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# THE USE OF STAGED ONLINE PRODUCTION ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE INTERACTION PATTERNS AMONG ENGLISH 3 FULLY ONLINE STUDENTS AT UPC

Teresa Sánchez-Chacaltana

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**TERESA JESÚS SÁNCHEZ CHACALTANA**

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**FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN**

**MAESTRÍA EN EDUCACIÓN**

**MENCIÓN EN ENSEÑANZA DE INGLÉS  
COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA**

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## **APPROVAL**

The thesis titled **THE USE OF STAGED ONLINE PRODUCTION ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE INTERACTION PATTERNS AMONG ENGLISH 3 FULLY ONLINE STUDENTS AT UPC** presented by TERESA JESÚS SÁNCHEZ CHACALTANA in accordance with the requirements of being awarded the Degree of Master in Education with Mention in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, was approved by the thesis director: Mgtr. María Esther Linares Venegas, and defended on..... before a Jury with the following members:

.....  
President

.....  
Secretary

.....  
Informant



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## **SUMMARY**

The purpose of this research is to examine learners' online participation through the use of online production activities in order to enhance peer interaction on Blackboard forum discussions. The effectiveness of two types of online production activities was analyzed in a quasi-experimental and correlational research applied to two groups of students enrolled in an English 3 Fully Online class at UPC during an academic semester. Group 1 students (n=47) were involved with Staged Online Production Activities (SOPAs), which were designed by following a gradual criterion of levels of knowledge and restricted deadlines to publish postings on Blackboard online discussion forums on a two-weekly basis, whereas Group 2 students (n=47) had to do Online Production Activities (OPAs) on a weekly basis. The two proposed hypotheses to evaluate the effectiveness of these activities were validated through two statistical tests: Test U Mann-Whitney applied to the quantitative analysis for the variable Interaction and the test of Pearson Correlational Coefficient which measured the correlation between the number of publications and the Interaction score obtained by applying a scoring rubric. It was proven that interaction patterns were enhanced due to the greater degree of peer interaction among G1 students in which text-based communication was fostered; 50.4 % higher than in the G2 students.



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## **INTRODUCTION**

The use of Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) in educational institutions and universities has been greatly influenced by the asynchronous communication technologies, tools that facilitate different types of interactions among learners, teachers, and content. In the field of language teaching, blended learning is becoming increasingly popular and the main tool students use to interact among their classmates is OFDs (Online Forum Discussions). Students are assigned learning tasks through these type of forums which are designed to practice English target structures and vocabulary practiced in the English learning platforms and synchronic sessions, components of the modality fully online. These tasks are named Online Production Activities and have to be done by students as part of their learning and assessment process. They are also considered a suitable opportunity for interaction among participants in fully online English classes considering there is no face-to-face interaction. However, there exists a significant percentage of students who do not engage with this type of online activities and are considered lurkers, or just participate in a discussion forum with an initial posting, but do not continue the task sequence.

Previous research conducted by Wishart & Guy (2009) showed that lack of students' participation posted on OFDs has been one of the main pitfalls in blended English courses at the university due to various reasons: time management, passivity, lack of interest, disregard, degree of difficulty of the task, or task design, etc. Another

factor that might influence on students' participation in these online tasks is the small percentage of the grade assigned to them within our evaluation system; therefore, students assess the rate of return for time and effort and opt for not even reading them.

From the perspective of online teaching, the aim of this present research is to contribute to the design of effective and meaningful learning tasks which not only do motivate students to participate but encourage them to interact actively in the virtual environment through discussion forums on Blackboard.

Therefore, the main purpose of this action research was to examine the online production activities that greatly influenced on the interaction patterns of students in asynchronous online discussion forums in the Fully Online English 3 course at UPC (Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas) during a semester in 2016. The effectiveness in terms of interaction of the Online Production Activities and the Staged Online Production Activities, which are designed to foster interaction by means of OFDs, was examined and contrasted by carrying out a quantitative analysis whose results served to verify and validate the hypotheses of this present research. Two statistical tests were used to test its hypotheses and reliability: The Correlation Coefficient test was used to evaluate the significant increase in the number of publications in the experimental group and The U Mann Whitney Test for the correlation between the independent and dependent variables. The respective results are shown in Table 6 and Table 7 in Chapter 3.

In Chapter 1, it is outlined the present investigation providing information about the problem, hypotheses, objectives, and research questions, as well as antecedents of the investigation. In Chapter 2, which deals with the theoretical background, Blended Learning, Blended Language Learning and the Theory of Transactional Distance are presented as the fundamentals of this research. In Chapter 3, the type of research, data collection, measuring instruments, and the independent and dependent variables are discussed; and finally, in Chapter 4, the analysis of quantitative data and its findings are shown as to support the proposed hypotheses and the research conclusions.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INVESTIGATION OUTLINE**

#### **1.1. Formulation of the problem**

Online teaching has made an increasingly significant contribution to language learning through different modalities that could be blended or fully online in which courses are delivered and supported by ICT (Information and Communication Technology) platforms such as Blackboard, Moodle, etc. Within their communication tools, asynchronous discussions are considered as the backbone or as Kelly (2008) defined them, *they are the “heart of the course” and play an important role in humanizing online courses* (p. 4). As an asynchronous tool, OFDs (Online Forum Discussions) have come into existence in our Fully Online English courses to promote language learning through the participation of forum discussions in which students are required to post their writing tasks. In our English courses, these tools are used to post paragraphs that students write as homework in order to practice target grammar structures and vocabulary that they have practiced in synchronous sessions and the English learning platform called Cambridge LMS. However, there exists limited interaction in online forum discussions in our fully online classes and it appears to be a persistent and wide-spread problem according to prior research (Ng, C., Cheung, W., & Hew, K. K, 2011).

There has been a vigorous discussion among the English staff at UPC in relation to the effectiveness of production activities through Blackboard discussion forums as interactive resources since a considerable percentage of students are considered lurkers: neither participate by posting these learning tasks on Blackboard OFDs nor comment to their peers as stated in the task instructions. If they participate in these tasks, they just paraphrase each other, or there is a lack of cohesion in the postings. Therefore, this present research intends to answer these questions: How can we fill that communication gap necessary to build communities in this online environment due to the lack of face-to-face interaction? What aspects of the learning task design do we have to rethink in order to motivate students to participate and interact with peers in our online asynchronous tasks?

Based on this context, two types of production activities have been applied to 94 undergraduate students of Fully Online English 3 at UPC University: Online Production Activities (OPAs) as traditional discussion boards for the control group and an enhanced version of them called Staged Online Activities (SOPAs) for the experimental group. These activities are carried out by the students through Blackboard OFDs, which serve as communicative tools among them, generating text-based communication in our online English class and countering the lack of face-to-face interaction. Contributing to the design of communicative activities that foster quality interaction in an online setting highlights the importance of this present action research whose main purpose is, as a practitioner teacher, to evaluate results, reflect, and make recommendations that could be used for implementing new online tasks in fully online English classes.

## **1.2. Hypotheses**

Being given the problem, a significant question arises: Do the Staged Online Production Activities (SOPAs) posted on Blackboard Online Forum Discussion (OFDs) have an impact on interaction in a fully online learning environment? To what extent do these staged tasks enhance interaction patterns among Fully Online English 3 students at UPC?



The main focus of this present research is to analyze how effective has been this kind of improved staged tasks for online class interaction compared to the traditional Online Production Activities. The hypotheses of this present research are:

*The Staged Online Production Activities (SOPAs) increase the level of interaction of fully online English 3 students at UPC.*

*The Staged Online Production Activities (SOPAs) enhance the interaction patterns among fully online English 3 students at UPC through Blackboard's OFDs, allowing them to be involved in a conversational text-based communication.*

### **1.3. Statement of the objectives**

#### **1.3.1. General objective**

The general objective of this present research is to measure the impact of the Staged Online Production Activities designed to foster interaction in a Fully Online English 3 virtual environment.

#### **1.3.2. Specific objectives**

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Staged Online Production Activities posted on Blackboard discussion forums by UPC English 3 students as interactive tools used to engage them in a communicative process.
- Contrast the response of two groups of English 3 students on two different types of online production activities designed to promote interaction.
- Identify the different interaction patterns that both types of activities create in a fully online English class.

- Find the correlation between the number of postings and the students' degree of interaction.

#### **1.4. Justification of the investigation**

Online language teaching is a recently new trend which needs research since more universities are adopting this system gradually, e.g. Universidad Privada del Norte (UPN), Universidad del Pacífico, Pontificia Universidad Católica. The production activities posted on discussion forums are one of the main tools that teachers handle to measure students' interaction and language production on a virtual environment, particularly, Blackboard. Therefore, it is essential that English teachers analyze the impact of this new design of production activity on our students' learning process as to make the necessary adjustments or improvements.

Also, research has shown that the well-designed online discussions (Seo, 2007) allow more interaction among online students; consequently, this research opens doors to more studies on the effectiveness of enhanced or adapted versions of online production activities for English language teaching.

Additionally, most of the research on online teaching has been centered on the construction of knowledge and development of critical thinking in specific higher education and postgraduate studies. Thus, the treatment is very different from the one applied to our language courses since their main objective is to have our students use language and produce it by means of interacting with peers to counter the lack of face-to-face communication as well as the real presence in a classroom. It is also important to note the comparison made by Warschauer & Kern (2000) in which they indicated that a wide range of prior research has addressed the potential of CMC (Computer-Mediated Communication) to facilitate second language learning compared to research in EFL.

Finally, this research aims at providing English teachers or instructors, in their role of e-moderators, with resources to develop a comprehensive framework with design guidelines to have students participate online allowing quality interaction to take place. It is also

important to consider that the evaluation and analysis of any kind of English learning tasks are valuable for TEFL since these tasks can be repeated, adapted or enhanced depending on the students' needs, English language level, and age group.

### **1.5. Limitations of the investigation**

Considering this is a fully online environment and all the research has been carried out based on the data collection via online sources, there have not been any significant limitations to collect data for this present research.

Technology constraints that were present as part of the use of new tools or resources on Blackboard, specifically, the use of the repository tools represented the main problem. The accessibility of the repository tools was too limited after the grades were uploaded and sometimes it was difficult to recover and save all the information; thus, special permissions were asked to the IT area to access students' transcripts and grades on OFDs.

With respect to the study sample, there were some dropouts (about 10%) in each group before the midterm exam which influenced on the final results since they have been considered as students who did not engage in the learning tasks; however, they decided to stop studying and were considered as "temporary dropouts" in the university records.

The specialized bibliography was another hindrance for this present research in relation to books due to the fact that most university libraries do not have specialized books related to blended or online teaching; however, they were accessible thanks to the support of lecturers and the English coordination area after attending some training courses in blended learning.

## **1.6. Antecedents of the investigation**

The antecedents of the investigation have been divided into two sections: the first one that focuses the studies conducted in Peru and the second one, which is very ample and fruitful, is at the global level.

### **1.6.1. Antecedents of the investigation in Peru**

Castro R. Dolores, El uso de forums de discusión como, herramienta didáctica para desarrollar la capacidad de juicio crítico en las alumnas de segundo año “A” de secundaria de la institución educativa Santa María de Piura (The use of forum discussion as didactic tool to develop critical thinking skills in secondary students from the second year “A” in the educational institution Santa María of Piura), Universidad de Piura, 2015.

This research focuses on the use of discussion forums in different courses such as history, geography, and economics. It has been considered one of the antecedents since it deals with the same object of study applied in the educational field and its conclusion related to interaction is valuable.

Castro (2015) conducted a quantitative longitudinal study with pre-experimental design in which the sample was composed of 39 students who took the courses of history, geography and economics. The research evaluated the students' critical thinking skills by means of a pre-test and at the end of the study they were assessed with a post test which supported the use of forum discussions as valuable tools in educational settings.

Despite the fact that the type of research is different from the one used in this research, the results supported that forum discussions are useful in secondary education to promote critical skills in different courses in which there is not enough time in class to develop skills. In its theoretical background, the importance of interaction in the communicative dimension is presented as a support to construct knowledge since this research is based on constructivism. Based on this recognition of the forum as an important tool in education, this present research expands it to the

area of language learning through interaction via discussion forums.

### **1.6.2. Antecedents of the investigation in the world**

There have been a number of studies on the changes in web-enhanced courses throughout the last two decades in different countries such as United States, Australia, United Kingdom, etc. The ones that are closely linked to the area of online EFL teaching or are linked to online interaction through asynchronous discussion forums will be used as a reference.

1. Interaction in asynchronous discussions forums: peer facilitation techniques, Ng C., Cheung, W., & Hew, K. Singapore, 2011.

Ng et al examined (2011) the peer facilitation techniques that might influence student interaction in asynchronous discussions forums for two graduate-level blended courses attended by Asian Pacific students. This classification has provided some insights on peer facilitation techniques that could be measured in peers' interaction. Some aspects considered in this classification have been included as part of the criteria in the rubric for assessing interaction despite the fact that their study groups differ from the ones involved in this present research.

Another important aspect that was considered in the design of the measuring tools for analyzing interaction in OFDs in Blackboard for English fully online classes is Gunawardena's measuring criteria, which have been used in their study (Gunawardena, 1997) with five phases: Phase I: Sharing and comparing: refers to the giving of information in response to questions; Phase II: Dissonance: Refers to the exploration of inconsistency among the ideas advanced by different participants; Phase III: Negotiation / Co-construction: Refers to the negotiation of meaning; Phase IV: Testing Tentative Constructions: Refers to the testing and modification of proposed synthesis of proposed synthesis or

co-construction; and Phase V: Statement / Application of Newly Constructed Knowledge: Refers to the agreement statement or applications of newly constructed meaning. Most of the research on the use of online forums in education is based on knowledge construction and two of the above mentioned phases, I and II, have been used to analyze the respective interaction patterns in OFDs' transcripts. However, in ELT at UPC the purpose of creating interaction by means of communication tools such as OFDs is to counter the lack of face-2-face communication which might be considered a hindrance to language production and learning in fully-online contexts. Hence, Gunawaderna's model has been used to guide the analysis of this present research when evaluating the interaction patterns in OFDs as communication tool.

2. A pedagogical perspective on promoting English as a foreign language writing through online forum discussions, Jose, J., & Abidin, M. J. Malaysia, January 2016

This is one of the few studies which is closely linked to the area of study of this research: Online Forum discussions and English Language Teaching. It has been used to elaborate the rubric for measuring the degree of interaction among participants. Even though Jose & Abidin conducted a qualitative research based on a semi-structured interview, their findings are very valuable since they have listed themes and sub-themes from qualitative data that were useful for classifying the indicators for the rubric elaborated to measure interaction in OFDs for online English classes. They studied the effectiveness of online forum discussions on the learners' EFL writing performance. They analyzed two groups of students in this research; the experimental group (N=28) was involved in synchronous online forum discussion and the control group (N=28) in asynchronous blog writing during one semester. They highlighted the influence of ICT (Interactive Communication Tools) in education and the importance of incorporating OFDs (Online Forum Discussions) in English as a foreign language writing due to the learners' need to interact with each other in an online environment.

The research showed that there was no statistically significant effect on the EFL learners' writing performance in terms of the linguistic complexity; however, the results obtained from the interview revealed relevant information about the significance of online forum discussion on various aspects of learners' views, feelings, and attitudes towards this communicative tool through which they could interact with their peers in comparison to the blogs that are carried out asynchronously without student-to-student interaction. The findings of this research highlight the importance of implementing ICT tools effectively in EFL lessons with clear criteria of evaluation so that students will know what is expected from them (Jose & Abidin, 2016).

3. Using online discussion forums to assist a traditional English class, Zhang, T.; Gao, T.; Ring, G.; Zhang, W., China, 2007

This study shows the influence of online discussion forums on student achievement in reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, and critical thinking in English as Second Language (ESL) instruction. Fifty-four senior high school students participated in this study and they were divided into three groups taught by the same instructor and with the same instructional content of 4 units of an ESL program: (a) a control group who did not use online discussion forums, (b) experimental group 1 who used online discussion forums without instructor interventions, and (c) experimental group 2 used online discussion forums with instructor interventions. The online discussions were transcribed and analyzed to evaluate the depth of critical thinking during the online discussion process. The assessment criteria they have used for the ANOVA and Tukey tests have been very useful for determining the differences between the two groups of students in which the two learning tasks were applied. One of the findings of this experiment is that the students using the online discussion forum were better at organizing the structure of certain essays than the students who did not use online discussion forums. It is clear that discussion online with classmates helped students to organize and write a

certain style of essays; thus, they improve their writing skills (Zhang et al., 2007).

This present research aims at measuring the impact of the application of a certain type of learning tasks in the interaction patterns in an online learning environment; therefore, the model used to analyze the students' English writing was used as a guide to conduct this action research plan.

4. Comparison of restricted and traditional discussion boards on student critical thinking, Morrison, J. R., Watson, G. S. Virginia, USA, 2012.

As it was mentioned at the beginning of this section, there are few studies in relation to Online Forum Discussions linked to interaction in English learning but this one was considered very relevant for this research since they have used the SOLO classification for online postings. This classification has been a guide for analyzing the students' participation on Blackboard. This classification includes different levels of mental processes from pre-structural through evidence of metacognition at a higher level of abstraction. This research intends to compare the effects of restricted and traditional discussion boards on critical thinking and learning in a graduate-level online distance education course. Findings showed that there was an improvement in critical thinking in the quality and preparation strategies of initial discussion board postings when participants' views of peer responses to discussion board questions were restricted until a predetermined date. This finding was really useful for the design of the staged online production activities.

The participants of this research were twenty-four instructional design and technology graduate students enrolled in one of two online summer courses, Class A (n=18) and class B (n=6) were recruited on a voluntary basis. Class A was a hybrid course with a weekly synchronous online meeting with discussion board activities; Class B was an



asynchronous course that used discussion forum for all communication between participants. The design employed as an independent variable the traditional discussion board treatments and the dependent variables were the quality of initial posts, quality of subsequent posts, student participation, student preference, and the student preparation. Both classes were exposed to the traditional discussion format and the restricted discussion format. Class A participated in two weeks of traditional discussions followed by two weeks of restricted discussions. Class B participated in two weeks of restricted discussions followed by two weeks of traditional discussions. The postings were analyzed using a rubric devised by Biggs & Collis (as cited in Morrison et al. p.171) based on the Structure of the Observed Learning Outcome or SOLO taxonomy that has five levels. The results of the statistical analysis support for the use of restricted discussions forums,  $F(1, 79) = 26.1$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .201$ , observed power = .991. Post hoc comparison indicated that the ratings of initial posts were significantly higher in quality in the restricted ( $M=3.27$ ,  $SD = 0.43$ ) discussion forum format than in the traditional format ( $M= 2.755$ ,  $SD=0.47$ ). The results supported the first hypothesis that a restricted discussion forum produced an improved quality in initial postings as compared with the traditional discussion forum (Morrison et al. 2012).



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

This research aims at analyzing the impact of online production activities in a blended English course (fully online format) in terms of interaction. Thus, it is necessary to provide the definition of distance learning to distinguish it from the term blended learning. The Encyclopedia Britannica defines it as follows:

“Distance learning, also called distance education, and online learning, the form of education in which the main elements include physical separation of teachers and students during instruction and the use of various technologies to facilitate student-teacher and student-student communication.”

It is evident that distance learning is carried out remotely and the lectures or course contents are delivered through some type of technology which also allows teachers and students to interact or communicate. Conversely, based on the definition of the Glossary of Education Reform, blended learning describes the way e-learning is combined with traditional classroom methods and autonomous learning to generate a hybrid teaching methodology.

The modality fully online is the context of this research and it fits within this hybrid type which is also considered in distance learning or education due to the lack of face-to-face classes; however, it uses technology to interact with the online community members,

teacher, and students. Consequently, Blended learning concepts and the theory of transactional distance of distance education have been used to support the theoretical fundamentals of this present research. In other words, the theoretical background has been divided into two main areas: Blended learning to provide a general context area of study, and the theory of transactional distance as principles that support interaction as an important aspect of online learning. Several definitions from experts have also been included in the related areas and the definition of “Interaction” which is used in this research is supported by Seo (2007).

## **2.1. Blended learning**

The U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Web-Based Education Commission stated that “...*There is no going back. The traditional classroom has been transformed*” (2000, p.1) and it can be said that it is totally true from the online teacher’s perspective. There exist different online learning scenarios that are delimited by the time students spend face-to-face and in online environments. The classification done by Hockly et al. (2010) distinguishes four types of blended learning: Mainly face-to-face in which learners meet 70% face-to-face while 30% of the course is carried out online; Half-and-half where there is a balance of time for each of the components; Mainly online in which 80% of the coursework is carried out online and the last one that is called Fully Online as participants never meet face-to-face but they can meet online through Blackboard Collaborate or other virtual class to have a synchronous session or text chat.

Blended learning is the area in which this present research is developed and some definitions and conceptions from different authors will be presented to clarify its context. Macdonald (2008) recognizes that blended learning is:

*“... something of a hot topic nowadays because everyone has a different understanding of what it means. This term is associated with the introduction of online media into a course or programme together with face-to-face contact or other traditional approaches to supporting students” (p.19).*

It is likely that this learning modality has arisen from a general sense of disillusionment with the stand-alone adoption of online media since many people felt that the promise of online media was somehow unfulfilled (Macdonald, 2008). Blended learning is a modality that has always been practiced in teaching any English course since different resources are used to transmit instructional knowledge; thus, the term 'blended' would apply to any use of different methods in a course and it would be very ample. However, nowadays this term is used to mean a mixture of different modalities which could be "partially virtual, partially tangible" as stated by Glazer (2012) in his book about Online Learning in which he highlighted that the challenge is, "to link, or blend, what happens in those two contexts in order to create a unified course. If its main feature is focused, it can be defined in a simple way: time spent in the classroom is replaced with online activities in order for students to achieve course objectives.

According to Hockly et al. (2010), Blended Learning refers to a mixture of both face-to-face and online learning. They also defined online learning, in the strictest sense, as the one that uses computer-based tools to promote communication and interactivity with other people, either learners and/ or teachers. Sharma & Barrett (2007) refer to Blended Learning (BL) as *a language course which combines a face-to-face (F2F) classroom component with an appropriate technology* (p. 7). As it is seen in the previous definitions, most authors agree on the nature of blended learning as a learning modality that combines face-to-face and online settings. It is also evident that blended learning has been in use for over 20 years and its meaning has been constantly changing during this period (Sharpe et al, 2006).

### **2.1.1. The model of teaching and learning in a blended environment**

Salmon (2011) developed a five-stage model for teaching and learning in online courses that was applied to design the Staged Online Production Activities used in my present research. Figure 1 shows that the motivation stage or stage 1 is necessary to encourage students to participate; individual access and the induction of participants into online learning are also prerequisites for quick and easy access to technology. It is also

noted that there is an “interactivity bar” running along the right of the steps that shows the intensity of interactivity. Stage 2 stresses the importance of the design of the learning activities itself since it has to offer opportunities for the participants to share ideas and encourage socialization in the forum. At stage 3, information can be exchanged and interaction is promoted among students and learning content. At stage 4, participants are expected to construct knowledge based on real, personal situations and experiences through critical and practical thinking. This leads to Stage 5 in which participants can become responsible for their own learning, building on the constructed ideas, and reflecting on what has been learned.

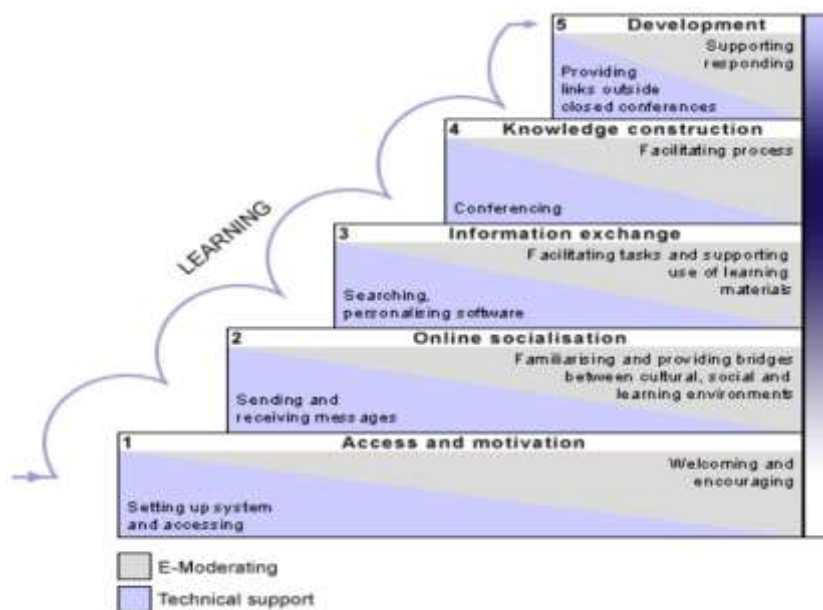


Figure 1. Model of teaching and learning online through online networking.  
 Source: Salmon (2011, p.32)

Through the contribution of asynchronous support, particularly, the use of Blackboard OFDs, students are expected to reach a higher degree of interaction. As it is observed in figure 1 from stages 1 to 4, the more stages they go through, the more interaction they will have among their peers.

### **2.1.2. Online communication tools in blended learning**

The communication tools used in Blended learning are classified in two text-based discussions: synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (delayed time); being the last one, the preferred method of educational ICT interaction in high-quality discussions (Wijekumar & Spielvogel 2006). Both of them will be explained in more detail below.

#### **2.1.2.1. Synchronous communication tools used in blended learning**

Synchronous communication tools are part of the learning through real-time interaction among learners themselves and between learners and teachers. Using wikis, forums and chat is referred as synchronous learning. They make use of audio or video together with endless applications of shared workspaces, break-out rooms, file sharing, etc. (Macdonald, 2008). The most widely used synchronous communication tools are listed below:

1. Break-out rooms are virtual spaces into which students can be divided into sub-groups for working on a particular topic, analogous to forming sub-groups in a classroom (Macdonald, 2008).
2. Video conferencing is used to video many-to-many, or one-to-many and it is commonly applied in purpose-built video conference suites where there is a reliable broadband connection.
3. Chats can be used to rehearse the spoken language in writing. They are text-based messaging one-to-one or between members of a group, either between mobiles or using the Internet. The transcript can often be saved and archived for reference (Macdonald, 2008).

### **2.1.2.2. Asynchronous communication tools**

Asynchronous communication tools are also part of online learning. This communication can be defined as an online learning situation where learners can complete their learning on their own space and time or within the timeframe set by the teacher using blogs, forums, emails, or other ICT tools where participants do not receive quick feedback from their peers or their teachers. These tools involve text-based communication and the sharing of documents or multimedia files (Macdonald, 2008.) The most widely used asynchronous communication tools are listed below:

1. Discussion boards or forums have formed the backbone of online education up until now. Discussion boards are online communicative tools that promote a sense of community and are considered a powerful resource for learning if the course is well designed and the learning activities and tasks aim at encouraging thoughtful postings that engage students (Wijekumar & Spielvogel, 2006). They allow instructors and students to communicate by posting some questions, requesting information, generating a debate, surveying, and conducting a discussion (Wijekumar & Spielvogel, 2006).
2. Blogs (weblogs) are widely regarded as the 'killer apps' of Web 2.0. (Cheng, G., & Chau, J. 2011). The only person who can edit the blog content is the blog owner and entries in blog are displayed in a journal style and arranged in a reverse chronological order. Viewers can comment easily on a particular entry of the blog. It is also considered an online log or diary, often used for personal opinions and reflections, may also be used for sharing ideas with a group (Macdonald, 2008)



3. Wikis can be owned by multiple users who share the same right to create their messages (Cheng, G., & Chau, J. 2011). Through wiki page histories, individual changes to a page can be recorded and maintained. An initial wiki page is loosely structured as a blank page. Users need to establish a layout structure (e.g. organizing into topics) before editing the content. Macdonald (2008) mentions that it is also used for collaborative writing, or for publishing resources, pictures and links to favourite sites. It may include a discussion area.

## **2.2. Blended language learning**

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has been used since the 1960s and teachers have been blending face-to-face classes with different technology-mediated language learning. However, the arrival of the Internet and particularly the emergence of Web 2.0 has changed the language instruction since it provides access to interactive tools that facilitate teaching and learning a language. Also, the use of implemented blended learning into the classroom can significantly improve learning experience if it is planned appropriately (Marsh, 2012).

### **2.2.1. The use of virtual learning environments in blended language learning**

Universities and educational institutions use Blackboard and Moodle as VLE (Virtual Learning Environments). These ones are two of the learning management systems that Blended Language Learning uses to deliver English classes through their whiteboard features and integrated synchronous and asynchronous tools. Blackboard (Wikipedia, 2017) developed applications and services related to more than 2200 educational institutions in more than 60 countries and this is the VLE that UPC uses to engage students in learning and its OFDs are the communication tools in which learning activities are designed for students to participate and interact.

One of the important communicative and interactive tools that learning management systems possess is the discussion forums. It is recognized by experts as Kanuka (2006) that online discussion forums are text-based communication methods that can increase the quality of the learning experience, enabling higher level learning to take place. It is recognized that OFDs are powerful learning tools, but they will yield results if students get engaged with them (Mason, 2011)

### **2.2.2. The strengths of blended language learning**

Marsh (2012) has identified the benefits of Blended Language Learning and among all of them, those ones which are linked to promoting a student-centered approach will be listed below:

Students are provided with a more individualized learning experience through a more personalized learning support.

It supports and encourages independent and collaborative learning and accommodates a variety of learning styles.

It also provides a less stressful practice environment for the target language with a flexible study, anytime or anywhere to meet learners' needs.

Salmon (2003) highlights the importance of online learning based on its own nature:

*“The lack of face-to-face and visual clues in online participation is a key ingredient of success rather than a barrier. If the remoteness and lack of visual clues are handled appropriately they can increase the comfort level of e-moderators and participants alike. Therefore, I do not consider that (interactive) e-learning is deficient for teaching and learning. Instead, it brings its own special advantages and disadvantages compared to face-to-face working” (p.20).*

Consequently, it can be stated based on the previous concepts that blended learning provides opportunities for English students to interact socially, negotiate meaning and engage in meaningful learning activities which allow them to practice target English structures, vocabulary, and language functions with their peers asynchronously surpassing boundaries of time and place.

### **2.3. The theory of transactional distance in blended learning**

It is relevant to clarify certain aspects in the area of online learning since it is a new domain of study that has its proper characteristics due to its virtual nature. In relation to the aspect of distance, Bender (2012) stated that there is a sense of predictability in terms of environment when students become familiar both with the room in which the class is held and with regularity of attendance of learners and teachers. Thus, a relevant question arises: Is it possible to generate a feeling of belonging in a virtual class? She affirmed that education is surely about the meeting of minds, not their separation. Hence, it is relevant to highlight the difference between place and space and then provide the definition of transactional space to explain the impact of social dimension on it.

According to Robinson (2000) space is *“an abstract container determined by distance, direction and time,” and place as in a class, holds together the instructor with a community of students and their ideas, knowledge, thoughts, etc.* (p.112.) Thus, cyberspace, according to Bender (2012) if pragmatically speaking: *the place within cyberspace is created and defined by the computer program, and its structures of authorized access and passwords, which ensure that only those intended to belong to this place actually do so.* (p. 9)

It is clear that online classes involve physical distance, but what it is more important is the relational distance between teacher and student. This relational distance has been defined by Michael Moore (1984) when explaining the meaning of distance in education as follows:

*“There is now a distance between learner and teacher which is not merely geographic, but educational and psychological as well. It is a distance in the relationship of the two partners in the educational enterprise. It is a transactional distance.”(p.155)*

Bender (2012) also clarifies this concept stating that *“it is the extent to which the teacher manages to successfully engage the students in their learning”* (p.10). If the teacher does not motivate students in their learning, there can be a vast transactional distance. Conversely, if a teacher provides students with meaningful educational opportunities with the right degree of challenge and relevance and with a feeling of responsibility for their own learning, the transactional gap shrinks and no one feels remote from each other.

### **2.3.1. The impact of social dimension on transactional distance**

Wegerif (1998) highlighted an important social dimension within online classes that will have an impact on transactional distance. He discovered that degree of students’ success or failure was closely related to their degree of belonging in the virtual context: if students felt insiders or outsiders. In this sense, learning was seen as a social process which is linked to the feeling of belonging to a community of practice.

The National Research Council (2001) published a study entitled *Knowing What Students Know* in which is stated that *“learning takes place in a social context and that collaboration is vital to learning in order to understand questions, develop arguments, share meaning and conclusions among a community of learners.”* It also affirmed that *knowledge is not incorporeal or disembodied, but is developed through working with others* (p.88). Bender (2012) explained that even though this study focused on grade-school children, their views can be applied to online learning as well due to the establishing of an online community of learners. In relation to a sense of community, Wegerif (1998, p. 48) concludes that:

*“Forming a sense of community, where people feel they will be treated sympathetically by their fellows, seems to be a necessary first step for collaborative learning. Without a feeling of*

*community people are on their own, likely to be anxious, defensive and unwilling to take the risks involved in learning."*

Transactional distance or gap should be shrunk if students stop feeling outsiders and become into insiders in online classes (Bender, 2012)

### **2.3.2. Forms of interaction in blended learning**

Due to the virtual aspect of distant education, interaction has been analyzed from the most recent findings in this area and distance education theorists provided with valuable information based on their research area. Moore (1989) distinguished three forms of interaction that will be described to set the fundamentals of this research: interaction between students and teacher, interaction between students, and interaction of students with content.

#### **2.3.2.1. Interaction between students and teacher**

This type of interaction is called by Moore (1989) instructional dialogue and is the dialogue developed by teachers and learners in the course of the interactions that occur when one gives instruction and the others respond; it consists of dialogue that is purposeful, constructive and valued by each party. He also recognizes that the interactive nature of the medium of communication is a major determinant of dialogue in teaching-learning environment and it could be increased by manipulating the communications media in order to reduce the transactional distance.

Conversely, he states that much attention has been paid to the communications medium as a factor that has influenced on the quality of instructional dialog; hence, there are other aspects that need to be considered as important variables such as the educational philosophy of the individual or group responsible for the design of the

course, personalities of teacher and learner and the subject-matter of the course as well as environmental factors which will play an important role in the quality of dialogue.

Therefore, language program coordinators and teachers are responsible for enhancing the quality and quantity of student-teacher interaction based on the instructional design and selection of learning activities which aim to maximize the impact of interactions with students and provide alternative forms of interaction when time constraints become excessive (Anderson, 2003).

### **2.3.2.2. Interaction between students**

This type of interaction is the object of this present research and it will be analyzed in more detail in the following chapters. Moore (1989) mentioned this type of interaction which he called inter-learner dialogue and it occurs between learners and other learners, alone or in groups, with or without the real time presence of an instructor. According to Moore (1989), *“this dialogue by learners to learners within and between groups makes it possible for distance learners to share in the creation of knowledge and developing skills of analysis, synthesis and critique of knowledge, as well as testing and evaluating”* (p. 33). The benefits of learner-learner interaction are described by Damon (1984) in terms of, *“intellectual accomplishments that flourish best under conditions of highly motivated discovery, the free exchange of ideas and the reciprocal feedback between mutually respected individuals.”* (p. 340). In the area of English learning, this inter-learner dialogue is so valuable since it might reduce the learners’ affective filter providing the slow and reflective ones more time to reflect before contributing with their postings in the virtual environment.

In most previous research, the terms participation and interaction have been used for the learners' behavior in online environments. It is necessary to distinguish between two terms: Participation and Interaction. Participation is defined as the social presence the students have on the online communication tools. Nandi et al. (2012) collected data from different authors and presented the three main levels of participation in online forum discussions: First, "lurkers" who just read the messages and do not participate, but incorporate ideas into their assignments; second, some learners read the messages and treat them as a notice board posting their own position having limited interactivity; third, the participation is interactive and to its full potential" (p.7).

In the case of the OFDs used for Language Blended Learning, the students' behavior is almost similar and the difference lays on the language production among students since the aim is to have them interact in English. This interaction process allows students to personalize and share information about themselves as noted by Nandi et al. (2012) who indicated that the online interactive activities can assist learners to share and gain knowledge from each other. He also highlighted the need for better uses of the technology to support online learning and suggests adequate research on the way online interaction and participation are designed.

Hrastinski (2008) defined online learner participation as "*a process of learning by taking part and maintaining relations with others. It is a complex process comprising doing, communicating, thinking, feeling and belonging, which occurs both online and offline*", *emphasizing that it can be both online by computer-mediated communication with peers and teachers, and offline by reading course literature*" (p.1761). This definition is more ample and does not focus on text-based communication considering there are other types of online tools that allow students to videotape or record their speech.

Moore (1989) distinguished among three forms of interaction in Distance Education: (a) SS interaction, (b) ST interaction, and (c) student-content (SC) interaction. SS interaction refers to interaction among individual students or among students working in small groups (p.1). It should be also noted that in web-based courses, SS interaction can be synchronous, as in videoconferencing and chatting, or asynchronous, as in discussion boards or e-mail messaging.

Engagement, participation, and interaction are three terms that have been used in research indistinctively and their definitions overlapped in this online context. In order to clarify them, the experts' opinions have been considered and based on their findings, the definition of the variable Interaction has been adapted to the context of OFDs in online English teaching. Considering that students belong to an online community in which the teacher designs the communication resource for them to interact and they have social presence since the moment they enrolled in the course, "Interaction" is defined in this study as:

*"The student's social presence on Blackboard's OFDs through online production activities in the fully online English course which consists of different gradual stages: sharing personal information by means of an initial posting related to the specific English lesson, commenting on the previous peers' postings, and answering those comments in a final paragraph."*

The nature of the online course does not allow English teachers to apply traditional concepts of interaction; consequently, it is accepted that technology has adapted interaction into different forms within a virtual environment. Students interact by sharing their initial posting that then might be read by other peers because they belong to a virtual community that is potentially accessible to any of its members. This communication process generates a similar behavior to



the one observed in social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, etc.

#### **2.3.2.3. Interaction of students with content**

In traditional distance education, interaction of students with content has meant study with texts and electronic resources, often supplemented by faculty-created study guides. Nowadays, current technologies offer a wide variety of media alternatives for creating content for student interaction. These media have been classified into five basic categories: sound, text, graphics, video and virtual reality.

### **2.4. Patterns of classroom interaction**

Penny Ur (1999) defined different patterns of interaction which are delimited by the degree of activity that predominates in the teacher and the student in class; these patterns are listed below:

TT_=	Teacher very active, students only receptive
T=	Teacher active, students mainly receptive
TS=	Teacher and students fairly equally active
S=	Students active, teacher mainly receptive
SS=	Students very active, teacher only receptive

In the case of interaction in Blackboard OFDs that are the subject of this research, the interaction patterns will be analyzed in Chapter 4 about findings; however, it is relevant to mention that based on Penny Ur's classification, the main pattern is SS as students interact with members that belong to a virtual community and the teacher just monitors the task encouraging them to participate in the discussion forums through planning, setting deadlines, giving feedback, and assessing.

With respect to forms of classroom interaction, Penny Ur (1999) provides us with a summary of the most typical interactions which occur in a language classroom:

#### Group work

Students work in small groups on tasks that entail interaction. The teacher walks around listening, intervenes little if at all.

#### Closed-ended teacher questioning

The teacher expects one right answer and it is sometimes cynically called the “Guess what the teacher wants you to say.”

#### Individual work

Students work on a task or a set of tasks individually and the teacher monitors it or them where necessary.

#### Choral responses

The teacher gives a model which is repeated by all the class in chorus; or gives a cue which is responded to in chorus.

#### Collaboration

Students do the same sort of tasks as in individual work, but work together, usually in pairs, to try to achieve the best results they can.

#### Student initiates, teacher answers

It is practiced when the student starts the task and then the teacher responds to it.

#### Full-class interaction

Students do a language task as a class; the teacher may intervene occasionally to stimulate participation or to monitor.

#### Teacher talk

There is no initiative on the part of the student. This may involve some kind of silent student response.

#### Self-access

Students choose their own learning tasks and work autonomously.

#### Open-ended teacher question

There are a number of possible right answers so that more students answer each cue.

In online environments and specifically in discussion forums analyzed in this study, the most widely used forms of interaction is the individual and collaborative ones. The individual form is promoted through the initial posting the student has to elaborate and then the collaborative one is applied when they are requested to interact with two peers by reading and commenting on their postings. The present research analyzed the impact of the Staged Online Production Activities in terms of interaction and it is a model of learning task that can be applied to all the courses of Blended English due to its student-centered approach that enhanced the previous activity to be done in OFDs from any virtual classroom with this kind of communicative tool that allows students to share opinions or personal information, or post their comments on specific topics proposed for each task.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Type of research**

The present study is an action research that used the quasi-experimental model of Sampieri et al. (2006) since the groups involved in this research were not formed by random assignment. The analysis of data is quantitative and correlational because the main purpose was to handle numeric data from Blackboard repository tools and to test the existence of a causal relationship between the independent and dependent variables as to estimate the interaction impact and resulting interaction patterns, which is the dependent variable, in the study groups.

The frequency of participation and interaction of students in the online production activities posted on online forum discussions (OFDs) was quantified and analyzed through statistics tests to validate the effectiveness of these tasks as communication tools in which students interact to counter the lack of face-to-face presence in a fully online scenario. The significance of this study which focuses on the use of online discussion forums is relevant considering their potential in socialization and interaction using the target language (L2).

The suggested model by Burns (2010) considering this type of research is very valuable for English Language Teaching. She encourages teachers to be reflective and critical about their own teaching practice. She relates action research to the ideas of “reflective practice”

and the teacher as a researcher in order to bring about changes or improvements in practice. The steps mentioned by Burns were applied in this present study as it is observed in Table 2 with the four broad phases in a cycle of research. The suggested steps for conducting Action Research as a practitioner are:

1. Planning: Identify the repetitive problem of lack of interaction among students of Fully Online English 3 course at UPC during four semesters in 2015-2016 and develop a plan of action.
2. Action: Apply different and new learning strategies during a semester in order to evaluate their effectiveness.
3. Observation: Observe systematically the changes or effects in the students' interaction and the types of interaction patterns that may arise.
4. Reflection: Observe the results of the plan, reflect and planning for further action.

### **3.1.1. The nature of data**

The nature of data is numeric from Blackboard, the University VLE, in which students interact and post their contributions and comments. All the data from the six learning activities applied to the control and experimental groups have been collected from Blackboard repository tools that are recorded in OFDs. Statistical data drawn from Blackboard was the main valuable source of information. This data includes: the student code, name, professional career, tasks, posting transcripts, the number of postings, posting threads, and time.

Among Blackboard's communication tools, OFDs offer a great possibility of data collection since all the students' transcripts are saved as threads and they can be downloaded and saved for purpose studies. In this present research, two types of tasks were quantified and analyzed: Online Production Activities and Staged Online Production Activities which were posted as homework in OFDs and will be explained in detail in the next section.

The students' transcripts from both types of online production activities were quantified and analyzed using two measuring tools: a checklist for recording students' interaction and a rubric for quantifying their interaction. The experts who evaluate the relevance of these measuring tools (see Appendixes 5 and 6) considered the rubric as the main tool that had to be analyzed because the checklist was only used for recording purposes. The two interraters are experts in TEFL and hold either a master or doctor's degree in education.

#### **3.1.1.1. Blackboard online forum discussions as asynchronous tools**

The scenario that is being analyzed in this research is a type of blended course that is called Fully Online English Course that consists of a six hour- study in an online environment. Learners have a two-hour online class using Blackboard Collaborate and a four-hour self-study weekly through a platform called Cambridge LMS and communicative tools from Blackboard. Online Forum Discussions (OFDs) are virtual communicative tools that are used as means of interaction among the online learning community on the platform Blackboard which represents the virtual classroom for online courses at UPC.

The forum participants are able to write and read posts from others about specific discussion topics and they are generally carried out in an ordered thread layout. For English courses at UPC, a hybrid version of them has been developed and applied, since they are not used to posting opinions or comments on determined issues; they are used as a language learning resource in which students are expected to write in English using the target structures and vocabulary for each of the units in the English course. The English team designs Production Activities that involve students in learning tasks and there are two types that have been called OPAs and SOPAs for these present research.

## **A. Online production activities**

The experimental group has been monitored through the use of OPAs for the English online learning program. It is just a traditional online discussion forum on a weekly basis with an interesting topic linked to the lesson objective from Cambridge LMS for students to contribute with their relevant comments. In an academic semester at UPC, students have to work twelve OPAs in twelve weeks; two OPAs per unit in a course of six units. This type of discussion forum aims at involving all the class in interactive tasks in which they are given four points out of twenty if they comment on two of their classmates' postings.

### **3.1.1.2. Staged online production activities for the treated group (SOPAs)**

The Online Production Activities are the learning tasks designed by the English team to motivate students to post contributions related to the lesson objective. These tasks are the enhanced version of the previous ones with changes in the number of them and the time assigned for their completion. Students have to work on six activities which are done on a two-week basis instead of 12 of them on a weekly basis. This implies reducing the number of activities but adding stages to have students work on a weekly basis. Three delimited and restricted stages are designed in which different learning strategies have been applied to engage students with these activities. The first stage generally consists of sharing some pictures with some prompts that can raise their classmates' interest in the topic. The second stage allows them to interact with the class since they have to choose two classmates' postings and make questions or comments on them. The third stage is a combination of collaborative writing in which they answer their classmates' questions and at the same time, they practice the target grammar structures, vocabulary or



conversation strategies that have been established as lesson objectives. This conversational text-based task is posted on Blackboard on every unit discussion forum and is guided by the SOPA's instructions that are clearly stated in the task, the student's guide, and the SOPA rubric.

### **3.2. Assumptions**

This action research discusses the effectivity of one type of learning task for asynchronous communication in a fully online English course at UPC, an educational institution which has standardized this format to all its English courses; there is no face-to-face instruction at all. Thus, it is assumed that as more technology and asynchronous communication are included in English courses, English teachers are required to be knowledgeable in the use of them as communication tools which might involve students in language production to counter the lack of real interaction necessary to learn a language.

The format of fully online courses is becoming more popular at university and higher education levels in our country due to their anytime-anywhere feature and their learning flexibility. Therefore, teachers are involved with challenging tasks that consists of designing production activities for OFDs considering these last ones as the main tools for students' engagement and interaction in a virtual environment. The design of fully student-centered learning tasks which are used to foster online participation will play an important factor for increasing students' interaction in Blackboard OFDs since setting up a discussion forum does not guarantee that they will interact with each other as it is expected.

It is also assumed that the analyzed design of forum discussion in this present paper called SOPA which is monitored on a two-week basis and has different stages based on the model of teaching and learning online through online networking developed by Salmon (2011) will be more effective in terms of interaction degree compared to the traditional one due to its student-centered approach. It is a planned and organized design that starts with a motivation stage, goes through an inquisitive process, and ends with a synthesis stage that generates a text-based

communication similar to the pair-work interaction in a face-to-face class.

Finally, the design of the tasks, their degree of difficulty, and the topics involved in them might play an important role in the students' motivation to participate in online discussion forums.

### **3.3. Questions**

What is the impact on the students' interaction when they are involved with the Staged Online Production Activities in a Fully Online English 3 course?

How effective are the Staged Online Production Activities as communication tools posted on Blackboard discussion forums for UPC English 3 students as to engage them in a communicative process?

What are the different interaction patterns of the two sample groups of English 3 students on two different types of online production activities designed to promote interaction?

What is the correlation between the number of postings and the students' level of interaction?

### **3.4. Variables**

#### **3.4.1. Independent variable**

The intervention program: Staged online production activities on Blackboard platform for the experimental group (SOPAs) from units 1- 6:

Unit 1: The way we are

Unit 2: Experiences

Unit 3: My country's natural wonders contest

Unit 4: Family memories

Unit 5: A discussion about healthy food

Unit 6: I'm not sure about my future

Online Production Activities on Blackboard platform for the control group (OPAs) from units 1-6.

Unit 1: The best friend's interview

Unit 2: My awesome trip

Unit 3: My special place in the world

Unit 4: Family gripes

Unit 5: My eating habits

Unit 6: A phone conversation

### **3.4.2. Dependent variable:**

The degree of interaction quantified by means of a rubric which assessed the following sub-variables and are shown in Table 1:

- Promptness

% of students who meet deadlines and demonstrated good self-initiative

% of students who didn't participate in the task

- Social presence by sharing an initial posting

% of students who shared an initial posting

% of students who just shared an initial posting and didn't interact with peers

- Comments on peers' postings

% of students who commented to one peer

% of students who commented to two peers

% of students who answered comments to peers

- Netiquette

% of students who applied the rules of netiquette

- Expression or tone within postings
- Promptness
  - % of students who meet deadlines and demonstrated good self-initiative
  - % of students who didn't participate in the task
- Social presence by sharing an initial posting
  - % of students who shared an initial posting
  - % of students who just shared an initial posting and didn't interact with peers
- Comments on peers' postings
  - % of students who commented to one peer
  - % of students who commented to two peers
  - % of students who answered comments to peers
- Netiquette
  - % of students who applied the rules of netiquette
- Expression or tone within postings

The measuring tool used for analyzing the research variables was: Rubric for measuring the degree of interaction in Appendix 2.

Table 1. Operationalization of the measured variables

<b>Dependent Variable</b>	<b>Operational Definition</b>	<b>Subvariables</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
Degree of Interaction	The students' social presence on Blackboard's OFDs through online production activities in the fully online English course.	Promptness	Consistently posts several days before due date; demonstrates good self-initiative.
		Social presence by sharing an initial posting	Gets involved with the task and shares an initial posting with interesting personal information that catches their peer's attention. It might include pictures with prompts relevant to the learning task.
		Comments on peers' postings	Writes comments on two peers' initial postings that enrich the online conversation and also provides thoughtful follow-up answers to peers' comments.
		Netiquette	Postings reflect respect for peers' opinions or comments and follow netiquette standards: be respectful and be polite.
		Expression or tone within postings	Expresses opinions and ideas in a clear and concise manner with obvious connection to the topic. Shows affective response, use of humor and self-disclosure.
<b>Independent Variable</b>	<b>Operational Definition</b>	<b>Subvariables</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
The intervention program: The staged online production activities	It is a proposal consisting of online production tasks through online forum discussions on Blackboard which includes three stages to encourage students to participate and interact with their peers more actively.	Motivation stage	*Response to a proposed learning task by sharing an initial posting.
		Inquisitive stage	Positive reaction to their peers' initial postings by reading them and writing questions or comments about aspects that need clarification or grab their attention.
		Synthesis stage	Consolidation of the online text-based communication by writing a final post with answers or comments about their peers' questions in the inquisitive stage.

Source: Own elaboration

### **3.5. Sample**

The sample group has been selected from the undergraduate students who took English 3 modality online and the information about it is outlined as follows:

**Universe:** The universe of this research is 384 university students from Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas (UPC) who enrolled in the fully online English 3 course in 2016.

**Population:** The population is composed of 207 students that took English 3 in Monterrico campus.

**Sample:** The sample consists of 94 students which was composed of 47 for the experimental and control groups respectively.

**Individual:** The individual is an undergraduate university student who enrolled in the English fully online 3 course from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. in 2016 in Monterrico campus and are aged between 17-23 years old and study careers related to business management, communication, architecture, and engineering.

#### **3.5.1. Identifying characteristics of the sample group**

The ethnographic characteristics of the sample group has been recorded through two collection instruments: Intranet and Blackboard statistical data.

##### **3.5.1.1. Ethnography**

Participants of this research were divided into two equal-size groups. The control group and the experimental group were composed of 47 students each and both groups are socially almost similar since the students of each group belong to class C, from lower middle to upper middle class. In the experimental group, 45% of the students come from different cities of Peru

and 55% of them live in emerging class C districts such as Los Olivos, San Juan de Miraflores, San Juan de Lurigancho, Ate, and Villa María del Triunfo and traditional or historical ones such as Pueblo Libre, Miraflores, Santiago de Surco, and Magdalena. In the control group, the situation is quite similar, 34 % of students come from different cities of Peru and 66% come from the abovementioned districts and other such as Lurin, Chaclacayo, Comas, Rimac, San Luis, etc. From the 94 students of both groups, only 9 students came from national schools; most of them studied in private schools from their districts and provinces they lived or came from and they were ranked in the low scale of the university tuition system that fluctuates from S/.850 and S/1350 Soles per month depending on their academic performance or the school category. There is just one student in the control group that belongs to the program Beca 18 and studied at Colegio Mayor.

#### **3.5.1.2. Age and gender**

As it is indicated in Table 2, students from both groups are aged between 18 and 23; the distribution of genre in both groups is quite similar. In the control group, there were more females (n=24) than males (n=23) whereas in the experimental group there were more males (n= 25) than females (n=22).

With respect to age, most students in the control group were between 20 and 21 (n=28, 60%), and there were almost the same number of students in the 18-19 range (n=10, 21%) as in the range 22-23 (n=9, 19%).

Table 2. Age and gender of the sample

AGE AND GENDER		
Age range	G1 (n=47)	G2 (n=47)
18-19	11 (23%)	10 (21%)
20-21	28 (60%)	28 (60%)
22-23	8 (17%)	9 (19%)
Gender		
Male	25 (53%)	23 (49%)
Female	22 (47%)	24 (51%)

Source: Own elaboration based on Intranet and Blackboard's statistical data

In the experimental group, most students were aged between 20 and 21 (n=28, 60%), exactly the same as the control group; and there were more students in the 18-19 range (n=11, 23%) than in the 22-23 one (n=8, 17%).

### 3.5.1.3. Educational and L2 learning background

As it has been mentioned in the section 3.5.1 about the ethnography of the study sample, they came from different private schools except from 9 students who studied in national schools. In both groups, there was a representative percentage of students who came from provinces of Peru, representing 40% in the experimental group and 34% in the control group; most of them studied in private schools and few of them studied in traditional schools such as Santa Ana and La Salle in Cusco, Claretiano in Trujillo, Santa Ana in Tacna, etc. With respect to the students from Lima, most of them studied in private schools located in their districts and there was a percentage of students representing 15 % of them who studied in schools which provide training for university studies such as Saco Oliveros in Los Olivos, Trilce in



Santa Beatriz, Marsano and Blas Pascal in San Juan de Lurigancho.

All the students from both groups had to take a placement test to assess their English level when entering the university. They were placed in different English levels from remedial to English 2.

As it is seen in Table 3, all the students took previous online English courses before they enrolled in this present course called Fully Online English 3; thus, they all had background information and online training in the use of Blackboard tools in a blended or fully online course. Even though this previous online training, they were involved in three induction forums for socialization.

Table 3. Classification of students by their English Level by means of the UPC English placement test.

English level	Control group	Experimental Group
<b>Remedial English</b>	7 students (15%)	7 students (15%)
<b>English 1</b>	12 students (25%)	24 students (51%)
<b>English 2</b>	28 students (60 %)	16 students (34%)
<b>Total</b>	47 students	47 students

Source: Own elaboration based on Intranet and Blackboard's statistical data.

### 3.6. Description of instruments

For this present action research which quantifies data through a quasi-experiment, it was necessary to elaborate two instruments which will be explained in a more detailed way below:

#### 3.6.1. Checklist to record the frequency of the study sample's postings

Based on the definition of interaction as the student's social presence in Blackboard's OFDs in the fully online English

course through sharing personal information by means of an initial posting related to the specific English lesson, commenting on previous peers' postings, and answering those comments, a format called checklist (see Appendix 1) to quantify students' interaction in OFDs had to be elaborated. This measuring instrument was designed to quantify the frequency the students posted on OFDs and to record their data immediately after the ending of the task availability.

In our English online course, OFDs are used differently from other courses; it is a hybrid forum since students are required to open an individual thread that is considered their assignment or English production activity so there are as many new threads as the number of participants and they are not sequenced from one main discussion to specifically construct knowledge on the course content. OFDs are used to counter the lack of face-to-face interaction and this communication tool has proven to be a useful resource in order to overcome this pitfall.

Blackboard's repository tool provides data from the total number of postings per thread, being an excellent indicator of number of postings in general; however, it was necessary to analyze the interaction patterns within a student's thread to see how each individual student interacted or responded to the new design of learning task disregarding the communication web created by any type of OFDs. For example, if Blackboard shows that there were 7 postings in one thread, it does not mean that a student participated 7 times because it counts for the incoming postings from peers and the student's initial contribution as well as the outgoing postings to other peers. In order to analyze the student's behavior and response to the new learning activity design, it was necessary to record it manually for avoiding false information about students' postings.

### **3.6.2. Rubric for measuring the degree of interaction**

It was necessary the elaboration of a 20-scale rubric (see Appendix 2) to quantify interaction and it was designed in order to find the correlation that existed between the number of

postings and the degree of interaction. Two models of rubric guided the elaboration of this rubric: *Evaluation of Social Presence* by Bruyn (2004) in Table 4 and *Assessing Effectiveness of Student Participation in Online Discussions* by Edelstein, S., & Edwards, J. (2002) in Table 5. The resulting rubric aims at assessing the degree of interaction of the participants of this research and it was elaborated as a model titled: Rubric for measuring the degree of interaction in online production tasks. The rubric elaborated by de Bruyn in Table 4 evaluates the social presence and three of its components were used to suit a fully online course.

Table 4. Evaluation of Social Presence

<b>Content Analysis</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
<b>Interactive responses</b>	Includes complimenting, expressing appreciation or agreement, asking unsolicited questions, referring to others' messages, quoting from others' messages and continuing a thread.
<b>Affective responses</b>	Includes expressing emotion, feeling or mood, use of humor and self-disclosure.
<b>Cohesive responses</b>	Includes addressing or referring to other students by name, and/ or group as we, us, our, group, and salutations
<b>Cognitive responses</b>	Includes discussion and commentary on the unit content.
<b>System responses</b>	Includes discussion related to the software or access issues.

Source: de Bruyn, 2004, p. 76

In Table 4, it is observed the criteria Bruyn used to evaluate different aspects that are involved when participating in online forum discussions from affective responses to discussions related to the software or access system. These criteria were very useful for designing the rubric for assessing the degree of interaction among English 3 fully online students. The interactive responses corresponded to the students' comment on peers' postings; the affective responses were considered within the tone; and finally, the cohesive responses were included in netiquette.

Edelstein, S., & Edwards, J. (2002) provide a sample of a rubric that can be adapted for any online course when students' participation in threaded discussions has to be evaluated with the purpose of building a learning community. They proposed five categories for objective scoring to the overall structural design of effective learning communities which can be seen in Table 5.

According to Edelstein, S., & Edwards, J. (2002) the rubric they have designed assesses the student's effective participation in online forums and the criteria they have used are explained as follows:

*Promptness and Initiative* refer to the student's ability to participate timely which shows self-motivation. It indicates whether or not the student is actively and consistently engaging in the course content.

*Delivery of Post* addresses the student's attention to detail in terms, being grammatically correct with rare misspellings.

The category, *Relevance of Post*, allows an objective assessment of the student's ability to post topics that are relevant to the original discussion with acknowledgement of references if provided.

*Expression within the Post* addresses the issue of how well opinions are expressed and how ideas or comments are presented. This category also allows the facilitator to acknowledge the different writing/expression styles of the students.

Lastly, the category, *Contribution to the Learning Community*, refers to the belonging to the online community. It provides distinction between the student who seems relatively indifferent to the building process of a LC and the student who strives to reinforce the LC as the course develops.

The rating scale ranges from 1 to 4 with 1 being indicative of student participation which is less than acceptable for the development of a progressive learning community. A score of 4 in

any category represents the attainment of the highest standard of participation and reflects a contribution to the learning community.

Table 5. Assessing Effectiveness of Student Participation in Online Discussions

Promptness and initiative	Does not respond to most postings; rarely participates freely	Responds to most postings several days after initial discussion; limited initiative	Responds to most postings within a 24 hour period; requires occasional prompting to post	Consistently responds to postings in less than 24 hours; demonstrates good self-initiative
Delivery of post	Utilizes poor spelling and grammar in most posts; post appear "hasty"	Errors in spelling and grammar evidenced in several posts	Few grammatical or spelling errors are noted in posts	Consistently uses grammatically correct posts with rare misspellings
Relevance of post	Posts topics which do not relate to the discussion content; makes short irrelevant remarks	Occasionally posts off topic; most posts are short in length and offer no further insight into the topic	Frequently posts topics that are related to discussion content; prompts further discussion of topic	Consistently posts topics related to discussion topic; cites additional references related to topic
Expression within the post	Does not express opinions or ideas clearly; no connection to topic	Unclear connection to topic evidenced in minimal expression of opinions or ideas	Opinions and ideas are stated clearly with occasional lack of connection to topic	Expresses opinions and ideas in a clear and concise manner with obvious connection to topic
Contribution to the learning community	Does not make effort to participate in learning community; seems indifferent	Occasionally makes meaningful reflection on group's efforts; marginal effort to become involved with group	Frequently attempts to direct the discussion and to present relevant viewpoint for consideration by group; interacts freely	Aware of needs of community; frequently attempts to motivate the group discussion; presents creative approach to topic

Source: Edelstein, S., & Edwards, J. (2002). If you build it, they will come.

Considering that the online production tasks are designed to practice English through the online forum discussions as communication tools in which conversational text-based task is

developed in pairs or in groups of three students, the rubric was elaborated to assess interaction among students (see Appendix 2). Five important subvariables were considered for this type of online tasks. The first one is promptness, an aspect that has been considered one of the pitfalls in all online courses due to students' ineffective time management or limited access to the platforms which affects peer interaction due to tardiness in posting on Blackboard. The second one is sharing an initial posting which reflects social presence and starts the dialogue; then the third one is comments on peers' postings including from commenting on peers' postings to ending the dialogue with a final posting. Finally, Netiquette and tone considered important aspects of online communication that allows the dialogue to be respectful and polite.

Hence, the rubric had to be adapted to the area of blended language learning in which two or three stages are used to foster interaction in the online course. The interactive responses are represented in the interactive stages of the online production activities: sharing and initial posting and commenting on peers' postings. The affective responses are considered in Netiquette and expression or tone within postings. The Interaction scores obtained by means of this measuring tool (see Appendixes 3 and 4) are organized in two tables corresponding to G1 and G2 with their respective interaction pattern.

It is also important to mention that two EFL specialists (see Appendix 5 and 6): Dirk Gootseng, coordinator and professor of the UPC Fully Online Program, and Gianina Tello, ESAN English Program professor evaluated this measuring instrument named: Rubric for measuring the degree of interaction.

After discussing the different criteria to evaluate interaction through online production activities, the rubric applied to this present research to assess interaction had to be adapted based on the previous two models and it consists of five subvariables that will be explained in detail in the next sections.

### **3.6.2.1. Promptness**

Promptness is one of the relevant aspects of online interaction among students since it allows all the members of the online community to measure their initiative for timely uploading postings or commenting on their peers' contributions. On one hand, if students do not post timely, nobody will read their postings; therefore, there are no or fewer opportunities for interacting with the other members of the online community. On the other hand, the students who post timely will be the ones who receive the most comments. Even though the task is organized and time-restricted using Blackboard adjustments, it can not be predicted what exact day or time students will upload their postings or to whom they will comment on. The task sets stage deadlines for students to enter Blackboard according to their availability. It is an aspect that clearly shows either the student's belonging to the group or the low online social presence, important aspect mentioned by Akcaoglu, M., & Lee, E. (2016, p.15):

*“Social presence is essential for high quality asynchronous discussion forums. That is, high-quality group discussions entail interaction and reciprocity (Burgoon et al., 2002 as cited in Akcaoglu, M., & Lee, E). When students do not participate in a timely manner or the students' discussion posts are ignored, it results in limited interaction and reciprocity and low communication quality, and subsequently, students perceive low social presence. In effect, it can decrease the quality of student performance (as cited in Akcaoglu, M., & Lee, E.)*

### **3.6.2.2. Social presence by sharing an initial posting**

When students are required to post personal information about a topic related to the lesson content in an online setting through a text-based communicative tool, social presence is an aspect that plays an important role for participation within an online community. Consequently, social presence by sharing an initial posting has been

considered one of the sub variables in this present research due to the fact that students who feel insiders will post their entries. The definition of social presence has evolved through time and contexts. Lowry's (2006) definition of social presence is as follows:

*"... the degree to which a communication medium allows group members to perceive (sense) the actual presence of the communication participants and the consequent appreciation of an interpersonal relationship, despite the fact that they are located in different places, that they may operate at different times, and that all communication is through digital channels (p. 633).*

Garrison (2011) defines "social presence" as:

*"... the ability of participants to identify with a group, communicate purposefully in a trusting environment, and develop personal and affective relationships progressively (p.34).*

### **3.6.2.3. Comments on peers' postings**

The online production activities have been designed to foster interaction among the members of the online English community to counter the lack of face-to-face interaction. After posting their initial contribution, the students read two peers' postings and comment on them following instructions stated in the learning task.

One important aspect considered in the measuring of students' interaction is the number of comments they make to their peers. This interactivity creates a reciprocal activity due to the fact that commenting on peers' postings and receiving comments play an important role in the interaction process. It simulates pair work, the interaction pattern in a face-to-face class in which students have to interact or communicate among each other, or perform a communicative task in class. Through this sub variable, the interaction level is measured based on the times the student posts comments and then



answers to comments. In most of the production activities, students are required to write a final posting which answers their peers' questions or comments.

#### **3.6.2.4. Netiquette**

Netiquette is defined by the Merriam Webster's Dictionary as *the etiquette governing communication on the Internet*. The AMA dictionary of business and management (2013) provides a similar definition *the informal rules and regulations that govern Internet communications*. It is also known that "Netiquette" is derived by merging the words "network" and "etiquette" (Scheuermann & Taylor, 1997). From all the information about netiquette rules, Brakeman's ten commandments of netiquette (as cited in Scheuermann & Taylor, 1997) have been selected:

1. Never forget that the person on the other side is a human being.
2. Be brief.
3. Be proud of your messages.
4. Use descriptive subject headings in your messages.
5. Think about your audience.
6. Be careful with humor and sarcasm.
7. Summarize what you are following up.
8. Give back to the community.
9. Do not repeat what has been said.
10. Cite appropriate references. (p.270)

Scheuermann & Taylor (1997) also provided with the most frequently cited specific suggestions for online users and they are listed below:

- Think first. Messages can be forwarded or copied. Never write while angry. It may even be better to wait a day to think of the possible outcomes before responding in haste.

- Write in upper and lower case. UPPER CASE ONLY looks like SHOUTING and lower case only is difficult to read.
- Avoid abbreviations. Even if the receiver knows familiar abbreviations the complete words are still easier to read.
- Be concise. Brief, well-written notes usually have far more impact than those filled with unneeded extra verbiage.
- Avoid smileys (or emoticons as they are sometimes called. Most netiquette articles actually promote their limited use to help replace facial expressions and other body language.
- Don't flame. This is a good place for the golden rule. Respond to others in e-mail conversations the same as if the conversation were face-to-face.
- Don't take offense easily. Some messages are not sent to tease or deride.
- Don't evangelize. It is much better to offer a humble opinion and write with reason. (p.270)

### **3.6.2.5. Expression or tone within posting**

The dictionary Merriam-Webster defines *tone* as *the style or manner of expression in speaking or writing*. The text-based communication reflects the tone the students use to transmit their feelings, mood and emotions.

According to Chavez (2016), tone refers to an author's intention when writing and the most common types are: Informative, humorous, scientific, ironic, sarcastic, philosophical, balanced, aggressive, kind, persuasive, and others.

Patterson (2014) defines tone as *an author's use of words and writing style to convey his or her attitude towards a topic. Tone is often defined as what the author feels about the subject.*

In relation to postings on Blackboard through the production activities, the tones students express themselves are: colloquial, humorous, critical, curious, melancholic, diplomatic, displeased, optimistic, enthusiastic, respectful, kind, unsympathetic, making fun of someone, unpleasant, sarcastic, sentimental, sympathetic (understanding of how someone feels), or conversational (informal like a private conversation).

### **3.7. Reliability and validity**

As it has been previously mentioned in Chapter II, experts think that OFDs are the core of any online course; therefore, the application of this model supports its reliability and it might be adjusted to each online English course objective due to its positive results. Besides, the online production activities are still being used at UPC in its English program and their main communication tool is OFDs.

#### **3.7.1. Reliability**

The reliability of this research is also supported by the results shown in Table 6 from The U Mann-Whitney Test applied to it.

This hypothesis states that there is a significant increase in the number of publications in the experimental group in which SOPAs were applied in comparison to the control group's results in which OPAs were used.

Table 6. Hypothesis Test Summary

N°	Null Hypothesis	Test	Significance	Decision
1	The means of N° of publications in unit 1 are the same among the group categories	Sample Means for Independent Samples	,000	Reject the null hypothesis
2	The distribution of N° of publications in unit 1 are the same among the group categories	Independent samples-Mann Whitney Test	,000	Reject the null hypothesis
3	The means of N° of publications in unit 2 are the same among the group categories	Sample Means for Independent Samples	,000	Reject the null hypothesis
4	The distribution of N° of publications in unit 2 are the same among the group categories	Independent samples-Mann Whitney Test	,000	Reject the null hypothesis
5	The means of N° of publications in unit 3 are the same among the group categories	Sample Means for Independent Samples	,000	Reject the null hypothesis
6	The distribution of N° of publications in unit 3 are the same among the group categories	Independent samples-Mann Whitney Test	,000	Reject the null hypothesis
7	The means of N° of publications in unit 4 are the same among the group categories	Sample Means for Independent Samples	,000	Reject the null hypothesis
8	The distribution of N° of publications in unit 4 are the same among the group categories	Independent samples-Mann Whitney Test	,000	Reject the null hypothesis
9	The means of N° of publications in unit 5 are the same among the group categories	Sample Means for Independent Samples	,000	Reject the null hypothesis
10	The distribution of N° of publications in unit 5 are the same among the group categories	Independent samples-Mann Whitney Test	,000	Reject the null hypothesis
11	The means of N° of publications in unit 6 are the same among the group categories	Sample Means for Independent Samples	,000	Reject the null hypothesis
12	The distribution of N° of publications in unit 1 are the same among the group categories	Independent samples-Mann Whitney Test	,000	Reject the null hypothesis

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

Source: Elaborated by Professor of statistics at Universidad ESAN: José Lara Mascaro.

This test was applied by Professor Jose Lara Mascaro, coordinator of the area of statistics at ESAN University who holds a master degree in Education. Through this test, the Null hypothesis states that the means of the number of publications in each unit and the distribution in the number of publications is the same among the group categories. After applying the U Mann-Whitney Test to validate these null hypothesis, it is concluded that the null hypothesis is rejected since it did not attain a level greater than 0,05 which is the p-value that

represents the means for the number of publications in each study group.

### **3.7.2. Validity**

The results obtained by the measuring instruments designed for evaluating the hypotheses were used to provide validity to this present study. They were evaluated by EFL experts and agreed on their validity. Also, the statistical tests applied to the findings supported the research validity.

#### **3.7.2.1. Internal validity**

Interaction was quantified by using a 20-item scale based on two rubrics which were explained in detail in the section 3.6.2. The results showed that the experimental group had a significantly greater increase in interaction than the control group. This fact proves that this research has internal validity because the treatments of the independent variable produced effects in the dependent variable.

The internal validity is also proven by means of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient which was used for measuring the correlation of two quantitative variables to answer the question: What is the correlation between the number of postings and the students' level of interaction? The correlation that exists between the number of postings and the scores for interaction is shown in Table 7 and it is observed a greater positive correlation between the number of publications and the scores given in each of the units in the experimental group compared to the control group. In unit 1, the control group yield 0,822 and the experimental group 0,870 and throughout the units, it is observed that the experimental group had greater results. The greater increase is shown in unit 5 with 0,987 for the experimental group and 0,793 for the control group. In unit three, it is observed a different result due to

the fact that students tried a different communication tool.

Its internal validity is also supported by the study groups' characteristics; although, these groups were not chosen randomly or by any other technique of selection. The characteristics of the control and the treated groups are equivalent:

- Age range: Students between 18-23
- Social status: From lower to upper-class C
- Undergraduate studies: Students who belong to careers such as business management, communication, architecture, and engineering.
- Place of study: Monterrico campus
- Level of English: Lower intermediate
- Previous studies of English: Fully Online English course or Blended courses: Blended or Fully Online English 2; the other previous courses, Remedial and English 1, were face-to-face.
- Motivation: The students need to pass the English course as a prerequisite to continue studying their career.
- English instructor: The same teacher for both groups, the control one, and the experimental one. Hence, English teaching methodology was standardized.

Table 7. Correlation between the number of postings and the scores for the degree of interaction.

Group			Unit 1 scores	Unit 2 scores	Unit 3 scores	Unit 4 scores	Unit 5 scores	Unit 6 scores
G1	N°of postings	Pearson correlation	,870**	,341*	0.253	0.125	0.063	0.164
	in unit 1	Sig. (bilateral)	0.000	0.019	0.086	0.402	0.676	0.271
	N°of postings	Pearson correlation	,427**	,929**	,837**	,310*	,312*	,388**
	in unit 2	Sig. (bilateral)	0.003	0.000	0.000	0.034	0.033	0.007
	N°of postings	Pearson correlation	,334*	,676**	,893**	,331*	,385**	,444**
	in unit 3	Sig. (bilateral)	0.022	0.000	0.000	0.023	0.008	0.002
	N°of postings	Pearson correlation	0.109	0.216	,370*	,912**	,691**	,603**
	in unit 4	Sig. (bilateral)	0.466	0.145	0.010	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N°of postings	Pearson correlation	0.222	0.203	,484**	,723**	,987**	,589**
	in unit 5	Sig. (bilateral)	0.134	0.172	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N°of postings	Pearson correlation	0.259	,340*	,406**	,561**	,538**	,933**
	in unit 6	Sig. (bilateral)	0.079	0.020	0.005	0.000	0.000	0.000
G2	N°of postings	Pearson correlation	,822**	,321*	,421**	0.275	,382**	0.252
	in unit 1	Sig. (bilateral)	0.000	0.028	0.003	0.061	0.008	0.088
	N°of postings	Pearson correlation	0.239	,863**	,417**	0.177	,503**	0.175
	in unit 2	Sig. (bilateral)	0.106	0.000	0.004	0.233	0.000	0.240
	N°of postings	Pearson correlation	,520**	,504**	,994**	,519**	,751**	,506**
	in unit 3	Sig. (bilateral)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N°of postings	Pearson correlation	,466**	,307*	,588**	,808**	,559**	,556**
	in unit 4	Sig. (bilateral)	0.001	0.036	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N°of postings	Pearson correlation	,360*	,419**	,444**	,524**	,793**	,451**
	in unit 5	Sig. (bilateral)	0.013	0.003	0.002	0.000	0.000	0.001
	N°of postings	Pearson correlation	0.149	0.066	,356*	,536**	,394**	,832**
	in unit 6	Sig. (bilateral)	0.319	0.659	0.014	0.000	0.006	0.000

\*\* . The correlation is significant in the level 0.01 (bilateral).

\* . The correlation is significant in the level 0,05 (bilateral).

Source: Elaborated by Professor of statistics at Universidad ESAN: José Lara Mascaró.

### 3.7.2.2. External validity

This research has external validity since the intervention program that consisted of six learning activities for every course unit is valuable for the design of online learning tasks on Blackboard or in any other virtual classrooms. The staged student-centered design and the elaboration criteria used for SOPAs could be generalized or

be adapted for online EFL classes since the hypotheses of this research were confirmed through the application of the intervention program. The independent variable: the intervention program with SOPAs caused changes in the dependent variable: interaction.

The findings of this action research supported by quantitative data from the quasi-experiment conducted in this paper could be applied to all types of online English classes because it was applied to equivalent groups and the experiment can be repeated in virtual classes. All the teaching resources have been standardized to create similar contexts: students' guide, rubrics to evaluate tasks, calendar of activities and posting of announcements on a weekly basis.

The sample is representative for the control and treated groups: (n=94) and all of their interaction patterns were analyzed through the designed measuring tools.

### **3.8. Procedure**

The study experimented in two groups of undergraduate students from the Fully Online English 3 course at UPC, Monterrico with the objective of finding out the effectiveness of online forum discussions on the learners of UPC English 3 as tools that promoted interaction among participants. The experimental group (n=47) and control group (n=47) were required to participate in Online Forum Discussions that involved them in six language learning activities during a semester that lasted 14 weeks to facilitate English language learning through interactive tasks. Both groups were assigned different types of asynchronous communication tasks; the experimental one had to deal with OPAs (Online Production Activities) and the control group with SOPAs (Staged Online Production Activities) that were posted on forums as communicative tasks on Blackboard after each lesson was completed (see Table 8).



Table 8. Process of the Investigation

STAGES	DESCRIPTION
<b>1. Planning</b>	The problem of lack of interaction was identified since students started working on Blackboard. Most of the students were reluctant to participate by posting and commenting to their classmates from three consecutive semesters: 2015 1, 2015 2 and 2016 1. Thus, an action plan was designed to tackle this problem and the enhanced version of learning activities was in process of elaboration for the semester 2016 2 after some training courses and staff meetings in 2016 1; the team of fully online English 3 teachers worked as a team to plan, design and edit the new online production activities according to our students' needs. In each coordination meeting which took place on a weekly basis, we worked on these activities' final versions.
<b>2. Action</b>	Once these activities were approved by the team and the coordination, we posted them on Blackboard and started monitoring their application in our virtual classrooms which consisted in uploading the students' guide for each unit, providing timely evaluation and feedback, sending reminders and emails to students, and uploading grades into the system per every task.
<b>3. Observation</b>	Systematic observation and recording of data using the first measuring instrument: Checklist for recording the frequency the students interact in every unit task on a weekly basis. Then grading students' interaction through the rubric designed to quantify Interaction. The treatment for both groups in relation to methodology and communication was standardized through Blackboard messaging tools and virtual classroom in which the two types of learning activities called OPAs for the control group and SOPAs for the experimental group were posted with their respective students' guide and rubrics.
<b>4. Validation of instruments.</b>	Two interraters who are experts in TEFL validated the rubric for assessing Interaction. The checklist that was used to record the frequency students posted was not considered in the validation by experts since it is just an instrument for recording data that helped me organize and understand the internal process of students' posting on Blackboard.
<b>5. Analysis of data</b>	After recording the frequency of interaction and grading it, the data was analyzed using an Excel table and its graphs to measure the frequency students posted and interacted. These two processes of recording and grading students' interaction led to the research findings and hypotheses were confirmed and questions were answered. Statistical tests were required in order to validate findings: U Mann-Whitney to validate reliability and Pearson Correlation Coefficient to assess its validity. Finally, the tables of results were elaborated and then analyzed with the help of an expert.
<b>6. Reflection</b>	In this stage, the results are interpreted and conclusions are drawn based on the theoretical framework.
<b>7. Elaboration of the final project and thesis.</b>	Once the results are analyzed and the conclusions are drawn, the first draft of the Final project is sent to the tutor. After receiving the tutor's comments, it was improved and sent the second draft to her for its grading.

Source: Own elaboration

### 3.8.1. Research design

The research design followed is the quasi-experimental and correlational model from Hernandez Sampieri (2006) since the groups involved in this research were not formed by random assignment. It is also a correlational research since its main purpose was to test the existence of a causal relationship between the independent and dependent variables as to estimate the impact of the last one, interaction, in the given groups.

G1 =	Experimental group
G2 =	Control group
X1 =	Experimental Intervention (SOPA unit 1)
X2 =	SOPA unit 2
X3 =	SOPA unit 3
X4 =	SOPA unit 4
X5 =	SOPA unit 5
X6 =	SOPA unit 6
Y =	Interaction

The experimental intervention was conducted on a fully online scenario in which participants were registered on Blackboard, the virtual classroom and learning platform, and they were given the instructional content by Cambridge LMS English 3 that consisted of six lessons during 2016. Both groups, the experimental (n=47) and the control (n=47) groups were assigned six OFDs with their respective OPAs (Appendix 8) and SOPAs (Appendix 9) that were posted right after the lesson was completed. The six writing topics were related to the learning objective of each of the course lessons and they were relevant to the learners' social and academic context that promoted narrative and descriptive writing in English. For instance, the learners were asked to write about their favorite places, traveling experiences, family life, eating habits, and plans.

The existing correlation between the students' number of postings and the degree of interaction was also analyzed through a specific rubric that was designed to measure this aspect.

### **3.8.2. Development of activities**

Ninety-four students, who were divided into two groups, participated in the research. The selection was not randomly done due to the fact that they were grouped by the English area when they enrolled in the course called English 3 coded as HU59 FO courses. The experiment lasted for a period of one semester consisting of 14 weeks. The experimental group was engaged in Staged Online Production Activities (SOPAs) and the control group in Online Production Activities (OPAS) posted on Online Forum Discussion (OFDs) an asynchronous communication tool on Blackboard. Both groups were given one week training in using the OFD through three induction forums that helped them become familiarized with uploading, posting and commenting via this tool despite the fact they had previously studied a fully online English course, English 2 FO; it was done to ensure they all had background information about handling Blackboard tools. From the second week onwards, the treatment lasted for a period of 13 weeks and the students' participation was recorded quantitatively using the form in Appendix 1 after the end of the availability of the OFDs scheduled on Blackboard every two weeks.

### **3.9. Data analysis**

The level of interaction was quantified through the rubric, which was designed based on experts' literature for measuring the degree of interaction. The recording of the number of students' postings in their individual threads to identify the most common interaction patterns as to measure changes in interaction was quantified by the format called Checklist for Recording Students' Interaction. All of the data analysis was carried out quantitatively through the measuring tools designed to evaluate the hypotheses.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE FINDINGS**

#### **4.1. Research findings**

The findings of this present research will be supported by the quantitative analysis which was done for the dependent variable: the degree of interaction measured by the students' online presence in each of the online learning tasks through two measuring tools that were designed to record the students' postings in OFDs and to grade their interaction level based on a rubric. They were periodically recorded at the end of the task availability on Blackboard and then they were analyzed at the end of the term.

##### **4.1.1. The degree of interaction in OFDS on blackboard**

Considering the type of research is quasi-experimental which involves two research groups: the control one and the experimental one, the degree of interaction in OFDs is measured and contrasted against two types of online learning activities that have been named OPAs and SOPAs for the control and experimental groups respectively on Blackboard. The quantitative data obtained can be seen in Table 9 for the control group and Table 10 for the experimental one.

The control group's interaction in OFDs on Blackboard was initially recorded after each of the six deadlines based on the production activity that was elaborated per unit and the results were analyzed respectively. For recording purposes, a checklist was elaborated in which all the group 2's participation was recorded.

Table 9. Degree of interaction in Online Production Activities on Blackboard (n=47)

<b>OPAs</b>	<b>Unit 1</b>	<b>Unit 2</b>	<b>Unit 3</b>	<b>Unit 4</b>	<b>Unit 5</b>	<b>Unit 6</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>N° of students who</b>							
Didn't participate	22	25	25	15	19	19	20.8
Shared an initial posting	25	22	22	32	28	28	26.2
Just shared an initial posting	18	15	22	23	23	18	19.8
Commented to one peer	2	4	0	7	1	2	2.7
Commented to two peers	5	3	0	2	4	8	3.7
Answered comments to peers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
<b>% of students who</b>							
Posted in OFDs	53.19	46.81	46.81	68.09	59.57	59.57	55.7
Didn't post in OFDs	46.81	53.19	53.19	31.91	40.43	40.43	44.3
OPAs per student							3

Source: Own elaboration

On one hand, the average percentage of students who participated in the six learning activities called OPAs was 55.7% throughout the semester as we can see in Table 9. Sharing the initial posting, remained almost stable in the first part of the semester and then it increased considerably in the second part of it reaching 68.09% after the midterm exam; however, it fell almost 7% at the end of the semester. This decrease in the percentage of students who participated in OPAs is linked to the end of the semester and to submitting other courses' final papers as well as studying for final exams. This is a trend that has been observed for two consecutive years in the online courses. On the other hand, the average percentage of students who didn't post in OPAs is 44.3%, which is considerably higher because it is a representative figure from students who were not engaged with this type of learning activity. Consequently, this low degree of participation needs to be analyzed in order to find the causes and apply corrective measures.

In relation to peer interaction, it is observed in Table 9 that there was a limited interaction among the participants although the

instructions for peer interaction were clearly stated in the each of the OPAs and the students' guide. In these two documents, it is stated that students are required to read their classmates' postings and then comment on two of them. Table 9 also shows that 3.7 and 2.7 were the average numbers of students who interacted with one classmate and two classmates respectively per OPA, being very low figures considering that the purpose of this type of activity is to involve students in interactive activities. It is indeed very evident that there were more students who were liable to comment to one peer rather than two of them in the online community.

Table 10. Degree of Interaction in Staged Online Production Activities (SOPAs) on Blackboard (n=47)

SOPAs	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6	Average
<b>N° of students who</b>							
Didn't participate	6	9	12	8	11	11	9.5
Shared an initial posting	41	38	35	39	36	36	37.5
Just shared an initial posting	17	10	13	9	0	5	9.0
Commented to one peer	3	3	1	3	2	1	2.2
Commented to two peers	21	25	21	27	34	30	26.3
Answered comments to peer	17	15	17	17	26	24	19.3
<b>% of students who</b>							
Posted in OFDs	87.23	80.85	74.47	82.98	76.60	76.60	79.8
Didn't post in OFDs	12.77	19.15	25.53	17.02	23.40	23.40	20.2
OPAs per student							5

Source: Own elaboration

In Table 10, the experimental group's interaction is also expressed in numbers and percentage; comments among peers are also quantified. The percentage of English 3 students from the experimental group that participated posting on OFDs was 79.8% average and the number of students that posted per unit was quite steady representing an average number of 37.5 from the total number of 47. The average percentage of students who didn't participate in the SOPAs was 20.2%; it started in 12.77% and progressively increased throughout all the rest of units; except from units 4 which had a slight fall. It is clearly seen that the average number of students who commented to two classmates was significant, being 26.3 the average number of students who followed the task instructions and interacted with two classmates.

#### **4.1.2. The impact on the students' interaction in the staged online production activities.**

In Table 11 the collected data from the sample groups is shown in order to analyze the impact of the SOPAs applied to the experimental group in contrast with the OPAs in the control group. When both groups' results are contrasted, a higher degree of interaction in the SOPAs is observed throughout the semester based on the difference between students who shared an initial posting which is 24.1% higher for SOPAs. In the case of comments to two peers, SOPAs were more effective due to the considerable difference between these two percentages of 50.4% higher for SOPAs. In relation to comments to one peer, the percentage is higher in OPAs since the objective of SOPAs is to encourage students to comment to two peers instead of just one.

The contrastive analysis of the involved figures for both sample groups indicates that there was a greater degree of interaction through the SOPAs. The design of the production activity plays an important role for students' participation and interaction as it is observed from the figures in Table 11. The design of the OPA was not restrictive in deadlines and this aspect did not allow students to timely participate or comment on their peers' postings. Time management was the main weakness in the design of OPAs due to the fact that it did not specify the deadlines for the first and second steps. Also, asking students to write a paragraph in the first step led them to use automatic translators and they just copy and paste it. Conversely, the first stage in SOPAs encourage students to participate by sharing personalized information, prompts or pictures which created a friendly online environment; thus, it was not time-consuming and it did not require of translation tools. Table 11 also provides a general overview of the percentage of students who posted on the online forum discussion for every different interaction pattern confirming the hypotheses of this research.



Table 11. Comparison of the level of interaction through OPAs and SOPAs expressed in % (n=47 in each group)

N° of students who:	UNIT 1		UNIT 2		UNIT 3		UNIT 4		UNIT 5		UNIT 6		AVERAGE	
	G1	G2	G1	G2	G1	G2	G1	G2	G1	G2	G1	G2	G1	G2
Didn't participate	12.8	46.8	19.1	53.2	25.5	53.2	17.0	31.9	23.4	40.4	23.4	40.4	20.2	44.3
Shared an initial posting	87.2	53.2	80.9	46.8	74.5	46.8	83.0	68.1	76.6	59.6	76.6	59.6	79.8	55.7
Just shared an initial posting	36.2	38.3	21.3	31.9	27.7	46.8	19.1	48.9	0.0	48.9	10.6	38.3	19.1	42.2
Commented to one peer	6.4	4.3	6.4	8.5	2.1	0.0	6.4	14.9	4.3	2.1	2.1	4.3	4.6	5.7
Commented to two peers	44.7	10.6	53.2	6.4	44.7	0.0	57.4	4.3	72.3	8.5	76.6	17.0	58.2	7.8
Answered comments to peers	36.2	0.0	31.9	0.0	36.2	0.0	36.2	0.0	55.3	0.0	51.1	0.0	41.1	0.0

Source: Own elaboration by using the checklist for recording interaction patterns

Additionally, it is observed that there was a significant increase in the total interaction level with this kind of learning task. The design of SOPAs allowed students to organize their time for posting considering it had three delimited stages with specific deadlines. Time was managed efficiently for this type of activities and there was an increasing number of students as each unit learning activity was assigned; although it fluctuated when they had other academic activities such as the midterm or final exams.

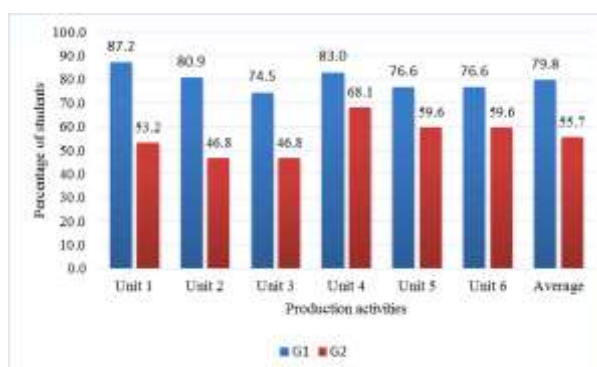


Figure 2. Percentage of students who posted in OFDs.

Source: Own elaboration

In Figure 2, it is observed the contrastive data of students' interaction or social presence between the control and experimental groups in which there is a noticeable difference; the experimental group, students who were exposed to SOPAs, participated 79.8% average whereas the control group reached 55.70% average throughout the whole semester in 6 online learning activities. In

terms of the average number of online production activities, the experimental group participated in 5 SOPAs in comparison to the control group with 3 OPAs as it is seen in Table 9 and Table 10. Therefore, there was a positive impact in the application of the enhanced learning tasks, SOPAs.

With respect to peer interaction, reading and commenting on two peers' postings, it is clearly seen in Figure 3 that there were more students engaged in the enhanced version of learning task than in the traditional one; the average percentage of students who commented to two peers for OPAs was 7.8% whereas in SOPAs was 56%. Peer interaction is noticeably greater in SOPAs; however, the number of participants remains steady in some units and there is a slight decrease in others.

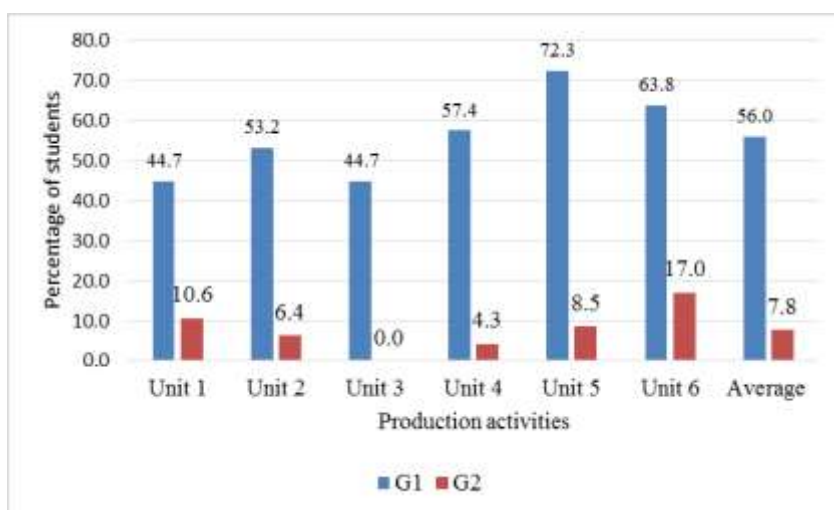


Figure 3. Peer interaction in OFDS (n=47 in each group)  
Source: Own elaboration

Online Interaction as the social presence in Blackboard OFDs, as it was defined in this research, was more representative through SOPAs when analyzing the number of postings in each of the patterns generated by their application as it has been observed in the Table 11 and Figure 2 and Figure 3 shown above.

The design of SOPAs fostered interaction among participants of the OFDs due to the two different previous types of tasks in stages 1 and 2 that involve them in an online dialogue that helps

them find a purpose for writing and organize ideas before posting their final paragraph in which they were able to answer their peers comments; generating a conversational text-based communication. In OPAs students are required to write a paragraph and then comment on their classmates' postings and the interaction among them is very low; only the average percentages of 5.7% and 7.8% of students who interacted with one classmate and two classmates respectively per OPA compared to the ones of 4.6% and 56% of students that interacted with one and two classmates respectively per SOPAs. The preferred interaction pattern that SOPAs generated is reading and commenting to two classmates instead of interacting with just one.

Thus, the hypotheses proposed for this present research were confirmed after having analyzed interaction, which is the independent variable, its validity and reliability:

*The Staged Online Production Activities (SOPAs) increase the level of interaction of fully online English 3 students at UPC.*

*The Staged Online Production Activities (SOPAs) enhance the interaction patterns among fully online English 3 students at UPC through Blackboard's OFDs, allowing them to be involved in a conversational text-based communication.*

The stages designed for the students to participate in online learning tasks have been carefully planned as to achieve the lesson objectives. In Figure 4 and Figure 5, the two models of learning tasks are outlined in order to contrast their differences. It is evident that the model of teaching and learning through online networking proposed by Salmon (2003, p.11) has been a useful and supportive resource for designing online learning tasks. The main differences between the two types of learning tasks are the allotted time for the whole task and the deadlines for each of the three stages in the SOPAs.

After applying Salmon's design (2003), the resulting production activity starts with the motivation stage to engage students with the activity and ends with the synthesis stage that gathers all the previous interaction process. The motivation stage allows students to personalize information sharing their own pictures or prompts which shorten the physical distance and the

lack of f2f interaction; it humanizes the online text-based conversation. The inquisitive stage plays an important role in all the process since it encourages students to know more about their peers; as a result, the text-based conversation turns into a meaningful interchange of ideas which at the end of the process are used to synthesize the communication process.

#### My Country's Natural Wonders Contest

STAGES	DESCRIPTION	INTERACTION STAGES
Stage 1 (Days 1-3)	Post a photo of one of the natural wonder of your city. Include the following information: Its name Where it is located The reason this natural wonder should win the contest. Post your contribution by Day 3. Create a new thread under the name: <i>Stage 1- YourName</i> .	Motivation Stage Sharing a picture and opinion to start the dialogue that motivates this specific online community in the topic.
Stage 2 (Days 4-6)	Come back to the forum discussion and read two postings and then ask questions to two classmates about the pictures they posted (three questions each, six in total) by Day 6. Try and make relevant questions about their choice and geographic features. <i>Example:</i> <i>Hi, Susan!</i> <i>I think the natural wonder you have proposed is the most amazing waterfall I have ever seen. How long is it? Is it easy to get there? How long does it take to get there from Cusco? How hot is its water?</i> <i>Cheers,</i> <i>Teresa</i>	Inquisitive stage Students are asked to read their classmates' postings and then comment and ask them some questions that foster a dialogue among the members of this online community.
Stage 3 (Days 7-12)	WRITE a short paragraph (80 – 100 words) telling us about this natural wonder. Include detailed information about its features to complement the hints you gave us in Stage 1, and answer all the questions your classmates asked you in Stage 2. Include the following structures and vocabulary: 04 superlative adjectives to describe this natural wonder and what you can do there. Vocabulary about natural features and measurements. Simple present tense and Present perfect tense for experience. Post this final product by Day 12. Create a new thread under the name: <i>Stage 3 – Your Name</i> .  Dear classmates, I think 7 Tinajas natural waterfall should win this contest <i>because</i> it is one of <i>the most attractive natural</i> places <i>I have ever visited</i> in Cusco. It is about 40 meters <i>high and</i> is located in Cusco, Quillabamba, Echarate district and it takes 6 hours from Cusco to get there by car. It is not one of <i>the highest</i> waterfalls in my country <i>but</i> it is one of <i>the most amazing</i> places since its waters have carved in the bedrock forming irregular channels and 7 ponds. If you are planning to go to Cusco, you shouldn't miss it! It is one of <i>the most relaxing</i> places <i>I have ever been</i> in which you can take a bath and swim and it also has.... You can climb to the <i>highest</i> part of the waterfall and ..... Vote for it! Regards,	Synthesis stage Students are guided to write a short paragraph that summarizes the interaction stages 1 and 2. They have to connect ideas and integrate information to write a coherent paragraph according to instructions. They have to answer their peers' questions or comments.

Figure 4. Design of a staged online production activity

Source: Own elaboration 2016.

### Production Activity Unit 1

The Best Friends Interview	Steps
<p>Dear Students,</p> <p>You will participate in a forum discussion about best friends. Here the steps to complete the task.</p> <p>Answer the following questions. Make sure you give elaborated responses with <u>minimum 10 words</u>. Pay close attention to <u>personality adjectives</u>, &amp; <u>adverbs</u>.</p> <p><i>Example:</i>  <i>What's your best friend like?</i>  <i>He's an easygoing person because he's always so relaxed and cool about everything.</i></p> <p>What's your best friend like?  How about you? What are you like?  What do you have in common?  How are you different?  What do you typically do together?  Post your answers as a new thread with the name: The Best Friends Interview (your name).</p>	<p>Write a post answering some given questions by the teacher.</p>
<p>Come back later and comment on two other classmates' posts.</p> <p>You will earn up to sixteen points for answering the interview questions, and up to two points for each comment.</p>	<p>Commenting on two classmates' postings</p>

Figure 5. Design of Online Production Activity

Source: Elaborated by the Fully Online English 3 teachers 2016.

#### 4.1.3. The correlation between the number of postings and the level of interaction

There exists a positive correlation between the number of postings and the level of interaction as it was proven in the Chapter 3, in the section 3.7.2.1 through the statistical test: Pearson Correlation Coefficient. Additionally, in the Appendixes 3 and 4, the scores obtained by applying the rubric designed for measuring purposes can be seen. It is concluded that group 1 (experimental group) obtained better scores in average compared to group 2 (control group.) Table 12 provides the classification of the interaction patterns, which could also be considered roles, and the score ranges.

Table 12. Interaction patterns in OPAs and SOPAs

Score	Description of the interaction pattern
20 – 18	Outstanding participant: Learner is involved in all types of interaction patterns (4 publications): shares a timely initial post, reads, and comments on two peers' postings with respect and consideration. Shows affective response, use of humor and self-disclosure. Answers peers' comments creating an appropriate environment in which English text-based conversation takes place.
17 – 16	Good participant: Shares a timely initial post, reads, and comments on two peers' postings (3 publications) with respect and consideration. Opinions and ideas are stated clearly and are connected to topic. Includes expressing emotion, feeling or mood.
15 – 11	Average participant: Shares a timely initial post linked to the task, comments on one or two peers' postings (2 or 3 publications), but does not answer their questions or comments. Does not address peers by their names nor shows affective response or emotion. May not follow netiquette rules (writes the whole post with capital letters, or varied fonts with different colors, etc).
10 – 6	Deficient participant: Just shares a timely initial post (1 publication) following the instructions given. Does not interact with peers.
5 – 1	Unengaged participant: Just shared an unfocused initial posting (1 publication) within the deadline set.
0	lurker: did not participate in OFDs on Blackboard

Source: Own elaboration based on the scores obtained applying the rubric for measuring the degree of Interaction.

Based on the evaluation of the postings in terms of interaction using the respective measuring rubric, six types of roles have been identified in the online production activities in Blackboard OFDs in the English 3 course at UPC.

This classification is the result of the analysis of the types of interaction patterns generated by the application of OPAs and SOPAs in the Fully Online English 3 classes under study. The criteria used to design the rubric for evaluating interaction is reflected in Table 12 since each of the levels obtained through the respective analysis is based on each of the sub-variables or aspects considered in its design. First, it is observed that the students who got from 18 to 20 actively participated in these online learning activities and were named outstanding participants. Their degree of

interaction was high due to the fact that the design of the production activity allowed them to be involved in a text-based communication with comments and answers to peers. The deadlines and the motivation stage played a decisive role in engaging them with the learning task.

The subsequent level, good participant, from 17- 16 describes an online participant who met deadlines and partially fulfilled the task requirements since the last stage of answering to peers was not completed. In terms of interaction degree, there was interaction with two peers but answers to comments was absent. The aspects of netiquette which creates an appropriate environment for the communication to take place were not developed properly or the use of self-disclosure was not shown due to the fact that the belonging to the online community was in process. In the case of the third level, average participant, the range stretches from 15 to 11 due to the differences in the use of netiquette rules and the tone of their writing as well as delays in posting.

Given the definition of interaction in online environments, the fourth and fifth levels for a deficient participant and an unengaged one consider students who just shared an initial posting but there was absence of interaction with peers. This type of participants interacted with the content of the online course as to be able to participate uploading an initial posting; however, they might not meet the task requirements in terms of content and the other aspects involved.

Table 13 provides the percentage of participants who were classified in each interaction pattern for SOPAs. It is noted that there is an increasing percentage of participants who were engaged with all the stages of this type of learning task, from 36.2% to 55.3% of students participated in the three proposed stages. The average percentage of 41.10 for the outstanding pattern compared to 16% in the deficient pattern reflects that there was a greater number of students who were committed to interact in the online environment.

Table 13. Interaction patterns in the Staged Online Production Activities on Blackboard expressed in percentage (n=47)

Interaction patterns	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6	Average
<b>Lurker</b>	12.8	19.1	25.5	17.0	23.4	23.4	20.2
<b>Unengaged</b>	12.8	6.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.2
<b>Deficient</b>	23.4	14.9	27.7	19.1	0.0	10.6	16.0
<b>Average</b>	6.4	6.4	2.1	6.4	4.3	2.1	4.6
<b>Good</b>	8.5	21.3	8.5	21.3	17.0	12.8	14.9
<b>Outstanding</b>	36.2	31.9	36.2	36.2	55.3	51.1	41.1

Source: Own elaboration

#### 4.1.4. Effectiveness of the production activities in fostering interaction

It is necessary to contrast the behavior of students in the two involved online production activities to reach a conclusion on their effectiveness in creating interaction. Figure 6 provides an overview of the interaction patterns generated by the OPAs that will be analyzed as follows. Sharing an initial posting, as it is seen in the green bars, was the preferred interaction pattern in this kind of learning activity since its design involves students with working individually by answering a series of questions related to the unit topic and related language structures. After sharing the initial posting, very few students felt eager to read or comment their classmates' postings; these activities are represented by the purple and the red bars which remained very low and in some production activities is zero due to the fact that there was low or no interaction at these two levels. To sum up, there exists an evident trend in sharing mainly the initial posting with little or no peer interaction in OPAs, being units 4 and 5 the ones in which most students participated. The assigned score for the students' commenting on peers' postings played a decisive role considering it was 16 points for the initial paragraph and just 2 points per comment. It meant that a student could get 16 and have a passing grade just by sharing the initial posting and did not feel motivated to interact with classmates just for 4 points.

The design for OPAs that consisted of writing a paragraph and then commenting on others' postings was not effective for



interactive purposes in the learning process of a language as it is seen in Figure 6. The blue bars show that there was a high percentage of lurkers, students who did not participate in this type of activity due presumably to lack of motivation, time constraint, or task difficulty since OPAs are product-oriented activities rather than process-oriented ones. Writing a paragraph implies more effort which some students sorted out by using an automatic translator for writing their paragraph in English.

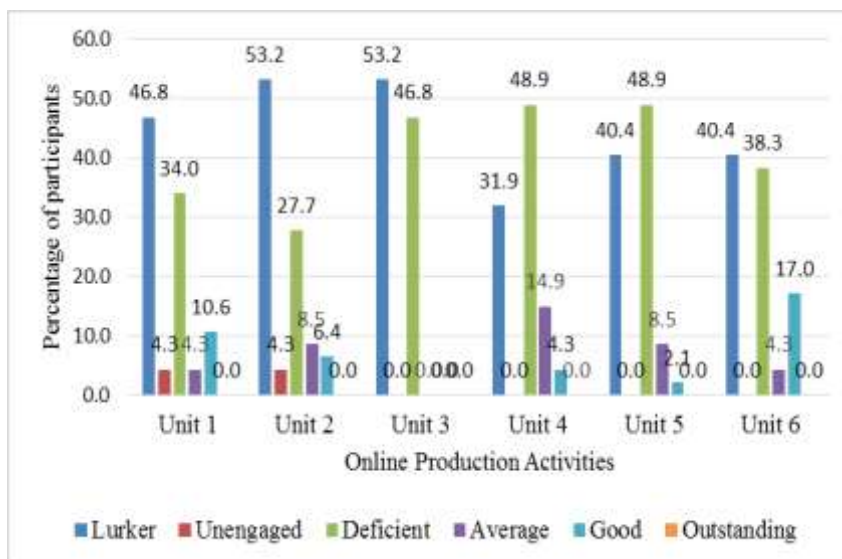


Figure 6. Interaction patterns in OPAs  
Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 7 provides a broad overview of the interaction patterns as a result of the application of an enhanced version of online learning task through Blackboard forum discussions. In SOPAs the trend was to gradually participate in all the three stages allowing a more active process of communication among peers. Commenting to one peer was not the preferred interaction pattern since the design of this learning task encouraged them to read and comment to two classmates.

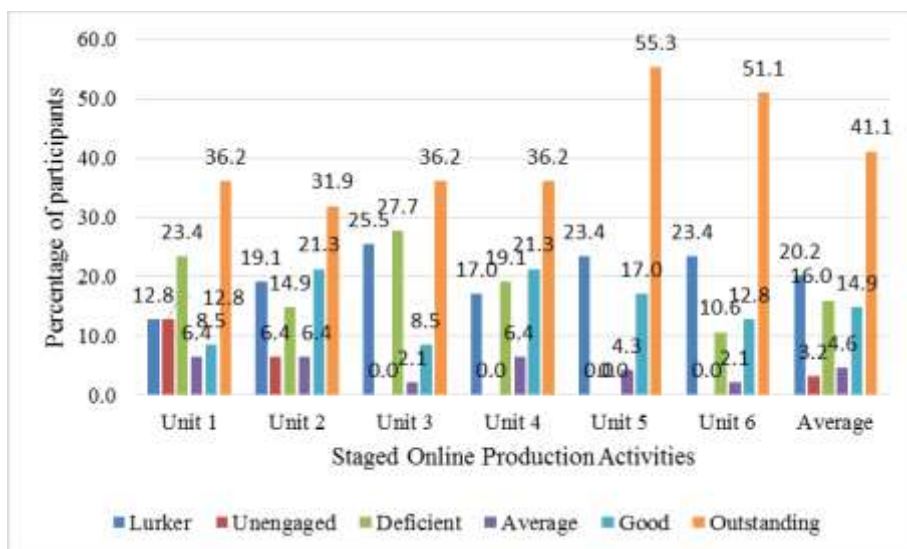


Figure 7. Interaction patterns in SOPAs  
Source: Own elaboration

The orange bars indicate that there was an increasing percentage of students who went through the three stages, sharing their initial postings, commenting on their peers' postings and writing a final paragraph that answered their peers' questions or comments. It allowed students to undergo an interactive process through all these three stages which at the same time permitted them to be exposed to language during their learning process. The percentage of lurkers lowered in this type of activity since the motivation stage which consisted of sharing some pictures with prompts or just some sentences related to the task fostered students' participation. It was also noticed that students completed this stage as soon as the synchronic session ended or immediately after due to its less demanding elaboration process and the type of engaging task.

To sum up, the design of SOPAs and OPAs influences on the students' interaction patterns as to allow them to be less or more engaged with the tasks depending on the instructions given for each type.

In the case of the traditional design of online discussion forums for OPAs, there were two important conditions which limited the students' interaction: First, the students were not given deadlines for each of the two steps; second, the low score assigned for interaction which deterred them from commenting on their peers' postings. Figure 8 shows the average percentage of participants in each level of interaction for OPAs, being 44% the average number of students who did not participate in any of the activities throughout the semester whereas 7% was the same average number for the ones who commented to one peer or two peers and they were considered average and good participants respectively. In terms of peer interaction, OPAs did not foster students' answering to comments; thus, there were no outstanding participants, but there were 41% students who shared an initial posting. It is evident that just 14% were eager to interact with their peers.

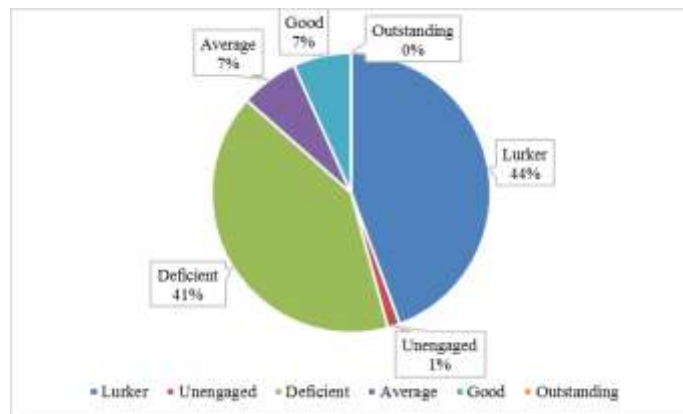


Figure 8. Average percentage of participants per level of interaction in OPAs

Source: Own elaboration

Conversely, the three restricted stages with specific deadlines and instructions of SOPAs guided the behavior of students in the online environment since they became aware of the task availability and the teacher's expectations through the model they were given. The Blackboard availability feature, which restricted them from posting out of the time range, helped them manage their time based on the task requirements and the scoring rubric; this last one had certainly to be adapted to the new model with three stages and their

deadlines. The other important aspect that was implemented in this design is the two-week process instead of the one-week model from OPAs, an important factor that also influenced on the results. Two-week in length for participating in one task per unit yielded better results and engaged more students in online interaction as it is seen in Table 11. It provided more time for students to participate compared to the OPA design in which they had to work on two tasks per unit in two weeks.

Figure 9 shows the average percentage of participants in each level for SOPAS. The orange area indicates the average number of 41% for outstanding students, the ones who completed the three stages successfully with a high degree of interaction with peers. It is also noted that the average percentage of lurkers decreased considerably in contrast with the one from OPAS from 44% to 20%.

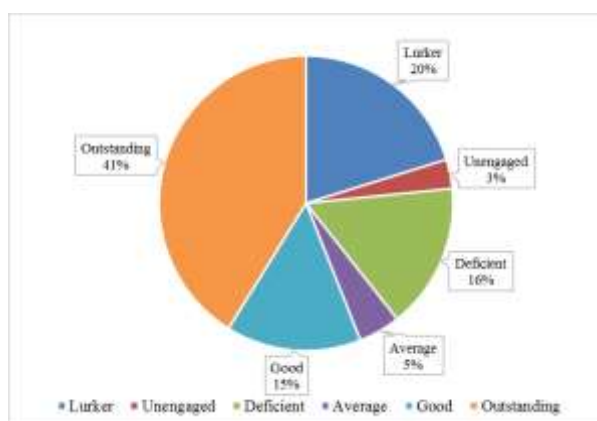


Figure 9. Average percentage of participants per level of interaction in SOPAs

Source: Own elaboration

The effectiveness of the two-week design lies in the motivation and peer interaction stages which were necessary to move towards the third stage which had the highest score and represented a valuable opportunity to interact among peers by becoming insiders in this virtual community. In relation to language learning, they were given a pair-work task to practice English: they read postings, commented on them, and answered to them using English new structures in online contexts. The design of

Staged Online Production Activities allowed students to actively interact among peers opposing the the traditional design of OPAs which did not foster the dialogue in an online text-based communication.

## **4.2. Discussion**

Previous research mentioned in this study as antecedents of the use of online forums discussions confirms their importance as educational tools for construction of knowledge due to its interactive nature. Jose & Abidin (2016) highlighted the importance of incorporating OFDs in English language learning due to the need for interaction in an online environment in comparison to the use of blogs in which there was no student-to-student interaction. Castro (2015) also recognized the usefulness of interaction in the communicative dimension to construct knowledge through online forums in secondary education. Additionally, Zhang (2007) proved that students who used online discussion forums were better at organizing essays of certain types. Being proven the effectiveness of OFDs in education due to their interactive nature, the problem to be solved in this research was not only to validate the proposed hypotheses, but instead creating learning activities that foster interaction in fully online courses and compensate the lack of face-to-face interaction. Consequently, the results of this present research confirm that the task design for online production activities in English language teaching certainly influences on the degree of interaction and its respective patterns in fully online classes.

Most of the antecedents of the research were not closely linked to EFL as it was seen in the previous paragraph; therefore, the ones selected guided the rationale and analysis in order to design the online production tasks and elaborate the rubric for measuring the level of interaction through forum discussions. The study by Ng et al (2011, pp. 280) presented twelve peer facilitation techniques; four of them were evident in the students' postings which contributed to a greater degree of interaction: Showing appreciation, considering others' viewpoints, questioning, and giving personal opinion. The other eight facilitation techniques that they found and analyzed in their study were not explicitly developed in this type of forum discussion due to the fact that it was not designed for knowledge construction. Notwithstanding, the design of

English learning tasks may consider certain stages or instructions which help students develop conversational strategies such as clarifying, challenging others' points of view, or synthesizing/summarizing. It should be noted here that the design of learning tasks influences directly on the type of peer facilitation techniques that are expected as language production. From Gunawardena's (1997) five phases involved in the construction of knowledge, three of them have been observed in the interaction process in the staged online production activities: Phase I: Sharing and comparing: In the first and second stages of the task in which students share an initial posting and make questions; Phase III: Negotiation / Co-construction: It is practiced in the third stage in which students read postings, comment on these last ones and give a response to their peers' questions; and Phase V: Statement / Application of Newly Constructed Knowledge: It is observed in all the stages but it is more evident in the last stage in which students use new English structures, vocabulary and expressions from the involved unit as to reinforce or recycle what they have already studied in the Cambridge LMS or in the synchronic sessions. Due to the nature of the course, learning a new language, the Phase V is also evident in all the three stages of the task when students followed instructions to complete each of them; even in the first stage, when they were required to write some prompts, they had to use previous and new content. One aspect that should be taken into consideration in Phase V in the case of English learning is that the interaction with content and the previous postings ease the construction of knowledge; however, the focus of this research is Interaction and this topic must be considered as further research.

With respect to restricted discussion forums, Morrison et al. (2012) analyzed their effectivity for initial postings compared to the traditional ones. In this present research, this restrictive aspect is applied to three stages to foster timely response and participation. It was necessary to restrict the forum availability since it was observed that the design of activities called OPAs promoted a timely initial posting but there was little or no interaction after this first step. Either low level of or lack of interaction among students was one of the main pitfalls in fully online English classes, especially in asynchronous communication when they had to read and comment on peers' postings. Not only did students deal with time management to complete the learning task, but they underwent an adaptation process to face the new type of learning modality which involved online communication tools. As a solution to this problem, the

present research analyzed two types of online learning tasks, OPAs and SOPAs in two sample groups, whose results were confronted to evaluate the dependent variable: the degree of interaction. The results revealed that there was a higher degree of interaction when using a staged online task in contrast to the traditional model. It is also shown that students were more engaged with a three stage-learning tasks on two-week basis rather than with the traditional task which consisted of two steps on a weekly basis.

Considering that this present research was conducted in an EFL context in which forum discussions were used as tools to compensate the lack of face-to-face interaction, it follows that the elaboration online tasks involves a detailed and thorough plan as to become a learning resource that generates interaction with activities that should be: Appealing, achievable, and accessible. The issues to be examined in the process of their elaboration are: students' interests, relevant topics, achievable tasks in terms of time and degree of difficulty, length of posting, a clear assessment rubric, a student's guide with deadlines, and a timely and continuous feedback. As a result, the three-staged design of SOPAs is totally different from the traditional task for online forum discussion; they were used to provide students with a setting in which they could interact as if they were in a face-to-face English class. SOPAs created a hybrid type of conversational communication based on text, which is sort of similar to the one practiced by students through social networking sites, e.g. facebook, twitter, etc.

After having analyzed two types of online production activities on Blackboard for a fully online course in which there is no face-to-face interaction, it could be stated that the SOPAs facilitated effective interaction and meaningful practice that involved students in an online dialogue in which they could practice target structures and vocabulary as well as informal functional language. However, it was observed in the data shown in this research, that there were still students who feel outsiders and were not committed with the learning tasks that were designed to counter the lack of face-to-face interaction. Therefore, further study will be necessary in order to verify the effects in learning of those students who did not become part of the online learning community due to their lack of online participation.

In the elaboration of the Staged Online Production Activities, two levels of learning that ranged from low (description of pictures, writing prompts, and asking questions) to higher levels of learning (critical and creative thinking as well as writing skills) guided students to consolidate the interactive tasks into a final paragraph. Most students, 79.8%, from the experimental group responded positively to this design since the first stages were manageable in terms of time and task difficulty.

It could be argued that they were conditioned by a staged task design with three different deadlines and different degree of difficulty that also assigned eight points for commenting to peers compared to four points in OPAs. It might also be stated that this assigned score influenced on the results. Notwithstanding, an online survey using survey monkey was conducted in order to know the students' perceptions towards this new design and they agreed on the benefits that the staged design offered to them to reach the lesson objectives. Not only did the results show that students worked the SOPA's first stage immediately after the synchronous class finished but it was also confirmed through the fulfilling of the task in the online class as a result of the low level of difficulty. Consequently, completing this stage represented the tool that broke down the online communication barriers.

The study of interaction in this research has been enriching for teaching purposes; but there are many other aspects that need to be analyzed such as the students' written production in OFDs as a skill for learning English since it seems that most students transfer the format they use for communicating in social networking sites into Blackboard OFDs.

To sum up, it could not be taken for granted that any online learning task will cause active interaction. The sense of community that has to be developed when participating in an online class can be enhanced through the type of learning activities that teachers design and monitor as to shrink the transactional distance between members of this online community.

#### **4.2.1. Implications**

This research provides evidence that English learning tasks in a virtual environment can be used as an educational tool to help



engage students into a more active role in which they profit from this virtual classroom feature: anytime-anywhere. It is also noted that the nature itself of being online benefits students equally, especially for shy ones, offering them a scenario for interaction where they will have more time to reflect, internalize new structures, and produce language at their own pace. This condition will reduce student's anxiety caused by the immediateness of responses in a face-to-face environment.

Also, it raises the issue of integration of effective use of interactive online tools with English methodology and approaches: How to transform or adapt our English classes into an online format in which there are other interaction patterns and how we can profit from them to create more meaningful learning tasks that suit our students' needs.

Additionally, the face-to face interaction patterns students practice in classrooms could be transferred to the online scenario successfully based on the findings of this research. This action research provided us with useful data that showed students' time management was one of the main pitfalls in asynchronous communication. This data which could be used to guide our future planning and designing of asynchronous online learning tasks in OFDs.

Therefore, pair and group work could be designed for better results in Online English classes as to organize an even interaction considering that in SOPAs there were still lurkers, latecomers, and delayed postings that did not receive any comments.

Finally, there are many aspects that could affect students' interaction in virtual environments that have not been analyzed in this research since the focus is interaction. However, the interaction degree could have been affected by lack of internal or external motivation, the score weight assigned to these activities, and the pressure of other academic tasks that are prioritized in their condition of university students.



## CONCLUSIONS

Our English classrooms have been transformed into virtual spaces in which usernames and passwords authorize learners to interact with content, teachers, and classmates; being Online Discussion Forums (OFDs) the most useful tool to communicate and interact among themselves.

The first proposed hypothesis of the present research has been tested and verified by means of the U Mann-Whitney Test which was supported by the quantitative analysis of the dependent variable, *the intervention program*, and the independent variable, *Interaction*. Being rejected the null hypothesis, it is stated that the application of SOPAs through OFDs resulted in a significant increase of an average percentage of 24.1 during one semester which is higher than OPAs' in relation to sharing an initial posting. With respect to the subvariable *commenting to two peers*, SOPAs generated an average percentage of 50.4 higher than OPAs'.

The second hypothesis was validated by means of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient test which was used for measuring the correlation of the number of publications and the Interaction score given to each posting in the sample groups. There exists a positive correlation between these two variables: the more publications the students share, the higher interaction score they have. Consequently, it can be stated that the intervention program through the application of SOPAs yielded better grades in comparison with the OPAs'. The

resulting interaction patterns, after the respective scoring analysis, were six from lurkers to outstanding participants in SOPAs and from lurkers to good participants in OPAs. It is concluded that the application of SOPAs enhanced the interaction patterns by adding the last one, outstanding participant, in which the students were led to interact among each other through a text-based communication similarly to the one in social networking sites with the advantages of anywhere and anytime.

SOPAs and OPAs generated six different types of interaction patterns that have been translated into six types of online participants which were classified according to their degree of participation obtained by applying the respective rubric.

Students underwent a process of belonging to the online community, from outsiders into insiders, when they were exposed to and involved in more meaningful activities which provided them with the opportunity to personalize information and share their own pictures; thus authentic dialogue took place in the form of text-based communication.

Transactional distance was lessened through the application of the enhanced type of learning activities (SOPAs) that included, restricting the posting time with gradual degree of difficulty from lower to higher levels of learning.

Salmon's five stage model of teaching and learning online through online networking should be applied when designing learning tasks in order to enhance interaction among learners.

The results of this research reveal that interaction, the dependent variable under investigation, is more evident and representative in the SOPAs (Staged Online Production Activities) applied to the experimental group compared to the ones obtained for the OPAs applied to the control group.

The new online format for English learning has generated a new concept for Interaction which basically highlights the learners' social presence in a Virtual Learning Environment due to their belonging to a virtual community.

The graded difficulty design of the Staged Online Production Activities, which goes from a low level of learning in the first and second stages until a higher level in the third stage, engages more students in active participation compared to the traditional task in which there was no motivation or guided interaction processes.

The design of OPA did not foster interaction among peers and most discussions remained in the initial postings that mostly turned into one-way serial monologues due to the lack of time management or degree of difficulty of tasks. The statistics from Blackboard showed that they posted before the closing of the task availability or due to the absence of other postings to be commented.

VLEs such as Blackboard and Moodle provide English teachers with a variety of teaching resources which should be appropriately used as to counter the lack of face-to-face interaction for fully online English classes.

Integrated skills tasks should be included in the online production tasks as to improve students' English production since most students do not edit postings and they might internalize others' mistakes by being exposed to continuous reading peers' contributions which have not been proofread or edited.

The English teachers' role has also been transformed due to online teaching features: from content manager, online learning task designer, OFD moderator to provider of online feedback.

Promptness and timely responses were still, in a minor grade, aspects that affected students' interaction modifying their interaction patterns; there were lurkers who opted for not participating in them, some latecomers who did not receive any comments on their postings, and students who received more comments than expected.

The significant difference of 24.5% in the average percentage for lurkers (44.7%) in OPAs and SOPAs (20.2%) in online forum discussions indicates that *Interaction* might partially be influenced by the score weight given to these production activities in our evaluation system. This grade is considered as *performance assessment* with a

weight of 30% in the total grade; as a result, there were some lurkers who still passed the course; however, there were few of them who dropped out or failed the course.

The students who participated in the three stages from the online production activities underwent a more active communicative process in which they could practice informal and in some cases, colloquial English overcoming, to some extent, the lack of face-to-face interaction.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Some questions have remained unanswered in this present study that might be interesting areas for further investigation. For example: What is the role of the automatic translator such as google translators students used in the SOPAs since they are completely text-based for online English classes? Does the automatic translator contribute to language learning due to the practicability and automatization when writing is required? Does it conduct to fossilization of language mistakes as participants are naturally exposed to them when reading postings? How effective is cooperative writing in OFDs for English language learning?

It is expected that this model of online production activity that fosters participation and interaction could be enhanced to provide a solution to the learning problems that our students might face in our online classes. Two variables have been analyzed in this study in terms of interaction and a treatment program; however, it is advisable we conduct studies on how to improve writing skills on OFDs since it has been observed that there are vocabulary and grammar interferences from L2 in most of the students' postings.

Research on other types of interaction patterns for Online English classes such as pair work, small group work with integrated skills should be analyzed in order to overcome the persisting problems that online teaching poses due to delayed postings and lack of motivation.





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## **APPENDIXES**





### Appendix 1. Checklist for measuring the degree of students' interaction per unit in SOPAs or OPAS

[illegible]

## Appendix 2. Rubric for measuring the level of interaction

SUBVARIABLES	RATING	CRITERIA
<b>Promptness</b>	1	Posts on the due date before the availability closes.
	2	Posts one day before due date.
	3	Posts few days before due date.
	4	Consistently posts the first day after posting the task; demonstrates good self-initiative.
<b>Social presence by sharing an initial posting</b>	1	Shares an initial posting with no relevant information about the topic.
	2	Shares an initial posting with little information about the topic.
	3	Shares an initial posting with the required information linked to the topic. It might include pictures with prompts.
	4	Gets involved with the task. Shares an initial posting with interesting personal information that catches their peers' attention. It includes pictures with prompts relevant to the learning task.
<b>Comments on peers' postings</b>	1	Writes disorganized or unfocused comments that are not easy to understand, or are too brief to be understood.
	2	Writes comments to one or two peers that are related to the topic.
	3	Writes comments to one or two peers that create a familiar environment to have a dialogue. Also, provides appropriate responses to either one or two peers.
	4	Writes comments on two classmates' postings that enrich the online conversation and also provides thoughtful follow-up answers to peers' comments.
<b>Netiquette</b>	1	Does not address peers by names and might sound rude in some postings.
	2	Follow most of the rules of netiquette but uses capital letters or different font color or styles to write the posting.
	3	Addresses peers by names and respects opinions when posting.
	4	Postings reflect respect for peers' opinions or comments and follow netiquette standards: be polite and be respectful.
<b>Expression or tone within posting</b>	1	Posts shallow comments to peers (e.g., agrees or disagrees); does not enrich dialogue.
	2	Unclear connection to topic evidenced in minimal expression or opinions or ideas
	3	Opinions and ideas are stated clearly and are connected to the topic. Includes expressing emotion, feeling or mood.
	4	Expresses opinions and ideas in a clear and concise manner with obvious connection to the topic. Shows affective response, use of humor and self-disclosure.

### Appendix 3. Group 1's interaction levels with scores

Student's N <sup>o</sup>	Interaction Level	P1	C1	Interaction Level	P2	C2
Student 1	Good	3	17	Outstanding	4	18
Student 2	Deficient	1	9	Average	2	11
Student 3	Outstanding	4	18	lurker	0	0
Student 4	Outstanding	4	18	Outstanding	4	19
Student 5	Deficient	1	9	Outstanding	4	19
Student 6	Unengaged	1	5	lurker	0	0
Student 7	Unengaged	1	5	Outstanding	4	18
Student 8	Deficient	1	9	lurker	0	0
Student 9	Outstanding	4	18	Outstanding	4	19
Student 10	Outstanding	4	18	Outstanding	4	18
Student 11	Outstanding	4	18	Good	3	16
Student 12	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 13	lurker	0	0	Good	3	16
Student 14	Average	2	14	Deficient	1	10
Student 15	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 16	Average	2	15	Average	3	15
Student 17	Outstanding	4	18	Outstanding	4	18
Student 18	Outstanding	4	18	Outstanding	4	18
Student 19	Outstanding	4	17	Good	3	16
Student 20	Good	4	16	Deficient	1	8
Student 21	Outstanding	4	18	Outstanding	4	18
Student 22	Outstanding	4	18	Unengaged	1	5
Student 23	Deficient	1	10	Outstanding	4	18
Student 24	Average	4	14	Deficient	1	9
Student 25	lurker	0	0	Deficient	1	10
Student 26	Deficient	1	10	Outstanding	4	16
Student 27	Outstanding	4	16	Good	3	17
Student 28	Deficient	1	10	lurker	0	0
Student 29	Outstanding	4	18	Deficient	1	10
Student 30	Outstanding	4	18	Outstanding	4	19
Student 31	Outstanding	4	18	Deficient	1	9
Student 32	Deficient	1	9	Average	3	15
Student 33	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 34	Unengaged	1	5	Good	3	16
Student 35	Deficient	1	8	Good	3	16
Student 36	Unengaged	1	5	Unengaged	1	5
Student 37	Unengaged	1	5	lurker	0	0
Student 38	Deficient	1	10	Good	3	16
Student 39	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 40	Deficient	1	7	Good	3	16
Student 41	Outstanding	4	18	Good	3	16
Student 42	Good	4	17	Outstanding	4	18
Student 43	Outstanding	4	18	Outstanding	4	18
Student 44	Unengaged	1	5	Unengaged	1	5
Student 45	Good	3	16	Good	3	17
Student 46	Outstanding	4	18	Outstanding	4	18
Student 47	Deficient	1	9	Good	3	17

Student's N°	Interaction Level	P3	C3	Interaction Level	P4	C4
Student 1	Outstanding	4	18	Outstanding	4	19
Student 2	Deficient	1	10	Good	3	16
Student 3	lurker	0	0	Good	3	16
Student 4	Outstanding	4	18	Deficient	1	10
Student 5	Outstanding	4	19	Outstanding	4	20
Student 6	lurker	0	0	Outstanding	4	18
Student 7	Outstanding	4	19	Outstanding	4	18
Student 8	lurker	0	0	Good	3	16
Student 9	Outstanding	4	19	Deficient	1	10
Student 10	Outstanding	4	18	Deficient	1	10
Student 11	Outstanding	4	19	Outstanding	4	19
Student 12	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 13	Average	2	14	Outstanding	4	19
Student 14	Deficient	1	10	Good	3	16
Student 15	lurker	0	0	Outstanding	4	19
Student 16	Deficient	1	9	Deficient	1	10
Student 17	Deficient	1	10	lurker	0	0
Student 18	Good	3	16	Good	4	17
Student 19	Outstanding	4	18	Outstanding	4	18
Student 20	Deficient	1	10	Average	2	15
Student 21	Deficient	1	8	Outstanding	4	18
Student 22	Good	3	16	Average	2	15
Student 23	Outstanding	4	19	Deficient	1	10
Student 24	lurker	0	0	Deficient	1	10
Student 25	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 26	Outstanding	4	19	lurker	0	0
Student 27	Deficient	1	10	Average	2	15
Student 28	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 29	lurker	0	0	Deficient	1	10
Student 30	Outstanding	4	20	Outstanding	4	20
Student 31	Deficient	1	10	Deficient	1	10
Student 32	Good	3	16	Deficient	1	9
Student 33	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 34	Deficient	1	8	Outstanding	4	19
Student 35	Good	3	16	Good	3	16
Student 36	Deficient	1	8	Good	3	15
Student 37	Deficient	1	8	Outstanding	4	19
Student 38	Outstanding	4	20	Outstanding	4	19
Student 39	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 40	Outstanding	4	19	Good	3	15
Student 41	Outstanding	4	20	lurker	0	0
Student 42	Deficient	1	10	Outstanding	4	19
Student 43	Deficient	1	10	Good	3	16
Student 44	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 45	Outstanding	4	20	Good	3	16
Student 46	Outstanding	4	20	Good	3	16
Student 47	Outstanding	4	20	Good	3	16

Student's N°	Interaction Level	P5	C5	Interaction Level	P6	C6
Student 1	Outstanding	4	18	Outstanding	4	19
Student 2	Outstanding	4	18	Outstanding	4	18
Student 3	Outstanding	4	19	Good	3	16
Student 4	Outstanding	4	18	Good	3	15
Student 5	Outstanding	4	20	Outstanding	4	18
Student 6	Good	3	16	Good	3	16
Student 7	Outstanding	4	20	Outstanding	4	19
Student 8	Outstanding	4	19	Outstanding	4	19
Student 9	lurker	0	0	Outstanding	4	17
Student 10	Good	3	16	Good	3	16
Student 11	Outstanding	4	19	Outstanding	4	19
Student 12	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 13	Outstanding	4	19	Outstanding	4	19
Student 14	Outstanding	4	19	Outstanding	4	19
Student 15	Outstanding	4	20	Outstanding	4	19
Student 16	Outstanding	4	20	lurker	0	0
Student 17	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 18	Outstanding	4	19	Outstanding	4	19
Student 19	Outstanding	4	19	Outstanding	4	19
Student 20	Good	3	16	Deficient	1	10
Student 21	Good	3	16	Outstanding	4	19
Student 22	Good	3	16	Deficient	1	8
Student 23	Outstanding	4	20	Average	2	15
Student 24	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 25	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 26	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 27	Outstanding	4	18	Outstanding	4	19
Student 28	Good	3	16	lurker	0	0
Student 29	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 30	Outstanding	4	20	Outstanding	4	16
Student 31	Good	3	16	lurker	0	0
Student 32	Good	4	17	Outstanding	4	19
Student 33	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 34	Average	2	15	Deficient	1	10
Student 35	Outstanding	4	19	Deficient	1	10
Student 36	Outstanding	4	19	lurker	0	0
Student 37	Outstanding	4	19	Good	3	16
Student 38	Outstanding	4	19	Good	3	16
Student 39	lurker	0	0	Deficient	1	10
Student 40	Average	2	11	Outstanding	4	19
Student 41	Outstanding	4	19	Outstanding	4	19
Student 42	Outstanding	4	19	Outstanding	4	19
Student 43	Good	3	16	Outstanding	4	19
Student 44	lurker	0	0	Outstanding	4	18
Student 45	Outstanding	4	19	Outstanding	4	19
Student 46	Outstanding	4	19	Outstanding	4	19
Student 47	Outstanding	4	19	Outstanding	4	19

#### Appendix 4. Group 2's interaction levels with scores

Student's N°	Interaction Level	P1	C1	Interaction Level	P2	C2
Student 48	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 49	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 50	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 51	Average	2	13	Deficient	1	10
Student 52	Good	3	16	Deficient	1	10
Student 53	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 54	Average	3	15	lurker	0	0
Student 55	Deficient	1	9	Deficient	1	10
Student 56	lurker	0	0	Deficient	1	10
Student 57	Deficient	1	10	Good	3	17
Student 58	lurker	0	0	Good	3	16
Student 59	lurker	0	0	Deficient	1	8
Student 60	lurker	0	0	Deficient	1	9
Student 61	Deficient	1	10	Average	3	15
Student 62	Deficient	1	10	Deficient	1	10
Student 63	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 64	Unengaged	1	5	Unengaged	1	5
Student 65	Deficient	1	7	Deficient	1	10
Student 66	lurker	0	0	Average	2	17
Student 67	Unengaged	1	5	Unengaged	1	5
Student 68	Deficient	1	9	lurker	0	0
Student 69	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 70	Deficient	1	8	Deficient	1	10
Student 71	Deficient	1	8	Deficient	0	0
Student 72	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 73	lurker	0	0	Good	3	16
Student 74	Good	3	16	Good	3	16
Student 75	Good	3	17	Average	2	15
Student 76	Good	3	16	lurker	0	0
Student 77	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 78	Good	3	17	Average	2	15
Student 79	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 80	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 81	Deficient	1	7	Deficient	1	10
Student 82	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 83	Deficient	1	8	Deficient	1	10
Student 84	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 85	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 86	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 87	Deficient	1	8	Deficient	1	9
Student 88	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 89	Deficient	1	10	Deficient	1	10
Student 90	Deficient	1	10	Deficient	0	0
Student 91	lurker	0	0	Deficient	1	10
Student 92	Deficient	1	8	lurker	0	0
Student 93	Deficient	1	8	lurker	0	0
Student 94	Deficient	1	8	lurker	0	0

Student's N°	Interaction Level	P3	C3	Interaction Level	P4	C4
Student 48	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 49	lurker	0	0	Deficient	1	9
Student 50	lurker	0	0	Deficient	1	10
Student 51	Deficient	1	10	Deficient	1	9
Student 52	Deficient	1	10	Average	2	13
Student 53	lurker	0	0	Deficient	1	10
Student 54	lurker	0	0	Deficient	1	10
Student 55	Deficient	1	10	Deficient	1	10
Student 56	Deficient	1	10	Deficient	1	10
Student 57	Deficient	1	10	Good	3	16
Student 58	Deficient	1	10	Deficient	1	10
Student 59	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 60	Deficient	1	10	Deficient	1	10
Student 61	Deficient	1	10	lurker	0	0
Student 62	lurker	0	0	Deficient	1	10
Student 63	Deficient	1	10	Deficient	1	10
Student 64	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 65	Deficient	1	8	Average	2	15
Student 66	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 67	Deficient	1	8	Good	3	16
Student 68	Deficient	1	9	Deficient	1	10
Student 69	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 70	Deficient	1	10	Good	3	16
Student 71	Deficient	1	10	Good	3	16
Student 72	lurker	0	0	Deficient	1	9
Student 73	lurker	0	0	Deficient	1	9
Student 74	Deficient	1	9	Good	3	17
Student 75	Deficient	1	10	Good	3	17
Student 76	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 77	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 78	Deficient	1	10	Good	3	17
Student 79	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 80	lurker	0	0	Deficient	1	10
Student 81	Deficient	1	9	Deficient	1	10
Student 82	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 83	Deficient	1	10	Deficient	1	10
Student 84	lurker	0	0	Deficient	1	10
Student 85	lurker	0	0	Deficient	1	10
Student 86	lurker	0	0	Deficient	1	10
Student 87	Deficient	1	10	lurker	0	0
Student 88	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 89	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 90	lurker	0	0	Deficient	1	10
Student 91	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 92	Deficient	1	8	Deficient	1	10
Student 93	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 94	Deficient	1	10	Deficient	1	10

Student's N°	Interaction Level	P5	C5	Interaction Level	P6	C6
Student 48	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 49	Deficient	1	8	Deficient	1	10
Student 50	lurker	0	0	Deficient	1	10
Student 51	Deficient	1	10	Deficient	1	10
Student 52	Good	3	16	Good	3	17
Student 53	lurker	0	0	Good	3	16
Student 54	Good	3	16	Deficient	1	10
Student 55	Deficient	1	10	lurker	0	0
Student 56	Deficient	1	8	Deficient	1	10
Student 57	Deficient	1	10	Deficient	1	10
Student 58	Deficient	1	10	lurker	0	0
Student 59	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 60	Deficient	1	10	Good	3	16
Student 61	Good	1	17	Deficient	1	10
Student 62	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 63	Deficient	1	10	Deficient	1	10
Student 64	lurker	0	0	Deficient	1	10
Student 65	Deficient	1	10	Average	1	13
Student 66	Deficient	1	10	lurker	0	0
Student 67	Deficient	1	10	Average	2	14
Student 68	Deficient	1	8	Good	3	17
Student 69	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 70	Deficient	1	10	Average	2	15
Student 71	Deficient	1	10	Good	3	16
Student 72	Deficient	1	10	lurker	0	0
Student 73	Good	3	17	Average	3	15
Student 74	Good	2	16	Deficient	1	10
Student 75	Average	1	10	Deficient	1	13
Student 76	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 77	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 78	Good	3	17	Deficient	1	10
Student 79	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 80	lurker	0	0	Good	2	16
Student 81	Deficient	1	10	Deficient	1	10
Student 82	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 83	Deficient	1	8	Deficient	1	10
Student 84	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 85	Deficient	1	8	Deficient	1	10
Student 86	lurker	0	0	Good	2	16
Student 87	lurker	0	0	Deficient	1	10
Student 88	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 89	Deficient	1	8	lurker	0	0
Student 90	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 91	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 92	Deficient	1	9	Good	3	16
Student 93	lurker	0	0	lurker	0	0
Student 94	Deficient	1	10	lurker	0	0



## Appendix 5. Validation form N° 1 of the measuring instrument



UNIVERSIDAD DE PIURA  
Facultad de Ciencias  
de la Educación

FICHA DE VALIDACIÓN  
DEL INSTRUMENTO

### I. INFORMACIÓN GENERAL

1.1 Nombres y apellidos del validador **Dr. Dirk Christiaan Gootjes Kasel**  
1.2 Cargo e institución donde labora **Coordinador de Inglés para Traductores 4 y 5, UPC**  
1.3 Nombre del instrumento evaluado **RUBRIC FOR MEASURING INTERACTION IN A FULLY ONLINE ENGLISH 3 COURSE OFDs on BLACKBOARD**  
1.4 Autor del instrumento **Lic. Teresa Sanchez**

### II. ASPECTOS DE VALIDACIÓN

Revisar cada uno de los ítems del instrumento y marcar con un aspa dentro del recuadro (X), según la calificación que asigna a cada uno de los indicadores.

- 1 Deficiente (Si menos del 30% de los ítems cumplen con el indicador).  
2 Regular (Si entre el 31% y 70% de los ítems cumplen con el indicador).  
3 Buena (Si más del 70% de los ítems cumplen con el indicador).

Aspectos de validación del instrumento		1	2	3	Observaciones Sugerencias
Criterios	Indicadores	D	R	B	
• PERTINENCIA	Los ítems miden lo previsto en los objetivos de investigación.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
• COHERENCIA	Los ítems responden a lo que se debe medir en la variable y sus dimensiones.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
• CONGRUENCIA	Los ítems son congruentes entre sí y con el concepto que mide.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• SUFFICIENCIA	Los ítems son suficientes en cantidad para medir la variable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
• OBJETIVIDAD	Los ítems se expresan en comportamientos y acciones observables.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
• CONSISTENCIA	Los ítems se han formulado en concordancia a los fundamentos teóricos de la variable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
• ORGANIZACIÓN	Los ítems están secuenciados y distribuidos de acuerdo a dimensiones e indicadores.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
• CLARIDAD	Los ítems están redactados en un lenguaje entendible para los sujetos a evaluar.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	La redacción en inglés fue revisada.
• FORMATO	Los ítems están escritos respetando aspectos técnicos (tamaño de letra, espaciado, interlineado, nitidez).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• ESTRUCTURA	El instrumento cuenta con instrucciones, consignas, opciones de respuesta bien definidas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Muy claras.
CONTEO TOTAL					
(Realizar el conteo de acuerdo a puntuaciones asignadas a cada indicador)		C	B	A	Total

Coefficiente  
de validez

$$\frac{A+B+C}{30}$$

$$= \frac{(27+2)/30}{0.9666}$$

### III. CALIFICACIÓN GLOBAL

Ubicar el coeficiente de validez obtenido en el intervalo respectivo y escriba sobre el espacio el resultado.

Validez muy buena

Lima, 03 de Febrero de 2017.

Intervalos	Resultado
0.00 – 0.49	• Validez nula
0.50 – 0.59	• Validez muy baja
0.60 – 0.69	• Validez baja
0.70 – 0.79	• Validez aceptable
0.80 – 0.89	• Validez buena
0.90 – 1.00	• Validez muy buena

27/30

Coefficiente de valid: 0,9

## Appendix 6. Validation form N° 2 of the measuring instrument



UNIVERSIDAD DE PIURA  
Facultad de Ciencias  
de la Educación

### FICHA DE VALIDACIÓN DEL INSTRUMENTO

#### I. INFORMACIÓN GENERAL

1.1 Nombres y apellidos del validador : **Gianina Nella Tello Flores**  
1.2 Cargo e institución donde labora : **Universidad ESAN**  
1.3 Nombre del instrumento evaluado : **RUBRIC FOR MEASURING INTERACTION IN A FULLY ONLINE ENGLISH 3 COURSE OFDs on BLACKBOARD**  
1.4 Autor del instrumento : **Teresa Jesús Sánchez Chacaltana**

#### II. ASPECTOS DE VALIDACIÓN

Revisar cada uno de los ítems del instrumento y marcar con un aspa dentro del recuadro (X), según la calificación que asigna a cada uno de los indicadores.

- 1 Deficiente (Si menos del 30% de los ítems cumplen con el indicador).  
2 Regular (Si entre el 31% y 70% de los ítems cumplen con el indicador).  
3 Buena (Si más del 70% de los ítems cumplen con el indicador).

Criterios	Aspectos de validación del instrumento Indicadores	1 D	2 R	3 B	Observaciones Sugerencias
• PERTINENCIA	Los ítems miden lo previsto en los objetivos de investigación.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	Los instrumentos evalúan el nivel de interacción del estudiante en la plataforma online.
• COHERENCIA	Los ítems responden a lo que se debe medir en la variable y sus dimensiones.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	Existe una relación lógica con lo que se quiere medir.
• CONGRUENCIA	Los ítems son congruentes entre sí y con el concepto que mide.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	
• SUFICIENCIA	Los ítems son suficientes en cantidad para medir la variable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	Son suficientes.
• OBJETIVIDAD	Los ítems se expresan en comportamientos y acciones observables.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	Pueden ser medibles.
• CONSISTENCIA	Los ítems se han formulado en concordancia a los fundamentos teóricos de la variable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Verificar que los ítems han sido definidos en la operacionalización de las variables.
• ORGANIZACIÓN	Los ítems están secuenciados y distribuidos de acuerdo a dimensiones e indicadores.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	Si
• CLARIDAD	Los ítems están redactados en un lenguaje entendible para los sujetos a evaluar.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	Todo claro.
• FORMATO	Los ítems están escritos respetando aspectos técnicos (tamaño de letra, espaciado, interlineado, nitidez).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	
• ESTRUCTURA	El instrumento cuenta con instrucciones, consignas, opciones de respuesta bien definidas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	
<b>CONTEO TOTAL</b>					<b>0.9666</b>
(Realizar el conteo de acuerdo a puntuaciones asignadas a cada indicador)		<b>C</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Total</b>

Coefficiente  
de validez

$$\frac{A+B+C}{30} = \frac{(27+2)}{30} = 0.9666$$

Intervalos	Resultado
0.00 – 0.49	• Validez nula
0.50 – 0.59	• Validez muy baja
0.60 – 0.69	• Validez baja
0.70 – 0.79	• Validez aceptable
0.80 – 0.89	• Validez buena
0.90 – 1.00	• Validez muy buena

## Appendix 7. Online production activities for control group

### 1. Online production activity – Unit 1



#### The Best Friends Interview

Dear Students,

You will participate in a forum discussion about best friends. Here the steps to complete the task.

- Answer the following questions. Make sure you give elaborated responses with minimum 10 words. Pay close attention to personality adjectives, & adverbs.

*Example:*

1. *What's your best friend like?*

*He's an easygoing person because he's always so relaxed and cool about everything.*

1. **What's your best friend like?**
2. **How about you? What are you like?**
3. **What do you have in common?**
4. **How are you different?**
5. **What do you typically do together?**

- Post your answers as a new thread with the name: **The Best Friends Interview (your name)**.
- Come back later and comment on two other classmates' posts.

You will earn up to **sixteen points** for answering the **interview questions**, and up to **two points for each comment**.

This task is due on

## 2. Online production activity - Unit 2

### My Awesome Trip

Dear Students,

You will post an entry to a **forum**. In this unit we discuss **travelling**. Here are the steps to complete the task.

#### Step 1

Think about a trip you really liked. To help you **organize** your ideas, try to answer the questions below.

- Where did you go?
- What is this place famous for?
- What did you do there?
- What did you like most about it?
- Would you like to go back? Why?

#### Step 2

Use the **answers** to write your **text**. (You don't need to copy the questions!). Try to include adverbs of attitude (e.g., fortunately, unfortunately, amazingly, etc.). You may want to revisit Lesson D, Activity 5 to get some ideas. Make sure your text is at least **100 words**. **Check** your **grammar**, **vocabulary** and **punctuation**.

#### Step 3

Create your text and paste it (under the name: *My Awesome Trip- (your name)*). You will earn a **bonus point** if you insert a **picture of yourself** on that trip. Remember, you have to use the INSERT/EDIT IMAGE icon in the bottom message tool bar on the left to insert a photo that appears with your text. If you add the photo as an attachment that has to be opened, you will not earn the bonus point.

#### Step 4

Come back later and make **meaningful comments** on **two other classmates'** posts.  
*Example: Hi Margarita! Wow! You had a fantastic time in the jungle. I really like your photo dancing in that huge party. I hear there are exotic animals there. Have you seen any?*

You will earn up to **sixteen points** for your text, and up to **two points for each comment**.

**This task is due on**

### 3. Online production activity - Unit 3

#### My special place in the world

Dear Students,

The famous magazine “The Brave Traveler” is receiving articles that fall into the travel narrative category. We need your submission to be published in our magazine. To send your article you will have to post an entry on the **PADLET** wall named “**My special Place in the World**”. You will have to write about **places to visit, typical dishes, customs, etc.** Here are the steps to complete the task.

#### Step 1

Think about a place you really liked. To help you **organize** your ideas, try to answer the questions below.

- Where is that place
- Why is this place famous?
- What can you eat there?
- What can you see there?
- What did you like most about it?
- Would you recommend to travel there? Why?

#### Step 2

Use the **answers** to write your **text**. (You don’t need to copy the questions!). You have to include: superlatives in your writing. Make sure your text is **50 words**. **Check** your **grammar, vocabulary** and **punctuation**.

#### Step 3

Create your text and paste it in a new window. To post your text you will have to double click on the **PADLET** wall and a window will open. Paste your text there. Do not forget to write your name and post a beautiful photo too. You will earn a **bonus point** for a picture **of yourself** on that trip.

**This task is due on**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UuzciL8qCYM>

## 4. Online production activity - Unit 4

### Family gripes

Dear Students,

You will participate in a video forum discussion about family gripes. Here the steps to complete the task.

#### **Step 1**

Make five sentences about your family gripes.

*Example: My grandmother wants me to watch soap operas with her all the time! I really don't like these shows. I prefer watching soccer.*

Make sure you use the following verbs: let, make, help, have, get, want, ask & tell. You can get some help in Unit 4, Lesson A, Activities 2- 6 in the CLMS.

#### **Step 2**

Video- record yourself saying the sentences. Use mailvu or any other video recording device. You can practice until you're happy with the recording.

#### **Step 3**

Create a new thread with the name: *My family gripes*. Paste your URL (video) and script there.

#### **Step 4**

Come back later and make a comment on other classmates' posts.

Please remember that the script is just referential. The video is the principal element of this task.

### Some tips!

- Practice several times before you submit the final version.
- Try not to appear "reading" in front of the camera.
- Use a headset with a peripheral microphone for best quality audio.
- Make sure you submit the complete URL. Try to open it yourself before submitting it.

**This task is due on**

## 5. Online production activity – Unit 5

### My eating habits

Dear Students,

You will participate in a forum discussion about food. Here the steps to complete the tasks.

#### **Step 1**

Read the phrases below and think how you can complete them to describe yourself in terms of your eating habits.

1. At breakfast, I usually...
2. If I get hungry before lunch, I...
3. When I have friends at home for dinner, I usually offer them...
4. When I eat out, I always...
5. If a friend cooks something I don't like, ...

#### **Step 2**

You need to **add minimum 20 words to each phrase** to complete the entries.

*Example: At breakfast, I usually have fruit juice, some coffee, and a sandwich. Sometimes I don't have time, so I just eat a snack, but on weekends my breakfast is much bigger.*

#### **Step 3**

Post your text as a new thread with the name: My eating habits (your name)

#### **Step 4**

Come back later and comment on two other classmates' posts.

You will earn up to **sixteen points** for completing the phrases, and up to **two points for each comment**.

This task is due on Sunday, June 5<sup>th</sup> at midnight.

## 6. Online production activity - Unit 6

### A. Phone conversation!

Dear Students,

You will participate in a forum discussion about phone conversations. Here the steps to complete the tasks.

#### Step 1:

##### Create a phone conversation about a dilemma he/she has

1. Create a phone conversation. Choose a dilemma

e.g:

- ✓ Your 16 years old daughter tells you she wants to get married soon
- ✓ You discover your spouse is cheating on you
- ✓ My co-worker is a bully. He is always making fun of me and others. Nobody wants to complain.
- ✓ You need a new cell phone but you are not sure which to buy

#### Step 2:

##### In your conversation mention:

1. What you plan to do.  
Include some decisions at the moment of speaking.
2. Get and give advice about what to do. Mention the possible consequences.
3. End the conversation in a polite way.

### B. Use the information seen in Unit 6 lesson A, B and C:

Grammar and vocabulary seen in the Lesson A: (At least 3 examples)

- ✓ Be going to
- ✓ Present Continuous
- ✓ Simple present for future.

Grammar and vocabulary seen in the Lesson B: (At least 5 examples)

- ✓ Should/ought to/Had better
- ✓ Going to have to/ have got to
- ✓ Collocations with *make* and *do*
- ✓ Expressions to end the conversation politely

#### Step 3

Post your text as a new thread with the name: A phone conversation (your name)

#### Step 4

Come back later and comment on two other classmates' posts.

You will earn up to **sixteen points** for completing the phrases, and up to **two points for each comment**.

This task is due on



## Appendix 8. Staged production activity

### 1. Staged production activity - Unit 1

#### The way we are

Dear Students,

You are going to participate in a forum discussion about friends. Here the steps to complete the assignment.

#### Stage 1 (Days 1 – 3)

- Post a photo of someone you admire with the following information:
  - His/her name
  - His/her age
  - The reason you admire him/ her
- Post your contribution by **Day 3**. Create a new thread under the name: ***Stage 1-YourName***.

#### Stage 2 (Days 4 – 6)

- Come back to the forum discussion and ask three questions about personality and hobbies on two classmates' friends (Six questions in total.) by **Day 6**.
- Try and make interesting questions.

*Example:*

*Hi, David!*

*I think I've seen Dariela on campus. Is she outgoing or a bit shy? What kind of things do you do together?*

*Cheers,*

*Lorena*

#### Stage 3 (Days 7 – 12)

- Make a short paragraph (100 -120 words) telling us about the person you admire. Include relevant information to complement the hints you gave us in Stage 1, and answer all the questions your classmates asked you in Stage 2. Include the following structures and vocabulary:
- 05 adjectives to describe personality
- 03 adverbs to describe how well / how badly he/ she does certain activities.
- 03 adverbs to reinforce the idea: totally, completely, pretty, etc.
- Verbs: be, get, feel, etc.
- Post this final product by **Day 12**. Create a new thread under the name:

*Example:*

*This is my friend Rodrigo. I've known him for 10 years and we are best friends. He's very generous and helpful. He always asks people if they need help. He's really a cool guy, but sometimes he can be disorganized, especially at school when we have assignments and short projects . . .*

Please remember that you must organize your time and post your contributions in due time.

## 2. Staged production activity - Unit 2

### Experiences

Dear Students,

You are going to participate in a forum discussion about experiences you've had. Here the steps to complete the assignment.

#### **Stage 1** (Days 1 – 3)

- Post a power point presentation (no more than 2 slides) with four google pictures or photographs about two of things you've done, two things you haven't done yet. Write 4 questions to make your partners guess:
  - Do you think I've gone to Disney?
  - Do you think I've worn a Kimono? Etc.
- Post your contribution by **Day 3**. Create a new thread under the name: **Stage 1- YourName**.

#### **Stage 2** (Days 4 – 6)

- Come back to the forum discussion and ask 3 questions to 2 different partners (6 in total) trying to get specific information about their experiences. Post your contribution by **Day 6**.
- Try and make interesting questions.

*Example:*

*Hi, Giovana!*

*I see you've gone to Disney! When did you go? Did you go with your family? Did you get into all the theme parks? Did you have any exciting experience?*

*Cheers,*

*Angel.*

- Post your questions in the forum by **Day 6**. Create a new thread under the name: **Stage 2- Your Name**.

#### **Stage 3** (Days 7 – 12)

- Make a short paragraph about (80-100 words) telling us about your experiences (things you've done) and your dreams (things you haven't done yet). Include relevant information to complement the hints you gave us in Stage 1, and answer all the questions your classmates asked you in Stage 2 using the structures and vocabulary from the unit underline at least 5 sentences where you used them.
- Post this final product by **Day 12**. Create a new thread under the name: **Stage 3 – Your Name**.

*Example:*

*I've always wanted to travel around the world! I haven't gone to Europe but I've been to many different countries. 7 years ago I went to Orlando with my husband*

*and son, we didn't get into all the theme parks but we went back in 2013 and we could do it. I've never ...*

Please remember that you must organize your time and post your contributions in due time.

CHECK THE DEADLINES FOR EACH STAGE IN THE STUDENT'S GUIDE IN UNIT 2 IN BLACKBOARD

**Stage 1 – by Day 3**

**Stage 2 – by Day 6**

**Stage 3 – by Day 12**

### **3. Staged production activity - Unit 3**

#### **My Country's Natural Wonders Contest**

Dear Students,

We will participate in the contest: My City's / Country's Natural Wonders and all the English 3 students are invited to promote one by posting a photo of one of the most amazing places of our country / their cities.

Here the steps to complete the assignment.

#### **Stage 1** (Days 1 – 2)

Post a photo of one of the natural wonders of your city. Include the following information:

- Its name
- Where it is located
- The reason this natural wonder should win the contest.
- Post your contribution by **Day 2**. Create a new thread under the name: ***Stage 1-YourName***.

#### **Stage 2** (Day 4 )

Come back to the forum discussion and read two postings and then ask questions to two classmates about the pictures they posted (three questions each, six in total) by **Day 4**.

Try and make relevant questions about their choice and geographic features.

*Example:*

*Hi, Susan!*

*I think the natural wonder you have proposed is the most amazing waterfall I have ever seen. How long is it? Is it easy to get there? How long does it take to get there from Cusco? How hot is its water?*

*Cheers,*

*Teresa*

### **Stage 3** (Days 7 )

WRITE a short paragraph (80 – 100 words) telling us about this natural wonder. Include detailed information about its features to complement the hints you gave us in Stage 1, and answer all the questions your classmates asked you in Stage 2. Include the following structures and vocabulary:

- 04 superlative adjectives to describe this natural wonder and what you can do there.
- Vocabulary about natural features and measurements.
- Simple present tense and Present perfect tense for experience.
- Post this final product by **Day 7** Create a new thread under the name:

### ***Stage 3 – Your Name.***

*Example:*

I think 7 Tinajas natural waterfall should win this contest ***because*** it is one of ***the most attractive natural*** places ***I have ever visited*** in Cusco. It is about 40 meters ***high and*** is located in Cusco, Quillabamba, Echarate district and it takes 6 hours from Cusco to get there by car. It is not one of ***the highest*** waterfalls in my country ***but*** it is one of ***the most amazing*** places since its waters have carved in the bedrock forming irregular channels and 7 ponds. If you are planning to go to Cusco, you shouldn't miss it! It is one of ***the most relaxing*** places ***I have ever been*** in which you can take a bath and swim and it also has..... You can climb to the ***highest*** part of the waterfall and ..... Vote for it!

Please remember that you must organize your time and post your contributions in due time.

**Stage 1 – by Day 2**

**Stage 2 – by Day 4**

**Stage 3 – by Day 07**

## **4. Staged production activity - Unit 4**

### **Family Life**

Dear Students,

You are going to participate in a forum discussion about family memories . Here the steps to complete the assignment.

### **Stage 1** (Days 1 – 3)

Post two photographs giving clues about your best and worst memories when you were a child.

Post your contribution by **Day 3**. Create a new thread under the name: ***Stage 1- Your Name.***

### **Stage 2** (Days 4 – 6)

Come back to the forum discussion and ask 4 questions ( 2 questions per picture) to 2 different partners (8 questions in total) trying to predict about their memories based on the clues from the pictures.

Try and make interesting questions using : ask – make – tell - have - get – let – want - help

*Example:*

*Hi, Giovana!*

- 1. Did your stepmother **make you clean** all floors in the house?*
- 2. Did your favorite uncle **help you ride** your first bike?*

*Edward*

*Hi Martin !*

- 1. Did your great grandmother....*
- 2. Did your sister...*

*Edward*

- Post your questions in the forum by **Day 6**. Create a new thread under the name: **Stage 2- Your Name.**

### **Stage 3** (Days 7 – 12)

Make a short paragraph about (80-100 words) telling us what really happened. Use USED To and WOULD to tell us about your family life.

- Add expressions and vocabulary used in this Unit.
- Post this final product by **Day 12**. Create a new thread under the name: **Stage 3 – Your Name.**

*Example:*

*I **used to** play in the house with my friends. We **would** run everywhere and definitely made a mess. So my mum **asked me to help** her with some house chores. So I **helped my mother clean** the kitchen and living room, so she **would mop** the bathroom floor and dining room. She **had my dad vacuum** our bedrooms.*

*In the second picture I **got my step brother to take** me to the park and **help me ride** my bike. It was **absolutely** my first bike and my first experience riding. **If you ask me, it feels like** it was yesterday.*

Please remember that you must organize your time and post your contributions in due time.

CHECK THE DEADLINES FOR EACH STAGE IN THE STUDENT'S GUIDE  
UNIT 2 IN BLACKBOARD

**Stage 1 – by Day 3**

**Stage 2 – by Day 6**

**Stage 3 – by Day 12**

## 5. Staged production activity - Unit 5

### Forum: Healthy food

Dear Students,

You are going to participate in a forum discussion about healthy food. Follow the stages below to complete the assignment.

#### **Stage 1** (4 points)

- Post four sentences about beliefs about healthy food. Use different quantifiers (a little, less, a few, etc....) in each sentence.

*Example:*

#### **Stage 1- Sandra Diaz**

*I heard...*

- *It's good to eat **a few** nuts every day.*
- *If you eat **a little** chocolate a day, it can improve your mood.*
- *It's a good idea to eat **less** salt to prevent high blood pressure.*
- *If you eat **fewer** carbohydrates and **a little** more fat and protein, you will lose weight more quickly.*
- Post your contribution by **Friday, October 28<sup>th</sup> (11:59 p.m.)**. Create a new thread under the name: **Stage 1- YourName**.

#### **Stage 2** (4 points)

- Come back to the forum discussion. Read two classmates' postings and write two negative things about the food your partners wrote about.
- Use **too / too much / too many / enough**.

*Example:*

#### **Stage 2- Jessica Drexler**

*Hi, Sandra!*

*I read you wrote about chocolate and nuts. I found it out about these two kinds of food:*

- 1. Eating **too much** chocolate can raise the glucose in your blood.*
  - 2. You said it is good to eat a few nuts, and it is true. But if they are served salted and you eat **too many** of them it can contribute to high blood pressure.*
- Post your contribution by **Sunday, October 30<sup>th</sup> (11:59 p.m.)**. Create a new thread under the name: **Stage 2- Your Name**.

#### **Stage 3** (12 points)

- Make a short paragraph (80 – 100 words) about healthy food. Include the information you wrote in Stage 1 and the information your partners shared with you in Stage 2. Then add more interesting information you might find.
- Use: a little, very little, less, not much, a few, very few, fewer, not many, too much, too many and enough.

- Vocabulary about containers and ways of cooking.

### **Stage 3 – Sandra Diaz.**

*Example:*

*It's good to eat a few nuts every day because they provide healthy fats to help fight high cholesterol and heart disease, but if they are served salted and you eat too many of them it can contribute to high blood pressure, so choose unsalted varieties.*

*It is a good idea to keep your nuts in a glass jar in the refrigerator.*

*If you like sweets, I recommend you to eat a little chocolate a day, a small bar perhaps, it can improve your mood, but remember that eating too much chocolate can raise the glucose in your blood.....*

*It's a good idea to eat less salt to prevent high blood pressure.....because....*

*If you eat fewer carbohydrates and a little more fat and protein, you will lose weight more quickly because.....*

## **6. Staged production activity - Unit 6**

### **Forum: I'm not sure about my future**

You are going to participate in a forum discussion about “future plans” you’re not so sure about. Follow the stages below to complete the assignment.

#### **Stage 1** (4 points)

- Post two ideas about “future plans” you have, but you’re not so sure about. Express why you believe they might be difficult to achieve. Use ***will, be going to, and the present continuous***. Use expressions with **DO** and **MAKE** when possible (4-6 sentences approx.)

*Example:*

#### **Stage 1- Fiorella Martínez**

- *I think **I'll do some volunteer work** next year, but I'm not so sure because **I'm going to start** doing my thesis next January.*
- ***I'll take** a year off to travel around the world, but I haven't **made up my mind** yet. It must be really expensive, but **I'll try to do my best** to save enough money.*
- Post your contribution by **Day 4 (11:59 p.m.)** Create a new thread under the name: **Stage 1- YourName.**

#### **Stage 2** (4 points)

- Come back to the forum discussion. Read two classmates' postings and suggest some ideas (one suggestion per classmate).
- Use ***had better, ought to, might want to, going to have to, have got to, don't have to.***

Example:

**Stage 2- José Cárdenas**

Hi, Fiorella!

*I read what you wrote about your future plans. I believe some volunteer work can do you some good, but you **ought to** organize you time. You **don't have to** work as a volunteer every day; once a week would be enough.*

- Post your contribution by **Day 7 (11:59 p.m.)**. Create a new thread under the name: **Stage 2- Your Name**.

**Stage 3** (12 points)

- Make a video (<http://mailvu.com/>) 1 to 2 min. describing some future plans you have and what you need to do to achieve them. Include the information you wrote in Stage 1 and the ideas your partners suggested in Stage 2.
- Use: *will, be going to, and the present continuous*, expressions with DO and MAKE when possible, *had better, ought to, might want to, going to have to, have got to, don't have to*.

**Tip:** Write your ideas first and read them until you sound clear and natural.

Example:

***I'm going to start** doing my thesis next year, so **I'm going to be** very busy. However, **I'll still need to do something** to gain experience, and I think some volunteer work can **do me some good**. **I will start** looking for some places next month. To be able to do my thesis, study, and work as a volunteer, **I'm going to have to organize** my time carefully...*

- Post your video by **Day 12 (11:59 p.m.)** Create a new thread under the name: **Stage 3 - Your Name**.



## **Appendix 9. Samples of interaction patterns in SOPAs**

In the following sample, it is observed the conversational text based communication that was generated by the staged online production activity:

In the first stage, the learner is presented an activity that motivated him to post information about one of his friends. By posting a photo the activity is personalized and the learning task involves him in the expected interaction process.

### **FIRST SAMPLE**

#### **Staged Online Production Activity -Unit 1**

##### **FIRST STAGE**

**Brandon Francisco Espinoza Soto**



Maryoli and I

She is Maryori, she is my best friend, she has 23 years old, she is very shy.

In the second stage, the design of SOPA encourages the learner to take a more active role by leading him to read two peers' postings and write three questions to continue the text-based communication.

##### **SECOND STAGE:**

Brandon Francisco Espinoza Soto

##### **RE: MY BEST FRIEND**

Hi Claudia, I have 3 questions:

- Your friend is happy always?
- How is her house?
- if she work , how is her job?

**Brandon Francisco Espinoza Soto**  
**RE: Stage 1 – My best friend forever <3.**

Hi Jennifer, I have 3 questions (the previous questions are bad):

- How is she with her boyfriend?
- How she's in university?
- Is your friend jealous?

In this third stage, first the learner reads what their peers want to know about his picture and then writes responses to them. It is also observed the use of the rules of netiquette throughout all the conversation; especially in the last part of the activity in which the student kindly answers to his peers by calling them by their names.

The conversational text-based communication has been developed successfully following all the aspects outlined in the rubric even the humor part when the learner apologized for having posted other questions.

### **THIRD STAGE**

**Claudia Maciel Espinoza Aponte**  
**RE: Maryoli and I**

Hi, Brandon!

What kind of things do you do together? She is a very good friend? How is her personality?

Cheers!

Claudia

**Jennifer Elena Panduro Ramirez**  
**RE: Maryoli and I**

Hi Brandon!

Since when are you best friends?  
when your best friend and you meet?  
She is also shy with you? or talkative?

**Brandon Francisco Espinoza Soto**  
**RE: Maryoli and I**

Hi!!! Jennifer and Claudia

I will tell you about my friend Maryoli.

Maryoli Pascual is 22 years old and is of the university (UPC). We are friends since the first cycle, exactly three years. She and I studied communication, specifically publicity. She is talented to photograph. She is considered always photography social problems, is a good person. Really, not all is good. She in a study group to work is serious. When we are free of obligations talked and sometimes go to parties. Two weeks ago she was robbed. She is generous because discovered the thief and not report. She is shy and does not like having problems with people and less if they are bad.

## **SECOND SAMPLE**

Staged Online Production Activity -Unit 1

**FIRST STAGE:**  
**Juan Diego Blanco Martinez**



She is my best friend. She's 23 years old.

## **SECOND STAGE**

**Juan Diego Blanco Martinez**

**RE: My Funny Friend and Me**

Hi, Elvis! I have never seen in my life Ana. Does she drives dangerously? Does Ana swimms slow? Elvis, What do you have in common?... Juan Diego Blanco.

Juan Diego Blanco Martinez

RE: My best friend is...

Hi, Giancarlo. You are friends nine years. How are you different? Do he cooks good or bad? What do you have in common?

## **THIRD STAGE**

**Giancarlo Piero Segundo Romero Briceño**

**RE: Juan Diego Blanco**

Hi Juan Diego, about Angela

Where did you meet?

What´s Angela like?

What does she do in her freetime?

**Elvis Crisanto Egusquiza Altamirano**

**RE: Juan Diego Blanco**

Hi Juan Diego!

¿Your best friend is outgoing or a bit shy?  
¿She speaks English fluently?  
¿What do you have in common with your best friend?

Autor: Juan Diego Blanco Martinez Fecha: miércoles 24 de agosto de 2016 14H48' PET Asunto: Juan

Hello, Elvis and Giancarlo.

Angela and I met in Arequipa in the summer of 2009. She was a tourist. Angela loves to read books. She bought many books when on vacation. So in her spare time rather stay home and read a good book. Really she loves them. Her interest in books is great. She reads very fast. She's very organized. Angela is a bit shy when you know her, but then is friendly. She was born and lived in Australia, so speaks very fluent english. Something we have in common is that both are responsible, we like to cook. We cook very well and very slow. The two are kind people and a little shy. We are very careful with the things we like. We do things patiently. We have always wanted to try surfing

### **SAMPLE 3**

Staged Online Production Activity - Unit 3

Ruben Fernando Mejia Huayhua

**STAGE 1 - RUBEN**

**NAME: "Cordillera La Viuda"**



This range is between Canta and Junin. It has a beautiful lake you can go walking and see water green, blue o turquoise .The weather is nice

## **STAGE 2**

**Ruben Fernando Mejia Huayhua**

RE: Stage1- Milka Meza

Hi, Milka

I think the natural wonder you have proposed is the deepest lake according the legend.

But actually, How many meters of deep is it? Does the weather is nice? How long does it take to get there from Lima?

Cheers,  
Ruben

Ruben Fernando Mejia Huayhua  
RE: Stage 1: Claudia Sarmiento  
Hi, Claudia

I think the natural wonder you have proposed is the most amazing waterfall in Peru. But, I have some doubts, How many meters of high has this waterfall? What mystery has this wonder? How you get to that place?

Cheers,  
Ruben

## **STAGE 3: ANSWERING PEERS' COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS**

Milka Ivony Meza Yanqui

RE: STAGE 1 - RUBEN

Hi,Rubén!

I think the natural wonder you have proposed is the most beautiful mountain range I have seen so, tell me, Is it hard to get there? How long does it take to get there from Junin? How much cold it is there?

Cheers!

Milka

I think "La Cordillera La Viuda" win this contest because It is one the most beautiful natural places but I have never been there. Also it is one of th most popular and nearbysites to Lima. its lagoon make it an attractive place so yo can see beautiful waterfalls and a variety of landscapes to be left marveling, like a multicolored range that has formed in the hills.If you are planning to go to there you must go through Canta and take a tour. You delay about 4 hours, this place is very cold you should wear warm clothing. But You will not regret to visit.....  
Vote for it!