" (p. 64). A need to increase student curiosity about, engagement with, and involvement in the instrumental EFL courses offered at NVU gives impetus to this study.

Universities like NVU that wish to incorporate blended instruction are asking students (and their course instructors) to change their manner of involvement and participation in the classroom. The levels of teacher engagement and social presence in

both components of blended courses are vital to the learning process and overall course outcomes (Arbaugh et al., 2009). The teachers' guidance of students through a blended learning program by (a) knowing about their learning styles, (b) their approaches to study, and (c) their opinions about using technology for academic purposes has become a primary role for many HE instructors. Giving students timely feedback on their progress in order to raise self-awareness (especially for underperforming learners) as well as to motivate them to solicit and accept help constitutes another responsibility teachers must undertake in a variety of formats, not only in the classroom (Fritz, 2011).

Traditionally, teachers could only give feedback to students—on their written assignments for example—during class time. The time lag between the reception of written work and its return to students (with comments or error correction from the instructor) was generally a matter of days, or between one class and the next. This lag became inconvenient in at least two ways. First, the student was unaware of any errors until the instructor provided feedback in the next F2F class and could, therefore, not continue to advance in that part of the course. Secondly, teachers spent precious class time explaining the feedback to each student, as well as in subsequent negotiation of possible next steps. Blended instruction offers a viable solution to these drawbacks. The NVU-EFL teachers can now offer regular and timely feedback to their students through the online platform of the program. Time spent by the teacher in reviewing and critiquing student work should be similar in all regards to traditional assessment work done by them, at home or in the office. Enhancing the efficacy of the feedback becomes possible

if teachers decide to post the common issues of punctuation, grammar, and style for all students to share. This approach, again, involves working smarter not harder.

The right blend. Student passivity in either environment of a blended course (online or F2F) often leads to dropout, failure, or low levels of learning. Frequently, as the experience at NVU attests, students perceive the online portion of a blended course as something extracurricular, optional, or secondary to the F2F portion. At the same time, "students find a fully face-to-face teaching environment, attending classes artificially soothing and often feel that by attending classes they have done their part" (Kaczynski, Wood, & Harding, 2008, p. 30). Blended learning requires teacher-led facilitation of more active student engagement in both arenas.

In the early days of blended course development, some of the hoped-for benefits included the following: (a) attracting new student markets to increase enrollment opportunities among working adults for HE (weekend and evening courses), (b) more motivated (less passive) students who would become actively engaged self-starters, and (c) invigorated teachers who could spend more of their time and energy guiding and facilitating learning (see for example So & Brush, 2008; Garrett, 2009). After almost 20 years, expectations remain high, but research will require more evidence that shows higher student acceptance or the perceived value of blended courses over more traditional formats (Doughty et al., 2009; McCarthy & Murphy, 2010). Ongoing research must help to find the optimal blend that can facilitate, maximize, and maintain student motivation throughout a given blended course and to reposition, shift, or transform the teachers'

role—from that of lecturer to more of a facilitator or tutor function—in the overall delivery and assessment of blended content.

Blending online and F2F components into one teaching-learning environment may provide opportunities for enhanced interaction with course contents, teachers, and other students but may also give rise to new problems, especially in the online portions of a blended course. According to So and Brush (2008) "students in *distance courses* [emphasis added], are dissatisfied and frustrated with the following factors: (a) unclear expectations from the instructors, (b) tight timeline, (c) workload, (d) poor software interface, (e) slow access, and (f) no synchronous communication" (p. 321). To date, these negative factors (also alluded to by the participants in this study) have not been fully resolved, but clearly, the combining of F2F with online activities in a single course constitutes only a small part of blended learning. Academic leaders and EFL instructors themselves need to account for and address much more in order to increase learning success in this format.

Theoretical Framework, Pedagogical Paradigm, and Motivation Design Model

Among the current studies I examined for this literature review, the researchers suggested different theoretical frameworks, teaching-learning paradigms, and course design models and strategies as appropriate for the blended learning environments. Some authors had a clear favorite theory of learning whereas others held more eclectic viewpoints. While many theories of learning have potential merit, one theoretical framework for blended learning seemed to emerge prominently throughout this review.

Social cognitive theory. A consensus appeared among many blended and e-learning educational researchers that the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977) outlines the most appropriate theoretical framework within which to explain and predict student behavior in these settings (Artino, 2008, 2010; Artino & Stephens, 2009; Baker, 2010; Keller, 2008; Ladkin, Case, Gayá Wicks, & Kinsella, 2009; Rakes & Dunn, 2010; Shroff & Vogel, 2009; Wu et al., 2010; Zimmerman, 2008). These authors, among others, made note of the adequacy of the social cognitive theoretical framework for exploring student motivation and satisfaction in blended or e-learning environments due to its emphasis on the critical cognitive factors of performance expectations and self-efficacy. Because of the prominence the theory gives to the notion of student self-efficacy—that student-held belief, judgment, or confidence in the capability to execute and accomplish a specific behavior—the social cognitive theory recognizes that student doubt or lack of confidence in the ability to perform a specific behavior will have a negative effect on student performance expectations. Wu et al. (2010) provided a succinct description of the relevance of this theory as it applies to the present study when they stated that developing students' notions of self-efficacy and performance expectations can "enhance human accomplishment and well-being, help determine how much effort people will expend on a behavior, how long they will persevere when confronting obstacles and how resilient they will be in the face of adverse situations" (p. 156).

The social cognitive theory argues that student self-efficacy and performance expectations are "held to be the principal cognitive determinants of individual behavior" (Wu et al., 2010, p. 157). Self-efficacy then, along with task value, the degree to which

students find a task interesting or important (Artino, 2008), and their perceptions of instructional quality, all remain individual learner beliefs that determine their satisfaction and academic performance, as well as their future enrollment choices, in online or blended courses.

Constructivist paradigm. Ladkin et al. (2009) noted that the constructivist paradigm encapsulates the instructional or pedagogical model of teaching-learning that best describes the way HE students in online and blended settings should learn. Rather than viewing education as the transmission of knowledge from one-who-knows (the teacher) to one-who-does-not (the student), constructivism posits an active process of meaning making on the part of the student, facilitated by the instructor, through the student's own personal interpretation, understanding, and selection or use of the learning objects (content) of a course. In the constructivist model, teachers become less the sage-on-the-stage transmitters of facts and knowledge and more the guide-on-the-side facilitators of individual student and course-group learning. In short, the student's own self-regulation and motivation—or self-regulated learning prompted and supported by the teacher (Zimmerman, 2008)—shapes academic achievement and performance. The dedicated engagement of teachers who promote active student involvement factors significantly in this process (Astin, 1999). The international LEP program offers 24-7 asynchronous access to students, through the LMS, for different types of engagement whenever teachers might choose to make use of the opportunities afforded to them through the available technology applications. This affordability does not necessarily mean that teachers must spend more of their time engaging with the students, but it does

perhaps imply time better spent. I assume that teachers are dedicating time to their students when grading or correcting assignments. Students become aware of these efforts, in a more timely fashion, through online feedback from the teacher within the LMS. No need to wait for the next F2F class to continue working.

The notion, previously mentioned, of social presence on the part of the teacher has two component aspects. The first, instructor immediacy, denotes the use of verbally immediate behaviors such as "initiating discussions, asking questions, using self-disclosure, addressing students by name, using inclusive personal pronouns (we, us), repeating contacts with students over time, responding frequently to students, offering praise, and communicating attentiveness" (Baker, 2010, p. 5). The second, instructor presence, involves communicating accessibility, consistent interaction patterns that include substantive feedback, effective discussion moderation, and direct instruction in the online setting. Both aspects play a critical role in social presence, which helps to facilitate and strengthen the self-efficacy and performance expectations of students. Interestingly, as Baker (2010) observed, instructor immediacy proves less important than instructor presence. In other words, teacher clarity, consistency, and content-expertise-driven guidance and feedback constitute more effective means of generating student engagement in online settings than do high levels of rapport, empathy, or e-friendliness.

Motivation design model. Finally, the ARCS motivation theory serves as a theoretical model for course design and support specifically geared to measure and respond to student motivation in e-blended learning environments (Bolliger, Supanakorn, & Boggs, 2010; Colakoglu & Akdemir, 2010; Keller, 2008). In the late 1970s and early

1980s, Keller (2008) elaborated the ARCS motivation theory based on a list of principles or conditions common to all learning settings. Keller, after a thorough examination and synthesis of motivation literature, coined the term *ARCS* as an "acronym resulting from key words representing the four categories (attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction)" (p. 176) thought most relevant. Keller later expanded this original synthesis to include volition and self-regulation as "these concepts supplement motivation by explaining attitudes and behaviors that help a person overcome obstacles and persist toward the accomplishment of one's goals" (p. 176). The ARCS motivation theory coincides with (and becomes subsumed within) the overarching social cognitive theory previously mentioned. In the same way, Astin's (1999) theory of student involvement has offered fruitful ground from which to develop ideas about how to increase student time-on-task in order to achieve course learning goals and objectives.

Student Perspectives, Roles, and Responsibilities in Blended Learning

In the social cognitivist theoretical framework, in the constructivist paradigm, through the lens of student involvement theory, and for motivational design models like ARCS, the student constitutes the center of the teaching-learning dynamic. Much of the international research of online and blended learning formats I examined for this study focused largely on the students' own perspectives and attitudes towards online or blended content, their needs, and the responsibilities they hold for online or blended learning success (Alexander, Perreault, Zhao, & Waldman, 2009; Hatziapostolou & Paraskakis, 2010; Kupczynski, Stallone Brown, & Davis, 2008; Ogunleye, 2010). For these and other authors, student engagement takes on primary importance for e-learning formats. Raising

student levels of motivation in order to increase their perseverance in working with course content through an online platform was the impetus behind most of this research.

Research into e-learning and learner motivation has found that student demographics have little effect (Bradford & Wyatt, 2010). Rather, learner participation and their levels of focused involvement in the online platform become the prominent indicators of learning success. According to Hrastinski (2008, 2009) student involvement in the online portion of a course has been measured in any number of ways, but only "active" participation (with the teacher and with other learners) leads to higher perceived learning and more favorable outcomes—which holds true for both types of blended course delivery formats. As Kuh (2009) has stated, "Students' perceptions are not directly related to how much they learn; however, they are directly related to whether students will persist and are satisfied with their experiences and, thus, indirectly related to desired outcomes" (p. 12). The teachers of blended courses play an important role in terms of the extent to which students engage and actively participate with course content and with one another—both online and in the classroom.

Participation and the perception of quality. Student course evaluations can often prove subjective (Artino, 2009), yet it seems clear that the perception of quality results from the interaction between the student and the learning environment. According to Daukilas, Kačinienė, Vaišnorienė, and Vaščila (2008), if learners disengage, lack motivation, or have "weakly expressed study motives [because] students often use eTeaching/learning technologies only for obtaining a formal qualification rather than for the development of their individual competence" (p. 137), then an increased perception of

quality becomes unlikely. Undoubtedly, students bring their personal-historical academic practice into the blended learning environment. Those more adequately prepared by past work and academic experience will more easily fit into a course offering blended components—and vice versa. Holley and Oliver (2010) argued that "simply providing e-learning—no matter how well intentioned—is insufficient to address the problems that students are experiencing" (p. 699). Most studies showed that traditionally "good" students thrive in both. How then to support and encourage academically "weaker" students—in order to fulfill the widening participation agenda of online learning—marks the next big step in blended learning research.

Motivational factors play a pivotal role in the amount of individual student participation in an LMS and can indicate the type of learners they are. Knight (2010) identified three basic groups of online learners and categorized them as early users, late users, and constant users. Knight described early users as students who mainly access online resources at the start of a course, and called this a "grab-and-go" strategy, while late users, "forced by impending coursework and exam deadlines to access these resources" (p. 72), come on towards the end of the term. Neither of these student groups actively participates during the course, and Knight places both in the strategic or surface learner categories. Constant users, on the other hand, seem to achieve higher results and show "deep learning approaches in which understanding of the topics . . . is built up incrementally through continual and persistent interaction with the learning resources [i.e., through active learning]" (p. 73). Clearly then, for some students, personal intrinsic motivation leads to more-or-less active online participation, while for others, extrinsic

motivating factors (grades, deadlines, etc.) become the primary motors of online or blended course involvement. However, studies show that the extrinsic motivating factors put into a course by the teacher also prove necessary to increasing overall gains in student participation (Selvi, 2010). The process of deciding upon and implementing extrinsic motivating components into the overall structure of the NVU-EFL program and syllabus over the last few years has gone through several iterations. Again, the right blend has not yet been discovered.

Technology challenges and cultural perceptions. Technical problems often become a major source of dissatisfaction in online or blended courses (Artino, 2009). However, beyond any major or minor technical difficulties, the students' self-efficacy with technology, in terms of access, skill, and know-how, primarily determines online or blended course participation. These commonly-reported barriers to technology use in HE are generally diminishing as most university-level students can proficiently navigate the instructional and communication technology (ICT) platforms in place.

Many college campuses are rapidly addressing the physical and technical issues of resourcing and skill and studies show that most students use ICT resources (the Internet, for example) in their personal lives but not necessarily for study purposes. Actual use differs from what students could or should be doing (Selwyn, 2008). Many students misunderstand the connection between ICT, academics, and the nature of learning—NVU students included. Selwyn (2008) argued that universities need to clarify how these elements fit together in order to meet the increasing demands for nontraditional content delivery modes.

Blended courses create new opportunities for enhanced study and increased transfer of learning. The diversity in content delivery and assessment should prove decidedly attractive to HE students. However, even though the task value of a blended course may be high, student satisfaction with it may not. Lack of satisfaction can occur even when course content directly relates to future career aspirations (Artino, 2009).

In some cases, this dissatisfaction has a cultural base. According to Zhu, Valcke, and Schellens (2009), "Western students are more accustomed to student-centered learning environments whereas Asian students prefer a teacher-centered approach . . . although Chinese students are self-confident about their computer skills, they are less likely to use computers for study purposes" (p. 34). In other cases, campus-based students, when offered a choice, appear to prefer more traditional F2F classes—perceived as higher in quality—over hybrid (blended) courses, even though online options may be more convenient (Yudko, Hirokawa, & Chi, 2008). These negative biases toward distance learning can lead to decreased engagement with course content—time-on-task—which may in turn cause inferior outcomes.

Students commonly hold a number of misconceptions around e-blended learning contexts (i.e., that universities use blended learning as a ploy to save money through a necessarily inferior program that leaves students on their own to learn; see Toon et al., 2009). The NVU-EFL program must overcome these false impressions in order to make progress. Teachers, of course, will prove crucial to this process of change management because the optimal blend remains undiscovered and much more needs doing in order to arouse student interest in online or blended course delivery platforms (Hatziapostolou &

Paraskakis, 2010; Kupczynski et al., 2008; Ogunleye, 2010). In this study, I examined teacher perspectives around these issues in the NVU-EFL program.

Teacher Perspectives, Roles, and Responsibilities in Blended Learning

A good deal of research has been conducted with a focus on the teachers' perspective towards online or hybrid learning designs as a means through which they might identify their own (as well as the students') biases and discover ways to provide effective and engaging online or blended instruction by addressing their learners' academic self-regulation and motivation (Artino, 2008b; Hsu & Sheu, 2008; Koenig, 2010; Külekçi, 2011; Ocak, 2011; Sayadian, Mukundan, & Baki, 2009; Vlachopoulos & Cowan, 2010; Whyte, 2011; Yuksel, 2009). Artino (2008b) has argued that "online learning, as a mode of instruction, shifts control from the instructor to the learner" (p. 38). Negative attitudes on the part of teachers, however, can thwart online or blended program acceptance, development, and support (Alexander et al., 2009; Sayadian et al., 2009). Much of this negativity has been explained by what may often derive from a more traditionalist stance towards teaching, and a predominant preference for F2F modes of instruction. In the EFL program at NVU, teachers believe that classroom instructional delivery allows for greater human contact and interaction so that changes in course dynamics, perceived through body language cues for example, can occur "on-the-fly" if necessary (B. Pino, personal communication, July 14, 2011). Classroom-based instruction and assessment also gives assurance that learners complete their own work, thereby allowing teachers to feel a sense of greater control over the learning process.

Integrating technology to add time for learning opportunities. Citing foreign language course work as an example, Kuh (2009) stated that many types of "complementary learning opportunities augment academic programs . . . [and that] technology facilitates collaboration between peers and instructors . . . and [can] provide opportunities to integrate and apply knowledge" (p. 18). Many teachers, however, see an online addition to their traditional courses as little more than "'stretching the mold', by including more technology without rethinking or changing any of the traditional classroom teaching offerings" or dynamics (Holley & Oliver, 2010, p. 694-695). More traditional-minded instructors often perceive online delivery as inferior in these regards and "very impersonal with little or no interaction between the instructor and the students. . . . [It can] allow the good students to learn more, but average or poor students learn a lot less" (Koenig, 2010, p. 22). These instructors tend to challenge the notion that blended teaching-learning offers sufficient improvement to warrant the time and energy required to include it as an integral part of their classes (Sayadian et al., 2009; Whyte, 2011). But, if teachers and not technology hold the key to the robust integration of ICT platforms within blended learning environments, then precisely this attitude needs adjusting in order to increase success rates for hybrid or blended courses for both learners and teachers. Inviting EFL teachers to take part in the design of the blended courses at NVU, which although might require a good amount of time "up front," may offer an opportunity for them to discover ways of using their time to best advantage during the semester. In the project for this study (in Appendix A and described in Section 3), I will continue to stress the notion that students must work more—and not necessarily the

teachers. The teachers can make better use of their time in F2F classes through appropriate use of technology in a blended learning environment. Overall, aggregated time spent by the teacher on any one course should remain the same if blended courses undergo a thoughtful design process with teachers' input in mind.

In the case of second or foreign language learning, the need to spend time—lots of time—in the acquisition process through hundreds of hours of intensive study and guided practice remains the crux of the issues involved. NVU allots no more than 3 hours per week over a 16-18 week academic period for classroom time in EFL courses (B. Pino, personal communication, July 14, 2011). At a maximum, approximately 50 hours of instruction can take place F2F in a subject in which "between 150 and 200 hours of instruction are required to progress from one level to the next" (Whyte, 2011, p. 216). Therefore, a sort of "time-gap" problem emerges, calling for a way out that motivates students to engage more of their time on the task of learning EFL.

Astin (1999) has devoted much of his life to what he dubs the theory of student involvement. In this theory, Astin postulates student time, specifically student time-on-task, as the most important institutional resource, and that in most cases (within reasonable limits) more time results in better learning. Astin has suggested that any level of measureable achievement in a student's educational, learning, or developmental goals finds direct proportion to the amount of time and effort devoted to activities designed to produce the desired gains in those areas. Accordingly, the intentional end of any pedagogical practice should focus on achieving maximal student involvement in the teaching-learning process. Only then could such a practice or policy stand as effective.

The EFL department at NVU bases its course programs upon the assumption that students will engage with the content of each level for a minimum of 100 hours (both in-class and online) over the course of a 16- to 18-week semester. The academic schedules, however, provide an average of only 50 hours of F2F instruction, practice, and assessment throughout the same period (B. Pino, personal communication, July 14, 2011). Simply put, F2F classes do not provide enough time for adequate coverage, practice, and assessment of the entire scope of language input (instruction) and student output (production) required to advance satisfactorily from level to level. According to Whyte (2011), "the only practical solution to these shortcomings in both hours and conditions of foreign language instruction seems to be the use of instructional and communication technology (ICT) in combination with face-to-face instruction" (p. 218). The roadmap to achieving this combination-blend of EFL course components at NVU remains imprecise. The teachers themselves can offer insight into the design of blended courses that allow them to spend the same amount of time during the semester on preparation, instruction, and assessment more effectively and efficiently while simultaneously increasing the time their students spend on learning beyond the classroom. Again, I propose in the present study that blending need not imply a work speed-up for teachers, but a work enhancement.

Concerns and commitments. Teachers express concern over several aspects of blended courses. One concern revolves around the complexity of instruction, as potentially a lot more goes on in a blended environment than in either strictly F2F or online course formats. Student-teacher interaction becomes diversified—and both

synchronous and asynchronous—which requires the harmonization of both in order to adapt to changing learning conditions (Ocak, 2011). Another concern involves the amount of preparation and the time required to teach blended courses effectively. Perceived time constraint becomes an important detractor to blended courses alluded to by teachers (Ocak, 2011; Whyte, 2011). Often, teachers feel that they are teaching or doing the same thing twice and, therefore, fail to engage fully with students in the online portion of a blended course (Nakazawa, 2009). The issues of time and resource management require consideration through the appropriate design and implementation of blended learning—and when teachers are clear about their roles and responsibilities. In this study, I have addressed the apparent lack of engagement by teachers with their students through the online components of the NVU-EFL blended courses.

Time becomes an important factor when looking at teacher online engagement with students of blended courses. According to Ocak (2011), "compared to traditional courses, in which the time faculty spend is limited by the designated hours set aside for the classroom setting, the faculty spend more time on blended courses because, to a great extent, they lack such limits" (p. 696). This concern often coincides with disquiet about teacher pay. If changing to a blended course format requires added or different kinds of work, teachers want extra payment for it, or to reduce their overall course load (Alexander et al., 2009; Daukilas et al., 2008; Whyte, 2011). University administrators may need to clarify the issues of teacher workload versus payment—especially in terms of blended course offerings—and adequately communicate these policies to teachers. Current schedules allow EFL teachers at NVU to spend approximately 50 hours per

semester in F2F classes with each of their course groups. The university also expects teachers to prepare all of their classes beforehand, grade homework assignments and exams, give appropriate written and verbal feedback to students, and to upload all final marks to the university's student information system before the end of the term. While the total time spent on any one or all of these additional work requirements may differ from teacher to teacher, often depending on their level of experience, it would be safe to say that teachers spend between 25 to 50 additional hours of their time during the semester (for each of their courses) to comply with these duties. Taking experienced teachers as an example then, if they could better exploit and maximize the additional, non-F2F hours of their work in terms of advancing course objectives—by automatizing and streamlining some of the grading, feedback, or data entry—that innovation could become a boon for the teachers. I discuss this issue as part of the training project developed in Section 3.

In any case, the experience so far at NVU indicates that teachers spend relatively little time at all on the LMS platform in direct communication and engagement with their students. Teachers still feel the need to cover all of the course material in class in order to control the entire learning process (B. Pino, personal communication, July 14, 2011). This teacher perception creates serious limitations to the overall potential effectiveness of a so-called blended EFL solution and often simply extends the transmission or behaviorist approach onto the LMS. Senior (2010) emphasized that, instead of trying to cover everything F2F, teachers should focus on more general pedagogical outcomes and use technology as a means of virtually extending the classroom and concentrating on the

learners' interests, requirements, experiences, and goals. This fresh approach to teaching would align with the social cognitive or social constructivist frameworks described previously that encourage the creation and facilitation of learning environments in which instruction focuses on enhancing student self-regulation and motivation through proactive engagement with students throughout the course content (Astin, 1999; Baker, 2010; Kuh 2009; Ladkin et al., 2009; Zimmerman, 2008). In effect, this approach seeks to shift the students' locus of control from external (teacher-centered) to internal (learner-centered) in order to enhance student self-efficacy and to reduce their anxiety or sense of helplessness in the face of EFL learning (Bandura, 1977). Student proficiency remains the goal—not covering every page of the course book in class.

Astin (1999) and Kuh (2009) have also been quite emphatic on this point. Astin's theory of student involvement encouraged teachers to focus their attention on what their students did—how motivated they seemed and how much time and energy they devoted to learning—rather than what they themselves did. Student involvement becomes the right focus of concern, rather than any particular set of resources, specific course content, or preferred pedagogical techniques. Getting students to engage proactively in the learning dynamic can increase both their learning outcomes and their academic satisfaction. Careful consideration of the quality of student effort, the time and energy students invest in relevant learning tasks, and their purposeful interaction among peers and teachers throughout a blended course, constitute important components in the EFL program at NVU in need of attention. Kuh stated that "today *engagement* is the term usually used to represent constructs such as quality of effort and involvement in

productive learning activities" (p. 6). In this study, I have looked for ways to enhance student-teacher engagement with blended EFL course content, and with one another.

Reorienting the teacher's role in the learning dynamic. Universities like NVU are asking for more blended or online support for traditional courses. However, often teachers receive little institutional support in terms of training and development (P. Dittborn, personal communication, September 15, 2010). Teachers may feel left alone and forced to rely on their own individual efforts and willingness to integrate technology into their courses, which can lead to suspicions about the motives of administrators who promote blended teaching (Ocak, 2011). The international LEP offers online developmental modules for teachers to meet this need. The teachers, however, often excuse themselves from participating in these courses for lack of time. To address these and other issues, the English Institute at NVU has implemented an online Community-of-Practice (CoP; see Hsu & Sheu, 2008) and asked teachers to begin working together as part of the solution. Helping one another find and share best practices provides a step forward towards a clearer path to academic quality and to both student and teacher satisfaction. This project study will become another source of insight into what can help teachers and students in a blended EFL program to achieve better results.

There are multiple roles in blended or online teaching (Yuksel, 2009), and the inadequate clarification of these roles in blended courses confuses both teachers and students (Ocak, 2011). Even though students must conscientiously self-regulate their own learning, instructor monitoring of online work proves essential to the effective and seamless delivery of educational resources in support of F2F teaching and the

enhancement of online participation by learners (Knight, 2010; Kupczynski et al., 2008). The external guidance on the part of instructors who actively engage with their students in the online portion of a course shows particular importance if students are to succeed (Artino, 2008b). The way that instructors choose to conduct this guidance can take many forms (tutoring, coaching, managing, facilitating). In each case, the teachers' own particular role will often be a reflection of their F2F demeanor, interaction, and connectivity with students as well as their particular technical and technological skills and competencies (Senior, 2010; Vlachopoulos & Cowan, 2010; Yuksel, 2009). The findings of this study show this tendency to hold true for NVU-EFL teachers as well.

According to Vlachopoulos and Cowan (2010), all of these approaches and roles can be more-or-less effective in e-moderation, depending upon various factors of a given course. Still, no established best practice has come to the fore, and potential risk or weakness can result from each. In any case, one cannot overstress the importance of teacher engagement in timely communication with their students in the different venues of a blended course. This idea harkens back to the notion of enhanced teaching presence both on- and off-line to support student engagement with blended course content (Artino, 2008b; Senior, 2010). The concept of teacher presence becomes vital and can increase course attendance and boost learning, especially for reluctant learners (Hsu & Sheu, 2008). Low student attendance in the F2F component of the blended EFL courses at NVU concerns many teachers and administrators alike.

Teacher self-efficacy and technological competence. Foreign language anxiety among young and older adult learners remains a common theme in EFL teaching circles

(Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2010). Research has demonstrated that active participation and cooperative learning in the EFL classroom effectively lowers student anxiety and increases proficiency. Again, however, raising student participation largely depends on the skills, capabilities, imagination, and efforts of the instructor in order to increase the success and effectiveness of an online delivery platform (Koenig, 2010, Whyte, 2011). Teachers must believe that more active student engagement remains possible and that they are capable and proficient change-agents who can make a difference in student motivation.

I assume that properly-trained teachers, who believe they are competent and effective educational providers, are likely to demonstrate confidence in their instructional practices in most settings. Külekçi (2011) stated that "teacher efficacy beliefs [fostered in teacher-training programs] are regarded as an important criterion in increasing . . . productivity and motivation during the teaching and learning process" (p. 247). Many preservice or inservice teacher training programs, however, often fail to prepare their students to integrate technology into their teaching, which leaves them unprepared for the challenges of computer-based or blended instruction (Sayadian et al., 2009). Furthermore, many teacher training programs generally focus on preparing teachers for service at the primary and secondary levels of education and do not pertain to instruction in HE, where faculty often have little or no training regarding teaching and the facilitation of learning (Dr. J. P. Keen, personal communication, November 13, 2011). At NVU, the same type of situation exists.

For the most part, the EFL instructors at NVU, either teachers or translators, received formal pedagogical training of the traditional sort. The addition of technology as a means of instructional content delivery requires teachers to break out of the traditional mold of purely F2F instruction. Blended teaching may also involve a greater or different type of time commitment, extra or differently-focused effort, and confidence as well as familiarity, with the tools available in an online platform (i.e., technological competence). A successfully blended EFL course requires a holistic approach and alternating teaching strategies that include the use of the LMS-web 2.0 tools. The adjustment to an e-learning content delivery and assessment model implies change and may require blended course teachers to give up their former teaching styles in order to establish meaningful connections between the F2F and online portions of a course (Ocak, 2011). Honing new skills may prove challenging and perhaps threatening for some.

When the LMS or other technological components fail. Even when teachers do take on the challenge of blended learning, if the technology does not work, then problems ensue. Technology breakdown or limited (slow) access comprises another area of high concern for teachers. Often, access to online content depends on minimum PC—or the institutional technology infrastructure—system requirements that may prove lacking. When the necessary arrangements for adequate technology access remain unresolved (Internet connection bandwidth, hardware, and software problems), it becomes naïve to think that students and teachers will be able or willing to solve these issues on their own. Koenig (2010) and Salcedo (2010) have noted that instructional time lost because of malfunctioning technology or limited, slow access can become a major issue for online or

blended programs no matter how efficiently teachers conduct the courses otherwise. These technical issues create barriers to the effective teaching of blended courses and may cause both teachers and students to work around, instead of with, the online components.

Adult Students and Blended Learning: A Good Mix?

Once technical (access) issues find resolution, the fundamental verdict of many current studies into blended and e-learning among traditional HE students remains: namely, that instructional approaches can influence the self-motivation and self-regulated learning strategies of students within the context of an educational program (Rakes & Dunn, 2010). Coaching, for example, in a context that emphasizes constructivist learning—as a break away from "the prevalence of a 'transmission' view of education being enacted by [many] instructors" (Ladkin et al., 2009, p. 204)—takes on particular importance in these strategies. Strong coaching practices by teachers can give rise to three apparent paradoxes of online or blended learning. These paradoxes are that (a) the learning experience gains value, (b) the perception of quality increases, and (c) the sense of psychological distance lowers (p. 208). The question arises as to whether or not these findings hold for nontraditional adult students in HE as well.

A number of current studies centered on the needs of this growing HE student population in online or blended course environments (Ke, 2010; Ke & Xie, 2009; Mesh, 2010; Ransdell, 2010; Toon et al., 2009). Ke (2010) indicated that nontraditional adult students now make up more than 45% of HE enrollment in the USA—which corresponds roughly to NVU's own student body—and have become the new majority in online and

distance education (Ke & Xie, 2009). The results of these and other studies showed that while nontraditional adult students exhibit differences from their younger adult (18 to 24-year old) counterparts—in terms of their life and work experience, their multiple commitments, and a proportionally high part-time student status—their participation in online or blended courses remains similar. According to Ransdell (2010), "contrary to popular wisdom, older students may make better online learners than younger" (p. 70) due to higher critical thinking skills and a greater sensitivity to meeting the demands of autonomous or self-directed learning environments. In fact, Keen (personal communication, November 13, 2011) remarked that one might better acknowledge the so-called "popular wisdom" surrounding adult learners and online educational designs as a popular misconception given the unacceptably high attrition rates of 18 to 22-year olds who tend to require a much stronger social component to learning than often available in online formats.

According to Wlodkowski (2008), adults bring their own intrinsic motivational strategy into the classroom. Wlodkowski's now classic reference for understanding adult motivation in educational settings, *Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn: A Comprehensive Guide for Teaching All Adults* (3rd ed.), focuses primarily on these "working-age adults, nontraditional college students, and older adults" (p. 33). When and if their motivation wanes, Wlodkowski has offered 60 strategies to help instructors regain their attention. Many of these strategies prove perfectly adaptable to blended learning environments. In any case, for older as well as younger adult learners, teacher presence and encouragement catalyzes student success, satisfaction, and deep learning in online or

blended courses (Ke, 2010; Ke & Xie, 2009; Mesh, 2010). At NVU, the blended program offers EFL courses to both of these student populations but, as yet, discerns little difference between them in terms of overall learning outcomes, participation, or satisfaction.

Given a choice, most adult students prefer blended courses that include F2F sessions—with real teachers—over and above exclusively e-learning environments where they may feel a sense of isolation and psychological distance more strongly (Toon et al., 2009). In F2F settings, students have the opportunity to ask questions as and when they like, and teachers can respond in the moment. Adult students of all ages appreciate this type of interaction and collaboration, which online-only venues may lack.

Establishing instructor presence throughout all portions of the blended EFL courses at NVU takes on the highest priority in order to expect greater learning success with both the younger and older student populations. In the classroom, more interactive activities (a) among students, (b) with the teacher, and (c) through technology-based components as a group accomplish this requirement. Online, teachers need to help build student confidence by accompanying them through tasks that are "just within reach" in terms of complexity in order for them to build their sense of self efficacy and gradually become more autonomous in their learning (Joseph, Watanabe, Shiung, Choi, & Robbins, 2009; Wlodkowski, 2008). The LEP offers this possibility to NVU teachers who choose to take advantage of it.

Blended Learning and EFL: Answer to a Riddle?

Language learning experts have written extensively on the topic of EFL learning or acquisition and how this important challenge has been tackled in the past (Crystal, 2010). Current authors continue to look at this topic in general terms and with a new focus on blended learning as a possible answer to the ongoing riddle (Cheng, Hwang, Wu, Shadiev, & Xie, 2010; Dang & Robertson, 2010; Fang, 2010; Garrett, 2009; Genc Ilter, 2009; Hershkovitz & Nachmias, 2009; Joseph et al., 2009; McPherson, 2009; Nakazawa, 2009; Richards, 2010; Salcedo, 2010; Senior, 2010; Shih, 2010; Srichanyachon, 2011; Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2010; Wichadee, 2010). Teachers working with students—and students spending a great deal of time on L2 acquisition—remains the basic dynamic. LMS software and other online components can strengthen the teacher-learner-content relationship, but it will not do so automatically, and it cannot turn into a replacement for the teacher (Doughty et al., 2009; Fang, 2010). As Garrett (2009) stated, "it will always be better for students to learn language in courses led by well-trained language teachers than to attempt to do so independently, no matter how good the materials" (p. 726). This idea harkens back again to the notion of teacher presence and the need to establish strong rapport with and among students in order to reduce anxiety and promote more effective L2 acquisition (Salcedo, 2010; Senior, 2010). Language learning is a social, as well as an academic, skill learned by way of personal interactions where the L2 becomes the primary means of communication.

Learning together reduces the fear of failure. Foreign language learning anxiety constitutes a major affective barrier to successful L2 acquisition. Awan et al.

(2010) stated that this common anxiety "is not something to be ignored or considered a problem for students to deal with on their own" (p. 56). The formation of a CoP among teachers, mentioned previously, comprises an important step for evaluating and improving teaching practice in dealing with this issue. Inviting students to take an active part in the learning community also becomes essential. Blended learning platforms (through web 2.0 tools, for example) can give teachers and students an opportunity for simulated real-life practice in oral and writing skills in a less anxiety-ridden setting thus allowing for more confident L2 output (Cheng et al., 2010; Salcedo, 2010). One of the major ideas of the international LEP—for the development of the online platform, as a component of an overall blended learning program—was to provide anxiety-free venues for students to practice in without fear of making mistakes or suffering ridicule.

Effective teachers reduce student anxiety through the development of a community of learners and through personalized, learner-focused teaching in both online and F2F settings (Richards, 2010). Cooperative learning among students results from a teaching strategy that requires helping one another to create an atmosphere of mutual achievement, collaboration, support, encouragement, and praise in order to increase proficiency and reduce anxiety in an EFL course (Awan et al., 2010; Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2010). Blended learning offers HE instructors an opportunity to deal with the changing roles of teachers in the 21st century and requires a reconceptualization of the "valuable part they play in supporting the learning opportunities of their students in our progressively interconnected world" (Senior 2010, p. 146). At NVU and across the

Laureate network, creating this opportunity for teachers and students shapes the vision of the blended learning program.

Increased student autonomy: The aspiration of blended learning. Getting the relatively underprepared students at NVU to take on the challenge of autonomous (and interdependent) learning through a blended program constitutes part of this vision. Learner autonomy remains a multifaceted capacity recognized and addressed in the particular social context of EFL courses at the university level (Dang & Robertson, 2010). Learner autonomy has much to do with an individual student's innate, personal, cognitive, and learning styles for tackling the challenges of EFL and, generally speaking, better students make for better results (Srichanyachon, 2011). But, blended instruction can potentially help teachers facilitate learning for all students. On one hand, an LMS allows students to initiate their own learning processes without exclusive overreliance on the teacher (Dang & Robertson, 2010). On the other hand, language learning denotes a social phenomenon that requires some basic level of human-to-human interaction. According to Nakazawa (2009), "some [EFL] skills can be acquired through self-study . . . while other skills need to be learned through the experience of interacting with other people along with the guidance of a teacher" (p. 406). Primary among these, stand the productive skills of speaking and writing in which human assessment, accuracy, and feedback remain unmatched by online programs (Fang, 2010; Shih, 2010). Web 2.0 offers voice tools and writing platforms, like wikis and blogs that require a high degree of human interaction and may offer a partial solution to this challenge (Wichadee, 2010). However, an overreliance on technology for L2 acquisition could lead to student

boredom or a strong sense of isolation and a felt lack of essential academic support (Genc Ilter, 2009). A truly blended EFL program at NVU could help to resolve some of the multifaceted challenges of English language learning.

Placing, grading, and tracking students in a blended course. Grading, an important part of any EFL course, often begins even before instruction starts. Online platforms can facilitate placement testing and the objective evaluation of EFL competency at the start of a term, in order to situate students into more-or-less homogeneous groupings (McPherson, 2009). After placement, ongoing student assessment can continue directly through an LMS. Perhaps even more importantly, students can evaluate their own (as well as their classmates') work when the course syllabus requires students to share postings and to work collaboratively on assignments through the platform (Dang & Robertson, 2010). Online assessment of individual and group work can take place either with or without direct teacher intervention—even though teacher presence remains a fundamental aspect of successful blended courses.

An LMS allows teachers to monitor and track the student learning process and to intertwine the social and academic domains (Dang & Robertson, 2010). Using the data-mining information gathered from an LMS and, depending on the results, adjusting motivational and teaching practices to accommodate low or insufficient usage can allow teachers to help reduce their students' anxiety (Nakazawa, 2009) and to become more efficient learners (Hershkovitz & Nachmias, 2009). Of course, students can always attempt to cheat the system, and blended programs require mechanisms that minimize fraudulent behavior (Joseph et al., 2009), but teachers have no reason to suspect that

student deception will be commonplace, especially if attractive and motivating online content exists—and the teachers know the students in their classes.

Final thoughts from the literature. For successful English language learning, the ability to extend the amount of time—through an Internet-based learning platform—for study, practice, and play with blended course content through guided practice outside of the classroom remains vitally important. An LMS can afford students an almost unlimited and highly convenient opportunity to engage with authentic linguistic input at a variety of levels and on multiple topics. The web 2.0 tools available within the platform (blogs, wikis, forums, voice tools, and video interfaces, etc.) allow for collaborative and cooperative learning activities. But, simply putting EFL content for students to access "out-there" on the platform suggests an insufficient blended course design. Online content must become an integral part of the overall course in order to more readily achieve the learning aims of instruction. Teachers need to play a leading role in this integration and change their instructional methods in ways that promote student engagement. According to Whyte (2011) providing ICT resources to students becomes a relatively simple matter, but encouraging effective use of such materials requires "imagination and effort . . . [so that these resources] become an integral—normal—part of foreign language instruction in universities" (p 218). In short, university administrators and software providers can almost always find a solution whenever the technology of an LMS fails, crashes, or performs unsatisfactorily in any way. The inappropriate or insufficient use of an LMS, on the part of the teachers or their students, must surely require a solution as well.

Implications

Many EFL instructors and their students may consider language teaching (and learning) a private or solitary activity confined to the four walls of a classroom with little relevance to the real world. In order for a meaningful change in the mindset of teachers and students at NVU, who might not see themselves as members of a larger EFL world to occur, they must—through technology—find ways to tear down the walls, expand their notions of EFL learning, and form wider communities of shared practice (Richards, 2010). By opening up possibilities for more student-teacher and student-student interaction outside of the classroom, new kinds of activities and communication become possible in F2F sessions (Senior, 2010). The goal of successfully integrating technology in the EFL courses at NVU, through an online platform, as a means to increase the students' learning outcomes and overall satisfaction constitutes the most important long-term implication of the current study.

Again, I must emphasize the notion that the process of EFL acquisition suggests a time-intensive, personal, and social endeavor and that the use of technology becomes a means to serve that end by expanding opportunities for actively-guided engagement with blended course content and interactive EFL production among individuals and within larger course groupings. According to Garrett (2009), the theoretical frameworks of learning, pedagogical paradigms, and motivational design models all intertwine with the use of technology in a dynamic complex meant to serve this purpose. Even though the integration of technology cannot resolve all of the difficulties associated with foreign

language learning—without it "we cannot begin to address them" (p. 724). The NVU-EFL department has an opportunity to begin again.

Summary

A pending challenge exists in the EFL program at NVU—a gap that needs filling. Many students come to the university as the first-one-in-their-family to undertake the rigors of a university degree program. More often than not, they are underprepared for the task because they have been underserved during their K-12 preparation. Nevertheless, the university needs teachers who are willing and able to take charge of this situation and to guide, encourage, cajole, and enable these students to complete the EFL portion of their degree programs successfully. In doing so, the English department at NVU will fulfill its role as collaborators in the mission and vision of the university. While research shows that better students often make for better learners (Srichanyachon, 2011), the university's EFL teachers will need training to face, cope with, and positively influence the actual students they receive in their blended courses.

NVU students have particular characteristics and an identifiable profile—somewhat dissimilar perhaps to college level students at other universities in Chile. They are, however, normal Chilean students, with normal levels of intelligence and the common human capacities for modifiability, learning, personal growth, and professional development. They deserve recognition as full members of the university academic community and prove worthy of every possible effort to help them to accomplish their aspiration for a university degree and find their place, as professionals, in Chilean society. Sufficient proficiency in English language skills plays an important part of their

professional training, and they ought to have the kind of blended EFL program that can help them attain a given standard. In order to assist these students toward achievable EFL learning objectives, in this qualitative study I explored the challenges and obstacles to this goal, and looked for ways—through individual, semistructured interviews with teachers—to improve course content delivery and instruction by extending student learning opportunities through an online platform.

Section 2 describes the qualitative research design methodology that I used in this study. The qualitative data gathered and analyzed in the study came from two different groups of EFL professionals at NVU (full-time and part-time teachers). I collected the data through a form of qualitative inquiry (semistructured, individual interviews) with the two different groups of teacher participants. I utilized voluntary participation and purposeful sampling to select the interviewee group samples. I also examined current NVU-EFL program documentation and reports as a third data point for analysis and as primary background and rationale for the study.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The literature reviewed in Section 1 indicated that the conscientious and persistent application of instructional techniques and motivational practices by teachers in the classroom and online have a positive effect on overall student satisfaction, engagement, and involvement in blended learning courses. Hence, I approached this research with the assumption that teachers could provide useful insights regarding the dynamics of student engagement in the online portions of the NVU-EFL programs. I also sought suggestions for improved approaches to blended learning as well as identification of best practices for the program at NVU (and potentially around the Laureate network) for more readily achieving student learning goals. In order to address the problem indicated in the research questions articulated in Section 1, I conducted this basic qualitative research study.

Qualitative Design

In this study, I followed a basic qualitative design as detailed by Merriam (2009) and others. In general terms, Creswell (2009) observed that "qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). Merriam emphasized that, in applied fields of practice like education, "the most common 'type' of qualitative research is a basic, interpretive study . . . [and that] one does a qualitative research study, *not* a phenomenological, grounded theory, narrative analysis, or critical or ethnographic study" (p. 22). Merriam has referred to this type of study "as *generic*, *basic*, and *interpretive* . . . [but] since all qualitative research is interpretive, [prefers to call] this type of study a *basic qualitative*

study" (p. 22). In this type of study, qualitative researchers look for the meanings and interpretations that people attribute to their experiences in order to make sense of them. The principal aim of the researcher is to discover and illuminate those meanings.

Because student engagement, or lack thereof, in the online portion of blended courses occurs as a potentially unbounded phenomenon, a case study approach was unsuitable for this investigation (see Merriam, 2009). To address the problem of student engagement, I conducted semistructured interviews with full-time and part-time EFL teachers at NVU in order to explore their thoughts about apparent student reticence to engage with course content (and with one another) through the online portion of the blended program. Conversations with EFL department leadership and the findings from these interviews suggest that NVU students and their teachers do not fully engage with the online components of these courses at present. Therefore, in this basic qualitative study, I looked at the opinions and perceptions of a purposefully-selected sample of teachers within the Laureate network.

Because teachers hold a primary responsibility, at least in part, for the success and satisfaction of their students throughout the EFL learning process, I expected that those who voluntarily self-selected to participate in the study would prove eager to contribute to an open reflection of this sort, as was indeed the case. Interviews can allow researchers to discover possible explanations for the problem under investigation, and implicated in the research questions. From the same perspective, I expect that this study can become a step towards establishing a pattern of ongoing research into the problem at NVU (e.g. Glesne, 2011). The findings, analysis, and implications of this study can serve as the

basis upon which university leaders conduct future research, planning, implementation, and evaluation schemes to improve the program.

Participants

Individual interviews with full-time and part-time EFL teachers at NVU constitute the principal source of data I collected for this study. Merriam (2009) has declared that "in all forms of qualitative research, some and occasionally all of the data are collected through interviews" (p. 87). A basic qualitative design based upon interviews with key informants who can provide the type of firsthand knowledge of the issues raised by the research questions stands "on the belief that knowledge is derived from the social setting and that understanding social knowledge is a legitimate scientific process" (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010, p. 264). NVU-EFL teacher specialists provided the type of social knowledge that I gathered during the data collection phase of this study. Before and throughout this study, I took appropriate measures to gain access to the participants, to establish a positive working relationship with them, and to protect them from harm.

In order to carry out this study, I conducted a purposeful and intentional sample selection process of individual full-time teachers at NVU ($N = 5$) who had been working as EFL practitioners for 5 years or more at the institution. Because the total pool of full-time NVU-EFL staff in the Santiago metropolitan area remains limited, I asked all of them ($N = 9$) whether or not they would like to participate voluntarily in the interviews. Before final selection began, I had sent out a clear general e-mail to all nine potential full-time teacher interviewees stating that I needed five volunteers to participate and, if more than five responded, that I would select them in some random manner such as

pulling the first five names from among the volunteers out of a secure box. This stipulation was intended to assuage any sense of preference or favoritism on my part. I solicited each one of these professionals to take part (on a self-selected, voluntary basis) in a 45-minute, one-on-one interview with me about the issues related to the research questions. I developed an interview protocol and the questions themselves prior to these meetings.

The selection of these five full-time participants was a type of typical sampling of individuals who, because of their relatively extended experience, have "embodied the cultural norms" of the university (Creswell, 2008, p. 216). Of the nine invitations to participate in research sent to prospective full-time teacher interviewees, I received five positive responses. These first five teachers formed the final group of interviewees for this sample. I received and documented participant consent before the interviews began.

Immediately after completing these initial interviews with full-time participants, I conducted a further round of individual interviews with part-time instructors ($N = 5$). I selected these part-time teachers through a homogeneous sampling procedure based simply on (a) their membership in the EFL department at NVU and at least two semesters of experience with the blended learning program; (b) their part-time, and therefore more tenuous, vulnerable status at the university; and (c) their voluntary willingness to participate in the study. Although the total number of part-time EFL staff in the Santiago metropolitan area is more extensive ($N = 30+$), my doctoral committee suggested, as part of the oral defense of the proposal for this study, that I invite 7-8 of these differently-experienced instructors to participate in the study, of which I would randomly select five

volunteers. I ultimately sent a total of nine invitations to participate in research to prospective part-time teacher interviewees. From these invitations, I received six positive responses. From this total pool of volunteers, I successfully conducted five interviews. I also received and documented participant consent before these interviews with part-time instructors began.

Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants

In order to conduct this study, it was necessary to solicit the views of full-time and part-time teachers at NVU with the aim of more fully exploring and comprehending the central phenomenon under focus (see Creswell, 2008, p. 138-139; 2009, p. 130). The aim was to discover potential best practices that might foster the teacher-led (but student-focused) promotion and integration of the online support platform into EFL curriculum courses. I sought to gain "a deep understanding of the views of one group or single individuals" (Creswell, 2008, p. 139) who could afford insight as to (a) why NVU students may not currently exploit the available technology, (b) what teachers could do in lieu of traditional classroom-based lecture to motivate students to work outside of the EFL classroom (in order to increase their time-on-task), and (c) how the university could use this information to improve teaching and learning practices throughout the EFL academic community. By way of a signed Letter of Cooperation, I received permission from a relevant university authority to approach the participants and conduct the interviews. I also received permission, through a signed Data Use Agreement, to examine any relevant documents and reports that could serve as background and justification for this study. Both of these documents can be found in the appendices of this study.

The most important considerations to take into account before conducting the interviews involved the questions of where, when, and for how long. Glense (2011) offered some appropriate tips for arriving at mutually suitable arrangements, especially for how to accommodate the interviewees and their schedules (see p. 113-114). I needed to make arrangements for where and when to conduct interviews with the teachers selected in the sample. Both of these conditions needed some modification during the data collection process. I determined how long the interviews would last by the availability of my interviewees, as well as by my desire to limit the sessions to around 45 minutes or so. I did not need to make any changes in the IRB-approved interview protocol questions or format throughout the process of data collection.

Researcher-Participant Working Relationship

Perhaps the most important guideline for conducting interviews involves the selection of interviewee-participants whose opinions and insights can elucidate the problem under study (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). I considered all of the potential volunteer participants for the study highly qualified and relevant in this regard and I expressed my esteem and appreciation to all of the selected participants before, during, and after our interviews together. Equally important, the researcher needs to develop open-ended questions, appropriate to the topic, for the interviewee participants. Glense (2011) highlighted that, during the interview, the researcher must look, listen, and, most importantly, remember (a) what has been said, (b) what has been heard, (c) the responsibility to assure a quality experience for the interviewee, (d) the need to monitor any negative emotions (on either side of the table), and (e) the need to keep track of time.

One of the difficulties I faced during the course of the interviews involved finding a balance between paying attention to what my interviewees said, their facial expressions, body language, and pauses while still keeping in mind where I wanted the conversation to go. In doing so, I remained as neutral as possible in order to avoid leading the interviewees by overly asserting my own opinions, perspectives, or attitudes about the topic under study.

Measures for the Protection of Human Participants

Some of the field or ethical issues that needed consideration before conducting data collection stemmed directly from my position (as the researcher) in the LEP corporate structure as one of the "gatekeepers." As a measure to minimize any potentially negative consequences of my position, I strove to put all of the participants (who may have perceived me as a supervisor or LEP authority figure) at ease throughout the study. I presented and discussed a clearly written research summary with all participants, giving assurances of confidentiality and freedom from harm for any of their contributions to the study before data collection began. I reassured all interviewees that I would not use the information against them in any way and told them "that they cannot be wrong . . . that to 'do right' they must simply verbalize their stories, opinions, and feelings, and remain comfortable when they do not remember something or have nothing to say to a question" (Glense, 2011, p. 53). As a further measure to assure protection, at the end of each interview, I asked all participants to reconfirm their voluntary willingness to allow me to use their remarks and insights confidentially in the final report of the study.

Data Collection and Role of the Researcher

As stated previously, I conducted 10 individual interviews as the primary means of data collection for this basic qualitative study. I conducted the first round of interviews over a 10-day period with the five full-time teachers who volunteered for the study, using a carefully-crafted interview protocol designed for this purpose and vetted by an expert panel. I carried out the interviews with part-time NVU teachers selected for the study (*N* = 5) during the week following. I made an electronic calendar and sign-up sheet available for this purpose. These interviews lasted for an average of 47.5 minutes, and I audio taped them with the permission and signed consent from each participant for later transcription and analysis.

During the time frame of data collection, I served as the Latin American regional manager for the LEP, as part of the Laureate Network Products and Services division. I assumed this role as of January 1, 2012, resigning from my previous job as the director of the Laureate English Institute at NVU. The latter was a position that I had held for 4 years (2008-2011) and during which I conducted the initial piloting and rollout of the new blended EFL program. In some sense, then, I was still somewhat of an "insider" who, according to Glesne (2011), was "doing backyard research" (p. 41). In order to minimize any potential conflicts—even though, effective this date, I no longer had direct oversight or evaluation responsibilities over any of the selected participants—I gave assurances to all interviewees in the study that their participation would be voluntary and confidential and that I would protect their personal identities at all times.

Lodico et al. (2010) observed that "an interview is basically a purposive conversation with a person or a group of persons" (p. 121). Being an insider to this purposive conversation can offer increased credibility to a study like this one as long as the interviewer can maintain an appropriate distance in order to fully explore (rather than to share) assumptions with the interviewees. The interviewer-respondent dynamic suggests a complex interaction in which "both parties bring biases, predispositions, [and] attitudes . . . that affect the interaction and the data elicited" (Merriam, 2009, p. 109). The evaluation of the data, therefore, needed to take into account these factors from an approach of open-minded, attentive, and respectful listening. I utilized this approach during the interviews themselves as well by remembering to "give some attention to the conversation with the participants" (Creswell, 2008, p. 226). Due to my sense that the relationship with these teachers over the years had been open, respectful, and built on mutual trust, I expected that the conversations would be stress-free, spontaneous, and engaging. I further anticipated that this rapport would lead to fruitful dialogue during the interview sessions. From my perspective, productive and relevant exchanges were indeed the case.

Qualitative Results

I transcribed the audio recordings of the interviews verbatim using the participants' words (including fillers, false starts, and repetitive phrases) with very little editing. After several readings of the transcripts, and the gradual reduction and crystallization of initial (line-by-line) thoughts and impressions into formalized codes, categories, and subcategories, I found that a number of general (major) themes began to

emerge in the data. I compared and contrasted the data collected from the two teacher groups (full-time and part-time) using the constant comparative method (see Merriam, 2009, p. 30-31) in order to confirm and validate the major themes as they coalesced into a unified whole. I analyzed these themes and discuss them (in the findings) through a rich, thick description to convey the outcomes and conclusions (Creswell, 2009).

Data Analysis Procedures

In order to keep track of the data and emerging understandings, I used Microsoft Word 2010 documents for the transcripts of the audio recordings of the interviews and for the initial line-by-line coding of the participants' remarks (placed in the margins). After this initial and reiterative process, I used Microsoft Excel 2010 files to sort comments, codes, and themes on a question-by-question basis and on a thematic basis. I also kept a reflective journal (or researcher log) in which I made note of emerging understandings of the data. Brief samples of these records can also be found in the appendices of this study.

I used a thematic approach to analyze and interpret the major themes that emerged from the interviews. Researchers often use a thematic approach (see Creswell, 2008, p. 280; 2009, p. 189; Glesne, 2011, p. 229) in qualitative research to discuss the final themes one-by-one in descriptive detail through the careful selection and inclusion of "key participants' statements that [could] elucidate key findings" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p. 62). As I assumed, the results of this basic qualitative study confirmed and corroborated those found in the literature: that enhanced teacher presence in the online portion of a blended course can lead to greater student satisfaction, engagement, and involvement in these courses. The teacher-participants indicated awareness of this notion,

and the intuitive insights gleaned from the interview data I collected from them pointed in the same direction. As an initial exploration, the investigation ascertained some of the reasons behind the currently low levels of student engagement online and their relatively meager passing marks in the blended EFL learning program at NVU.

Evidence of Quality Procedures

As the primary means of validation, I utilized constant comparison of the interview data sources, in order to pinpoint converging themes or areas of divergence. In order to validate further the initial findings and conclusions of the study, I held an individual member checking session with each interviewee in order to review the transcripts and the finalized coding categories. For the transcript revision, I asked all participants to read carefully through the finalized transcription of their own interview in order to allow for the checking of particular words or phrases in the audio recording that remained unclear as well as to confirm that the selected codes and themes looked accurate to the meaning of their words. All of the participants confirmed that the codes accurately described the meanings they wished to convey and indicated only a very few cosmetic changes to the transcripts.

Even though constant comparison of the interview data sources was the primary means of validation, I conducted these member checking sessions as an appropriate measure of confirming the trustworthiness of the analysis and interpretation of the data. I also conducted these sessions in order to strengthen the reliability of the study; even though it entails a time-consuming process and many potential pitfalls (see Carlson, 2010). I used member checking as a way to assure that any unconscious bias on my part

did not unduly influence the portrayal of the general themes as well as to further corroborate that the codes I used accurately reflected the participants' perspectives.

In the following analysis, I present a write up of the findings of the study. These findings are corroborated by the member checking feedback after a full review of the coding and the identification of major themes. In basic qualitative research and reporting, experts stress the importance of checking (and rechecking with the participants) the codes and themes used as interpretation devices during the analysis process. In the literature on qualitative studies, researchers clearly call for self-checking as a way to assure the trustworthiness and quality of any given interpretation of the data (see Creswell, 2008, p. 267; 2009, p. 191; Glesne, 2011, p. 211-212; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p. 66; Lodico et al., 2010, p. 274). In order to assure the best possible accuracy and credibility of the findings, I undertook these measures to confirm that my interpretation of the data accurately reflected the participants' viewpoints.

Findings

In a basic qualitative study like this, data are collected through interviews (or observations, or document analysis) and the researcher analyses this data by identifying the characteristic and recurring patterns within the data set. Merriam (2009) underscored that the "findings *are* these recurring patterns or themes supported by the data from which they are derived [and] the overall interpretation will be the researcher's understanding of the participants' understanding of the phenomenon of interest" (p. 23-24). Nearly 200 single-spaced pages of transcripts resulted from the audio-recorded data collected during the interviews with NVU teacher participants for this study. A careful,

line-by-line reading and examination of these transcripts generated over 110 unique codes that I used as interpretation devices for later analysis. After numerous rounds of constant comparison of the coded interview data, between and among full-time and part-time teacher responses, I was able to group each code within eight emerging conceptual categories or major themes. I then further analyzed these major themes one-by-one, and on a question-by-question basis, from the expert-panel-vetted interview protocol.

The themes that emerged from the analysis, and the number of codes aligned with each, in descending order, were as follows: Teachers & Teaching (24 codes), Learning & Practice (18 codes), Teacher Concerns (16 codes), Cultural Issues (16 codes), Motivation Issues (15 codes), Learning Environment (12 codes), Blended Learning (7 codes), and LEP Program Issues (5 codes). In the following thematic analysis, I describe these themes in further detail. The markings "//" separate extracts of individual participant insights in order to show the range and variety of views and thoughts expressed during the interviews. These quotations highlight the most descriptive findings for each of the major themes and help to indicate their relationship to the research questions. The quotations also point towards the project for this study, which I describe in Section 3.

Theme 1: Teachers & Teaching

Due to the nature of the research questions (all of which this theme addresses) and to those included in the interview protocol, I expected many of the collected responses to fall under a category such as this one. The expectation proved true and, indeed, the largest amount of input data (after coding) coalesced into this overarching theme. The interviewed teachers recognized that many important factors in the teaching and learning

dynamic proved worthy of consideration. Primary among these factors was the need to address students' "particular abilities or personal traits" as well as the "need to be motivating them, all the time." The main challenge, according to many of the teachers, related to helping students to "understand how important it [learning EFL] is and to make them see all the benefits they will get." The teachers indicated that low student autonomy was a constant source of frustration for them and, for the most part, attributed the lack of a more proactive orientation towards learning to the students' cultural background and past experiences. As one of the teachers put it, students come to the university with the idea that English,

> is like a mystery; something they've got to solve, and all that. So they come with this very bad experience. So, when we get them, in the first level, is where we have to put most of our effort, right? To motivate them, to make them feel, well, to feel comfortable, to feel that they're learning . . . it's, it's, very challenging.

The teachers clearly expressed the idea that successful learning "depends on your own motivation and engagement with the learning process" but for the students at NVU, teachers feel the "need to motivate them and . . . to probably to teach them how to learn." A blended learning platform can become a potentially powerful ally in this regard. As one teacher stated,

> Yes, I think we are facing important challenges . . . which are mainly connected with making the use of our resources relevant to our teaching practice. Uh, we've been [in] the process of implementing a new program over the last [few] years, I would say, uh, we are uh, we count on a number of resources, technological

> resources, uh, our teachers have been trained, uh, duly trained in how to use these technologies, and it seems to me that most of our decisions have been of a top-down nature.

To counteract this sense of top-down implementation of the LEP, teachers will need to come up with strategies for utilizing the LMS in order to increase meaningful student engagement in the learning process. The discussion of these strategies plays a part in the teacher-training project proposed for this study in Section 3. In addition to strategies for learning EFL, the project examines the facilitated use of the LMS as a vehicle for teaching and the acquisition of the life-long learning skills that students need.

The participants indicated, however, a tendency to teach as they had learned. They spoke of their own positive memories in the learning experience (of instructors with friendly rapport, availability, demonstrated interest in the students, and joy-filled teaching, etc.) as a reflection of their own teaching practice while negative memories reminded them of what-not-to-do in the classroom (being overly corrective, too strict, etc.). As one respondent stated,

> And, and now, that I am a teacher, I can see that, umm, it's, that is not a correct way to . . . deal with your students. So, uh, that's it . . . and now I think that those, uh, experiences were opportunities for me to learn what I shouldn't do with my students.

And as another said,

> I guess that when, you know, you, you have a teacher . . . who really motivates you, who really; you can tell when a teacher likes what they're doing, they like

> teaching. And, I remember having one really good teacher, I mean, really, really motivated, and you could tell that he loved teaching. And, that really helps. Because, you know, he, he really motivated his students, to keep learning, to keep, you know, discovering new things, and, I think that's really important. Learning has to do with how, how it's taught, and who teaches you.

All of the participants had clear ideas on what good teachers do,

> OK, yeah. I think teachers' main role, function, should be that of, uh, promoting community participation. // Be with them. Um, yeah, you have to be there, right? You have to be part of their learning . . . uh, not like, "Oh, I know," you know? "I'm going to teach you," no? No, I don't think that's the way. I'm not the owner of this, uh, knowledge, right? Helping them out, uh huh? And, I think the most important thing is, uh, teaching them how to learn. I think that is important, OK? Make them feel that they are able to do many things by themselves. So, you have to make them, feel that they are able to learn, [to] feel confident; that they're not stupid, right? Being there; being with them, ah, ah, make them feel that you are there, at any time they need you. // Sometimes you have to be like a mother, in a way, like a grandma, you know? (laughter). They need to be, I don't know, it's a, a, positive, uh, I don't know, like a . . . yeah, ah, ah, reinforcement. I don't know, . . . the affective factor, you know? Something like a, a positive attitude, and all this; [saying] "good!" right? Something like that. [Saying] "You did it very well" (laugh) "good job" (laugh). But, those students, think they are like, [unable] you know? And their self-esteem, you, you can improve and, their self-esteem

increases, like, something like that. I mean, here . . . maybe not . . . in other universities, but here it's like that. // Yeah, right, because if they see it as rules, and, and pronunciation, I don't know, that's difficult, and, that's not fun. So, I try to relate the, [to] make the connection between their studies and the language, somehow. // Yes, and they are, uh, they, sometimes they, they have the ability, but they don't feel free to, to talk and perform [in] English. If you create a good environment in your classroom, then you can take the best of your students. // Yeah, so, adapting contents to the students' needs, I think is a really important thing to do. Making sure that the process is also student centered . . . I think that's important. And, again, I think all that has to do with, motivation; making sure that the student is motivated. When the student loses interest, then, it's really difficult to, you know, keep going, and keep having any kind of positive, uh, input. // Uh, for example, giving them the tools, and guide them, on how to achieve their objectives. For example, uh, well, first of all, to make them feel comfortable, in class . . . and, that it's OK that they make mistakes, for example. So, encouraging them to participate, in class; that would be, something very important. And then, uh, guide them on how to continue, for example, what resources to use, outside the classroom…things like that. // Uh, they [teachers] can help a lot, I think. Uh, I think, in order for the students to ask questions, to participate, they need to feel, uh, comfortable. And they need to feel that they are in a good environment. Um, most of them are very scared of . . . mispronouncing things, or that, when they have to write something, they wrote the sentence in the wrong way, and so-on. So

> I try to provide, uh, a good atmosphere in the class, so we are all part of the same group, we're all working together and, yeah, they may make mistakes but, there's nothing wrong with making mistakes. // Um, um. I always try to learn . . . their names, like very quickly. So, I call them by their names. So, it's like, "Please," um, I don't know, "Marcella, can you give me an example of this?" And, "how, what do you understand by this?" and, "give me…" So, they; and I always make them participate. All the time, so, they need to be alert. // I feel, I think that the first thing is, like the climate thing. You know the affection. Because if they feel that you care, that you're nice, that you're there for them, eh, they will engage more with the class. And that is really important. Eh, then, I think that the teacher must also lead them. So, you have to be there for answering their questions, to, to show them some, to open up some experiences for them to, to have. And, so I think that those are the main two roles.

The teachers expressed that their own best contributions to the learning process include (a) personal experience that they can share with others; (b) creating a relaxed environment in the classroom; (c) giving students many different tools for learning; (d) patience; (e) being present to the students, helping them overcome negative experiences; (f) creating opportunities for open dialogue; and (g) helping students to become more autonomous, "Because, I can teach them, but, uh, learning is everywhere!" Teachers perceived their own role in the classroom as a reflection of these contributions and described it as that of a student-centered: guide, resource provider, facilitator, patient companion, support person, and motivator. Some of the participants felt that waning

teacher enthusiasm presented the primary challenge to sustaining these roles due, in large part, to the very routine of teaching. One teacher put it in this way,

> (Sigh) I mean, Umm…through the years, I think that not to; lose the, the motivation (laugh), yeah . . . as a teacher, yeah, because sometimes I've been through that too. I mean, sometimes I feel like, umm, well, it's not going to work, maybe, umm, I'm doing the same again and again and sometimes you see that the whole course is like "oh, we don't like this" or . . .But we have to, I mean, to find again the, the, I don't know, the, yeah, the sparkle, the, I don't know, the love (laugh) to fall in love again, with the teacher, with teaching. Yeah, that's it, I mean, the main challenge here [is] routine! That's it!

Blended learning constitutes a new paradigm, and very likely, "it's here to stay." EFL instructors need to grasp opportunities to rekindle student (and teacher) motivation. The teachers showed awareness of the need to do so but may find it difficult to make the transition to online modes of teaching. Some may be merely hesitant. One teacher put it this way,

> Ah, something that some people feel . . . and I'm included [is] that I need always a F2F class. I couldn't do a whole, uh, course online. I always feel that. Yeah, right, right. I couldn't. I couldn't. I know. I'm pretty sure that if I start, I wouldn't finish it, because I feel, I need the teacher. I need the, to be, to feel confident that what I'm doing is correct. So, sometimes that doesn't make me feel confident. I think the students have the same. They need—but, that's strange, because they say, "We don't have time; we need something online." And you give them this

> LMS, and they say, “We need the teacher!” Umm, but, I think that’s the best of the, the blended class. I mean, you have both, in this case.

Others may feel reticent towards, or resistant to online content delivery: “OK, I have to be very honest and say that, um, I’m not so keen on technology. So, for me it’s been a bit difficult to, use the LMS, as a teacher.”

Perhaps the teachers’ felt lack of control over the learning process offers an explanation for much of this resistance. For example,

> They [the students] just wait till the very last day to do everything. Or, probably, they tell their brother, or sister, or whomever, to, to do the activities for them. I imagine that happens. I mean, if, I were a noninterested student, I’d definitely do that. Yeah? So, it’s diff[icult], I mean, in that sense, you have to trust that the student is, being honest, and he’s doing, the exercises. Yeah. // Umm. Because they [teachers] think that, if they can’t manage the thing, if they are not present, [then] they [the students] are, not going to learn. It’s something like, “If I’m not . . . in my class, they are not going to learn anything,” and that they are going to be in my class and I’m going to, uh, I’m going to have to, uh, teach again and again and again, because they were in, on the platform, and they didn’t learn anything. But I don’t think like that, because they learn when they are [on the LMS]. And I’ve seen it, I mean, they say, “ah, that’s the same word that appeared in the, ah, on the platform.” You say, “Yes, it was like this,” you know? Or, “Ah, I saw that the other day on the platform.” Yeah, but you see, you can, they, they get things, when they are there. Sometimes they are just, repeating. Sometimes they are

> doing activities, and activities, and activities, and, they get something. But, I think that some teachers think that, they are going to repeat all the class—if they are just on the, platform, and . . . they are, they, they, go to classes and it's, "ah, it's the same activity again and, ugh." You know? Sometimes, as a teacher we think that's it's a problem, that's it's going to be a problem, more work (laugh). "I wasn't there, so, I'm going to have," I mean, "to teach again, when they are here, in the class." Could it be? Yes. I think that.

In the teacher-training project, I focus on these feelings of reticence in order to allow instructors to voice them and to generate strategies for overcoming them.

At this point, teachers feel that the online portion of the LEP blended solution requires a heavy amount of control on their part.

> You don't have to give them so much freedom. You have to tell them, for example, "OK, you have," I don't know, "one week to complete, these two exercises." And you have to be monitoring them. // But, the thing is that we don't know how, if they are working on [the] activity, maybe they can stop working on that, and then, they go back to the activity, maybe three days later and, they maybe, lose the idea of what they were doing. So, that's a bad thing, like, compared to a F2F class, because you finish an activity. You start and you have a, a progress of the activity, you clarify doubts, and then you make them produce, what you taught them. Um, in the computers it's different, I think. They could start an activity, maybe they could get the exercises wrong, and, and then they could just leave them there. We don't know! The thing is that, in the LMS, we are

> not, um, measuring the progress, in the sense of, um, how bad or how well they do. It's like you're measuring, uh, if they actually work in there, and the time they spend, but not the way they do all the time. But, in general, a student could fail the exercises but then . . . could still get 100% and, and, like the teacher wouldn't know. But, well, that's why we need to be very, uh, aware of what every student is doing all the time.

For the most part, teachers only assign SCORM-based exercises to their students on the LMS, and little attention has been paid to the web 2.0 tools available through the platform. The teachers recognized that incorporating these tools into the learning process would benefit the students and would allow instructors to interact in more meaningful ways with them. As one teacher said,

> Yeah, that kind of thing [SCORM activities] gets the students bored. They need just one or two clicks and that's it; there you have the exercises. And, and you, you have to increase the amount of use of, from my point of view, things like the forum, or the blog, or something like that where students can participate. But, that meaning, not only the teacher going there to check if they did it; but being there.

Teachers indicated awareness of the difficulties to this challenge, "Sometimes it's hard to, to be connected with this, which is, in a space, somewhere (laugh) it's not, like, physical (laugh)" but teachers also know that they are vital to the solution,

> You have to be there, again. And, it's time-consuming, on the part of the teacher. But, somehow, you have to do it. They [students] have to feel that they are being, uh, supported, controlled, uh hum, graded, whatever. But something has to . . .

> happen there. . . . I think the difficult part of blended learning is not the students, it is the teachers.

And the teachers themselves have proposed some intuitive solutions, such as:

> The ideal solution would probably be uh, different types of teachers. Teachers who are just involved in the platform and teachers who are just involved in the F2F component, but who are, at the same time, in charge of the same process. // Umm. Many different ways (laugh). With assessment; with punishment. No! (laugh) yeah. Sometimes, we grade that, we don't grade that, we try to, so, a lot of different ways, uh, just, chatting, you know? Making, uh, creating blogs, trying to, uh, look for, uh, other, different topics. Creating things, I don't know. That's something that we can, that we are always trying to do . . . more things. // I think that, we have to, to walk, with them. For example . . . if we see that there are a lot of difficulties, because the . . . students don't . . . want to work with the online part of the . . . course, even though you, you try to motivate them, with, uh, grades, it's more than that. For example, uh, inviting them to the computers, uh, lab, and spending some time with them. Uh, that is a good, uh, way in which you can show them . . . how to, to work with that. And, it's not just, uh, telling them, just show, showing them what, how to do it, and what to do, for example. // Uh, you need, you need, in that case, to be a little bit bossy, because, sometimes it doesn't work if you don't. So, you need to become part of the process when, when you have this blended component. Because, for example, when, when I started working on this, I left everything, for, for the students' side. It's like, "well, you

> have to work on this" and then I, sometimes checked their progress but only, like, before the [exams] . . . and so-on. But then, when I did that, um, I wasn't part of the process, of what they were doing. Um, I didn't get involved in that. And I think then, um, well after [reviewing], um, the results, and seeing that it was useful, to work, um, on the online component, uh, I started to change this. And I realized that is was necessary. That I, I could, I had to get involved, into the progress, into the, the process that, of what they were doing, in the computer lab, and in, on the online. Well I, also because I, I read, . . . I read that it was important that the tutor, the online tutor, um, could check constantly, um, what they were doing online and it was important . . . that you work with them, some exercises, at least, sometimes, like, during the semester. Yes, in the, like, they are working in the computer lab and you are with them and you are checking what they're doing, and answering questions, and, like, motivating them. Because, if you leave everything for them, then, it's unlikely that they would finish all the work online.

But the challenges remain, and the teachers are thinking about possible ways to overcome them. Creativity and experimentation can lead to new insights, "Yes, uh, I think we should just try to, uh, uh, I would say, explore other uses, even though they might not be very standard or canonical." Teachers also need to have a personal experience with online learning,

> I think it's very important for us teachers to, uh, take, uh, courses online, as students. I mean, the experience of being a student in a blended course, or an online course, a 100% online course, is very important because then we can

> understand them . . . it's a different way of learning, and we have to understand the experience, so that we can understand our students.

The teachers mentioned that one of two things should happen to improve course content delivery in the blended program at NVU. Option one includes recruiting and hiring online experts to manage the online part of the course,

> . . . I heard that sometimes maybe we need one person in charge of the thing [the LMS]. I mean, 24 hours (laugh) I mean, 24-7 would be doing that, but, I mean, we can do it. I don't see . . . an obstacle.

An online teacher specialist would provide,

> . . . support, as a support, or, technical, academic support (laugh) yeah, something. And this is what I think is the role of the teacher or, or someone who could be there, I mean, through the day. A moderator, and, at the same time as a person who helps the students.

Some teachers expressed the desire to have an additional support person as an option:

> We assume that our teachers are working uh at a given number of hours online, and sometimes that is the case, and sometimes they work even more than they're supposed to. But it doesn't mean to say that they do very important things, because, because the students are not there, probably when the teacher has the time to be there and, it seems to me that, that one thing is schedule, scheduling problems, class schedules. And the other one is that they may be teaching more than they should, on the understanding that, what they need to do is to devote more time to the online component. So, it seems to me that the online component

> is considered to be—at the moment it's considered to be—something that's extra. It's not totally conceived of as integral, an integral part of the program and, and that is not correctly monitored, I mean students' work, and teachers' participation at the same time. So that could, that could be a, maybe what we need is like a, an e-moderator there, that is like a dedicated e-moderator, not someone who is teaching but someone who is just like making sure that there is a, a level of activity that is required, a general level of activity. And . . . find the problems, the specific problems that might, might be taking place when there's someone—either teacher or students—that's not participating very much. Yeah.

The second option would require the teachers to become online content delivery experts themselves and to, "Umm, to know both, umm, both sides; the F2F class and the online part. So, you have to learn and manage the, the platform, very well."

In either case, all teachers need to overcome personal biases against online content delivery, learning, and assessment. As one teacher said,

> I know that there are some things I should do, or I could do, but, I don't do it! Using a lot of excuses and some of them are, valid? But, others, probably not! So, I think I . . . [need to] bring an online Freud (laugh) to tell me . . . why not! (laugh)

And the teachers need to overcome any unconscious fears about online or blended learning platforms,

> Yeah, there is this reluctance, as I told you before. I don't know exactly why. Sometimes I feel . . . uh, the teachers may feel that, they will lose their jobs,

> finally [or] that their, their, participation will be, very little, in the future [because] they were taught to teach in a certain way.

Or worries that they fail to make themselves understood in a virtual setting,

> You have to be sure, [and] when you're in the online part, you're not sure if you are understood, on the other side. I can, write a long explanation of something but, if I don't know, I may not know that the other person is understanding, or is paying attention. . . . Yeah, because, I can have the best explanation, online, written or whatever . . . [but] I don't know if he's understanding or not!

The teachers also demonstrated some conscious apprehensions related to a blended learning format like the LEP. They mentioned time as one of the major worries—as well as remuneration for it. I examine these concerns in Theme 3: Teacher Concerns. Before touching upon that however, I address another theme that had a high number of codes associated with it.

Theme 2: Learning & Practice

The participants referred often throughout the interviews to the opportunities available to students for additional practice through a blended EFL program, as a vehicle for learning. This theme clearly touched upon all three of the research questions. The teachers recognized, from their own experience, that the need for active participation in class—plus an engaged curiosity with and for the English language outside of the classroom—offered a sure path for learning success. They also stressed that the time dedicated to formal instruction in F2F class proved insufficient and that additional

opportunities for working, playing, and experimenting with English benefitted the successful attainment of the learning goals. As one teacher put it,

> Well, I was thinking about that, because (laugh) yeah, it's a little bit, I don't know, I think that, uh, it's all about being immersed in a . . . language, all the time. I think for me it's like, being, a lot of time with, ah, and taking any possibility you have . . . to be in the language. I mean, all the time, at all times. Not just, in a class. I mean, class is a . . . compliment, but it's not, all the thing.

The teachers themselves—even though quite proficient—recognize that they are still learning English. Teachers must seek out and provide more, and better, opportunities for learning, and students need stronger guidance from teachers in order to stay on task.

> As I said before, I think it's, it's uh, people's successful learning experiences are systematically connected with their opportunities to participate within communities, uh, where there are other people with similar interests and goals in mind so that they can learn how to do better, what they already know. // Um, then, they, I think that they need to engage with, eh, doing their exercises or homeworks. Um, because that is the way you practice until you have to repeat and repeat something, like, in a drill, for example. At home, when you have to do exercises . . . maybe it's boring, but somehow it helps you to record that information in your mind. Yeah, they have to do their exercises! Sometimes, the thing is that, we as teachers must keep them, eh, in a . . . difficulty level that is, eh, possible for them to do. If you give them, like, 20 pages of a Murphy book, well, eh, they'll be bored. But, if you ask them for specific homeworks, they tend

> to keep more, eh, active, because if not, they let you talk until Unit 6 and they have never opened a book and, whatever.

The teachers also indicated that, from their own personal experience, connecting EFL learning with academic success and real-world opportunities offers a plus. Students at NVU also need to understand and strengthen this connection in their own minds.

In the question about the benefits of blended learning—as opposed to more traditional F2F-only formats of instruction—I found it interesting, from the analysis of the interview data, that none of the teachers referred directly to learning and practice. The teachers immediately touched upon this omission, however, when asked to describe the potential differences in activities appropriate for students in F2F sessions versus online. For example, in-class time affords an opportunity,

> Where we can do things, as I say; we can talk, we can sing, and we can laugh, and cry, whatever. Now, when they work on the computers, right? Not, F2F, it's time to, to exercise, uh huh, uh, to work on their own, and to learn how to work on their own — to learn how to be autonomous. And that's the difficult part for them, right? Being autonomous. But, ah, so it is different. It is different. You are producing, and creating F2F, and then you are, sort of, exercising on the computer.

The teachers could also see online time as an opportunity for learning to take place but, at NVU, the LMS has not been used for this purpose to date. The teachers understand that more experimentation with web 2.0 tools offers a possible solution. Both teachers and students require motivation to explore possibilities for learning online,

> A reward, yes (laugh). Yes, but there are some students who, you don't need to do that with them, because they are convinced. "OK, this is a good tool, uh, for learning, and I'm going to use it." But, here? (laugh). There are a lot of, uh, students who, don't think, that way. // So, you can write a book as a teacher also, or write a sentence. So, you have to learn to use it [the LMS] effective, efec-ti-vely.

The teachers see their primary role in a blended program as a "facilitator" of student learning (someone who encourages participation by assigning short-meaningful-doable activities in the classroom and online, and acts as a backstop for any potential difficulties) who guides them throughout the process. Teachers see class time as the best format for error correction and feedback and give little recognition to online feedback as a viable alternative for error correction,

> So, the student probably will say, "OK, I understood!" The same as in class, and, he didn't. So, that might be the, the problem there. Because, I think it's the same, I mean . . . to be teaching online or F2F. But, the thing is, sometimes you need to see their faces—and they need to see your face—for you to realize if they are . . . understanding. And, not to be misunderstood, with intonations, and things like that. That helps a lot!

Perhaps the idea of online error correction never crossed their minds. Teacher training or orientation should examine possibilities for this kind of interaction. When asked whether or not instructors could provide valuable feedback to students through the LMS, one teacher said,

> I guess you could, I guess you could, yeah. I never thought about doing it that way (laugh). But, I think, yeah, it might, it might be better, you know? Yeah. That might be better than actually, yeah, using up class time, umm, yeah, that's a good idea . . . (laugh) Yeah . . . that would be better. Yeah, I agree. (laugh)

Theme 3: Teacher Concerns

Teachers must cover a certain amount of specified EFL content for each level of the blended program during an academic term. The participants made mention during the interviews that a strong focus on quantity can have an adverse effect on the quality of learning. The teachers' responses showed a connection between this dichotomy and the research questions (but in a somewhat negative light) as well as to their perception of NVU students as incapable of reaching the learning goals.

> I think that objectives here are, far too, I don't know what's the, the word, uh, I'm talking about the contents, the amount of contents . . . Ambitious, yeah, that's the word; ambitious. I think the objectives are too ambitious for our students. // Yeah, because, uh, I think that, um, the system is, uh, it's overwhelming . . . especially, if you are starting to learn. First of all because you have to learn 12 units in a semester. And, I think that's too much. It's a lot of information for, I don't know, how many, 14 weeks? And then you are suddenly at an elementary [level] and you're supposed to have the competence of an elementary student, knowing that in week 1, you didn't know how to say "hello" and then, uh, unit 14, you know the difference between countable-uncountable nouns, and you can use the Present Simple, Continuous, and Past Simple! So, I, I think in that sense, it's too

> intensive. I think it should be 6 units per semester. It will never happen but, it's my opinion.

The teachers couple their perception of having too much content to cover in a semester with the idea that students lack sufficient autonomy for a blended program to work. "And, most of them, I think, they don't study much during the week. So then, the input is not enough."

Despite tacit nods to the importance of EFL proficiency, as a crucial component of the professional development of students, teachers feel that the university has not created an appropriate climate that promotes dedication to the subject. "And uh, they create this idea, in the students, that only their major, uh, related subjects are the most important, and we're not really important, we're not really relevant." Often, university campus administrators form class-groups at a relatively late stage in the term.

> And then, new students come late, so, you could say that the classes start, fine, let's say, like, after the first two weeks. And then, you want to put 6 units into the first [exam] and, for example, now we have, we should be taking [exams], uh, now . . . and, we should have finished the 6 units and I'm in unit 4 . . . um, because of this [final class-group formation]. Because students sometimes change the, the courses, the sections, um, and at the beginning, some of them also start the semester late. So, you have, I don't know, I would, delay it a, a little bit, a couple of weeks more, which, I will have to do, probably (laugh).

The teachers also perceived technology on campus as deficient for the requirements of the LMS.

> Uh, technology, because it, uh, computer lab doesn't work very well. Um, for example, if I have one hour to work with them on, in the Academic Gym, and the computer takes very long to start . . . so I waste about, 10 minutes, just to get the computer started. And, then they start their own, um, work there. Um, and the, the listening exercises are impossible to work in there, because, I have tried, and it has never worked! It's too slow, I think. Probably, or, or the, the broadband that we use at NVU is not good, maybe, because, and, we have been told, as teachers, like, not to do the listening part, so we're not doing listening exercises. And, and I think that's something bad, because, the, the webpage is good, the Touchstone program is good and I would like to use the listening part. So, technology in, in that sense [is a drawback].

The participants further indicated a concern about student access to online content off-campus.

> Yeah. I mean, if you're going to use a blended model, it has to be 100% working, and it has to be the same way for the kids. I mean, these kids are what I call the click generation. They click once, and it has to be there, immediately, instantly, right? They cannot click and wait for three seconds, five seconds; that is too much. So, the tech problems we have had, of course, have been very uncomfortable, in my opinion. I have had the same problems too, and when [that happens] I have been very against this, uh, system.

Teachers reiterated that student attendance in F2F classes remains low. The good students "never miss classes" but the average or poor students are absent quite a bit. The

participants see reliable access to content online as a positive solution to this lack of attendance but encouraging students to do so can present a challenge.

> So, uh, I think there are lots of benefits, in the sense that they can get more practice, um, but, at the same time, I think that, uh, in my opinion, it's not good to; push them to use it, so much. // Even if you tell them that, you know it's graded, you know, that's the difficult thing, making sure. You'll find that a lot of them, they say, "I don't have time, I had to work." Some of them say; they'll tell you, they forgot. // . . . and, some of them send e-mails, like, "Oh my God, I didn't have time!" or, "the system wasn't working!" and so-on, and it's like, "I'm sorry" but, that really happens. So, how much are they really learning with the blended, uh, method, let's say? I'm not really sure. I know they fail to attend the lessons, a lot.

In general, teachers felt that poor time management reflected a cultural issue.

> So, I think that managing time is one of our, society topics, in this moment. And, the other challenge, well, is, eh, sometimes there are some, well, or the other obstacle, sometimes they have a lot of, eh, problems with the technology. Um, because . . . the program is a little bit heavy, for example, and they have to wait. And, we are impatient. Because of the thing of the, the matter of the time.

Teachers voiced different ideas around the notion of standardized delivery of content, or perhaps a more personalized class-by-class group approach.

> Yeah, I mean, you've got, both sides, so, what, what would be the, the best thing to do? Maybe, make sure that you've got a kind of, fixed program, but where you

> work with the different tools, to make sure you use everything. Or, a lot of different things on the platform; maybe . . . one voice tool activity, one blog activity, you know, you don't have to use the whole thing, but, maybe one of each.

In any case, the teachers felt an urgent need to become more familiar with the online options available to them through the LMS.

> Ah, well, I, it's basically related to what I've said before, I mean, the teachers really have to know the system well. And uh, it's not just a matter of sending the teacher a PowerPoint presentation on how to grade the students. Because, it's a mess. And, you get confused, and, there should be someone there for you, like, every time you need to be explained something about the system. And, of course I have, I . . . wasn't around when you had the trainings, but maybe you should have, like, extra trainings. And, there are some people that will need extra, extra training, and I think that's me. So, I, I think there should be some, instance in which, uh, we can get to learn to use the system, correctly and, and it's not only on, on a superficial, way, I just, from the core, like, to really know how it works, because, in that way, we can, address these issues better. If I knew how to use it I, I would definitely start something related. Uh, but yeah, it's not only just doing the exercises, the grammar focused exercises, it's just doing something else. And I think the platform, in that sense, has many alternatives—if I knew how to use it. (laugh) yeah. Yeah, I know that you can, you can, make a lot of, good things with it. But, I don't know how. Training. And, and, it's not just a matter of knowing

> how to enter and how to, like, make things visible or invisible, it's, like, how you start a blog there, how can you, promote an activity, or so-on. Yeah, I think that. And maybe sometimes those activities can have better results than making the students, uh, do the, workbook. I don't really know. Um, I just enter, check if my students are there, (laugh) if they're doing the exercises and, and I barely, click the other; (laugh) the other parts. It, it freaks me out! (laugh). So, if there were, like, some training sessions, I don't know when, (laugh) because we're all busy at different times, but, maybe on holiday or something? Uh, maybe we could get started, and if we are started, then we can investigate on our own; on a Sunday, I think. (laugh). // I think it's difficult for new teachers when, they have to learn, how the platform works. And, sometimes, they don't get the proper instruction, and they are afraid of asking. Um, and so, I, I think, then the resources are not used, properly. I think that is something that, um, I don't know, coordinators need to pay attention to and, uh, the main one is to know how to blend, the two things (laugh).

These and similar comments, again, point to the need for ongoing teacher training. Students need training in blended learning as well due to the somewhat unexpected finding that they did not know how to manage the platform.

> If they have any doubts, you know, because sometimes you'll find, you know, it happened to me in the past when I, I thought they knew how to use the program, and then, how to access, how to do the activities, simple things like, "what's submit?" . . . or "check?" They don't know what that meant . . . and, they'd ask

me, you know, “I don’t know how to do the activities.” And I thought it was something so straightforward! But it, it isn’t.

As expected, the topic of teacher pay for the additional work required in blended courses came up on occasion in the conversations.

So, as a teacher, well first, you have to have, like, work conditions to do this. So you have, for example, to have, uh, (cough) paid time to work in this. It’s, it’s not just for free, because if not, you’re gonna have, like, the teachers out of it, very quickly. And, in that way, you can do that work in the hour that was paid [for] you to do that. And you don’t spend all your night, because, teachers feel scared about that. // [Blended teaching is not] as spontaneous as we are, used to, to working. And . . . I’m thinking about teachers who come here and they are paid for what they do in . . . the classroom, because I, I am one of those, uh, few, dinosaurs, who have a contract! So, I am paid for teaching, uh, some hours, but I’m also paid for some, uh, working in the office. So, I can, OK, I can do a lot of things in the office, and I’m going to be paid for that. But, what happens with those teachers who . . . don’t have a contract, and they’re supposed to work and to do a, uh, to . . . write, uh, for their students a report, about what they did wrong on the platform and, and they want to . . . work somewhere else because they need more hours, to, to get a better salary. There are a lot of things, so . . . it has to do with teachers’ working conditions too. Because, OK, you’re going to give your students support, because they are, uh, here—you have a blended program, and you’re going to be paid for your, uh, classes, and also for what you do . . . online.

Also, the teachers expressed a fear of becoming outdated and outsourced by technology.

> So, uh, you're changing everything, right? You're changing everything. I mean, I don't know, they studied five years, to teach in a certain way. And then, when it comes to working, in a place, everything is changed. So they [teachers] don't like it. They're reluctant to that. And they feel that, this university, or any other place, it's not only here, the blended mode, or the online, the 100% online model, will finally take their jobs. // I heard before that, in [an]other university, uh, they started with a blended, uh, program, and, at the end, it was, everything with the computer—and no, no teachers!

Theme 4: Cultural Issues

Communicative activities in the classroom are all the rage in EFL circles. All good teachers would like to get their learners to produce meaningful utterances in more-or-less authentic situations during the course. All of the research questions posit the need to get the teachers perspective on this goal. But attaining this type of classroom interaction seems to fly in the face of the cultural background and expectations of Chilean students, and the teachers feel forced to revert to more traditional approaches.

> As soon as, uh, for instance, if you're doing like a speaking activity, or something like that; or a kind of a, a warm-up activity, they feel you're not doing much, although we know that they're learning more. But, when it comes to, uh, standing in front of the board, you know, and writing down something like, Present Perfect, for instance, they immediately sit quietly and pay attention and, and, they automatically get their pens and books and everything. So it's difficult to, to go

> against that, because that's the way they've been taught. That's what happens here. // I think sometimes, a little bit, it has to do with their personality, especially when they have to, uh, they are forced, in a classroom, for example, to talk. And they, they don't feel confident enough, because, uh, they . . . think that, probably, the other students are going to, make a fun of what they said. // Like, they need you to explain, for example, the rules. They always want rules and that kind of things. But, I really don't think that they need that, uh, to learn the language. Because, if you put the same students in the middle of a country that speaks another language and they don't have anyone to explain them the rules, they will learn.

Teachers feel that the students' age plays a possible role in this,

> Although I believe that learning English is mainly possible through experience, um, I think that older students . . . like . . . the ones that we have here, uh, they need and they ask for, also, for receiving some, uh, information in the way, like, printed or written, and they need more explanations . . . because our students tend not to be very autonomous.

Ideas for working with these cultural traits in order to generate more interactive and communicative learning environments, both F2F and online, need to come from the teachers themselves. In the project, developed in Section 3, I focus on generating these ideas. Some teachers already have notions of where to begin,

> So, the main challenge is making teachers, or say, getting teachers engaged in the opposite process, so to say, the opposite direction. Uh, we need, probably, a needs

> analysis. It's important [to] update the needs analysis, uh, so that we have a very clear idea of what it is that we want, that we can do, that we want to do, that we are in a position to do—and then try to identify the relevance of technology; of the technology that we have. Because, as I understand it, technology is always neutral. It is teachers; it's people that make use of technologies—that have to make the most important decisions as to how to use them appropriately.

A good number of participants indicated that they perceived NVU students as (a) lazy or only interested in passing the course but disinterested in learning, (b) negatively biased towards EFL due to past experiences before coming to the university, (c) having poor study skills and very low learner autonomy, (d) people who put a low priority on EFL learning, (e) lacking commitment to learning—leading to poor attendance, (f) highly reticent to actively participating, and (g) nonreaders.

The teachers (Chileans themselves) perceived all of these student characteristics as cultural in nature. One teacher put it like this:

> There is a lack of autonomy, because, they need someone, like, directing every step of the activity. It's difficult for them, sometimes, to keep on work, talking in English, to keep on being involved in the situation. Unless they are, like, some special students that are really eager to learn, or they feel very, they have a, a high self-esteem, regarding to their English, eh, skills.

Several teachers nuanced these generally unfavorable perceptions of their students by chalking it all up to shyness. Some of the participants, for example, said that,

> Um, I don't know if it's a Chilean thing? But, here we are very shy. Students are shy. They, they don't take risks, when they have questions. // They are usually very ashamed of their pronunciation. // Umm, a lot of them are afraid, and embarrassed, you know, they say, "But I don't want to make a mistake, because my classmates might laugh at me." They seem to care a lot about their peers, you know, and about how they're going to react.

Others said that teachers themselves need to address these negative qualities. For example,

> . . . because they come with a very bad experience, right? From high school, because most of our students come from, uh *municipalizados*, these, like government schools, which uh, that's what I mean. Ah, so they have to, we have to, um, try to show them that English is different, that, that, what their teachers did at school was something that they have to forget about, right? // First of all making, making feel them comfortable, because, uh, especially, I think it has to do with, uh, Chilean people, in general…we are kind of shy. // So, they have to take advantage of that! And they have to learn how, how to learn! So, uh, every time I can, I try to, I try to give them hints about that! // So, to give them the tools and try to make them follow you is like, you have to hold their hands!

A blended format should deliver a positive contribution to this situation, and a help for teachers. Some teachers recognized this possibility,

> The blended program has to be attractive enough and supported in the proper way so the students, eh, get involved in that. Because, if not, they are not going to do it and something is going to be missing there.

But others remained unsure,

> For example, when you have a F2F class, and you, and you, and you miss, uh, the class, uh, that's it! The teacher is not going to, to repeat the same class again because you were not there! . . . But when you have an appointment with the computer (laugh) uh, you can, procrastinate, that appointment, so you are, uh, you are free! But now I, I think I'm, uh, if I mention this, it's not a benefit, because, even though you can procrastinate, when you're in front of the computer, uh, some people, who are, procrastinators, by nature, (laugh) they say "OK, tomorrow I'm going to have my meeting with the computer." And then tomorrow is tomorrow and, that tomorrow never ends.

Participants strongly acknowledged the need to set rules and establish deadlines for online student work. One teacher felt that,

> Yeah, I mean, you give students dates, like deadlines, but . . . [then] they're responsible [for that] you know, and, and they have to, decide, whether they actually do that, or not. So, discipline is really important, and how they manage time, time-management is really important for them. Can they do it?

While another worried that,

> Well, online, well that's, yeah, that's something important because Chilean students are not autonomous learners . . . so, if you're talking about time,

> sometimes, for example, with my students, uh, trying to do something good, or trying to benefit them, I would give them a lot of time to complete, for example, uh, just a couple of units—thinking that they have little time, or that they have other things to do. And, that turned into, a drawback, because, actually, it doesn't matter if you give them one month or six months—they're going to do, the activities the night before (laugh). They're always going to do the activities the night before. So . . . now, I think that you . . . don't have to give them, all this freedom. It's not something, uh, beneficial . . . thinking about these classes here.

Some participants said that the students' cultural characteristics remained unaffected by blended formats and continued to block the potential effectiveness of online course content access for extended learning and practice.

> And there's something, uh, with [the] students, that they are not interested. I can give them all the time they want, to do things online, and they won't do it on time; or, they will do it at the end, at the last moment. So, I don't know what's, wrong (laugh). There´s something missing, and, I believe it's because it's, uh, a compulsory thing to do, in this moment, here . . . Yeah, maybe if it was elective, but, even though, I think, they find it too much sometimes. They find it too much. But, it's just a course! I don't get it! // So, to be honest, it's not that there's such a big problem. I think they're just a bit lazy; because they can spend hours playing games. They can be, for hours, on Facebook, WhatsApp, whatever, right? And, when it comes to something that they have to study, they're just a bit lazy. // Yeah, the online part, right? Yeah. Ah, sometimes we, we see that they, they are

> very slow with their, with the job, I mean, with the things that they have to do; with the activities. So, I think that we have to be motivating them all the time. Um, I'm saying, you know? "try to work there." These are, this is the challenge for them, I mean, motivation, try to, I don't know, sometimes I don't know how to . . . I don't know, how can I?

The teachers felt that students underutilized their time—the great benefit that blended learning offers to them. For example,

> Umm, I think it depends on the, the students, because, NVU is a world. But, there are different kinds of students, for example, those, who come here, uh, during the days, and . . . [for] those who come here at night, they, they are probably, uh, they think that the computer is, something that, they use, at work, and they, they don't see the, uh, the computer as a tool to, to learn—[and they seem to say] "OK, it's just 5%? No, and, and I'm going to spend a lot of time, uh, working, I don't have time, because I work, I have a family, etcetera, etcetera, and you're going to give me just 5% if I do this?" And, I always try to tell them, "It's not what I give you, it's what are you're going to get if you work with that! // I guess it's, basically related to, (laugh) time-management! You know? That's one of the biggest issues that we have; is that students say that they don't have enough time, to work on the platform, because a lot of them work, umm, and, like being, you know, having, you know, being able to say, "I'm going to spend an hour a day, or a few hours a week." It, it's difficult for them to do, because there's no one forcing them to do it. // So they, they see that they can, that they have this, uh, I don't know, they

> have a lot of time to complete some contents, so they, they're not responsible with that freedom. // But, uh, if they don't come, if they don't attend the lessons, and then they have to do the online thing, I mean, and they don't really care about it; they can check, and know which the, are the correct [answers], but not because they want to critically understand, what the problem was, with their previous answer, but just to have it right and get a good mark. I mean, there isn't a lot of learning there.

The teachers remained hesitant to say what could remedy this situation. Many of the participants expressed exasperation,

> . . . (laugh) I don't know, really! Because we have tried everything, um, yeah, we have tried a lot of things. // You know what? To be very honest, I don't, I don't feel that we have a, obstacles here. We have a good; a good connection, [and] we have time to do it. Sometimes the main, the main obstacles are, are the very same students. I mean, but, that's what I told you, ah, ah, we need to find, again, the sparkle of this, because, we have all the tools. I think that we have all the tools. // . . . but, they, don't see the . . . platform as a, an opportunity to learn! Most of them, it's something they have to do, and they do it, even though, if they have to check the, the, the answers, or, or ask someone else, uh, to do it. It's, "OK, I have to; I have to do this, and I'll do it, and it doesn't matter what happens in the . . . process." And, and that is hard to; that is one of the most difficult, uh, things to . . . solve . . . with that, because, they . . . it's not, uh, you have to teach them, certain contents, and you have to teach them how to use some things they are not willing

> to use. So it's, double effort, double, uh, work. // Because you're not gonna have time to do everything anyway . . . it's impossible, yeah. // Uh, as I said before, they just, some of them . . . don't want to learn, they just want to pass; because they think that they have other, more important subjects.

Some teachers believe that incorporating more of the online components into the F2F class (which would defeat the purpose of a blended approach) might afford the only way to get students to work with the LMS.

> I could leave things for their work online. Because, that's the idea of, um, and that's the advantage for me . . . of the online thing. But I think we . . . should take more of the things to classes, so it works better. Because when, when you leave everything for them to work on their, in their houses, for example, sometimes it doesn't work very well. They, they just click, click, click. Yes, exactly (laugh), the personal commitment or, the program, um, is not very well, um, done, in the sense that the students could check any, they can click on anything and then you will have the progress. But you don't really know if they are doing it right!

Clearly, teachers and students at NVU need to engage one another in conversations about the meaning of *quality education*—a very important topic in the media headlines sparked by student protests over the past few years in Chile—and about the roles and responsibilities of the participants in the process of learning. This need arose on several occasions in response the interview protocol questions geared towards blended learning and became prevalent under that same theme (Theme 7: Blended

Learning). Developing sound arguments for the potential benefits of a blended program remains an important topic for teacher training (Section 3). It can work,

> But, (laugh) it, you, you have to work with, uh, with their minds first, you have to convince them, and it's hard to convince someone when they are, I think that when, when you're older. // Yes, [because] they don't see it as an opportunity.

One of the big teacher concerns with blended instruction revolved around "how-to use things like blogs, etcetera," to benefit their students' production. For example, teachers felt that having to do error correction online created a barrier to this type of activity,

> Because, when you, uh, are, uh, helping them, uh, from distance, and in front of a computer, for example, if I . . . want to explain . . . why their answer was, uh, wrong, uh, I have to write a, like a report! And that takes, uh, time! And, sometimes you say, "OK, now I don't have time to explain, uh, this, and how can I know, because I'm not . . . checking my student's . . . face, to, to know?" And then say, "OK, I understand now." So, I think it takes, uh, it takes longer when you, when you want to . . . be with your students from the distance, [to] teach them using, uh, the, a platform.

Evidently, the teachers felt that finding enough time to work with their students on web 2.0 activities presented difficulties. Many of them hold down more than one job, and their inexperience with online platforms leads to demotivation,

> Uh, or you don't have much experience working with this. And also, there is another thing that you must take into consideration is that you need time to do this

> kind of things. But, in that way, you don't have to spend—you can administrate time. Time is a big matter for both of them, teachers and students. // Uh, so, I have to worry about the platform here but I have to worry about another platform there, and, and something else in, in my other job. So, there are many things. // Eh, well, the first thing, or the main thing is that you have to be able to manage your time. // Because, you know, you don't want to, that's why you don't want to assign everything, because, if you do, then you're not going to have time to, to go through the whole thing, so, yeah. So, I'd rather assign, less, things to do, but make sure that you can actually, you know, follow up (laugh) you can correct them and can give them feedback. [That] would be the most important thing. It's one of the biggest challenges, really. I mean, yeah.

Time becomes a critical factor for students as well, especially when they underutilize the online portion of the blended courses,

> Uh huh. Other challenges. Well, some students don't like to work online. // So, they have time to acquire. Because, they don't have time to acquire. It's not their priority. They have three hours a week. They don't really care about the, the Internet thing. So, how on earth are they going to acquire 12 units in 14 weeks? And that's why they fail so much. I remember, last semester, I had, like, 80 students, and 20 or 25 of them failed. And they failed big time! So, it, I, I think, well, they're not motivated and so-on, but there's also this, time thing that, uh, is like, a limit, I think.

On the whole, the participants saw the value in having a blended program, but felt that they (and especially their students) lacked the mindset to make blended learning work,

> Yeah, I think that . . . it's something that we can; I mean, we could make it [happen]. I think that . . . at the beginning, I thought it was going to be something, like, very difficult; I mean, you know how you have the LMS part and the class, but, I think that we can make it. I mean, just as a conclusion, I think it works. I mean, when you have the online part and F2F classes, it works, and it's like, very, valuable; I mean, it's a, it's a useful, tool. And, sometimes, we as a teachers, and students, don't, don't see that. I mean, when they . . . graduate, and they see that, how expensive the . . . the courses are; and how difficult it is to manage work and, and classes, and everything; they can, you see that it was something that, maybe, you, you lost. I mean, you lost your, your opportunity when you had that. // I would like to say that, maybe the problem—because, I don't know if this happens in other universities—is the, as I told you, the kind of students we have. They are not very used to study, um, they are different. You know that; they are different. And, it's hard for them to study. They were not used to it. And, they were not very used to, online things. So, that may be another [thing]—they might feel frightened by it. So, that might be one of the problems, with the blended thing. But, in a perfect world, it would, it should work! It should work; but, I think that it's a very important point—the kind of students we have. They're not very used to study. // Yes [learning] English, English. So how? How? . . . I don't get it. And, and that's, uh, I am worried about that, but, because of, of the students! // You

> know? And, it's not just something that you, have to do. And, there has to be a point to it; especially for students—making sure that it does help them in the learning process. Because, if they see it just as something that they have to do, and they're not learning, then, you know, it becomes pointless. Yeah.

Theme 5: Motivation Issues

All of the research questions indirectly posited motivation (or lack thereof) as an underlying aspect of blended learning success. Another overarching theme that emerged from the interviews involved trying to motivate students to engage online with course content and with one another throughout the semester. The teachers felt that their concern for student motivation and how to bolster it ran against many of the cultural, environmental, and program related issues previously noted. Some of the more prominent challenges involved: time constraints and preference for other subjects, lack of interest and the obligatory nature of EFL as a requirement for graduation, unclear objectives and rational for learning EFL, as well as negative bias towards EFL due to past experiences, among others. From the teachers' point of view, if students did not see the immediate value of learning EFL as a life skill, they tended to want to put-it-off until a later date—when it might actually become needed or required.

The teachers recognized themselves as highly motivated EFL learners who felt a love for the language and the acquisition process. They believed, however, that their students did not demonstrate similar levels of curiosity, enthusiasm, and a clear sense of the opportunities that learning EFL could open up. This belief becomes a source of frustration and angst for these professionals. As one participant responded, "And

sometimes, of course, uh, there are many that are motivated, like, naturally, others need to be motivated, and there are others that need to motivate themselves. And . . . those are the ones that fail."

The teachers felt that the most appropriate way to break into the students' intrinsic motivation required attempts to relate EFL learning activities to topics that their learners already showed interest in, and trying to avoid negative stimulus type motivators as much as possible. The participants believed that focusing on the positive and rewarding progress in a consistent way constituted a best-practice in their teaching role.

Theme 6: Learning Environment

I found that references (latent among all of the research questions) to setting the tone for learning and to creating a class atmosphere for EFL practice and production, that fosters eventual acquisition, became frequent during the interviews,

> So uh with this notion in mind, I think it is pedagogically convenient uh to try to somehow simulate the conditions, uh, that are normally observed when people learn how to use an artifact of this type. Uh, and as I understand it, a very, like uh, say convenient and useful way of implementing a concrete strategy is by promoting the idea of learning communities. Because, within the context of learning communities, uh, community members have the opportunity to interact, to see how others are doing, how others are making mistakes, and just come up with a hypothesis about what works best. What works or what doesn't. // And, in a very natural environment. And, besides, they've got to feel good. My motive is like "the better you feel, the more you learn." Right? They have to feel

> comfortable. They have to feel at ease. And, uh, and they have to, um, I don't know, be like, kind of immersed in the language.

The teachers often related this idea of language immersion—informally, outside of the classroom—and the type of atmosphere conducive to EFL learning, to how they had learned English themselves: lots of exposure to more-or-less authentic language input, numerous opportunities to practice the language in meaningful ways, and interesting game-like activities, music, or films that sparked intrinsic interest. The teachers also suggested (from their own past experience) certain actions and strategies for learning that they tried to promote within the formal learning environment. They used many adjectives to describe a learning inducing environment. For example, it should be: fun, friendly, relaxed, and meaningful (among others). A lot of what made EFL learning a positive experience for teachers also centered on these ideas.

Setting the stage for this type of class environment provides a way forward. Any negative memories teachers expressed centered on notions of how the educational system forces students into compliance without offering other alternatives. The teacher participants expressed a desire to break out of this mold and, as far as possible, search for ways to adapt the learning environment to fit the students' needs in their own classes. The instructors play a primary role in supporting learning. A prime goal involves getting students to support one another and suggests the idea of forming a CoP among students.

> It seems to me that a good teacher should also know when to make others support, uh, how to make students support one another. Yes. So we should be able to realize what are the weaknesses of some students [and] of some others,

> strengths, and then fix the best cocktail. // I think that the learning a language has to do with, with communication. So, every time I have the opportunity to . . . make . . . a communicative environment, or [create] activities in which they have to, talk to each other, uh, I do it, because, I think, they are not learning just from me! They can learn from their classmates too!

Related to the challenge of creating opportunities for student-student dialogue, the teachers perceived their own "shyness" or lack of self-confidence in promoting communicative class environments in a proactive way. They identified with the building of a CoP among their peers as a good idea to counteract this reticence and to move beyond more traditional, fixed, teaching schemata. The LEP has built an online CoP and has been actively encouraging participation from teachers, directors and coordinators around the network. In the training project, developed in Section 3, I address this opportunity as one of several available for professional development as a member of the LEP. I found it interesting that, in responses to questions more directly related to blended formats of instruction, none of the teachers referred specifically to the notion of creating a learning environment online.

Theme 7: Blended Learning

EFL learning in general requires time, and the teacher-participants indicated that they had required a minimum of 4-to-6 years for their own learning process. Several teachers even stated that after 10, 15, or 20 years, they continue to learn. "Some people ask you, 'how long does it take to learn English?' I say, 'years and years, and you never stop'." All of the respondents referred to a lack time in F2F classes to cover the required

content of a course adequately. “One of the biggest challenges that teachers have, is, uh, time.” Therefore, both F2F and online time require refocusing through purposeful design.

Blended teaching and learning underscores the whole idea behind this study and all of the research questions. Teachers understand that a blended format offers a potentially very good way to help students to manage their time where the,

> . . . benefit is that students, uh, get more, uh, input, outside of the classroom and, maybe also, helps them, organize, time, you know? Because three hours a week F2F is not enough, is not enough. They need to, to spend more time practicing and, hearing and, well, practicing, so, that’s why it’s a very, very useful resource, to, to have a blended course, where they can go online, and continue practicing.

Teachers need to trust the students to do their part in this process and teachers need reenergizing in order to find ways to tap into their own . . . “diversity of experiences, and [their] curiosity, and [their] ability to connect with the students.” // . . . “[their own personal] mediums or means to deliver content and provide, like, uh, room for students to practice more on their own time.”

The teachers also recognize that the blended program at NVU remains a work in progress and that much room for improvement still remains:

> Uh, well we’re trying to implement this uh, blended program here at NVU to help our students learn English and we’ve gone through a lot of problems. I, to be frank, I wouldn’t say that, uh, like we can sing victory (laughter), but it doesn’t mean to say that we haven’t learned, uh, a lot. So, maybe it’s just that we’re going through, probably the less, the least romantic stage and we just have to gather

> data, experiences, and as much information as possible so that we can probably, in the near future, reevaluate everything and come to the conclusion that what we need is blended, for example, a blended solution but which might be completely different from what we now have, precisely because we learned where and when this solution was successful, or not. // Well, I like it, you know? I like blended learning. We have had many problems. It hasn't been easy but, I, I think we are in a digital era. The blended model, I think, is here to stay. // I mean, obviously you have a lot of problems with, uh, technology is like that. Sometimes you have, I don't know, you have problems with the connections, [or] whatever, but, when it works, it's very useful, yeah.

Teachers indicated clear awareness that a blended EFL program affords a way for students to learn online so that F2F class time can provide opportunities for practice and consolidation but, "here it's the other way around. We teach, in class, and [ask students] to exercise in . . . the webpage." Getting students to spend more time actually learning online, however, has proven quite difficult for the teachers to achieve. It can happen,

> But, (laugh) it…you, you have to work with, uh, with their minds first. You have to convince them, and it's hard to convince someone when they are, I think that when, when you're older. // [because the students] don't see it as an opportunity.

Some of the teachers have tried to counteract this student reticence.

> Yeah, yeah, yes. Well, umm, I always tell them that, that they've got to take advantage of this opportunity because it's, you know, it's a really good way of, of, umm, practicing what you learned in class, and, you know, I, I tell them, "you,

> you have so many activities that you can do, and, make the most of it because this is, you're not going to have this opportunity, afterwards.

Others admitted confusion about how to move forward.

The teachers' responses showed a general consensus that confusion exists about how to facilitate blended learning. The participants indicated a desire for a clear rubric or standard for the blended courses they teach, and felt a strong need for more training in this area because, "it's all a bit messy and confusing." // "[I think that, for example] . . . assessment should be done primarily online in order to free up F2F class time for practice and consolidation of the proposed learning outcomes." Additional training opportunities to help teachers see around some of their currently experienced difficulties would make the perceived benefits of a blended program more apparent. In regards to the potential of online time, in a blended program, one teacher put it succinctly,

> Um, well F2F classes are always, we always have time limitations, I mean, [but for] online time, we don't. There's, probably an unlimited time (laugh). Um, so, like Internet use would be more practical, like, and it's more likely that students could spend as many hours as they want, but on F2F they cannot. So, that would be an advantage.

Theme 8: LEP Program Issues

All of the research questions try to get at the heart of the issues and challenges related to the LEP's blended format of content delivery. These issues did not really surface in the first part of the interviews, which focused on more general topics about EFL learning, except for the question concerning the challenges faced by teachers in

assuming an active role in the teaching-learning dynamic. In that question, responses indicated the tension between the amount of course content and the time to cover it.

> Time to do, everything that they, [teachers] would love to do. I mean, ideally, all teachers would love to, do lots of activities in class. They would love to make sure that, every class is really complete. But, sometimes you'll find that [the] workload is quite, heavy, and maybe not—you can't always, do everything you want to do. That could be a challenge, time. And, another challenge that you might have is, uh, umm, how, thinking about how flexible the program is. Can you make changes? Can you adapt it? Or, do you have to stick to it? That can sometimes be a challenge for teachers, you know, you might want to teach something, but it's, you know, you don't have the time, because you have to stick to a program. I think that could be one of, another big challenge. You know, when you have for, for some teachers it might be, better just to stick to a plan. But I think most teachers like to, include something, you know, else, that they think might help, that particular group of students. And you just don't have enough time. Umm, so, sticking to the program is a challenge. And it's related to a time factor. That's, that's right. I mean, not making, the book, like, the, the main, thing, you know? Maybe having it as some kind of, support, but not everything.

The teachers indicated that the main challenge for getting students to participate actively in the online portion of the LEP seemed to require a lot of negative reinforcement.

> In the way that we, we, so, that's why I, uh, I do my own regulations during, like, I give them one week only to work in [a] unit, and then I close the unit, and then, um. If I didn't do that, I think, it wouldn't work. Because they, could be all lost. They, some of them would work, others wouldn't. And even for myself, when, when I have studied in an Internet program, uh, online program, sometimes it was, uh, hard to do all the exercises when they were requested to, like, on time. For example, uh, participate in forums or, all different kinds of activities.

Teachers felt their primary role in the online portion of blended courses revolved around enforcing student engagement and that, to some extent, the platform required that role from them. In other words, they expressed a sense that the LMS generated more of a straightjacket than a multiplier effect. Teacher training can open minds in this area.

Conclusion

It became evident throughout the course of the interviews, and subsequent analysis and coding of the transcripts that the teacher participants in this study at NVU have reflected on their personal notions of good teaching practice in a F2F setting. How to transfer that good teaching practice to the online portion of the LEP still remained unclear for many of the participants. Through all three of the research questions, I sought to focus on this type of transfer.

Research Question 1: What factors do teachers perceive impede or limit students' engagement with the blended EFL course content through the online platform?

For the most part, the teacher interviewees felt that their students lacked the autonomous motivation required to engage in meaningful practice and study online. They

also indicated that time management turned into a critical factor. The teachers remarked that students had sufficient time (even though the responses mentioned student responsibilities to family, work, and dedication to other, academic major-related subjects) but did not take, or schedule, the time necessary to engage with EFL course content outside of the classroom. The teachers saw poor time management as a cultural issue resulting, for the most part, from:

- a lack of learner autonomy,
- negative experiences with EFL learning before coming to the university,
- an unclear sense of the importance of EFL for professional development,
- a student perception that online study and practice was simply make-work and not an integral part of the learning process, and
- impatience with slow-to-load applications through the LMS.

In the teacher training project developed in Section 3, I address these and other impediments to learner engagement and active involvement in the online portion of the LEP.

Research Question 2: What factors do teachers perceive contribute to students' engagement with blended EFL course content through the online platform?

Some of the respondents indicated an awareness that their interactive presence online during the blended course could positively influence and promote student engagement online (being there). Other teachers remained unsure how, or to what extent, they could (or should) become more involved with their students in the online portion of

the blended courses. The following factors related to this lack of clarity, on the part of teachers:

- Suspicion about the effect that online course delivery would have on future employment.
- The sense that they lacked control over the teaching process through an online medium.
- Unease with the amount of time that might be required of them.
- Teacher pay for this time.

In the project developed in Section 3, I seek to open teachers' minds and hearts about these uncertainties and to begin the process of ongoing reflection. I deal with concerns about teacher time (required, spent, and managed) for blended course delivery as a special focus of the project. Rather than adding to the already heavy workload of the teachers, in the project, I look at ways to shift their current time commitments towards a more blended, less traditional, model of instruction. The ability and willingness to look at, examine, and change ones teaching paradigm becomes the first step towards shaping future practice. I expect that this type of reflection on practice will lead to more and better teacher engagement online so that their students will follow in suit.

Research Question 3: What do teachers propose they could put in place to counteract impediments to students' engagement and to increase their involvement with blended EFL course content through the online platform?

The teachers recognize that, to date, both they and their students have underutilized the web 2.0 tools incorporated into the LMS. Asking the students to work

alone online has not produced the desired results. The teachers openly admit that their own participation and engagement with students online has been minimal—for the most part not going beyond that of checking the students' progress in SCORM-based exercises in the LMS. Teachers realize that the time spent with students in the F2F portion of the blended course holds vital importance for the production and practice of the language. Unfortunately, teachers currently use up much of this F2F time in covering the basics of grammar and vocabulary instruction (content delivery), repetitive activities (drilling), and some limited pair and group work activities (time permitting).

The teacher participants realized that the LMS could save them time in the classroom, and allow them to focus on more productive, speaking-type activities, if they and their students could put it to good use for:

- basic instruction (if adequately explained and guided),
- listening practice,
- individual speaking assignments (with voice tools),
- individual or group writing assignments (with blogs or discussion forums),
- error correction (through these same tools), and
- assessment.

For the teacher training project, I need to demonstrate how instructors can better utilize the LMS tools for these purposes in order to free up time in the F2F classroom and add value to the learning dynamic. The teacher training will also need to cover aspects of the types of student-training required of teachers so that they can create learning communities with and among their students throughout the semester.

In Section 3, I outline a teacher training project for use at NVU and potentially around the Laureate network of HE providers to address the findings of the data collection phase of this study that have been analyzed and discussed in this section. A second literature review offers current research-based support for the different elements of the project understood as relevant for the various stakeholders, as well as a theoretical basis upon which to build the project. The international LEP presently offers a growing suite of products and services for teacher development and training to EFL educators. I hope that this project can also provide teachers with the desired type of support they require and have requested over the past few years.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The LEP at NVU, and around the Laureate network of HE providers, has proposed a goal of intermediate EFL proficiency for students as an achievable learning outcome. This goal, based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for language acquisition, stands at the B1, sometimes referred to as the Threshold level (Council of Europe, n.d.). Attaining this standard of proficiency requires a minimum of 400-500 hours of guided instruction for students who begin their EFL studies at the 0, beginner, or false beginner level. The LEP at NVU provides (at least potentially) for this amount of student engagement with course content in a blended environment format over the course of four academic periods (approximately 100-120 hours each). The university does not, however, allot enough plausible time to the F2F components of these levels (50-60 hours per semester) to attain the amount of student time-on-task required to reach this standard. Therefore, NVU has piloted and rolled out a blended format over the last several years as a solution to the obvious time-gap.

In this study, I solicited the views and perceptions of LEP teachers around research questions related to blended learning and instruction in order to develop a teacher training project that can address their needs, clarify their roles, and promote their vocation as educational specialists at the university level. The project itself resulted from the analysis of qualitative interview data with purposefully selected samples of full-time and part-time teachers at NVU as well as a review of relevant literature on program development and teacher training. In this section, I discuss a theoretical backdrop,

emerging research in blended learning, and teacher training models gleaned from primary sources used to address the needs and concerns of all stakeholders.

Description and Goals

The incorporation of technology in order to enrich the learning process, both in-class and beyond, has been an educational desire and impetus for decades (Picciano, 2009). According to Buck (2009), however, PCs and LMSs are not the first (and likely not the last) technologies to have an effect on educational practices. Introducing technology in order to enhance instructional effectiveness can become a nightmare and holds no inherent guarantee of success. Often these innovations fail due to "[in]adequate investigation and over-confidence in the capabilities of an emerging technology" (Buck, 2009, p. 130). A danger also exists, as described in Section 2, of teacher and student reticence to use these technologies adequately when they perceive them as a top-down imposition or when the instructors lack sufficient training to do so. The project outlines a teacher training workshop that the university can use to address these and other issues identified by the participants in this study in order to provide ongoing support.

The project addresses the problem identified in Section 1 (nonoptimal use of the LMS by students and teachers as a way to extend the classroom dynamic and thereby increase the time-on-task required for EFL learning) by bringing teachers into the process of course design. The goals of the project seek to give the teachers and other stakeholders a clearer "stake" in the design, evaluation, and outcomes of EFL courses at NVU in order to increase their sense of buy-in and commitment to the program—for the sake of their students.

Rationale

Over the past several years, working with the LEP at NVU and throughout the Latin American region, I have heard it said, in one way or another, "Show me that blended teaching or learning works and then I'll start using it." This outlook creates a type of Catch-22 effect in that, like many things that are new, people cannot really know if something works until they try, and will not try until they know. All would agree, however, that time for adequate instruction, and for increasing student time-on-task, represents a critical factor in blended EFL programs in order to achieve reasonable gains in learning. Program authorities at NVU recognize, however, that the students do not spend more than a minimal amount of time online—and that their F2F class attendance remains low, at around 48% (K. Towl, personal communication, November 20, 2012). The options then are (a) to become discouraged and lament the poor state of affairs; (b) to give up on blended learning and return to the old way of doing things; (c) to lower the expectations for students, believing them incapable of more; or (d) to look for and experiment with creative ways to reach our goals and change the student-teacher relationship and culture so that blended instruction becomes an effective vehicle for improved learning.

Educational providers around the world are looking for ways to enhance the learning experience of their students and to increase their learning outcomes through blended or hybrid courses. They are trying to make it work. The teachers interviewed in this study expressed a desire to see the blended EFL program at NVU work better as well. The development of the project for this study responds to that desire.

In the past teacher training at NVU has been generally of the "how-to" sort where someone (a so-called expert) shows them interesting activities, an innovative method, or a trick on achieving a certain outcome. This training project seeks to change the "how-to," closed mindset of teachers to a more open-ended "how-might" approach. The genre of the project appropriately responds to a need for training expressed by the participants of this study (analyzed in Section 2) and as an invitation to their active engagement in the process of blended course design.

Through the content of the project, I have addressed the problem (identified in Section 1 and corroborated through analysis of teacher interviews in Section 2) as an invitation to NVU-EFL instructors to become more proactively involved in the setting of course learning outcomes and the design of the blended courses they teach in order to reach them. The project can adequately respond to the problem if it produces buy-in, ownership, and commitment to the blended learning solution of the Laureate network.

Review of the Literature

In the review of literature for Section 1, I focused on the context of student and teacher adaptation to e- or b-learning models in general; their perspectives, roles, and responsibilities in the blended learning process; and around the issues of social presence, engagement, and possible concerns for this type of course content delivery. Perhaps the most important finding from the first review of the literature pointed towards the need for blended learning instructors to become more "present" to their students in the online portion of their courses in order to increase the chances that the learners will engage more effectively there as well. The first review of literature also discussed the notion of

reorienting teacher perceptions and professional practice for more effective instruction in blended environments. That discussion led into the research questions and helped to frame the interview protocol for data collection used to complete Section 2.

The literature review for this section focuses on the need for teacher training and professional development in blended learning and teaching environments, supported by the findings in Section 2 and the content of relevant sources as they apply to the project (Appendix A) as an outcome resulting from this study. I describe the components of the project, as they relate to different groups of stakeholders, and their relevance to the need for the project itself. I have divided the literature review into sections according to the different stakeholder groups at NVU and beyond. At the end of this review, I introduce and outline two guiding theories to support the content of the project, as well as a design model for the training itself. An important finding from this review indicates that teachers also need to be "present" in the initial design of blended courses in order to acknowledge and honor the fundamental role they play in the effective implementation of them. Top-down policies for the integration of technology into the teaching and learning dynamic can sometimes create an unwelcome sense of "imposition" that universities should avoid in order to increase the teachers' personal sense of buy-in and ownership of the blended courses they lead.

Through the electronic databases of the Walden University library (SAGE, ERIC, and Education Research Complete) I conducted an extensive search to find peer-reviewed studies and journal articles related to the research questions, the problem under examination, and the findings from the data for the purposes of this review. I used the

following key words, in isolation or in combination, in Boolean searches to glean these resources: *blended learning, teachers, EFL learning, adult learners, technology, anxiety, culture, benefits, student motivation, teacher training,* and*, universal design for instruction* (among others). These searches generated 100 or so possible reference sources for the present review, 30 of which I found pertinent to the project.

According to So and Bonk (2010), the design and implementation of blended learning environments requires clear coordination between the two components of the course (F2F and online) in order to assure effective content delivery and knowledge transfer, and to fully support meaningful collaboration within and among members of the class group. This purposefully designed coordination fosters a sense of continuity and integration of the learning experience across and throughout the blended components of the course in a more holistic fashion. So and Bonk stress that blended course designers should keep in mind and understand that the online platform does replace the need for F2F teaching and learning but affords an opportunity to extend that interaction beyond the classroom in meaningful ways. These authors state, however, that some types of learning activities, tasks, or experiences stand better suited to online interactions than F2F. Instructors need not replicate or "teach the same thing twice" and must seek to design meaningful interaction in both spheres of a blended course so that "critical discourse episodes in face-to-face discussions are not lost and continue to develop online" (p. 190). Teachers, as well as LEP leadership and other university stakeholders need to design and create the necessary conditions for the implementation of truly blended EFL courses at NVU.

Students have high expectations for technology. Even with a very attractive, dynamic online platform, if any negative experiences occur, due to access or usability issues, then students may not take adequate advantage of the learning opportunities available to them (Masalela, 2009). In other words, the technology can get in the way of learning if not adequately implemented on campus and supported by the provider and other stakeholders. According to de Freitas, Rebolledo-Mendez, Liarokapis, Magoulas and Poulovassilis (2010), after addressing these issues, the next step should focus on learner expectations of (and in) blended environments by designing well-structured activities and social interactions online supported by feedback from the teacher.

The Stakeholders and Their Relevance to the Project

The following groups of stakeholders all play a vital role in the potential outcomes of the project for this study. I will need to provide each, to a greater-or-lesser-extent, with information gleaned from the findings of the study and from relevant research sources in order for them to carry out their corresponding functions with respect to blended EFL programs at NVU. All of the stakeholders are essential, none are discretionary. Completing the paradigm shift in the instructional practices of teachers and the learning practices of students—implied in the implementation of blended programs—can only happen if all relevant parties understand their particular roles and responsibilities and become willing to take appropriate action accordingly.

The University Leadership

The need for leadership from the highest levels of the university in order to implement policies, strategies, and support structures for a blended EFL program carries

the uppermost importance. Studies like that of Zuvic-Butorac, Nebic, and Nemcanin (2011) stress the importance of institutional planning for and acceptance of e- or b-learning as a model for teaching and learning. According to Edyburn (2011) however, only a very "few postsecondary institutions have a vision for deploying technology in ways that work toward reducing achievement gaps" (p. 42). In order to enhance the academic success of diverse student populations at the university level, the integration of technology must remain aligned with institutional policy, change strategies, and initiatives stemming from the academic and administrative management teams.

Similarly, a study by Wilson and Randall (2012) emphasized that in order promote successful blended programs; the university needs "to articulate clearly a vision for blended learning across the campus" (p. 5). Interviewing and collaborating with university leadership in order to understand and evaluate existing eLearning policies and structures at NVU falls beyond the scope of this project but I can and will take steps to advise authorities of the need to clarify these guidelines and procedures (and to broadcast them) for the benefit of all stakeholders. I could elaborate a list of key, focused questions for this purpose. According to Brown, Paewai and Suddaby (2010), "a set of key questions related to strategy, structure, decision-making, and so on, is helpful for senior managers, but the most important ingredient is the leadership and support at the highest level" (p. 70). Examples of these types of questions could be:

- What are the strategic goals and objectives for blended instruction at NVU?
- How are these goals reflected in policy statements about learning and teaching at the university?

- How much of a priority is this?
- What are the implications of blended instruction for students, teachers, and the larger academic community—including IT and infrastructure organizational leaders?
- How does the university manage these?

Without this type of vision and capacity for leading change, attempts to transform the learning environments at the university level can become stifled.

The LEP Leadership at NVU

At NVU, the LEP leadership has fairly extensive academic control over the program itself (course contents and syllabus, teacher observation and feedback, assessment items on formal exams, etc.) but relatively-limited influence over the teaching staff at the campus level (i.e., contractual agreements, pay scale, direct line management authority, etc.). This lack of recognized or traditionally-implied hierarchy creates a challenge for the LEP leadership because they must lead the course teams (on different campuses) informally and through collegiality in order to ensure that teachers follow the program syllabus and that the students attain the desired learning outcomes. Even though the course teams recognize the leadership's academic credibility, the lack of direct line management authority over the teachers can have a hindering effect on the academic unit as a whole (Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2011). For example, campus-based authorities who may hesitate to dismiss or replace a teacher for financial (rather than academic) considerations should conduct direct interventions with consistently underperforming instructors. I will work with the new LEP director and academic supervisor in the final

elaboration of the teacher training program (before implementation) in order to assure that it meets with the goals they envision for the professional development of their course team of instructors.

The LEP Teachers at NVU

Many authors, including Adewale, Ibam and Alese (2012), state that the "Web-based learning approach has come to stay" (p. 211). But even with a complex mathematical model of the sort these authors have developed—that purports to measure the effectiveness of blended courses—it remains difficult to know what works, how, and why, due to the wide ranging diversity of settings and experience. Widespread agreement exists, however, that "whether a course is offered in person, online, or through hybrid delivery, the skill of the instructor in facilitating student learning remains the single most important factor of all" (Thor, 2010, p. 43).

As mentioned in Section 1, many EFL instructors at the university level do not receive preparation in the use and incorporation of ICT in their teaching practice as part of their initial, preservice, formal training. The interview participants felt this gap in training as well (documented as part of the findings in Section 2). Reflection on this lack of preparation, as part of an ongoing teacher training program, of which this project will become part, can begin to address the question of what constitutes adequate training for inservice EFL teachers at NVU in order to "function in the sociocultural context in which they will work" (Peacock, 2009, p. 261).

The teachers at NVU and around the Laureate network have many questions about blended learning in general, the roles and responsibilities required of them in this

type of program, and the learning outcomes the university expects them to achieve. So and Bonk (2010) stressed that blended teaching and learning models generate a complex new paradigm for many instructors. Ongoing training on the possible dynamics of blended interactions (F2F and online), and around the ultimate question of how to achieve a meaningful, seamless learning experience for students in both formats, provides a necessary platform for clarifying teacher concerns.

Elements of the training project. The literature on program development and teacher training in blended environments stressed different elements that should form part of any training project of this nature. I found several of these particularly relevant to the findings from the data collection (Section 2) and the current situation at NVU. First, the technological competence of the instructors in blended courses needs addressing. Similar to research conducted in other emerging HE markets (see for example, Masalela, 2009) some of the interviewed teachers in this study expressed apprehensions about their personal abilities in the use of technology both inside and outside of the classroom. In the proposed training, I will encourage LEP teachers to "share their best teaching practices online . . . [in order to] help nontechnical teachers build confidence and competency to leverage the emerging technologies in the classroom and to better prepare students for their future professions" (Bai & Smith, 2010, p. 15).

Second, the teachers need to discuss, clarify, and, if necessary, modify their perceptions of the students. The blended model of content delivery, learning, and assessment has created a new paradigm for many teachers at NVU. In these EFL courses, the "instructors should consider the diversity of learners when developing the curriculum,

and should seek to implement supports and procedures to minimize the potential concerns and problems while maximizing opportunities for novel learning" (Walsh, Rutherford, & Sears, 2010, p. 206). Airing and addressing any preconceptions, notions, and feelings about the type of students NVU teachers encounter in their classrooms provides a first step towards the development of educational spaces (both real and virtual) that meet the learning needs and styles of these students. As Edyburn (2011) noted, "seldom do we examine the nexus of technology and its potential role for fostering academic success for students in the bottom 50th percentile" (p. 37). Because NVU has an open-enrollment admissions policy, many NVU students may well fall within this category. Edyburn further suggested that even though most teachers have not been formally trained to address the needs of diverse learners—they often find them in their classrooms. This reality certainly exists at NVU. Giving teachers an opportunity to think about ways to support all students, including those who may be more challenged, takes on special significance for the professional development of LEP instructors. According to Ruth (2012), "By starting to unpack how we believe students work, and our own assumptions about the teaching/learning nexus, we may find more useful ways of constituting learning and teaching for both our students and ourselves" (p. 10).

Third, teachers need to clearly establish and specify their blended course objectives. According to Picciano (2009), "pedagogical objectives and activities should drive the approaches that faculty use in instruction . . . blending these objectives, activities, and approaches within multiple modalities might be most effective for and appeal to a wide range of students" (p. 14). Getting teachers to take a collaborative look

at LEP course objectives in order to plan their lessons and weekly goals becomes another focus for training. In the literature, models have been suggested for conducting this type of teacher-involved course development process, which "can be usefully applied to higher education teaching that is not fully online, and can help to comprise an integral part of an action research approach (Johnson, 2010, p. 65).

Fulkerth (2009) noted that "most instructors had foggy notions of what objectives are. As a result, revisiting objectives [should become] a focus of initial work with instructors" (p. 45). This lack of teacher clarity about overall course objectives came out in the findings of the present study as well. Fulkerth found that revamping objectives with teachers gives them a deeper sense of involvement with their students, the course, and their ability to teach it better. This type of discussion, as part of inservice teacher training, allows instructors to clarify the nature of the courses they teach and can reinvigorate them in terms of the roles and responsibilities they (and their students) need to undertake. Focusing on and working with course objectives, even though time consuming, proves "highly satisfactory to mentors, developers and teachers . . . [and] helpful in moving [them] into the integration of blended learning tools" (p. 49). Working together on course objectives can also help teachers to increase their sense of belonging to the wider faculty culture at the university where, at present many instructors, especially part-time adjuncts who come to the university, teach their class(es), and leave, may feel isolated from the larger academic community. Providing an opportunity for LEP teachers to "come together for the common purpose of teaching/learning improvement . .

. [can generate] a positive change on the larger culture that should ameliorate some of the current distancing felt by some faculty" (Fulkerth, 2009, p. 53).

Several of the part-time teachers interviewed for this study expressed a sense of distancing or isolation, especially those that hold down more than one teaching position. In short, the training outline proposed for this project can become part of a regular series of workshops for newly hired teachers (as well as more experienced LEP course team members) focusing on challenges or, as Fetters and Garcia Duby (2011) call them, "points-of-pain" in the current blended program. Opening the floor for the sharing and thoughtful consideration of new opportunities and innovations can occur as well.

A possible goal for these training sessions involves the development of an NVU-specific set of pedagogical criteria as a framework of reference for all teachers. Brown et al. (2010, p. 66) offered a list that provides a useful starting point. The list includes the following key words or phrases: Communities of Inquiry, Learning-centeredness, Interactive, Collaboration, Personalization, Rich Tasks, Flexibility, Assessment for Learning, Diverse Learners, and Innovation and Excellence. The meaning assigned to each of these terms (among others that may arise during the training sessions) will require clear and consensually agreed upon definitions. Brown et al. (2010) based their own criteria on the assumption that a variety of metaphors for learning exist, and numerous teaching practices conducive to it. Their notion of learning centeredness, for example, in contradistinction to the more traditional poles of learner-centered versus teacher-centered approaches, proves interesting in that it puts the focus of course design on learning, as the center of the process, rather than on the players or a particular methodology. The

metaphors of EFL learning, acquisition, and participation remain crucial to this process and work together, rather than in opposition, as neither can fully account for the complexity of learning.

Summarizing the many considerations before-during-and-after blended instruction has been instituted, Niemiec and Otte (2010) stressed the importance of involving teachers in discussions about the thoughtful integration of blended components of a course. These authors underscored that "much depends on that 'thoughtful integration'—so much, in fact, that blended learning succeeds or fails by how effectively faculty are implicated" (p. 117). In the project for this study (Appendix A), I address the possible resistance towards blended instruction by the EFL teachers at NVU, which emerged in the findings from my research. The project stems from the foundational belief that "*Faculty can be resistant, but they can be eager to learn, truly teachable* [emphasis added] . . . [but they] must have ownership, must feel that blended learning is pursued through (and not against) their prerogatives, their responsibility for the design of instruction" (Niemiec & Otte, 2010, p. 117). If this notion becomes clear, I believe that teachers will welcome the opportunity to examine their current professional practice in the LEP and to explore alternatives in order to better serve their students.

Teachers need to become convinced of the benefits of blended instruction for their students as well as for themselves. Niemiec and Otte (2010) made the case that while the focus of teacher training generally targets the needs of the students; it can also create opportunities for faculty to reflect on possible uses for technology in order to increase their engagement with students and to create more and better interactions with and among

them. Opportunities of this sort would clearly "have an impact on the learning experiences and outcomes for the students— otherwise why undertake it? —but that impact would also be enriched by thinking through and capitalizing upon the multitude of likely outcomes for the faculty as well" (p. 120).

Teachers also need to become convinced that blended instruction works. In a study conducted by Shibley, Amaral, Shank, and Shibley (2011) the results showed that blended learning proves more effective than F2F instruction alone. These authors stated that the appropriate alignment and thoughtful integration of ICT and teaching strategies in a blended course can enhance both F2F and online student learning because it offers students "more structured learning opportunities outside of class than they have had previously [and this] increased time-on-task seems to improve learning" (p. 84).

The final purpose of the training project for this study aspires to create an opportunity for teachers at NVU to continue to break out of their personal silos and the possible rigidness of either theoretical orthodoxy or unexamined eclecticism in their classroom and online practice through a process of critical flexibility, as described by Yanchar and Gabbitas (2011). These authors concluded by reaffirming that educational practitioners are neither rigid ideologues nor mere technicians applying standardized methodologies in the classroom. Rather they become "agents of design seeking continuous improvement through critical reflection and the coherent appropriation of whatever may facilitate practice" (p. 396). Inviting LEP teachers at NVU to engage in open dialogue, through critical flexibility, about their courses, their students, and their

personal notions of the profession can provide new perspectives and promote changes in practice.

The LEP Students at NVU

As students spend more time online as part of their daily routine (socializing, exploring web pages, etc.) educators need to find more effective ways of interacting with them online as learning facilitators. Bai and Smith (2010) have argued that "through the affordance of Web 2.0 technologies, teachers can promote informal learning by . . . designing activities and facilitating social interactions in a pervasive way" (p. 22). These authors posited that blended programs provide many benefits for students (including reducing the cost of textbooks) and that these benefits are "especially important for students from under-resourced communities who are first generation college students and who, pedagogically speaking, come to the table with a disadvantage academically and financially" (p. 23).

Preparing the relatively disadvantaged students at NVU to study in blended programs can have a virtuous effect on teachers. Masalela (2009) found that when students are ready to participate in blended courses, the likelihood of successful learning increases. Student readiness also eases the time demands of blended instruction on the teachers. According to Quinn et al. (2012), another consideration when examining student readiness for blended formats of instruction, examines the extent to which teachers are asking learners to change their habitual and relatively successful approaches to education in the past in order to engage in "more flexible but often alien ways of

learning" (p. 17). Teachers must understand the kinds and extent of support that students may require as they embark upon this change.

As a first step, before instruction begins, and in order to avoid frustration later, the students need to clearly understand the technical requirements and participatory expectations of blended courses. Unfortunately, as Thor (2010) stated, "not all colleges clearly communicate this information to prospective students, who may find themselves enrolled in courses for which they are not equipped or prepared" (p. 42). Taking student needs into account becomes an important consideration for the teacher training projects like this one because, according to Wach, Broughton and Powers (2011), we cannot simply presume that students will automatically adjust their learning strategies to the nature of hybrid or blended courses: active participation and regular attendance in class and online, time management, meeting course deadlines for assignments, and so forth. These authors conclude that "efforts to develop faculty capacities to teach online . . . [need] to be matched by an equal commitment to building student capacities to learn online" (p. 93).

The IT Department at NVU

Adopting a blended learning environment can present a number of challenges for teachers and their students. The technology infrastructure, both physical and human, on campus takes on primary significance among these challenges. The teachers interviewed for this study mentioned this challenge quite often. Masalela (2009) emphasized that the reliability, convenience, and effectiveness of the LMS-type platforms in place for online content delivery and learning in university courses strongly influence the attitudes

towards blended instruction. Teachers credit (or blame) the university for the quality of the ICT infrastructure and expect immediate support whenever problems arise.

In the same way, whenever university policies prohibit the installation of ICT or online software on campus computers—or when firewalls prevent access to Internet-based resources—then both teachers and students perceive a clear message: security outweighs learning. University policy regarding the use of campus technology must reflect and support a concerted effort to promote student learning. Universities around the world are moving in that direction. According to Edyburn (2011), "as many campuses expand their online course offerings, they are recognizing the need to consolidate and improve the profile of online campus support services" (p. 42).

The Blended Content Providers: Cambridge University Press (CUP)

Several studies (see for example, de Freitas, Rebolledo-Mendez, Liarokapis, Magoulas, & Poulovassilis, 2010), "raised particular issues around [the technical issues of] accessibility and usability, including the quality of broadband connectivity and the user interface design" (p. 79). In this study and others, these issues often became "too jarring for the learners, and got in the way of them appreciating the value of the form" (p. 81). The CUP partners with Laureate are continually working on upgrades to the interface and usability of the LMS in order to enhance the blended learning experience across the network. CUP also provides teacher training opportunities on a regular basis, as needed, for LEP programs around the world. I could share the project for this study (Appendix A) with these partners in order to promote collaborative efforts to support teachers and students at NVU and throughout the Laureate network. This type of collaboration

provides essential support for the partnership. According to Thor (2010) the ability to count on adequate IT support and a stable online platform become fundamental preconditions for blended course delivery. After assuring satisfactory IT support, the university must provide instructors new to hybrid instruction with opportunities for faculty development in order to promote the discovery of pedagogically sound principles and methodologies for this type of course format. In order for these teachers to learn how to "develop, maintain, and manage the delivery of high-quality instruction" (p. 43), university leaders will need to assure the adequate time required for course development, instructional design, and training; proper resources (computer equipment and software); and strong internal support.

Two Guiding Theories and a Design Model to Inform the Project

This project proposes to train NVU-EFL teachers in order to facilitate the meaningful and appropriate incorporation of technology into a blended instructional model. A key goal addresses increasing the amount and quality of teacher presence in the online components of the LEP by helping them to see the value of technology as a way to facilitate and enhance their students' productivity and time-on-task. The need for teacher engagement online becomes paramount to this goal. Another goal fosters a cultural change in the students' attitude towards (and perception of) blended instruction as an effective way to succeed in their EFL learning aspirations. Change management proves necessary to achieve both of these. The theories of transactional distance and diffusion of innovation serve as a backdrop to relevant discussions around these and other goals for the training. The universal design for instruction (or learning) model offers an appropriate

context upon which to fashion blended courses that keep the students' learning profile top-of-mind.

Guiding Theory 1: Transactional distance theory. The notion of teacher presence (as described in Section 1) directly relates to this first guiding theory, and proves especially germane to the blended learning paradigm. According to Benson and Samarawickrema (2009), the transactional distance theory, which refers to the psychological rather than the geographical separation between students and their teachers, provides a framework for carefully analyzing the teaching and learning context in order to bridge this perceptual gap through appropriate course design and planning. Based on the instructor's knowledge of this context (and the observed level of student autonomy) design elements for blended courses can acquire an appropriate balance. For example,

- the type and amount of focused instruction given in the course,
- the level(s) of student-to-student and teacher-to-student dialogue in both the F2F and online settings, and
- the programed structure of the course syllabus.

The teachers interviewed in this study clearly believed that NVU students who regularly and comfortably use ICT platforms for entertainment or social-networking purposes may not possess the skills or mindset to use them for learning. When this dichotomy occurs, the transactional distance that students perceive may remain initially high and instructors need to take this into account when designing and planning the sorts of activities and supports that students require in a blended course. The teacher

participants in this study also perceived very low levels of learning autonomy in their students. Insufficient learner autonomy may indicate an even greater psychological distance experienced by students. Purposefully and thoughtfully designing blended courses within these parameters may provide the way to achieving the proposed learning outcomes of the LEP.

Students need adequate teacher support (both in-class and online) based on a constructivist perspective, which course planners can achieve through thoughtful course design. The end-goal of this design process aims to develop an alignment between the proposed learning outcomes of a given course and the types of learning tasks created to achieve them. The learning supports and resources provided by teachers that help students to complete these tasks become important components of this design and can, by extension, lead to more meaningful assessment practices. Benson and Samarawickrema (2009) noted that the importance of the transactional distance theory arises from its insight into the dynamics and design of eLearning by carefully considering the balance between the structure of a blended course and the expected levels of student autonomy. Recognizing this balance can provide very practical implications in terms of content delivery (online or F2F) and the types of interaction-dialogue that take place among students and between the teacher and the students.

Guiding Theory 2: Diffusion of innovation theory. The incorporation of new technologies into the learning dynamic of blended courses requires a process of careful planning and preparation. NVU officials implemented their blended EFL courses very quickly, as a top-down measure, without the time or opportunity to seek out and

incorporate the thoughtful input of stakeholders. Teachers interviewed for this study mentioned the sense of not contributing to the original planning and rollout of the program and indicated the desire for further, ongoing training. Several studies referred to the need to involve teachers directly in the planning, evaluation, and continuous revision of blended programs in order to produce a sense of buy-in and ownership (see for example, Fetters & Garcia Duby, 2011; Masalela, 2009). These authors, and others, stated that the diffusion of innovation theory provides a framework for understanding and facilitating the process of communicating, adopting and implementing proposed innovations (technological or otherwise) within an organization. This framework has been "guided by [Everett] Rogers' (2003) research and theory of Diffusion of Innovation . . . [that] refers to diffusion as a social process" (Masalela, 2009, p. 69). The theory posits that there are five steps or stages to innovation diffusion, which are:

- *Knowledge*: when a proposed innovation becomes known to an individual or group;
- *Persuasion*: when an individual or group begins to investigate the innovation and takes active steps towards discovering its potential;
- *Decision*: when the proposed innovation meets with either approval or negation for implementation;
- *Implementation*: when the innovation starts, becomes actively used, and undergoes evaluation for effectiveness as such; and,
- *Confirmation*: when the innovation receives complete acceptance by all relevant stakeholders and becomes fully operational throughout the organization.

The first four stages of this process—for the implementation of a blended EFL teaching model at NVU—were done on an institutional (NVU-LEP leadership) and Laureate network-wide level with little or no teacher-practitioner involvement. In the proposed training project, I seek to correct this oversight given that institutions "should recognize faculty perceptions, attitudes and concerns wherever they confront a new innovation . . . [because] the adoption rate on innovation is its compatibility with the values, belief system and past experiences of individuals in the social system" (Masalela, 2009, p. 68-69). Only then, the final stage of innovation diffusion (confirmation) becomes possible.

The members of the LEP-course team (NVU-EFL teachers) comprise the social system for the purposes of this project. All of these teachers approach the task of blended instruction through the lens of their own "values, belief system, and past experience" regarding technological innovation. According to Fetters and Garcia Duby (2011) the diffusion of innovation theory identifies and categorizes the different types of individuals within a social system in terms of their willingness to innovate. Examining these categories (or innovator personality types), can provide some perspective to the teachers as part of the training project. The categories are:

- *Innovators*: teachers with a positive bias toward new technology and who actively look for ways to use the latest gadgets and ICT software for their own classes. These teachers can become technology champions.
- *Early Adopters*: teachers who can visualize how emerging technology and blended instruction transforms their courses and want to take a leading role in this transformation. This group can become the core team of blended instructors.

- *Early Majority*: those teachers that take a pragmatic approach and understand that blended instruction has become the new paradigm. They can also see that technology provides a means to increase student productivity and become willing to take part in the blended learning revolution. This group can help to create a critical mass for blended teaching collaboration among the course team.
- *Late Majority*: teachers who exhibit generally pessimistic outlooks about technology and tend to focus on the potential problems. These teachers come-on-board only after the innovation has been tested and proven effective; and,
- *Laggards*: teachers who tend to ignore innovation and prefer to remain within their personal comfort-zones.

I will seek to identify individuals from each of these categories during the training project, which will allow for the set-up of possible mentoring teams that can assist members of the last two groups in the process of adoption. According to Masalela (2009) there are four elements that can influence the level of an individual's commitment to the innovation-decision-adoption process. They are (a) the innovation itself, (b) how the institution implements the innovation and the types of communication channels created to promote it, (c) the necessary amount of time allowed for adoption to take place, and (d) the particular social system being asked to incorporate the innovation.

The design of meaningful instruction in a blended context requires teachers to have a clear understanding of their students' attitudes, perceptions, and possible apprehensions about learning online. Teachers must also come to possess a strong commitment to using the ICT innovations available to them as tools for instruction in the

21st century. The transactional distance theory addresses this first requirement and the diffusion of innovation theory provides a basis for achieving the latter. The following model found in the literature review offers an approach to blended course design that incorporates these two theories and provides a framework for the LEP at NVU and, potentially, throughout the Laureate network.

A model to inform the project: Universal design for instruction (or learning). Designing course instruction geared towards learner (or learning) centeredness, based on clear objectives and standards, and which takes student diversity into account encompasses a major part of the teacher training project for this study. Dukes, Koorland, and Scott (2009), considered first-generation college students (like the great majority at NVU) as nontraditional in the same way that many recognize working adults, those with disabilities, and racial-ethnic minorities as diverse student populations. To my knowledge, thinking about NVU students in this way (i.e., with special needs) remains uncommon. The questions of how taking this viewpoint might modify attitudes towards blended instruction in the LEP and how the teaching of current LEP courses might differ arise prominently. These are important questions for consideration in teacher training. As Dukes et al., (2009) state, "undertaking this reexamination of instruction and the development or redesign process for blended classrooms presents an opportunity to proactively consider the needs of diverse learners" (p. 41). These authors (among others) propose a model for course design and instruction that integrates the nine principles of universal design for instruction, or learning (UDI-UDL) in order to improve the quality of blended courses. They state that "as a starting point in implementing UDI, faculty are

encouraged to reexamine what is essential to academic standards and classroom performance and what may in fact be merely tradition or habit in approaching how students learn" (p. 41). Faculty can utilize the principles for new-course design or as part of an iterative and reflective process for revising instructional practices in current course offerings on a regular basis. Iterative course design allows teachers and administrators to examine and evaluate learning environments as they evolve, take into account past teaching experiences, and reflect on the needs of diverse student populations.

For the UDL construct, Morra and Reynolds (2010) also state that the "goal is to create flexible learning environments that can reduce learning barriers and support the needs of a wide range of learners" (p. 44). They go on to say that the paradigm shift in HE towards technology-enhanced courses (doing more with less) requires "sound philosophical assumptions to guide these transitions . . . to expand the reach and appeal of the college classroom (p. 49). Course design teams can use universal design principles to enhance the efficacy of blended learning environments. Similarly, Shaw (2011) noted that the implementation of UDL-UDI principles at the college level allows for the design of blended courses accessible to a diverse range of students without the need for special accommodations.

According to Roberts, Park, Brown, and Cook (2011) the nine, widely accepted components or principles of UDL-UDI are:

1. *Equitable use*: Faculty should make easy access to the syllabus and other important course information available to students in a multiplicity of formats: online, print, verbally in class, or some other format.

2. *Flexibility in use*: Teachers should use a variety of instructional methods to deliver content and provide feedback and practice that can include structured lectures, open class discussions, as well as individual, pair, and group activities.

3. *Simple and intuitive*: Course descriptions, available to students in different formats: rubrics, assignment calendars, online message boards, and so forth, should clearly outline expectations for student work and grading.

4. *Perceptible information*: Universities should make all important course information available for students with special needs (documented disabilities or those whose first language is not English) in appropriate formats for them to process: closed captioning for videos, computer readable PDF files, and so forth.

5. *Tolerance for error*: Teachers can ameliorate the sometimes negative effect of high-stakes exams (midterms and finals) by providing more frequent assessments throughout the course of the semester as formative evaluations of learner progress. Instructors can factor his type of ongoing feedback into the final grade.

6. *Low physical effort*: Instructors should provide easy access and availability to all course content and lecture notes so that students who might have difficulty with note taking do not need to do so.

7. *Size and space for approach and use*: Whenever possible, teachers should arrange classroom seating for easy access and to promote direct visual as well as communicative contact among the course group. Circular or horseshoe-type seating arrangements might address this component-principle.

8. *Community of learners*: Faculty should offer a range of settings (physical and virtual) for student learning to occur. Web 2.0 applications: blogs, discussion forum groups, chat rooms, wikis, or social networking sites may help to foster virtual settings.

9. *Instructional climate*: In order to set the tone for learning, student orientation for the course, as well as the syllabus, might stress the aspiration to help all students to succeed and to invite them to make their needs known to their instructors.

All of these components or principles are pertinent to what the new LEP leadership at NVU currently attempts to instill in the mindset of their course teams of instructors at the different campuses.

After a thorough examination of a variety of studies in the area of UDL-UDI implementation in HE (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods) Roberts et al. (2011) claimed that the nine principles point the way toward "the future of (UDI-UDL) in higher education—a future that began, in part, in 2001 when Shaw, Scott, and McGuire [first published them]" (p. 6). The entire academic community can potentially benefit from teacher training on these principles but, paraphrasing Shaw (2011), the UDI-UDL process offers particular benefit to the teachers themselves:

- As a critical examination of pedagogical principles and practice: what are the most important aspects of their courses and how can teachers lead instruction in the most accessible, meaningful way to all students? Critical thinking about these issues proves a useful exercise for teachers.

- As an organizational starting point: how can teachers put their F2F time to best use in a blended course in a way that reduces the need to provide special accommodations to individual students? A thoughtfully-designed framework for course content delivery that offers students enough flexibility to learn at their own pace—and sufficient rigor to challenge them appropriately—can afford new dynamics to F2F class time.
- As a way to increase the accuracy of student learning assessments: how can student achievement measurement instruments and formats best reflect actual student knowledge of course content and reduce the effect of individual differences? Some students are not good "test-takers" and extraneous factors can influence the reliability of high-stakes exams. Experimenting with innovative assessment strategies (both formative and summative) can benefit all students.

Implementation

This project seeks to create opportunities for NVU-EFL teachers to become more effective practitioners of their discipline and better instructors for their students by inviting them to proactively design and evaluate their blended courses in collaboration with peers and program leadership. Implementation for this project will require the resources and support of relevant stakeholders. In order to execute the proposed timetable, I will need to address any potential barriers and assign certain rolls and responsibilities to specific collaborators.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

The English department can count on academic authorities at the university to provide all necessary support for the implementation of the training project and, depending upon availability, may want to invite one or more top university officials to open the training sessions with welcoming remarks and an introduction to the overall vision and stated mission of the NVU academic community. I will ask the EFL department leadership and selected staff members to conduct or actively participate in the bulk of the program sessions and group work activities.

There are only limited funds available in the English department budget, but these are generally sufficient to cover the costs of lunches and coffee-break items during training. Via e-mail, or other electronic format, I will send all of the materials proposed for use in the training to the participants beforehand and assure provisions for photocopying on campus (pending application for and approval of campus funding). The NVU equips all its campuses with interactive, multimedia rooms (both large and small), adequate for any size group. I will make a request for an adequate number of rooms, with varying sizes, on the same floor of a campus in order to arrange selected activities in separate spaces for both larger and smaller groups. I will also request a common space for coffee breaks and nearby restroom facilities. The university generally grants requests for spaces without delay unless the timing of the event may interfere with regular academic activities. Computers and telephones are available if the need arises (for checking e-mail or attending to family matters).

Potential Barriers

The teachers interviewed for this study clearly signaled the need and desire for more preparation in the area of blended instruction. They wanted further training sessions. The teachers also admitted to the difficulty of arranging their schedules to accommodate these types of professional development opportunities. Full-time and part-time teacher availability for participation in extended training gatherings has, historically, created an insurmountable barrier. Even though one of the interviewees in this study made the suggestion to hold training sessions on weekends (including Sundays) or during vacation periods, this idea would likely prove unacceptable to most. Perhaps making attendance and participation in collaborative training sessions a mandatory part of the contractual agreement between NVU and the teaching staff could afford a solution to this difficulty.

A major barrier to this idea stems from the type of contractual agreement that currently exists between teachers (primarily part-time) and the university. Each of the university campuses hires their own teachers, and these teachers respond administratively to campus authorities. As mentioned previously, the LEP leadership has no direct, line-management influence over these instructors. They cannot "obligate" campus-based teachers to attend the training without the support and approval of the campus hierarchy and may need to obtain permission to hold extended training sessions with the course team. Campus budgets will also need to supply payment for the time invested by teachers in the training. Budgetary considerations may not be a straightforward affair.

Another potential barrier may involve the teachers themselves and the extent of their willingness to engage actively in the training. What I can assume before the training begins remains unclear. Open questions persist: do NVU-EFL teachers really want to reflect on practice; do they want a recipe; what do they believe about their students; what do they understand about their profession, and the social responsibility they carry as educational providers? While I take nothing as absolutely certain beforehand, I will approach the training under the following suppositions and will clarify these from the beginning with the participants: (a) teachers are teachable, (b) teachers are professionals and see themselves as such, (c) they want to improve their practice, (d) they want their students to succeed, and (e) they believe their students can succeed.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

The implementation of the training project depends upon the consent and approval of campus-based and university academic stakeholders. As a first step, I will present the results of my findings and the relevant resources from this study to the NVU-EFL department leadership in order to get their buy-in for the training and begin to visualize a breakdown of roles and responsibilities for delivering the sessions when the time comes. Next, I will do the same with major NVU academic and campus authorities to persuade them of the need to allow and support the training as a value-added benefit for their EFL teachers and students alike. Because they provide the academic services within the institution and have a vested interest in the success and satisfaction of their students (clients) and teachers (collaborators), they will need to agree to supply the necessary infrastructure and any resources that the EFL department budget cannot cover.

Once approved by campus and academic authorities, as the next step, I will invite new and returning teachers to attend a three-day training workshop. I can offer the workshop shortly before the start of either academic term (mid-March or mid-July). Each day of the training will consist of two, 3-hour blocks of presentation, small-group discussion, planning, and if time allows, teaching practice or technique application. If adequate time proves unavailable to cover the entire content of the project, I can break it down into logical (and manageable) parts and deliver it progressively over the course of an academic year. The six parts (or Modules) of the training project will cover the following areas:

- DAY 1:
    - Module 1: Results of the study: What is blending?
    - Module 2: Design steps for instruction and learning.
- DAY 2:
    - Module 3: Universal design for instruction.
    - Module 4: Knowing the students and setting appropriate objectives based on commonly held pedagogical criteria.
- DAY 3:
    - Module 5: Learning and teaching contracts: Roles and responsibilities.
    - Module 6: Fostering cultural change in blended instruction.

Roles and Responsibilities of Student and Others

Implementation of the project (a teacher training workshop) that has been developed as a result of this study will require the direct collaboration, assistance, and

active engagement of many of the stakeholders previously identified: NVU campus and academic authorities, EFL department leadership, and, of course, all of the teacher participants. I will follow the previously-outlined timeline of data presentation and persuasion for the need to conduct the training at NVU in order to acquire the necessary permissions and commitment of cooperation needed before implementation. I will be the primary presenter-facilitator of the open sessions of the workshop, but any small group activities will require the assistance of the LEP leadership at the university as well as any blended-teacher champions that they might recommend as group facilitators. The LEP leadership, and perhaps a few of these teacher champions, might also want to lead some of the open sessions of the workshop themselves as well. I will need to discuss and agree upon these roles beforehand.

Project Evaluation

The training project intends to encourage thoughtful collaboration in the design, implementation, and evaluation of blended EFL courses at the university and to provoke a change in the mindset of the teachers (regardless of their contractual arrangement with the university) about the nature and relevance of this type of content delivery for their students. The initial 3-day training workshop supports only the beginning of a long-term goal of CoP formation among course team instructors on each campus and with the English Institute leadership at the university.

I will conduct a formative evaluation of the program, informally and on-site, during and immediately following the training sessions of each day of the planned workshop. I will conduct long-term, overall training project evaluation through formal,

summative assessment procedures at the end of each semester in order to measure the transfer of learning from the training and the effect that any changes in teacher practice and engagement with students (especially online) have had on learning outcomes. Even though measuring student learning outcomes falls beyond the scope of this project, I will make a recommendation for this type of evaluation in further studies. Measuring the transfer of training outcomes and objectives through a formative evaluation, however, denotes an effort to assure both immediate and long-term positive effects for the participants.

There are some immediate returns from the training that instructors can put into practice in their courses and a need-to-know-now type of information that teachers require so that they can approach their students with their eyes wide open. At the same time, the project assumes a long range goal of forming a CoP characterized by collaboration, mutual trust, and a desire to discover new and better ways to promote blended EFL learning. The synergy of veteran EFL staff members (who may have already acquired some best practices in blended teaching) and new teachers (who bring fresh energy and novel ideas) can lead to ground-breaking discoveries in the age-old challenge of teaching a foreign language and achieving meaningful results.

Lodico, et al. (2010) underscored that, in order for necessary changes to occur in project planning and implementation, evaluations must take place both during (formative) and after (summative) a project has been carried out. When a training project, like this one, pretends ongoing continuity then the evaluation process becomes iterative and may require “several years of intense formative feedback to ‘get the kinks out’ before the

program can become highly successful" (p. 321). I will propose summative, outcomes-based evaluation measures as an appropriate focus for future project planning and research. Because the university can offer this training project to teachers as a biannual affair (given at the beginning of each semester for new hires in the EFL program) the leadership can collate the data, collected after each repetition, and use it to determine trends toward improvement or to identify areas of needed adjustment.

The short term aim for the implementation of the project seeks to work directly with the NVU-EFL leadership and their course teams on at least one of the campus locations. In the longer term, after working out the "kinks," I may have the opportunity to implement it at other universities around the Laureate network. It may even become desirable (and practical) given the rapid growth of the network, to make some, or all of the project workshop components available to teachers online through the LEP teacher development platform. Executive LEP leadership will need to make that decision.

Implications Including Social Change

During my time at NVU, as the director of the LEP (2008-2011) I concerned myself with the original rollout and initial stages of the program's implementation. I had relatively good rapport and cooperation from the teachers given that they perceived the new materials and format (more F2F class time with students) as a definite improvement over the previous CALL-based system that had been in place (2002-2007). Now that the blended program enjoys full functionality under new leadership, the focus has changed towards teaching quality. This new focus advocates a positive development. Thus far,

compared to the previous content delivery format, results from the LEP at NVU show reasonably good advances (see Appendix B) but much can yet improve.

Local Community

The teacher participants interviewed in this study indicated hesitancy about using the technological components of the LMS in more meaningful ways with their students. The teachers requested more training in this area. The development of the project attempts to address this need by creating an opportunity for the teachers themselves to become more personally invested in the design of the blended courses, to improve their engagement with students in the online portions of the LEP, and to discover new possibilities for helping their students to achieve the proposed learning outcomes (CEFR level-B1, intermediate, English language skills) upon completion of four semesters. Possible implications for social change within the EFL teaching community at NVU include (a) increasing their sense of ownership in the courses they lead, (b) fostering a stronger sense of belongingness to the NVU academic community, and (c) renewing their commitment to social responsibility and the important role they play in the lives of their students. These implications can produce positive social ramifications for the entire NVU organization, especially for students and their professional development needs for English language skills in the marketplace.

Far-Reaching

While not "new," the notion of blended learning emerges in the literature as an ever-increasing model for content delivery at the university level. Within the Laureate network, the LEP leads the way—helping students around the world to achieve their

aspirations of a professional degree "with English as a plus that makes the difference" (the original vision of M. Albornoz, rector of NVU, 1989-2006). Possibilities arise for exporting this project for teacher training in blended instruction beyond NVU and throughout the Laureate network, either in F2F format or through existing online platforms.

Conclusion

International research studies have shown that teacher "presence" to students in the online portion of the blended courses they lead, as well as their direct involvement in the design of these courses, holds major importance for the successful implementation of this mode of instruction. This section has described the project, based on the findings of the present study and relevant literature, for a teacher training workshop designed to involve teachers more directly in the process of change as part of ongoing LEP course evaluation and program development at NVU. The English Institute leadership has developed and presented a new Teachers' Manual to all LEP course team members as a guiding document for the 2013 academic year. Some teachers, however, might still understand and receive this artifact as a top-down measure. The hope of the project seeks to revitalize the teachers' own personal perception and vision of the important role they play in the learning process. This project invites teachers to do so as a step towards reimagining their student's engagement and involvement in LEP blended learning environments in a more holistic way. It also invites teachers to rethink their own time commitments in terms of class preparation, revision of student work, and other administrative duties as they continue to make the transition into blended instruction. On

several occasions throughout this study, I have stressed the notion that teaching in a blended format need not automatically imply more work on the part of the instructor. There are, however, potential benefits to technology-enhanced courses that could allow teachers to work more efficiently—with the same number of hours—and, at the same time, motivate more student involvement and time-on-task during the course of a semester.

Time remains the most important factor of all in language learning. Currently, students at NVU do very little work online outside of the classroom and they attend classes irregularly. This situation creates a pressing concern for all involved and requires imaginative ways to tackle it. Giving students (not teachers) the opportunity to spend more time on EFL instruction remains the goal of the LEP. Inviting teachers to air and discuss their multiple perspectives on F2F and online experiences in the NVU-EFL courses can lead to new ideas and potential best practices that can improve both the learning experiences and outcomes of these courses. This project offers teachers yet another opportunity to become change managers for students who need to acquire the autonomous, life-long learning skills of the 21st century (as well as sufficient EFL proficiency) as they transition into professional life. The scope of this project cannot address and solve all of the issues involved in this process but provides a step towards that end. The project does offer NVU-EFL teachers, as a university community of educators, a chance to do so in reiterative fashion. Typically, according to Quinn et al. (2012) leading and managing change becomes “a long term process (Kotter 1995; 2007). Unlike industry, however, we have opportunities in higher education to restart the process

of change with each new student cohort entering into the . . . learning environment" (p. 26). This project provides an occasion to rethink and reinvigorate the vision for (and culture of) blended EFL instruction at the university in order to disseminate this vision to students in a better way.

Section 4 presents a more personal reflection as a scholar, EFL teacher-practitioner, and project developer as I come to the end of this EdD process. The section describes the proposed development of the project and identifies its strengths and limitations. This final section will conclude with a reflection on the possible impact the project will have on social change and recommendations for further research.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

Through semistructured interviews, the purpose of this study was to chronicle teacher perspectives on the current blended EFL program at NVU in order to develop a teacher training project that might prove helpful in increasing student time-on-task in the learning process. Teacher presence in the online portion of these courses can facilitate this increase in student engagement and involvement, thereby making the courses truly blended. Based on an analysis of interview data gathered from the teacher participants of this study in Section 2, I developed an outline in Section 3 for a training project, grounded in current literature and theory, that proposes bringing the teachers themselves into the process of evaluating current practice and developing new approaches to tackle impediments or weaknesses to the program in proactive ways. In this section, I reflect on the potential strengths and weaknesses of the project and on what I learned—about leadership, scholarship, and as a practitioner and project developer—during, and upon completion of this study.

Project Strengths

The primary strength of the project stems from its attention to addressing a felt need on the part of teachers for more training in blended instruction (as discovered and analyzed in the findings) by offering them an opportunity for participation and collaboration in the design and implementation of blended courses (as found in the review of relevant literature). The references used in this study come from a wide array of international sources and point to the need for a project of this sort as a viable solution to

address the issues surrounding blended instruction and the concerns of teachers tasked with the responsibility of facilitating student learning in this format. A further strength of the project arises from its usefulness as a stepping off initiative for ongoing research at the local and international level for the LEP at other Laureate universities.

Recommendations for Remediation of Limitations

The project focuses on teacher training around the nature of blended instruction and the meaningful incorporation of LMS tools as a means of encouraging stronger student engagement with course content throughout their EFL studies. It does not, however, examine the effect of these measures on student learning outcomes. I will make recommendations for future studies in this area that can give LEP decision makers a 360° perspective as the program develops. Another limitation of the project stems from the data set, in that I have based it on the analysis of qualitative interview data collected from only 10 volunteer teacher participants at NVU. Even though the relevant literature sources referenced in the study support and corroborate the findings, many other potential voices within the NVU-EFL community (and throughout the LEP internationally) require a hearing. The implementation of the project itself, at NVU and beyond, will allow for the expression of a wider range of viewpoints and opinions.

Scholarship

Scholarship presumes a goal in itself—to become knowledgeable about something—but it also provides a means through which one can become of service to others. When I began this EdD journey, I intended to find out more about how my own students learn EFL so that I could serve them better as an instructor through a blended

content-delivery format. The process of scholarly research and critical inquiry throughout the program has, however, shifted my focus—from the students to their teachers—and a desire to serve them, as an informed peer.

The scholarly publications and peer-reviewed journal articles I have referenced throughout this study provided valuable insights into the nature of the problem I wished to investigate. They have helped to verify or correct my own personal, experienced-based assumptions and given me direction towards a possible solution. My interviews with teachers, as key informants in the data-gathering steps of the study, have also been a source of revelation—truly thought provoking. These teachers, along with the literature sources, my committee chair, and Walden University peers have all collaborated in this effort. I have learned that scholarship requires this type of collaboration.

Project Development and Evaluation

I developed the idea for the project of this study over time during the course work of the EdD program and especially during the Doctoral Study Intensive (EDUC-8090) phases. I have reread course materials on program development and found peer-reviewed studies on similar types of training around the world. These sources have provided a wealth of information. I have tapped into all of these resources to generate the final product. I have learned, however, that training projects seldom reach perfection—that adjustments and modifications prove commonplace. Basing the project on strong, international research and the qualitative findings gathered from actual stakeholders, however, gives me reason to hope that the project can provide relevant information for NVU and potentially other Laureate universities. I will encourage both formative (initial)

and a summative (long-term) evaluation of the project to assure that this assumption remains reasonable.

I have learned to embrace this type of open-endedness in terms of discerning the effectiveness of a project. Even though much of my life over the past few years has been invested in the elaboration of this particular project, I can only expect that the format will require both modification and improvement over time. I have become comfortable with that idea. I offer the project, after all, for the benefit of the teachers I hope to serve through its implementation.

Leadership and Change

Promoting change, as mentioned previously in the conclusion of Section 3, generally requires a long-term, iterative process. Promoting change in the perspectives and attitudes of teachers in the LEP, at NVU and in the Laureate network, about blended instruction and the importance of their active engagement with students both in class and online will likely prove such as well. The leadership of university officials and EFL department heads will remain crucial to this endeavor. Their promotion of blended learning through example and relevant policy formation will set the stage for change to become permanent.

Leadership also means service. I have learned, throughout the course of the EdD program, during the elaboration of this project, and by way of personal experience that leadership originates as a privilege earned—not as a right exercised. Being a leader and holding responsibility for others becomes an honor. Inviting all stakeholders and

participants in the training to approach their own leadership roles through invitation, rather than fiat, characterizes an underlying goal for this project.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

Scholarship at the doctoral level requires painstaking work, literally. Many times during this process I have felt a bit like Sisyphus (In Greek mythology Sisyphus was a king punished by the gods who compelled him to roll an immense boulder up a hill, only to watch it roll back down, and to repeat this action again and again for all eternity). The proposal, IRB approval, data collection, interview transcription, organization of the data, coding and thematic categorization, member checking, analysis, second literature review and project development—until the final stages, all seemed never-ending at times. Even upon completion of this study, in partial fulfillment of a Doctor of Education degree, I realize that it remains, in fact, unfinished—part of a larger work in progress. Proposing and creating opportunities for change in teaching practice and learner engagement will likely always prove such.

At the Walden residency that I attended in Los Angeles in June 2009—as a requirement for the program—the advisors encouraged participating students to choose a topic for the project study related to the work setting. The consultants stressed that whatever was decided on as a topic should hold our passion for the extended journey involved in scholarly work. I followed their advice and chose to delve into the relevant issues surrounding the blended EFL program I had helped to create at NVU. The IRB approval process, before data collection could begin, presented challenges to the idea of researching an area in which one has direct involvement. Dire warnings about the

potential dangers of overstepping ethical boundaries due to possible confusions about supervisory roles, the perception of undue influence, perceived pressure on the teachers to participate in the study, conflicts of interest, and issues of authority gave me pause. Fortunately, at that point in the process, I had transitioned from my position as English department director at NVU to regional manager for the LEP in Latin America—so I no longer had any direct supervisory relationship with the teacher participants. Still, I knew them, and they knew me, as former colleagues.

I had always assumed that teachers could provide a solution to the difficulties and challenges of the new program. My reading and reflection during the proposal stage for the project confirmed for me that teachers needed to become more present to their students in the online portion of a blended course and change agents in the learning dynamic. All of the more experienced teachers, who had transitioned from the former CALL-based program to the new blended one, believed it an improvement. The challenge remained to make it even better. A way towards improvement needed to come from them.

During the data-gathering interviews with the participants, I made it a point to interject myself into the conversation as little as possible. My goal focused on hearing their own experienced-based thoughts and ideas about blended instruction and avoiding any undue influence on my part in terms of where the questions would lead. I wanted to learn from their experience and perceptions rather than have them say what they may or may not have unintentionally thought I expected to hear. I believe that I achieved that aim. The participants evidenced forthright and honest opinions in their assessment of the current state of the program, the part they played in its successful implementation, the

concerns they harbor about technology-enhanced courses, and the perception they had of their students.

In theory, I also believe that I could have maintained a nonprejudicial distance from the participants even if I had remained in my previous role as program director at NVU. My relationship with the teachers had always been professional and based on mutual respect and a high degree of trust. Honesty existed as a mutual expectation and the norm for all of our prior discussions during the rollout of the program (2008-2011). As it turned out, testing this theory proved unnecessary due to the change in the nature and level of my job.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

Recently, a university colleague of mine grumbled that the generally accepted learning theories often proved contradictory. He lamented something to the effect that they "cannot even agree on a basic definition of 'learning'—whatever that might be." My friend voiced dismay about the possibility of ever really knowing anything. He seemed often quite upset (even desperate) about it and found it hard to believe what any so-called educational expert might propose. My 13-year old son Bryan was born with Down syndrome and another associated syndrome called Moya-Moya, which caused him to suffer strokes between the ages of 2 and 4. He still does not walk or talk, nor can he feed or dress himself. Some might become discouraged at this situation and give my boy little chance (or opportunity) for significant learning, but I will not despair. I, for my part, choose to believe.

I choose to believe with the humanists that people are endowed with unlimited potential for learning and growth. I need to believe with the social cognitivists that any so-called "locus of control" resides internally, remains dependent upon the individual, and that circumstance does not fully define us. I have faith with the transformationists that our mindsets can change and that we can advance from perspective to perspective—from strength to strength.

I hold with the proponents of experiential learning that the requirements for us to take best advantage of our experiences include a basic trust in others (i.e., in their sympathetic, caring, and compassionate support) and self-confidence. With brain-based learning theorists, I embrace the notion of neuroflexibility. I accept as true that the brain behaves like a muscle, and that with adequate stimulation the increase of our intelligence can defy expectations. Finally, I cling to the assumptions of andragogy, that our intrinsic motivation, our eagerness to learn, and our desire to know ring true. My intuition tells me these things ring true.

Like my friend, I cannot claim to know these things, in the strict sense of knowing. Unlike him, I can believe in what these theories assert. I have discovered sufficient evidence of their usefulness. I choose to believe these things because I am personally certain of the modifiability of human beings. I am resolute in my conviction that human potential remains vast; that most limitations stand but impositions born of fear and doubt, generated from within or without, and nurtured on the dread of failure; the foreboding of disappointment. I try not to fear.

As an educational practitioner, I judge these notions to constitute the basis of a life-well-lived. I nod to their accepted wisdom, founded upon best practices and discovered through hard-won experience of the teaching and learning dynamic. I choose to believe these things because the teaching profession allows me to live my life with others in unassuming kindheartedness. I can believe the best of their nature, trust in their character, and challenge them to strive for the full potential of their God-given dignity. I believe them for myself, for my students, and for my son. If I did not, I might despair.

I learned many fresh, new ideas as an EFL teacher-practitioner while completing this EdD. The course work and the dissertation process all led to new discoveries. Any teacher—through unconscious conformity to routine, unwillingness or inability to engage in ongoing professional development, or outright indifference to self-analysis as an education provider—can fall into malpractice unless we make efforts to keep current and to develop the art and practice of teaching in order to better serve our students and to more fully comply with our social role and responsibility as educators. While my current position as Latin American regional manager for the LEP precludes actual teaching at one of the Laureate universities, I look forward to sharing what I have learned with inservice Laureate teachers at NVU and around the network. I hope someday to have an opportunity to put these ideas into practice myself, with my own students. For now, I offer them to the men and women of the LEP as a resource for consideration in their professional development.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

As I come to the end of this project study, I realize that for much of my working life I have been "pretending" in terms of project development. I have either followed someone else's planning style or waded my way through situations requiring planning and execution by trial-and-error. I guess I just never took the time to find out if a better way to go about the arduous and often tedious task of detail-oriented planning existed. I have come to realize that really good program planning can probably save a lot of time in the long run.

I was intrigued by the interactive model of program planning that we learned about in one of the courses. I think that this model would work best for the project developed for this study and in other situations of my current learning and work environment. The model works for many reasons. For example, it is not linear, as "it has no real beginnings or endings" (Caffarella, in Laureate Education, Inc., 2010, p. 22) and can, therefore, take better account for the vagaries, inconsistencies, and unforeseen events that occur in real-life programs. The 12-component model takes into account the negotiated nature of program planning, the issues of power and control, the cultural milieu of the participants, and the iterative nature of program planning. It includes all the information needed in the planning process. The model shows "how-to" based upon practical "know-how" and expands the personal knowledge base of program planning practitioners by providing "specific practical suggestions for how to tackle each component" (p. 23).

I liked that framework very much. It reminded me of a blueprint that describes all of the details that need to remain top-of-mind but can undergo adjustment whenever needed. I can use as much or as little as necessary. The social and organizational contexts that impact my learning and work environment seem ever-changing; especially over the last few years. The interactive model gives me the flexibility I need to conduct this teacher training project as well as any other program I may plan for in the future.

The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change

Over the years at NVU, while I was the director and to the present, the LEP leadership has undertaken many measures to encourage strong support for the mission of the university from the EFL course-team members. Efforts to strengthen the communication and collaboration among teachers at the local campus and national levels have been chief among these measures. In 2012, the new director opened an online, social-networking site for the teachers at NVU to keep team members informed of initiatives and developments, and to invite their active participation in the community, regardless of their contractual arrangement with the university. The new leadership introduced this CoP initiative soon after a global social networking platform had been inaugurated for the LEP worldwide.

On the local and (potentially) the international level, this project can facilitate a further opportunity for LEP course-team formation. Many of the resources used in this study pointed out the need for teacher participation in the design of blended courses in order to foster a sense of ownership, leading to increased engagement. Involving teachers in the decision making process of setting achievable learning objectives, of establishing

clear learner (and teacher) expectations, and of determining other relevant components of blended EFL course design can generate a potentially positive impact of this project on social change at NVU and beyond.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

I have learned a great deal about blended learning during the course of this study. The problems and issues that I have identified in the local setting of NVU, and through interviews with teachers, surrounding blended instruction have been echoed in the findings and conclusions of international researchers. Investigation into the delivery and assessment of course content through blended formats has become an important and emergent field of study. Many universities are looking for ways to expand their enrollment and to control costs while, at the same time, maintaining or increasing academic quality. Blended programs present an attractive and viable solution to this challenge, when thoughtfully implemented, and decision makers are searching for evidence and experience-based proposals to that effect. This project study adds to that growing list of resources.

Regarding directions for future research in light of the findings of this study I recommend that, given the focus of this study on the perceptions of faculty, follow-up studies (qualitative and quantitative) focus on

- the students' understanding and perceptions of the blended EFL teaching and learning environment in order to address issues that create resistance and negatively impact their engagement,

- the dynamics of blended learning (rather than blended teaching) in order to address student needs,

In addition, the LEP leadership at NVU might consider challenging individual faculty members to explore inquiry in their own classrooms—using basic research designs (e.g., pre-post, single subject)—and the international LEP shoud consider crafting a student survey or other instruments to guide and direct further development of blended learning.

Conclusion

This section has described different aspects of the project developed for the present study, which I offer to NVU-EFL practitioners (and potentially throughout the LEP internationally) as a resource for teacher development. During the course of this work, I have learned much about blended instruction and the exciting potential it can offer to a diverse range of students and teachers—when "thoughtfully" implemented. As oft reiterated throughout the study, blended instruction need not imply a work speed-up for the teachers. Working smarter—not harder—is a message I hope to make clear from the beginning.

Blended learning, on the other hand, does offer students the opportunity to spend more of their time on relevant, meaningful activities outside of the classroom. Prolonged involvement with EFL content remains foundational to successful language learning. In order to achieve this aim, I have based the project on a critical inquiry into relevant, international sources as well as the collection and analysis of qualitative interview-based data from teachers currently involved with blended LEP courses in Chile.

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Appendix A: The Project

Outline of a training workshop for designing blended EFL instruction at NVU:

A six-module proposal for consideration by the university's LEP leadership

Table of Contents

Purpose

The workshop outlined here is a proposal, an invitation, a call to action. From the opening session I will stress the idea that continuing professional development for EFL teachers at NVU remains an interactive (and iterative) process. The teachers should understand this first iteration as:

- Introductory, as a way to air topics and ideas for more of the same type of formalized training sessions in the future.
- Exploratory, leading to a determination of specified goals and transfer of learning outcomes.
- A design for continuous improvement of practice.

I will remind the participants that, in education, we do not plan—this term presumes a level of control and influence over the learning process that does not exist—we design (see Vella (2010) in Laureate Education, Inc.). The emphasis on design, rather than planning, provides an invocation to the creative potential of the teacher-participants in the workshop. Although the final product of these initial training sessions will likely serve to adapt current practices rather than as a complete makeover, I will invite the teachers to reimagine their roles, and to recompose the learning environments of their students. As instructors, we work with what we have within the parameters of the learning environment to make the best use of the resources at hand. This recognition finds similitude to what architects strive for when designing structures—as demonstrated in the following representations of new buildings for tight urban spaces (retrieved from: http://flavorwire.com/331546/7-innovative-buildings-designed-to-fit-tight-urban-spaces).

As a primary objective, this training-workshop project invites EFL teachers at NVU to critically reflect (individually and as a team) on the challenges and possibilities of blended instruction, for themselves and for their students. Designing this instruction in order to achieve enhanced learning outcomes through increased student engagement with online course content and with other members of the class (teachers and peers) remains the end-goal. The project intends to provide these teachers with a further and continuing opportunity for training that—as discussed in the findings of the study (Section 2)—they both need and have asked for.

I present the following (proposed) training modules as primers for ongoing reflection—not as blueprints. The select group of workshop collaborators can modify the order of the modules, the tenor and thrust of their content, and/or the topics themselves as they might deem necessary. I offer the modules as a service to the NVU-EFL community and I am open to any adaptation suggested before implementation. I both welcome and expect this sort of collaborative critique and review from key stakeholders. The final product will incorporate any and all insights received from them before publicizing, promoting, and presenting the workshop.

I understand the modules presented here as a flexible work-in-progress. The university can use and/or adapt them as part of onboarding (orientation) training sessions for new hires as well as starting points for the ongoing training of established course teams. I view all of the proposed activities during the workshop sessions as collaborative exercises for the purposes of brainstorming and for outlining new designs in blended EFL instruction at NVU. In the same way, I will use the information and feedback from

participants gathered after each session of the workshop to inform an iterative design process that might begin within the workshop and continue on afterwards in further rounds of training.

Materials

I will provide all materials to the teachers in either paper-based or electronic format for (a) pre-workshop reading/reflection, (b) in-workshop handouts, or (c) post-workshop follow up reading/reflection. For example:

- Pre-Workshop literature:

Picciano, A. G. (2009). Blending with purpose: The multimodal model. Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks, 13(1), 7-18. Retrieved from http://sloanconsortium.org/jaln/v13n1/blending-purpose-multimodal-model

Quinn, D., Amer, Y., Lonie, A., Blackmore, K., Thompson, L., & Pettigrove, M. (2012). Leading change: Applying change management approaches to engage students in blended learning. Australasian Journal of Educational Technology, 28(1), 16-29. Retrieved from http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/ajet28/quinn.pdf

(Among others as suggested by relevant collaborators)

- In-Workshop Handouts and/or Pre-Session reading:

Proposed materials for use during the workshop modules are suggestions only. Together in collaboration with the LEP leadership at NVU, I will make modifications to these resources before implementation and/or look for alternative resources as required. Where deemed appropriate, I have included examples of the proposed handouts in the description of each module of the workshop. I will also ask select teacher-leaders to

review and critique these and other workshop materials in order to assure their appropriateness to the desired outcomes of the sessions. In addition, they may want to enhance some of the workshop sessions with pre-reading literature relevant to the topic from the list of references for this study. The LEP leadership at NVU will need to vet and approve suggestions for this type of material prior to implementation. They may have other ideas.

- Post-Workshop literature:

I will make anything of interest from the complete list of references for this study available to teacher participants upon request. I may also recommend other online materials to the participants for addition to their personal libraries. For example:

- ✓ http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/C526_Blended%20learning_FINAL_web%20only.pdf (and),
- ✓ http://www.cambridge.org/touchstoneblended/
- ✓ (Among others as suggested by relevant collaborators).

Timeline and To-Dos: Before, During, and After the Workshop

In Section 3 of the present study, I have outlined a general timeline for the execution of this project-workshop. In addition to obtaining permissions and buy-in from the various stakeholder groups to conduct the training sessions and the reservation of suitable spaces in which to hold them (as initial and crucial steps), I will need to carry out other specific actions necessary to lay the groundwork for a successful implementation of the sessions. For example:

Before the Workshop

- Present outline of the proposed workshop sessions and ask the LEP leadership at NVU, teachers, and support staff about what they might want to learn, how they understand themselves as learners, and the formats and instructional techniques for learning that they prefer.
- Invite LEP leadership and selected teachers (as members of the primary stakeholder group) to give input on the design of the workshop and its various components with part of their input focused on how they might apply the concepts of the workshop into their teaching roles and responsibilities.
- Ask LEP leadership and select teachers to help schedule and promote the workshop.
- Ask teachers to recruit their peers as workshop participants.
- Ask LEP leadership for help in collecting formative baseline evaluation data.
- Invite select teachers and LEP leaders to serve as presenters/instructors or resource persons for the workshop sessions.

During the Workshop

- At the end of each session of the workshop, ask for formative feedback from participants (teachers and LEP leadership) on their perceptions of the content and interaction provided. Make changes accordingly.
- Set up peer-mentoring/support teams (new-hires with veteran teachers) to assist learning.

- Ask participants to reflect critically on the content of the workshop and to state how they might apply what they have learned.
- If no specific transfer of learning plan develops from the sessions, provide and discuss possible transfer strategies and have them choose one (or two) that they may find helpful to their particular way of learning.

After the Workshop

- Provide clear directions for follow-up (either F2F or through the online CoP) as a way to foster continuous reflection on teaching practice or learning transfer strategies that help them apply what they have learned. Uncover any obstacles to achieving this intention and ask for possible solutions from those affected.
- Continue to encourage peer-mentoring dyads, triads, or groups to provide mutual coaching support for the application of what teachers learned.
- Encourage Practical Action Research from the participants: suggestions, formats, proposals. Concentrate on student learning outcomes.
- Together with LEP leadership and select teachers, gather suggestions for further training opportunities.

DAY 1: Module 1 (Results of the study: What is blending?)

To begin the training, I will conduct appropriate icebreaker activities to create a relaxed atmosphere conducive to open discussion and critical reflection. I will solicit suggestions for these from the primary stakeholders mentioned previously. Once complete (approximately 20 minutes) I will present a brief overview of the study to the group outlining the main tenets of research in the area of blended instruction, the

important role teachers play in student engagement, and the need to incorporate their ideas into the design of blended courses, with student learning in the forefront. This activity should take about an hour but I will not rush it so that teachers can air and discuss any questions they may have at length. I will use a PowerPoint presentation (likely that used for the oral defense of this study with additional input or edits from the stakeholders) for this purpose.

For the remainder of this first Module (approximately 1.5 hours) the selected teachers and LEP leaders asked to serve as presenters/instructors or resource persons will lead small group discussions around relevant issues and concerns about the blended EFL program at NVU. I will also ask them jot down the main ideas that emerge from these discussions in order to document a record of the conversations for follow up after the workshop ends. I will conduct a wrap-up session at the end of the session to gather up these key findings. Some of the topics for these discussions can be (but are not limited to) to following:

- What parts, aspects, or components of an EFL course do you think work better F2F than online?
- What about the other way around?
- Even though reinforcement and repetition are important aspects of language learning, how can we avoid the sense that we are “teaching the same thing twice?”

Making your voice heard. If you had an opportunity to speak directly to other major stakeholders at the university about the blended LEP, what would you say or ask?

- Message to NVU leadership (rector, academic vice-rector, faculty deans, program [or career] directors): What do you want to tell them or ask them? Be nice—but clear. For example:
    - What is the university's vision for blended learning across the campuses?
    - What else?
- Message to LEP leadership (at NVU and internationally): Be nice—but clear. We need to hear your views. For example:
    - What is (or could/should be) the Mission Statement for the Laureate English Institute at NVU?
    - What else?
- Message to CUP: What do you want to tell them? Be nice—and very clear. We're their largest customer so they are keen to provide a quality product and the support to go with it.
    - All ideas, suggestions, and feedback are welcome.
- For IT Department: What do you want to tell/ask them? For example:
    - How can they better support teachers with any access/connectivity issues that may occur on campus?
    - What are the plans for increasing access (number of terminals, WIFI, etc.) and quality experience of users (connectivity, broadband, etc.)?
    - What else?

At the end of the project, I will summarize the collected notes and comments from this module in a clearly worded format and deliver this to the appropriate stakeholders.

The LEP leadership at NVU will conduct any required follow up so that the input from teacher participants receives appropriate action. I will assist with and support this follow up in whatever way desired/possible.

LUNCH BREAK

DAY 1: Module 2 (Design steps for instruction/learning)

Designing the instructional climate for learning to occur in HE courses may not always (or ever) be an easy affair. Even for teachers who have received pedagogical training (not always the case in some areas of study) the type of training they received generally focused on K-12 milieus. Designing instruction for HE students often proves new and challenging for all, and can be especially demanding when both teachers and their students find the format of a course unfamiliar. Blended instruction offers a case in point.

This module proposes getting back-to-basics and to review (for some) or introduce (for others) a number of fundamental considerations for examination in order to thoughtfully design a meaningful instructional/learning climate. I base the content of the module on "The Seven Design Steps" by Vella (2010, see chapter 3 in Laureate Education, Inc.). The main thrust of the module emphasizes the need to professionalize the art of teaching and to remind NVU instructors that "whether a course is offered in person, online, or through hybrid delivery, the skill of the instructor in facilitating student learning remains the single most important factor of all" (Thor, 2010, p. 43).

This module will lead off with open discussion questions about how the participants have been trained/prepared to teach blended courses and lead into the more

general question: What constitutes adequate training of a foreign language teacher in the 21st century? (Peacock, 2009). Some of the opening questions might include the following:

- How were you prepared to teach blended courses? During your initial preservice teacher training? As an inservice teacher? Any other opportunities?
- What are your feelings about (and how good are you at) using technology in your courses? (refer to Fetters & Garcia Duby, 2011 categories of innovator personality types: *Innovators* through *Laggards*)
- Who helps you when you need help?
- How do you help each other?

Vella (2010, in Laureate Education, Inc.) goes in to some detail on each of the seven design steps outlined in chapter three of, *Designing and Assessing Learning Experiences*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishing. For this module I will discuss all of the steps (*Who? Why? When? Where? What? What for?* and *How?*) as relevant to the context of blended EFL instruction and student learning at NVU. As a segue into this part of the module, I will project the seven key question words on the wall/board in no particular order (for example: How?—What?—Why?—Where?—When?—Who?—What for?) and ask the teachers (in small groups) to list them in the order of perceived importance. I will allot sufficient time for this group discussion but should take about 15 minutes.

Afterwards, I will present a brief review of Vella's seven steps in the recommended order using select quotations to emphasize the primary relevance of each. I will solicit short open discussion throughout. For example:

- Step One: *Who?* Participants and Leaders—How Many?
    - "In any learning event . . . clarity about the *Who?* is our first professional responsibility . . . focusing on the *Who?* clearly shows that your purpose in designing and teaching is *their* learning" (p. 67).
    - **Discussion Question(s)**: During tomorrow's sessions we will discuss at length about the characteristics and general profile of NVU students. As a primer for that activity, please take a few minutes to share with one another about the following question. What are your expectations for the type of student you will encounter in your classrooms at the university?
- Step Two: *Why?* The Situation Calling for the Learning Event
    - "*Why?* is not the purpose, it is the *situation*. . . . Individuals interested in designing effective education must know the situation that demands that the learning take place" (p. 68).
    - "*Why?* do the *Who?* need to learn. Or simply, What's the situation that calls for this learning event?" (p. 69).
    - **Discussion Question(s)**: Vella quotes a former needs assessment course teacher who asked the question "Who needs What as defined by Whom?" How would you answer this question? How might your students answer?
- Step Three: *When?* The Time Frame

- "An endemic problem in educational design is 'having too much *What?* for the *When?*' Educators consistently try to pack too much content into the time available for the learning event" (p. 70).
- "A wise educational designer requests adequate time for learning, not for teaching" (p. 71).
- "*When?* in [a blended] course must include both synchronous (in-class) and asynchronous (online) time frames . . . setting timed boundaries that free learners to learn!" (p. 72).
- **Discussion Question(s)**: How much "real" time are you expecting (hoping for) your students to actively engage in your course(s) throughout the semester? How much time do you expect to invest in each one of your courses: In preparation, in F2F classes, in assessment, error correction, and follow up?

NOTE: The teachers should answer these questions in as much detail as possible. For example: Three F2F hours and four online hours per week over an 18-week semester for a total of 126 hours.

- Step Four: *Where?* The Site
  - "The physical layout of a traditional classroom tends toward teacher-centered education. If we want to emphasize learning, we may have to move the furniture. . . . When we have the opportunity to design or choose a site, the demands of learning guide us. Note that this is not a *learner-*

centered issue, but rather a *learning-centered* one. Our focus . . . is not the learner, but rather the *learning*" (p. 73).

- **Discussion Question(s)**: Learning spaces, whether physical, virtual, or both, require design, evaluation and improvement. How would you design learning spaces for your students (physical and virtual) if given the opportunity (wish list)? When you walk into a traditional classroom, how do you deal with the physical aspects of the space (student chairs with desks, front-centered orientation of whiteboards, projections, etc.)? In the virtual setting of the LMS, how do you (could you) use that to keep students focused on learning and on track with the course aims? How do you (could you) provide clear instructions to them about access to the LMS, expectations, and demands so that they are more confident in their ability to succeed in the course?

- Steps Five and Six: *What?* and *What For?* The Content and Objectives
  - "These two design steps go together. . . . the content (*What?*) is named explicitly and a correlative ABO (Achievement Based Objective *What for?*) is immediately named to show what the learners will *do* to effectively learn that content. . . . The future perfect tense is intentionally used in laying out these objectives to show that it is a learning contract" (p. 75).
  - The difference between learning outcomes—a current strategy in course design and planning—and ABOs is the following: "Outcomes say what

the learner will be able to do (in future). Outcomes can be seen as transfer indicators. ABOs tell what the learner will do in the session to begin to learn the material (in future perfect). Completed ABOs serve as learning indicators" (p. 78-79).

- "Learning does not end with the work in the classroom. Each of the named content pieces is infinite in its extension. However, the learning indicated by ABOs is a specific, sound beginning" (p. 79).
- **Discussion Question(s)**: How might stating the goals for instruction in ABOs (future perfect: *At the end of this course all students will have…*) rather than in Outcomes (future: *At the end of this course all students will be able to…*) make a difference in the way you teacher your course(s)? Is this difference purely semantic, or could it create a change in the mindset of your students (and yourselves)? What do you think of the idea of "Learning Contracts"? I will explore this notion more fully later on in the workshop but it would be good to start reflecting on it.

- Step Seven: *How?* Learning Tasks and Materials
  - "*The learning task is a task for the learner*" (p. 79).
  - "A learning task is an open question put to a small group, with all the resources they need to respond. . . . *Learning tasks are not activities*. . . . Our learning task is not to make students active, but to enable them to learn what is important and meaningful to them" (p. 80).
  - "Materials for learning are accessible, open, and substantive" (p. 80).

        - Accessible = comprehensible by those for whom they are prepared.
        - Open = not dependent on back-of-the-book answers.
        - Substantive = thoughtfully prepared and/or selected by the teacher and immediately relevant to the students.
    - **Discussion Question(s)**: The *How?* step suggests where we put our beliefs about the profession of teaching into direct action. It becomes a reflection of our perceptions about the nature of our social responsibility as educators. If you had to describe in one sentence what being a teacher means, what would your motto be?
    - For example: "We do not 'cover content' or teach a 'textbook'—we teach men and women who need this learning to make better lives and to create a world without domination" (p. 80-81).
    - Why do you teach?
- Group work implementation challenge: Consider the blended EFL course(s) you currently teach (or will teach) and use the seven design steps to structure it/them anew. At this point, you only need to put together a basic outline. When finished, name one way that you see how this structure provides help to you as a teacher and as a learner. NOTE: I will utilize a handout designed in collaboration with selected stakeholders for this purpose.
- WRAP UP and collection of materials

DAY 2: Module 3 (Universal design for instruction/learning—UDI/UDL)

To begin this first session of day 2, I will present a general description of UDI/UDL principles and a brief history of the model, originally developed to provide adequate support for students with special needs or disabilities. Taking a look at the nine principles of UDL/UDI and opening up discussion on the possible ramifications of these for blended EFL instruction at NVU will provide an opportunity to address the "need for teachers to 're-imagine' their teaching" (Wilson & Randall, 2012, p. 5). Reviewing these basic principles will lead into further discussions later in the day (after lunch) and begin the process of more concrete design steps for the blended EFL courses taught at NVU.

According to Roberts, Park, Brown, and Cook (2011) the nine, widely accepted components or principles of UDL/UDI are:

1. *Equitable use*: Faculty should make easy access to the syllabus and other important course information available to students in a multiplicity of formats: online, print, verbally in class, and so forth.
2. *Flexibility in use*: Teachers should use a variety of instructional methods to deliver content and provide feedback and practice that can include structured lectures, open class discussions, as well as individual, pair, and group activities.
3. *Simple and intuitive*: Course descriptions, available to students in different formats: rubrics, assignment calendars, online message boards, and so forth, should clearly outline expectations for student work and grading.
4. *Perceptible information*: Universities should make all important course information available for students with special needs (documented disabilities or

those whose first language is not English) in appropriate formats for them to process: closed captioning for videos, computer readable PDF files, and so forth.

5. *Tolerance for error*: Teachers can ameliorate the sometimes negative effect of high-stakes exams (midterms and finals) by providing more frequent assessments throughout the course of the semester as formative evaluations of learner progress. Instructors can factor his type of ongoing feedback into the final grade.

6. *Low physical effort*: Instructors should provide easy access and availability to all course content and lecture notes so that students who might have difficulty with note taking do not need to do so.

7. *Size and space for approach and use*: Whenever possible, teachers should arrange classroom seating for easy access and to promote direct visual as well as communicative contact among the course group. Circular or horseshoe-type seating arrangements might address this component/principle.

8. *Community of learners*: Faculty should offer a range of settings (physical and virtual) for student learning to occur. Web 2.0 applications: blogs, discussion forum groups, chat rooms, wikis, or social networking sites may help to foster virtual settings.

9. *Instructional climate*: In order to set the tone for learning, student orientation for the course, as well as the syllabus, might stress the aspiration to help all students to succeed and to invite them to make their needs known to their instructors.

The basic outline for this module of the workshop will follow an adapted version of a format suggested by Shaw (2011). Wherever relevant or appropriate, I will insert the following questions and/or discussion prompts for each of the nine principles:

- What are the essential components of the course(s) you teach? How do you determine them?
- How do you provide clear expectations for the course(s) to your students? What types (or formats) of feedback do you give them?
- How do you incorporate natural supports within your course(s) for your students to learn? For example: a clear statement of course objectives, varied opportunities to ask questions, frequent exercises to assess understanding, among others?
- What types of multimodal instructional methods do you employ in your course(s)?
- How do you (can you) provide a variety of ways for students to demonstrate their knowledge?
- How do you (can you) use technology to enhance student learning?
- How do you (can you) promote and encourage student-student and faculty-student contact and interaction in your blended course(s)?
- MESSAGE FOR THE END OF THE MODULE: Go one step at a time and begin with whatever feels comfortable. Experiment with a few of the UDI/UDL components and see how they work in your course(s). Add more at regular intervals.

LUNCH BREAK

DAY 2: Module 4 (Knowing the students and setting appropriate objectives based on commonly held pedagogical criteria)

This session will begin with an overview of the first half of the workshop (modules 1-3) and allow for enough time to pose any doubts/questions that may linger about the concepts of the study, the seven design steps, and the principles of UDL/UDI. I will remind the teachers that, as many authors have stated, the research on ways to develop and enhance student learning clearly shows that "repeated engagement, over time, with tasks of increasing difficulty, remains the recipe for fostering high levels of expertise (Bransford, Brown, and Cocking 2000; Hattie 2009). UDL offers a framework for engaging diverse learners in deeper and more meaningful learning" (Edyburn, 2011, p. 41). I would place special emphasis on the teachers' perception of their students' capacities for learning (in general) and for online learning (in particular). Identifying and clarifying these perceptions provides a first step towards setting relevant and achievable objectives for blended instruction based upon sound pedagogical criteria. The teachers can (re)examine the following questions in small groups with the help of select teachers and LEP leaders who have agreed to act as resource persons:

- **Knowing your students.**

- How would you describe the basic profile of the students you teach at NVU?
- How would you describe the diversity of your students? NVU claims to have a heterogeneous student population.
- How many of your students would you say are in the bottom 50% of the general Chilean university population? According to Ruth (2012) "By starting to unpack

how we believe students work, and our own assumptions about the teaching/learning nexus, we may find more useful ways of constituting learning and teaching for both our students and ourselves" (p. 10).

- What do your students expect from a blended EFL course?
- Are NVU students ready to study in a blended course environment?
- Blended learning requires technical skills. Do they have them? What other skills (capacities) are necessary for successful learning in a blended environment?
- How do you (can you) help them to attain these skills/capacities?

I can ask a couple of general, open questions adapted from Edyburn's (2011) checkpoints to the full group as a roundup to this review. For example:

- Is academic diversity a condition to be remediated or celebrated? When students struggle in a course, what does this difficulty signify? To what extent should every class be explicitly designed to support students with diverse interests, background knowledge, and skills? (p. 38)
- If we truly understand diversity and value learner differences, what should be different about the classroom and instruction, before the students arrive? How can we use our knowledge of student differences and instructional challenges to design learning environments and materials in ways that provide support to all students before anyone fails? (p. 40)

➢ **Setting relevant and achievable course objectives.**

- Remember this first important question in designing a course: *Who* needs *What* as defined by *Whom*? (Vella, 2010, p. 68)

- What are your goals and objectives for the course(es) you teach?
- How do these goals/objectives influence your daily/weekly/monthly/semester planning?
- How do you know when you have reached them?
- What do you think your students' goals are for the course?

A general discussion point from Edyburn's (2011) checkpoints could also prove relevant here as a wrap up:

- Educators and administrators frequently make assumptions that all learners learn like they do. As a result, we are often surprised when students struggle to be successful in the classroom. How can we facilitate discussions about recent advances in the learning sciences, to create instructional environments and materials that proactively value academic diversity and engage students in developing high levels of expertise? How can we help faculty move away from goals of covering the curriculum and toward goals of teaching for understanding? (p. 41)

➢ **Establishing commonly held pedagogical criteria: Teaching as a team sport.**

- I can use a list provided by Brown et al. (2010, p. 66) here as a jumping-off-point for small group discussions in response to the following question: What pedagogical criteria do you use and strive to achieve in your courses in the following areas?

- *Communities of Inquiry* - Learning denotes a social experience where generative knowledge remains embedded within and distributed across communities of practice.
- *Learning-centeredness* – Placing the focus on "learning" where teachers can employ different instructional designs to support the needs, experiences, and preexisting knowledge of the learner.
- *Interactive* - Regular and structured interactivity with blended content and other learners provides opportunity for deep and durable learning to occur.
- *Collaboration* - Collaboration and a strong sense of social presence between students and the teacher promote active and meaningful learning.
- *Personalization* - Teaching needs to respond to individual needs and the learners must be able to customize the learning experience to their unique requirements.
- *Rich Tasks* - Rich tasks and productive pedagogies that engage students in critical reflection within authentic contexts enhance understanding.
- *Flexibility* - Learning designs need to support adaptive and flexible learning spaces where students can learn anytime, anywhere and any place.
- *Assessment for Learning* - Learning activities must promote feedback and feed-forward assessment, which helps students to reflect on and improve their learning outcomes.

- *Diverse Learners* - Learning designs need to respect the diverse needs of learners and support learning in socially and culturally appropriate contexts.
- *Innovation and Excellence* - Good teaching occurs in a culture of innovation where teachers find encouragement to continually push boundaries and strive for excellence

I could make a couple of general, open topic questions adapted from Edyburn's (2011) checkpoints to the full group as a roundup to this part of the module. For example:

- Many campus administrators are responsible for approving technology requests that are prepared simply to remain cutting edge. Such initiatives will facilitate change in the academic performance of diverse students. In what ways can administrators use the acquisition of technology as a core strategy for supporting the academic success of diverse students? Given a choice between investments in technology that enhances teaching, and investments in technology that enhances learning, preference must be given to the latter. (p. 42)
- What does a higher education administrator need to know and do, relative to using technology, to support diverse students? Advocating for the alignment of technology and improved student outcomes becomes a critical action step. Universal design for learning provides a framework for proactively valuing academic diversity by explicitly targeting the special needs of diverse learners, while offering educational benefit to all students. Finally, administrators need to

employ top-down change strategies, facilitate bottom-up change strategies, and utilize policy change as a means of making differences ordinary. (p. 43)

- WRAP UP and collection of materials and group notes.

DAY 3: Module 5 (Learning and teaching contracts: Roles and responsibilities)

On day 3 of the workshop teachers will attempt to put everything together by thinking about and beginning to draft working documents for use by the LEP at NVU. The first of these will become a "contract" for learning and teaching that instructors could use as part of student orientation to the blended environment of their English courses at the start of the term. This document will need to specify the nature of these courses as well as the expectations required for successful completion of them. The goal for this module will be to begin the process of outlining a policy document of this sort by identifying the relevant features of the instructional climate required for blended EFL courses and by specifying the roles and responsibilities of all participants in them. Further modifications, reediting, and clarifications can then continue within the online CoP site already established for the NVU-EFL course teams. The main thrust of the document will attempt to stress the idea that, in effect, languages are not taught, but learned. Telling students from the beginning that they are responsible for their own learning and that the teacher's job description includes facilitating and motivating their learning throughout the course can stress this point.

The following list (neither exhaustive nor in any particular order) provides some of the relevant, general themes to consider for this document:

- A Mission Statement for the EFL department at NVU:

    - Three or four sentences that precisely sum up the aspirations of the department in terms of the services they provide to help student success.

- A Welcome-to-the-Course Statement:
    - For example, from Dukes, Koorland, and Scott (2009, p. 46): Meaningful learning is the goal for this course. It is recognized that students enter this course with diverse backgrounds and experiences. Given the broad range of backgrounds and skills, each student is encouraged to set personal goals for their work in this course. The instructor is open to discussing these goals throughout the course, individually or as a class depending on the topic. Welcome to this course!
- A Statement of Expectations and Obligations (for the student) emphasizing:
    - High expectations for student work.
    - The importance of active engagement, communication, and collaboration.
    - Dedication to the course and the required time commitment.
    - Student responsibilities and work routine instructions.
    - Attendance and testing policies.
    - Academic integrity and netiquette policies.
- A Blended Teaching Guide (expressing commitment from the teacher):
    - For example, from Wach, Broughton and Powers (2011) the "Teaching Guide is a policy document which outlines principles of good practice in the following areas: instructor presence, responsiveness to student circumstances, course content, course . . . design, quality of assignments,

evaluation of student work, accuracy and currency, and academic integrity and intellectual property" (p. 92).

- Other commitments that teachers are willing and able to take on in order to help students succeed.

- A clear (brief) outline of the course and how the teachers will measure students' learning achievements:
  - For example, from Shibley, Amaral, Shank and Shibley (2011, p. 81): "The design team unanimously decided that the best strategy to help students learn online was to create a class guide that would lead the students through the most important course content."
  - A class guide of this sort might include:
    - An abbreviated syllabus outlining "a table of contents, topic / chapter learning goals, action items, and a learning resources page" (p. 81).
    - The nature and extent of any expected pre-class assignments and what they might be worth (if grading this work constitutes part of the course) in order to "encourage students to spend time-on-task prior to face-to-face time" (p. 82).
    - What students can expect to in class during the F2F sessions of the course.
    - The nature and extent any regular post-class assignments or course projects and what they are worth.

        - The schedule and extent of regular, ongoing formative as well as high-stakes summative assessments for the course and the graded weight of each of these.
        - Peer mentoring policies (if desired and achievable as a goal).
        - Grading policies.
        - Among other components that teachers might deem appropriate.
- Any other themes that the course teams might consider relevant.
- A final statement of commitment to the course from all parties and a signature page to end the contract.

I will dedicate the full three hours of the morning session for this third day of the training to the elaboration of this working document. For the last session of the training workshop, we will spend the remaining time reflecting on ways to help students to understand the need to change the way they approach the EFL learning endeavor in blended environments.

LUNCH BREAK

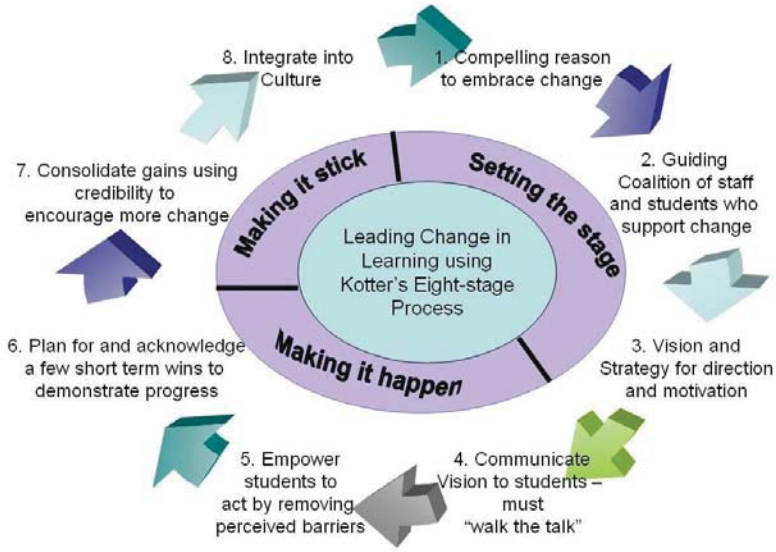
DAY 3: Module 6 (Fostering Cultural Change in Blended Instruction)

The second working document that the teachers will outline in this last module focuses on change management strategies that have been (or can be) used to enhance student and teacher involvement and engagement with content and with one another in blended EFL courses at NVU. The motivation for this type of activity will come from the belief that teachers must make all "good-faith" efforts to foster successful student learning. Teachers interviewed for this study expressed apprehensions about their

students' attitude towards EFL as a curricular subject and indicated that this mindset originated in Chilean culture. Any attempt to change that culture so that learning occurs offers a welcome contribution.

The module will begin with a brief introduction to the work done by Quinn, Amer, Lonie, Blackmore, Thompson, and Pettigrove (2012) to promote cultural changes in the engagement patterns of HE students in blended learning environments. These authors found that even after transforming the instructional environment, with careful consideration of the teachers input, through collaborative course development (as this workshop pretends to do) there remains a further need to focus on the students' attitudes and cultural perceptions of teaching and learning in blended environments. Drawing on scholarship related to principles of change management, these authors found inspiration in the work of "John Kotter [who had)] analyzed hundreds of change management attempts . . . and distilled his principles of change into eight strategic steps (Kotter, 1995; 2007) . . . that needed to be present and in the right order for the change process to be successful" (p. 21). One-by-one, I will briefly explain these steps to the teachers and solicit open comments from the whole group in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in the current process of motivating students to engage more effectively in their EFL courses. I will also refer back to and highlight points from previous modules of the workshop, whenever relevant to any of the steps, sin order to establish a sense of forward progress in the workshop. We are not starting from scratch but finding and filling in gaps in the change process.

Quinn et al. (2012) created the following figure as a visual representation of the cycle the eight strategic steps must progress through. I will use this diagram to keep the group focused and on track for the elaboration of the working document they will produce as a final product of the workshop.



Leading change in learning using Kotter's eight-stage process: Taken from: Quinn et al. (2012). Leading change: Applying change management approaches to engage students in blended learning. Australasian Journal of Educational Technology, 28(1), 16-29. Retrieved from http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/ajet28/quinn.pdf (p. 21).

The working document itself also comes from the Quinn et al. (2012) study (adapted for this module) and I will present this as a template for small groups to complete in the time remaining. I include an example of what this worksheet might look like here:

Kotter's Framework applied to students	What have we previously done to support each stage?	What we are or planning to do to further scaffold students' transition towards change?
Setting the stage		
1. Establish a Compelling reason to embrace the change		
2. Create a Guiding Coalition who support the change		
3. Formulate a vision and strategy for direction and motivation		
Making it happen		
4. Communicate vision to students		
5. Empower students to act by removing perceived barriers		
6. Plan for and acknowledge a few short term wins to demonstrate progress		
Making the change stick		
7. Consolidate Gains using credibility to encourage more change		
8. Integrate into culture		

Leading change in learning – audit of student support for transition (p. 22-23)

Once completed towards the end of this module, I will collect and later consolidate the collaborative work on this template from all small groups into one document that teachers can use as a starting point for further training sessions. I will conduct a final wrap up session and propose next steps. I will propose possible topics for future training workshops or for the online CoP established for the purpose of open, ongoing reflection among NVU-EFL. For example:

- Assessments that matter and measure learning: What can students do? (multiple avenues).
- Ideas for enhancing ongoing CoP formation: Building and maintaining academic partnerships among the NVU-EFL community.
- Among others.

References

Picciano, A. G. (2009). Blending with purpose: The multimodal model. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks, 13*(1), 7-18. Retrieved from http://sloanconsortium.org/jaln/v13n1/blending-purpose-multimodal-model

Quinn, D., Amer, Y., Lonie, A., Blackmore, K., Thompson, L., & Pettigrove, M. (2012). Leading change: Applying change management approaches to engage students in blended learning. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology, 28*(1), 16-29. Retrieved from http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/ajet28/quinn.pdf

(Among others as suggested by relevant collaborators)

Appendix B: Supplemental Historical Data of EFL Program Results at NVU

The following tables and figures represent data perceived to justify the need for present study. All information has been taken from NVU archival records or directly from the university Student Information System (SIS). The information has been reformatted when necessary in order to comply with APA6.0 standards.

Table B1.
Supplemental Information on Results of CALL-Based EFL Program at NVU 2002-2008(1)

Year	Total # of students enrolled	"Zero group" # nonactive students	Total % of nonactive students	Total # of "active" students	Pass rate% "active" students	Average # of completed levels	Length of course	Mode
2002	2435	200	8,21%	2235	34%	1,06	annual	Curricular
2003	5587	1200	21,48%	4387	50%	1,47	annual	Curricular
2004	9215	2679	29,07%	6536	47%	1,2	annual	Curricular
2005	10775	3747	34,77%	7028	37%	1	annual	Curricular
2006-1	6187	4359	70,45%	1828	22%	0,26	semester	Elective
2006-2	4012	2382	59,37%	1630	26%	0,36	semester	Elective
2007-1	4455	1985	44,56%	2470	32%	0,41	semester	Elective
2007-2	3436	1608	46,80%	1828	32%	0,52	semester	Elective
2008-1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	semester	Elective

Note. Data retrieved and reformatted from NVU archival records. Reprinted with permission. CALL course offerings evaluated on a Pass/Fail basis (no grades). Completing one "level" required approximately 12-15 hours of student engagement: 6 F2F assessment-based sessions + online self-study. For annual courses (offered between 2002—2005) students received a "pass" after completing 2 levels. For semester-based courses (offered between 2006-1—2008-1) students received a "pass" after completing 1 level. Data for the 2008-1 semester was not available (n/a). This semester served as a transition between the two types of programs, and accurate records not kept/maintained. However, accounts show that the university purchased 2000 student "licenses" for the online portion of these courses for the semester. Authorities assume that data trends have remained consistent with the information available from previous terms.

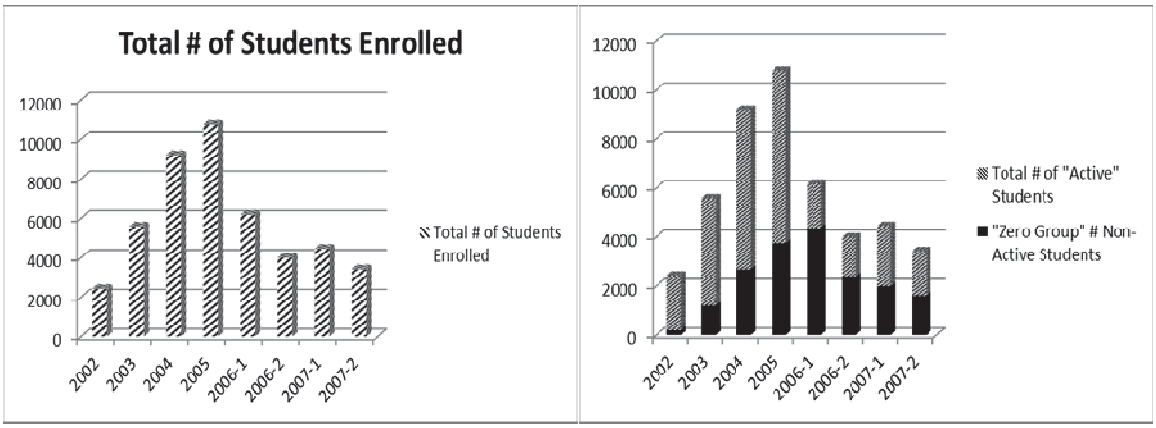


Figure B1. Supplemental information on CALL Program total student enrollment per academic period and contrast between "active" vs. "nonactive" students for the same periods.

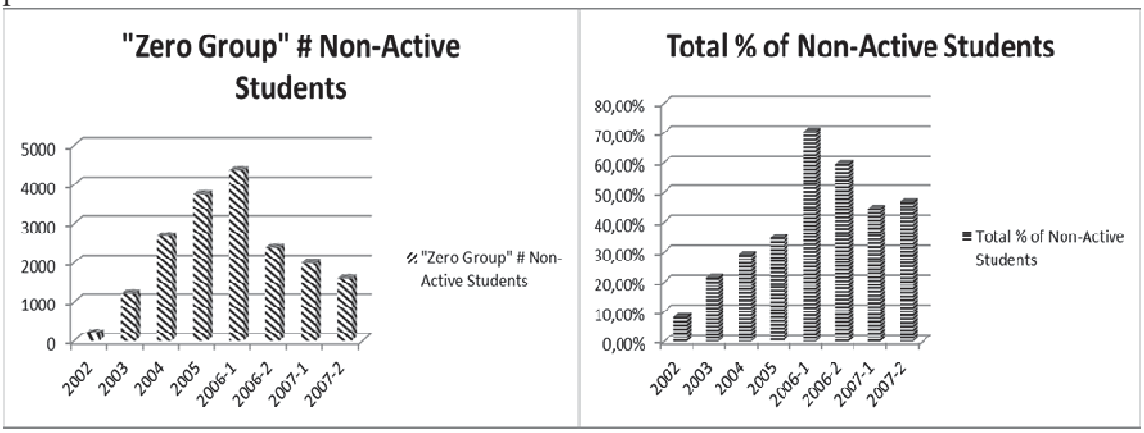


Figure B2. Supplemental information on CALL Program total number and percentage of "nonactive" students for the same periods. The university considered these students as drop-outs.

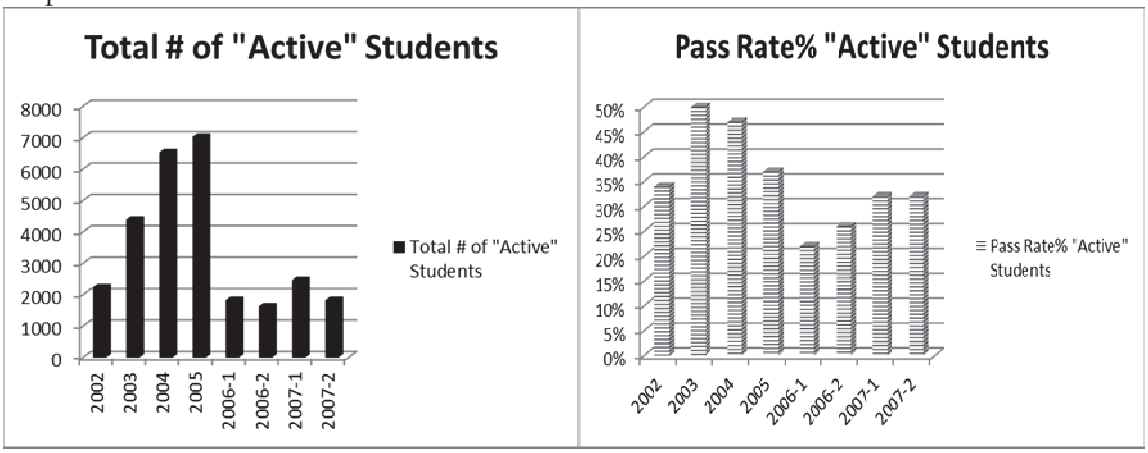


Figure B3. Supplemental information on CALL Program total number of "active" students and relative percentage of pass rates for the same periods.

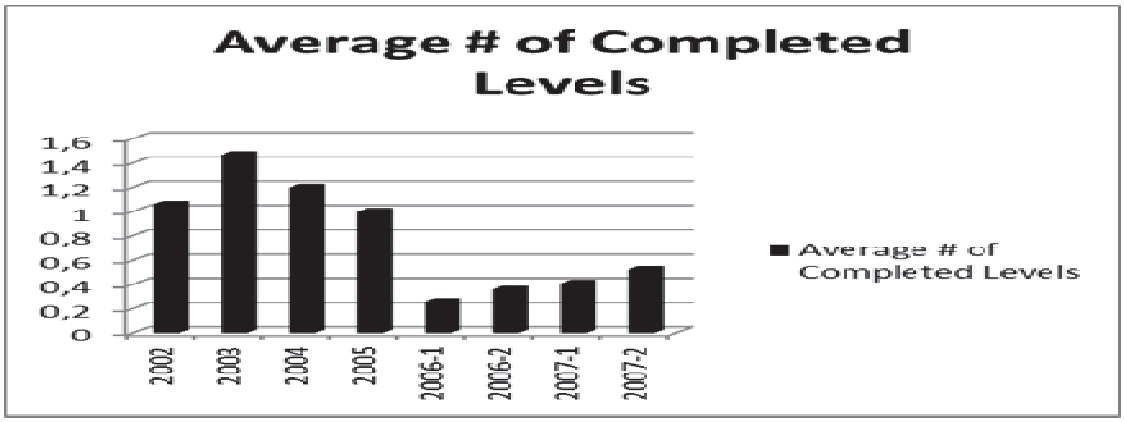


Figure B4. Supplemental information on CALL Program average number of "levels" completed by active students. Student dedication/engagement required to complete a level = approximately 12-15 hours.

Table B2.
Supplemental Information on Results of LEP-based "Blended" EFL Program at NVU 2008(2)-2012(2)

Year	Total # of students enrolled	Drop-out %	Total # of students end-of-term	Pass rate% "active" students	Average grade all active students	Average passing grade	Length of course	Mode
2008-2	n/a	n/a	475	69%	n/a	5.2	semester	Curricular
2009-1	n/a	n/a	1801	71%	n/a	5.2	semester	Curricular
2009-2	n/a	n/a	1190	62%	n/a	4.0	semester	Curricular
2010-1	n/a	n/a	1232	71%	n/a	4.5	semester	Curricular
2010-2	n/a	n/a	1402	62%	n/a	4.1	semester	Curricular
2011-1	2579	9.0%	2347	86%	5.0	5.4	semester	Curricular
2011-2	3298	2.7%	3209	75%	4.02	5.2	semester	Curricular
2012-1	4920	24.3%	3727	78%	4.4	5.0	semester	Curricular
2012-2	4425	20.6%	3512	76%	4.3	5.0	semester	Curricular

Note. Data retrieved and reformatted from NVU archival records. Reprinted with permission. The NVU graded this type of course offering in accordance with the Chilean grading scale (1.0-7.0). A "pass" for each level required a minimum grade of 4.0. Table B3 displays the grading scale in relevant percentages. Data for initial enrollment, drop-out rates, and individual student grades (for 2008-2—2010-2) were not available (n/a) from the NVU-SIS for analysis. Beginning in 2011-1, the university maintained more accurate and complete records in the SIS.

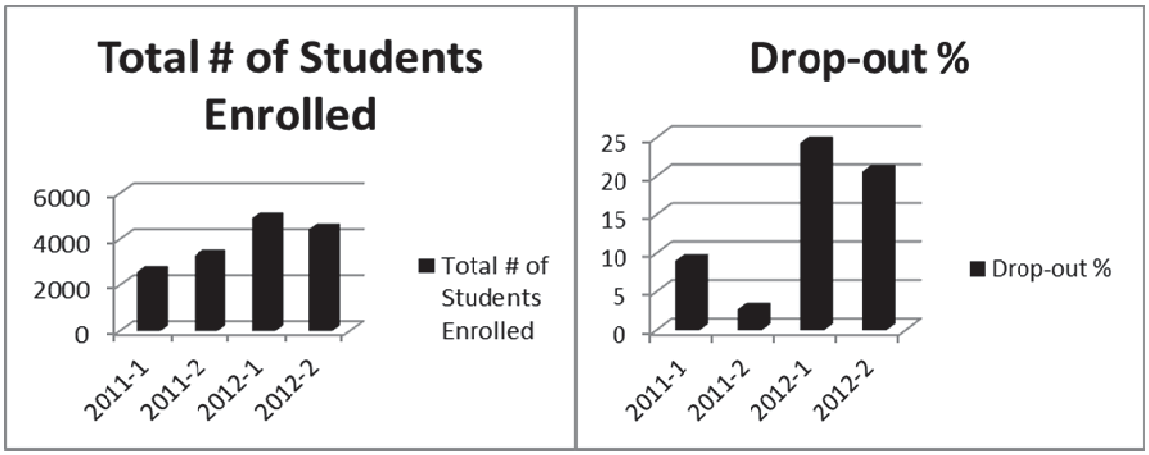


Figure B5. Supplemental information on Blended Program total student enrollment and drop-out percentage (2011-1-2012-2) from available data.

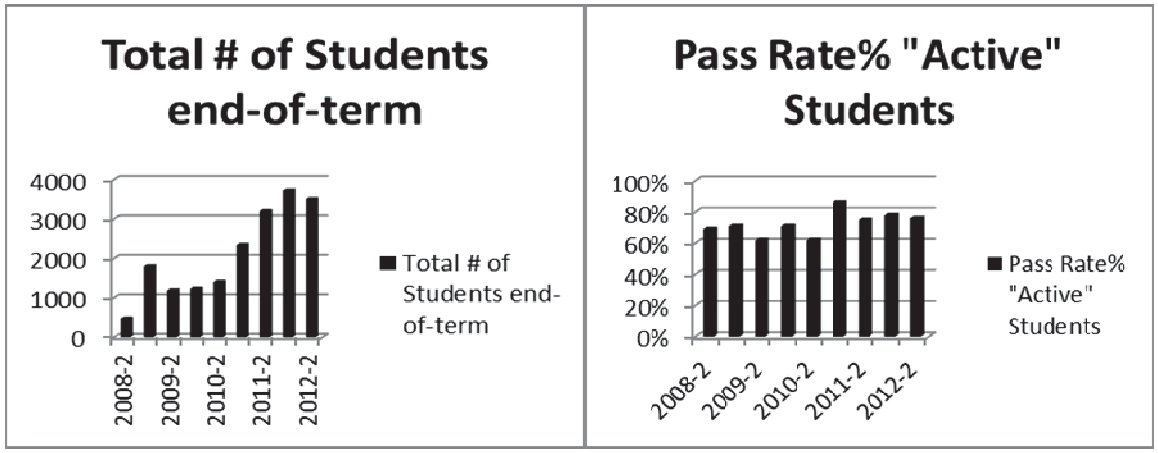


Figure B6. Supplemental information on Blended Program total end-of-term "active" student enrollment per academic period (2008-2-2012-2) and pass rate percentages for the same periods.

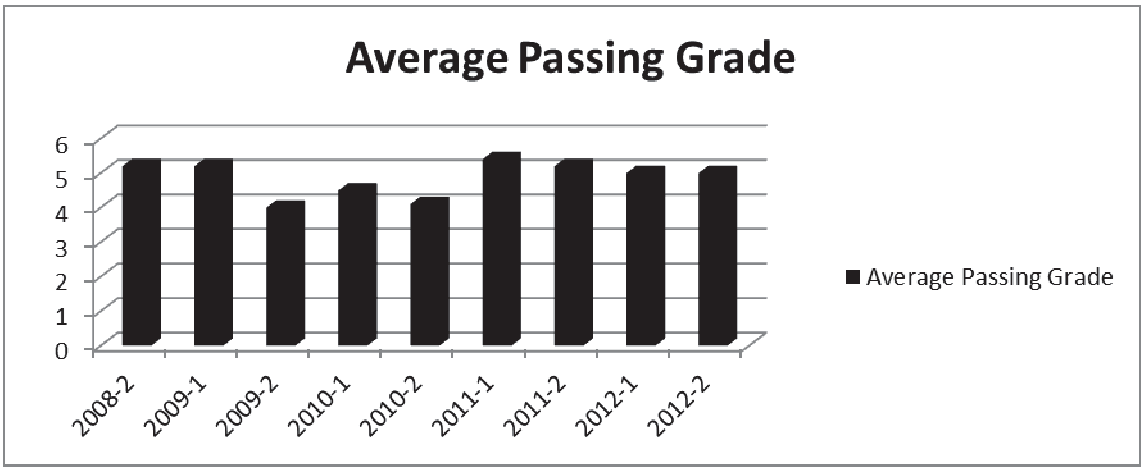


Figure B7. Supplemental information on Blended Program average passing grade per academic period.

Table B3.
Supplemental Information on Grading Scale used at NVU

Total % points:	Grade:	Total % points:	Grade:	Total % points:	Grade:	Total % points:	Grade:	Total % points:	Grade:
0	1.0	20	2	40	3	60	**4.0**	80	**5.5**
1	1.1	21	2.1	41	3.1	61	**4.1**	81	**5.6**
2	1.1	22	2.1	42	3.1	62	**4.2**	82	**5.7**
3	1.2	23	2.2	43	3.2	63	**4.2**	83	**5.7**
4	1.2	24	2.2	44	3.2	64	**4.3**	84	**5.8**
5	1.3	25	2.3	45	3.3	65	**4.4**	85	**5.9**
6	1.3	26	2.3	46	3.3	66	**4.5**	86	**6.0**
7	1.4	27	2.4	47	3.4	67	**4.5**	87	**6.0**
8	1.4	28	2.4	48	3.4	68	**4.6**	88	**6.1**
9	1.5	29	2.5	49	3.5	69	**4.7**	89	**6.2**
10	1.5	30	2.5	50	3.5	70	**4.8**	90	**6.3**
11	1.6	31	2.6	51	3.6	71	**4.8**	91	**6.3**
12	1.6	32	2.6	52	3.6	72	**4.9**	92	**6.4**
13	1.7	33	2.7	53	3.7	73	**5.0**	93	**6.5**
14	1.7	34	2.7	54	3.7	74	**5.1**	94	**6.6**
15	1.8	35	2.8	55	3.8	75	**5.1**	95	**6.6**
16	1.8	36	2.8	56	3.8	76	**5.2**	96	**6.7**
17	1.9	37	2.9	57	3.9	77	**5.3**	97	**6.8**
18	1.9	38	2.9	58	3.9	78	**5.4**	98	**6.9**
19	2.0	39	3.0	59	4.0	79	**5.4**	99	**6.9**
								100	**7.0**

Note. Data retrieved and reformatted from NVU archival records. Reprinted with permission.

Appendix C: Letter of Cooperation

Letter of Cooperation from a Community Research Partner

[redacted]
Academic Vice-Rector, Universidad [redacted], Chile

Contact Information:
Email: [redacted]
Telephone: [redacted]

Date: 26 July 2012

Dear Christopher P. Johnson,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Increasing Students' Academic Involvement: Chilean Teacher Engagement with Learners in Blended TEFL Courses within the Universidad [redacted], Chile (UDLA). As part of this study, I authorize you to send email invitations to potential fulltime and part-time EFL teacher participants in order to recruit volunteers for the study, to conduct individual interview sessions with the selected participants as primary data collection, to conduct member checking sessions with these same volunteer participants, and to disseminate the results of the study to all relevant stakeholders you have identified (including myself). Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: the provision of an appropriate space (room) from which to conduct the individual participant interviews and member checking sessions which you will require in order to conduct your study. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

[redacted]
Academic Vice-Rector, Universidad [redacted], Chile

Contact Information:
Email: [redacted]
Telephone: [redacted]

Appendix D: Data Use Agreement

DATA USE AGREEMENT

This Data Use Agreement ("Agreement"), effective as of 1 August 2012 ("Effective Date"), is entered into by and between Christopher P. Johnson ("Data Recipient") and [redacted]. ("Data Provider"). The purpose of this Agreement is to provide Data Recipient with access to a Limited Data Set ("LDS") for use in research in accord with the HIPAA and FERPA Regulations.

1. Definitions. Unless otherwise specified in this Agreement, all capitalized terms used in this Agreement not otherwise defined have the meaning established for purposes of the "HIPAA Regulations" codified at Title 45 parts 160 through 164 of the United States Code of Federal Regulations, as amended from time to time.

2. Preparation of the LDS. Data Provider shall prepare and furnish to Data Recipient a LDS in accord with any applicable HIPAA or FERPA Regulations

3. Data Fields in the LDS. No direct identifiers such as names may be included in the Limited Data Set (LDS). In preparing the LDS, Data Provider shall include the **data fields specified as follows**, which are the minimum necessary to accomplish the research (list all data to be provided): any available LEP, Laureate English Institute[redacted] program documentation and reports of student retention (dropout), pass-rates, final grades and/or student satisfaction with the TEFL program at[redacted].

4. Responsibilities of Data Recipient. Data Recipient agrees to:

   a. Use or disclose the LDS only as permitted by this Agreement or as required by law;

   b. Use appropriate safeguards to prevent use or disclosure of the LDS other than as permitted by this Agreement or required by law;

   c. Report to Data Provider any use or disclosure of the LDS of which it becomes aware that is not permitted by this Agreement or required by law;

   d. Require any of its subcontractors or agents that receive or have access to the LDS to agree to the same restrictions and conditions on the use and/or disclosure of the LDS that apply to Data Recipient under this Agreement; and

   e. Not use the information in the LDS to identify or contact the individuals who are data subjects.

5. Permitted Uses and Disclosures of the LDS. Data Recipient may use and/or disclose the LDS for its Research activities only.

6. Term and Termination.

   a. Term. The term of this Agreement shall commence as of the Effective Date and shall continue for so long as Data Recipient retains the LDS, unless sooner terminated as set forth in this Agreement.

   b. Termination by Data Recipient. Data Recipient may terminate this agreement at any time by notifying the Data Provider and returning or destroying the LDS.

   c. Termination by Data Provider. Data Provider may terminate this agreement at any time by providing thirty (30) days prior written notice to Data Recipient.

   d. For Breach. Data Provider shall provide written notice to Data Recipient within ten (10) days of any determination that Data Recipient has breached a material term of this Agreement. Data Provider shall afford Data Recipient an opportunity to cure said alleged material breach upon mutually agreeable terms. Failure to agree on mutually agreeable terms for cure within thirty (30) days shall be grounds for the immediate termination of this Agreement by Data Provider.

   e. Effect of Termination. Sections 1, 4, 5, 6(e) and 7 of this Agreement shall survive any termination of this Agreement under subsections c or d.

7. Miscellaneous.

   a. Change in Law. The parties agree to negotiate in good faith to amend this Agreement to comport with changes in federal law that materially alter either or both parties' obligations under this Agreement. Provided however, that if the parties are unable to agree to mutually acceptable amendment(s) by the compliance date of the change in applicable law or regulations, either Party may terminate this Agreement as provided in section 6.

   b. Construction of Terms. The terms of this Agreement shall be construed to give effect to applicable federal interpretative guidance regarding the HIPAA Regulations.

   c. No Third Party Beneficiaries. Nothing in this Agreement shall confer upon any person other than the parties and their respective successors or assigns, any rights, remedies, obligations, or liabilities whatsoever.

   d. Counterparts. This Agreement may be executed in one or more counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original, but all of which together shall constitute one and the same instrument.

e. Headings. The headings and other captions in this Agreement are for convenience and reference only and shall not be used in interpreting, construing or enforcing any of the provisions of this Agreement.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, each of the undersigned has caused this Agreement to be duly executed in its name and on its behalf.

DATA PROVIDER

Signed: [redacted]

Print Name: [redacted]

Print Title: Academic Vice-Rector,
Universidad [redacted]
[redacted] Chile

DATA RECIPIENT

Signed: [redacted]

Print Name: Christopher P. Johnson

Print Title: regional manager, Latin America
Laureate English Programs
Laureate International Universities

Appendix E: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in an interview-based research study of the value of teacher engagement with their students in blended EFL courses which focus on the integration of technology into (and beyond) the classroom—through an online LMS platform—as a means of: (a) promoting student involvement, (b) increasing their time-on-task, and (c) creating alternatives to lecturing as a way to enhance student satisfaction, retention, and learning outcomes in these courses. You were chosen for the interview, and asked to volunteer, because of your expertise in the area of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and your experience with the Blended Learning—LMS-based—courses currently being run at New Vision University (NVU; pseudonym), Chile. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part. Please read this form and ask any questions you have before agreeing to be part of the interview.

This interview-based research study is being conducted by a researcher named Christopher P. Johnson, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. Christopher P. Johnson is also the Latin American regional manager of the Laureate English Programs, part of the Laureate Network Products and Services (LNPS) branch of Laureate Education, Inc. You may already know the researcher as the former director of the Laureate English Institute at NVU (2008-2011), but this study is separate from both of these roles.

Background Information:
The purpose of this interview-based study is to gather primary qualitative data from TEFL professionals and to learn about the participant's experiences with the effectiveness of LMS-based blended EFL courses at NVU as well as to solicit insights into possible best practices for teacher engagement with students (in the classroom and through the LMS) as a way to increase learner involvement, retention, satisfaction, and assessed outcomes.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:
Participate in an initial audio-recorded interview, lasting approximately 45 minutes.
Participate in a follow-up Member Checking session of the transcript and coding of the interview, lasting approximately 45 minutes. This will allow for the checking of particular words or phrases in the audio-recording that are not clear as well as to confirm that the selected codes and themes are accurate to the meaning of your words.

Here are some sample questions:

GENERAL QUESTIONS REGARDING FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING/TEACHING:

1. In your opinion and experience, how do students learn a foreign language, like English?

2. In your opinion and experience, what type of student behavior, actions, or strategies are typical for successful foreign language learners?

3. In what ways can teachers facilitate student success in foreign language learning?

4. How do you understand the instructor's role (or roles) in the teaching/learning dynamic?

5. What, in your opinion, are the main challenges faced by teachers, in playing, assuming, or adopting an active role in this teaching/learning dynamic?

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS REGARDING *BLENDED* FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING/TEACHING:

6. What, in your opinion, are the possible benefits of blended EFL learning/teaching as opposed to the more traditional, F2F only, format of instruction?

7. What, in your opinion, are the challenges/obstacles to blended EFL learning/teaching?

8. How do you understand the role (or roles) of the teacher in a blended EFL learning process?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your participation in this interview-based study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to participate in the study. No one at New Vision University, Chile will treat you differently if you decide not to take part in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later (during or after the study). If you feel stressed during the interview, you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life. There is the minimal risk of psychological stress or fatigue during the interview. If you feel stressed during the interview, you may stop at any time. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

There are no particular benefits to you from participating in this interview-based study. Possible benefits to society include the insights of professional TEFL practitioners like yourself that may contribute to a better understanding of the current blended TEFL program at NVU and provide potential best-practices into the future (at NVU specifically, and throughout the LEP in general) as a way through which TEFL educational services, provided to LIU students, can be improved.

Payment/Compensation:
There is no compensation for participating in this interview-based study.

Privacy/Confidentiality:
Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this doctoral study project. Also, the researcher will not include your name, personal information, or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the interview in the final study.

Data will be kept secure in electronic format on a password protected personal computer and/or external hard-drive. In printed format, the data will be kept in a secure cabinet accessible only to me (by key) as the researcher. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university. After 5 years, the electronic data will be wiped from the password protected hard drive(s) and the printed data will be shredded.

Contacts and Questions:
The researcher's name is Christopher P. Johnson. The researcher's doctoral study chairperson is Dr. James P. Keen. You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone at: [redacted] or by email at: [redacted]. If you wish, you may also contact the chairperson directly at [redacted]. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call [redacted]. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is [redacted]. Walden University's approval number for this study is **08-03-12-0085105** and it expires on **August 2, 2013.**

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have received answers to any questions I have at this time and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. I am 18 years of age or older. By signing below, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above, and I consent to participate in the interview-based study.

Printed Name of Participant _____

Date of consent _____

Participant's Written or Electronic* Signature _____

Researcher's Written or Electronic* Signature _____

christopher.johnson@laureate.net
(or)
christopher.johnson1@waldenu.edu

Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Legally, an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically.

Appendix F: Sample Organization of Transcript Data

Example: Blended Learning Question #2: In question-by-question analysis

Increasing Students' Academic Involvement: Chilean Teacher Engagement with Learners in Blended TEFL Courses			
What, in your opinion, are the challenges/obstacles to blended EFL learning on the part of students?			
PID	CODE	Category/ Theme	Response
BQ2			Exactly. OK, thank you. **What, in your opinion, are the challenges/obstacles to blended EFL learning on the part of students?** Challenges the students face when they're presented with a blended program?
BQ2	Misc.	Misc.	FT1: um…I think it's probably the uh, just talking about our program
BQ2			Sure
BQ2	Online for Learning/ Meaningful Exchanges Online	Learning & Practice	FT1: The one that I'm familiarized with. It seems to me that uh, the current version of our blended program uh, is a…presents the students with like two different versions of the same process…one that is F2F and another that is online. It seems to me that the online component should probably have different aims, uh, uh, students could, rather than being presented with a one-to-one correspondence between the units that they see in the classroom and the units that they have to work on the platform, on the platform, uh, maybe there should be something that's more like product oriented or project oriented…long, long term, something like that, so that, that they could bind together a number of units, or probably the main topics in a given set of units—something like that. So that what they do is both meaningful in terms of what they learn in the classroom, and meaningful because they have to do that with someone else that has the same, like uh, duties…share the same duties or interests.
BQ2			
BQ2			Right, right. OK, good. Ah, **What, in your opinion, are the challenges/obstacles to blended EFL learning on the part of students?**
BQ2	Student Reticence to Online Delivery	Cultural Issues	FT2: They're a bit lazy!
BQ2			OK
BQ2	Student	Cultural	FT2: So, to be honest, it's not that there's such a big problem,

	Reticence to Online Delivery	Issues	uh?. I think they're just a bit lazy… because they can spend hours playing games…they can be, for hours, on Facebook, what's up, whatever, right? And, when it comes to something that they have to study, they're just a bit lazy.
BQ2			OK
BQ2	Misc.	Misc.	FT2: Uh huh.
BQ2			Technology for academics is not a…
BQ2	Teacher Presence Online	Teachers and Teaching	FT2: It shouldn't be a problem. It shouldn't be a problem…it's, it's just how to… but, the first thing I think, uh, the blended uh, model, needs a lot of work on the part of the teacher…because, you cannot leave them alone. They cannot be on cyberspace, somewhere, lost.
BQ2			Yeah
BQ2	Misc.	Misc.	FT2: OK? So if…
BQ2			Being there, again
BQ2	Rewards for Online Activity	Motivation Issues	FT2: You have to be there, again, right? You have to send them messages. You have to check their work because…if they…it's the same like with little kids. I remember when I was at school—now that you're asking me about that—I remember, for instance, we had to write compositions…many of them….and then essays, when we were older…but, at the very beginning, we had to write compositions. Every single day we had to write a little composition. But, the good thing is that we would get, like a, happy face from the teacher…
BQ2			Uh huh
BQ2	Rewards for Online Activity	Motivation Issues	FT2: Congratulations…you know? A nice word…something. But if you get NOTHING…then it's not worth working. And the same happens with this.
BQ2			Ok
BQ2	Teacher Presence Online	Teachers and Teaching	FT2: Uh huh. An so, for instance, you can do all the work on unit 1, and I did everything, and no one CHECKED my work…no one said anything about it! No one was there, on the other side of the computer, right? I was, like, alone on the cyberspace, as I told before.
BQ2			Umm
BQ2	Teacher Presence Online	Teachers and Teaching	FT2: Then it's not good. You have to be there again. And, it's time-consuming, on the part of the teacher. But, somehow, you have to do it. They have to feel that they are being, uh, supported, controlled, uh hum, graded, whatever...
BQ2			Right
BQ2	Teacher Presence Online	Teachers and Teaching	FT2: But something has to be … has to happen there…

BQ2			Right. OK, so,
BQ2	Teacher Reticence to Online Delivery	Teachers and Teaching	FT2: I think the difficult part…I think the difficult part of blended learning is not the students…it is the teachers…
BQ2			
BQ2			OK. Um…good. **What, in your opinion, are the challenges/obstacles to blended EFL learning on the part of students**?
BQ2	Misc.	Misc.	FT3: Uh huh. On the part of the students…
BQ2			On the part of the students…
BQ2	Student Reticence to Online Delivery	Cultural Issues	FT3: Motivation and, uh, I mean, they HAVE to do it, and, sometimes we are, I mean, they just have to focus on that and they, just have to, have the, the, I don't know…
BQ2			You're speaking of the online portion of the…
BQ2	Student Reticence to Online Delivery/ Change Mgmt/ Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	FT3: Yeah, the online part, right? Yeah. Ah, sometimes we, we see that they, they are very slow with their, with the…job, I mean, with the things that they have to do…with the activities. So, I think that we have to be motivating them…all the time. Um, I'm saying, you know? "try to work there" uh, these are….this is the challenge for them, I mean, motivation…try to, I don't know, sometimes I don't know how to…ugh, I don't know how can I?... I was talking to Thomas… Thomas is the …(laugh) … director of the course…because, he said the other day …"OK, I told them, it's, ah, very good, ah, If you want to success in the test, please, try to, try to do this LMS, thing, because the students are going very, uh, very slowly". So, and I was thinking, yeah, but this is something that we always face, I mean, every semester. How, how can we, uh, make them, to be, on time. I mean, week-by-week with the same kind of, uh, activities, and …
BQ2			Right
BQ2	Change Mgmt/ Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	FT3: I don't know. I don't know how to… I don't have the key for that …the answer…how to make them to…because we have tried with assessment…we have tried with discounting points for the *cátedra*…X does that… So, but, I don't know…something like they have to be motivated…
BQ2			So they're more consistent…
BQ2	Change Mgmt/ Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	FT3: Yeah, consistency…and…yeah

BQ2			That is the main challenge
BQ2	Change Mgmt/ Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	FT3: That's the main challenge here…
BQ2			Even though…even though most students at NVU are…are technologically…
BQ2	Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	FT3: They KNOW, how to…yeah, they are tech savvies (laugh)… but they, but…I don't know what happen with that. I don't know what…they are always expecting the last minute to do all the, the activities…not … I mean, not every day…it's not a consistent…job.
BQ2			Right
BQ2	Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	FT3: It's something that they do at the last minute before, uh, the course…finishes. So, this is the main challenge…I feel.
BQ2			
BQ2			Umm…Alright, well what do you think is the reason for that? Or, **what**, in your opinion, **are the challenges/obstacles to blended EFL learning on the part of students**?
BQ2			
BQ2	Student Reticence to Online Delivery	Cultural Issues	FT4: I wouldn't know...why…because…students are not interested…so, maybe if you…if we do it the other way around, as I told you…maybe it wouldn't work either (laugh). And there's something, uh, with students, that they are not interested. Um…I can give them all the time they want…to do things online…and they won't do it on time…or, they will do it at the end…at the last moment…so, I don't know what's…wrong…(laugh)
BQ2			Uh huh…
BQ2	Student Reticence to Online Delivery	Cultural Issues	FT4: there´s something missing…and, I believe it's because it's, uh, a compulsory thing to do…in this moment, here…
BQ2			So, do you think that if this were an elective course there would be more….active participation…in both portions of the blended…?
BQ2	Misc.	Misc.	FT4: Maybe…maybe…we had the elective…
BQ2			We did…
BQ2	Misc.	Misc.	FT4: I don't remember what happened…(laugh). I don't remember. What year was that? I don't remember what happened…Ah, but we had a different, uh, system
BQ2			System…platform...

BQ2	Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	FT4: System…yeah…yeah, it was different. Yeah, maybe if it was elective…but, even though, I think…they find it…too much…sometimes. They find it too much. But, it's just a course! I don't get it!
BQ2			
BQ2			OK. OK, Alright, good. **What, in your opinion, are the challenges/obstacles to blended EFL learning on the part of students**? When students come to, to NVU…
BQ2	Misc.	Misc.	FT5: Please repeat that…because I was thinking in the…in my previous…(laugh)
BQ2			Answer?
BQ2	Misc.	Misc.	FT5: Yes…
BQ2			OK, that's fine. Did you, did you want to modify your…?
BQ2	Misc.	Misc.	FT5: No, no, no, no…(laugh)
BQ2			Students come to NVU…
BQ2	Misc.	Misc.	FT5: Uh huh…
BQ2			…with their, with their experience, and many students at NVU are the first ones in their families to come to university…and, and all of a sudden they are faced with a blended course…in English.
BQ2	Misc.	Misc.	FT5: Uh huh
BQ2			What, in your opinion are the challenges or obstacles to this type of blended learning, on the part of students?
BQ2	Change Mgmt/ Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	FT5: Umm, I think it depends on…the… the students, because…NVU is a world…but, there are different kinds of students, for example, those, who come here, uh, during the days, and those who come here, at night…
BQ2			Right
BQ2	ICT and Academics	Cultural Issues	FT5: those who come here at night….they, they are probably…uh, they think that the computer is, something that …they use, at work…and they…they don't see the, uh, the computer as a tool to, to learn.
BQ2			Ahh
BQ2	Rewards for Online Activity	Motivation Issues	FT5: And, I think that, uh…It's hard to explain…uh, that. Sometimes they think that, "OK, I have to do, uh, this online, and I'll do it, but, what are you going to give me back?" Uh, uh…
BQ2			Yeah…
BQ2	Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	FT5: Uh, "OK, it's just 5%? No…and, and I'm going to spend a lot of time, uh, working, I don't have time, because I work, I have a family, etc, etc, and you're going to give me just 5% if I do this?"

BQ2			Uh huh
BQ2	Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	FT5: And, I always try to tell them, "It's not what I give you, it's what are you're going to get!...if you work with that"
BQ2			Yeah.
BQ2	Age	BLENDED Learning	FT5: But, (laugh) it…you, you have to work with, uh, with their minds first…you have to convince them, and it's hard to convince someone when they are … I think that when, when you're older… you're…older, uh, you're…
BQ2			More set…in your ways?
BQ2	Misc.	Misc.	FT5: Yes…uh, yeah, in general terms…yeah, yeah.
BQ2			
BQ2			Good. Very good. OK, **What, in your opinion, are the challenges/obstacles to blended EFL learning on the part of students**?
BQ2	Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	PT1: I guess it's, basically related to, (laugh) time-management! You know? That's one of the… biggest issues that we have.
BQ2			Umm
BQ2	Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	PT1: Is that students say that they don't have enough time, to work on the platform, because… a lot of them work, umm, and…like being, you know, having, you know, being able to…say, "I'm going to spend an hour a day, or a few hours a week…" It, it's difficult for them to do, because there's no one forcing them to do it…
BQ2			Right
BQ2	Obligatory or Not?	Teacher Concerns	PT1: Even if you tell them that, you know it's graded, you know… that's the difficult thing, making sure… You'll find that a lot of them, they say, "I don't have time…I had to work." Some of them say…they'll tell you, "they forgot."
BQ2			Right
BQ2	Student Autonomy	Cultural Issues	PT1: And… but then you have a group that, do…always do the work because, they, they want to learn, they're motivated. But one of the biggest challenges…getting them to actually work on the, on the platform, yeah?
BQ2			So, they have an opportunity…if I understand you correctly, they have an opportunity to spend more time, learning…but they can't find, a space in their, in their lives to, to take advantage of that opportunity…is that right?
BQ2	Misc.	Misc.	PT1: that's right, yeah, yeah.
BQ2			
BQ2			Uh…and this next question might be…might be somewhat, somewhat related to what you just said: **What, in your opinion, are the challenges/obstacles to blended EFL learning**

			on the part of students?
BQ2	Chilean Cultural Context	Cultural Issues	PT2: Yes, that's one point, that they don't, uh, they are not, well, Chilean students are not autonomous learners.
BQ2			Yeah
BQ2	Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	PT2: So they, they see that they can, that they have this, uh, I don't know, they have a lot of time to complete some contents, so they, they're not responsible with that freedom.
BQ2			Uh huh
BQ2	Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	PT2: And they do things, just, at the very last minute, for example, or…
BQ2			Procrastination
BQ2	Control of LL Process	Teachers and Teaching	PT2: Yes, yes. And another important thing is that… how do I know that they are actually doing the exercises, and not someone else?
BQ2			Umm
BQ2	Control of LL Process	Teachers and Teaching	PT2: That's one thing… And the other thing is that, they know how to, uh, well, I didn't want to say cheat! But…(laugh)
BQ2			To work the system
BQ2	Misc.	Misc.	PT2: Yes
BQ2			Yeah
BQ2	Control of LL Process	Teachers and Teaching	PT2: Because I have very, like, students that, with a very, very low level that, they, they can't maintain a conversation, or, they don't participate in class, they don't understand what I say. And they have a, a 100% in all the contents.
BQ2			Umm
BQ2	Misc.	Misc.	PT2: So that's…
BQ2			That makes you doubt…
BQ2	Control of LL Process	Teachers and Teaching	PT2: Yes, so, did they do that, online, uh, components, or…? Or also, the system has a, has a thing that, uh, it shows the students the answers…also
BQ2			Right, sure.
BQ2	Control of LL Process	Teachers and Teaching	PT2: So, how can you, deal with that?
BQ2			Yeah, as a teacher…
BQ2	Control of LL Process	Teachers and Teaching	PT2: As a teacher, yes.

BQ2			What is it that you think, uh, causes students to procrastinate? Why do you, why do you think that they're not…and this goes back to the question again… Why do you think that they're not more involved in the online part, if, as you say, this gives them an opportunity … to practice?
BQ2	Misc.	Misc.	PT2: Uh huh.
BQ2			And, and time is, is, you've mentioned, time is what they really need…more time…three hours a week is, is, is not enough…
BQ2	Misc.	Misc.	PT2: Uh huh
BQ2			What is it that, that, the they're not seeing, or that they're…?
BQ2	Student Reticence to Online Delivery	Cultural Issues	PT2: That's THE question! (laugh)
BQ2			That's THE question, yeah…
BQ2	Student Reticence to Online Delivery	Cultural Issues	PT2: Yes, uhh, uhh, maybe, again, objectives…
BQ2			Umm, personal objectives…
BQ2	Student Reticence to Online Delivery	Cultural Issues	PT2: Personal objectives.
BQ2			Of why they're learning…
BQ2	Student Reticence to Online Delivery	Cultural Issues	PT2: Why they're learning. They don't have clear objectives. They just want to pass. They don't want to learn.
BQ2			So, they don't see it as an opportunity to…
BQ2	Extended Time for LL	BLENDED Learning	PT2: Yeah. Yes, they don't see it as an opportunity.
BQ2			
BQ2			Umm. Yeah, yeah. OK. Alright, just as a follow up then to, to what you just said: **What, in your opinion, are the challenges/obstacles to blended EFL learning on the part of students**?
BQ2	Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	PT3: Well, precisely what I just mentioned. That, they have other priorities, so, uh, they just, uh, well, first because it's mandatory, they just do the exercises and I think, sometimes, very carelessly!
BQ2			Umm

BQ2	ICT and Academics	Cultural Issues	PT3: So, they are not actually practicing. They're doing it because it's, mandatory.
BQ2			Umm, right
BQ2	ICT and Academics	Cultural Issues	PT3: And, it's like, "OK, true or false?" "Ah, the text is too long…true, true, false, check, OK, this was the correct one, I don't care…next." So, I don't really know if they're actually learning anything, that way? And, at the same time, uh, I think, if you tell them, "OK, it's from units 1 to 4, and, uh, the deadline is next, Sunday" so, probably they'll start doing things on Saturday.
BQ2			Yeah, yeah
BQ2	Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	PT3: Uh, and some of them are working on the prog... on the system, I know, but some others, don't.
BQ2			Right
BQ2	Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	PT3: And, most of them wait, till the very end…
BQ2			Uh huh.
BQ2	Attendance	Teacher Concerns	PT3: And, some of them send emails, like, "Oh my God, I didn't have time!" or, "the system wasn't working!" and so-on, and it's like, "I'm sorry" but, that really happens. So, how much are they really learning with the blended, uh, method, let's say? I'm not really sure. I know they fail to attend the lessons, a lot.
BQ2			The F2F lessons…
BQ2	Attendance	Teacher Concerns	PT3: Yeah. Yeah, the attendance is really bad.
BQ2			Umm
BQ2	Perception of EFL Importance	Cultural Issues	PT3: In general. And, uh, because it's not a priority for them. I don't blame myself for that. I know my classes are not boring. (laugh)
BQ2			Yeah.
BQ2	Perception of EFL Importance	Cultural Issues	PT3: But, uh, if they don't come, if they don't attend the lessons, and then they have to do the online thing, I mean, and they don't really care about it…they can check, and know which the, are the correct ones, but not because they want to critically understand, what the problem was, with their previous answer, but just to have it right and get a good mark. I mean, there isn't a lot of learning there.
BQ2			
BQ2			Um, um, um. OK, thank you. OK, this next question might have something to do with what you've just said…
BQ2	Misc.	Misc.	PT4: Uh huh

BQ2			**What, in your opinion, are the challenges/obstacles to blended EFL learning on the part of** (teachers, uff, on the part of) **students**? Learners…
BQ2	Misc.	Misc.	PT4: Uh huh Learners? Students?
BQ2			What are the challenges?
BQ2	Perception of EFL Importance	Cultural Issues	PT4: The most important one I think, uh, that, um, commitment.
BQ2			Commitment. Their personal commitment.
BQ2	Perception of EFL Importance	Cultural Issues	PT4: Commitment, personal commitment to work on this.
BQ2			Yeah
BQ2	Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	PT4: Because it's very easy to leave everything for the last minute.
BQ2			Uh huh
BQ2	Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	PT4: Um, for some students, like, they don't even work on it as we would like them to.
BQ2			Yeah
BQ2	Deadlines	LEP Program Issues	PT4: In the way that we, we…so, that's why I, uh, I do my own regulations during, like, I give them one week only to work in 1 unit, and then I close the unit, and then, um…
BQ2			Um
BQ2	Deadlines	LEP Program Issues	PT4: If I didn't do that, I think, it wouldn't work.
BQ2			Uh huh
BQ2	Deadlines	LEP Program Issues	PT4: Because they, could be all lost. They, some of them would work, others wouldn't.
BQ2			Right
BQ2	Deadlines	LEP Program Issues	PT4: And even for myself, when, when I have studied in an internet program, uh, online program, sometimes it was, uh, hard to do all the exercises when they were requested to, like…
BQ2			On time
BQ2	Deadlines	LEP Program Issues	PT4: On time, for example, uh, participate in forums or…
BQ2			Right
BQ2	Deadlines	LEP Program	PT4: all different kinds of activities.

		Issues	
BQ2			Right
BQ2	Teacher Presence Online	Teachers and Teaching	PT4: Sometimes it's hard to…to be connected with this, which is, in a space, somewhere (laugh) it's not, like, physical. (laugh)
BQ2			
BQ2			That goes right into my question, yeah, eh, about the, um, well you, you covered almost (laugh) all my questions. Very good. (Laugh)
BQ2	Misc.	Misc.	PT5: Well I have been thinking about this kind of things, and…lately, because
BQ2			Yeah, well, let's, let me just go through them, just so I, I make sure I don't want miss anything that you want to say. And then, if, if you, if you've already addressed it then, then, uh, we can move on. **What, in your opinion, are the challenges/ obstacles to blended EFL learning on the part of students**?
BQ2	Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	PT5: Dealing with the time…because they need to set some time apart from their own activities. And sometimes time runs away. And I have heard, even, I was in a meeting yesterday, something completely different, not related to work, but, they were complaining that people is, is having less time to go to meetings, less time to, to participate in things. They are all running, here in Chile, all running from one place to another. Arriving home late, going out very early…and that is the way we are living in Santiago. And that makes difficult for us to stop for some time.
BQ2			Right
BQ2	Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	PT5: A lot of people have a lot of problems with disconnecting themselves, from the cell phone or internet, or whatever.
BQ2			Right
BQ2	Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	PT5: I sometimes (laugh) stay in internet for a long time. I love it! But in some moments, in some meetings, or whatever, I just forget about the phone. And if I have forgotten to put it in silence … anyway, if it sounds, I put it in silence.
BQ2			Right
BQ2	Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	PT5: But, other people, if, if it sounds, they start talking. They start answering anyway…
BQ2			They have to…
BQ2	Time Mgmt	Cultural Issues	PT5: they cannot wait! And I say, "OK, I think the phone is gonna keep the number, so I'm gonna call again." But, other people don't think like that, and, and they feel press, a lot of pressure, with that.

BQ2			Yeah
BQ2	Technology Challenges	Teacher Concerns	PT5: So, I think that managing time is one of our … society topics, in this moment. And… the other challenge, well, is, eh, sometimes there are some, well, or the other obstacle, sometimes they have a lot of, eh, problems with the technology. Um, because the, the, some, the program is a little bit heavy, for example, and they have to wait. And, we are impatient. Because of the thing of the… the matter of the time.
BQ2			Time, yeah
BQ2	Technology Challenges	Teacher Concerns	PT5: It's the same thing. If the thing starts, like, with the clock, clock, clock, and one minute later you are desperate! Just one minute later, but (laugh) you're desperate. And you cannot wait and (scream) you, you go out. So, eh, to avoid that, the problems must be, and may be, really, like, light, nice to use…
BQ2			Yeah
BQ2	Technology Challenges	Teacher Concerns	PT5: So, especially, for example, the listening thing. I know that they are not doing that.
BQ2			Because it takes too long to download
BQ2	Technology Challenges	Teacher Concerns	PT5: Yes. But anyway, listening, maybe it's better to do it in the classroom so they can have, eh, they may have some, light listening files to practice… or some links. You know, there are some nice things in the web that you can put your own links. Or, maybe Cambridge can have, like, the links to…that way it's gonna be, like, lighter, I don't know.
BQ2			Right
BQ2	Technology Challenges	Teacher Concerns	PT5: Yeah, there are a lot of troubles with that…

Appendix G: Researcher Log Excerpts: Major Codes and Themes

Major (codes) and general themes/categories from the interviews:

CODES (for General EFL learning Questions)	GENERAL THEMES/CATEGORIES
CoP Milieu (students and teachers)	Environment
CoP Mileu (teachers)	Environment
Natural Environment	Environment
Learning Context (Meaningful)	Environment
L2 Context (intensive)	Environment
Culture (English Speaking)	Environment
Relevant Context	Environment
External Context/Influence	Environment
Environment/Exposure/Input	Environment
Non-Academic Exposure to EFL	Environment
Immersion	Environment
Cooperative learning	Environment
Teachers/Students learning together	Learning & Practice
Time Beyond F2F classes (practice)	Learning & Practice
Application of EFL beyond F2F	Learning & Practice
Real-world Application in F2F	Learning & Practice
Real-world Application beyond F2F	Learning & Practice
Teacher as Learner	Learning & Practice
Opportunities for Meaningful Participation	Learning & Practice
Practice	Learning & Practice
Active Participation	Learning & Practice
Pro-Active Learning	Learning & Practice
Drilling	Learning & Practice
Importance of Teacher (role)	Teachers and teaching
Importance of Teacher (presence)	Teachers and teaching
Teacher Accessibility	Teachers and teaching
Motivation (Teacher)	Teachers and teaching
Teacher Support	Teachers and teaching
Motivation from T. as Counter-Force	Teachers and teaching
Patience	Teachers and teaching
Rapport	Teachers and teaching
Opening a window	Teachers and teaching
Grammar (Rules of the Language)	Teachers and teaching
Measured Progress	Teachers and teaching
Student Reticence/Resistance	Cultural Issues
LL Experience	Cultural Issues
LL Expectations	Cultural Issues

LL Competition (among Students)	Cultural Issues
St. Autonomy	Cultural Issues
Teacher Engagement	Cultural Issues
Student Engagement	Cultural Issues
Perception of EFL importance	Cultural Issues
Past Experience w/EFL learning	Cultural Issues
Chilean Cultural Context	Cultural Issues
Laziness	Cultural Issues
Perseverance	Cultural Issues
Learning Strategies	Cultural Issues
Age	BLENDED Learning
Time	BLENDED Learning
Time Constraints	BLENDED Learning
Motivation	Motivation issues
Intrinsic Motivation (factors/effects)	Motivation issues
Extrinsic Motivation (factors/effects)	Motivation issues
Goal/Objective Setting	Motivation issues
Challenge	Motivation issues
Awareness	Motivation issues
Enthusiasm	Motivation issues
Immediate or Future use of EFL	Motivation issues
Curiosity	Motivation issues
Sense of accomplishment (confidence)	Motivation issues
Reading as Pathway	Motivation issues
Music as Pathway	Motivation issues
Quality vs. Quantity of Input	Teacher Concerns
University Support/Structure	Teacher Concerns
B1 is too ambitious for NVU sts.	Teacher Concerns
Attendance in F2F	Teacher Concerns
Class-group Size	Teacher Concerns
LEP Program restraints	LEP Program issues
CODES (for Blended EFL Questions)	GENERAL THEMES/CATEGORIES
Content Delivery for a Digital Age	Teachers and teaching
21st Century teaching/learning	Teachers and teaching
Teacher resistance to online delivery	Teachers and teaching
Reduction of teacher time (correction)	Teachers and teaching
Teacher presence online	Teachers and teaching
Split Roles for Teachers	Teachers and teaching
Teacher Motivation as counter-force	Teachers and teaching
Teacher Accessibility	Teachers and teaching
Teaching the same content twice	Teachers and teaching

Control of LL Process	Teachers and teaching
Lack of Control	Teachers and teaching
Teacher Time Online	Teachers and teaching
Trust	Teachers and teaching
Teachers as online learners	Teachers and teaching
F2F for Productive activities	Learning & Practice
Online for Practice activities	Learning & Practice
Online for Learning	Learning & Practice
Online for Productive activities	Learning & Practice
F2F for Correction and Feedback	Learning & Practice
Online for Correction and Feedback	Learning & Practice
Meaningful Exchanges online	Learning & Practice
ICT and Academics	Cultural Issues
Perception of EFL importance	Cultural Issues
Student resistance to online delivery	Cultural Issues
Time-Management	Cultural Issues
Student Autonomy	Cultural Issues
Change Management	BLENDED Learning
Extended Time for LL	BLENDED Learning
New F2F focus	BLENDED Learning
Focused online activities	BLENDED Learning
Time	BLENDED Learning
Age	BLENDED Learning
Deadlines	LEP Program issues
Flexibility	LEP Program issues
Flexibility of LMS	LEP Program issues
Assessment Online	LEP Program issues
Obligatory or not?	Teacher Concerns
Standardized delivery	Teacher Concerns
Attendance	Teacher Concerns
Technology Challenges	Teacher Concerns
Teacher training/support	Teacher Concerns
Nature of Blended Teaching/Learning	Teacher Concerns
University procedures	Teacher Concerns
Teacher pay	Teacher Concerns
Concern about job stability	Teacher Concerns
Not really BLENDED	Teacher Concerns
Amount of Content	Teacher Concerns
FL learning anxiety	Motivation issues
FL learning anxiety lowered	Motivation issues
Rewards for online activity	Motivation issues

Categories from the Literature:

Blended Learning: What is it?

Social presence for deep/strategic learning

- Curiosity
- Teacher presence
- Feedback and Correction

The right blend

- Student passivity
- ICT and Academics
- Enhanced interaction

Student Perspectives, Roles, and Responsibilities in the Blended Learning Process

- Active Participation
- Participation and the perception of quality
- Past experience with EFL?
- Motivational factors
- Deadlines
- Technology challenges and cultural perceptions
- ICT and academics

Teacher Perspectives, Roles, and Responsibilities in the Blended Learning Process

- Teachers view of ICT and academics
- Control of the LL process
- Integrating technology to add time for learning opportunities
- Time

GENERAL Categories/Themes that emerged from the Interviews:

Environment

Learning & Practice

Teachers and Teaching

Cultural Issues

BLENDED Learning

Motivational Issues

Teacher Concerns

LEP Program Issues

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REFERENCES Available upon request